Weird Tales

JULY 1931

The Unique Magazine

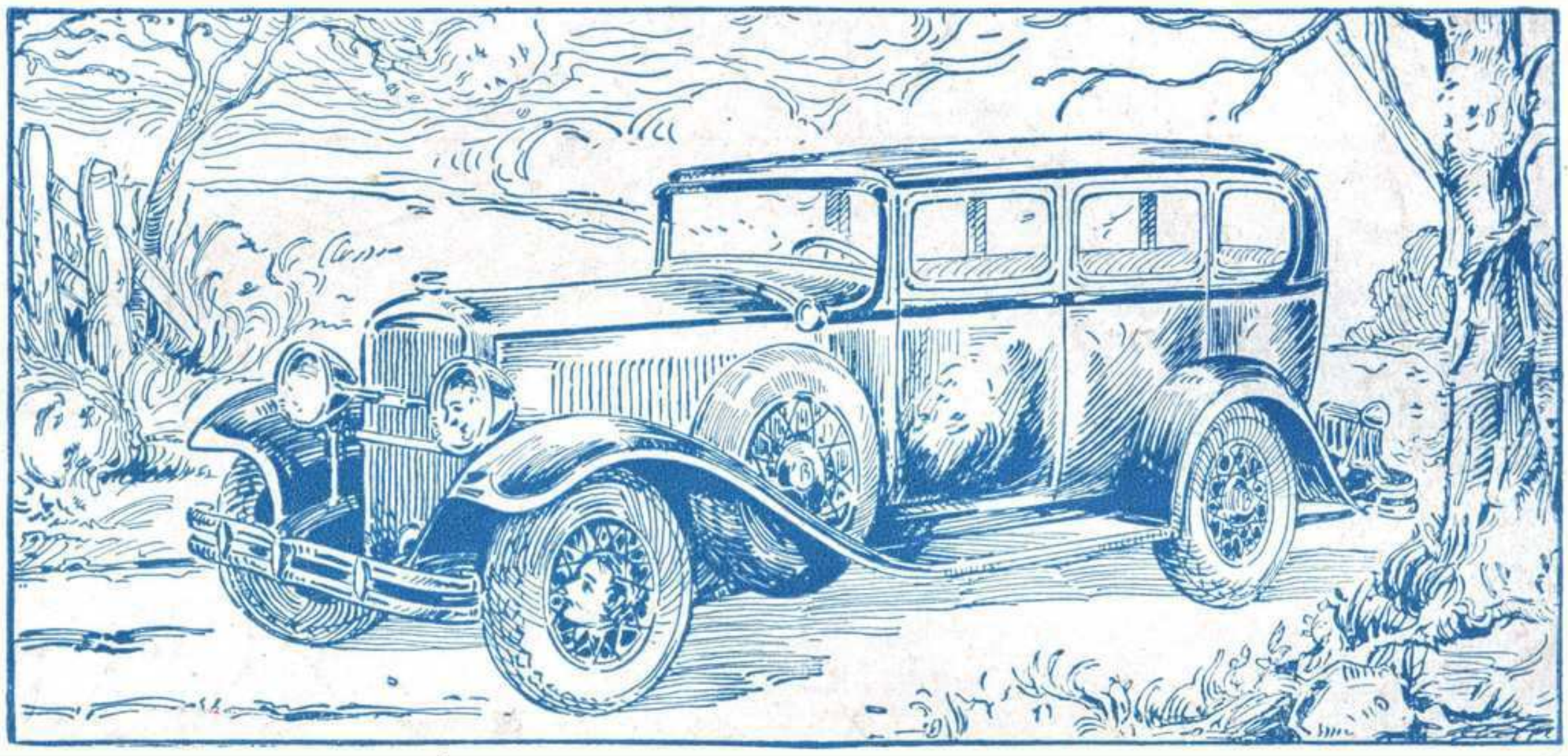
25¢ 30c IN CANADA

TAM
SON OF THE TIGER

By Otis Adelbert Kline

Win $3,700.00

OR BUICK 8 SEDAN AND $2,500 IN CASH



Can you find 5 faces in the picture?

Sensational money-making opportunity for everybody! You may win $3,700 if you prefer all cash or handsome latest model Buick 8 Sedan and $2,500 in cash. **This offer is made by a prominent business house for advertising purposes. Someone is going to win $3,700—why not you?**

I want to send you this prize. Act quick! Send your answer today and qualify to win.

All you do to qualify for an opportunity in this great cash prize advertising plan is to find five faces in picture.

People riding in the auto above got out of the car. Their faces are shown in odd places about the picture. Some faces are upside down, others look sideways, some look straight at you. If you can pick out 5 or more faces, mark them, clip the picture and send to me together with your name and address. Sharp eyes will find them. Can you?

Easy to Win - $12,960 in 103 Cash Prizes

We will give away $12,960 in cash. You are sure to profit if you take an active part. In case of ties duplicate prizes will be given. You get $3,700 if you win grand first prize. In addition there are 102 other wonderful cash prizes. Grand second prize $1,000 in cash. Grand third prize $500 in cash. Also four other prizes of $500.00 each and many others. All told $12,960 in cash. Money to pay you is already on deposit in the Mercantile Trust and Savings Bank, a big Chicago bank.

SEND NO MONEY

The main thing is—send in your answer today. You can share in this advertising cash distribution. Hurry! and take no chance of losing the extra reward of $1,000 for promptness if you win grand first prize. Act now! You don't need to send a penny of your money to win! Just find five faces in the picture above and mail with coupon at once for particulars.

$1,000.00 for Promptness

Send your answer at once. Make sure to qualify for $1,000 extra given for promptness if you win the Buick Sedan —a total of $3,700 if you prefer all cash.

Send Coupon Today

THOMAS LEE, Mgr.
427 W. Randolph St., Dept. 2380, Chicago, Ill.

• I have found five faces in the $3,700.00 prize picture and am anxious to win a prize. Please advise me how I stand.

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....State.....

Indiana Farmer Wins $3,500!

This is a picture of Mr. C. H. Essig, Argos, Ind., taken on his farm. He writes: "Wish to acknowledge receipt of your $3,500 prize check. Oh, boy! This is the biggest sum of money I ever had in my hands. It is indeed a fortune to me."

Hundreds have been rewarded in our past advertising campaigns. Mrs. Edna D. Ziler, of Kentucky, won $1,950. Miss Tillie Bohle, of Iowa, $1,500. Be Prompt! Answer today!

More marvelous than the power of the *Magician's Wand,* is the power that can be developed in the newly discovered cosmic areas of your own mind.

You can turn your mental pictures into living, vibrating waves of power that will reach other minds or attract to your consciousness the creative laws of nature which bring your mental images and desires into material realization.

A FREE Book for YOU

The Rosicrucians throughout the world for centuries have been the Master Minds in developing self-efficiency and self-domination over the obstacles of life. Their secret knowledge and strange methods have made them admired successes everywhere. You may bring about HEALTH, HAPPINESS and a fulfillment of your desires.

They are pledged to help others—just as you will gladly share your knowledge and successful experiences with others. They have prepared a book—new, fascinating, instructive, and practical—which tells about their helpfulness. It is called "The Light of Egypt"—the land where White Magic first gave man his power to be masterful. The coupon below will bring it to you without obligation.

REMEMBER—There are thousands of men and women throughout the world who had a new LIFE opened to them through the Rosicrucian Teachings.

LIBRARIAN W. H. G.
ROSICRUCIAN BROTHERHOOD
(AMORC)
SAN JOSE,
CALIFORNIA

W. T.—1

FREE BOOK COUPON

Librarian W. H. G.
Rosicrucian Brotherhood (Amorc)
San Jose, California

Please send me, without obligation, a copy of "The Light of Egypt" and sample lesson. I am really sincere and not merely curious.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XVII NUMBER 4

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

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

FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1931, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for June-July, 1931

Cover Design ---------- **C. C. Senf**
Illustrating a scene in "Tam, Son of the Tiger"

The Eyrie ---------- 436
A chat with the readers

Tam, Son of the Tiger (Part 1) ---------- 444
An exciting weird novel of wild adventures in a subterranean world under Tibet, and the ancient gods of Asia

Moth ---------- **G. R. Malloch** 464
A tale of giant insects, and colossal caterpillars that ate their way through London

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

[CONTINUED FROM PRECEDING PAGE]

The Venus of Azombeii ---------- Clark Ashton Smith 496
An eery story of Africa, and an agonizing poison that shrivels its victims—by the author of "A Rendezvous in Averoigne"

The Seeds of Death ---------- David H. Keller 514
A powerful story of a castle in Spain, and gorgeous orchids with their roots planted in warm human blood

Black Man and White Witch ---------- Watson Rawkins 531
Death stalked the Portuguese slave-ship in the shape of a giant Black who alone of all on board had his sight

Hill Drums ---------- Henry S. Whitehead 540
The Blacks of the Danish West Indies harried a British consul-general by the weird power of a song

The Blood Veins of the Robot ---------- L. Harper Allen 550
A grim story of a miser whose mechanical man was fed by a stream of gold and silver coins

The Abominable Snow Men ---------- Frank Belknap Long, Jr. 559
Verse

The Finishing Touches ---------- Renier Wyers 560
A striking and unusual devil-story about a painter and the frightful diabolism of his painting

Weird Story Reprint:

The Outsider ---------- H. P. Lovecraft 566
One of the greatest weird stories ever written—reprinted from WEIRD TALES of five years ago

Phantoms ---------- Alice I'Anson 576
Verse

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

WEIRD TALES

Western Advertising Office:
HARLEY L. WARD, INC.
360 N. Michigan Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.
Phone, Central 6269

Eastern Advertising Office:
D. P. RIKER, Mgr.
303 Fourth Ave.,
New York, N. Y.
Phone, Gramercy 5380

THE EYRIE

WITH this issue WEIRD TALES returns to a monthly basis. This number goes on the news stands June 1st; the August issue will be on sale July 1st. The magazine will be issued regularly every month thereafter. Our announcement in last issue that the magazine would again be published every thirty days has called forth a chorus of congratulations from you, the readers, and we find that WEIRD TALES is the favorite magazine of many thousands.

A letter from Ted Fox, of New Haven, Connecticut, says: "I was overjoyed to learn that you have decided to return to monthly publication. I very definitely had missed the thrills and quakings engendered by reading your periodical. I had a sneaking suspicion that your cutting down the number of issues was actuated by your being unable to find sufficient material of your high literary standard. But the April-May number has convinced me that this is not the case. *The Dead-Alive* is as artistic, as eery a yarn of the occult as has ever entertained me with cold shivers for a delicious half-hour. Especially well done was the scene between the hero and the body of his father. That left me with a cold sweat. *The Dust of Death*, your featured story, rather disappointed; not that it was not a good yarn, but that one expects the superlative of the featured narrative in WEIRD TALES. Are we to have no more of Seabury Quinn? There is something missing in a W. T. without Jules de Grandin's Gallic exuberance." [Certainly, there will be many more stories of Jules de Grandin in future issues.—THE EDITORS.]

From Mexico City, Alice I'Anson writes: "As was to be expected, my favorite story in the April-May issue is *A Rendezvous in Averoigne*. It is a gem of fantasy, beautifully worded, dreamily weird, soul-thrilling and satisfying. I hope there are many others to follow like this and *The End of the Story*."

Writes B. A. Balkin, of Los Angeles: "I have just laid down your recent issue, and had to rush to my typewriter to tell you that *The Dead-Alive* by Messrs. Schachner and Zagat is positively the masterpiece of all weird, creepy stories. It goes immediately to the top of anything you have ever printed. I assure you I won't be able to sleep tonight after that thriller; I'll be seeing ghastly faces at my window. Like Oliver Twist, I want more."

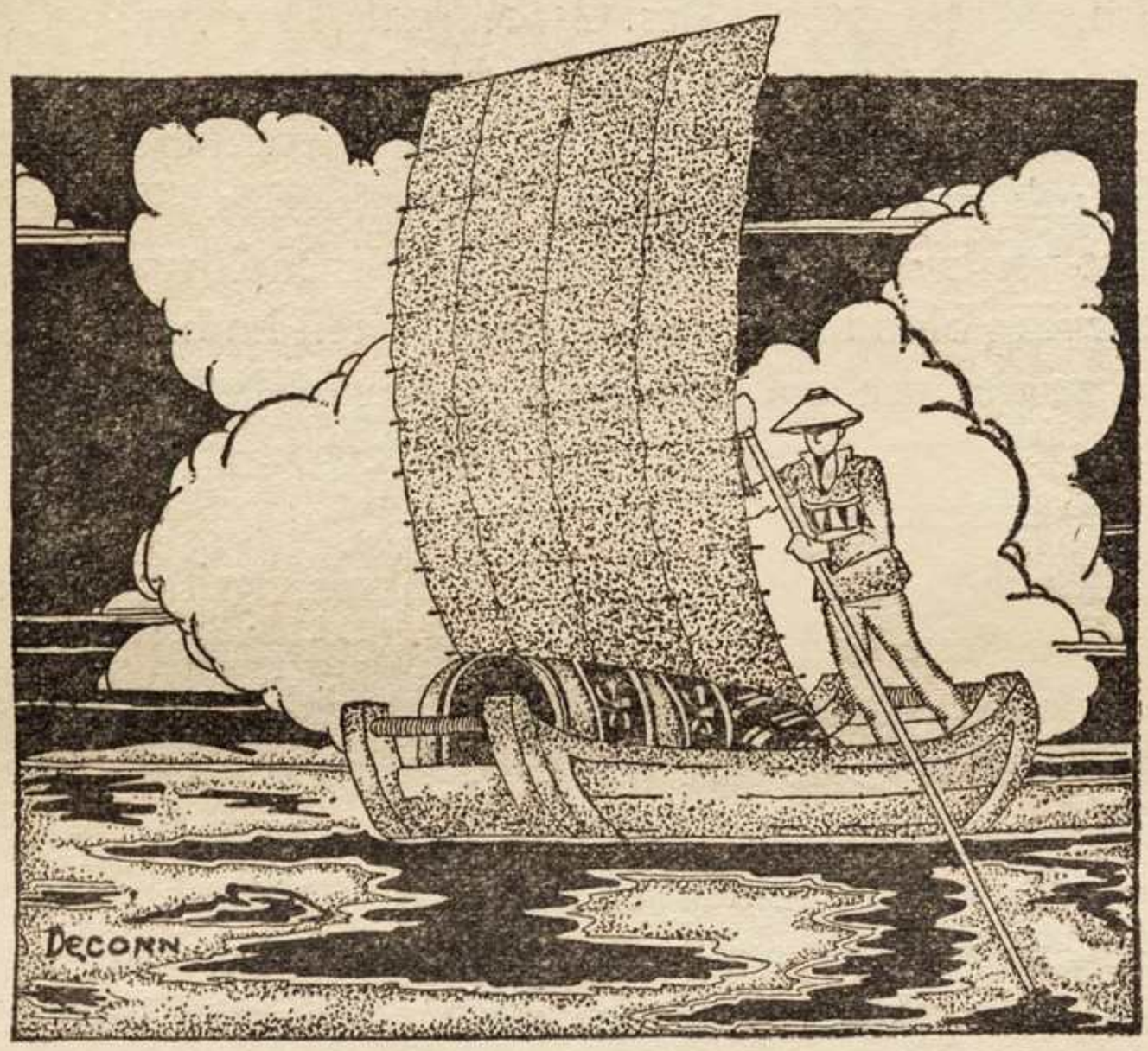
"The May issue was great," writes Jack Darrow; "not so many stories, but they were long ones and I like long stories. Sticking its neck above the rest is *The Dust*

(Please turn to page 438)

NO COLLECTION OF BOOKS

Owned by Anyone Who Speaks the English Language Is Complete Without These Two Famous Classics

The WIND that TRAMPS the WORLD



The PURPLE SEA

By FRANK OWEN

ACCLAIMED BY CRITICS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

New York Times: "Fanciful, touched by the supernatural, exotic in thought and coloring. Flowers, poems, music and jade are interwoven with their themes and the effect is often both quaint and charming."

The China Weekly Review, Shanghai, China: "Reveals a true sense of gentleness, the heart of a dreamer, a deep sense of rhythm and beauty. He sees China and the Chinese through misty, naive, sometimes philosophic eyes."

Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Honolulu, Hawaii: "They are strange and glowing tales of an unearthly beauty. Their scenes are laid in China but they might be anywhere. They are essentially a part of the history of those lost lands where Dunsany's heroes live and die magnificently and where Walter de la Mare's dark travelers knock vainly at mysterious moonlit doors."

Ohio State Journal, Columbus, Ohio: "There is some weirdness here, some mystery and some tender passages, enough of each to make a superlative ensemble that won for this author a secure place in the field of Far East fiction."

Daily Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, S. D.: "This is a collection to be read, laid down and read again."

Wilmington Every Evening, Wilmington, Del.: "Deserves a place among one's favorite books."

Radio Station KDKA, Pittsburgh: "For those who are interested in Chinese literature and traditions, we believe this book will find a cordial welcome. A very beautiful book."

The Globe, Toronto, Ont.: "Dealing with curious phases of Chinese life, they are imaginative, colorful and replete with poetry. For the first of these qualities they might be likened to some of the creations of Edgar Allan Poe, but even the weirdest of them possess a tenderness to which Poe was a stranger."

Arizona Republican, Phoenix, Ariz.: "It is not often that such a book, as deserving of praise and as full of real literary merit as "The Wind That Tramps the World," comes our way. This sounds like effusiveness, but it isn't. It's merely giving credit for a real literary achievement. . . . They are masterpieces of a rich imagination, deep and gripping in their beauty and romance."

SPECIAL AUTOGRAPHED FIRST EDITIONS

Here are some real gems of literature. Poetic and fanciful Chinese stories with a real thrill to them. These are stories that deserve to live forever. Their ethereal sweetness will grip you. Both books are special first editions *autographed by the author.* These books are very artistically bound and would make an excellent gift to a friend or a valuable addition to your own library. Remember, first edition copies grow more valuable with the years and when autographed become doubly valuable. Order today. Price $1.50 each postpaid.

Weird Tales, Book Dept. F. O.
840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed find $_____. Please send me an autographed first edition of—

☐ "The Wind That Tramps the World"
☐ "The Purple Sea"

Name_____
Address_____
City_____State_____

(Continued from page 436)

of Death, by Hugh Jeffries. An excellent science-fiction story. Next comes ***Ten Million Years Ahead,*** by Edmond Hamilton. I'll never tire of reading his stories."

From Toppenish, Washington, Mrs. Grace Penfield writes: "One story in your April-May issue has brought me the urge to write to you. It is *A Rendezvous in Averoigne,* by Clark Ashton Smith. To me the perfect weird tale must ring true, and must be weird to the nth degree. This story fills both bills. The writer tells a tale in such a manner that you feel it all the way through, and, having some of the good old Irish, banshee-believing blood in my veins, truth to tell he had me almost believing it. Even though he relates the end of the Sieur du Malinbois and his chatelaine, sure an' you'll never catch me in the wood of Averoigne, at all, at all. I am looking forward to more by this author."

Robert Leonard Russell, of Mount Vernon, Illinois, writes to the Eyrie: "I am very glad to see that you have had the good sense to comply with the readers' wishes in changing W. T. back to a monthly. (It really should be a semi-monthly or a weekly.) I am also pleased to note that you have a new Lovecraft story ready for the near future; he wastes a good idea for a story in each section of his monthly poetry column, *Fungi from Yuggoth.* I am glad that you will again publish serials in W. T.; serials are the backbone of any good magazine. But you should have a de Grandin story in each issue (lately you have not). Your recent covers are *punk;* we do not want portrait studies of insidious Orientals, monster boas and dinosaurs: what we want is action pictures, pictures of scenes in the story. Since some of the blue-nosed censors have kicked about nudes in your illustrations they have been cut out entirely. I say that nudes are all right when needed to illustrate a certain scene."

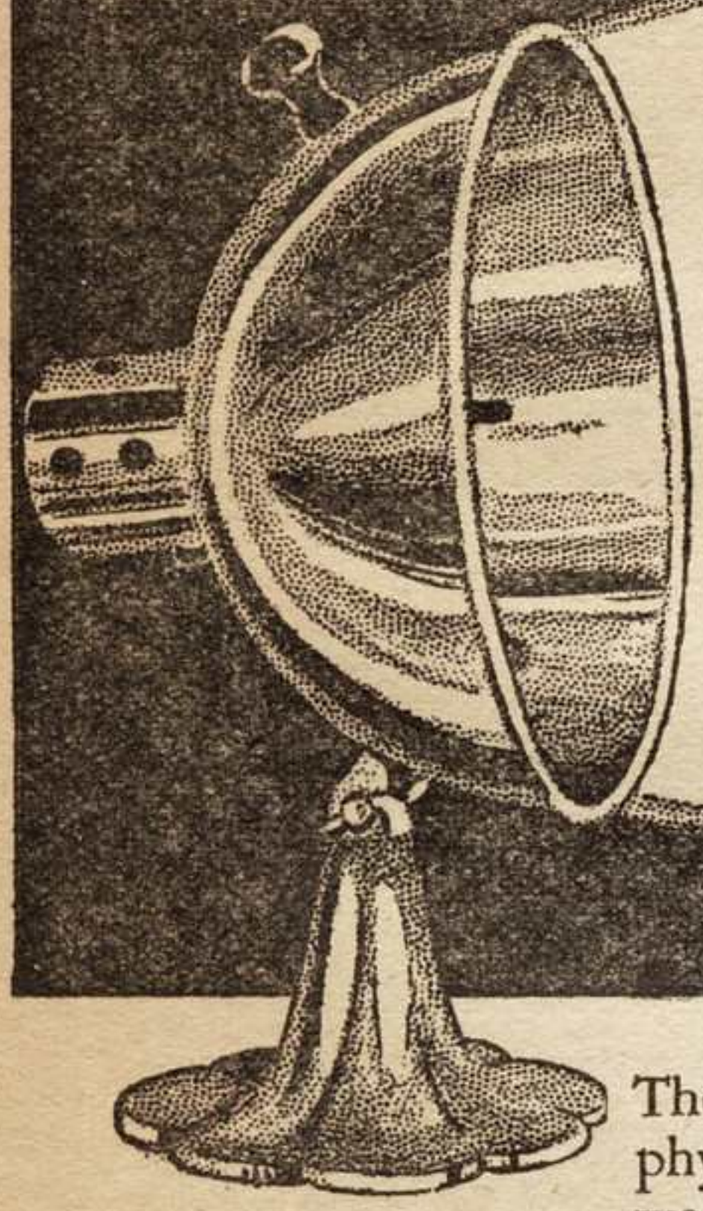
A letter from Mrs. George F. Hatton, Jr., of Battle Creek, Michigan, says: "The best news I have heard in a long time is your decision to resume monthly publication; I thought those two-month stretches between issues were the longest I'd ever experienced. I have been a reader of your very entertaining magazine for the past six years and I would surely forego any other magazine except WEIRD TALES. I wouldn't even attempt to pick out all my favorite stories, as I wouldn't know where to stop. But I do like your cover designs much more than I formerly did."

Writes J. Wasso, Jr., of Pen Argyl, Pennsylvania: "Old W. T. will again be a monthly! That's the best news in many a moon! Now, please, resume the long, pseudo-scientific interstellar serials. I would like to see many more stories by Lovecraft in WEIRD TALES; also more torture tales of the type of *The Chain* and *The Copper Bowl.*"

"I am at present rejoicing, as are the rest of your readers," writes John R. Small, of Washington, D. C., "that the monthly schedule is to be resumed. In the current issue, a letter from Mr. William Brewster is printed. It has annoyed me considerably, and I hope you won't take his advice, namely, to print a magazine that will please only your casual reader and not your host of faithful. Haven't we shown what we want? (Three cheers for Seabury Quinn, Jules de Grandin, and Doc Trowbridge and Harrisonville! Long live the Interstellar Patrol! And Robert E.

(Please turn to page 440)

Write for
Free Demonstrator
Offer Today!



.... NOW

a $12.50 SUN LAMP that brings HEALTH to thousands and WEALTH to YOU!

Thousands of reputable physicians all over the world have done one-half the selling job for you by educating people on the therapeutic values of the Ultra-Violet and Infra-Red Rays of the Sun. Go into the average doctor's office. You'll find some type of Sun Lamp. Up to now, the only thing that has kept the great mass of people from owning Sun Lamps has been the cost. The New Solray at $12.50 makes it possible for EVERYBODY to have the health-giving, beauty-developing properties of the Ultra-Violet and Infra-Red Rays in their OWN HOMES.

Make Up to $40 a Day

You do not need to be a "high pressure" salesman or have any previous sales training to make BIG MONEY with the New Solray Health Sun Lamp. People KNOW the life-giving value of Sun Treatment. All you have to do is demonstrate the New Solray Health Lamp. It will do EVERYTHING that the highest priced lamps will do, including our own $90 Professional model. We say this to you, with a backing of years of catering to the medical profession. The New Solray Health Lamp has a place in EVERY home; in every barber shop, beauty shop, dental and medical office. No wonder livewire agents are making up to $40 A DAY.

FREE DEMONSTRATOR OFFER

YOU can make BIG MONEY with the New Solray Health Lamp. You're not asked to lay out a huge amount of money. No! Just fill out the coupon at the bottom of this advertisement and we will send you full particulars regarding our FREE DEMONSTRATOR OFFER, together with a complete Sales Manual that will show you in a very few minutes how you can CASH IN on the public's knowledge of and need for the health-giving properties of the Ultra-Violet and Infra-Red Rays.

SOLRAY COMPANY, Inc.

217 East Illinois Street **Chicago, Illinois**

MAIL THIS COUPON *now!*

SOLRAY COMPANY, Inc.
217 East Illinois St., Dept. 4-W, Chicago, Illinois.

Gentlemen:
Without obligation to me, kindly send me full particulars regarding your FREE DEMONSTRATOR OFFER on the New Solray Health Lamp selling for $12.50.

Name_____

Address_____ City_____ State_____

(Continued from page 438)

Howard!) There *is* a good deal of excitement in Harrisonville, but tell Mr. Quinn it's a great place and that if the old Frenchman does decide to widen the scope of his activities to other sectors of the world, he will suffer, for he will be out of his element and will not be as well understood elsewhere. Sergeant Costello is familiar with him and, surely, there are enough mysteries in good old Harrisonville to keep Jules de Grandin busy there. In my opinion the best story in your last issue was *The Dust of Death,* by Hugh Jeffries. The author writes easily, clearly, and keeps up the interest throughout his story. He has woven it carefully, and I, for one, congratulate him for a splendid piece of work."

Earl Morgan, of Detroit, writes to the Eyrie: "I agree with the gentleman who suggested a small department in which you could tell the readers something about your authors. I, for one, would like to know something about them. I am perhaps too inquisitive, but such questions as these have me curious: Is Seabury Quinn a physician? How old is H. P. Lovecraft? Where does Edmond Hamilton live? Is Robert E. Howard a professor of history at the University of Southern California? (I have heard he is.) Is Greye La Spina a man or a woman? Is Nictzin Dyalhis a real or just a book name? (If it is his real name it is a very pretty-sounding monicker.) These are just a few of the many questions that I would like answered." [Just a minute until we get our breath, and we will try to answer your questions. No, Seabury Quinn is not a physician. He is editor of a trade journal, and was formerly a lawyer. He was in the Intelligence Service of the A. E. F. We do not know how old Mr. Lovecraft is, although we have an approximate idea. We suggest that you write him, care of WEIRD TALES, and ask him. Edmond Hamilton lives in New Castle, Pennsylvania. No, Robert E. Howard is not a professor of ancient history, and he lives in Texas instead of in California. Greye La Spina is a woman, and a grandmother too, although a rather young one. Nictzin Dyalhis is a real and not a book name. The first name is Toltec Indian (his mother came from Guatemala); the last name is one of the oldest of English names.—THE EDITORS.]

A letter from Charles Rush, Jr., of New York, says: "Allow me to congratulate you on Edmond Hamilton's last two tales, *The Horror City* and *Ten Million Years Ahead.* What delighted me most in the February-March issue, however, was that beautiful story, *The Ghost-Helper.* If Seabury Quinn keeps that thread of pathos in his de Grandin stories, I am sure he will rise to that position in weird literature that in my estimation is now held by H. P. Lovecraft."

"I wish you could induce H. P. Lovecraft to write at least four or five stories for you each year," writes Paul S. Smith, of Orange, New Jersey. "He is a wonderful writer and I am sure all the readers have greatly regretted the absence of new stories by him during the past two years. The April-May number of WEIRD TALES was excellent as a whole; but to me, by far the best thing in this issue is the first paragraph of the Eyrie, which states that the magazine will again be published monthly instead of bi-monthly. I have always found it hard to wait one month between issues; but to have to wait two months is a pretty terrible ordeal. But now, praise be, we are to have it every month again."

(Please turn to page 442)

"She is Yours, Master!"

SICK at heart the trembling girl shuddered at the words that delivered her to this terrible fate of the East. How could she escape from this Oriental monster into whose hands she had been given—this mysterious man of mighty power whose face none had yet seen?

Here is an *extraordinary situation.* What was to be the fate of this beautiful girl? Who was this strange emissary whom no one really knew?

To know the answer to this and the most exciting tales of Oriental adventure and mystery ever told, read on through the most thrilling, absorbing, entertaining and fascinating pages ever written.

Masterpieces of Oriental Mystery

11 Superb Volumes by SAX ROHMER

Written with his uncanny knowledge of things Oriental

HERE you are offered no ordinary mystery stories. In these books the hidden secrets, mysteries and intrigues of the Orient fairly leap from the pages. Before your very eyes spreads a swiftly moving panorama that takes you breathless from the high places of society—from homes of refinement and luxury to sinister underworlds of London and the Far East—from Piccadilly and Broadway to incredible scenes behind idol temples in far off China—to the jungles of Malay, along strange paths to the very seat of Hindu sorcery.

11 Mystery Volumes Packed With Thrills!

Be the first in your community to own these, the most wonderful Oriental mystery stories ever published—books that have sold by the hundred thousand at much higher prices—books you will enjoy reading over and over again. Handsomely bound in substantial cloth covers, a proud adornment for your table or shelf.

These are the sort of stories that President Wilson, Roosevelt and other great men read to help them relax—to forget their burdens. To read these absorbing tales of the mysterious East is to cast your worries into oblivion—to increase your efficiency.

Priced for Quick Sale

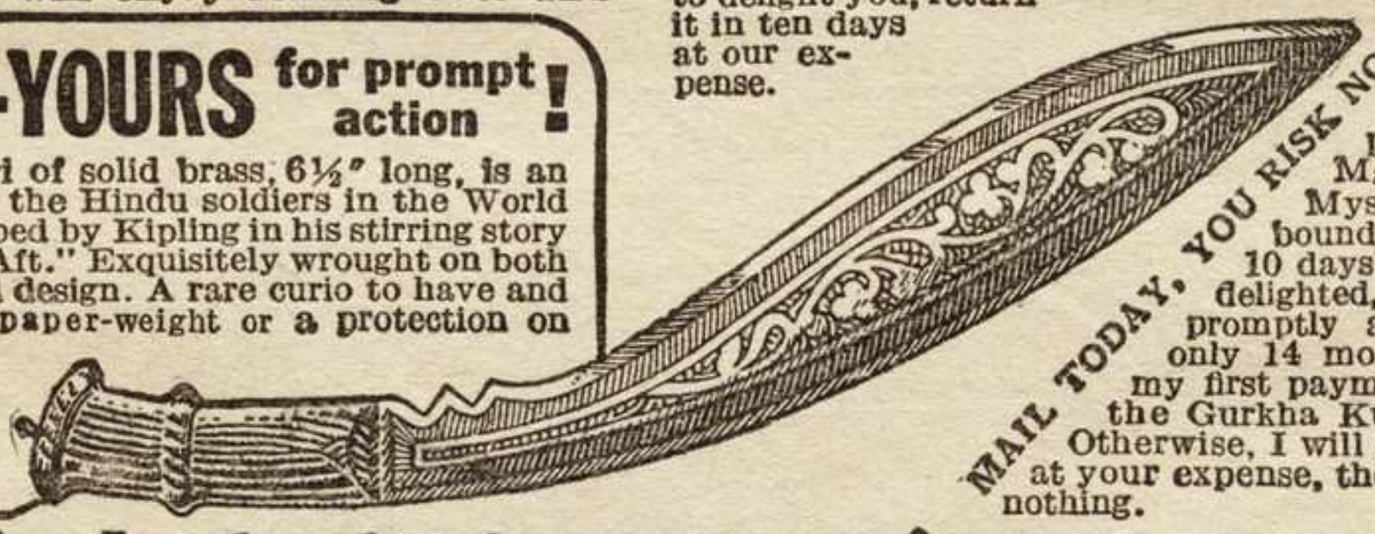
Printing these volumes by the hundred thousand when paper was cheap makes this low price possible. Only a limited number left. *Don't lose a minute!*

Complete Sets Free on Approval

You needn't send a cent. Simply mail the coupon and this amazing set will go to you immediately, all charges prepaid. If it fails to delight you, return it in ten days at our expense.

This rare PREMIUM-YOURS for prompt action!

This famous Gurkha Kukri of solid brass, 6½" long, is an exact replica of that used by the Hindu soldiers in the World War and so graphically described by Kipling in his stirring story "The Drums of the Fore and Aft." Exquisitely wrought on both sides in an ancient symbolical design. A rare curio to have and useful as a letter-opener, a paper-weight or a protection on occasion. A limited quantity on hand will be given without added cost as a premium for promptness—but you must act today!



MAIL TODAY, YOU RISK NOTHING

Dept. 045 7-31

McKINLAY, STONE & MACKENZIE
114 E. 16th St., N. Y.

Please send me on approval, all charges prepaid, your special set of Masterpieces of Oriental Mystery, in 11 handsomely bound cloth volumes. If after 10 days' free examination, I am delighted, I will send you $1.00 promptly and $1.00 a month for only 14 months; when you receive my first payment you are to send me the Gurkha Kukri without extra cost. Otherwise, I will return the set in 10 days at your expense, the examination to cost me nothing.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation.....

Age; Over 21?..... *Under 21?*.....

FOR CASH DEDUCT 5%

McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie, Dept. 045, 114 E. 16th St. New York City, N. Y.

(Continued from page 440)

Dale V. Simpson, of Marion, Ohio, writes to the Eyrie: "I am quite overjoyed to know that Lovecraft is to have in another tale. *The Whisperer in Darkness!* What maleficent ultramondane adumbrations that title brings to one's mind! Things from Outside! . . . Do any of us *know* that there are *not?* . . . I certainly hope the story appears soon. *The Horror from the Hills,* by Long, is great! Second only to *The Dunwich Horror!* May we have many more from *that* author. By the way, speaking of *The Dunwich Horror,* I sent my copy of W. T. containing the story to a young friend in England. He writes me that it is quite one of the best stories he has ever read. It was the first copy of WEIRD TALES he had ever seen, he said, and wished 'Woolies' (Woolworth's) would get it in. (He gets quite a number of American magazines at Woolworth's store in Sheffield.)"

From Penn Yan, New York, writes Jack T. Whitfield: "Having received the latest issue of W. T. I note with much joy that you have decided to change back to the old monthly output. This is wonderful news and I am confident that every reader will be elated over your announcement. I enjoy greatly most of the stories you publish, though I am not so keen on interplanetary stuff. I like stories of Chinese torture, vampire and werewolf stories, and also those about tropical growths that menace cities and countries. To my mind the big three of your writers are: Lovecraft, Long, and Quinn. I always enjoy each story they turn out. Lovecraft is the peer of them all for stark horror. His style is perfect and his mode of telling (in which the horror creeps and grows and almost becomes tangible) is magnificent."

Readers, what is your favorite story in this issue? The most popular story in the April-May number, as shown by your votes and letters, was Clark Ashton Smith's exquisite vampire story, *A Rendezvous in Averoigne.* Not far behind it in popularity was *The Dead-Alive,* that thrilling story of corpses that walk in the night, by Nat Schachner and Arthur L. Zagat.

My Favorite Stories in the June-July Weird Tales Are:

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

I do not like the following stories:

(1) ----------	Why? ----------
(2) ----------	----------

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

Reader's name and address:

BAFFLING MYSTERY STORIES

GIVEN FREE

12 THRILLING DETECTIVE ADVENTURES

If You Act Now!

HERE THEY ARE

1. **The Valley of Missing Men**—Read how Parkinson discovered this baffling mystery—a story pulsating with hair-raising incidents.
2. **Buff**—A cub reporter and a death mystery — a story that works up to a crashing climax.
3. **The Triangle of Terror** — A gooseflesh story that will send the cold shivers up your spine.
4. **Crimson Poppies**—Dr. Howes evolves a fiendish plot to inherit the wealth of a lunatic millionaire.
5. **The Sign of the Toad** — An eerie detective story, full of exciting situations and mysterious deaths.
6. **The Mystery at Eagle Lodge**—Soul-gripping, fascinating, tense, full of action—You will move in the land of make-believe with a touch of the unreal.
7. **The Web**—This tale threads the sinister net that was torn asunder by the murder of James Blake.
8. **The Glass Eye**—The convict worked out a clever and diabolical scheme, but a dead man's eye betrayed him.
9. **Ten Dangerous Hours**—Bristling with excitement and full of surprises — a remarkable story with thrills galore.
10. **Disappearing Bullets**—Crammed with blood-curdling action and strange happenings in the underworld — master-mind crooks and criminals.
11. **The Green-Eyed Monster**—A thrilling book, replete with startling climaxes and bristling with action.
12. **Deering-Do** — A vivid tale of Chinamen, opium traffic, the secret service, and desperate fighting.

READ how Experience Smith, master detective, solved the baffling mystery of "Disappearing Bullets"—a swift-action story with dramatic situations. Each one an exciting detective story. These novels formerly sold for the regular price of $1.00 per set. Now, for a limited time only, we are giving them away **absolutely free** with a year's subscription to ORIENTAL STORIES, the latest magazine of thrilling mystery adventure stories.

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER

ORIENTAL STORIES is rapidly growing in circulation because of its fascinating stories 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. Simply send $1.00, the regular yearly subscription price for ORIENTAL STORIES, and the 12 Detective Story Novels will be sent to you without cost. A $2.00 value for $1.00. You receive the magazine for one year and the novels free of charge. The supply of novels is limited, so hurry.

ORIENTAL STORIES
840 N. Michigan Ave., Dept. A-1, Chicago, Ill.

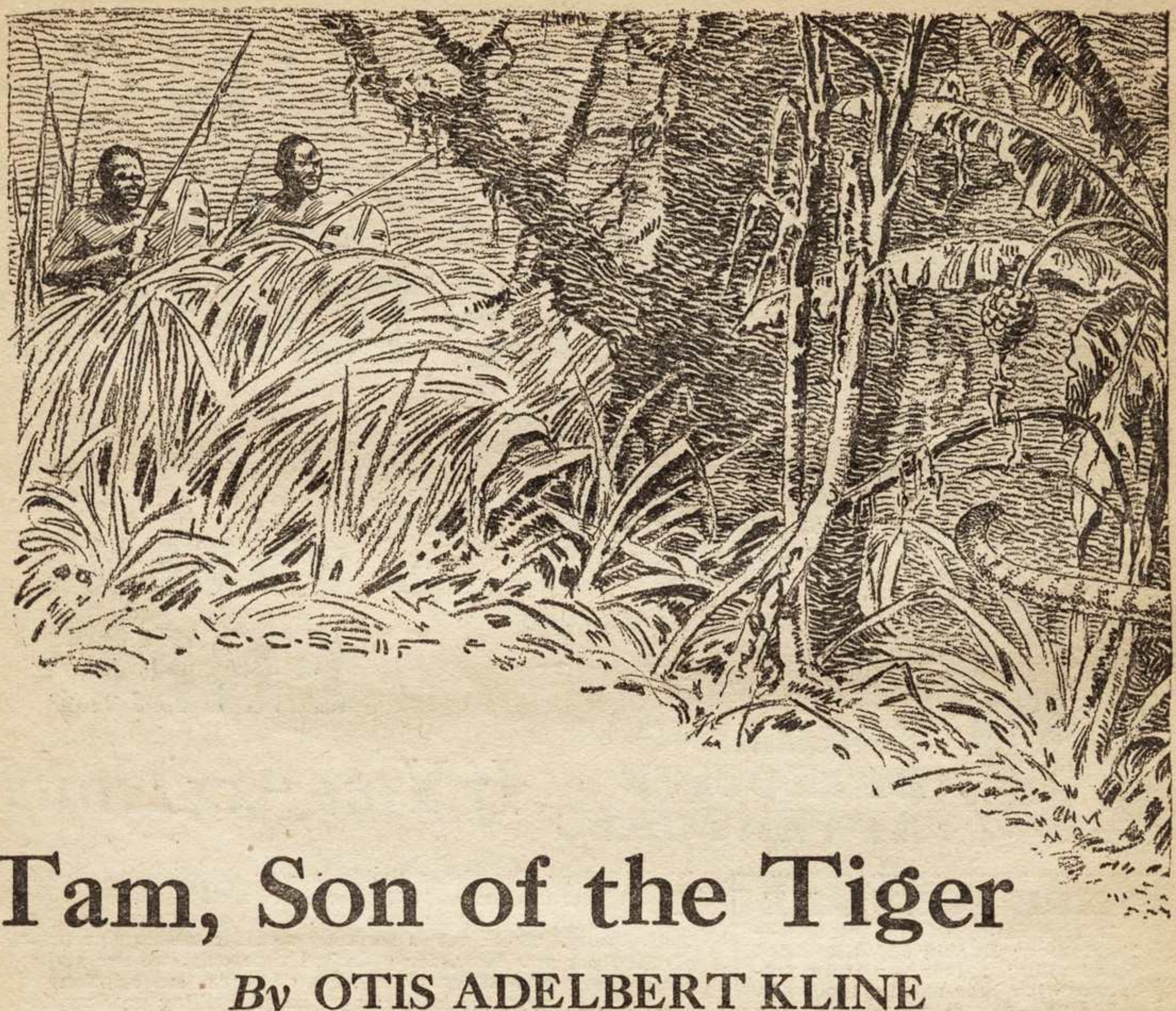
ORIENTAL STORIES, Dept. A-1,
840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

I enclose $1.00. Send at once, postage prepaid, the 12 Detective Story Novels advertised, and enter my subscription to ORIENTAL STORIES for one year. It is understood this $1.00 is payment in full.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____



Tam, Son of the Tiger

By OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

CHAPTER 1

The Man-Eater

BURMA—land of mystery, of gilded Buddhas and almond-eyed dancing-girls, of patient elephants piling teak, of shaven, yellow-robed priests, smoldering incense, and the silver tinkle of temple bells.

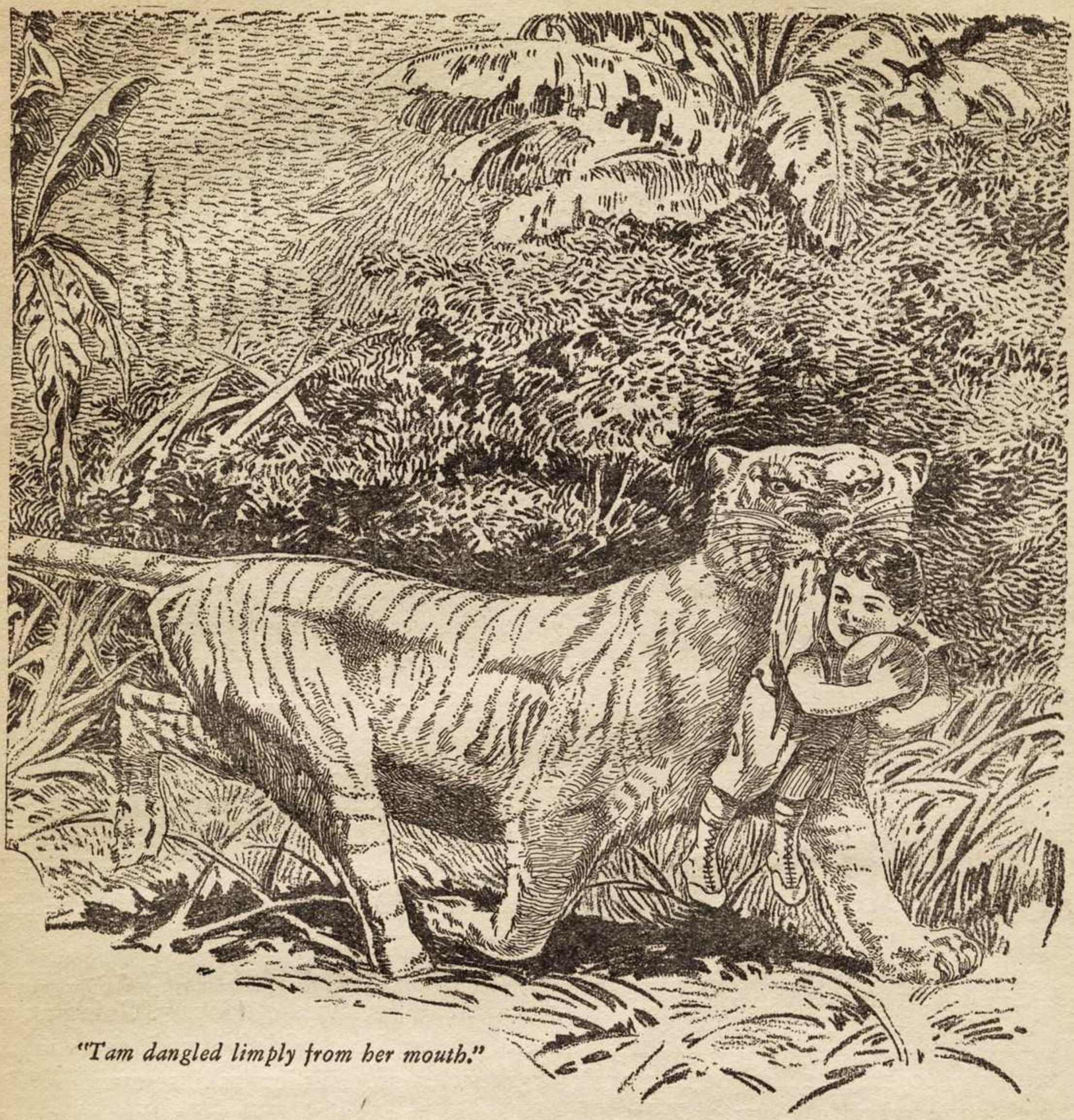
The jungle—teeming with tropical life and potential death.

In its upper branches were the feathered inhabitants. Liquid tones of sweet-voiced songsters competed with the harsh, raucous cries of parrots and crows. Flashes of brightly pigmented plumage contrasted with the greens and browns of the vegetation. Peacocks proudly spread their painted fans.

A little lower, monkeys chattered at spider-limbed gibbons with faces like little old men. A sleek, well-fed leopard basked on a thick limb, its mottled hide blending perfectly with the black and gold shadows that descended through the leafy canopy.

And on the forest floor, creeping through the undergrowth with cat-like stealth, was that most cunning and ferocious of all jungle creatures—the man-eating tiger.

The leopard bristled, laid back its small ears, and growled softly at sight of the huge striped terror passing beneath. The monkeys and gibbons heard that growl and scampered away through the branches. A rusty black crow cocked its head to one side and stared for a moment with beady eyes. Then it uttered a sharp, rasping



"Tam dangled limply from her mouth."

"caw!" that plainly said "tiger!" to all jungle inhabitants. The peafowls rose, en masse, with a thunderous whir of wings.

And the tiger, snarling its anger at this premature exposure of its presence, and knowing that all concealment was at an end, charged straight for the human being, straggling behind the others, which it had marked for its prey.

MAJOR CHARLES EVANS, young American philanthropist and sportsman, had come to Burma with a twofold purpose: to gather chaulmoogra seeds for planting on the Hawaiian land which he had donated to the leper colony at Kalaupapa, and to hunt tigers. With him were his wife, Lucille, and his two-year-old son, Tam.

After a boat trip down the Irrawaddy and up the Mu from Mandalay, they had come to the village of Kyokta, near which it was said the chaulmoogra might be found. Scouts under the leadership of Zahn, son of the village *tajies,* or headman, had quickly located several extensive stands of the trees, and toward one of these Evans and his wife journeyed after a night in a Kyokta hut. They were

guided by Zahn and his friends, who carried baskets for gathering the fruit from which the seeds were to be later removed. Tam had been left at the village in the care of his colored nurse maid, Clarabelle Jackson, who had accompanied them from the United States.

Zahn proudly marched at the head of the procession. Just behind him walked the American and his wife. Major Evans was tall, broad-shouldered and athletic. He wore high laced boots, khaki trousers, a shooting-jacket with large pockets, and a pith helmet. Beside him walked his pretty young wife, dressed exactly like her husband, but so small and daintily feminine that even in mannish clothes there was no mistaking her sex. Four villagers who acted as gun-bearers came behind them, carrying two heavy, double-barreled .450 Bury rifles, a Winchester and a Savage. The major had high hopes of stalking a tiger, but not the slightest suspicion that, at that very moment, the striped death was stalking his own party.

Following the gun-bearers were a score of villagers with the baskets and bags which were to be filled with the fruit of the chaulmoogra. And at the rear trailed Kru Muang, youthful chum of Zahn. The handle of his basket was slung over one arm, and he was using his spear as a staff.

Suddenly the boy heard a sharp "caw!" from a near-by branch, followed by the flapping of startled peafowls, a low snarl, and the rush of a heavy body through the undergrowth behind him.

"Suar! Suar!" he shouted, springing forward. "Tiger! Tiger!" Then he uttered a single piercing shriek of terror and agony as the huge teeth of the charging man-eater sank into his shoulder, hurling him to the ground.

Half of the villagers instantly dropped their baskets and bags, and took to the trees. The others stood their ground, clutching their spears in readiness for attack, but making no move to help the stricken boy. The major wrested one of the heavy Burys from the trembling hands of a frightened gun-bearer, but before he could bring it to his shoulder a brown-skinned body flashed between him and the tiger, which was now shaking its prey as a cat shakes a mouse. It was Zahn, armed only with his spear, dashing to the rescue of his chum.

The man-eater saw him coming, and dropping its prey, launched its striped bulk through the air. Zahn halted and extended his spear, but the great carnivore swept the puny weapon aside with one huge paw, and seizing his face in its mighty jaws, bore him to earth.

Evans, who had not dared to shoot before for fear of hitting Zahn, now fired. At the impact of the heavy projectile, the tiger leaped high in the air. Just as it struck the ground the major fired again, and it sank down motionless beside the chief's son.

The sportsman reached for a second gun and advanced cautiously. Going up to the beast, he prodded it with the end of the weapon. But it was limp and lifeless. Shot first through the body, then through the head, the terrible man-eater had breathed its last.

Gingerly, the natives formed a ring around the fallen brute and his two victims. Lucille Evans glanced at Zahn, then averted her eyes with a shudder. He was past all help, his face completely bitten away. She knelt beside Kru Muang. His shoulder was cruelly torn and lacerated, but he was still breathing.

With water from her flask, and gauze from the emergency kit, she bathed his wounds. Then the major saturated them with iodine and helped her to bind them.

The natives had, meanwhile, rigged two pole litters for the fallen. The carcass

of the tiger was suspended from another pole thrust through its bound feet and carried by four men. Then the sad little procession turned its footsteps back toward the village. There would be no journey to the chaulmoogra groves that day.

When they drew near to the village, the major went on ahead in order that he might break the news to the *tajies* before his son's mutilated body was brought in. But he met him coming out of the village at the head of a considerable body of armed men who seemed very much excited.

The major walked up to the old fellow, and said:

"It is my sad duty to inform you that your son, Zahn, has just been killed by a tiger. He died a hero, giving his life to save his chum, Kru Muang, who is being brought in badly wounded."

The old man halted, and for some time regarded him in silence, tears flooding his eyes and starting down his withered cheeks. Then he replied:

"Let us mourn together, *sahib,* for this day both of us have been bereaved."

"Both of us? What do you mean? Speak!"

"Your little son has just been carried off by a white tigress, *sahib*. We were coming out to tell you."

CHAPTER 2

The White Tigress

LEANG, the white tigress, stalked majestically through the jungle grass near the Village of Kyokta, her tail held high, and on her feline features a look of supreme satisfaction. She had just dined exceedingly well, having slain a water buffalo in the jungle, and was on her way to the river to quench the thirst which followed her feast.

Having drunk her fill at the stream, she was returning by the way she had come, when something white and spherical rolled across her path, startling her considerably. She was within fifty feet of one of the village huts, and knew that it must have come from that direction. This sphere, which caused her involuntarily to pause and then leap backward, was an affront to her dignity. Never before had she been molested by a human being. Men respected her, not only because she was a tigress, but because she was a *white* tigress. They did not send arrows, spears and bullets after her as they did at her common striped relatives.

She looked in the direction whence the sphere had come, and saw a tiny manthing running toward her—a little lad with dark curly hair, wearing a loose khaki blouse, shorts, and tiny, high-laced boots. He was laughing, the spontaneous, carefree laughter of healthy childhood, as he pursued the rubber ball which he had just hurled into the jungle grass. The tigress crouched, waiting to see what he would do next.

Suddenly the boy came face to face with her — saw her for the first time. She snarled, politely warning him away, for Leang was not a man-eater. Furthermore, she had so stuffed herself with buffalo flesh that she would not be able to eat a morsel for many hours to come.

But this boy, it seemed, was not so ready to run from her as had been most other humans she had encountered.

"Ooh! Big kitty!" he exclaimed, and paused, staring at her.

She stared back, slightly jerking the tip of her tail in token of annoyance, and snarled again, but more softly.

"Big kitty mustn't be mad with Tam," he said. "Tam won't hurt you." Then he fearlessly and deliberately walked up to her and scratched her behind the ear.

The tigress was so amazed at this un-

precedented temerity that she forgot to snarl again. The little hand scratching her neck felt good. She made a contented noise deep down in her throat, and tilted her head to one side that the boy might better reach the spot which had begun to feel so pleasant under his ministrations. Leang was purring like a house cat, but with a noise that more nearly resembled the rumbling of distant thunder. And while she purred, the boy prattled to her in a voice that was soft and soothing.

"Big kitty want to play ball?" he asked, presently. "Come on and play ball with Tam."

He picked up the ball and rolled it toward her.

Leang was a young tigress, and had not yet lost her liking for play. Moreover, she had played with a ball before, as she had been raised by a man—a very strange man. She tapped the ball lightly, rolling it back at the boy, who chuckled with glee. For some time they played together, the tigress apparently enjoying herself fully as much as the boy. Then their play was interrupted by the sound of a woman's voice.

"Tam! Tam! Where is you, honey?"

The boy paused in his play to reply:

"Here I am, Clarabelle. Come and see big kitty Tam found."

Again he rolled the ball at the tigress, but she paid no attention to it. She was snarling slightly, ears cocked in the direction whence the sound of the maid's voice had come.

The colored girl, who had been dozing in the doorway of the hut, and had awakened to find Tam missing, advanced toward the jungle grass which concealed boy and beast. Suddenly she caught sight of the tigress, and shrieked at the top of her voice.

Her cry brought people running from the bamboo huts near by. The old Buddhist priest poked his shaven head out the door of the teakwood temple. A crowd of people gathered around the negress as she shrieked again and fell in a swoon.

"*Suar! Suar!*" a voice cried, and some of the men ran to get their spears.

Tam picked up his ball and stood beside the now thoroughly aroused tigress. Her tail lashed the grass stalks and she growled thunderously. The menace in the cries and actions of the villagers was unmistakable. This was annoying. She and the boy had been having so much fun before this interruption. Well, they would go somewhere else to play.

She started away with a low invitation to Tam to follow, much like the "mew" of a mother cat. But he did not understand. He only stood looking at her. She paused and called again, but still he stood there, bewildered, looking first at her and then at the crowd of excited villagers surrounding the swooning Clarabelle.

Leang's feline mind considered. This man-thing was only a cub, and had not yet learned to understand the mother call. Like any other cub, he must be taught its meaning. She accordingly returned, and picking him up by the collar of his blouse, trotted away.

When they saw this the assembled villagers redoubled their cries. Men came running with spears. One carried an old muzzle-loading gun. But none of the weapons was used, for those who carried them saw that the tigress was white, a sacred animal which they believed to be a reincarnation of some great lady, perhaps a *ranee,* or even a minor goddess. While they watched, awe-stricken, she gave a great leap and disappeared in the jungle. She continued to run with tail held high and Tam dangling limply from her mouth until the sounds of the voices died away. Then she stood him on his feet.

Tam stroked her head and back.

"Nice kitty," he said. "Gave Tam big ride. More."

But Leang didn't want to linger, nor did she care to play just then. She did want to teach this man-cub to understand and obey her orders. Also her distending mammæ had begun to remind her that she must get back to her own cub, which would be hungry and in need of her ministrations.

She took a few steps, calling to the boy to follow her. When he did not move she returned, and taking him by the arm, led him for a little way. Then she let go and called once more. This time, he followed.

But the way was long and difficult for a little boy of two, and soon Tam grew very tired.

"Wait, kitty," he called. "Don't go so fast."

But the tigress proceeded, paying no attention.

PRESENTLY, Tam stumbled and fell. He was exhausted. Leang turned and looked at him for a moment. Then she promptly returned, picked him up by his collar, and carried him on. His slight weight did not inconvenience her at all, for Leang was fully capable of lifting the huge bulk of an ox or buffalo, and had often done it.

After traveling many miles at a steady, tireless trot, she came to an ancient wall covered with vines and creepers. She leaped to its summit and, dropping lightly to the other side, crossed a weed-grown grass plot and entered the doorway of a small pagoda of wood and glazed tile, one of a pair that stood on each side of the entrance to a large *wat,* or temple, much of which was in ruins.

Inside the ancient pagoda, she set Tam on his feet. Then she affectionately licked the little striped cub that came toddling and mewling from a corner at her approach.

Tam tried to pet the cub, but it spit at him and he backed away. He had had some painful experiences with house cats that spit.

Leang lay down on her side and the cub promptly found a nipple. Soon it was purring contentedly, pumping industriously with both front paws as it absorbed the warm and indubitably fresh milk. Tam watched this process with considerable interest. It was long past his lunch time, and he, too, was thirsty and hungry. Presently he approached more closely and sat down beside the cub. The tigress leaned over and nuzzled him, pushing him down toward the source of the liquid food supply, of which there was an overabundance for her one cub. Then she lay back and rolled slightly—invitingly. It was a plain bid to tiffin, and the boy accepted hungrily.

Tam had tasted mother's milk, goat's milk, cow's milk and tinned milk, but never before had he tasted tiger's milk. And never before had milk of any variety tasted quite so good. He pumped and drank until his little stomach was distended quite comfortably. Then he slept, his tousled head pillowed on a furry foreleg.

When Tam awoke, the newly risen sun was sending its first shafts into the pagoda, and birds were caroling their morning songs. The tiger cub was curled into a striped, furry ball beside him, but the tigress was gone.

He looked about him in bewilderment at first, for it seemed to him that he must be in his little cot next to that of his father and mother, and that they were surely there beside him. When he realized where he was he began to feel very sad and lonely, and very much afraid.

"Mother!" he cried. "Daddy!"

But only the twittering, screeching and chattering of the jungle folk answered him.

He sat up and again called to his parents at the top of his voice. Then, realizing that they were not with him, he began to cry.

The cub, disturbed by the strange noises, uncurled itself and toddled over to him. Evidently understanding that he was in distress, it rubbed its striped sides against him—a friendly, sympathetic gesture that showed it had accepted him as a member of the family circle.

Never before had there been a time in Tam's short life when his wailing had not speedily brought some one to do something about it—to pick him up, comfort him, and humor him. Now it amazed and disconcerted him to find that no matter how loudly he howled, nobody came. For the first time in his life he was learning the lesson which the prophet, Mohammed, learned many centuries before—that if one wanted a mountain and it wouldn't come when called, one had best go to the mountain.

Rubbing his tear-filled eyes with his small fists, he got up and walked out into the sunshine, the cub waddling after him. He was in a large, walled enclosure, in the center of which stood the ruined temple. The only way out was barred by a tall, brass gate, sagging on its hinges and covered with the verdigris of centuries.

Hungry, thirsty, and homesick, Tam wept softly to himself as he wandered aimlessly about the enclosure, accompanied by the cub. Convinced that there was no one to hear his cries, he no longer screamed at the top of his voice.

But one of the jungle creatures had heard. For a moment it gazed down from the top of the wall at this luscious and helpless morsel which might easily be had for the taking. Its eyes glowed with a greenish-yellow light which showed that it was fearful of the pungent tiger scent. But its hunger evidently overcame its fear of the great beast's lair, for it leaped lightly into the enclosure and bounded toward the boy and cub.

The cub spit angrily, then turned and ran toward the pagoda. Tam, looking up, saw a big "kitty," covered with black spots against an orange background, bounding toward him. There was something about its demeanor which struck terror into his little heart. He turned and ran after the retreating cub, but before he could reach the pagoda, sharp claws ripped through his blouse.

Then, snarling ferociously, the leopard bore him to earth.

CHAPTER 3

Jungle Justice

LEANG, the white tiger-mother, awoke early and went forth into the gray dawn. After quenching her thirst at the ancient fountain of bronze and marble which, though centuries had passed since it was built, still bubbled and splashed in the center of the enclosure, she leaped the wall and set off through the jungle at a rapid trot.

It was with pleasant anticipation that she thought of the many pounds of buffalo flesh waiting to be consumed where she had left her kill the day before. The more she thought of that excellent meat the keener her appetite became, and the faster she trotted. True, it would have become a bit "high" after many hours in the heat, but this mattered not a whit to Leang. Although unlike some human epicures, she preferred her meat fresh, she was not at all averse to eating it after it had become quite putrid.

But as she drew near the spot where she had left the carcass there came to her

sensitive nostrils a fetid body-scent that caused the hairs of her neck and back to stiffen and a low rumble to issue from her throat. Jackals! She bounded forward at top speed and arrived at the spot just in time to see a dozen slinking forms melt into the shadows. Of the carcass there remained only part of the skull, the horns, and a few gnawed vertebræ and rib bones, all reeking with the stench of the jungle scavengers.

Leang lashed the undergrowth with her long tail as she roared her rage and disappointment, but she did not attempt to follow the skulking forms. Many times before had she been despoiled of her prey by jackals, and she had learned that it was useless to attempt to capture the elusive thieves.

After sniffing about for some time to make sure there were no edible morsels which the jackals had overlooked, the thoroughly angered tigress set off once more toward her lair. As she traveled, she hunted by the way. Presently an unwary peahen fell prey to her skill and partly satisfied her hunger. This put her in a slightly better humor as she approached the temple ruins. Then she heard a cry—the wail of her man-cub. She quickened her pace.

A spotted form flashed to the top of the wall, hung there for a moment, and then dropped to the other side. Leang bounded forward.

Over the wall she hurtled in one great leap, her feet barely touching its top. Her own cub was scampering toward the pagoda. Her man-cub, trying to follow, was brought down by the leopard.

Intent on his prey, the spotted carnivore did not see the charging mother tiger until she was almost upon him. He turned just in time to receive a cuff that sent him rolling over and over for fully twenty feet. Recovering with the agility common to all members of the cat tribe, he dashed for the wall. Once in the jungle, he could easily elude the tigress. A tremendous spring carried him to the top of the wall. It was his last. Powerful jaws closed on the back of his neck. Long sharp claws sank into his mottled shoulders. He was dragged back into the enclosure.

The tigress and leopard fell to the earth together, the former growling thunderously, the latter screaming his fear and pain. As this fearful uproar smote upon the ears of the lesser jungle creatures, their own voices were stilled. Rodents hastily sought their burrows. Climbers scrambled for the highest branches. Birds flew to another part of the jungle.

But the screeching of the leopard soon ceased, as Leang, with the precision of a trained surgeon, bit through his cervical vertebræ. For a moment a shudder ran through his frame. Then he lay limp and lifeless beneath her.

Far overhead a passing kite paused in its flight, wheeled, and circled lower. Then it dropped like a plummet, alighting on the fronds of a tall palm that stood in the enclosure. Soon it was joined by a host of others, and by several vultures, all apparently materialized from a clear sky.

TAM, who had regained his feet and scampered into the pagoda with the cub, crouched in the doorway, watching breathlessly. His back smarted where the leopard's claws had punctured his khaki blouse, but he had not been injured otherwise.

Crouching beside her kill, the tigress, whose tremendous hunger had only been partly satisfied by the peahen, leisurely began her second breakfast, starting on the hind quarters as is the custom with the great cats. Her audience of vultures and kites watched hungrily, the former

craning their scrawny necks, the latter maintaining their balance on the swaying fronds by flapping their black wings from time to time as if applauding.

Her hunger satisfied, the tigress drank at the fountain and went into the pagoda. Tam, who had been fearfully watching the proceedings from the doorway, saw the kites and vultures descend to finish what was left of his terrible enemy. Then he joined the cub at breakfast.

Man can live where he pleases because of his capacity for adapting himself to any environment. Young or old, weak or strong, he has this ability to a far greater extent than any other animal.

And thus it was that Tam, finding himself living under a new set of conditions, was soon as much at ease in the tiger's lair as he had formerly been in the home of his parents.

Here he had a broader vista than the four walls of his nursery had afforded, and real live "kitties" for playmates, instead of imitations stuffed with sawdust and excelsior.

It was not long before Leang began bringing meat to her lair—freshly killed peafowls, wild boars, deer, and at times, great haunches of buffalo meat.

The boy and cub feasted very daintily on these at first, both preferring the liquid food to which they were accustomed. But it was not long before they grew to like meat above everything else, and became as clamorous as small children around a parent bringing candy whenever Leang returned after a kill.

The cub grew with a rapidity that amazed Tam. In six months he was as large as the boy, and much stronger, though Tam, playing with him every day, was developing strength far beyond his years. They had many romps and mimic fights under the approving eye of the tiger mother, and played with the ball until it was completely worn out by the cub's teeth and claws.

Tam's clothes soon went to pieces, but he had no desire to replace them. He was far more comfortable in that hot climate without them. His shoes soon began to pinch his growing feet, and he discarded these, also.

It was not long before he began thinking of himself, not as a human being but as a tiger. He imitated all the sounds made by Leang and the cub, and soon grew to know the meaning of each. He could understand them or be understood without difficulty.

When the cub grew large and strong, Leang, as is the custom of tiger mothers, brought live game into the enclosure to be killed by the youngsters. Here the cub excelled, as in the mock fighting, and Tam shed tears of envy because of his own inability to grow such splendid claws and teeth.

Leang also taught both of them the value of moving silently through the grass and undergrowth. One of their favorite games was for both to separate, then each to try to stalk the other. At this game Tam soon learned to excel the cub, and these victories helped to salve his wounded pride at being defeated in the mock battles and outclassed in the game killings.

Then came the time when Leang called them to accompany her on a hunt. The cub was, by this time, able to leap to the top of the wall, but Tam, try as he would, couldn't make it. Fearful of being left behind, he ran to the gate, squeezed his slim brown body between the bars, and hurried after the two beasts, his feet as silent and his movements as stealthy as Leang's own.

They found royal game indeed for the first day. It was a big bull buffalo. Leang showed them how to stalk it, keeping to

windward and moving noiselessly. But when she roared the signal to charge, Tam made the mistake of getting in front of the beast. Before it was dragged down by Leang it tossed the boy with one long horn. Scratched and bruised, but not pierced by the horn, Tam fell in the soft mud fully twenty feet away. He had learned, long since, that crying was a useless accomplishment in the jungle, and got up without a whimper to return for his share of the kill.

There were many hunts after that, in some of which Tam was quite painfully injured. But he eventually learned to avoid the horns and hoofs of deer and buffalo, and the tusks of boars.

BY THE time Tam reached his seventh year the cub was a full-grown tiger, as large and strong as his mother. Sometimes the three hunted in concert, but often one or the other would wander off to hunt alone.

Tam took to exploring the jungle by himself, not merely for the sake of hunting—he killed only when hungry—but because of the pleasure it gave him to observe the wild things. Leang had taught him to avoid the haunts of men, but like all boys he was very curious, and often went as near to the villages as he could approach without being seen, in order to learn how the strange and terrible creatures, shaped like himself, lived.

Once he saw a traveling *fakir* charming a cobra with his queer, squalling noise-stick. Tam remembered the sounds made by that strange stick, and on his return to the *wat* imitated them with considerable success, for he was a born mimic.

Leang had taught him to give all serpents a wide berth, and for this reason he had never dared to explore the rear rooms of the temple, which were inhabited by cobras. He decided to try his new magic on one of them. The subject he selected paid no attention to him at first, but he persisted until it raised its hooded head and swayed in time to the barbaric strains. Emboldened by his success, he approached the snake, stroked it, and picked it up, finally depositing it on the floor and getting away unscathed. Often after that he amused himself at the dangerous sport of snake-charming, until the cobras paid no more attention to his comings and goings than to each other.

After this, he made friends with many of the other jungle creatures. By watching them patiently, day after day, he learned the meanings of the various sounds they made, and, imitating them, was thus able to converse with each in its own language.

From the monkeys and gibbons he quickly learned the art of swift silent travel through the upper traffic lanes of the jungle. From these, also, he learned that certain fruits and nuts were very good to eat, and often supplemented his meat diet with them. As soon as they learned that he would not harm them, they accepted him as a friend and companion, and he passed many pleasant hours with them, amused by their strange antics.

Two or three times in his wanderings he came upon men, and these meetings were always unpleasant. The first man he met, a member of a fierce hill tribe, hurled a spear at him. It pierced his arm and clung there for some time as he scurried away through the forest. He plucked it out and flung it from him, but it left a painful wound that was many days in healing.

Several times after that he came upon men unexpectedly, and all of them were ready to use their weapons first and ask questions afterward. He decided that men, like leopards, jackals and hyenas, could only be regarded as dangerous enemies, and had best be avoided.

The first herd of wild elephants he encountered excited his wonder. For many days he followed them, observing how the great pachyderms lived.

Once, in his northern wanderings, he came into a teak forest that was being worked. Here there were many elephants laboring under the direction of men, who sometimes walked beside them, sometimes sat on their necks. These elephants wore wooden bells that went: "Tika, tok, tok, tok," and some had leg-irons that clanked when they moved.

Always keeping well out of sight, Tam watched the *mahouts,* striving to learn how they controlled the great brutes, and resolving that some day he, too, would capture an elephant and cause it to obey him. He noticed that the *ankus,* or elephant hook, was a part of every *mahout's* equipment, and one night succeeded in pilfering one and getting away unscathed. He returned to the *wat* with his treasure, but the wild herd had moved to another feeding-ground; so he put the *ankus* away in the pagoda for future reference.

Tam took no notice of the passing of time, but he did notice that as the seasons came and went he grew larger and stronger, whereas, after the fifth year, Leang's cub had ceased to grow. Several times during those years, strange tigers had come to the *wat,* evidently attracted by Leang, but these she had always driven away.

In his wanderings through the jungle, Tam also met a number of strange tigers. They neither ran from him nor attempted to attack him, but treated him precisely as if he were another tiger. This was because if they voiced their thoughts and feelings, as tigers often do, he answered them in their own language. If they remained silent, he addressed them in the same language, making it plain that though he was friendly enough, he was not to be trifled with, for he was a very devil of a tiger, himself.

By the time he was twelve years of age he could pull down his buck or boar quite as well as Leang, though a buffalo was still too much for him.

One day, after he and the two tigers had slain and devoured a buck, they returned to the temple enclosure to drink at the fountain.

Suddenly they heard a voice, a human voice, at the gate.

"Leang," it said.

Turning, Tam beheld a tall man with a wrinkled yellow face, peering through the gate. He wore a red cap, and a robe of the same color, caught over his left shoulder. His right arm and shoulder were bare.

To Tam, every man was a deadly enemy. He snarled fiercely, and the tiger echoed his snarl.

But Leang only stared at the stranger.

CHAPTER 4

The Red Lama

LOZONG, the pious lama, drew his robe of red Lhasa cloth more tightly about his tall, straight figure as he plunged into the jungle trail which he had not taken for more than ten years, and which was nearly obliterated by the vegetation.

When necessary, he swung his *dah,* or double-curved jungle knife, to clear the path. But as he cut and forced his way through the thick undergrowth he did not for a moment cease to lay up merit for himself in the world to come, for over and over again his lips framed the mystical formula: "*Om mani padme hum.*" [O, Jewel in the Lotus, Amen.]

Despite his priestly garb and pious declamations there was something in the bearing of Lozong which made it appear that he had not always been a man of the

robe and alms-bowl. His straight, soldierly figure smacked more of the camp and battlefield, and the ease and precision with which he used his *dah* showed more than casual acquaintance with a cutting weapon.

His Mongoloid features were old, and yet young, for though his sun-cured skin was like wrinkled yellow parchment, his black eyes flashed with a fire that was decidedly youthful. They were the eyes of a conqueror, descendant of a race that had once terrorized the entire civilized world, and were strangely incongruous in the otherwise austere countenance.

As he hewed and chanted his way through the jungle, he wondered if Leang, the white tigress, still lived in the pagoda before the temple ruins in which he had made his home for five years, and from which, ten years before, he had emerged to go on a long pilgrimage. He had visited most of the celebrated shrines of India, Burma and Siam, learning Sanskrit that he might study the ancient religious books of India, and seeing many strange and wonderful sights.

Thirteen years before, Lozong, who had retired to the old sacred ruins to meditate in solitude and to lay up merit, had found an orphan tiger cub less than three months old playing in a nest beneath the umbrella-like foliage of a korinda. The bones of the mother lay near by, picked clean by scavengers. She had evidently been shot or poisoned, and had succumbed before she could reach her lair.

The cub, which was a white female, was half starved. Had it been an ordinary striped animal, Lozong would have left it there to die, but as it was white, and therefore sacred, he could acquire much merit by saving its life. He had accordingly captured the spitting and growling youngster in his robe, and taken it to his retreat, establishing it in a grass nest in the pagoda. After that, for many months, he had been kept busy trapping birds and small game for his young charge, which he named Leang. He built traps that caught the game alive, then permitted his pet to kill it, herself, so he need not commit the sin of taking animal life.

But Leang had eventually learned to do her own hunting, and when she was nearly three years old, began consorting at night with her own kind. Lozong let her come and go as she pleased, and she remained quite friendly until, one morning when he approached the pagoda, she warned him away with a thunderous growl. He understood, and did not go near her den for many days, nor did she come to see him in his temple room as was her wont.

But one day as he was seated on the temple steps eating his frugal meal of curry and rice, donated by a village housewife, she had emerged from the pagoda followed by four striped cubs which she proudly led up to him for inspection.

A few days later a tiger came—a great striped brute. He killed and ate three of the cubs which had been playing in the temple enclosure. The fourth, asleep in the pagoda, he overlooked. Leang returned as he was devouring the third little body. Lozong, watching from the temple corridor, saw an exhibition of feline fury such as it falls to the lot of few men to witness. The tiger, badly scratched and bitten, beat a hasty retreat. Nor did he dare come near the place again. He had been Leang's mate, but never would she mate with him again.

A few days thereafter, Lozong had gone on his long pilgrimage, bidding the sacred tigress and her remaining cub a fond farewell. Now, as he neared the temple ruins, his thoughts were on the two creatures he had left there.

Leang would be thirteen years old. The

cub, which he had named "Chiam," would be ten—a full-grown tiger in his prime.

Suddenly, as he neared a little glade which he knew to be but a short distance from the temple ruins, he heard the roar of a charging tiger and the crashing of heavy bodies through the underbrush. Silently he slid behind a tree and watched.

Into the glade a buck came leaping. Behind it bounded an immense tiger. It looked as if the buck would escape when there swiftly flashed from the undergrowth in its path, a lithe, sun-browned human form—a slender boy about twelve years of age, naked and unarmed. From the other side a white tigress charged. But it was the boy who brought down the game. He met the buck in midair, gripped the antlers and twisted them to one side. As his prey went down he uttered a roar that matched that of the tiger, and sank his teeth into the furry throat.

Then, while the astonished lama looked on from his place of concealment, the boy and two beasts settled down to feed on their kill.

Lozong did not doubt that the white tigress was Leang. And the tiger might be her cub, Chiam, or a new mate. But this naked, black-haired boy with the voice of a tiger and the muscles of a gladiator—who could he be, and whence could he have come? It was plain that he was not of the tribes of Burma or Siam, nor yet of India or Tibet. Though his skin was deeply tanned by the sun, he was undoubtedly white, like the English or French.

The lama knew better than to approach a feeding tiger. So he kept out of sight until the boy and the two beasts had finished. He knew that after they had eaten they would drink, and wondered if they would go to the river or the temple. When they turned toward the ruins his belief in the identity of Leang was confirmed, and he followed silently.

THE boy and the two brutes leaped the wall, and Lozong, watching through the bars of the bronze gate, saw them drinking at the fountain.

When they had finished, he cried:

"Leang."

The tigress turned, looking curiously in his direction. The boy and tiger both snarled.

"Leang, come here," he called, as he had summoned her in the old days.

She pricked up her ears, elevated her tail, and trotted toward the gate. Behind her came the boy and the tiger.

In Leang's attitude there was only curiosity, but the others were openly hostile.

"Don't you remember me, Leang?" asked Lozong. "Don't you remember your old master who fed you?"

The tigress sniffed at him through the bars. The boy and tiger were snarling belligerently.

Suddenly, with an angry snarl, the boy sprang—raked the lama's bare shoulder with his nails. But Leang turned on him —cuffed him back. At this instant the tiger leaped, but him also she buffeted back. Then she rubbed her jowl against the bars, and Lozong knew that she remembered.

Fearlessly he scratched her under the chin—behind the ear—while she purred loudly. The boy and the tiger remained in the background, still unfriendly, but obedient to the tigress.

Presently the lama took a large bronze key from the voluminous breast pocket of his robe, and inserted it in the lock of the gate. It stuck with the corrosion acquired during his ten years' absence, but he eventually succeeded in turning it. Then he swung the gate on its complaining

hinges and boldly entered, closing it after him.

Leang stood aside to let him in, then walked with him as he fearlessly strode toward the temple. He watched the boy and tiger from the corners of his eyes as he passed, but they made no move to molest him. It was evident that they had a wholesome respect for the authority of the white tigress.

Straight through the ruined temple portal he went, and to the room he had previously occupied. Here he squatted, cross-legged, on the floor, and Leang stretched out beside him. Unslinging his alms-bowl, he lifted the bit of oily paper which covered it, disclosing the rice and *ghee* which a woman of the near-by village had given him.

He made a greasy ball and held it out to Leang, just as he had fed her from his bowl ten years before. She took it daintily, chewed it much more than was necessary, and swallowed it. But when he offered her more she turned her head away. Evidently buttered rice was no longer to her liking. It was as if she had taken the first morsel for politeness' sake.

Lozong ate rapidly, for the sun was nearing the zenith and it was not permitted that he eat solid food after midday. Having completed his plain but satisfying meal, he took his water-strainer from his pocket and went out for a drink at the fountain, the strainer being a religious rather than a hygienic precaution, as it was unlawful for him to take animal life, even of the most minute kind.

Stretched in the shade of one of the mango trees that lined the approach, the boy and tiger barred his path to the fountain. The lama did not wish to show fear, nor did he desire to arouse either of them, as he knew that if one should spring for him, the other, also, would attack.

He advanced cautiously, intending to circle the two and pass on. But just as he turned aside from the path, an ugly, hooded head reared its spectacled death-sign above the grass.

The cobra swayed angrily for a moment with darting tongue—then struck.

CHAPTER 5

The First Lesson

THE head of the striking cobra moved as swiftly as an arrow, yet just a fraction of a second quicker flashed the *dah* of Lozong. There was a scarcely perceptible turn of the lama's wrist, and the keen blade severed the venomous head with the neat drawing cut of an expert.

Although he had momentarily saved his own life by his quickness with the weapon, Lozong, by making the sudden movement, had instantly put it in jeopardy again. The boy and tiger, basking in the shade, both took it for a hostile gesture. Their roars resounded together as they sprang for the lama.

According to Lozong's belief he had committed a deadly sin by slaying the cobra, despite the fact that he had acted on the spur of the moment to save his own life. Many thousands of "*Om mani padme hums*" would have to be said before sufficient merit was acquired to atone for this one act.

But the instinct of self-preservation made him turn again at this new attack, his *dah* lightly balanced in the hand so skilled in its use, as the boy and tiger sprang at him.

Leang, right behind her former master, leaped for the tiger, knocking him over. In an instant he was rolling on the ground with the tigress standing over him.

Seeing this, the lama smiled and dropped his *dah* as the boy sprang upon him. Tiger fashion, the lad attacked with teeth and nails. And tigerish was the

strength of the muscles that rippled beneath his sun-browned skin.

But Lozong, who had not always been a lama, who was a past master in the arts of offense and defense, knew how to meet his every movement and turn it into defeat. Had it not been for the uncertainty of what the tigers might do, he would have played with him. But because of that uncertainty, he quickly ended the contest.

Catching one extended wrist, the lama turned and dragged the arm across his shoulder, throwing the boy heavily. Before he could recover, he was down beside him, his hands playing skilfully here and there. The lad was, for a time, paralyzed —helpless. Lozong had learned jiu jitsu from a Japanese expert, and learned it well.

Picking up his *dah,* the lama sheathed it and proceeded serenely toward the fountain, precisely as if nothing had happened. He drank, then returned to the temple, looking neither to the right nor the left. The boy, still unable to move, snarled as he passed, but the tigers, now lying side by side in the shade, made no sound.

Lozong squatted, cross-legged, in the shade of the portal, and began clicking the wooden beads of his rosary, the while he muttered his monotonous: *"Om mani padme hum."* This prayer would have to be said countless thousands of times in order to recover the merit lost by slaying the cobra.

But the repetition of the prayer was purely mechanical. His mind was occupied with the problem of making friends with the other occupants of the *wat.* Leang, he believed, could be counted on to remain friendly. The tiger, which he now felt sure was Chiam because of the way Leang had cuffed him about, was more of a problem. Though he had petted and handled him when a tiny cub, there was no possibility of that memory assisting him now. He must find some other way.

And the boy. He, indeed, was the greatest problem of all. Wild and ferocious as the tigers, and aided by a mind far superior, he could be approached only with the greatest caution. Lozong pondered the course to be pursued as he muttered his prayers and gazed out at him through the dancing heat waves.

Presently the lad, finding himself able to move once more, stood up. He flexed his muscles as if to make certain that they would serve him. The lama forgot his prayers for a moment, fearing another attack as the boy looked in his direction. But the lad turned and went over to where the headless body of the cobra lay. No malice showed on his features—only wonder and curiosity. After examining the decapitated reptile with evident puzzlement, he went over and lay down in the shade with the panting tigers. So far as the lama was concerned, he seemed disposed to ignore his presence.

As he lay there in the shade, Tam, though feigning to completely ignore the strange being who had moved into the *wat,* was very much concerned about him. He was puzzled by the fact that Leang not only obeyed him as if she were his cub, but actually showed affection for him, even to the point of protecting him against her own offspring.

Despite the fact that he had always considered all men as his enemies, Tam was beginning to believe that this unusual person, who had defeated him almost painlessly, was friendly.

Suddenly the man in red began making strange noises with his mouth, which sounded very much like those made by the people of the villages. To Tam, they were incomprehensible, yet the man seemed to be addressing him. Although,

during his ten years in the jungle he had learned the language of most of the wild things, Tam had not picked up a single human word to add to the meager nursery vocabulary he had brought with him at the age of two. And even this, through disuse, had been long forgotten.

But now the man was making noises which aroused some latent memory. Having tried him with Tibetan, Burmese and Siamese, Lozong was now speaking English.

"What is your name, my son?" he asked. "Who are you?"

At the words: "What is your name?" there flashed through Tam's mind the recollection of an answer which should follow—an answer in which he had been drilled, day after day, by his parents in case he should ever be lost. He turned and faced the lama as he replied:

"Tam Evans, 1130 Lake Shore Drive, 'Phone Lake Shore 0206."

"Come over here and sit with me in the shade, Tam Evans," said Lozong. "I would be your friend."

Tam stared at him in bewilderment, not because he couldn't comprehend his meaning, but because he could. Gradually taking form in his objective consciousness were memories, shadowy and indistinct, of his father and mother, and of his black nurse-maid, who had made such sounds which he had understood, long, long ago. Yet never, since that time, had he heard human beings make sounds which had any meaning for him.

"You need not be afraid. I won't hurt you," assured the lama.

At this, Tam sneered.

"You hurt Tam? Tam afraid? No! Tam is a fierce kitty. Tam could kill and eat you." He amazed himself as the unfamiliar speech rolled from his lips, for he was translating into English exactly what he would have said to a strange tiger inclined to be bellicose.

The lama smiled. He knew better than to dispute the boy's strange statement at this stage.

"All right, fierce kitty," he said. "Come over and talk to me."

Tam walked over and crouched on the steps near him. They talked long, the erudite lama skilfully adapting his speech to the boy's tiger-like thought processes and limited vocabulary. And thus there began a firm friendship that was to last for many years.

THAT night the lama slept on the bare floor of his cell. The following morning when he awoke, he found freshly gathered fruit lying beside him, and a newly killed bird of paradise. He ate part of the fruit, but the bird he would not eat raw, and it was forbidden that he should prepare his own food, so he carried it outside.

Neither Tam nor Leang was in sight, but Chiam the tiger was lying at the foot of the temple steps. Lozong tossed the bird to him. He leaped back with a snarl, then seized it and carried it off to the bone-littered space before the pagoda, to devour it.

Lozong drank at the fountain, let himself out at the gate, and with his alms-bowl tucked in the large breast pocket of his robe, set off for a near-by village.

He had not gone far when he heard a rustling in the branches above his head. Looking up, he beheld Tam. A gibbon that had evidently been with him scampered off through the branches.

"Where you going?" asked the boy.

"To the village where men live," replied the lama.

"Don't go," said Tam. "They will kill you with sharp sticks, and eat you."

"No, they will give me food to eat," replied Lozong.

Tam followed him as far as the edge of the jungle, but would go no farther. When the lama returned, his bowl filled with curried vegetables and rice, the boy was waiting for him. They walked through the jungle together, back to the temple ruins. As they were passing through the courtyard, Chiam, the tiger, came out of the pagoda. At sight of the lama, Chiam growled menacingly, and barred his way to the portal.

Lozong paused. This time the white tigress was not there to defend him. Chiam advanced, ears laid back, tail lashing the air, voicing his disapproval of the lama in no uncertain tones.

To Lozong's surprize, the boy leaped in front of the tiger. There issued from his throat a growl that matched, in volume and ferocity, the voice of the big feline. For some time, boy and beast growled and snarled at each other. Then the tiger sprang.

The lama dropped his begging-bowl and whipped out his *dah*, expecting Tam would be mangled by those terrible teeth and claws. But the boy leaped lightly to one side, and before the beast could recover, had flung himself on its back. Gripping the loose skin of its neck and locking his feet far back beneath the belly, he hung on like grim death. The tiger flung itself over backward, rolled over and over, and tried its best to paw him off, but to no avail. Presently the beast subsided, panting.

Tam laughed, and releasing his hold, scratched the big feline behind the ear, making low, purring sounds meanwhile, which were answered by the tiger.

Then he stood up and returned to where the astounded lama waited.

"Kitty won't hurt you, now," he said. "I told him you were our friend."

"But you might have been killed," exclaimed Lozong.

Tam laughed.

"We play like that, often," he said. "When I was little and weak, he could beat me, but now I am big and strong. Now I win the games. He still has better teeth and claws, but I am quicker. Some day when my teeth and claws grow bigger it will be easier."

"You will grow bigger some day, Tam," said the lama, "but you will never have big teeth and claws. Men do not have them. You must stop thinking you are a kitty, because you are a boy, and when you grow up you will be a man."

"I was a boy, once," replied Tam. "I remember a little about it."

"And you are still a boy," replied Lozong. "There are many things I must teach you, which boys and men should know." They sat down in the shade, and there across the alms-bowl began Tam's first lesson.

CHAPTER 6

The Gods of Asia

EACH day, Lozong made his morning trip to the near-by village. But about two weeks after his arrival at the temple, he returned with a parcel wrapped in heavy paper. He made a great mystery of it until he and Tam reached his cell. Then he unwrapped it ceremoniously.

Tam watched, with wide-eyed curiosity, as the lama took out several books, pads of writing-paper, pencils, and a ruler.

"What are they?" he asked.

"I sent for them," replied Lozong, "in order that I might teach you to read and write the language of your people. These will be the foundation for your education."

And thus, at the age when most children have graduated from grammar school, Tam made his beginning.

He progressed rapidly, and Lozong ordered more books and supplies for him

from time to time. Each afternoon was set aside for his studies. His mornings were usually spent roving in the jungle. The lama was an excellent instructor because he made everything interesting, and Tam's thirst for knowledge was insatiable.

Book knowledge was not all that Lozong taught his pupil. He taught him jiu jitsu and boxing, and the use of the *dah*. At first he let Tam use his knife, but one day he brought him a bright new one from the village, with a sheath and belt. He had previously persuaded Tam to wear a garment which he had cut for him from red Lhasa cloth. It was merely a narrow strip of the material passed over his left shoulder and wound about his loins, but quite enough for that climate.

When Tam had become proficient with the *dah,* the lama brought him other weapons and taught him their use. They soon accumulated quite an arsenal of spears, bows and arrows, crossbows and their shorter projectiles, blowguns and darts, axes and swords. For hours at a time they would practise shooting at marks, hurling spears and knives, and fencing.

Lozong's favorite weapon was the terrible *yatagan,* or double-curved sword. With this, he would fell a tall tree at a single blow, then instruct his pupil to cut it up.

At first, Tam could not more than cut half through the trunk of a tree felled by his teacher, but gradually he got the knack of it.

"Slice!" Lozong would cry excitedly, when Tam, in spite of his powerful muscles, would end with his blade still sticking in the wood. "Watch this. Observe that I do not strike with half the force you used, yet my blade passes clear through. Why? Because I turn the wrist, so, and draw the blade back, so; so I bring it down. Your wrist should be of rubber, not of wood. You chop like a clumsy Chinaman."

So Tam would try again and yet again. But he was sixteen before he could cleave through a trunk that Lozong had felled at a single blow, and twenty before he had become his equal at fence. Meanwhile, his studies had progressed tremendously. He could read and write Tibetan and Sanskrit as well as English, and had studied and discussed with Lozong the sciences and the leading religions of the world.

But most of all, he liked to hear Lozong relate his interesting life experiences —how his people had moved to Hangchow from Tibet when he was a boy, and he had become a Christian and gone to school at the *Ching Nea Way,* the American Y. M. C. A. Then how he had gone to Japan and saved the life of a descendant of the samurai, who had taught him jiu jitsu and swordsmanship. And then how he had gone to visit his parents, who had moved back to Tibet, and while there, had been left for dead by a company of Chinese soldiers that had massacred the entire village, including his parents and his brothers and sisters. Embittered against the Chinese, he had turned brigand, and soon became leader of the most dreaded band of marauders in that region. His fame had spread, and new recruits had flocked to him until he became a military power to be reckoned with.

But he grew sick of bloodshed and endless campaigns, and at thirty decided to give up all his possessions and seek salvation by way of the eight-fold path. He had accordingly taken leave of his followers and entered a lamasery, but such was his popularity and piety that in less than a year he had become its chief lama.

Still dissatisfied, he left the lamasery in charge of a subordinate, and set out on a

pilgrimage, a seeker after that elusive entity, Truth. Wandering through Burma, he had accidentally found the ancient ruins, where he had tarried for a time to meditate and study in solitude, and near which he had found Leang.

At twenty, Tam had not only grown mentally, but had attained to splendid physical manhood. He was slightly taller than Lozong, who was six feet without his sandals, broad-shouldered, narrow-hipped, and superbly muscled.

Leang and Chiam had become middle-aged tigers, and though he still hunted with them, Tam now employed the weapons Lozong had taught him to use. Like his preceptor, he came to favor the *yatagan* above all other weapons. With this he could sever the neck or split the skull of a charging buffalo at a single stroke.

Nor had he forgotten his many jungle friends. These he had cultivated through the years. But the achievement which had pleased him most of all was his conquest of a mighty bull elephant. The great bull, suffering from that strange temporary madness called *must,* had slain his *mahout* one day when the man had used his *ankus* a bit too roughly, and dashed off into the jungle. He had managed to elude the men sent after him, and his wanderings had brought him to Tam's hunting-grounds.

For many days, Tam had watched him, feeding in the forest or wallowing in the river, spraying himself with water. From the first day he carried the *ankus* which he had been keeping for just such an occasion. Though he feared no jungle creature, it was with some trepidation that Tam went up to the great brute for the first time carrying a peace offering of fruit.

The elephant, which had fully recovered from its illness by this time, readily responded to the commands which Tam had learned by observing the *mahouts,* and he received one of the greatest thrills of his life when, swung upward on the trunk of the huge pachyderm, he took his seat behind the gigantic head and, *ankus* in hand, rode off through the forest.

He said nothing of his conquest to Lozong, but several days later, when he and the great brute had become better acquainted, he rode his mighty steed down the path to meet the lama on his return from the village.

Astounded, Lozong looked on while Tam put the big beast through his paces, finally causing him to kneel so that the lama might mount his back. They rode home in state that night, or nearly so, for the elephant stopped and refused to budge when he scented the lair of the tigers. By much perseverance and the employment of fruit and balls of sweetened rice, Tam eventually persuaded him to enter the enclosure and actually to make friends with the two tigers. After that, Ganesha, as they called him, made his headquarters in the temple enclosure. He was friendly toward Lozong, but showed positive affection for Tam.

ONE DAY Ganesha wandered away, and did not return that night as was his wont. Worried, Tam set out on his trail the next morning.

As usual, Tam carried the weapons which had made him master of the jungle. From his belt hung his *dah* and *yatagan.* At his back was his quiver, containing his powerful bow and a supply of arrows. In his hand he carried the *ankus,* his scepter of authority over the elephant.

The trail of Ganesha led straight to the north, and Tam followed it all morning without pausing. But as the blazing sun reached the zenith he decided to halt for rest and refreshment. He had eaten only a little fruit for breakfast, and his long tramp had engendered meat hunger. He turned aside from the trail to hunt.

Traversing a dense thicket of bamboo, he came out in a flat expanse of tall jungle grass through which a little brook meandered. Thirsty, he went down to the stream to drink. He had barely touched his lips to the purling water when he heard a movement in the tall grass on the farther bank. Silently he slid back into the rushes and drew his *yatagan*. No doubt this was some jungle creature coming for a drink. Well, it should supply the meat he craved. The breeze was neither in his favor nor against him, but blowing downstream, so his nose told him nothing. He must wait for his eyes to reveal the quarry.

As he crouched there in the rushes, Tam gasped in amazement at sight of the wondrous creature that emerged from the waving jungle grass. A slender girl, panting and swaying as if from exhaustion, ran out on the bank.

Her garments were unlike anything he had ever seen or heard of. On her head was a tight-fitting golden helmet crowned with a gold disk above a silver crescent, set on a uræus with eyes that were smoldering rubies. Wisps of her dark-brown hair peeped from beneath the magnificent head-piece, and in her hazel eyes was the look of one who has just escaped some unspeakable horror. Her shapely limbs and torso were encased in light, golden chain mail, reinforced by sliding shoulder plates, circular breast plates, and a jointed girdle with a skirt of taces, and adorned with glittering jewels set in strange designs. From her belt of scarlet leather hung a dagger sheath and sword scabbard, both empty.

Fascinated, Tam stared in breathless wonder and admiration. But the slight hint of a movement in the tall grass behind the girl drew his jungle-trained eyes. Something was stalking her! Then he saw the striped tip of a long tail lashing above the grass, and he knew!

He leaped up, a cry of warning on his lips, but at that moment the tiger sprang, emitting a thunderous roar as it crushed its victim to the ground.

With an answering roar, Tam leaped across the brook and confronted the tiger, his *yatagan* gleaming in his hand.

Standing over the prostrate girl, the tiger snarled its anger at this presumptuous human who had the temerity to dispute its right to its prey. Then it charged and reared up to seize its challenger, teeth gleaming and claws aspread.

With the swiftness of lightning flashed the razor-sharp *yatagan*. It caught the rearing tiger squarely between the eyes, and divided its skull as neatly as a *dah* divides an orange, finding lodgment in the neck vertebræ. Like a thing of inflated rubber, the mighty body collapsed.

Tam jerked his blade free and sprang to the side of the girl.

"Are you badly hurt?" he asked in English.

She did not understand, but held up both hands to him, a gesture he could not fail to comprehend. He dropped his gory blade and grasping her hands, helped her to her feet. Despite the weight of her armor, she seemed light as a feather. And when she leaned against Tam for support, the crest of her helmet barely reached to his shoulder. Tam repeated his query in Tibetan and Sanskrit. She appeared to understand the latter language and replied in a language that was very much like it—enough to make her speech intelligible to Tam.

"My armor protected me," she said, then added: "I am very thirsty. Let me drink."

With his arm around her slender waist, Tam helped her down the bank, then sup-

(Please turn to page 571)

MOTH

By G. R. MALLOCH

A tale of colossal caterpillars that ate their way through London, spreading disaster and death

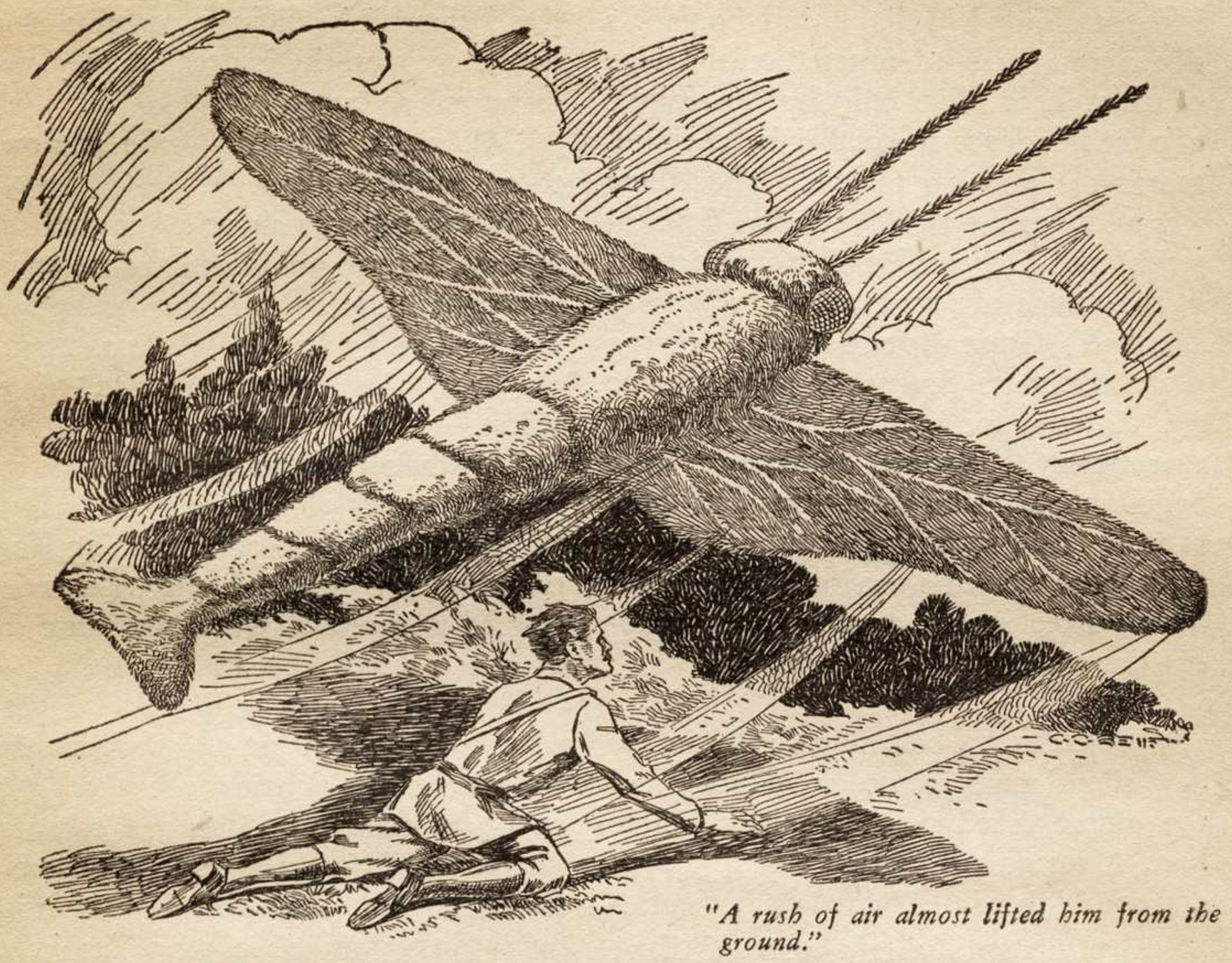
1. *The Mysterious Plane*

ON THE first of July, 193—, an officer on night duty at the air ministry was sitting at his desk studying an air map of the Channel and the southern counties of England. The time was three in the morning and the presence at such an hour of this officer and many others who were on duty in the building was explained by the fact that a state of political tension existed between Great Britain and an alliance of European states. Nothing that indicated war or even a rupture of diplomatic relations had been allowed to reach the press, nor was it in the least probable that any of the countries concerned would be so criminal or so foolish as to resort to the last arbitrament: but the tension was there, and the government of the day was not one that would be caught napping.

However peacefully the people might be sleeping in their beds, those responsible for the defense of the nation were painfully aware of the possibilities of such a situation. They knew that in those times a declaration of war would be followed by almost instantaneous action. Vast fleets of aircraft loaded with the deadliest bombs would be released at once and would be over the cities of the enemy almost before he was aware of the fact that he was to be attacked. And many of these craft would be of new and secret kinds: certainly, there would be flights of pilotless, automatically guided planes, some timed to drop their bombs on a given area and return, some simply to plunge with their load of destruction into the unsuspecting cities to which they were directed. There was also the possibility that no actual declaration of war would be made and that attack would be the first notification of it. Certainly there would be no time for the mobilization of existing forces or the improvization of new armies and air fleets.

At the first hint of trouble the air force had been keyed up to the highest state of readiness; the military and naval reserves had been recalled to the colors under the pretext of extensive combined maneuvers, and the government arsenals and many privately owned firms were working at full blast as a measure of unemployment relief. Such was and is the complacency of the British public that these excuses actually passed current as the truth; and the press was completely muzzled by a new Official Secret Act hurriedly rushed through Parliament. The parochially minded descendants of the empire builders were absorbed in their games and more interested in cricket scores and bathing girls than in the destiny of Europe. Such is their custom, encouraged by politicians for their own ends, but throwing a tremendous responsibility upon those who encourage it.

The officer was studying with particular interest on the maps before him the broad lines indicating the many new arterial roads which converged upon London from all parts of the country and he was reflecting bitterly upon their use as guides to enemy aircraft. He visualized how at the moment these long avenues of light made the finding of the capital



"A rush of air almost lifted him from the ground."

mere child's play to airmen. But he remembered, as a compensating factor, that the existence of similar roads all over the continent provided equal facilities for the defending forces.

It is a matter of history that the greatest feature of world development in the decade preceding the date of this account had been the amazing development of the use of electricity. It had become so cheap that it was used for every conceivable purpose; the towns were as light at night as they were in the daytime, and every road of importance was brilliantly illuminated from end to end and carried as much, if not more traffic in what were once the hours of darkness, as by day. The civilized world by night was a blaze of light: golf courses, cricket and football fields and polo grounds were thronged with players and watching crowds; only in the deep country was the old order of nature still observed and night fell in comfortable darkness.

Some curious results of this almost universal abolition of darkness had been observed, but they meant nothing to the mob mind. One was the almost complete dying out of many species of insectivorous birds, which naturalists attributed to the fact that millions of insects attracted to the blaze of light dashed themselves to death against the innumerable lamps, with the consequence that in the ensuing year there were no caterpillars to feed the nestlings. And each successive year, this phenomenon repeated itself until it was only in remote districts or in the few remaining forests that many once-common birds were to be found at all. The dearth of birds in turn led to a devastating increase in many kinds of insect

life not affected by light, and England's declining agriculture tottered on the edge of ruin, kept alive only by the frantic efforts of science to combat by chemical means the growing plagues. Thus there was added to the already existing political troubles of the world, a fear ever present in the minds of its governors, of a food shortage. Great Britain was becoming more and more dependent upon Europe and America for its food and the causes that operated against agriculture were beginning to make themselves felt there as well. And so in this world of blazing light there existed a tension which might have broken at any moment into world-conflict, though happily it did not.

A TELEPHONE bell rang shrilly in the silent room at the air ministry and the officer lifted the instrument beside him. Manston Air Station was speaking, and speaking with subdued excitement.

"Two unidentifiable planes of large size have just passed over here. They are quite an unknown type, so far as could be observed, and they seemed to keep out of range of the searchlights—came from southwest and flew round, and then headed along the coast toward Birchington and Herne Bay. I've warned all stations to be on the lookout and sent two scouts up in pursuit."

"Very good," said the officer, calmly. "Hold on for a moment."

He summoned another officer and gave certain emergency instructions for the defense of London. Satisfied that wires and wireless were busy, he turned to the telephone again.

"Manston. Right; now, can you describe these planes?"

"Like nothing I've ever seen, sir," began the voice at the other end. "Something new and devilish by the look of them. I'd only a glimpse as they dodged the lights. It's difficult to give a coherent account, the impression they made on us was so queer."

"All right, Manston—take it slowly, then," said the officer.

"Wing expanse about a hundred feet, at least, I'd say—absolutely silent engine—caught a queer swishing sound now and then as if they were gliding. But the damned thing was the action of the wings."

"Action of the wings? What do you mean?"

"Well, sir, they came planing down till they saw us and then the wings seemed to give a flap and the thing shot away at a terrific speed."

"Movable wings, eh? Bird flight—what we've been trying for ourselves—wish we could bring one down! Go on—how many propellers and engines?"

"None, sir—that is, no propellers as far as we could see—action of the wings only—unless there's a propeller in the tail. No visible engines."

Another officer came into the room and laid a typed slip on the table. It indicated that the London air defense was fully mobilized and in the air. The first officer nodded and the other handed him a second slip which read:

> Two unknown planes passed over Southend heading London. No identification marks, unknown class, moving fast.

"Well, they'll be stopped," was his comment.

"Easy thing, sir, if there are no more," said his junior, as he went out. The conversation with Manston was resumed.

"What lights did they carry?"

"None, sir—that's to say, not exactly lights."

"What do you mean, exactly?"

"Well, on either side of the nose there seemed to be a big sort of window divided into sort of honeycomb panes—observation posts, I'd say. I think they

had lights inside—at least when the searchlight hit them you could see those two windows or whatever they were all lit up and glowing red. Big things, something like a searchlight disk, if you follow me, only practically no light seemed to come out of them—when they passed out of the light, you could just see them glowing like windows. Sounds crazy, sir, but we all saw them and there's no mistake."

"I'm not thinking there is any mistake, Travers," said the officer gravely. "We know that Extrania has had a secret plane up its sleeve for some time. Mind you, this may only be a practise spin by some of their pilots—it doesn't follow that they're out for mischief. Still, if they come over London, they know that they'll be shot down, and that's their lookout. Report anything fresh at once."

"Did I say anything about the color, sir?"

"No—I ought to have asked you that—it's very important."

"Sort of silvery gray, sir, so far as we could make out, with curious markings on the underside of the wings. The fuselage seemed a bit darker—but at night it was difficult to tell. It was very good camouflage, anyhow."

"Thank you, Travers. Let me have your scouts' report at once, won't you?"

"Right, sir."

THE officer hung up the receiver and began to make notes. After a time he rose and going to the window, flung it open. It was still dark and all the lights of London had been cut off on the first alarm. The air was full of the droning of planes which were circling in squadrons over the city. From the outer defenses, long pencils of light roved incessantly over the sky, and from the streets below the building rose a murmur of voices and the shuffle of many feet. All London was in the streets by this time, attracted by the noise overhead and the sudden darkness. Wild rumors were already flying about, and to prevent panic, the police were announcing that it was only a special test of the air defense forces.

The door of the room was flung open suddenly and a tall gray-haired man wrapped in a fur coat strode in. The officer swung round and after a glance at his visitor, saluted.

"Tell me what is all this, Langton," asked the Prime Minister, without ceremony. "Are we actually attacked?"

"I hope not, sir," was the reply. "But two mysterious planes of large size and strange design came in over the Kent coast and are reported heading for London without lights. You see, we are ready, sir."

"Yes, I see that," replied Mr. Perceval. "It's all admirable, if a civilian may say so. But I can scarcely contemplate the possibility of attack from Extrania without a declaration of war, and we're far from that stage."

"Quite, sir—but you never know. The first blow wins the next war, they say. Anyhow, all we've done is to put plan A in operation, according to the standing orders."

"If they reach London or try to reach it, what do you do?" asked Mr. Perceval.

"Shoot 'em down, sir. Acting against the international code in that fashion could only mean war on their part. I rather hope we do get them down, sir—they seem to be something quite new in design."

"Very well," said the Prime Minister. "I'll go back to Downing Street and I'd better look in at the Palace. You'll keep me posted?"

"Of course, sir. Can you find your way? I mustn't leave this telephone."

The Prime Minister departed as quickly as he had come and the officer resumed his vigil at the window. But nothing happened, save that the crowds in the street grew in numbers and the planes continued to drone through the sky. Dawn began to break at last but no further news of the raiders came through. Reports poured in from air stations all over the country, all to the same effect: that nothing had been seen or heard of the raiders. The people, quieted by the police statements, began to straggle home to their beds; the light grew, and the London sparrows began their cheerful twittering. Save for a few scouts, the defending planes were ordered back to their respective stations and what seemed like a normal day began in the streets.

THE officer stretched himself and yawned. He was very tired and his relief would soon take over. But he was not quite easy in his mind about what was to come, although the consensus of official opinion was that two foreign pilots trying out a new machine had ventured over England in the dark and made for home when they saw they were discovered. Somehow, Langton did not feel that it was just like that.

The telephone bell rang shrilly at his elbow.

"Hillow. Yes, this is Langton speaking. Wants to speak to me personally—who d'ye say? A Colonel Butler?—don't know him. Well, if it's urgent, put him through."

A voice boomed in his ear.

"Is that Air Commodore Langton?"

"It is."

"My name's Butler—Colonel, late Loamshires, on the Retired List. I have a son in the air force, so I knew that you were in charge at the ministry."

"Well—what do you want, sir?"

"Give me time, sir. I live at Epping—house is fairly high up and commands a view of most of the forest."

"Yes," said Langton, with new interest.

"Heard all that row this morning—planes woke me. Looking out of my window, I thought I saw something big in the sky with no lights. And I thought it seemed to come down in the forest."

"The devil you did! What did you do?"

"Nothing—might have been mere fancy and how could you start up to search the forest in the dark? However, first thing this morning, I saddled up and rode round a bit. Just where I thought it might be, there's a big plane lying on the ground."

"Smashed—hit the trees?"

"No—seems all right, but it's the weirdest kind of machine I've ever seen. I didn't wait to examine it—just rode back hell for leather to phone you. I thought you wouldn't want people nosing about—might want it kept secret. All last night's row wasn't for nothing, no matter what the police say."

"Is it possible for it to take off from there?"

"No, fills the available space completely, I should say."

"Colonel, you've done splendidly—it's a mercy there was an experienced soldier on the spot. Don't let a word get about—I'll be with you as fast as a car can take me. Is it likely to be seen by any one?"

"No—it's in a lonely glade where very few people ever go—no one at this hour or season, anyhow. Best come straight to my house—Wintram Hall—and I'll take you with me."

"Right! Many thanks, sir."

Langton was soon on the road. His fast car was followed by an Air Force

lorry filled with fully armed men, whose job was to deal with any show of resistance on the part of the crew of the fallen plane. He had chosen to travel by car because it would bring him right to Colonel Butler's house and would attract less attention than a plane, and he was above all anxious to preserve complete secrecy both for technical and diplomatic reasons. The air ministry had no desire that enterprising journalists should make public the design of the secret Extranian plane and if the theory that Extranian pilots had been flying over London at night proved correct, public indignation, were the fact known, might make it very difficult for the government to preserve the atmosphere of diplomatic good-will so necessary for the handling of the present crisis.

It was still comparatively early and the roads were fairly clear of traffic; in little over half an hour, Langton's car turned in at the entrance gates of Wintram Hall. Under the portico of the old Georgian house, a gray-haired soldierly figure was awaiting him. Near by, a groom held two saddled horses.

As Langton jumped from the car, the Colonel came down the steps to meet him.

"Colonel Butler?"

"Yes. I expect you're in a hurry to see this thing. You ride?"

Langton nodded, and as they were mounting, the Colonel explained that this was their quickest method of approaching the fallen machine. They left the grounds of the Hall, crossed the road, and were soon riding down narrow paths between the trees where it was frequently necessary to crouch in the saddle to avoid overhanging branches. They had the forest to themselves: occasionally a rabbit scurried across the path or a deer raised a timid head from the green bracken; small birds twittered in the thickets and blackbirds whistled mellowly now and then, but the full chorus of song was over for the year. The sun burned strong in the open spaces; the peace and quiet of the whole scene struck Langton as in strange contrast to his errand. There was something ironical in the complete indifference of nature to the presence of the instrument of death and destruction which had fallen into this quiet forest. Langton was listening to the crooning of a dove hidden in the green boughs above him, when the Colonel checked his horse and made a sign to him to come alongside.

They had arrived on the edge of an open glade about fifty yards across. It was surrounded on all sides by tall beeches and oaks, whose height formed a barrier that no ordinary plane could surmount without a much longer take-off. And in the center of this space, seeming to occupy most of it, lay the most extraordinary machine that Langton had ever seen.

The wings extended almost from side to side of the glade, and what struck Langton's expert eyes at once was the fact that this was neither a biplane nor a monoplane but something of both. It had two planes on either side of the body, but instead of being superimposed, the lower plane was practically on a level with the upper, behind which it extended fanwise. The confused metaphor that rose in Langton's mind was a four-winged monoplane. Between the wings, the fuselage lay long and tapering, a glistening silver-gray. It was wholly enclosed; no windows were visible and the pilot's quarters were apparently completely built in. The under-carriage was not visible, being completely covered by the downward spread of the four enormous wings. On the nose of the machine,

Langton could see, on the near side, one of those large globular disks which the officer at Manston had described as windows: they seemed to be constructed of a cellular framework of metal with panes of some glassy material; but no light came from them. Near these protuberances were a number of complicated, pipe-like affairs, the use of which it was impossible to guess; and in front of them emerged two long tube-like appliances which were folded back toward the wings.

There was no sign of life or movement about the machine, which lay apparently as it had lighted.

"What d'ye make of it?" asked Colonel Butler, at last.

"The new Extranian hush-hush plane, I think," said Langton, trying to put his horse toward it. But both of the horses were strangely restive and kept backing into the shelter of the trees.

"I shouldn't go too near all at once," warned the Colonel. "Where's the crew? Training machine-guns on us, maybe."

"No crew there," said Langton. "You see all that stuff in the nose of the thing —those long feelers and so on? That explains it—it's one of those automatic planes, controlled by wireless. It may be stuffed full of gas or high explosive, of course, but there's nothing human in it. Let us have a look."

They dismounted and walked across the still-dewy grass, and as they did so, the huge size of the thing before them became apparent. The fuselage towered above them like a house, the expanse of wing seemed colossal.

"Damn it, you'd almost say it was hairy," said the Colonel, as he peered up at the enormous body.

"That's all part of the wireless gadget," said Langton. "We'll soon get the secret of that. How do we get into the thing, though?"

"You'd want a ladder."

Langton turned from his scrutiny of the body and approached the edge of the hinder plane. He could not guess at the construction of the wide, laminated surface, the edge of which was fringed with spikes set closely together.

"You'd better wait where you are, Colonel," he said, as he stepped carefully on to the wing. "Just in case anything happens."

He began walking over the plane: the surface was hard and slippery under his feet; here and there he could detect a vein-like structure, presumably of light metal girder-work, which kept the wing rigid. It was when he put his foot on one of these concealed girders that a strange thing happened. A tremor seemed to go through the entire machine. Langton was puzzled for a moment; then the explanation seemed to be that the under-carriage had been damaged in landing and that his weight had upset the precarious balance of the machine. He went on and reached the forward plane, pausing to notice how the rear plane fitted under the front one so closely that they were almost in touch. It looked as if one could be slid under the other, and this structure puzzled him. But there would be plenty of time to go into that: he walked on till he came to the junction of the planes with the body. Here the body rose in a dome-like structure that offered no opening and seemed impossible to climb: the dome was covered with interlacing work of some kind that looked like metal feathers, which presented a smooth gray surface of the same color as the wings he had crossed.

He felt this surface with his hands: to his surprize it was strangely soft and yielding. He dug his fingers into it.

Again a strange tremor ran through

the entire structure, but this time something further happened. The two long feelers that had been folded over the wings suddenly shot forward and waved to and fro in the air with a loud swishing sound. Then something started in the under-carriage: the whole body shot up several feet from the ground; a strange pulsating movement began in the wings that nearly jerked Langton off his feet. And for the first time in his life, he was seized with panic, a wild, unreasoning panic that made him run for the edge of the wing he was on; a horrible notion that this thing was alive filled his mind.

He ran for his life, but just as he reached the edge of the wing and was about to jump to the solid ground, the wings with a mighty motion shot upward over the top of the fuselage. For a moment, as he fell headlong through the flexible spikes that fringed the wing he thought that he had set in action some mechanism for exploding a cargo of destruction. But no explosion followed: only as he lay face downward in the long grass, a rush of air almost lifted him from the ground; he could hear the branches near him, swaying in the gust of it. Then all was silent. He rolled over—the glade was empty and only the crushed grass and the figure of Colonel Butler, standing with his head craned backward, remained as evidence that the plane had ever been there.

He scrambled to his feet and followed the Colonel's gaze skyward. Far up in the blue, the great silver shape was rapidly lessening as it rose and circled over the forest, higher and higher, till it became indistinguishable. Even in the depths of his amazement, Langton's professional eye noted instantly the peculiar bird-like action of the wings, which rose and fell in long beats or trembled like a hovering hawk's. In what seemed a few moments, it was out of sight: the peace and silence of the green forest were as if they had never been disturbed.

LANGTON hobbled over to the Colonel and stared at him. The Colonel returned the stare; then both of them turned to where the terrified horses were tethered to trees.

"Better come back with me and have a drink," said the Colonel. "You took a nasty toss."

In silence they mounted and rode back to Wintram Hall, lost in speculation that neither liked to put into words.

"Do you want to do anything immediate about this?" asked the Colonel, as they dismounted. "Report, I mean to say, or anything like that before lunch?"

He avoided Langton's eye as he spoke, but Langton understood.

"Only to send my men back to London," he said. "I'll be glad to have lunch here, if it's convenient."

The Colonel went into the house to give his instructions and Langton interviewed the men who stood grouped round a service lorry on the drive. It was with a certain sense of relief that he heard that nobody had seen anything of a strange plane. He explained that their services would not be required any longer and having dismissed them, entered the house. He found the Colonel pacing up and down the hall. As soon as Langton had removed the traces of his fall, they sat down to lunch in an oak-panelled dining-room.

While the servants were in the room, they talked of other things, but the Colonel was preoccupied in manner and always seemed on the verge of saying something which he did not say.

"I've served in India a lot," he came out once, "and in West Africa. Funny

things happen there—things you wouldn't believe if I told them."

"So I've heard," said Langton.

"And that's one reason," went on the Colonel, "why I don't believe that anything's impossible."

The butler had gone out of the room. Langton looked straight at his host.

"You mean," he said, slowly, "you mean that the thing was alive?"

The Colonel nodded.

"You couldn't see what I did. When you dug your fist into it—damn it, it stood up! Stood up, sir, on legs! Three on each side—I counted them. Six legs—you know what that is?"

"It might be a mechanical device of some kind," suggested Langton, uncertainly.

"No, sir!" said the Colonel, fiercely, leaning forward as he spoke. "It was an infernal great moth—that's what it was. I'll show you, presently. I collect 'em in the forest here, since I retired. I'm supposed to be a bit of a dab at entomology and I know."

"But," stammered Langton, "admitting it was alive, how do you account for the coldness of everything I touched—seemed ice-cold."

"Insects have no blood like ours—they have a circulating fluid but it's cold. It would be cold—that's another proof."

"Then, how am I to report a thing like that?" demanded Langton, unhappily.

"You can't," said the Colonel. "You can't. They wouldn't believe you—you'd be up before a medical board before they'd got to the end of your report."

"What am I to do, then?"

"If you're finished," said the Colonel, "come into my study and I'll show you something. Keep my collection there."

He led the way across the hall into a room lined with cabinets and bookcases. From one of the cabinets he took a drawer and carried it over to a table under the window.

"Genus *Eupithecia*," he said. "We call 'em Pug moths in England."

Langton found himself gazing down on a neatly arranged collection of tiny models of the mysterious plane. The resemblance was exact, shape, attitude, angle of the outspread wings, and in some, nearly the color: the eyes which he had taken for windows, the long antennæ, the tapering body on six legs.

"Couldn't it be that some genius had succeeded in discovering the secret of a moth's flight and in making a big scale model?" he asked, presently.

"Can a man imitate the works of God so closely, d'ye think?" asked the Colonel, solemnly.

"But these are so tiny—that was a monstrous thing," objected Langton. "No creature of that size could live on this earth without being discovered."

"The inference is they've just arrived on this earth," said Colonel Butler, grimly. "It's a bad lookout for us, if they have. D'ye realize what sort of monster the caterpillar of that thing would be, eh? You know those caterpillars we call loopers—kind that grips with its forelegs—that's its real legs, of course—and pulls its long body up into a loop, takes hold with the claspers on its tail and then reaches out again. You remember—they seem to take huge strides."

Langton nodded.

"I know them. What size would the caterpillar of that be?"

"About seventy-five feet long, probably, when it was full-grown. It would have jaws that could crush anything softer than iron—maybe iron. I doubt if a machine-gun bullet could pierce its skin."

Langton threw out his arms, despairingly.

"We're dreaming," he said. "Where could they come from?"

"I don't know," said the Colonel, gloomily. "But they've come. Light attracts them—these little beggars come to street lamps. Well, the world's a blaze of light, now, in this age of electricity they're always boasting about."

"You mean they might have been attracted from some other planet that has monstrous forms of life? But that's not credible—surely all the electric light in the world going at full blast wouldn't be noticed there?"

"We don't know what sort of sight they may have in Mars or any of the others," said the Colonel. "And we don't know what the flying range of such things would be. Suppose they are flying about in the upper air, of which we know damn little—they see all this glow at night—down they come. Impossible, it may sound—but it's feasible. Anyway, have you any better explanation?"

"No," said Langton, "I haven't. I wish this discovery had fallen to some one else, Colonel, because I'm going to be broken over it."

"You mean you're going to report what you saw?" asked the Colonel.

"It's my duty. There's a fearful danger in this thing, if such creatures get a footing on the earth—I can see that."

"There is," said the Colonel. "Imagine a batch of eggs—hundreds, maybe—hatching out and a horde of caterpillars like that eating up the country. They might eat human beings—they might eat anything—wood, houses, anything. On the other hand they might die for lack of their proper food."

"Still, I've got to report," said Langton. "And if you'll excuse me, I'll get back to the ministry and make my report. They won't believe it, but it's up to me."

The Colonel held out his hand and gripped Langton's warmly.

"Look here, my boy," he said, gruffly, "if—if any trouble comes out of it for you, rely on me in any way you think fit. You can use my name, of course, but it won't carry you far—I'm looked upon as an eccentric down here already because I collect bugs. But what I mean is—if they—if they retire you, or anything like that—come down here and stop with me for a bit. We might think out something to do about this—it may be a very real danger, you know."

"If things turn out as they probably will, Colonel," said Langton, gratefully, "I shall certainly come. I'm a bachelor and have no family ties, so there's nothing to hinder me, unless they lock me in an asylum. And I want to go into this thing with some one who knows it all."

Colonel Butler stood for some time gazing after the receding car, and as he turned to go indoors he was speaking to himself.

"Damned fine chap," he said. "They'll certify him when he comes out with that story—sure thing."

A few weeks later, he read in the *London Gazette* that Air Commodore Langton had been invalided out of the service.

2. *The Egg*

COLONEL BUTLER had been surprized and relieved at not being called to give evidence in the official inquiry which he knew had been held into his friend's sanity. He guessed that Langton had kept his name out of it as far as possible, also that the authorities had not desired to widen their inquiry beyond what was strictly necessary—if it leaked out that the officer who had been in charge of the London defenses on that night of public excitement had been found to be insane,

there would have been an outcry which would have imperilled the positions of many important people. He understood, therefore, well enough why he had not been called upon, but he was anxious about the fate of the man for whom he had formed an instinctive liking. If he had not volunteered any corroboration of Langton's fantastic report it was because he had no desire to be certified himself and because he foresaw possible consequences of the visit of the giant moth: if the peril he feared materialized, there would be at least one man at liberty who understood its cause and could suggest how to deal with it. And he had grave reasons for believing that it might materialize. Nevertheless he was on the point of setting out for London to make inquiries about his friend when he was saved the trouble by a visit from a high medical officer of the air service.

That officer's arrival happened to coincide with the return of the Colonel from a collecting expedition in the forest; they met outside the Colonel's door, as the officer was stepping from his car and Colonel Butler, with a collecting-box hung from his shoulder and a net in one hand, was mounting the steps. The officer introduced himself and indicated that his visit was connected with Langton's affair. He glanced at the Colonel's paraphernalia.

"And I think," he added, "if you will forgive me, that I see something that suggests the origin of your friend's unfortunate delusion."

"You mean this?" asked the Colonel, flourishing his net, as he led the way to his study. "Well, I know that the ignorant commonly regard entomologists as eccentric or even potty, as they express it —but I didn't expect to find a medical officer sharing that delusion, sir."

The officer flushed and laughed, as he took the chair that the Colonel had indicated.

"I'm far from it, I assure you," he declared. "As a matter of fact, I've dabbled a bit in entomology when I was on foreign service—you'll find a collection of Mesopotamian moths at South Kensington made by me."

"I'm glad to hear it," said the Colonel, with a slight increase of cordiality, "because in that case you'll perhaps appreciate the proof I propose to show you of Langton's complete sanity. Where is he now?"

"He is in hospital, under observation at present, and as for his sanity, that appears to be unimpeachable except for this extraordinary delusion that he saw a gigantic moth in the forest here. You can imagine the effect of such a story on the authorities. And I don't blame them for being inclined to have him certified, for delusion insanity is a terribly dangerous thing. You never know what the next fixed idea may be. The Harley Street men we called in said he already showed signs of the persecution mania."

The Colonel laughed.

"I should say he did," was his comment. "If you were locked up for reporting truthfully a thing you'd seen, I fancy you would show signs of it yourself."

"But, Colonel—surely you don't suggest——"

"What are you going to do with him?" interrupted the Colonel.

"Well," said his visitor, failing to conceal his embarrassment at the Colonel's attitude, "that's what has brought me here. He asks us to allow him to come to you and says that you are willing to look after him. Personally, I'd be inclined to advise that, if you are willing to accept the responsibility. We could run down here and have a look at him, now and then. It seems an extreme step to send

an officer of his standing and record to an asylum."

"I'm perfectly willing to have him—only too glad," said the Colonel.

"You realize the responsibility—the possible danger?"

"Perfectly. I realize other things, too, sir. One is the danger to the country if I don't get him here; another is, that you think me as mad as Langton. Well, come and look at this, will you?"

The medical officer followed the Colonel to a table which stood in the bay of one of the windows. On the table, enclosed in a rough cage of stout wire stood a most remarkable-looking object. At the first glance, the visitor took it for some rare vase which his eccentric host had caged in to prevent theft or breakage. Indeed, it resembled nothing so much as a vase without handles. It was about eighteen inches high and perhaps a foot in diameter at its widest point: a rough description of the shape would be that of a Ruby football set on end. The beauty of it was remarkable: it seemed to be composed of some rare pinkish marble, richly and curiously carved with geometrical designs which were repeated over the entire surface with faultless precision. The top was closed, and if it had an opening anywhere, it was concealed.

The visitor stared at this object with mixed feelings of admiration for its beauty and bewilderment at the Colonel's conduct in connecting it with Langton. What could be the connection between this work of art and that officer's sanity?

"What is it?" demanded the Colonel.

"A rare vase of some kind, I suppose —and a remarkably beautiful thing, Colonel."

The Colonel frowned.

"I thought you were an entomologist, sir," he said. "Please look again, and look carefully this time. Doesn't it recall anything to your mind?"

The medical officer drew a chair up to the table, and sitting down, began to examine the object intently. He turned the wire cage this way and that, scrutinized the surface with care, lifted it and weighed it in his hands, while the Colonel looked on. Finally he replaced it, and pushing back his chair, turned to his host.

"I think I see what you mean," he said. "It might be a very much enlarged model of the egg of some lepidopterous insect."

The Colonel nodded.

"Right," he said. "Only, it isn't a model. It is an egg and I'm keeping it in that wire cage till it hatches. I don't want a larva of that size loose in the house."

"But it's impossible."

"You may think so. Will it alter your idea if I tell you that I was with Langton when he saw the moth? In fact, I discovered it and mistook it for some new kind of plane that had fallen in the forest. I telephoned to him because I thought they'd want it kept secret—he came down, and what he told you in his report, we saw together."

His visitor was looking at him with frank incredulity. But the Colonel went on, unabashed.

"When it came to me that the thing was alive, I made a rough guess that it corresponded roughly to our genus *Eupithecia.* And as the antennæ were not ciliated, the inference was that it was a female—the bulky body also suggested that. So while you were looking him up, I made a search of the glade where it alighted. In the long grass, I found that. And there you are!"

The officer began to look very uncomfortable: he got up and crossed to the fireplace.

"But how—supposing that we accept

that you did see it—how did it get here—where did it come from?"

"I expect Langton explained our theory in his report."

"He did—and that seemed the maddest part of it. Something about the country being so brilliantly lit up at night and attracting these things from some planet or from the upper air."

"Well, you're a practical entomologist—think it out and see if it doesn't fit in."

There was silence for some moments. Then the officer moved uneasily.

"The funny thing about it is," he said, "that the night after, a man was run in for being drunk and disorderly. He said to the magistrate next day that he had seen an enormous thing like a plane falling on the roof of Mondaine Mansions, that big block in Park Lane. He got fourteen days."

"Anything else you know?" asked the Colonel with interest.

"I don't know," said the officer. "Could this have any bearing on it? The Captain of the *Fanteric,* the big liner, reported that he ran into some big floating object in the channel a day or two later which he thought must have been a dead whale—only the lookout man said that the sea on either side of it seemed to be held down by two wing-shaped patches of oil. Anyway it was cut up by the bows of the ship and apparently sank. But they found traces of some glutinous substance on the plates of the ship that certainly wasn't the blood of a whale. Mystery of the sea, the papers called it."

"That might account for one of them," said the Colonel. "I must make inquiries. But the other—if there were only two—where is it?"

"Look here," said the officer, with a gesture of perplexity, "you can't expect me to go back to Kingsway and father this story. Nobody would—not even if you produced that egg to the Royal Society. If nothing comes of it, they would all be branded as lunatics."

"But something may come of it," said the Colonel. "Suppose they've been scattering eggs all over the place? These larvæ would be fairly formidable things, what?"

"I'll do this," said his visitor, after a pause; "I'll send Langton down here, discharged as cured, and you and he can work on it. If there are any developments, I'll count on you to let me know at once. Langton ought to be reinstated immediately, but till there's some convincing proof, you can see how impossible that is."

"Well," said the Colonel, "that's the best thing you can do, I've no doubt. But meantime I have drawn up a full report of the whole thing. I sent it to the Prime Minister last night—it was my duty to the nation and to Langton. How he'll take it, of course, I don't know."

"But you can guess," said the other. "Very well—we'll leave it like that, Colonel. If the P. M. knows, it's out of my hands and that's a comfort. Langton will be sent down to you today. He'll be a bit under the weather anyhow after the ordeal he's been through—you'd better feed him up and let him rest a bit."

ON THAT understanding they parted. That evening, a car brought Langton to Wintram Hall. He was pale and obviously suffering from strain, and the Colonel packed him off to bed, refusing to discuss anything till he had eaten a good meal and had a sound sleep. It was noon of the following day before he came downstairs; but his host noted with delight that he looked almost as well and alert as on the occasion of his first visit.

The long discussions that followed served little purpose but to make clear to

the two men the nature of the dilemma in which they were involved. It seemed impossible to do anything further in a public manner—the fate that had overtaken Langton in consequence of his report was sufficient proof of that: and until they were made aware of the manner in which the Prime Minister was going to treat the Colonel's communication, any other move was worse than useless. Then there had been no further reports of the presence of the strange visitors: they might still be hidden somewhere or they might have returned to the regions from which they came, although the Colonel's investigations in the affair of the *Fanteric* revealed the fact that a quantity of strange bony framework had been washed ashore in Sussex and that a mysterious scum had appeared on the sea in the same neighborhood, mixed with entrail-like fragments. This suggested that one of the wanderers, perhaps exhausted by the lack of some natural element required for its sustenance, had fallen exhausted into the sea and been destroyed by the ship. But that was only a likely speculation, and what had become of the other? That, they never knew: either it perished unseen or returned to its native element.

If the creatures had died or left the earth, the remaining danger was that ovæ had been deposited during their visit, and might eventually hatch out larvæ whose size and destructiveness would be a terrible danger to mankind. That one egg had been left behind, they had proof—it reposed in the Colonel's study. A wide search of the neighborhood had revealed no others and there might be no others. But the probability was that they had disturbed the moth at the beginning of its operations and that it had completed them elsewhere, in which case hundreds of these eggs must be in existence. That could only be found out when the time for the emergence of the larvæ arrived; and that they hoped to learn from the solitary specimen they had.

There was in the meantime, therefore, nothing for them to do but think out possible plans of destroying the brood when it hatched and was discovered; but a few comparative experiments with living insects made it plain that caterpillars of such a size would possess enormous strength and that their skins would probably be tough enough to turn any bullet aside.

How was such a danger to be dealt with? It was to this problem that the two friends turned their attention in the weeks that followed and without any assurance of success.

About a fortnight after Langton's return to Wintram Hall, they received a visit from the medical officer who had previously consulted Colonel Butler about his friend. Nothing beyond a brief official acknowledgment had resulted from the Colonel's letter to the Prime Minister and he had been forced to the conclusion that he was regarded as one of those harmless lunatics who pester the great with their effusions. He and Langton were in the study when the visitor was shown in, and the Colonel's welcome was not any too cordial.

"You don't mean to tell me that they've sent you down to inspect Langton, after all?" he growled.

"You'll still find me suffering as badly as ever from the same delusion," Langton added, before the other could reply.

"Sorry about all that, you know, Langton," said the officer, patiently, "but as things were, it couldn't be helped. No, sir," he went on, turning to the Colonel, "it is not about that—it's about your letter to the Prime Minister."

The Colonel sat up.

"Yes, sir, the P. M., naturally enough, turned it over to the air ministry. The fat was in the fire, as you can guess. They could not very well ask the P. M. to believe that Langton, and you and myself, for of course I told them what I'd seen, were all mad. There was the devil to pay—the P. M. called for a full report of the whole affair, said he had talked to Langton that morning and found him perfectly sane. He threatened to retire all sorts of important bugs and gave every one a dressing down. The upshot is that he has appointed a sort of committee of scientific big-wigs to consider the possibilities. So far all they've done is to say it's impossible. But the P. M. says everything is possible till the contrary is proved—and I'm here as the forerunner of the committee and the P. M. himself. They want to see the egg."

Instinctively the gaze of the three men turned to the object on the table in the window. But something had happened to it. From a hole near the top of it, a shining, horny head, armed with complicated and formidable jaws, projected, emerging farther at every moment. They rushed to the table and watched with a horrible fascination the long, eel-like body pushing itself forth, till finally the thing, grasping the broken edge of the shell with its hind claspers, was fully born.

The young caterpillar they saw surpassed so greatly in size anything of the kind ever seen by men that it seemed like the creature of a nightmare. Its body, about two feet in length, projected stiffly from the tail claspers by which it held on to the egg, at an angle of about forty-five degrees: it was a dark-reddish color, with a rough, horny skin on which the rows of breathing-follicles were clearly visible, and looked like nothing so much as a branch of a tree.

"What is it?" demanded the medical officer at last.

"Might be a gigantic variant of the genus *Eupithecia,* going by the old classification," said the Colonel. "In fact, it might be a huge *subumbrata*—the coloring of the parent and of this caterpillar distinctly suggest *subumbrata.* Curiously enough, the glade between beechwoods in which we saw the thing is just exactly where you might find our tiny *Eupithecia subumbrata.* But to a thing of that size, our beech trees would look like seedlings."

"He's going to move!" shouted Langton. As he spoke, the creature began to sway its extended body to and fro, as if seeking for a hold for the six legs near its head, and the Colonel snatched the wire cage away. The long body bent down to the surface of the table, found a footing there for the forelegs and drew itself up into a loop which brought the hind claspers against the forelegs. The head then shot forth, secured a hold, and the tail was drawn up to it again in the familiar method of "looper" caterpillars. But in each of these strides, the creature covered about two feet of ground and the movements were performed with incredible rapidity. Before the watchers realized what was happening, it was on the floor and looping its way across the carpet at a great speed.

The three men backed away from it with pale, horror-stricken faces.

"Do you realize that it may grow to fifty meet or more?" gasped the Colonel. "Imagine hundreds of them loose in the country—they'd devastate a county in a week."

"They're big enough to provide a good target," suggested Langton.

"Yes, but once they're half-grown, how're you going to kill them?" demanded the Colonel. "Bullets from any

ordinary firearm wouldn't pierce them—you'd need artillery. You'd need to evacuate the country and send out an army against them."

"I—I suppose they're not carnivorous, anyhow," said the medical officer.

"God knows what they eat in the moon or Mars or wherever they've come from," groaned the Colonel. "But we must chain this fellow up before he starts on my carpet."

He slipped off his coat and threw it over the caterpillar, muffling its head carefully. But even then, it required all his strength to wrench its hind claspers from the carpet: they came away with bits of the material attached.

He rushed out of the house with the writhing creature in his hands, followed by the others. In the stableyard was a brick shed with a corrugated-iron roof and a stout door; into this they thrust the caterpillar and locked the door, first flinging in half a dozen cabbages which the Colonel pulled ruthlessly from the kitchen garden. Then, three greatly shaken men, they returned to the house, but this time it was to the dining-room that they went, where the Colonel produced the whisky decanter. They helped themselves generously and drank in silence.

"WELL," said the medical officer, presently, "there is nothing for me to do here. The P. M. and his scientific big bugs are coming to see you on Friday. Meantime, I shall tell them what I've seen—and as for the air ministry, I'll quote Hamlet to them—but it won't have any effect, I'm afraid."

With this he took his leave.

Shortly afterward, the two friends set out on another exploration of the region in which the egg had been found; but a prolonged search of the grass and the trees in the neighboring parts of the forest revealed nothing. They returned tired and exhausted and sat late over an excellent dinner, discussing the subject that was foremost in their thoughts.

Before they retired, Langton suggested that they might take another look at the shed in the stable yard.

"Just what I was thinking myself," said the Colonel. "He's safe enough in there, of course, but we don't know what he is capable of consuming in the way of food. Let us collect a few more cabbages and throw them in, shall we? In the morning, I propose to photograph him. I wish we had thought of doing it when he was first hatched—it would have been useful as a record of growth."

The night was cloudy and dark, but with the aid of two powerful electric torches they raided the kitchen garden again and proceeded to the shed. The Colonel unlocked the stout door and flung it open, while Langton flashed his torch round the interior.

It was empty.

"It's gone!" cried Langton. They entered the shed and closed the door while they turned the torches upon every cranny and corner that could hide the creature. It was not there.

"My God!" cried the Colonel, suddenly; "look at that!"

He pointed at a little heap of brick dust at the foot of the back wall and then at a hole eaten through the brickwork above it. Here and there, there were deep scores in the bricks round this point as if they had been gnawed by some animal; on the floor lay the droppings of the caterpillar. The cabbages had only been partly consumed.

"Do you understand what this means?" asked Colonel Butler, almost in a whisper. "It means that these things can eat brick—it has eaten and digested brick-

work—the droppings prove that. But after all, is that more impossible than their size? The little forms of this creature that we know in this world live on vegetable matter which is derived from the earth—might not a gigantic and more robust digestive system deal with the earth itself, even in the form of brick and stone?"

Langton stared at him with fear in his eyes.

"Suppose they began to attack houses?"

"You see for yourself what would happen," replied the Colonel. "I suppose we had better make a search for it—but it may be miles away by now, travelling at that rate, and if it's near we shall never find it in the dark."

Nevertheless they made what search they could with the aid of the torches, but it was fruitless. Their prisoner had escaped and they never saw it again. There was nothing to be done but to await developments.

NEXT morning there was a letter for the Colonel from the Prime Minister. It was a brief communication stating that he had heard of the hatching of the egg and confirming his visit at the end of the week. Meantime, he urged upon the Colonel and Langton the extreme undesirability of starting a scare among the public and enjoined secrecy. The committee he had got together had expressed the opinion that if such creatures had reached the earth—a possibility which they did not accept—the conditions would be so different from those of their native habitat that they would certainly perish in a very short time, and this would apply to the larvæ if any were hatched. It seemed, therefore, the Prime Minister wrote, that any idea of real danger to the community might be dismissed, and that to avoid wild and exaggerated reports, nothing had better be done or said at present. The committee would look at the egg and inspect the spot on which it was found: he wished to be present at these investigations himself and his first available day was Friday.

"The real meaning of that lies between the lines," said Langton, when the Colonel had finished reading this communication aloud. "It means that those old fossils don't believe a word of the story and think that we have faked this egg ourselves. When they hear that the caterpillar has escaped, they'll nod their sapient heads and say, 'Quite!' in triumphant fashion."

The Colonel nodded.

"That's about the size of it, I'm afraid," he agreed. "Very well, let the P. M. and his friends have it their own way. Our orders are to do nothing—good! We'll obey them. But I tell you what we can do, Langton, and that's keep a lookout."

"How d'ye mean?"

"In the press. I've ordered all the London papers to be delivered here every day, and most of the important provincial journals as well. Now, I suggest that we go through them every day and cut out anything that might have the remotest bearing on the presence of these creatures. I mean to say, the connection might not be obvious at once—we'll have to weigh every item of home news with reference to a possible bearing."

Langton thought the idea a good one and welcomed it as a relief from the monotony of inaction. They spent that morning going through the newspapers, and most of the afternoon as well, but the result was nil.

Next day, however, the search yielded something that might be a possibility. The Colonel looked up from the *Times*

in which he was immersed at the sound of Langton's scissors.

"Struck something?" he asked, eagerly.

"Listen to this," said Langton. "It's the *Express:* 'Ghost in Epping Forest. Yesterday afternoon two men arrived at the Robin Hood Inn in an exhausted and terrified state, telling an incoherent story of having seen a ghost in Monks Wood where they had been resting. They said they had run for over a mile in their terror and were in such a collapsed condition that the landlord supplied them with brandy at his own charge. The men, who were of the tramp class, stated that they were on their way to London from the north and had camped in the wood for their midday meal. They were unable to describe what they had seen clearly but said that something horrible had looked at them from a tree overhead. One said it looked like the Devil and the other described it as a huge horny face. They declined to report the matter to the police and shortly afterward proceeded to London by bus. Local opinion is skeptical as to the presence of a ghost or a monster in Monks Wood, one of the finest natural preserves in the Forest. The police believe that they were the victims of a practical joke, and the more cynical members of the force suggest that the whole affair was an ingenious method of obtaining drink at the expense of the landlord of the Robin Hood.' "

"Sounds like our escaped friend," said the Colonel. "We'd better file that, and have a look at Monks Wood ourselves."

But the visit to Monks Wood yielded no trace of the missing caterpillar. Next day's paper, however, yielded one or two paragraphs on the same subject and mentioned other reports of picnickers and pedestrians in the forest having been scared by strange sounds and sights. By the third day, the Epping Forest Mystery had become news, but the press treated it as a subject for humor and accused the inhabitants of trying to advertise their neighborhood at the expense of the seaside resorts. The *Telegraph* pointed out that the best that the seaside could do was a sea-serpent and that was not due till August, whereas here were the proprietors of swings and roundabouts and tea gardens trying to draw custom by proclaiming the arrival of a land serpent, of terrifying dimensions, for such was the description given by one party.

But on Friday morning the press had changed its tone. The penny papers and flaring headlines announcing a "Dastardly Outrage in Epping Forest." Late on the previous night, three motor coaches conveying excursionists to London passed through the village of Epping at a fast speed. A mile or two farther on the leading coach struck an unseen obstacle which killed the driver and ripped the entire top from the chassis, causing numerous casualties among the passengers. The following coach swerved out to avoid a collision and ran into the same obstacle with nearly similar results, and the third vehicle, so quickly did the whole thing happen, was unable to pull up and crashed into the wreckage. When the police and the ambulances reached the spot, an appalling scene was revealed by the headlights of the numerous cars now stopped. Dead and injured lay all over the road and in the wreckage of the coaches, and the cause of the accident was plainly revealed by the fragments of a cable of some very strong but unknown substance attached to tree trunks on either side of the highway.

"An outrage that could only have been planned by fiends," as one paper put it, certainly seemed a just description of the affair. That it was a carefully thought-out affair seemed certain to the press.

The cable was of a substance unknown to industry or science and of great strength. First investigations suggested that it was composed of some combination of the materials that go to make artificial silk and it had been fixed to trees on either side by adhesive of mysterious nature. The whole affair was obviously the work of enemies of society: perfectly innocent and harmless holiday-makers had been massacred and maimed with the most callous cruelty. Public opinion was immediately aflame: suspicion centered upon Bolshevist agents and the Communist Party was accused of participation in the outrage. Communists' clubs and committee rooms were wrecked by angry crowds, an attack was made upon the Russian Embassy and many innocent people were injured and hunted through the streets.

Search of the forest by day revealed no hidden anarchists: but a strong police patrol was put upon all main roads.

COLONEL BUTLER and Langton, although they were living not very far from the scene of this affair, heard nothing of it till the following morning, when the Colonel's butler brought him the papers with his morning tea. He was still absorbing the details when Langton came into the room with his tea in one hand and a paper in the other.

"You know what this is!" cried the Colonel, waving his paper in the air.

"I do," said Langton, gravely. "It was a thread spun by one of those infernal creatures from one tree to another. Of course it would be invisible at night and of course it would be frightfully strong. This'll happen again, unless something is done about it. Surely this will make the authorities do something."

"Not a hope!" asserted the Colonel. "They've made up their minds that we're madmen or fakers—people in that frame of mind are not capable of making deductions. You see what they say—the work of Communists and Anarchists. Why should Communists want to murder coachloads of working people? Where did they get this mysterious cable that's baffling the experts? What fools people are, Langton! And here are we condemned to sit here till tomorrow when the Prime Minister is bringing his committee of old wives to mumble over it. Perhaps they won't come at all, now!"

"This paper put two and two together to some extent," said Langton. "Listen: 'It is impossible not to connect this outrage with the mysterious reports of the haunting of the Forest by terrifying creatures which have been current for some days. No doubt the perpetrators of the crime required some days to perfect their arrangements and took that means of scaring away unwanted observers. But it is too late to search the Forest now: the criminals have undoubtedly put a safe distance between them and the scene of their devilish activities."

"Whereas," said the Colonel, "the real criminals are still on the spot—they are lying by day extended along the branches and trunks of trees, so like them in substance that it is almost impossible to detect them even if you're looking for them. And nobody's looking for them—they're chasing innocent Communists and threatening amazed Russians. I tell you what, Langton! I'm not anxious to die before my time and I'm not going out into the Forest myself, till we've seen the Prime Minister and found out what he's going to do. D'ye realize that one of those fellows could practically bite your head off?"

"In any case," said Langton, "I can't go against the P. M.'s orders—I'd lose my last hope of professional reinstatement if I did. We'll sit tight till he comes

tomorrow. We've warned him and the responsibility isn't ours, now."

Next morning the press sensations were unabated. A constant patrol of the Forest roads had been maintained but in spite of the vigilance of the police, two new cables were found laid across the highways in a precisely similar manner. An order was issued closing all roads in the district to traffic by night. Meantime panic had spread among the inhabitants: the wildest and most incredible stories were flying about of a non-human monster hiding in the woods, and of extraordinary sounds rising from the thickets after dark.

ABOUT eleven o'clock a number of cars arrived at Wintram Hall bringing the Prime Minister and his committee as well as several high officers of the army and air force. It was a hot and rather misty July morning, without a breath of wind, and from the terrace which commanded a wide view of the forest mile upon mile of woodland could be seen shimmering in the heat haze which obscured the distant outlines.

The Colonel received his visitors as they alighted and conducted them to the study, where the necessary introductions were effected. The experts who formed the committee were Professor Meakerly, a famous biologist, and two eminent members of the Royal Entomological Society. These gentlemen at once asked to see the egg.

They subjected it to a careful scrutiny, while the Prime Minister was talking to the Colonel and Langton and the officers he had brought with him.

"You may be surprized to see these gentlemen," he said, referring to the latter, "but it is my intention, when we have looked into this affair of the egg, to investigate this other mystery of the Forest. In fact, as soon as the mist clears, a thorough examination of the forest will be made from the air—it may afford a clue to the presence of the miscreants responsible for the outrages."

Langton and the Colonel stared at the speaker, but before they could say anything, an interruption came from the scientists.

"And now may we see the caterpillar, please?" asked the biologist.

"Unfortunately, it escaped the same night," said the Colonel. "We made a search but it was hopeless."

"Quite," said the biologist, and the three exchanged glances. "Was it not confined in any way?"

"Yes, in a brick and iron shed," replied the Colonel. "It gnawed through the bricks and got away."

"It eats bricks, then?" queried one of the entomologists, with a half-smile.

"It does," replied the Colonel, stoutly, "for not only did it get out but it had been eating the walls in a lot of places—and it not only eats brick but digests it, as its droppings prove."

"A truly remarkable caterpillar!" said the other entomologist, and there was a general laugh. "I don't know that we need take up any more of Colonel Butler's no doubt valuable time," he continued, "but it might be interesting to see this shed—and the digested brickwork."

"By all means!" said the Colonel. "But you have examined the egg—perhaps you would be good enough to say what you make of that?"

The three looked at each other and then the biologist replied.

"We propose to take a portion of it with us for analysis," he said, with heavy sarcasm. "I have seen an enlarged model of the egg of a lepidopterous insect which was fashioned of material obtained by calcining gypsum until it had become

partially dehydrated and the addition of a little coloring matter. It was a remarkably good imitation of this of course genuine object."

"In other words, you suggest that it is made of plaster of Paris," said the Colonel, with a smile. "Very good—it is not for me to suggest that such an eminent authority might be mistaken." He was about to say more, when a surprizing interruption came from his friend.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Langton. "Plaster of Paris—that gives me an idea!"

Inquiring glances were turned upon him, but he relapsed into silence. The Colonel, seeing that he did not want to be questioned, proposed that they should now examine the shed.

"Excellent!" exclaimed the biologist, who was nettled by the Colonel's reply. "That's just what we want to do to complete our inquiry. Has any objection occurred to you, Colonel?" he asked, as the Colonel seemed to hesitate.

"No!" burst out that honest soldier, angrily. "I only want to say first that it passes my comprehension how the Prime Minister, for whose common sense I have always had the greatest respect, can allow himself to be so far deluded by the skepticism of this committee as not to see for himself the connection between the appearances of these moths and these so-called outrages in the Forest, which he says he is going to investigate. Why, the thing's as plain as the nose on my face to any one who's not prejudiced."

The Prime Minister flushed; the members of the committee exchanged smiles.

"Kindly explain yourself, Colonel," said the Prime Minister, with dignity.

"Sir," said the Colonel, "forgive me if I spoke impatiently and if I make my explanation elementary. If one egg has been laid, probably hundreds have. Probably you remember from boyhood what a looper caterpillar is like? Well, these are gigantic loopers—that lie concealed during the day by their very resemblance to tree trunks or branches, if any danger threatens them—they can spin threads strong enough to bear their own weight and a good deal more. The cable that those cars ran into was nothing but a thread made by one of them from one tree to another. The horny heads like devils that people say they have seen—isn't that obvious? Didn't one of your airmen report yesterday that he saw nothing suspicious in the forest but that there was a spot that looked as if it had been burned recently? If any one had had courage to explore that burned area, he would have found that it wasn't burned but simply eaten out by these creatures."

That the Prime Minister was impressed by the Colonel's sincerity was obvious. He turned frowning to the men of science, but as he did so he cast a startled glance at the window.

"What is happening out there?" he demanded. The Colonel ran to the French windows and flung them open and the whole party followed him out on to the terrace.

A rapidly growing crowd of obviously frightened people was gathering on the Colonel's lawns, from which as from the terrace a wide view of the Forest could be obtained. Their gaze was directed on one section of the woodland about a mile away, in which, despite the windless morning, a strange agitation was visible among the trees. On the still morning air curious tearing and rending sounds were audible, as of torn and snapped branches. Tree tops disappeared before the watchers' eyes, leaving gaps in the greenery in which long writhing forms were visible. Occasionally a long, eel-like body appeared above the trees, waving to and fro: it would descend on a mass of

foliage which in a short space of time had disappeared altogether.

THE Prime Minister and his committee gazed in astonishment at the scene—Colonel Butler had slipped away from the group, and returning in a few moments, he distributed field glasses amongst them. The Prime Minister, the biologist and one of the other experts snatched them eagerly and focussed them on the disturbed area.

"Now, do you believe?" asked the Colonel, after a few moments. The biologist lowered his glasses and turned to him.

"I do," he said, simply, "and I offer you and Commodore Langton my sincerest apologies. There is no doubt that there is a brood of creatures like gigantic caterpillars in the trees there—and, by Jove! they are making short work of the Forest!"

The Colonel nodded: he was not the man to maintain a grudge.

"That's all right, sir," he said. "The thing's too incredible for any one to swallow without proof. But the question now is how are we going to deal with them. I estimate they'll grow to at least seventy-five feet—I don't know how you're going to kill them, short of artillery."

"Is there danger to human life?" asked the Prime Minister. The biologist replied:

"Terrible danger, I should say, if they break out of there—and if they're not all destroyed, you'll have another brood hatching out in time. They might wipe out human life and human houses, not to speak of destroying vegetation to the last leaf."

"Has any one a suggestion?"

"I have, sir," said an air officer. "Let me telephone for a squadron of bombers and bomb them out."

"The effect would be to destroy the Forest—and there would be a possible loss of human life," objected the politician. "I can't take such an extreme measure without consulting my colleagues in the Cabinet. And the control of the Forest is vested by Act of Parliament in the Corporation of London—they must be consulted. And a public warning must be given first in any case."

"Do you realize, sir, what the danger really is?" asked the Colonel. "Imagine these creatures, say fifty feet long and stronger than anything we can conceive of, emerging from the Forest on the neighboring towns and villages! We have seen that they can eat anything—why, one of them might devastate a village in an hour."

But the nature of the whole question was strange to the Prime Minister and his imagination refused to function with sufficient range: the first consideration with him was the fear of public opinion and its repercussion at the approaching elections. He shook his head.

"We must make haste slowly, Colonel," he said. "Let all preparations be made by the air ministry for dealing with the creatures by bombing—but nothing must be done without my express sanction, and my sanction for the ruthless destruction of London's finest playground will not be given except in the last emergency. By the look of it, there is enough food there for these creatures for many days to come: I shall return to London and summon the Cabinet at once."

"Don't forget, sir," urged the Colonel, "that they're growing every day. Their progress tomorrow will be twice what it is today."

"I shall lose no time, be assured of that," was the reply, and they all had to

be contented with that. It was arranged that an air observation patrol should be maintained till a decision had been come to, and that a certain force of infantry should be drafted to the Forest area with instructions to shoot the creatures on sight. The Prime Minister then took his departure with the committee.

The Colonel groaned as he and Langton watched the departing cars.

"It's sheer suicide!" he exclaimed. "My God, fancy thinking of votes at a moment like this! However, there it is—and if they won't have lunch, we may as well, while we have a roof over our heads."

They went to the dining-room, and before they had finished their meal they heard through the open windows the droning of airplanes which were circling over the Forest and dispatching wireless reports momentarily to headquarters.

"A few bombs dropped now in the middle of that brood would do the trick," remarked Langton, as they looked on: "but when they get a little bigger they'll separate."

The Colonel agreed.

"Judging by the size of these fellows out there," he said, "they either grow at a colossal speed or they're an earlier brood than our egg. Hillo! Hear that! The troops have arrived on the scene, eh?"

The sound of scattered firing, in curious wooden thuds, came to their ears from the Forest below. The Colonel got up eagerly.

"I say," he exclaimed, "let us go down and have a look at this—reminds me of old times."

3. The Death Grapple

THEY made their way down to the Forest. Dense crowds of sightseers thronged the roads, despite the warnings of the police patrols: press men and press photographers hung about hoping to hear or see something sensational. But no one was allowed to leave the roadways and when the Colonel and Langton tried to penetrate the woods in the direction of the firing, they were promptly halted by the military. Not even the Colonel's rank and standing as a local magistrate would have been of avail, had not a hot and perspiring officer emerged from the thicket and overheard the argument.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said to the Colonel, "but I can't let you through—orders are absolutely strict. We're actually in action and there's considerable danger from stray bullets."

"Doing any good?' asked Langton.

"Not the least," grumbled the officer. "Might as well use pea-shooters. Bullets bounce off them, so far as I can see. Only sting them up and annoy them. They've done for one or two men already. I mean to say, one of the fellows saw one standing up like a tree trunk and fired at it—the thing switched about and came down on him with its forelegs—picked him up and dropped him with all his ribs broken. Another hit a man when it was swaying about and knocked him against a tree—killed. We're simply stirring them up."

"Hm!" said the Colonel, "I doubt if it's wise. Suppose you start them travelling, how are you going to stop them?"

"Can't," said the officer. "They've started already in places. We had a firing-line and the damned things simply stepped over it. Never saw anything like it—d'ye know some of them must be getting on for forty or fifty feet? They're simply eating the heart out of the Forest, as if it were a cabbage."

"They should be bombed out," said Langton.

"Of course," agreed the soldier. "But would you believe it, the City Corporation

object! Nobody seems to realize what we're up against. D'ye know that they're running excursions from London to see the strange monsters, as they call them? Look at this mob—out for a picnic, you'd think."

With that he left them, and they detached themselves from the crowd and made their way back to Wintram Hall, the Colonel full of gloomy prognostications as to what would happen if the authorities did not wake up to the danger. They were met in the hall by an excited butler.

"Sir," he cried, "they say that the creatures are moving through the Forest southward and that the army's got a battery of artillery on the golf course at Chingford to meet them if they come out."

"Ah," said the Colonel, "then some one's taken charge at last! That's the best thing they could do—get them in the open and blow them to bits. Tell Jones to get the car ready—we'll run down to Chingford as soon as we've had a cup of tea and see how things are."

But when the car emerged on the highroad, they found it blocked by a surging mass of fugitives, on foot, in cars, in motor coaches and every kind of vehicle, all making in common panic for the shelter of London. Terrifying stories were current of the oncoming of a horde of death-dealing monsters: hundreds of soldiers, it was rumored, had been killed and the creatures were proof against bullets; they could tear down houses and devour their inhabitants. People were leaving their dwellings and joining the fleeing mob, women were screaming in terror and white-faced men were forcing their way through the throng. An occasional burst of rifle fire from the trees only served to quicken the panic. It was over an hour before the Colonel's car, moving at a snail's pace, managed to traverse the few miles to Chingford, and the Colonel and Langton, leaving it among the trees in charge of the chauffeur, managed to find a footing on the hill behind the Forest Hotel.

From this point they commanded a view of the open plain and the great stretch of forest to the north. Across the golf course, a battery of quick-firers was drawn up in the open, the gunners at the ready. They were supported by lines of troops lying on the grass. The terrified inhabitants of the village on the edge of the golf course stood at their windows or in their gardens staring in astonishment at these war-like preparations; others were loading their cars with valuables in readiness for immediate flight.

But the little group of cooler spectators on the hill had their eyes fixed upon the dense green sea of the forest. The same strange agitation among the trees that they had seen farther north that morning, the Colonel and Langton now saw again, not very far away, accompanied by the same rending and crashing sounds. But it was obvious that the center of the disturbance was moving southward toward them. Now and then volleys of rifle fire broke out; above the falling trees, great writhing shapes appeared and withdrew.

"Whoever's handling this job knows what he's doing," said the Colonel. "You hear that firing—first on one flank and then on the other? He's shepherding them down to the guns—may not be able to kill them but he's got them on the run—and by Jove! they're coming pretty fast!"

HE HAD scarcely spoken when the first of the monsters appeared on the edge of the Forest. A vast columnar shape rose above the thicket of thorn bushes that fringed the trees and bowed its head down to take a foothold on the grass of the open plain. In an instant the giant loop was drawn up and the creature had thrust its

length forward again, taking forty feet in its stride. The speed at which it progressed seemed incredible; behind it, other vast shapes could be seen twisting and writhing through the trees.

Faint and thin in the distance they heard a word of command: there was a flash from one of the guns, followed by the thud of the explosion and by the crash of a bursting shell.

"Good man!" breathed the Colonel, as a cloud of dust and smoke rose from the ground just where the advancing caterpillar was taking a fresh foothold. The creature reared on its hind claspers, swayed for a moment and then fell like a falling factory chimney; the long body thrashed to and fro on the grass in the muscular contortions of death. A cheer went up from the onlookers.

But now the whole brood, about a hundred in number, had broken from the cover of the trees and was looping toward the guns with frightening velocity. It is almost impossible to give any adequate idea of the terrifying nature of the spectacle that confronted the gunner and the trembling crowds. Huge eel-like bodies, some forty or fifty feet in length, towered in the air or flung themselves in gigantic looping strides toward the line of artillery. These bodies were a dull red; they were surmounted by flattish, horny heads armed with formidable pincer-like jaws and cavernous mouths; three pairs of many-jointed legs of shining horny substance, immediately behind the head, tore the surface of the ground they descended upon, like the automatic diggers used in excavation. Such a spectacle had never before been seen by human eyes: beside them, the soldiers looked like pigmies and their guns like toys.

Yet, true to their traditions, the men of the British army stood firmly to their guns. There was no flinching, but here and there a Cockney flung a jesting remark to his comrades.

"They're leaving it too late," growled the Colonel, as he watched the mass of looping shapes bearing down upon the artillery. But even as he spoke, a sheet of flame sprang from the line of guns and the roll of their fire reverberated in his ears. From the clouds of smoke and earth thrown up by the bursting shells, huge writhing shapes shot up like the tentacles of a stricken octopus, wavered in the air and then fell with heavy thuds that could be felt and heard. One huge form bore through the smoke and grasping a gun in its enormous arms flung it into the air; another, swinging its body in the death agony, fell upon a gun and its crew and obliterated them; one or two others stepped right over the battery in one gigantic stride. But now men of the infantry in reserve ran forward and attacked them with Mills bombs of high destructive power and, one by one, the great creatures swayed, stumbled and collapsed with great rents torn in their sides, from which a green liquid poured in floods. In a very short space of time the affair was over: the plain was piled with battered shapes, still writhing as life ebbed from them and still dangerous to approach. Dead and injured men were being attended to on the ground and hurried into waiting ambulances, but a huge sigh of relief went up from the watching crowd as they realized that the danger had been magnificently overcome.

Presently long lines of bombers converged on the forest and disappeared into its recesses: an occasional explosion could be heard as they carried out their task of running down any stragglers from the main brood of the creatures that had seemed to threaten the human race.

Langton turned to his friend.

"That was jolly well handled!" he said

with heart-felt relief. "The danger is over, if that was the only brood."

"Yes," replied the Colonel. "The army's not played out yet when it comes to a job of work! But is it the only brood? I hope so—and it probably is. After all, only one pair was seen."

"And one of the pair is dead, we know —the other has probably perished, also, by this time or returned to the upper regions. Yes—the chances are a million to one that this is the last of them."

They disentangled themselves from the crowd and went home, all access to the field of action being forbidden by the military. This was necessary, for every now and then a long body would heave itself up from the pile of shattered monsters and thrash to and fro in an expiring convulsion. And whenever this happened, bombers ran forward to dispatch it.

That night there were scenes of the wildest rejoicing in the streets of London and the suburbs. When the news came through of the destruction of the whole horde of monsters which had threatened the safety of perhaps even London itself, the people swarmed into the thoroughfares and abandoned themselves to mafficking. The authorities made no attempt to interfere beyond checking the alcohol-inspired excess of the wilder spirits. The papers poured out edition after edition describing the Battle of Chingford and specials containing news of the destruction of yet another monster in the depths of the Forest. The news, flashed round the world, brought with it a wave of relief to other nations, for the tidings of the last few days had revealed to scientists everywhere a threat to the very existence of mankind.

IN THE warm dusk of the July night, the Colonel and Langton were sitting in the garden of Wintram Hall, smoking their final cigars. They could hear dimly the sounds of general rejoicing: bonfires blazed, and rockets soared into the darkness; faint sounds of singing came from the neighboring village.

The Colonel flung away the stump of his cigar and rose from his chair; he stood sniffing the air for a moment.

"Although it's such a hot night, Langton," he said, presently, "I think we should keep our windows shut. Can you smell anything?"

Langton became aware of a slight but horribly sickly odor mingling with the scent of the flowers. He looked inquiringly at his friend.

"What did you expect?" asked the Colonel, as he led the way indoors. "That great heap of dead caterpillars—hundreds of tons, there must be—putrefying. It'll be worse tomorrow."

Down the valley of the Lea, toward London, the smell was stealing almost imperceptibly but becoming momentarily stronger. A slight northerly breeze that began to stir in the trees accelerated its progress. The rejoicing crowds in Piccadilly fell silent as they began to breathe the horrible contagion. What new terror was this?

In Park Lane the dense throng pouring north and south paused to sniff the breeze. Where was this odor coming from—had something gone wrong with the sewers or was it coming from above? As they stood gazing upward, they were startled by a succession of crashes. A shower of tiles and roofing material began to fall from the huge soaring clock of Mondaine Mansions, the biggest building of its kind in London. The cries of the injured started a panic—people surged this way and that in an endeavor of escape from some new unseen danger, the weak were trampled underfoot and the strong, if they stumbled, were lost.

It took the police and the military sev-

eral hours to clear Park Lane and the vicinity. The crowds were sternly admonished to go home, the injured were collected and dispatched to the hospitals. A little group of officials stood in the at last empty roadway looking at the pile of debris which had fallen on the crowd.

"Heavens! What on earth is that stink?" exclaimed Chief Inspector Salisbury to another officer.

"It's the decaying corpses of those things at Chingford, they say," replied his friend. "Hillo, hillo!"

The exclamation was caused by the descent of another small shower of broken tiles from the top of the building.

"Seems as if the damn thing is crumbling!" said the Chief Inspector. "We'll have to close the road except for people coming to the Mansions—we can make them use the back entrance."

"Yes, but there's a dance going on in there," said his friend. "My God, what's all this?"

Through the main entrance of the building there came pouring a struggling terrified mob of men and women in evening dress. Some shouted frantically for their cars and taxi-cabs; others started running on foot; some surged round the police officers imploring help and protection. It took them some time to disentangle anything coherent from the babble of voices around them.

At last, a little disheveled man in pajamas with an overcoat thrown over them disengaged himself from the crowd and told his story.

He was a servant employed in the mansions who was off duty that night and had retired to bed about eleven o'clock. He had been awakened some time later by a curious scraping, scratching sound that seemed to come from the roof overhead—his bedroom was on the attic floor of the building. He kept on hearing the sound and then dozing off and hearing it again. Then when it seemed to be getting nearer and louder—like a big rat gnawing, he said—he had switched on the light and sat up in bed. As he did so, a shower of plaster fell on his head and he looked up.

There was a hole in the ceiling above his head and looking down at him was a horny, evil-looking head with a pair of great jaws which were eating away the lath and plaster of the ceiling as though it were paper.

At first the little man had sat staring at the thing, hypnotized by the horror of it and wondering whether he was in a nightmare. Then he had a flash of comprehension—he had been reading the evening papers and studying the photographs of the monsters of Epping Forest. This was undoubtedly the same sort of creature on a smaller scale. He leaped out of bed, threw on an overcoat, and raced for his life, shouting an alarm as he ran. An astonished liftman had refused to admit him to his lift till the little man, shaking the steel bars of the door in a frenzy, had managed to convey to him what he had seen. The lift shot down to the ground floor and the man ran along the corridors and found himself at the entrance to the ballroom. Dashing through the protesting attendants, he reached the middle of the floor and shouted:

"They're here—the caterpillars are here—in this house—they're eating the roof off. I tell you, I've seen them."

As the sound of his voice reached the ears of the astonished dancers and his meaning began to penetrate their minds, the couples one by one came to a standstill and began to crowd round him. The band stopped playing and stood up to listen. Angry managers and waiters who pushed forward and tried to drag him away were stopped by the guests who insisted on hearing his story. Every mind was full of

the press accounts of the horrors from which London had been saved that afternoon—and here was a terrified man proclaiming that the monsters were not only in London but in that very building. Some scoffed, but the earnestness of the frightened man was convincing. In vain did the managers try to laugh the thing down: the gathering was a fashionable one and several of the men present insisted authoritatively on going up and testing the truth of the story for themselves.

When they had left the ballroom, the guests stood about uneasily, the timid edging toward the door. The band attempted to resume its functions but was angrily shouted down by the people, who wanted to discuss this strange report, and to cross-examine the shivering little man in pajamas. The longer they waited, the more a feeling of panic grew: there were noisy shouts for champagne and whisky, which were served by pale and trembling waiters. The legend of the Forest monsters had by this time grown to a story of man-devouring dragons clad in impenetrable armor from whom there could be no escape.

WHEN the men who had gone up in the lift to inspect the man's room returned to the ballroom, one glance at their set, grave faces was enough to set a rush for the exits in motion. Their spokesman in a loud voice implored every one to keep calm but thought it would be best if they all went home at once. This precipitated the rush of the panic-strcken guests who had poured out into Park Lane and surrounded the police officers.

The first care of these officers was to get every one out of the building; a cordon was then drawn round it, to prevent injury to passengers from the occasional showers of debris that continued to fall; and the officers, having informed the authorities of what had happened, went up to examine the place for themselves.

Guided by the manager, they reached the vast expanse of flat concrete, broken here and there by tiled ridges and high chimneys. With the aid of powerful lamps they examined every part of the place without result till they came to a long ridge roof that ran across the frontage to Park Lane.

A strange sight met their eyes. The tiling was mostly eaten away, leaving some of the rafters that had supported it bare and skeleton-like against the sky. Rows of huge caterpillars were at work on it, systematically demolishing everything but their own foothold. A huge gap yawned into the interior of the building and the darkness of it was populated with dimly seen moving forms.

"They're here, all right," said the Chief Inspector, wiping his forehead. "And how are we going to deal with them here, eh?"

"Luckily they're comparatively small," said the manager. "Nothing like the Forest ones, if the accounts are true."

"Yes," said the Inspector, who knew something about the subject, "but how big do you suppose they'll be when they've eaten this building?"

"Nonsense," was the reply. "Men with axes could get rid of these easily enough, it seems to me."

"Their axes wouldn't make a scratch on the skins of these things," was the reply. "We'd better get down and shut the place up till the War Office makes up its mind what to do."

The War Office was not unduly concerned: it had dealt with the first menace and it could deal with this, it felt. It contented itself with posting a regiment in and round the block, and waited till daylight should reveal the nature of the situation more clearly. Nevertheless, it was a complicated problem that it laid before

the Prime Minister and his Cabinet in the morning.

The huge building was rapidly being eaten away: the two upper stories were simply skeletons of girders from which all the friable material had been consumed. But it was out of the question to use artillery in the heart of London, and bombing by hand would involve much danger to life and destruction to a building that represented a capital value of many millions. The shareholders and directors were clamoring to have their property saved from a kind of destruction against which they were not insured; the press and public were demanding the most drastic measures to remove the menace to life and property; and the brood of monsters was growing rapidly. Their length today was estimated at ten feet: what it might be in a week, no one liked to guess. There were a thousand suggestions, none of them useful: the air force could not bomb the place without destroying the whole area, poison gas was out of the question, the local authorities took one view, the County Council another, Parliament was not sitting. A day passed and no conclusion was reached; a panic spread through London and the roads were crowded in all directions with cars bearing people away to the safety of the country.

Meantime, the monsters kept within the building, eating systematically downward. Brick, wood, furnishings, all seemed grist to their digestive mill. The braver inhabitants of London assembled in the park in huge crowds to watch the extraordinary spectacle of the huge block of flats being slowly reduced to a skeleton steel framework—for steel was the only material that seemed to refuse to yield to the action of those formidable jaws.

IT WAS on the third day, while the authorities were still disputing as to methods and who was to bear the cost of operations, which might lead to wholesale destruction of property, that driven by some instinctive purpose, the brood broke out of Mondaine Mansions, now mostly reduced to a steel skeleton. Without warning, they appeared suddenly on the exterior walls and swung themselves down on to the roadways that surrounded the building. One body of about fifty crossed Park Lane and stepping over the railings took possession of Hyde Park. Other smaller detachments wandered into Mayfair, some debouched on Piccadilly and crossed into the Green Park. The creatures, now about twenty feet long, moved with such extreme rapidity that they had scattered before any effective measures could be devised to restrain them.

Piccadilly was thronged with traffic when without warning save for a few shouts of terror from madly running people, three of the monsters came looping down Berkeley Street and turned up toward the Circus. The effect was terrible: traffic instantly came to a standstill and people leaped from cars and omnibuses to join in a wild flight to the safety of the shops and clubs. The street became one solid mass of abandoned vehicles over which the great caterpillars walked, crushing all but the strongest vehicles with their weight, and occasionally pausing to lash their great bodies to and fro as they were irritated by the fumes and noise of the hundreds of engines left running by their owners in the stampede. Many unfortunates who had remained in their cars were trampled by the formidable legs and claspers that descended on them. One caterpillar sought to escape from its unaccustomed surroundings by taking a foothold on a building: stretching out to its full length, it fixed its forelegs on a balcony and was lifting itself up when the balcony gave way and crashed to the pavement with the creature still clinging

to it. For a moment it lay writhing, smashing windows and wrecking cars with the convulsive movements of its enormously strong muscles; then it got on its feet and followed the others toward the Circus.

Here, timely warning had enabled the police to clear the road of all vehicles. Soldiers and police were drawn across all the thoroughfares opening on the Circus and they immediately closed across the top of Piccadilly when the three creatures emerged on to the empty space of the Circus. How they were to stop the progress of the caterpillars they did not know: rifles were useless and dangerous, and bombing was also dangerous in the confined space with every window crowded and every shop and restaurant packed with fugitives. But fortunately the creatures themselves solved the problem for a time by coming to rest. One stood with head and tail on the ground and its body in a loop and the others stretched their long bodies flat on the roadway.

A GROUP of distracted men sat in the Cabinet Room at No. 10 Downing Street. Air and military experts were urging their plans upon the members of the government, but all of them were so fraught with danger to life and property that to put them into operation at the moment was beyond the courage of the men in control. The gathering was actually discussing the evacuation of the capital in order to give the soldiers and airmen a free hand, when it was interrupted by the entry of a secretary who said that two gentlemen were outside demanding an interview, with such urgency that he had thought it right to announce their presence.

"They say they are Colonel Butler and Air Commodore Langton, retired," said the secretary, "and they've got a string of lorries out in Whitehall, the police tell me."

"Butler and Langton—bring them in at once," said the Prime Minister, his face lightening. "These are the two men whose warnings and advice we have disregarded all along. You gentlemen at the air ministry," he added, bitterly, "drove Langton out of the service and wanted to certify him for discovering this menace—Butler was the only man who had courage enough to support him. They may be able to save us yet."

There was an uncomfortable silence among the experts, till the two friends entered the room. They presented a strange appearance, tired and worn, as men who had not known sleep for a long time: their clothes were crushed and untidy and both were spotted from head to foot with splashes of what looked like whitewash.

"Sir," said the Colonel, without preface, "we want an order placing us in command of the fire brigade at once. Langton has thought of a method of destroying these creatures—we have been engaged in preparing our material for some days—we need the fire engines."

Murmurs arose immediately and demands for an explanation from the assembled experts. But the Colonel waved them aside with an authoritative gesture.

"The Prime Minister knows what it has cost to put us under the control of experts already," he snapped, with the anger of a man near breaking-point. "Our plan is based upon a knowledge of entomology—so was Langton's first report that would have sent him to an asylum if the authorities had had their way. Briefly, sir, give me a dozen fire engines with their crews and we'll dispose of those creatures in Piccadilly Circus as a first step."

Without a word to his colleagues, the Prime Minister wrote out an order rapidly and handed it to the Colonel.

"Take it, in God's name," he exclaimed,

"and make your attempt—if it fails, we shan't be any the worse off."

Twenty minutes later, the tense silence which reigned in Piccadilly Circus was broken by the familiar sound of fire-engine bells. The cordons were open and six fire engines drove into the empty Circus, Langton and the Colonel on the first. Behind them came a procession of petrol lorries, the tanks of which were plentifully besmeared with white: these were drawn up behind the fire engines and the hoses were attached to the tanks.

Under the directions of Langton and the Colonel, the firemen brought two hoses as near as was safe to each of the resting caterpillars.

"Aim first at their sides," were the Colonel's final words to the men. "You see those spots along each side—your object is to hit these and keep hitting them. They are the breathing-spiracles of the caterpillar—if they are choked he dies. If you can't keep on these, work on their heads where their sense organs are and particularly their mouths."

Langton himself took the first hose. At a word from the Colonel, the pumping began and six streams of white, thickish liquid began to play on the creatures. At first they disregarded the attack; then they expressed annoyance by twitching and moving their bodies.

"Give them a rest!" ordered the Colonel. The spraying ceased and the creatures settled down again, but in a few moments they began to show evidences of discomfort. The intense heat of the midday sun served to harden the mixture that had been poured upon them; they began to twitch uneasily.

At a signal from the Colonel, the streams of white liquid were renewed. The creatures began to thrash about and then to move in great loops. But the moment they tried to get into motion they were caught by a blinding spray of the white fluid full in the face. Clouds of spray descended on the firemen and the soldiers; the roadway was as white as if it had been whitewashed, and in the middle of the Circus the three creatures turned this way and that trying to escape from their tormentors. They lashed about in fury, but at every turn they were met by a torrent of the fluid. And in time it became evident that their movements were becoming sluggish; one reared itself to its full height as if in agony and fell slowly, like a tree collapsing under the pressure of a gale; it lay making convulsive movements but did not rise. The soldiers closed on it: pick-axes and sledgehammers laid to the head and thorax finished what the firemen had begun. Presently its companions shared its fate. In half an hour from the beginning of the attack, the three were dead.

An immense sigh of relief went up from the crowd, the firemen and the men of the army and police. They broke into wild cheering, while the Colonel and Langton stood wiping the stuff from their faces. They were tired out but happy: they had demonstrated that it was possible to overcome this menace to the country without danger to the lives or properties of the people.

The Colonel grasped Langton's hand and wrung it warmly.

"That was a damned ingenious idea of yours, my boy," he exclaimed.

"Only a chance thought suggested by that fool at Wintram Hall," said Langton, modestly.

"But what is the idea?" asked a voice at his side. They swung round to find themselves surrounded by the group they had left at Downing Street, and it was the Prime Minister who had asked the question. Amongst them was the eminent

biologist who had been so heavily sarcastic at Wintram Hall about the egg which he had been called in to examine. At him Langton cast a look of malice before replying.

"Simple enough, sir," he said, "and your biological expert who suggested that the egg was a plaster of Paris imitation made by us, will be interested to hear that what we have been spraying on these creatures is, to quote his own words, 'a material obtained by calcining gypsum until it has become partially dehyrated, added in certain quantities to water'."

"You mean plaster of Paris?"

"Nothing else. Sprayed into the breathing-tubes of these creatures, it hardens and chokes them; it also chokes up their jaws and mouths and gets into the joints of their forelegs. It hardens on the outer skin and impedes their movements—if you can keep the application of it up long enough, it is bound to overcome them."

"Well, whatever it is, you have saved London and perhaps the whole country, gentlemen," said the Prime Minister, who was deeply moved. "I can tell you that the country will not forget your services in this crisis or how you have both suffered for them."

Langton and his friend blushed under their coating of plaster and looked uncomfortable.

"You mustn't forget that there are about a hundred of these things loose in London, sir," said the Colonel. "If some of these military gentlemen will take over the idea from us, we'll be glad—it took us three days and nights to assemble a sufficient supply of this stuff and we're both tired out. All I want from the country, sir, is permission to go home and sleep."

THAT was virtually the end of the menace. The method of destroying them had been found, and under military control a vigorous campaign against the invaders was established. By twos and threes or in solitary combat against a force that nature had not given them a defense for, they were brought down in the streets or in the parks, till the last of them had been exterminated.

How or why the parents of these broods had reached England or where they came from was never explained any better than by the Colonel's theories. No repetition of the danger has ever taken place or seems likely to: probably only some chance concatenation of circumstances brought about their descent from regions unknown to man. The last scene of all took place in Trafalgar Square, where the solitary survivor of the brood that had threatened the existence of London was finally cornered.

It was an immense creature, over thirty feet in length. Hemmed in by its enemies and plastered with the deadly spray that was rapidly choking its life out of it, the monster caught hold of the shaft of the Nelson monument and swung itself upward till its hind claspers were grasping the top of the column. There it extended its full length toward the fathomless blue of the summer sky, as if imploring succor from the regions, perhaps in the moon, perhaps on some far planet, that were native to it and its kind. But none came: for a moment it swayed to and fro and then fell with a crash to finish its death agonies on the stone pavement of the square. And the creatures fashioned by nature in another mold, of another consciousness and divided from it by gulfs of impassable difference, but sharing the same principle of life, shouted and cheered exultantly as it stiffened into death.

The Venus of Azombeii

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

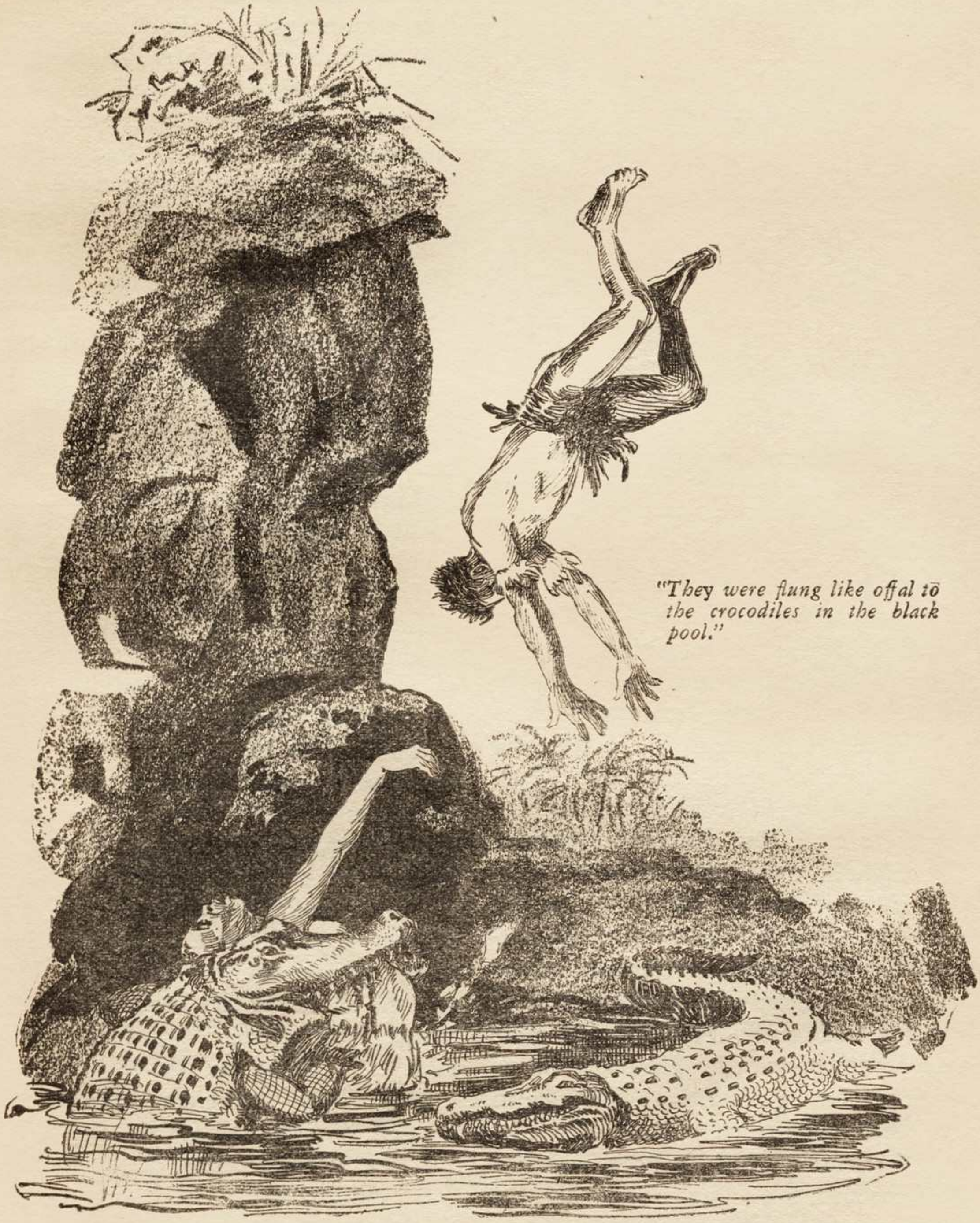
A fascinating weird story of an African Amazon, and an agonizing poison that shrivels its victims before it slays them

THE statuette was not more than twelve inches in height, and represented a female figure that somehow reminded me of the Medicean Venus, despite many differences of feature and proportion. It was wrought of a black wood, almost as heavy as marble; and the unknown artist had certainly made the most of his material to suggest the admixture of a negroid strain with a type of beauty well-nigh classic in its perfection of line. It stood on a pedestal formed in imitation of a half-moon, with the cloven side of the hemisphere constituting the base. On studying it more closely, I found that the resemblance to the Venus de Medici was largely in the pose and in the curves of the hips and shoulders; but the right hand was more elevated than hers in its position, and seemed to caress the polished abdomen; and the face was fuller, with a smile of enigmatic voluptuousness about the heavy lips, and a sensuous droop to the deep eyelids, which were like the petals of some exotic flower when they fold beneath a sultry velvet evening. The workmanship was quite amazing, and would not have been unworthy of the more archaic and primitive periods of Roman art.

My friend Marsden had brought the figurine with him on his return from Africa; and it stood always on his library table. It had fascinated me and had stirred my curiosity from the first; but Marsden was singularly reticent concerning it; and beyond telling me that it was of negro workmanship and represented the goddess of a little-known tribe on the upper Benuwe, in Adamawa, he had so far declined to gratify my inquisitiveness. But his very reserve, and something of significant import, even of emotional perturbation in his tone whenever we spoke of the statuette, had made me believe that a story hung thereon; and, knowing Marsden as I did, remembering his habitual reticence recurrently varied by outbursts of a well-nigh garrulous confidentiality, I felt sure that he would tell me the story in due time.

I had known Marsden ever since our school-days, for we had both been in the same year at Berkeley. He possessed few friends, and none, perhaps, who had been intimate with him as long as I. So no one was better fitted than I to perceive the inexplicable change that had come over him since his two years of traveling in Africa. This change was both physical and spiritual, and some of its features were of so subtle a character that one could hardly give them a name or seize upon them with any degree of clearness. Others, though, were all too plainly marked: the increase of Marsden's natural melancholia, turning now into fits of ferocious depression; and the woful deterioration in his health, never too robust even in its prime, would have been noticeable to the merest acquaintance. I remembered him as being very tall and wiry, with a sallow complexion, black hair, and eyes of a clear azure blue; but since his return, he was far thinner than of old, and he stooped so much that he gave the impression of having actually lost in height; his features were shrunken and wrinkled, his skin had

become corpse-like in its pallor, his hair was heavily sprinkled with gray, and his eyes had darkened in an unaccountable manner, as if they had somehow absorbed the mysteriously profound and sinister blue of tropic nights. In them, there burned a fire that they had never before possessed—a macabre fire such as one would find in the eyes of a man consumed by some equatorial fever. Indeed, it often occurred to me that the readiest explanation of the change in Marsden was that he had been seized by some lethal sickness of the jungle, from which he had not



"They were flung like offal to the crocodiles in the black pool."

yet fully recovered. But this he had always denied when I questioned him.

The more elusive alterations at which I have hinted were mainly mental, and I shall not try to define all of them. But one, in particular, was quite signal: Marsden had always been a man of undoubted courage and hardihood, with nerves that were unshakable in spite of his melancholic disposition; but now I perceived in him at times a queer furtiveness, an undefinable apprehensiveness quite at variance with his former character. Even in the midst of some trivial or commonplace conversation, a look of manifest fear would suddenly pass over his face, he would scrutinize the shadows of the room with an apprehensive stare, and would stop half-way in a sentence, apparently forgetting what he had started to say. Then, in a few moments, he would recover himself and go on with the interrupted speech. He had developed some odd mannerisms, too: one of them was, that he could never enter or leave a room without looking behind him, with the air of a man who fears that he is being followed or that some imminent doom is dogging his every footstep. But all this, of course, could have been explained as nervousness attendant upon, or resulting from, the illness that I suspected. Marsden himself would never discuss the matter; so, after a few discreet suggestions that might have led him to unbosom himself, if he so wished, I had tacitly ignored the visible changes in his manner and personality. But I sensed a real and perhaps tragic mystery, and felt also that the black figurine on Marsden's table was in some way connected with it. He had told me much concerning his trip to Africa, which had been undertaken because of a life-long fascination which that continent had held for him; but I knew intuitively that much more was being kept back.

ONE morning, about six weeks after Marsden's return, I called to see him, following several days of absence during which I had been extremely busy. He was living alone, with one servant, in the large house on Russian Hill, San Francisco, which he had inherited together with a considerable fortune from his parents, who were long dead. He did not come to answer my knock, as was his wont; and if my hearing were not exceptionally keen, I do not think I should have heard the feeble voice in which he called out, telling me to enter. Pushing open the door, I went through the hall into the library, from which his voice had issued, and found him lying on a sofa, near the table on which stood the black statuette. It was obvious to me at a glance that he was very ill; his thinness and pallor had increased to a shocking degree in the few days since I had seen him last, and I was immediately impressed by the singular fact that he had even shrunken more in stature than could be explained by the crouch of his shoulders. Everything about him had shriveled, had actually withered as if a flame were consuming him, and the form on the couch was that of a smaller man than my friend. He had aged, also, and his hair had taken on a new hoariness, as if white ashes had fallen upon it. His eyes were pitifully sunken, and they burned as embers burn in deep caverns. I could scarcely repress a cry of astonishment and consternation when I saw him.

"Well, Holly," he greeted me, "I guess my days are numbered. I knew the thing would get me in time—I knew it when I left the shores of the Benuwe with that image of the goddess Wanaôs for a keepsake. . . . There are dreadful things in Africa, Holly—malignant lust, and corruption, and poison, and sorcery—things that are deadlier than death itself—at least, deadlier than death in any form that we know. Don't ever go there—if you

have any care for the safety of body and soul."

I tried to reassure him, without paying ostensible heed to the more cryptic references, the more oracular hints in his utterance.

"There is some low African fever in your system," I said. "You should see a doctor—should, in fact, have seen one weeks or months ago. There's no reason why you shouldn't get rid of the trouble, whatever it is, now that you are back in America. But of course you need expert medical attention: you can't afford to neglect anything so insidious and obscure."

Marsden smiled—if the ghastly contortion of his lips could be called a smile. "It's no use, old man. I know my malady better than any doctor could know it. Of course, it may be that I have a little fever —that wouldn't be surprizing; but the fever isn't one that has ever been classifier in medical lore. And there's no cure for it in any pharmacopœia."

With the last word, his countenance assumed a horrible grimace of pain, and seemed to shrivel before me like a sheet of paper that turns ashen with fire. He no longer appeared to notice my presence, and began to mutter brokenly, in tones of a peculiar huskiness, in a harsh, grating whisper, as if the very cords of his throat were involved in the same shrinking that affected his face. I caught most, if not all, of the words:

"She is dying, too—as I am—even though she is a living goddess. . . . Mybaloë, why did you drink the palm-wine? . . . You, too, will shrivel up, and suffer these gnawing, clawing tortures. . . . Your beautiful body . . . how perfect, how magnificent it was! . . . You will shrivel up in a few weeks, like a little old woman . . . you will suffer the torments of hell-fire. . . . Mybaloë! Mybaloë!" . . .

His speech became an indistinct moaning, in which portions of words were now and then audible. He had all the aspect of a dying man: his whole body seemed to contract, as if all the muscles, all the nerves, even the very bones, were dwindling in size, were tightening to a locked rigidity; and his lips were drawn in a horrible rictus, showing a thin white line of teeth.

I ran to Marsden's dining-room, where I knew that a decanter full of old Scotch usually stood on the sideboard, and filled a sherry-glass with the liquor. Hastening back, I succeeded, though with extreme difficulty, in forcing some of the strong spirit between his teeth. The effect was almost immediate: he revived into full consciousness, his facial muscles relaxed, and he no longer wore the look of tetanic agony that had possessed his whole body.

"I'm sorry to have been such a bother," he said. "But the crisis is past for today. . . . Tomorrow, though . . . that'll be another matter." He shuddered, and his eyes were dark with the haunting of some incombatable horror.

I made him drink the remainder of the whisky, and going to the telephone, took the liberty of summoning a doctor whose abilities were personally known to both of us. My friend smiled a little, in grateful recognition of my solicitude, but shook his head.

"The end won't be so very far off now," he said. "I know the symptoms; it's a matter of a fortnight, or little more, when matters reach the point that they have reached today."

"But what is it?" I cried. The query was prompted by horror and solicitude, more than curiosity.

"You will learn soon enough," he replied, pointing to the library table with a forefinger of skeleton thinness. "Do you see that manuscript?"

Following his direction, I perceived on the table, close to the wooden statuette, a pile of written sheets, which, in my natural concern regarding Marsden's illness, I had not before noticed.

"You are my oldest friend," he went on, "and I have been aware for quite a while past that I owe you an explanation of certain things that have puzzled you. But the matters involved are so strange, and so peculiarly intimate, that I have been unable to bring myself to a frank confession face to face. So I have written for you a full narration of the final two months of my stay in Africa, concerning which I have spoken so little heretofore. You are to take it home with you when you leave; but I must beg you not to read the manuscript till after my death. I am sure I can trust you to respect my wishes in this regard. When you read it, you will learn the cause of my illness, and the story of the black figurine which has tantalized your curiosity so much."

A few minutes later, there came a knock on the door, and I went to answer it. As I expected, it was Dr. Felton, who lived only a few blocks away, and who had left home immediately in reply to my summons. He was a brisk and confident type of person, with the air of habitual reassurance, of professional good cheer, that goes so far in building up a doctor's reputation for proficiency. But I could see beneath his manner an undertone of doubt, of real bafflement, as he examined Marsden.

"I'm not altogether sure what is wrong," he admitted, "but I think the trouble is mainly digestive and nervous. Doubtless the African climate, and the food, must have upset you quite radically. You will need a nurse, if there is any recurrence of the attack you have had today."

He wrote a prescription, and left shortly after. Since I had a pressing engagement, I was obliged to follow him in about half an hour, taking with me the manuscript that Marsden had indicated. But before going, I called a nurse by telephone, with Marsden's authority, and left her in charge, promising to return as soon as possible.

OF THE fortnight that followed, with the frightful protracted agonies, the brief and illusory shifts for the better, the ghastly relapses that characterized my friend's condition, I can not bear to write a full account. I spent with him all the time I could spare, for my presence seemed to comfort him a little, except during the awful daily crises, when he was beyond all consciousness of his surroundings. Toward the last, there were lengthening intervals of delirium, when he muttered wildly, or screamed aloud in terror of things or persons visible only to himself. To be with him, to watch him, was an ordeal without parallel; and to me, the most dreadful thing about it all was the progressive shriveling, the perpetual diminution of Marsden's head and body, and the lessening of his very stature, which went on hour by hour and day by day with paroxysmal accompaniments of a suffering not to be borne by human flesh without lapsing into madness or oblivion. . . . But I can not enter into details, or describe the final stages; and I hardly dare even hint the condition in which he died and in which his body went to the undertaker. I can only say that in their extreme, their more than infantile dwarfage and devolution of form, the remains bore no likeness to anything that it would be permissible to name; also, that the task of the undertaker and the pall-bearers was phenomenally light. . . . When the end came, I gave thanks to God for the belated mercy

of my friend's death. I was completely worn out, and it was not until after the funeral that I summoned enough energy and resolution for a perusal of Marsden's manuscript.

The account was clearly written, in a fine, feline script, though the handwriting bore evidence of stress and agitation toward the end. I transcribe the narrative hereunder, with no liberties of abridgment or amplification:

I, JULIUS MARSDEN, have experienced all my life the ineffable nostalgia of the far-off and the unknown. I have loved the very names of remote places, of antipodean seas and continents and isles. But I have never found in any other word even a tithe of the untellable charm that has lain inherent for me ever since childhood in the three syllables of the word *Africa*. They have conjured up for me, as by some necromantic spell, the very quintessence of all mystery, of all romance, and no woman's name could have been dearer to me, or more eloquent of delight and allure, than the name of this obscure continent. By a happy dispensation, which, alas! does not invariably attend the fulfilment of our dreams, my twenty-two months of sojourning in Morocco, Tunis, Egypt, Zanzibar, Senegal, Dahomey and Nigeria had in no way disappointed me, for the reality was astoundingly like my vision. In the hot and heavy azure of the skies, the great levels of desert sand or of rampant jungles, the long and mighty rivers winding through landscapes of unbelievable diversity, I found something that was deeply congenial to my spirit. It was a realm in which my rarest dreams could dwell and expand with a sense of freedom never achievable elsewhere.

At the end of the twenty-second month of my sojourn, I was traveling on the upper reaches of the river Benuwe, that great eastern tributary of the Niger. My immediate objective was Lake Tchad, with whose confluent rivers the Benuwe is connected by means of an upland swamp. I had left Yollah, with several boatmen of the Foulah tribe, a race of negroid Mohammedans, and we had now rounded the eastern slope of Mount Alantika, that enormous granite bulk that looms for nine thousand feet from the fertile plains of Adamawa.

It was a picturesque and beautiful country through which we were passing. There were occasional villages surrounded by fields of durra, of cotton and yams, and great stretches of wild, luxuriant forest, of baobabs, bananas, deleb-palms, pandanus and plaintains, beyond which arose the castellated tops of ridgy hills and fantastically carven cliffs.

Toward sunset, Alantika had become a bluish blur in the distance, above the green sea of the jungle. As we went onward in our two small barges, one of which was mainly laden with my personal effects, I perceived that my boatmen were conversing among themselves in low voices, and caught a frequent repetition of the word "Azombeii," always with a note of fear and warning.

I had already picked up a little of the Foulah language; and one of the boatmen, a tall, well-featured fellow, bronze rather than black, was master of a sort of broken German variegated with a few words of English. I questioned him as to the subject and import of the conversation, and learned that Azombeii was the name of the district we were now approaching, which, he declared, was peopled by a pagan tribe of unusual ferocity, who were still suspected of cannibalism and human sacrifice. They had never been properly subdued, either by the Mohammedan conquerors of the country

or by the present German administration, and lived very much to themselves in their own primeval way, worshipping a goddess named Wanaôs—a goddess unfamiliar even to the other pagan tribes of Adamawa, who were all fetishists. They were especially inimical toward the Mohammedan negroes, and it was perilous to intrude upon their territory, particularly during the annual religious festival now being celebrated. He and his fellows, he confessed, were loth to proceed much farther.

On all this, at the time, I made no express comment. To me, the story seemed none too credible, and savored of the ignorant prejudice of insular peoples, who are ever suspicious and fearful of those beyond their own borders. But I was a little disturbed, for I did not want the course of my journey to be suspended by any difficulty with my boatmen or the natives.

The sun had now gone down with a tropical abruptness, and in the brief twilight I saw that the forest on the riverbanks had become more dense and exuberant than any through which we had before passed. There were ancient baobabs, enormous in the gloom; and the pendant leaves of mammoth plants fell down to the river like cataracts of emerald. Over all, a primordial silence reigned—a silence fraught with the burden of things unutterable by human speech—with the furtive pulse of an esoteric and exotic life, the secret breathing of unformulable passion, of unapprehended peril, the spirit of a vast and insuppressible fecundity.

WE LANDED on a grassy margin, and proceeded to make our camp for the night. After a meal of yams and ground-nuts and tinned meat, to which I added a little palm-wine, I brought up the matter of continuing our journey on the morrow; but not until I had pledged myself to triple the boatmen's wages would they promise to take me through the Azombeii country. I was more than ever inclined to make light of their fears, and, in fact, had begun to suspect that the whole business was mere play-acting, with no other purpose than the extortion of an increase of pay. But this, of course, I could not prove; and the boatmen were full of an apparent reluctance, vowing by Allah and his prophet Mohammed that the danger they would incur was incomparably dire—that they, and even myself, might furnish soup-meat for the revels of Azombeii, or smoke on a pagan altar, before the setting of tomorrow's sun. They also told me some curious details concerning the customs and beliefs of the people of Azombeii. These people, they said, were ruled by a woman who was looked upon as the living representative of the goddess Wanaôs, and who shared the divine honors accorded to her. Wanaôs, as far as I could gather, appeared to be a goddess of love and procreation, resembling somewhat in her character both the Roman Venus and the Carthaginian Tanit. I was struck even then by a certain etymological similarity of her name to that of Venus—a similarity regarding which I was soon to learn more. She was worshipped, they told me, with rites and ceremonies of an orgiastic license beyond all parallel—a license which shocked even the neighboring pagans, who were themselves given to vile practises not to be tolerated by any virtuous Moslem. They went on to say that the Azombeiians were also addicted to sorcery, and that their witch-doctors were feared throughout Adamawa.

My curiosity was aroused, though I told myself that in all probability the rumors related by the boatmen were

fables or gross exaggerations. But I had seen something of negro religious rites, and was able to credit the tales of orgiastic excess, at any rate. Pondering the strange stories I had heard, my imagination became excited, and I did not fall asleep till after an unwonted interval.

My slumber was heavy, and full of troubled dreams that appeared to prolong intolerably the duration of the night. I awoke a little before dawn, when the red horn of a waning moon had begun to set behind the serrate edges of palm-trees in the west. Looking about in the half-light, with eyes that were still bemused with sleep, I found myself entirely alone: The boatmen and their barges were gone, though all of my personal property and some of the provisions had been left behind with an honesty quite scrupulous, considering the circumstances. Evidently the fears expressed by the Foulahs had been genuine, and discretion had overpowered their desire for gain.

Somewhat dismayed by the prospect of having to continue my journey alone—if it were to be continued at all—and without means of navigation or conveyance, I stood irresolute on the river-bank, as the dawn began to brighten. I did not like the idea of turning back; and, since I did not consider it at all probable that I could be in any bodily danger at the hands of the natives, in a region under German rule, I finally resolved to go on and try to engage bearers or boatmen in the Azombeii district. It would be necessary for me to leave most of my effects by the river for the present, and return for them later, trusting to find them undisturbed.

I had no sooner made up my mind to this course of procedure, than I heard a soft rustling in the long grasses behind me. Turning, I perceived that I was no longer alone, though my companions were not the missing Foulahs, as I had hoped for a brief instant. Two negro women, attired in little more than the lightening amber air of morn, stood close beside me. Both were fairly tall, and well-proportioned, but it was the foremost of the two who caught my attention with a veritable shock of surprize not altogether due to the suddenness of her approach.

Her appearance would have surprized me anywhere, at any time. Her skin was a lustrous velvet black, with subtle gleams of rapid-running bronze; but all her features and proportions, by some astounding anomaly, were those of an antique Venus. Indeed, I have seldom seen in Caucasian women a more consummate regularity of profile and facial contour. As she stood before me without moving, she might have been a woman of Rome or Pompeii, sculptured in black marble by a statuary of the Latin decadence. She wore a look that was both demure and sensual, an expression full of cryptic poise allied with great sweetness. Her hair was done in a rich coil on the nape of a comely neck. Between her breasts, on a chain of beaten silver, hung several ruddy garnets, carven with rough intaglios whose precise nature I did not notice at the time. Her eyes met mine with perfect frankness, and she smiled with an air of naive delight and mischief at my all-too-obvious dumfoundment. That smile made me her voluntary captive henceforward.

The second woman was of a more negroid type, though personable enough in her way. By her bearing and demeanor, she gave the impression of being somehow subordinate to the first, and I assumed that she was a slave or servant. The one semblance of a garment worn by both was a little square of cloth depend-

ing in front from a girdle of palm-fiber; but the fabric of the square worn by the first was finer than that of the other, and differed from it in having a fringe of silky tassels.

The leader turned and spoke a few words to her companion in mellifluous liquid tones, and the servant replied in a voice almost equally soft and musical. The word *"Aroumani"* was repeated several times, with accompanying glances at me, and I readily surmised that I was the theme of their conversation. I could not understand their speech, which bore no likeness to the Foulah language, and, indeed, was different from that of any pagan tribe I had so far encountered in Adamawa. But some of the vocables teased me with a vague sense of familiarity, though I could not define or aline this familiarity at the moment.

I addressed the two women in the scant Foulah that I knew, asking if they were of the Azombeii tribe. They smiled, and nodded their heads in recognition of the word, and made signs to me that I was to follow them.

THE sun had now leapt above the horizon, and the forest was filled with a green and golden radiance as the women led me away from the river-shore and along a meandering path among gigantic baobabs. They walked before me with a grave and effortless grace, and the leader looked back every now and then over her shapely shoulder, smiling with a complaisant curve of the full lips and a delicious droop of the carven lids that had in them a trace of simple coquetry. I followed, half overcome by emotions that were new to me—by the first pulsations of a mounting fever of the senses and the mind, the stirring of unfamiliar curiosities, the subtle languor, the poppy-drowsy delight of a Circean enchantment. I felt as if the immemorial attraction of Africa had suddenly become embodied for me in a human shape.

The forest began to thin, and we came to cultivated fields, and then to a large village of clay huts. My sable guides pointed to the village, saying the one word: "Azombeii," which, as I learned later, was the name of the principal town as well as of the district in general.

The place was astir with negroes, many of whom, both male and female, were possessed of a clear-cut type of feature unaccountably reminiscent of the classical, and similar to that of the two women. Their skins varied from darkest ebony to a sultry, tarnished copper. Many of them crowded around us immediately, regarding me with a sort of friendly inquisitiveness, and making signs of obeisance and reverence before my Venus-like companion. It was clear that she occupied a place of high importance among them, and I wondered, not for the first time, if she were the woman of whom the Foulahs had spoken—the ruler of the Azombeii and the living viceregent of the goddess Wanaôs.

I tried to converse with the natives, but could not make myself understood till an old man with a bald head and a straggling fringe of gray beard came forward and hailed me in broken English. He, it seemed, had traveled as far afield as Nigeria during his youth, which accounted for his linguistic accomplishments. None of the others had ever been more than a few miles beyond the confines of his own territory; and apparently the tribe had had little intercourse with outsiders, either negro or Caucasian.

The old man was most affable and loquacious, evidently delighting in an opportunity to air his command of a foreign tongue. It was hardly necessary to question him, for he began at once to

volunteer the information which I desired. His people, he announced, were very glad to see me, for they were friendly toward the whites, though they had no manner of use for the Moslem negroes of Adamawa. Also, he went on, it was manifest that I had won the favor and protection of the goddess Wanaôs, since I appeared among them under the guidance of Mybaloë, their beloved ruler, in whom the spirit of the goddess resided. At this, he made an humble obeisance toward my lovely guide, who smiled, and addressed a few sentences to him, which he forthwith interpreted, saying that Mybaloë had proffered me an invitation to remain in Azombeii as her guest.

I had intended to broach immediately the matter of hiring bearers, or engaging boatmen for the continuance of my journey on the Benuwe; but at this invitation, and the sweet, wistful, almost supplicating look which Mybaloë directed upon me as her words were being translated, I forgot all about my plans, and told the interpreter to thank Mybaloë and say that I accepted the invitation. A few hours earlier, I should not have dreamt of the possibility of feeling any specific interest in a black woman, since that aspect of the charm of Africa was one which had never really touched me heretofore. But now, the first weavings of an unforeseen magic were upon me: my senses had become preternaturally active, and my normal processes of thought were benumbed as by the working of some insidious opiate. I had been eager to reach Lake Tchad, and the idea of tarrying by the way had never before occurred to me: now, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to remain in Azombeii, and Lake Tchad became a dimly receding mirage, far off on the borders of oblivion.

Mybaloë's face grew radiant as a summer morn, when my acceptance was interpreted. She spoke to some of the people about her, obviously giving them instructions. Then she disappeared among the crowd, and the old interpreter, with several others, led me to a hut which they put at my disposal. The hut was quite clean, and the floors were strewn with strips of palm-leaf, which exhaled an agreeable odor. Food and wine were set before me and the old man and two girls remained in attendance, saying that they had been appointed as my servants. I had barely finished my meal, when some more natives entered, bearing the belongings I had left by the river-side.

Now, in reply to my queries, the interpreter, whose name was Nygaza, told me as much as his rudimentary English would convey regarding the history, habits and religion of the people of Azombeii. According to their traditions, the worship of Wanaôs among them was almost as old as the world itself, and had been introduced ages and ages ago by some white strangers from the north, who called themselves *Aroumani*. These strangers had settled and married among the natives, and their blood had gradually become disseminated throughout the whole tribe, who had always remained apart from the other pagans of Adamawa. All white people were called *Aroumani* by them, and were looked upon with peculiar respect, on account of these traditions. Wanaôs, as the Foulahs had said, was a deity of love and fecundation, the mother of all life, the mistress of the world, and her image had been accurately graven in wood by the pale strangers, so that the Azombeiians might have an exemplar for their idols. It had always been customary to associate a living woman with her worship, as a sort of avatar or embodiment of the goddess, and the most beautiful maiden of the district was chosen by the priests and priestesses

for this rôle, and filled also the office of queen, with the privilege of taking to herself a male consort. Mybaloë, a girl of eighteen, had recently been elected; and the annual festival of Wanaôs, which consisted of liberal drinking and feasting, together with nightly ceremonies of worship, was now in progress.

While I listened to the old man, I indulged in certain speculations of a surprizing order. I deemed it not impossible that the pale strangers of whom he spoke had been a party of Roman explorers, who had crossed the Sahara from Carthage and penetrated the Sudan. This would account for the classic features of Mybaloë and others of the Azombeiians, and for the name and character of the local goddess. Also, the vague familiarity of some of the words spoken by Mybaloë was now explicable, since I realized that these words had borne a partial resemblance to Latin vocables. Much amazed by what I had learned and by all that I had succeeded in piecing together, I lost myself in odd reveries, while Nygaza continued his babbling.

THE day wore on, and I did not see Mybaloë, as I had fully expected, nor did I receive word from her. I began to wonder a little. Nygaza said that her absence was attributable only to urgent duties; he leered discreetly, as he assured me that I would soon see her again.

I went for a walk through the village, accompanied by the interpreter and the girls, who refused to leave me for a moment. The town, as I have said, was large for an African village, and must have comprised two or three thousand people. All was neat and orderly, and the general degree of cleanliness was quite remarkable. The Azombeiians, I could see, were thrifty and industrious, and gave evidence of many civilized qualities.

Toward the hour of sunset, a messenger came, bearing an invitation from Mybaloë, which Nygaza translated. I was to dine with her in her palace, and then attend the evening rites in the local temple.

The palace stood on the very outskirts of the town, among palms and pandanus, and was merely an overgrown hut, as African palaces are wont to be. But the interior proved to be quite comfortable, even luxurious, and a certain barbaric taste had been displayed in its furnishing. There were low couches along the walls, covered with draperies of native weaving, or the skins of the *ayu,* a sort of fresh-water seal found in the Benuwe. In the center was a long table, not more than a foot in height from the floor, around which the guests were squatted. In one corner, as in a niche, I noticed a small wooden image of a female figure, which I rightly took to be a representation of Wanaôs. The figure bore a strange resemblance to the Roman Venus; but I need not describe it further, since you have often seen it on my library table.

Mybaloë greeted me with many compliments, which were duly translated by Nygaza; and I, not to be outdone, replied with speeches of a flowery fervor by no means insincere. My hostess had me seated at her right hand, and the feast began. The guests, I learned, were mostly priests and priestesses of Wanaôs. All of them regarded me with friendly smiles, with the exception of one man, who wore a murderous frown. This man, Nygaza told me in a whisper almost inaudible, was the high-priest Mergawe, a mighty sorcerer or witch-doctor, much feared rather than revered, who had long been in love with Mybaloë and had hoped to be chosen for her consort.

As unobtrusively as I could, I surveyed Mergawe with more attention. He was a muscular brute, over six feet in height, and broad without being stout. His face was regular in outline, and would have been handsome, were it not for the distortion due to a most malignant expression. Whenever Mybaloë smiled upon me or addressed some remark to me through Nygaza, his look became a demoniacal glare. I readily perceived that the first day of my visit in Azombeii had brought me a powerful enemy, as well as a possible sweetheart.

The table was laden with equatorial delicacies, with the meat of young rhinoceros, several kinds of wild fowl, bananas, papayas, and a sweet, highly intoxicating palm-wine. Most of the guests were prone to gorge themselves in true African fashion, but Mybaloë's manner of eating was as dainty as that of any European girl, and she endeared herself to me all the more by her restraint. Mergawe also ate little, but drank immoderately, in a seeming attempt to achieve inebriation as soon as possible. The eating and drinking went on for hours, but I paid less and less attention to it and to my fellow-guests, in the ever-growing enchantment of Mybaloë's presence. Her sinuous youthful grace of figure, her lovely tender eyes and lips, were far more potent than the wine, and I soon forgot to notice even the baleful glaring of Mergawe. On her part, Mybaloë displayed toward me a frank favor, swiftly conceived and avowed, which she did not even dream of disguising. She and I began to speak a language which did not require the interpretation of old Nygaza. With the one exception of Mergawe, no one seemed to regard our mutual infatuation with anything but approval.

Presently the time of the evening rites approached, and Mybaloë excused herself, telling me that she would meet me later in the temple. The gathering broke up, and Nygaza led me through the nocturnal village, where groups of people were feasting and revelling about their fires in the open air. We entered the jungle, which was full of voices and flitting shadowy forms, all on their way to the fane of Wanaôs. I had no idea what the temple would be like, though somehow I did not expect the usual African fetish-house. To my surprize, it proved to be an enormous cave in a hill back of the village. It was illumined by many torches, and had already become crowded with the worshippers. At the farther end of the huge chamber, whose lofty vault was dark with impenetrable shadow, there stood on a sort of natural dais an image of Wanaôs, carved in the customary black wood of a tree that is native to Azombeii. The image was somewhat more than life-size. Beside it, on a wooden seat that could easily have accommodated another person, sat Mybaloë, statuesque and immobile as the goddess herself. Fragrant leaves and grasses were burning on a low altar, and tom-toms were throbbing with delirious insistence, regular as the beating of turgid pulses, in the gloom behind the goddess and her mortal viceregent. The priests, priestesses and devotees were all naked, except for little squares of cloth similar to that worn by Mybaloë, and their bodies gleamed like polished metal in the wildly flickering light of the torches. All were chanting a solemn monotonous litany, and they swayed in the slow movements of a hieratic dance, lifting their arms toward Wanaôs, as if to invoke her favor.

There was an undeniable impressiveness about it all; and as if by contagion, a bizarre excitement began to invade me, and something of the sacred fervor felt by the devotees found its way into my own blood. With eyes intent upon

Mybaloë, who seemed to be in a veritable trance, unconscious or unheedful of all about her, I felt the resurgence of atavistic impulses, of barbaric passions and superstitions latent in the subterranean depths of being. I knew the promptings of a savage hysteria, of a lust both animal and religious.

The old interpreter, who had disappeared in the throng, returned to my side anon, saying that Mybaloë had requested that I come forward to her seat. How the request had been communicated I can not imagine, for surely her lips had never opened or moved beneath my intent and passionate watching. The worshippers made way for me, and I stood before her, thrilling almost with a kind of awe, as well as a frenetic desire, when I met her eyes that were filled by the solemn possession of the amorous deity. She motioned me to seat myself beside her. By this act, as I learned later, she selected me before all the world as her consort, and I, by accepting the invitation, became her official lover.

Now, as if my enthronement with Mybaloë were a signal, the ceremonies took on a new excitation, with an orgiastic trend at which I can only hint. Things were done at which Tiberias would have blushed: Elephantis itself could have learned more than one secret from these savages. The cavern became a scene of indiscriminate revel, and the goddess and her representative were alike forgotten in the practise of rites that were doubtless appropriate enough, considering the nature of Wanaôs, even though they were highly improper from a civilized viewpoint. Through it all, Mybaloë maintained a perfect immobility, with open eyes whose lids were still as those of the statue. At last she arose and looked around the cavern upon her oblivious devotees with a gaze that was wholly inscrutable. Then she turned to me, with a demure smile and a slight movement of the hand, and beckoned me to follow her. Unnoticed by any one, we left the orgies and came forth upon the open jungle, where warm gusts of perfume wandered beneath the tropical stars. . . .

FROM that night there began for me a new life—a life which I will not try to defend, but will only describe, as far as any description is possible. I had never before conceived of anything of the sort; I should never have believed myself capable of the sensuous fervor I felt for Mybaloë, and the almost inenarrable experiences into which her love initiated me. The dark electric vitality of the very earth upon which I trod, the humid warmth of the atmosphere, the life of the swiftly grown luxuriant plants, all became an intimate part of my own entity, were mingled with the ebb and flow of my blood, and I drew nearer than ever before to the secret of the charm that had lured me across the world to that esoteric continent. A powerful fever exalted all my senses, a deep indolence bedrugged my brain. I lived, as never before, and never again, to the full capacity of my corporeal being. I knew, as an aborigine knows, the mystic impact of perfume and color and savor and tactual sensation. Through the flesh of Mybaloë, I touched the primal reality of the physical world. I had no longer any thoughts, or even dreams, in the abstract meaning of such terms, but existed wholly in relation to my surroundings, to the diurnal flux of light and darkness, of sleep and passion, and all sensory impressions.

Mybaloë, I am sure, was indeed lovable, and her charm, though highly voluptuous, was not altogether of the body. She had a fresh and naive nature,

laughter-loving and kindly, with less of actual or latent cruelty than is common to the African. And always I found in her, even apart from her form and features, a delightful suggestion of the elder pagan world, a hint of the classic woman and the goddess of old myths. Her sorcery, perhaps, was not really complex; but its power was complete, and lay as far beyond analysis as beyond denial. I became the ecstatic slave of a loving and indulgent queen.

The flowers of an equatorial spring were now in bloom, and our nights were opiate or aphrodisiac with their fragrance. The nocturnal heavens were full of fervid stars, the noons were balmy and propitious, and the people of Azombeii looked with favor upon our love, since the will of Mybaloë was to them the will of the goddess.

One cloud alone—a cloud which we scarcely regarded at first—was visible in our firmament. This cloud was the jealousy and ill-will of Mergawe, the high-priest of Wanaôs. He glowered with a lethal malignity, sullen as a negro Satan, whenever I happened to meet him; but his ill-will was not otherwise demonstrated, either by word or act; and Nygaza and Mybaloë both assured me that overt hostility on his part would be most improbable at any time, since, because of Mybaloë's divine office and my position as her lover, anything of the sort would savor of actual blasphemy.

As for me, I felt an intuitive distrust of the sorcerer, though I was far too happy to expend much thought on the problem of his potential maleficence. However, the man was an interesting type, and his reputation was literally something with which to conjure. People believed that he knew the language of animals, and could even hold converse with trees and stones, which accorded him whatever information he might require. He was reputed to be a master of what is known as "bad fetish"—that is to say, he could lay an evil spell on the person or possessions of whosoever had incurred his enmity. He was a practitioner of invultuation, and was also said to know the secret of a terrible slow poison, which caused its victims to wither up and shrivel to the stature of a new-born child, with prolonged and hellish agonies—a poison which did not begin to operate for weeks or even months after the time of its consumption.

The days went by, and I lost all proper count of their passage, reckoning time only by the hours I spent with Mybaloë. The world and its fullness were ours—ours were the deep-blue heavens and the flowering forest and the grassy meadows by the riverside. As lovers are prone to do, we found for ourselves more than one favorite haunt, to which we liked to repair at recurrent intervals. One of these haunts was a grotto behind the cave-temple of Wanaôs, in whose center was a great pool fed by the river Benuwe through subterranean channels. At some remote time, the roof of the grotto had broken in, leaving a palm-fringed aperture in the hill-top, through which the sunlight or moonlight fell with precipitate rays upon the somber waters. Around the sides there were many broad ledges and fantastic alcoves of columnar stone. It was a place of weird beauty, and Mybaloë and I had spent more than one moon-lit hour on the couch-like shelves above the pool. The waters were inhabited by several crocodiles, but of these we took little heed, absorbed in each other and in the bizarre loveliness of the grotto, that always changed with the changing light.

One day, Mybaloë had been summoned away from the village on some

errand whose nature I can not now remember. Doubtless it concerned some problem of justice or native politics. At any rate, she was not expected back till the following noon. Therefore, I was quite surprized when a messenger came to me at evening, with word that Mybaloë would return sooner than she had planned, and that she requested me to meet her in the grotto behind the cave of Wanaôs at the hour when the rays of the moon, now slightly gibbous, would first fall through the opening above. The native who brought the message was a man I had never seen before, but of this I thought nothing, since he purported to come from the outlying village to which Mybaloë had been called.

I REACHED the cavern at the hour appointed, and paused on the verge of one of the ledges, looking about in the uncertain light for Mybaloë. The moon had begun to pour a faery radiance over the rough edge of the pit in the cavern-dome. I saw a stealthy movement in the waters beneath me, where a crocodile slid through the silver-gleaming ebony of the surface; but of Mybaloë herself I could find no visible sign anywhere. I wondered if she were not hiding from me in some prankish mood, and resolved to make a search of the alcoves and shelves on tiptoe, in order to surprize her.

I was about to leave the ledge on which I stood, when I received a violent push from behind, which precipitated me with a headlong suddenness into the black pool seven or eight feet below. The waters were deep, and I sank almost to the bottom before I recovered myself or even realized what had happened. Then I rose and struck out blindly for the shore, remembering with a thrill of terror the crocodile I had seen a moment before my fall. I reached the edge, where it shelved down with accessible gradations, but the water was still deep, and my fingers slipped on the smooth stone. Behind me, I heard a furtive rippling, and knew its causation all too well. Turning my head, I saw two of the great saurians, whose eyes burned with unholy phosphorescence in the moonlight as they glided toward me.

I think that I must have cried aloud; for, as if in answer, I heard a woman's voice cry out on the ledge above, and then the rippled waters were cleft by a falling form that shone for an instant with a flash as of black marble. A breathless interval, while the waters foamed, and then a well-known head arose beside me, and an arm that held aloft a glittering knife. It was Mybaloë herself. With miraculous adroitness, she drove the knife to its hilt in the side of the foremost crocodile, as the monster opened his formidable jaws to seize me. Her stroke had found the heart, and the crocodile slipped back beneath the surface, thrashing about in a brief agony. But its companion came on without pausing, and met the same unerring thrust of Mybaloë's knife. There were stirrings in the pool, and the dark bodies of others began to appear. With a superhuman agility, in what was seemingly no more than a single movement, Mybaloë drew herself out on the rocks of the margent, and caught my hands in hers. An instant more, and I stood beside her, hardly knowing how I had come there, so light and swift had been my ascent. The crocodiles were nosing the shore beneath us when I turned to look back.

Breathless and dripping, we sat on a moon-bright shelf of the cavern and began to question each other, with tender interludes of silence and caresses. In a few weeks, I had learned much of the

Azombeiian tongue, and we no longer required an interpreter at any time.

To my astonishment, Mybaloë denied having sent me a messenger that evening. She had returned because of an overwhelming premonition of some imminent evil that menaced me, and had felt herself drawn irresistibly to the grotto, arriving just in time to find me floundering in the pool. While passing through the cave of Wanaôs, from which a low tunnel led to the open grotto, she had met a man in the darkness, and thought that it might have been Mergawe. He had passed without speaking, in as much haste as Mybaloë herself. I told her of the push I had received from behind as I stood on the ledge. It was all too evident that I had been lured to the cavern by some one who desired to make away with me; and, as far as we knew, Mergawe was the one person in Azombeii capable of conceiving or nurturing such a motive. Mybaloë became very grave, and little more was said between us regarding the matter.

After our return to the village, Mybaloë sent several men to search for Mergawe and bring him before her. But the sorcerer had disappeared, and no one could tell his whereabouts, though more than one person had seen him earlier in the evening. He did not return to his dwelling on the morrow; and though a sedulous and thorough quest was instituted throughout the whole of Azombeii, no trace of him could be found during the days following. His very disappearance, of course, was taken for an implicit confession of guilt. Supreme indignation was rife among the people when the episode in the grotto became publicly known; and, in spite of the fear his reputation had evoked, Mergawe would have fared disastrously at their hands, and the sentence of death pronounced against him by Mybaloë would have been needless, if he had dared to show himself among his fellow-tribesmen.

The unexpected peril I had faced, and the marvelous rescue effected by Mybaloë, served to draw us even closer together, and our passion found a new depth and gravity henceforward. But as time went on, and nothing was heard of Mergawe, who seemed to have been swallowed up by the wide and sultry silence of the equatorial spaces, the episode began to recede, and gradually dwindled to our view in a lengthening perspective of blissful days. We ceased to apprehend any further attempt at harm on the part of the witch-doctor, and were lulled to an indolent security, in which our happiness took on the hues of its maturing summer.

ONE night, the priests of Wanaôs were giving a dinner in my honor. Forty or fifty people were already gathered in a banqueting-hall not far from the temple, but Mybaloë had not yet arrived. As we sat awaiting her, a man entered, bearing a large calabash full of palm-wine. The man was a stranger to me, though he was evidently known to some of the people present, who hailed him by name, calling him Marvasi.

Addressing me, Marvasi explained that he had been sent by the people of an outland community with a gift of palm-wine, which they hoped that I, as the consort of Mybaloë, would deign to accept. I thanked him, and bade him convey my acknowledgment to the donors of the wine.

"Will you not taste the wine now?" he said. "I must return immediately; but before leaving, I should like to learn if the gift meets with your approval, so that I can tell my people."

I poured out some of the wine into a

cup and drank it very slowly, as one does in testing the savor and quality of a beverage. It was quite sweet and heavy, with a peculiar after-flavor of puckerish bitterness which I did not find altogether agreeable. However, I praised the wine, not wishing to hurt Marvasi's feelings. He grinned with apparent pleasure at my words, and was about to depart, when Mybaloë entered. She was panting with haste, her expression was both wild and stern, and her eyes blazed with unnatural fire. Rushing up to me, she snatched the empty wine-cup from my fingers.

"You have drunk it?" she cried, in a tone of statement more than of query.

"Yes," I replied, in great wonder and perplexity.

The look that she turned upon me was indescribable, and full of conflicting elements. Horror, agony, devotion, love and fury were mingled in it, but I knew somehow that the fury was not directed toward me. For one intense moment her eyes held mine; then, averting her face, she pointed to Marvasi and bade the priests of Wanaôs to seize and bind him. The command was instantly obeyed. But before offering any explanation, and without saying a word to me or to anyone, Mybaloë poured out a cupful of the palm-wine and drank it at a single draft. Beginning to suspect the truth, I would have seized it from her hand, but she was too quick for me.

"Now we will both die," she said, when she had emptied the cup. For a moment, her face assumed a tranquil smile, then it became the countenance of an avenging goddess as she turned her attention to the wretched Marvasi. Every one present had now surmised the truth, and mutterings of rage and horror were heard on all sides. Marvasi would have been torn limb from limb, joint from joint, muscle from muscle, by the bare hands of the priests if it had not been for Mybaloë, who intervened and told them to wait. Stricken with abject terror, the man cowered among his captors, knowing too well the manner of doom that would be meted out to him in spite of any momentary reprieve.

Mybaloë began to interrogate him in brief, stern sentences, and Marvasi, whose awe of her was even more patent than his fear of the priests, made answer with many stammerings as he cringed and fawned. He confessed that the wine was poisoned; also, that he had been hired by the sorcerer and high-priest Mergawe to proffer it to me and see that I drank some of it at once, if possible. Mergawe, he said, had been hiding in the forest on the borders of Azombeii for weeks, living in a secret cavern known only to himself and a few adherents, who had brought him food and such news as he desired to learn. Marvasi, who was under certain intimate obligations to Mergawe, and had been used by him as a tool on other occasions, was one of these adherents.

"Where is Mergawe now?" questioned Mybaloë. Marvasi would have hesitated, but the eyes of the queen, ablaze with anger and with superhuman mesmerism, dragged the very truth from his reluctant lips. He said that Mergawe was now lurking in the jungle, on the outskirts of the town of Azombeii, waiting for assurance that the poison had been drunk by its intended victim.

A number of the priests were at once dispatched to find Mergawe. While they were absent, Mybaloë told me how warning of the plan to poison me had been brought to her by another of Mergawe's friends, who had recoiled at the final hour from the atrociousness and audacity of such a design.

The priests returned in a little while,

bringing the captive sorcerer. They had succeeded in coming upon him unaware, and though he struggled with demoniacal strength and fury, they bore him down and bound him with thongs of rhinoceros hide. They brought him into the banqueting-hall amid a horror-frozen silence.

In spite of his desperate predicament, the face of the sorcerer was full of a malevolent triumph, as he stood before us. Proud, and superbly erect, he gave no evidence of fear, but his mien proclaimed the Satanic possession of an evil exultation. Before Mybaloë could question or address him, he began to pour forth a torrent of dreadful mouthings, intermingled with maledictions and vituperations. He told us how he had prepared the poison, he enumerated the fearsome ingredients, the slowly chanted and lethiferous runes, the manifold and mighty power of the baleful fetishes that had gone into or had helped in its making. Then he described the action of the poison, the preliminary months during which Mybaloë and I would suffer innumerable pangs, would die uncounted deaths in our anticipation of the deferred agonies to come; and then the interminable tortures themselves, the slow and hideous contraction of all our fibers, all our organs, the drying-up of the very sources of life, and the shrinkage to infantile, or even pre-infantile, stature and dimensions before the relief of death. Forgetful of all but his mad hatred, his insensate jealousy, he lingered over these details, he repeated them again and again with so vile a gloating, so horrible and rapturous a relish, that a sort of paralyzing spell was laid upon the assembly, and no one stepped forward to silence him with a knife or a spear.

At last, while his mouthings continued, Mybaloë filled another cup with the poisoned wine; and while the priests held Mergawe and forced his teeth apart with their spear-blades, she poured the wine down his throat. Oblivious or contemptuous of his doom, he betrayed no slightest quiver or shrinking of fear, but glared with that awful look of exultation all the while, like a black fiend who rejoices over the damned, even though he himself is numbered among them. Marvasi was also compelled to drink the wine, and he cringed and cried with terror, frothing at the mouth when the lethal liquor touched his tongue. Then the two men, by Mybaloe's order, were led away and imprisoned, and were left under a strong guard to await the working of the poison. But later in the night, when their deed became known to the populace, a multitude of men and women, maddened beyond all measure or control, broke in and overpowered the guards and carried Marvasi and Mergawe to the grotto behind the cave of Wanaôs, where they were flung like offal to the crocodiles in the black pool.

Now, for Mybaloë and me, there began a life of indepictable horror. Dead was all our former joy and happiness, for the blackness of the doom to come lay on us like the charnel shadow cast by the gathering of a myriad vultures. Love, it is true, was still ours, but love that already seemed to have entered the hideous gloom and nothingness of the grave. . . . But of these things I can not tell you, though I have told you so much. . . . They were too sacred and too terrible. . . .

After the leaden lapse of funereal days, beneath heavens from which for us the very azure had now departed, it was agreed between Mybaloë and me that I should leave Azombeii and return to my native land. Neither of us could bear the thought of having to witness day by day

the eventual torments and progressive physical disintegration of the other when Mergawe's poison began to operate. Of our farewell meeting, I can say only that it was infinitely sorrowful, and that I shall remember the love and grief in Mybaloë's eyes amid the culminative pangs and disordered illusions of my last delirium. Before I left, she gave me for a keepsake the little image of Wanaôs, concerning which you have asked me so often.

It is needless to detail my return to America. Now, after months of a delay that has had in it nothing of mercy or mitigation, I feel the first workings of the poison; I have recognized all its preliminary symptoms, and the sickening expectations of haunted days and sleep-forbidden nights are being realized. And knowing all that is yet to come, and seeing with a clarity of imaginative vision that sears my soul the coincidental agonies of Mybaloë, I have begun to envy the death of Marvasi and Mergawe in the pool of crocodiles.

The Seeds of Death

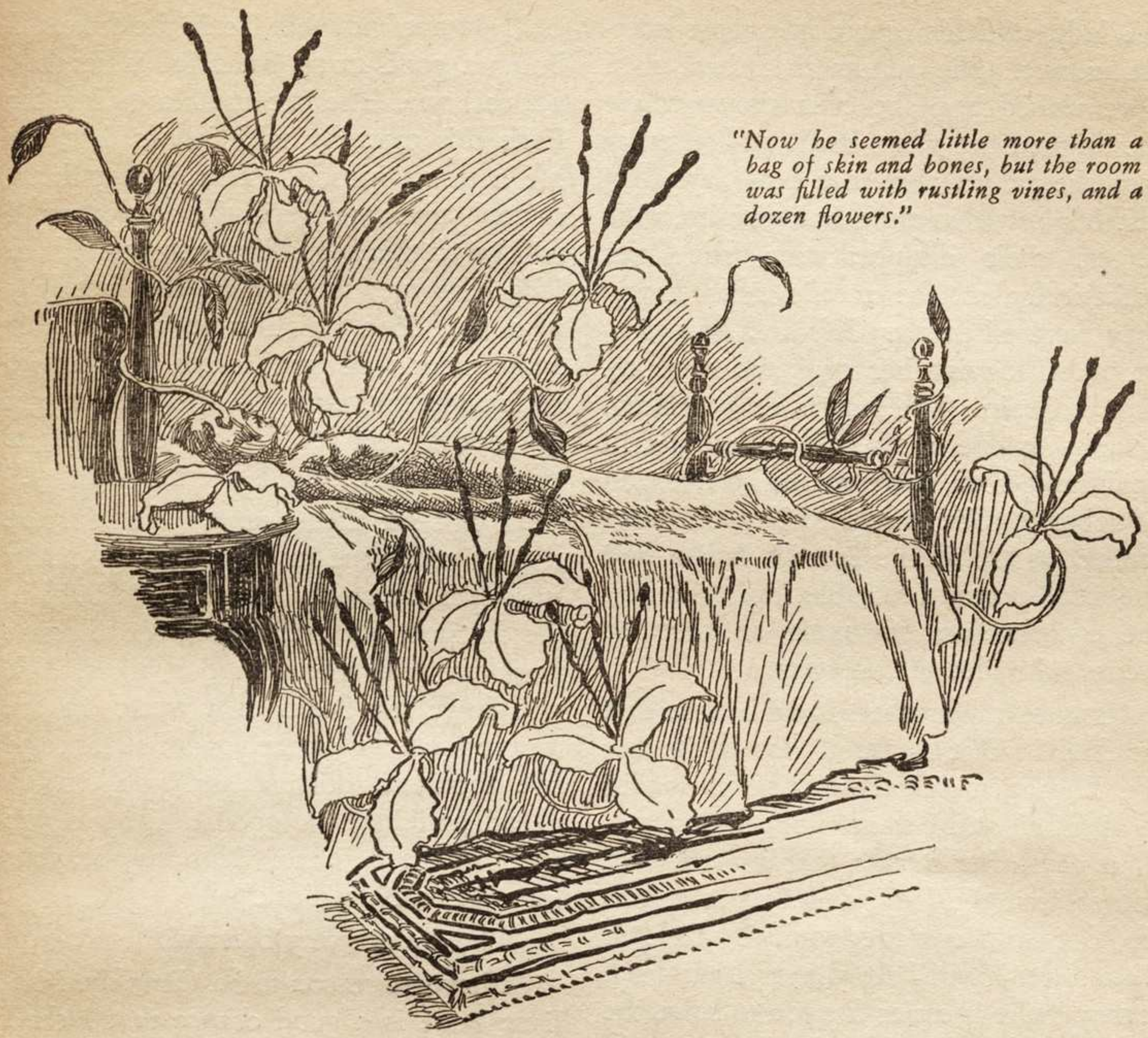
By DAVID H. KELLER

A powerful mystery story of man-eating orchids and a beautiful tiger-woman who lived in a castle in Spain

THE Duke of Freud was distinctly unhappy. He had spent a year's income in entertaining one lady who had been so unappreciative that she departed for Paris at the end of the week, leaving the duke absolutely alone in New York. The worst part about the whole affair was his gradually appreciating that she had engaged her passage a week before she vowed eternal devotion to him. Irrespective of anything that he might do, the duke realized that his bankers would make him no further advances for at least another year. The world was indeed dreary. Other ladies would be impossible without more money.

The Spanish ambassador gave a very profuse denial to his telegraphed request for a loan. The hotel where he had luxuriated since his arrival in New York became suspicious and sternly asked for a settlement in full. Finally, the duke walked out on the sidewalk, a free man, but all of his baggage and much of his jewelry remained in the hotel. For the first time in his life the duke was without visible means of support. The manager of the hotel had promised to let him occupy his room for a few more days, but there were to be no more wonderful meals served there.

The duke visited a three-ball shop and pawned some jewelry that he had managed to conceal from the hotel management. Then he bought some hard bread and several evening papers and returned to his room. For the first time in his life he read over the "Help Wanted" section. This innovation was more successful than he had thought was possible. There was actually an advertisement in Spanish, asking for a personal interview, with pros-



"Now he seemed little more than a bag of skin and bones, but the room was filled with rustling vines, and a dozen flowers."

pect of interesting service in Spain. A telephone number was given, which was to be used that evening only between the hours of eight and ten. This gave the duke ample cause for reflection as he munched the hard bread and drank ice-water.

It was a day of surprizes. It started in the morning with the unexpected desertion of the lady and it ended at nine that evening with a visit from the gentleman who had inserted the advertisement.

James Garey lost no time in giving the reason for the visit.

"I am looking for a man," he said, "who is not afraid to die."

"You have found him!" answered the duke, shrugging his shoulders. "In my present condition I am better off dead than alive. Of course," he said reflectively, "it all depends on the manner of the death."

"That is the bad part of it," the New Yorker said. "I think that death is there waiting, but I am not sure of what form it takes. It is a peculiar story; in fact, it may be that you will find it even stranger than I do, or you may understand it. I had a brother who had everything in life to live for—and he went to Spain—to visit a lady there—and he never came back. Several other men that I have heard of have visited that lady, and they have never come back. The American ambassador to Spain has investigated the matter; in fact, he has personally been to see

the lady, and his report is a most interesting one. She admits that these men have visited her, she even shows where they signed her guest book, and in every case she proves that in a few days they left her castle in their automobiles. She regrets their disappearance; she cries pathetically as she recalls how happy they were when they left and how they promised to visit her again on their return to Spain. The lady is very wealthy, belongs to one of the oldest families in Spain and, thus, there can be no question of robbery. She is said to be well chaperoned, as are all the Spanish ladies, and she made a very favorable impression on the ambassador; so much so that he scouted the idea of foul play.

"I loved my brother, and I believe that he died in that castle. I also think that the other men died there. So I am going to visit her, and I want you to follow me. Four days after I enter that castle I want you to visit the lady, and I want you to find out what happened to my brother. If I am alive, I will help you; if I am dead, it may make it easier for you to solve the problem of my brother, for the trail will be fresher. You will, of course, understand that you are likely to die in the same way that these other men have died."

"I wonder if I know the lady," the duke mused.

"It may be that you do. Her name is Helen Moyennes. She seems to have some kind of a title, lots of money, and she lives in a very old castle on the mountain top of Andorra."

"Helen," replied the duke, "is not a Spanish name."

"Perhaps not, and, perhaps the only reason she is called a Spanish lady is because she lives in Spain. She is a brunette of uncertain age, and the ambassador, in a personal letter to me, commented on her beauty."

"I do not know her," said the duke. "I know a good many beautiful ladies, but not this one. The last one I knew left for Paris this morning with jewels that cost me a year's income. That is why I answered your message in the newspaper. I will go on this adventure with you. If the lady kills me, she will be the first lady who has done so. I suppose that this ambassador will provide me with letters of introduction, and you will have to get my clothes and jewelry out of pawn; at present, the hotel holds them as security."

"I will get them for you, and for the rest of your time in New York you may stay with me as my guest. I am busy in the daytime, but every night for the next week we will talk over our plans. We will leave for Spain in a week. In the meantime, I will make you an advance of five thousand dollars, and you can go ahead and have as good a time as you want in the daytime. This may be your last visit to New York."

"You are not very cheerful."

"I have no reason to be. Frankly, I believe there is a good chance that I shall die in that castle; you may die there; I hope that one of us will clear up the mystery of my brother's death. Then, there are some more men, like Southward of Atlanta and Serriano of Boston. There is one odd thing about these men that have disappeared, and that is, they were all fine specimens of manhood, and they were all traveling by themselves. For some reason all were in automobiles without chauffeurs. They went to that castle; there seems to be proof that they left the castle—at least that is the statement that the lady and her servants make; and then they simply dropped out of existence. How does it look to you?"

"I do not think they left the castle," answered the duke.

"Do you think that they are dead?"

"Either dead, prisoners, or so happy that they are willing to shut themselves off from all communication with the world."

The New Yorker shook his head. "They may be dead, or they may be prisoners, but these men are not staying there voluntarily. There are too many of them—they would be jealous of each other."

"Not if this Helen were a Messalina, or a Circe."

"No. She is not that. If she is, she has the ambassador badly fooled. Besides, I know my brother. He was not averse to a love affair with a lady, but he never would allow a rival in the field. If ever there was a jealous man in regard to the ladies, it was my brother. I can imagine him staying in that castle a lifetime with this Helen, but not a minute after he found out that there were other men there. If he is there, he is kept there, either dead or a prisoner."

"Time will tell about this Helen," sighed the duke. "You are sure she is beautiful?"

"Absolutely."

"That one fact makes the adventure attractive. Suppose you stop at the desk on your way out and rescue my trunks. Tonight I spend here. Tomorrow I come to your abode as your humble guest. A month from now we may dine in Paradise; but tonight I shall rest better if I have on my silken pajamas."

FOR the next week the evenings were spent in planning the Spanish adventure. A hundred suggestions were made, only to be discarded. Finally, they saw what they had dimly seen from the first. James Garey would visit this lady as her house guest. During those four days he would try to solve the mystery of his brother's disappearance. On the fifth day the Duke of Freud would arrive at the castle. He would either meet James Garey or he would not. If he did not, then he could take it for granted that the New Yorker had fallen a victim to the same fate that had overcome his brother, the same that had been the undoing of Southward of Atlanta and Serriano of Boston, and other good men. One plan that was suggested was finally adopted. James Garey was to wear a ring with a large stone. This stone had a peculiar property. When rubbed against other stone or wood, it left no mark. When, however, the moist skin, as the palm or finger tips, rested on this place, a red stain appeared on the skin. The two men tried it, and when Garey carefully wrote "Death" on the top of the mahogany table and the duke carefully pressed the palm of his hand on this spot, then the word "Death" appeared in red letters on his hand.

"That works very well," commented Garey, "and the average person would believe that in this ring we had a very valuable way of communication, but, in reality, I doubt its real worth to us. I could not write messages all over a castle without being seen, and if I only wrote in a few places, you would never know where those places were and would find them only by accident. If we both knew the castle, it would be different. As it is, the best we can do is to presume that there is one special guest room, and if, when you come, you have the good fortune to be placed in the same room that I slept in, you will find a message from me on the wall above the door."

DURING the next week the duke had to find some occupation for his days, the evenings being spent in apparently useless conferences with his fellow adventurer. The duke was a peculiar com-

bination of globe-trotter, scholar and libertine. Naturally, he drifted in these idle moments to Broadway, and there, on the first day of his new life with Garey, a sharper fleeced him out of a hundred dollars by means of the old familiar shell game. One pea and three walnut shells and "You can see where I put the pea, gentlemen; now back up your confidence in yourself with a small bet." The duke was interested, and envious. It pained him to think that any one could work a trick like that on him; so he took the sharper into his confidence, showed him several unusual card tricks and offered him another hundred if he would teach him the trick. He saw possibilities in this as a valuable help in times of future financial stringency, and he was confident that such times would come.

He spent several hours with the shell man and then started to practise. Again and again he flipped the pea where he wanted it. For the next six days he practically lived with a pea and three walnut shells in front of him on a table. He practised on the servants in the Garey household and finally was able to deceive even the butler. Then he tried the game on his employer, and that worthy was willing to admit that it was impossible to keep his eye on the pea with any degree of accuracy. By the time the two men sailed for England, the duke was so proficient that he was able to make a considerable sum on the voyage—of course, in a very gentlemanly way.

The plan of action determined on by the two men was as follows: Garey was going to the castle in Andorra via Paris; the duke was to go by way of Barcelona. Their date of departure from London was so timed that the duke would arrive at the castle exactly four days after Garey. After leaving London, the two men were not going to communicate with each other. According to their program, the schedule seemed fool-proof. As a final protection, a complete statement of the entire plan, with Garey's suspicions, and a complete program of the intended investigation, were sent in a sealed envelope to the American ambassador at Madrid, with the request that it be opened and acted on if neither Garey nor the Duke of Freud called at the ambassador's office before a certain date.

The parting at London was rather dull. Both men were depressed. In the short time that they had been associated with each other they had developed a decided friendship. They were drawn together by a sense of impending danger. The duke became almost melodramatic in his profuse promises to leave no stone unturned to unravel the mystery and, if necessary, to avenge the threatened death of James Garey. So they said good-bye.

SOME weeks later the Duke of Freud slowly drove his Isotta-Fraschini up the winding mountain road that led to the castle in Andorra, occupied by the fair Helen Moyennes. In his pocket he carried a letter of introduction from the American ambassador; on his Fedora a small blue-bird feather shone in the cold clear sunlight, and in his breast his heart beat almost as fast as the slow explosion of his engine—for the path was so steep that even his powerful car was forced to go up on low gear. A little village huddled, as though in fear, at the bottom of this mountain. The duke considered pausing a few minutes to obtain the reaction of these mountain folk to the grand lady who lived, in every way, above them, on the top of the mountain; however, he ended by driving through without a stop.

Accustomed though he was to Spanish architecture, this castle impressed him as being somewhat out of the usual, a castle

so old as to be uninfluenced by the Moorish occupancy of Spain, a large pile of stone so massive that it towered above the peak, and yet the individual rock was so weatherbeaten and covered with moss and fern that at some turns of the winding road it came into sudden view, not as a castle, but rather as a part of the ageless mountain. There may have been windows in the walls, but these were so narrow and the walls so thick that they showed as lines rather than modern apertures.

The duke had spent a few hours talking with a celebrated Spanish historian about this castle. The opinion given by this antiquarian was that the building was very old. In some respects the architecture was Norman; in other ways the Gothic influence showed; and the best description available included a row of columns that were said to be Roman. It seems that no one had occupied the place for many years, and then this very rich lady, Helen Moyennes, had bought the place and had now lived there for five years. No one that the duke talked to in Madrid seemed to know much about this new owner of the castle. Even the police department had no knowledge of her past and very little of her present. She spent money lavishly and was very prompt in paying her bills. Also, in some way, she had powerful political influence. That was all that the duke found out about her.

Now, he was going up to the castle and, for all he knew, he might never come down again.

All the men that had gone up that road had been well educated; some of them had, by their personal efforts, become rich. There was not one fool among them, and yet, none of them had come back.

What had happened to them? Were they staying there in the castle from choice?

Or were they dead?

He came near the top of the mountain just as the sun was sinking for its long night's rest. Streaks of light hovered in long neurasthenic fingers on the castle walls, throwing the ancient rocks into every possible shade of syncopating grays. A low wind, moaning upward from the valley, whined miserably around the massive walls. The road came to an abrupt pause before a great gateway with a Gothic arch, its deep shadows showing the wonderful thickness of the walls. The gate was shut. The engine puttered to a pause, and silence hovered over the castle, with the downy wings of twilight teasing the anxious mind to thoughts of depressed mystery.

The duke had, in his youth, received an excellent literary education. Now, lines from the deep well of his subconscious came over his mental threshold—Childe Roland to the dark tower came—fee, fie, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman—and blew his horn! Without being really aware of what he was doing he looked in back of him to see if there was room to swing his automobile around and start down the hill. There was no one there to see him; apparently his arrival had not been noticed. While he was thinking these thoughts, he saw the great gate divide in the middle and slowly swing open. Apparently he had been seen and the way had been provided for him to drive into the courtyard.

Starting the car, he glided into the courtyard and stopped. A noise made him look backward, and the gate was already closing.

"The lady wants to keep me," the duke muttered to himself.

And then an old woman came from a little doorway toward the car. In Spanish she asked him to follow her. He

pretended not to understand, and she repeated the request in very good English. The duke shrugged his shoulders, and thought that it was very much like a page out of Perrault's fairy-tales.

The old dame took him to a bedroom that was a curious combination of the very old and the ultramodern. For instance, a completely furnished bathroom provided every possible convenience to the dusty traveler. A sad-faced valet was in attendance, and the duke's baggage had been brought up with him and was being unpacked by the black-clothed servant. The sound of running water assured him that a bath was being drawn. As in a dream, he heard the servant ask if he wished to be shaved or would he prefer to shave himself. It was all perfect.

Half an hour later another sad-faced man entered and asked him if he was ready for supper. It seemed that the Lady Moyennes awaited the duke's pleasure in the supper room. Somehow it did not seem real to the duke. There was too much regularity to it, too much that he could not understand. It seemed as though he were an actor in a play that went too smoothly—ah! That was it! It had to be well done, because it had been so often done by these servants—how often had that sad-faced valet drawn the bath for some bright-faced, anticipating young man who sought adventure and love in Andorra? Where were those young men now? And would he play the same part in the tragedy that they had played?

He told the butler that he would be ready in a few minutes and took one of his suitcases into the bathroom and closed the door. There was an automatic in that piece of baggage, but when he took it up and looked at it, he found that all of the cartridges had been taken out. He could not believe that this had happened since he arrived at the castle. Was it possible that a confederate in the hotel in which he had passed last night had made him defenseless? At least, this was the first sign of danger, and was depressingly suggestive. He was glad that he had that dagger in its leather case, strapped to his leg under his trousers. It would not be as useful as a revolver, but in a pinch he could use it to good advantage. At least, it made him feel better to have it strapped on his leg. Going into the bedroom, he told the butler that he was ready to follow him to the supper table.

IN A room that was so small that a charming sense of intimacy was possible, but with so high a ceiling that the candles failed to show any of its detail, the Lady Helen Moyennes awaited the Duke of Freud. The aristocratic Spaniard was well acquainted with the beauty of the feminine world, but even his blasé soul was aroused by the superb woman who faced him. He dimly felt that she was tall, but there was a delicacy about her that minimized her height. Her closely fitting decolleté ensemble showed a form that was almost massive, and, still, there was but little indication of the tremendous strength that must be associated with such a powerful body. All this and a hundred other thoughts flashed through the duke's mind as he bent forward to kiss her outstretched hand. Her long fingers, ending in pointed nails, gathered together his varied, fragmentary thoughts into a harmonious whole.

He thought to himself, "This woman is a tiger. All ladies are cats, but this beautiful one is a supercat."

If Lady Helen had any other thought save that of bored politeness, she did not

show it in her attitude. In a minute they were at the small table, set for two.

"I always have the service set for a guest," explained the languid woman. "Life here is dull, but now and then, from all over the world, very exceptional people drop in on me; so I am always prepared. Day and night a watchman is on the wall. When an automobile arrives at the gate, he has orders to open it. After it is in the courtyard, there is time enough to learn the business of the occupant with me. Of course, important guests like yourself are always anticipated and prepared for. It is necessary to do this, especially in regard to the food. You realize that most men enjoy good meals, and the habits gastronomical of different nations are so different. You are my first Spanish guest. Is that not odd? Men from England and Italy and even a very wonderful Turk, to say nothing of those charming but rather blunt Americans, have visited me, but never till this evening have I had the pleasure of entertaining a real member of the Spanish nobility. Naturally, when I heard that you were arranging to see me, I wondered what I could do to make this visit one that you would remember—it seemed to me that a man with your sense of beauty needed something more than a heavy supper; so, I thought it would be fitting to make you a little present, even before you taste the grapefruit. Manuel, bring in that silver casket, and place it before the duke."

A massive jewel case was placed on the snow-white linen cloth.

"Now, my dear duke," almost purred Lady Helen, "when I heard that you were on your way to see me, I thought that it would be best to give you jewels —not just ordinary jewels, but some very fine ones that would have a special significance to you; so I arranged to obtain some in Paris. A very notorious young lady arrived there a few weeks ago, and I obtained some from her that she had brought from New York. You are so fond of jewels, perhaps you may have seen these before? Also, there is a ring."

The puzzled duke opened the lid of the jewel case and carefully examined the individual pieces. It did not take long for him to recognize them as the ones that he had spent a year's income on. And, at the bottom of the box, a ring. Of course, there are often many rings in the world that look exactly alike, and yet, as the duke looked at it, he was struck at the resemblance to the ring worn by James Garey. But this was no time to betray himself by any outward show either of anxiety or of perplexity. He slowly broke into one of those famous smiles that made him such a charming favorite with the other sex.

"You have conquered me!" he exclaimed. "I never could resist jewels. Courtesy on my part demands that I accept this gift, and I am sure that your sense of pity for a beauty-starved man will make you willing to grant my request and wear these jewels during the rest of my visit. When I take them with me, they will be all the more precious to me because you have worn them, at least, for a little while. This ring, however, I will at once put on and cherish, for there will be hours, as your guest, that convention will deny me the sight of your smile, and, during those lonely hours, the wearing of this ring will comfort me till you again dispel the midnight of my sorrow with the dawn of your fair face."

"I think that was very nicely said," replied the Lady Helen. "I am beginning to regret the wasted years during which I never even realized how charming a true Spaniard could be. I feel that

my cosmopolitan tastes have played me false, and in my search for a real man I have been unfortunate enough—and met you only tonight."

They smiled at each other, and began to eat.

Soon he selected a bracelet and begged for the opportunity of personally placing it on her wrist. In touching her skin he felt a warm, vibrant, tingling thrill that roused the slumbering silences of his masculine ego.

Again she smiled on him, as she said, "For years I have been looking for a real man."

Lazily leaning toward her he whispered, "I trust that from tonight on you need no longer look."

"I want a man that will gamble with life—and love."

"You have found that man."

"I am in great trouble."

"I will share it with you."

The meal finally ended—with the butler discreetly absent, no chaperon in sight, and a close harmony already existent between the tiger woman and the Spaniard, who was already wondering just what the end would be of the game that he was playing. However, he did not wait long, for she suddenly asked him to excuse her. She was tired and felt that he was also fatigued with the events of the day. She promised to see him on the morrow and to confide in him, to tell him her troubles, but, just now—a white arm stretched toward him, a white hand rested on his to receive his nocturnal salutation—and then the butler appeared to escort him to his bedroom.

DULLY, he closed the door. He found the valet waiting and told him that there was nothing more for the night. After the servant had left, he locked the door and lit several candles. Carefully, he examined the plaster on each side of the doorway. It was scratched with the wrinkles of antiquity. He placed his hands first on one place and then another against the wall, and, after each pressing, looked carefully at the palm. Finally, a red mark appeared on the skin. He replaced the palm exactly over that piece of plaster and held it there while he counted thirty. This time a little flag showed on his palm, and it was a red flag. The red flag of danger! The duke laughed, silently. He did not need a red flag to tell him of the danger he was in. Poor old James Garey—he had meant well—but where was he now? A sudden thought came to him. He took the ring on his finger and carefully wrote the word "Danger" on the white plaster. When he had finished, there was no mark visible, but when he pressed against it with his palm, the word appeared in red letters on his moist skin.

There was no mistake. On his finger was the ring that James Garey had worn when he entered the castle. He had worn it long enough to trace the warning flag —perhaps he had tried to leave other messages—but now the ring was on another man's finger, and where was Garey? How much did this devil of a woman know? She had known about his buying those jewels for the woman in New York, and had been able to anticipate his visit in time to recover those jewels and give them to him. Of course, it was a left-handed gift. She could take them away from him—but that was not what was worrying him. How did she know about the woman who went to Paris? In what way had she found out that he was going to visit her? She must have known that almost before he and Garey left America. Any one could see that the very fact that she gave him Garey's ring showed that she had a fair

idea of what that ring could be used for.

With a deep sigh, the duke undressed and went to bed. Garey was either dead or alive, according to the whims of this woman. So were all the other young men who had been drawn to this castle by rumors of the wondrous beauty of the owner. "Well," reflected the Spaniard, "tomorrow will tell the tale. The tigress must have some weak spot. But what in the name of all the holy saints is her reason? What is she? A real woman, or a salamander?"

The morning came, and with it the sad-faced valet, a bath and a very remarkable breakfast, served in the bedroom. Later came a message from the lady. She had heard that the duke could drive a car. Would he object to showing her his ability? The duke did not object, but for the next three hours teased death a thousand times on the steep roads, bordered on one side by high mountains and on the other side by ravines that seemed to have no landing-place. As one thrill followed another, the woman by the duke's side became enthusiastic.

"You can drive a car!" she purred. "I think you are a real man."

FINALLY they returned to the castle. The lady, pleading indisposition, begged to be excused, but promised to meet the duke at the supper table. There, dressed in an Oriental fantasy of laces and pearls, she appeared more charming than ever. But it was not her beauty, nor yet the excellent food, that impressed the duke; rather it was a flower that she wore on her corsage. This flower, though its stem was blood-red, had white petals, almost dead-white, and thick, as though made of wax. The stamens and pistils were red, but that was not the remarkable thing about them. They were long and seemed to move caressingly over the white bust of the Lady Helen Moyennes. And when the ends of the red stamens touched her skin, the woman seemed to be pleased.

For a while the duke thought that he was imagining all this—he did not wish to be impolite by looking too long at the flower and at the low-cut gown that it was pinned on. He shivered. It was fastened by a gold snake. Perhaps it would be best for him not to drink any more. Of course, it was just a gold snake, but—damn it!—what made the eyes glitter that way?

The lady noticed his close attention. She laughingly asked, "Do you like my flower?"

"It is beautiful because of its location. May I ask the name?"

"I do not know. I have a few plants growing here. Occasionally one blossoms and then I wear it, though often I prefer the blossom to go to seed. Do you like it? Would you like to see one grow? You may if you stay here. I should like to have you do that. You are a real man. For years I have wanted a real man—one who could make me love him and fear him and shrink under his wild caresses. Some of the men who have visited me have been such gentlemen that they bored me."

"I think I should like to see the plants," answered the duke. "And, under certain circumstances, life might be very pleasant here."

"If once you saw the plants, you would want to stay. You are like all the other men—so jealous! But we have come to the end of the supper. You were so busy watching my orchid that you did not eat much. It is early; let us go to another room and play a game of cards. Do you know any new game of chance?"

The duke thought of his three walnut shells. He excused himself and, guided by the butler, went to his bedroom to get them. On his return, the Lady Helen preceded him to a small room. It is interesting to note that during the days that the duke stayed at the castle he never learned its geography sufficiently to find his way without a guide.

The lady awaited him in a small room, hung with black velvet drapes. The floor was covered with a carpet so thick that the silent footfalls sounded like the ghostly steps of pedestrians long dead. In the center of the room a small card table and two chairs provided ample furniture for a card game. On one side of the table an iron stand provided support for an ash-tray of jade. Even as he was sitting down, the duke saw that this iron was shaped like a dragon, a rather hideous feminine dragon, with red eyes; he wished those eyes did not stare that way.

So, between cigarettes, the two showed each other tricks of cards and walnut shells, and, finally, of very proper, almost sedate, early Victorian love. Lady Helen was fascinated by the shell game. She finally admitted that the duke's ability was too much for her.

Pleased, he boasted, "The hand is quicker than the eye."

That night, on returning to the room where his valet awaited him, he quietly shut and barred the door. He kept the servant busy with a few odd tasks while he took off his evening clothes and put on a more comfortable soft-collared shirt and slippers. Then, almost before the valet knew what had happened, the duke had him on the floor with the sharp point of a very business-like dagger pressing against his throat.

"Now, you can get me the ammunition for my gun," he whispered.

"Your gun is loaded, sir."

"You are a liar!"

"No. The next morning after you came, she told me to load it."

The duke carefully searched the man to see that he had no weapons, and then, with the dagger still pressed against his jugular vein, made him walk over and open the traveling-bag. A second's inspection satisfied him that the man had told the truth. The revolver was loaded. That only served to give the duke one more thing to think about.

He replaced the dagger in his leg sheath, having far more confidence in a gun. Then he told the valet to sit down in front of him. The time had come for a cessation of courtesies, the duke carefully explained to the valet.

"I am satisfied that you know a great deal about this place," continued the duke. "I am going to speak very slowly, so you will be sure to understand my meaning. I am confident that you have served all the gentlemen who have visited your mistress. Probably the same program is rendered for each of us. Now, you have your choice: you can either tell me all about it or you can have me slit your throat. What about it?"

"I will tell you all I know, sir."

"You will?"

"Yes, I will tell everything."

"Why? What is the reason for your eagerness? A good servant would die rather than betray his madam."

"She told me years ago that whenever this sort of thing happened, I should always tell."

"So, other men have threatened you?"

"Yes, sir! Mr. James Garey bruised me severely."

"I see. And where is Mr. Garey now?"

He saw a change come into the man's eyes. He seemed to be looking over the duke's head. And just then the Span-

iard sensed a strange perfume and felt a soft hand on his shoulder as her voice said, "Why not have me tell you?"

He whirled in his chair and faced Helen Moyennes.

She smiled at him, and even in his worried rage he saw that it was a tender, solicitous smile, a pleasant comprehensive smile that should have disarmed his suspicions.

"You are a little like all the other men, Ferdinand, Duke of Freud. I tell you that I am in trouble and that you can help me and, at once, you think the worst things about me that you can and try to corrupt or threaten my servants. Why were you not frank? I gave you jewels. I even offered to share everything with you — for the rest of my life. I am afraid that I love you, Ferdinand."

The Spaniard looked at her. He felt that she was either speaking the truth or was a wonderful actress.

"I think that I shall call your bluff, Helen Moyennes," he answered. "If you will tell me the mystery of the missing men and give an explanation that is satisfactory to me, I will accept it as proof of your love, and I think that you are beautiful and lovely enough for me to spend the rest of my life with—and when I love a woman, I usually satisfy her."

"That would suit me. I think that when I tell you my story, you will understand. Of course, the men are dead—at least, most of them—but if they wanted to kill themselves, am I to blame? Come into my private rooms, and let me tell you about it."

"I will, but this valet goes along."

"To what purpose? What does he know that I can not tell you?"

"And you are going to tell me everything?"

"Everything."

THE Spaniard followed the woman into her room. His dagger had been replaced in its leather case, but he held the revolver in his right hand. He was very careful, walking down the long hall; he did not favor a knife-thrust from behind in the dark.

Once in her bedroom, he sat with his back to the wall; no confederate of this tigress was going to get the best of him! From that place of security he noted, for the first time, that since supper time the lady had changed her dress. Now she had on a white lace negligée that gave a general impression of extreme intimacy. In fact, the duke felt that it was intended to impress him—to pity and, perhaps, to other more subtle emotions. The orchid that she had worn at supper was now in a vase on the center table.

"You are so odd, Ferdinand," began the lady. "Please put that revolver away, or I shall scream. What do you want to do? Shoot me? Of course, you could do that, but how explain matters to my servants or the American ambassador? Do you know him? He certainly is a dear. He came here to investigate me, and I really believe that had he been younger and not so great an official, he would have remained here—longer. At least, he gave me a wonderful recommendation. He sent me a copy of it, and I could see that he was shocked at the way people were talking about me. A lone woman must be very careful. In fact, she must be above suspicion, and when I told the ambassador my story and showed him my guest book, why, the only thing for him to do was to think that these dear boys had accidentally driven their cars over one of our precipices.

"I came here some years ago, and bought this castle. I spent a large sum in making it suitable as a residence for the best kind of people. Of course, I

hoped that now and then I should have company; so I prepared a series of guest chambers. There were any number of old four-poster beds, and I had these put into the new guest rooms and, at last, I began to be known, just a little; people in Paris and Moscow and New York began to whisper about this castle, and finally a man called from Moscow. He was a nervous fellow, always putting things in his mouth. One day we were walking through the forest and we saw some red seeds on the ground, near the skeleton of a horse. They looked exactly like pomegranate seeds. This Russian nobleman put some in his mouth and that night he became unconscious. Of course, I was worried, because I was sure that his friends would think that I had poisoned him. After some weeks of unconsciousness, he died. I went back to the forest and picked up all of the seeds that were scattered around, and I brought them back and planted some, and they would not germinate. The more I worried, the worse I felt, and just when it seemed that I could not bear the suspense any longer, a man by the name of Southward from an American town, called Atlanta, came to see me. He had heard of me in Paris. I was young then, and I thoughtlessly told him about the Russian and asked him to help me unravel the mystery. He was a doctor, this American, and he asked me to let him see the seeds. I showed them to him and he examined them. He cut one open and looked at it through a pocket microscope, and finally he said that it was just a hard seed, and he said that it was like a pomegranate, and that it was not the cause of the Russian's death, because it would never be dissolved in his stomach—it was too hard; and he thought the man had died of a disease he called uremia. I cried and told him how relieved I was to know all this, and could he prove it to me—if he could, he would win my everlasting gratitude. What did he do but at once put a seed in his mouth and swallow it! And he became unconscious and died—just like the Russian. And that made two.

"The affair shadowed my life. It made me broody, introspective. I was no longer the gay girl that had come so buoyantly to this castle in search of adventure.

"And then the blossoms came, and of all the things in my life that I have had, those wonderful blossoms were the most precious. You saw me wear one tonight at supper. At present, it is on the table. When I have one, I am a different woman — without one, I am sad, depressed and aged. So now I had two things to live for, one to solve the mystery of the seeds and the other to have a plentiful supply of blossoms.

"James Garey was the first man who acted in the least bit unfriendly. I knew that you were going to come, and I knew that he would accuse me of the death of his brother. Naturally, I was prepared; yet I determined to be honest with him and tell him the whole story. He decided to kill me, but at the last he said he would give me a gambler's chance. He had the idea that the red seeds had killed his brother. I showed him a bottle full, and, at the same time, allowed him to compare them with real seeds of the pomegranate. He said there was a little difference; so we put a red seed and a pomegranate seed on the card table and cut for the low card. The high card allowed the fortunate one to swallow the pomegranate seed, while the one who cut low was to swallow the seed that he felt was so poisonous. I cut low; so I swallowed the red seed and he took the harmless seed, and in a few hours he was silent in the embrace of the slowly approaching death.

You notice I am still alive? So, something else killed Garey? What?"

The duke smiled. "Perhaps. Or, at the last moment, you switched the seeds on him."

"No. He was fortunate. He won out in the cards. Do you know, he followed me around as long as he could walk, and, of course, waited to see me become a hopeless cripple, and you should have seen the look of hopeless terror on his face when he found out that he could not walk or talk. He gambled with death and lost."

"So, one and all, those brave boys are dead?"

"No. Garey is still alive, and one or two others, but the rest are really dead."

"Lady Helen Moyennes. You are a liar! If I thought that you were telling the truth, I would kill you right there. I would fill that lovely body full of bullet holes. But you are trying to deceive me. You are either insane or a great actress. I should not be surprized to have the door open and all these former lovers of yours walk in as the animals did at Circe's banquet. Such a tale as you tell! For children or fools."

"I am not a liar. Here is a bottle filled with seeds, and—why, there is one of the flowers!"

"The flowers?" asked the duke. "What in the name of the holy saints has the flower to do with the seed?"

"The seed finally matures the flower and the bloom is what I live for."

"But—I do not understand?"

"You will when you see the men. Come with me. Suppose we see James Garey first. He will have his eyes open, but he is really unconscious; at least, it is best to think so."

THE lady led the Spaniard into a guest room. Passing down the hall, he recognized at least one fact, that he was passing by the door of his own room. Then they entered the next room. Fool that he was! Had Garey been separated by only a wall from help all the time since the duke had arrived? They entered the room, and the duke saw that in practically every detail it was furnished like his own. And Garey was on the bed.

His eyes were open. He was in pajamas, and but lightly covered with a white silk sheet. On his face was a puzzled look. Without looking at the woman by his side, the duke took the sick man's hand. It was warm. The man was breathing, but the arm, when released, dropped flaccid on the bed.

"Garey! Garey! Don't you know me?" the duke pleaded.

The soul seemed to answer in Garey's eyes. The soul, and nothing else.

The duke's finger nervously touched the trigger of the revolver.

"Don't shoot me yet," jeered the tigress. "Wait till you have seen the rest of them. Let us go into the other rooms."

In the next room another man lay on the bed in the same paralyzed attitude.

The lady said in a low voice, "This is a South American. I was so disgusted with him that, in some way, he swallowed a seed with his salad. He has lost a good many pounds in the last week. If I were not sure of his loss of sensibility, I should think from his expression that he was in pain."

In the next room the woman paused to turn on the electric lights. "If you look at this man closely, you will see that he also is still alive but not doing very well. See the little green tendrils coming out of his mouth and nose? The root formation has now reached a point at which the plant is able to reach the surface. Naturally there is a profound disturbance of all of the vital organs.

"Let us go into the next room. A

lovely boy, Serriano of Boston, is there. A Greek god he was when he came here, and I would have saved him if I could, but he was so stubborn. Let's pass through this connecting door. See how thin his face is and shrunken his arms? But the plant is growing rampant. It is sending up its branches over the bedposts and down over the floor. See the little buds? In another two weeks the blossoms will appear. I am sure that Serriano has been dead for some days. I loved that boy, and I am so glad that he did not suffer.

"In this next room is the reason for your being here. Yes, you have guessed it—the brother of Garey. A surprize awaits you. Come through this door. Do you notice this odor? Have you ever had an experience like this? The most wonderful orchid in all the world, my passion flower."

On the bed in this room was what had once been a man. Now he seemed little more than a bag of skin and bones, but the room was filled with rustling, swaying vines, and a dozen flowers, like those the tigress had worn on her corsage, filled the room with a cloying fragrance that was almost unearthly and unendurable. The Lady Helen took one by the stem and held it near her bosom, and at once the pistils began tenderly to brush the skin.

She laughed. "See? My darlings know me. How glad they are to have me near! The others are disappointed, jealous. They want to love me, too."

"So that is Garey's brother?" the duke asked slowly.

"Yes. He was a fine man. So far, he has produced more blossoms than any I have ever had. But let us see the others. Suppose we skip two or three rooms and go to the last room? That will give you an idea of the end, and I know you will agree with me that it is not so bad, not so very bad."

This last room was furnished like the others, but the plant was dead. The thing that had been a man was now dried leather, cracked and broken. Between the cracks could be seen the dead, dried roots that had eaten him, till nothing remained; and these had then died of hunger. On the bedposts, over the floor, the dead leaves lay in dry rot. But the seed pods hung, a plentiful harvest, from the end of many a stem.

"Here we reap the harvest. This is the man from Moscow. Tomorrow I will come with my glass bottle and save every seed and have the room clean and precise for the next visitor."

"There will be no tomorrow and no more visitors!"

"So, this is the end?"

"Precisely!"

"Then, let me go and gather some of the flowers from Garey — for my funeral."

They returned to the room where the massive blooms filled the air with the odor of ethereal decay. Gently the lady broke off half a dozen, but, in spite of her care, the torn stems bled and covered her white negligée with blood. She pressed the bouquet to her face, and the duke shuddered as he saw dozens of long twitching stamens caress her cheeks and eyelids.

"Now we will go back to any of your rooms," commanded the duke, "and you can prepare to join Garey."

"At least, it will be a pleasure to die at the hands of such a gentleman. I am sure that it will give you a thrill to kill a defenseless woman."

"It will give me a great joy."

Still smelling the flowers, she sauntered to the card room.

Seated at one chair, she begged the

duke to occupy the other. The card table was between them.

"So, you are going to kill me?"

"No. On second thought, I am going to tie you up and take you in my car to Madrid, and there I am going to turn you over to the authorities."

"They will never believe you."

"They can come and see for themselves."

"By that time my servants will have all the rooms clean and fresh. Ferdinand, you are a fool. You know you can not make the people in Madrid believe you. You had better kill me here. Of course, you can not get out of the castle alive. Right now a half-dozen guns are pointed at your heart. Why not be a sport? Let's compromise. You write a letter to the American ambassador that you and James Garey are leaving for Nice and that you know everything is all right here. Then, we will play a game of cards. If I lose, I will take one of my own seeds and you a pomegranate. I have one of those fruits here. I will let you cut it open and satisfy yourself that there is no fraud. I will call in my men and tell them that if you win, they are to give you safe passage. I understand you are a gambler—let's try fate. Select your own game."

"I will do that little thing," said the duke, smiling, as he reached in his pocket for the three walnut shells. "Let me cut the pomegranate. I want to look at those seeds. Put one of your seeds beside it. God! They are alike. Now, call your men and tell them your orders, and we will begin."

THE lady clapped her hands, and from behind the velvet curtains stepped six men. She had not lied. She told these six that she and the duke were playing for high stakes, and if she lost they were to let the man go free. She called for pen and ink and paper and had the duke write to the American ambassador about the trip to Nice. Then she told the six men that they could leave the room.

"You will learn in eight hours who won," she told them, "but if this guest wins, let him go free. If I win, we will have you take the letter to Madrid. Now, Ferdinand, explain this new American game."

"I have here three half walnut shells," began the duke. "I will use a pomegranate seed. I will give you three chances to tell under which shell I put the seed. Best two out of three wins. If I win, I eat a pomegranate seed, and you one of those seeds of death. If you win, the tables will be reversed. I warn you that the hand is quicker than the eye."

"I will have some wine brought," commented the Lady Helen. "We will need something to wash the seeds down. My mouth is dry already. Is it not queer, fantastic, that I can not stand excitement? Feel my hand, how it shakes."

"I do not care to feel your hand."

"A few hours ago you said that you loved me."

"I love you as I do death. Come. Be a sport. Do you understand the rules? Good! Now watch me closely as I wave my hand over the shell. There! It is now under one. Which one? The right end? Wrong. It was in the center. Now again. Watch me. This is your life at stake. Now, which one? The center? Wrong again. It was on the left side. You have lost twice and you pay. Now is the time for my gun. Here is the glass of wine. Take a seed out of that bottle and swallow it. One false move and I blow your brains out. Now I will dig out one of these pomegranate seeds and drink

it down with wine. Now, we each have a seed. I understood you to say that it worked in eight hours? So, we will sit here till morning. If you move, I will kill you anyway. I am not going to leave you till I know that you have started the long road that those brave young fools took. You had a good time, but now your time has come to an end."

Sighing, the lady put down her glass.

"So, this is the end?" she said. "Well, have you any objection to my playing solitaire? Some men would have liked to hold me in their arms these last eight hours of life, but you are so different, Ferdinand. At times, you seem to be unnecessarily cold. It is better to die than to live a lifetime with you. You would not satisfy."

She started to play solitaire. Hour after hour she shuffled and dealt. Four hours passed and then five and six. She had not spoken, but the duke noticed that her movements were gradually becoming slower, and at times she swayed in her chair as though she were drunk.

At last, his curiosity overcame him. "Do you feel sick?" he asked.

"I feel very peculiar. I think that soon I shall be unable to play."

He watched her carefully. Seven and a half hours passed and she just sat there motionless, looking at him with glazed eyes. Sighing and tired, he took his revolver and placed it in his pocket; then, folding his hands on the table, he waited for the end.

He judged that the eight hours were up and started to look at his watch; but his hands stayed folded on the table. He tried to get up, and he just sat there.

Then the woman stretched; like a lazy cat she stretched her long bare arms above her head and yawned.

"It has been a long, tiresome night, Ferdinand," she said. "You look sleepy yourself. That was an interesting game you played. Your idea that the hand was quicker than the eye is right. You never did see me plant those seeds in a pomegranate or palm a harmless seed so that it looked as though I took one from the glass bottle."

The duke looked at her with smoldering hate, the fire of hell in his eyes, but he was helpless. The virus from the seed of death had already prostrated his nervous system and he was started on the long road that the other brave men had taken.

The tigress clapped her hands, and in walked the butler and the valet. Without a word, they took the duke and carried him to his bed. On that bed he was destined to lie till his body turned to bones, skin and dust. Then the woman clapped her hands again, and, when another servant came, she gave him the letters to the American ambassador, with orders to mail it. Then she went to her bedroom, talking softly to herself.

"I am tired," she said, "and slightly nauseated. I do not seem to stand excitement as well as I did once. Well. That makes one more fool. I wonder when I can stop. Certainly not so long as I gain such wonderful delight from my darling blossoms."

The sunlight was streaming through her bedroom windows. Slowly she undressed, and, with her six orchids in her hand, she sank luxuriously into the downy softness of her bed. She placed the blossoms on her shoulders, neck and face and, quivering, shut her eyes.

The flowers awakened, and stretching forth their tremulous pistils and stamens, stroked her skin.

With a convulsive effort she gathered them to her lips and kissed them till she slept.

"He snapped a rope and bound her wrists behind her."

Black Man and White Witch

By Watson Rawkins

An eery tale of an African slave-ship on which blindness and death held sway

THIS was the third night of drifting for the big, black, naked African savage upon his raft of wreckage. He had as yet spoken nothing save the sea, the sea-fowl, the sun and stars and moon, but now, in the bright tropic moonshine, the towering brigantine came down upon him, across the plain of silver.

He was a Koromantin, from the unsubdued mountains of the Ashanti Gold Coast. Here, sole survivor he was of those five hundred and eighty stripped human chattels, men and women, with which, stacked below deck like books, the Portuguese slaver *Flor de Felicidade*—Flower of Happiness—had put out from Whydah Roads of the West African slave marts.

Ere the discharge of the Cuban plantations there should have been, for him and those ignorant all, six weeks of fetid gloom, suffocation and thirst, but an eye plague had spread like fire in a cane village.

She had done it, with her witchcraft: she, the slim white witch, girl-wife of that hated captain—the woman who, hovering near the deck barricades, from aloof had gazed with large, curious eyes, to murmur charms while he and others supped from their pannikins or danced at the bidding of the lash.

Her eyes had often been fixed upon him, Koromantin of the mountains and of a free people who despised the lowland jungle dwellers, and her murmurs had been directed his way; but he had answered look with look, unafraid. In his country he was a headman and a great man. The white witch might do her worst, and he would not bow or cry out. What was her pleasure in saddling them, the already wretched, with her curse?

His fetish proved to be stronger than hers, for the red-eye curse passed him by. But through the slave-deck quarters, dark, smothersome, black with prone figures speaking different tongues, where news carries like news among stable brutes, there were groans burdened with fresh misery, and curses vainly answering curse.

Captain Fezarri had acted promptly. The first black discovered with the dreaded blindness had been thrown overboard along with his shackle-mate, and with others who had lain near. The next morning a score of culprits were revealed. They went over; and through succeeding days of baffling calms and head winds the drift and wake of the *Flower of Happiness* were specked with shark fins and with wallowing forms.

The half-drunken ship's doctor was busy with his own men. There was only the one remedy, expensive but thorough, to be applied to those cattle below, while praying for a stiff breeze which might sweep her slave-hold clean of contagion the *Flower of Happiness,* dogged by her lading of pestilence, blundered upon her sluggish way like a craft condemned.

The black man as well as the white man, however, had his gods—weak though they seemed to be. The lookout of the *Flower of Happiness* reported the square-sails of a brig tacking in upon her course. Captain Fezarri, nimble, yellow, barefooted, and knife-scarred in a cheek, took but a squint; then he ordered everything slow and aloft clapped on, for the stranger was a British cruiser.

In the thinned slave-tiers underneath fastened hatch gratings the big Koromantin had known all; he had read the shrieks and the strangled cries, and he missed companions in misery. Now he and his fellows might dully wonder over the new repeated loud commands above, the quick slap of soles, the creak of blocks and the quiver of the straining hull. No food or water was passed down.

All the night and all the day the chase continued, with the cruiser gradually creeping in. His bow-chasers opened, while his colors flew to his main-peak. The shot, at first falling astern, began to splash water upon the helmsman. A ball from a long twenty-four ripped through the bulwarks of the starboard bow—might as easily have ripped through either main- or fore-mast.

Captain Fezarri saw himself about to be caught with a foul ship. That would never do. Sheering off from a prize court and charge of piracy he ordered the chain cable of the best bower anchor freed of its hawse-hole and stoppered along outside the weather rail; and the blacks to be fetched up.

Up they came, prodded and thwacked, clanking and groaning in their ankle cuffs; up the main-hatch ladder, to tumble, bewildered, into the light of day. There now were scarce one hundred: men, women and children.

The king's ship appeared to have picked a favoring slant of air, for he gained more rapidly. Captain Fezarri, while overseeing that the blacks were leg-ironed in couples and tied by the wrists to the links of the cable, kept a hopeful eye (somewhat reddened of the conjunctival membrane) upon that squall gathering off the weather beam.

If the squall struck the cruiser first, and the cruiser stood on before it, the *Flower of Happiness* should be lightened speedily ere she was hove to for search. If the squall gave her an even break with the Britisher he, Captain Fezarri, would hold on, himself, and risk all.

Planted with the others against the forward rail, with his left ankle ironed to the right of a yellow Eboe, his bruised wrists bound, behind him, to the anchor cable, at the end of the line, as happened, the huge Koromantin stood erect. His battered head was high, his gaze was fixed straight before him as though he were reviewing his Africa, long below the horizon; and about him there was something serious, majestic, and implacable.

He had no wife nor child nor country; the first two had been wrested from him and done to death by the white man; from the last he himself had been wrested; and now he had only his hate.

Apparently unseeing, nevertheless he saw. The white witch was upon the deck. Here she came, that creature of evil, who had cast her spells upon them so that they might die. She came forward, slipping, and clinging to the rail opposite. Was it possible that she, too, had the sickness? In white she was, which was no whiter than her white-witch face. With her was another of the hated tormentors.

THE Koromantin gave no sign that he noted them. Perhaps it was this scornful hardihood—the naked soul exposed in a great naked savage; or perhaps it was the twilight gloom of the squall impending amid threat of cannon boom and ball and the flag of Law; or perhaps it was the quick word from the woman's parted lips which impelled the Arab cabin-boy (with eyes grotesquely swollen) to dart into the bows, to clip the Koromantin's wrist bond with his knife and tuck a file into the thick, astonished fingers.

While the eyes of master and crew, such as could still serve, were turned upon ship and squall over the quarter, stealthily sinking and here shielded by his fellows and a corner of the galley the Koromantin worked like mad upon his ankle shackle. The blind Eboe beside him was too far gone with apathy to care.

The file bit fiercely, like the black man's fierce spirit; but he was granted little time. Down swooped the squall, charging across the darkened sea with an onrush of Neptune's cavalry whose hoof-beats stir spume instead of dust, so that the murky line of its advance was clearly defined.

It veered for the cruiser, and the suck of it set the Guineaman's canvas to flapping; she lost way, while, leaning to the first blast until his yards dipped, with his fore top gallant streaming in ribbons, the cruiser leaped to seize his prize. In a minute he was almost within hailing distance

—aye, the whistle of his bo's'n could be heard, while his reefers clustered like bees and the teeth of his broadside plainly showed; and the *Flower of Happiness* hung practically in stays.

"Cut loose!" Captain Fezarri's command sharply issued, at last. Hatchet in hand a sailor ran for the bows; he brushed past the crouched Koromantin and the hatchet blade fell upon the sea lashings of the large bower anchor.

"Hold!"

See! The fore top gallant yard of the cruiser was down and dragging from his rail—he yawed—he lost way, the squall closed over him and was swinging for the wake of the *Flor de Felicidade* as she filled with the first of the wind.

"Hold!" That had been for the man with the hatchet. "Hard a-weather!" This, for the man at the helm. "*Dius,* boys! We'll leave him yet!"

Too late, in part. The hatchet had done its work. Down from the cathead dropped the anchor, and with terrible rasp and clangor the cable followed, ripped from stop after stop and in its deadly flight plucking with it black after black like monkeys snared in a forest twitch-up.

The rail was clean in an instant, while yet the *Flower of Happiness* was jibing upon new course. She whirled like a hare, and was away; and in the welter of the king's ship, just chopped free of his top gallant wreckage, tore over the spot that his chase had been occupying. But anchor and chain and hapless blacks were fathoms deep—all except the big Koromantin.

That vicious jerk by the anchor which, communicated through the wrist-tethered Eboe, had haled him along bodily, by the ankle shackle, over the bulwarks and into air and sea, snapped the weakened shackle-link, and thrown wide of the bows as the slaver jibed, he was released.

From two fathoms down he rose, half strangled, but fighting, into the moil of spray and gust; to be near strangled again by the rush of the cruiser, and then, drowning, to clutch, by instinct, at the top gallant flotsam, and take breath and bearings.

He hung fast, waiting and floating. The tropical rain flattened the slight sea kicked up by the squall; squall and rain ushered on the dusk and the clouds broke from the moon and stars. The Koromantin climbed upon his sodden little isle and greedily sucked at the rain cupped in the hollows of the canvas remnants.

Refreshed, he rode all night. In the sunrise doldrums the ocean lay flawless, heaving with long and languid breath like the pulsant rhythm of creation; not a sail emerged, between him and that low and distant bluish line which might be Africa, nor in that other direction which concealed the unknown. He had only the sharks and sea-fowl for company.

This was the latitude of seasonal calms punctuated by hasty squalls. He drifted all the day; managed to eke out an existence during two days and nights, and in the third night the towering brigantine came down upon him, across the silvered plain.

HE CROUCHED amid his raft of wreckage much as he would have crouched in a jungle covert of his Guinea mountain homeland. He preferred death to the slave deck again, but he was rabid for food. When the portentous thing came dipping and swaying and creaking, and suddenly uprearing would contemptuously tread him under, he sprang, he reached with his long arms and grasping the bob-stays he clung, for a short space, like a giant ape.

The little jingle that he had made, ceased; the top-hamper raft was shunted aside by his leap and by the wash from

the craft's cutwater; he swarmed higher and higher, foot by foot, until, chinning himself upon the bowsprit he craned with his fuzzy head and peered into the deck.

That which he sensed appalled him.

The gash through the forward starboard bulwarks had been partially repaired—though only partially; but this sign was not necessary to his enlightenment. He smelt, he perceived, he knew. He was back again upon the slaver *Flor de Felicidade,* which to him and the like had no name save the African black's name for Hell.

The deck, white under the moon and changeful with the shadows of sails and cordage as the ship weaved and curtsied with scarce steerage way, was muttersome with figures which, prone or sitting, otherwise might have been asleep. At the far end was the figure of the captain, motionless, holding to the wheel as if listening.

The Koromantin shrank, prepared to drop from his perch. In the bows right before him there rose a sailor, who called about:

"Hello! Ahoy! Listen, everybody! I heard something, dead ahead."

The murmurings were stilled. The great black sank lower, crouched for retreat. Through the tense interval of faculties alert the captain shouted query, from the wheel; the man in the bows replied, and turning looked full, with jaws moving and hand poised, at the bowsprit and its cowering, shadowed refugee.

But the black did not drop. Instead, he stiffened with nostrils expanded; he hitched higher and wormed onward, all in a fever of desire, down the bowsprit; the sailor was turned again, as though giving ear, but half face or full face counted the same now, with the black—the eyes had been swollen shut, and, besides, the Koromantin was hungry.

From the rail he sprang like a leopard upon the sailor vaguely questioning of the ankle-iron's faint jingle, with knee and arm snapped his neck even while bearing him down and had snatched the hunk of meat; crouched, was champing upon it while the alarm of the brief scuffle, the clinking and the fall had pervaded the deck fore and aft.

Men leaped up.

"What's that?"

"Who's aboard?"

"Did you hear?"

"Hello, forward!"

One stumbled against another, and swore; and with an oath the captain's voice belched powerfully:

"Forward, there! Who's the watch? Look sharp, men. That sounded like a loose black, wearing an iron. Search along up into the bows, some of you." And he called, in the Mandingo trade dialect of the Slave Coast: "Who is there?"

The Koromantin made no answer. While he greedily devoured the meat he fastened his glowing eyes upon another near enemy, who had scrambled up as though he had been asleep under the rail here, and who was confusedly casting about. The man tripped upon the body; and knelt, and explored with his hands, and shouted:

"Sanchez is dead! Here he is—he's just been killed! *Dius!* Look out, all! I'm coming aft." Wherewith he went creeping and groveling, as though he dodged a blow.

The effect of the words was pleasing to the black giant. The men before him cried out, and ran about, jostling and recoiling and seizing whatever weapons their fingers encountered. They were blind. He stood upright and they did not see him!

The meat had been salty. The thought of water mastered him. He made a step, his ankle shackle jingled, the ship men cried out again, and strained to see. He

tore the neckerchief from the dead white man and muffled the ankle cuff and its dangling link. Then, again, as swiftly and as silently as a leopard he stole to the scuttle-butt chocked at the foot of the mainmast, and throwing caution to the winds dipped with the calabash and avidly gulped.

From the wheel the captain called:

"Who's drinking? Look sharp, everybody. Down on deck with you!"

And he fired with his pistol. The ball seared the Koromantin's shoulder. The wanton injury, added to other injuries and to his hate of all these butchers and robbers and particularly of the chief and his white-witch woman, infuriated him. Straight on over the cabin roof he vaulted, pounced upon the wheel and the startled wretch there, clutched the captain by the two ears and the yellow chops and grinning into the sightless eyes dragged him from his hold, with the strength of madness twirled him high and flung him over the gunwale.

There was only the half-stifled cry from the captain before he whisked overboard, and only the plash of his landing, afterward; but these tokens carried to the crew stunned into immobility by the pistol shot and the instant slap of bare flat soles, and the pantings of savage energy.

"*Dius!* There goes the captain!"

"Wait! Listen! Hello, captain! Are you aboard, captain?"

The Koromantin, squatting near the wheel, did not reply. From the captain came no reply. Terror, like a cold hand, gripped the brigantine *Flower of Happiness*. With slat of sail and block, creak of boom and yard, she drifted helmless, while, stock-still or stealthily shifting as though fearing to draw attention, the crew murmured among themselves.

"It must be a black who escaped drowning."

"Yes, and he can see; he has his eyes."

"He is aft, where he got the captain. I hear him breathing."

"Saints protect us! We are dead men!"

"Somebody speak to him. Who knows Guinea talk?"

"Ruez has Mandingo. Where is Ruez?"

"Here."

"Go speak that devil black, Ruez. Ask him who he is and what he wants."

"He'll kill me."

"Maybe not, if you speak him civilly."

"Yes," said another. "Tell him we will feed him, Ruez. He shall have rum. Then if we can only get at the cabin's medicine chest we can poison him."

"Promise him pay, in rum, for the use of his eyes so we can make a port or a sail. When we wish we will doctor his rum with the laudanum and tie him up."

The squatted black saw a sailor coming on, feeling along the rail; and he rose, picked a belaying-pin from the near rail, and waited. He was going to kill all, in due time.

The sailor called in the Mandingo trade jargon: "Brother, hello."

This was not worth response. As the sailor paused, redly swollen of the eyes, in the moonlight at the farther corner of the cabin, the Koromantin recognized in those distorted features the countenance of the half-caste cabin-boy who had cut his bonds.

"Hello! Who is it? Eboe? Fullah? Mandingo?"

The African growled, with one word: "Koromantin."

A shudder and a wail swept the waist of the *Flower of Happiness*.

"Koromantin! Hear you? He is a savage, a pagan! We are dead men."

The cabin-boy piped again: "What do you want, friend?"

The black gave no answer.

"Food? Drink? You shall have plenty. Who are you? You are the big man? You have eyes?"

Said the Koromantin: "I am death."

The boy retreated.

"He is the big Koromantin. I offered him food and drink, but he means to kill us."

"Could you see him, Ruez?"

"Very little."

"Maybe enough to shoot him?"

"Oh, no! Not enough yet."

The white men jabbered: "Then fetch him food and rum. Quick!"

"Promise him we will make him rich. Toll him forward, till we can get the laudanum out of the cabin."

"Once he is put asleep we can tie him in irons and promise him his freedom, for his eyes. In that way we can make a port."

"Then he shall be strung up for murdering the captain and Sanchez."

"Yes; but in the name of God first treat with him. Quick, Ruez! Speak him fair again. Get him forward."

The Koromantin grimly smiled at the panic. A slight jar of impact registered upon the ship's counter. He looked over, and he saw a canoe—the small-boat, indeed—floating there with slack tether.

But here again came the boy, from forward, with a dish of food, and set it upon the roof of the cabin. He dipped into the cask of water and clumsily filled up a tin cup from which wafted the odor of rum.

"Eat and drink, friend," he called. "You will find," he said, "plenty more food in that little house up ahead. Pretty soon more rum, too. Eat, drink, sleep, make ready to show us the way to other white people, so that you shall go back home rich."

THE black, with eyes and nostrils titillated, straightened more erect, to take crafty step. He would eat, drink, and kill—but not kill all these in the night and by violating his fetish invest his path with ghosts.

He stopped short. Before his very face, up out of the stairway from the cabin she came, the white witch, the captain's woman, like a spirit: came, emerging silently into the moonlight, in bare feet, in thin white gown, with her hands groping, her countenance upturned to him, and sightless.

He stood transfixed, breathing rapidly while his broad naked chest rose and fell. His fingers spread, his sinews tautened, his veins swelled. Upon the top step she paused, as if questing. She spoke, from parted lips.

"Pedro? Are you here? What happens? I heard a noise."

Forward, a babble broke afresh.

"It is the *senhora!*"

"Beware! *Senhora!* Back! Down! No, no; this way! To us! There is a black!"

She uttered a frightened little cry. She wavered—and the big Koromantin leaped. Lust surged within him as he seized upon her, crushing her in his two arms, lifting her bodily and bearing her to the stern rail.

Her flesh was soft in his grip, her loosened hair brushed his face and all his brute senses thrilled to the gift of her.

Down he flung her, like a lion depositing his spoil. She had gasped, and shivered; she lay lax, disheveled; she had fainted, she was defenseless to his will.

There had been a moment of silence, but the white men roused.

"He has the *senhora!* At him! To the rescue!"

With loud shouts they wildly shambled up the deck. He vented a tremendous yell, and stamped, and clattered with his pin; and in a frenzy of helplessness they ran about, and blundered, and fought one another. Darting from spot to spot he threatened them until they cowered with their

tongues out, in a fear as though the *Flower of Happiness* were possessed by a demon.

Having demonstrated over the blind fools he left them to their prayers and curses and returned to his woman. While he stood over her his fingers twitched, clasping and unclasping; his large face worked convulsively—he licked his lips. She, this white-witch girl, whom he did not fear, was his, to do with as he pleased. But he need not hurry. He could picture, and gloat, and plan.

He snapped a rope and bound her wrists behind her; tied her by the slim waist to a stanchion; and settled, with cup and dish, to drink, eat, and wait.

Voices besought: "*Senhora!* Are you there, *senhora?*"

"Mother of God, *senhora!* Treat with him. Play him kindly. Do not anger him, *senhora.* It is the big Koromantin—the proud one you noticed. Pretend to be good to him, *senhora.* Fetch him rum from the cabin. You will put laudanum in it. When he is asleep we will take him and truss him."

The black, secure upon his quarter-deck, let them gabble. For this brief truce he glowered and deliberated. The right to kill was his, and the lust to kill was his. The white murderers—there they were, at his disposal as if by favor of his fetish. His fingers tightened upon the belaying-pin, and in fancy it crushed into those skulls. In fancy, too, he threw them all over into the water—threw them, blind, to join the blind devil captain and the blind and shackled black men and women thrown over before.

And then, the woman! She should go with him, to land (when he knew where land was), for his further pleasure. She should be his jungle toy, until he was done with her. He licked his lips.

The white men had promised him riches; although he was black and they were white, although he had been a slave and they were free, although he was naked and they were clothed, it should easily be believed that since he had eyes and they did not they would make him rich if he helped them.

It might be supposed that he had that to think upon. But vengeance for what had been visited upon him and his relatives and his kind lay virtually under his feet; and none should tell of it, for the sea, like the jungle, was deep.

The slaver, swinging in the airs and currents, yawing upon erratic course, drifted on through a low haze which like a sheeny halo enclosed but nowhere touched her. The canvas hung damp, every point dangled limply and from spars and beaded rigging the moisture dripped, dripped with the languored slowness of the tropics.

The babblings forward were fitful; the woman lay motionless; quiet doused the spasms of the exhausted brigantine and the black, content, dozed, but with animal senses alert.

WHEN he wakened by intuitive warning the moon was red in the horizon and its flooding light had been dulled by the grayish pallor of first daybreak. The deck was somnolent with figures postured inertly as if drugged by the heavy breath of dawn. The woman had not stirred, gently rocked by the *Flower of Happiness* that heaved to and fro upon the smoothly heaving water.

The air around had cleared, and to the Koromantin's quick ear was permeated with the booming as of a far, far African drum.

He looked, and he saw, yonder, a white bank—the bank of a fog suspended above the surface of the world; and beneath it a white line frothed and simmered: the line of that surf which boomed forever, like an

endless requiem, upon the bars and beaches and buttress cliffs of Africa.

The fluent fog opened and closed, for intervals of deeper vistas. Upon a broad low point apparently quite near, dark fronds of coco-palms sentineled a dense jungle of darker mangroves massed in illimitable review while the brigantine, impelled by a fateful current, idly drifted past. There were hints of a mighty inward curving coastline; and shattered by a headland in the remotest south the eddying fleecy billows gave errant glimpses of a bay where white-man craft clustered before a sprawling thatch-roofed village.

The time had come. If he showed the people of this ship whereabouts those other white people were they would make him rich. The boy had so said, in feeding him; had promised him more food, and rum. But here they were, his enemies; here was the white-witch woman, his woman; and there was the land. His lips curled.

With pin in hand he slipped forward, noiseless and resolute. He stood poised over the first of the crew, asleep with face in arms and body in shadow; whereupon, as if vaguely moved by the formidable presence the sleeper sighed, and turned, and beneath the raised club the black gazed down upon the blank countenance of the cabin-boy.

The club lingered, and drooped. Again he remembered. Here was one whom he could not strike. Irresolution tugged at him. While he hesitated, the swiftly broadening pink of the African dawn shone upon the top canvas of a ship distant out at sea but standing in as though it brought a breeze.

He yet had time. Abruptly stooping he whipped the knife from the boy's sash. He ran back to his woman, cut her waist tether and greedily lifted her. She wakened, she writhed, she was as a child in his clutch.

"Who is it?"

"Koromantin."

She might know, but she should never tell. Her white, soft form was pressed close to his black chest and his blood flowed hotly. His eyes sought the cabin; he started, he faltered. . . . He felt her heart beating like a frightened bird's, and through the pounding in his ears he caught her implorations, choked with anguish.

"No, no! Oh, *Dius!* He did not die, and he would harm me, who set him free. Holy angels, help me! Let me give him the rum!"

With a harsh cry he held her off, and slashed her wrist bond, and roughly dashed her to the deck. In a bound he leaned over the quarter, drew the floating boat underneath him, cut that rope, and hanging from the taffrail, dropped in.

He shoved away; then he uttered a high yell, and he heard again those responsive notes of terror from the white men: the craven bletherings of those white dogs who had murdered his family, friends and fellows and were connived together to lie him into dependence upon their gratitude—even to poison him through the oily words of the boy and the deceit of the woman who once had succored him. Forthwith he called up in fair Portuguese:

"Good-bye. You have on one side land, on other side comes king's ship. Maybe your fetish save you. You say you make me rich. Now I am rich, for I take my life in trade for your life. Go, you stinking murderers and liars."

Thus dismissing them the big black man, one-time court linguist to the Dahoman king who had sold him, paddled for that African shore where the mangrove jungle grew almost to the very surf.

Hill Drums

By HENRY S. WHITEHEAD

The weird power of a song—how the Blacks of the Danish West Indies harried a British consul-general

WHEN Mr. William Palgrave, British consul-general at St. Thomas, Danish West Indies, stepped out of his fine residence on Denmark Hill, he looked, as one local wit had unkindly remarked, "like an entire procession!" It could not be denied that handsome Mr. Palgrave, diplomat, famed author of travel articles in the leading British magazines, made at all times a vastly imposing appearance, and that of this appearance he was entirely conscious.

One blazing afternoon in May, in the year of Grace, 1873, he came statelily down the steps before his house toward his open carriage, waiting in the roadway below. On the box Claude, his negro coachman, sagged down now under the broiling sun, conversed languidly with one La Touche Penn, a street loafer whose swart skin showed through various rents in a faded, many-times-washed blue dungaree shirt. Seeing the consul-general descending, Claude straightened himself abruptly while La Touche Penn slouched away, the white of an observant, rolled eye on Mr. Palgrave.

As this ne'er-do-well strolled nonchalantly down the hill—the hard soles of a pair of feet which had never known the constriction of shoes making sandpaper-like sounds on the steep roadway—he whistled, softly, a nearly soundless little tune. Claude tightened his reins and the small, grass-fed, somnolent carriage-horses plucked up weary heads, ending their nap in the drowsy air. That was how Mr. Palgrave liked to find his appointments—in order; ready for their functions. Mr. Palgrave—so another St. Thomas wit—was not unlike the late General Braddock whose fame is in the American histories; in short, a bureaucratic martinet whose wide travels, soon to bring him greater fame as the distinguished author of *Ulysses,* had failed signally to modify a native phlegmatic bluntness.

He came down the steps, a resplendent figure of a fine gentleman, dressed with a precise meticulousness in the exact mode of the London fashion, and, glancing after the furtive wastrel now well down the hill road, he caught the whistled tune. As he recognized it he frowned heavily, pursing his lips into a kind of pout which went ill with his appearance of portly, well-nourished grandeur. This accomplished diplomat was fastidious, easily annoyed. Not to put too fine a point upon it, he did not like St. Thomas.

For one thing he disliked feminine names for places, and the capital town in those days was called Charlotte Amalia, after one of Denmark's queens. It was a coquette of a town, a slender brunette of black eyes and very red lips and cheeks; a Latin brunette of the smoldering, garish type; a brunette who ran to mantillas and *coquetteries* and very high heels on her glistening slippers.

Various times had Mr. Palgrave in his blunt manner compared to Charlotte's disadvantage her alleged beauties with the sedate solidity of his last post, Trebizond in Armenia, whence he had come here to the Caribbean. At first these animadver-

Copyright, 1930, by Henry S. Whitehead.

"He frowned, stared, and picked up the letter he had finished ten minutes before."

sions of his had been lightly received. Charlotte Amalia was a tolerant lass. This was, perhaps, only a strange variety of British banter! Society had let it go at that; would probably have forgotten all about it. But then the consul-general had made it plain, several times, that he had meant quite literally exactly what he had said. At that Charlotte, though still tolerantly, had been annoyed.

Finally he had been—unconsciously; Charlotte granted that quite definitely—offensive. He had said certain things, used certain terms, which were—inadvisable. The way he used the word "native", society agreed, was bad diplomacy, to put it mildly. Society continued, because he was a Caucasian and because of his official position, to invite him to its dinners, its routs, its afternoon teas, its swizzel parties. Government House took no notice of his ineptitudes, his comparisons.

The British families, and there were many of these permanently resident in St. Thomas—Chatfields, Talbots, Robertsons, MacDesmonds—were, of course, the backbone of his social relationships. Some of them tried to give him hints when they saw how the wind was veering against him and wishing their own diplomatic representative to be clear of criticism, but these well-intentioned efforts slipped off Mr. Palgrave's uncompromising broad back like water from a duck's!

Then he had really put his foot in it. The leading English magazine to which he was a valued contributor brought out an article by him—on Charlotte Amalia. Here the already famous author of travel articles had commented, in cold print, and disparagingly, upon the society of which he was, for the time being, an integral part. He had, too, been so injudicious as to compare Charlotte Amalia with Trebizond, vastly to the advantage of the

Armenian capital. Trebizond, if the man had any sentiment in him, must, at that period, have seemed very attractive in retrospect.

It was chiefly the British West Indians who took in the magazine, but there were a few others. The news of the article spread like wildfire. Extra copies, at Lightbourn's store, were quickly exhausted. Other copies were ordered. Extant copies were worn dog-eared from frequent readings of that *faux pas*. It finished Mr. Palgrave in Charlotte Amalia.

A consul-general, and of Great Britain, can hardly be ignored in a comparatively small community. Nevertheless Charlotte Amalia now drew in her perfumed skirts in no unmistakable gesture. There was, of course, nothing overt about this gesture. Charlotte was far too subtle, far too polite and sophisticated after the Continental manner, for anything crude; anything, that is, smacking of the consul-general's own methods! But there was an immediate difference, a delicate, subtle difference, which, as the weeks progressed, was to make its impact upon the consciousness of William Palgrave, through his thick mental epidermis, in a very strange manner indeed.

For it had penetrated elsewhere than to the very outer edges of St. Thomas society. It had got down to Black Quashee himself; down through the various intervening social strata—minor officials, a few professional persons, shopkeepers, artizans—down to Quashee in his tattered shirt; shoeless, carefree Quashee, at the very bottom of Charlotte Amalia's social scheme.

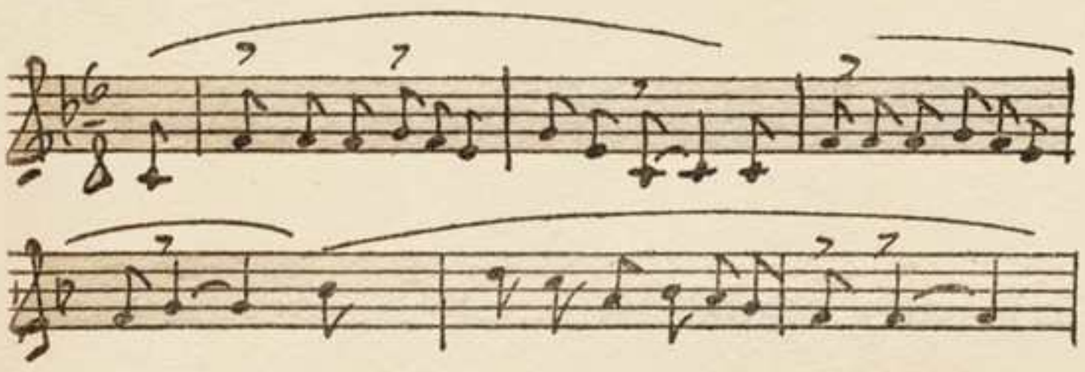
EARLY that spring, at the time when house servants become mysteriously ill and have to be relieved of their duties for a few days, and the Rata drums, Fad'er, Mama, and Boula de Babee, may be heard to roll and boom nightly from the wooded hills in the island's interior, and the Trade Winds' changing direction leaves an almost palpable curtain of sultriness hanging over the hot, dry town on its three hillsides; in those days when the burros' tongues hang out of dry mouths along dusty roads and the centipedes come into the houses out of the dust, and street dogs slink along blazing sidewalks in the narrow slits of house-shade under the broiling sun of late May-time—then, as the Black People came trickling back into the town from their three or four-day sojourn in the hills when they make the spring songs—then it was that the Honorable William Palgrave began to be conscious of a vague, partly realized annoyance, an annoyance which seemed to hang in the air all about him. . . .

As he lay on his handsome carved mahogany bedstead during an early-afternoon *siesta;* as he sat in his cool shaded office before his great desk with its dispatch-boxes in orderly rows; as he dressed for dinner after his late-afternoon bath—taken in the tin tub which he had lugged about the diplomatic world for the past eighteen years—at such times the new annoyance would drift to him in whispers, on the dull wings of the sultry air so hard to breathe for one of his portly habit.

It was a sound-annoyance; a vague, thin, almost imperceptible thing. It was a tune, with certain elusive words; words of which he heard recurrent bits, snatches, snippets, incidental mere light touches of a delicate, withering sarcasm—directed toward him as a child might blow thistledown with faint derisive intent in the direction of somebody who has managed to incur its dislike.

The St. Thomas negroes, so it became borne in upon Mr. Palgrave's understanding, had "made a song on" him.

It was a characteristic, quickstep kind of song; something in the nature of a folksong. Of these there are various examples, like the one wherein the more urban St. Thomian makes fun of his Santa Crucian neighbor by alleging that: "De Crucian gyurl don' wash dey skin," and which ends on the rollicking chorus: "Wash yo'self in a sardine-tín!"

In the course of the weeks in which he was obliged to listen to it, Mr. Palgrave came to recognize the tune, and even a few of the words, which, because of almost incessant repetition, had been forced, though with a delicacy that was almost eery, upon his attention. The tune went to the lilt of the small drum—Boula, de babee—somewhat as follows:

The words, of which there were many, resolved themselves, so far as his appreciation of them was concerned, into two first lines, and a refrain, thus:

Weelum Palgrave is a Cha-Cha, b'la-hoo!
Him are a koind of a half-a-Jew!

Then the refrain:

Him go back to Trebizond.

There were, in these apparently Mother Goose words, various hidden meanings. "B'la-hoo," a contraction from "ballyhoo," is the name of a small, hard-fleshed, surface-water fish, not unlike the flying-fish in consistency, and living, like its winged neighbor, on the surface of deeps. As used in the verses it intensified "Cha-Cha." A Cha-Cha—so-called, it is currently believed in St. Thomas, because of the peculiar sneezing nasality with which these French poor-whites enunciate their Norman French—is one of a peculiarly St. Thomian community, originally emigrés from St. Bartholomew's, now so thoroughly inbred as to look all alike—brave and hardy fishermen who can not swim; West Indian poor-whites of the lowest class, like the Barbadian "red-legs." A Cha-Cha B'la-hoo means a particularly Cha-Chaish Cha-Cha; an indubitable Cha-Cha. The application of such a term to the consul-general meant that he was of the lowest sort of humanity the St. Thomian negro could name.

Being "half-a-Jew" did not at all mean that Mr. Palgrave partook, as the hearer might easily imagine, of any characteristics believed to inhere in the co-religionists of Moses and Aaron. The phrase had a far deeper—and lower—significance than that. The significant portion of it was that word "half." That, stated plainly, meant an aspersion upon the legitimacy of Mr. Palgrave's birth. It was, that epithet, essentially a *"tu quoque"* type of insult—*you're another!* It referred directly to one of Mr. Palgrave's mordant aspersions upon the quality of the St. Thomians, or, rather, upon the class, the negroes, which was now retaliating. It was not the usual custom of these negroes to marry. It had not been their custom in Africa. Their Danish overlords did not compel it here. Why should this foreigner, this *Bukra* of the double-chin, cast his aspersions upon them? How was he concerned? Not at all, was Black Quashee's obvious reply, according to the logic of the situation. His equally obvious retort, to drum-beats, was:

Him are a koind of a half-a-Jew!

But—the real gist of the retort, compared to which these glancing blows at his self-esteem were mere thrusts of the *banderillo,* goads—was the refrain:

Him go back to Trebizond.

It was not, precisely, a command. It was still less a statement of accomplished

fact. Mr. Palgrave had not gone back to his esteemed Armenian post; Mr. Palgrave had no intention whatever of applying to Downing Street for a transfer back there. It was—a suggestion.

It was that refrain which La Touche Penn had been whistling as he walked demurely away down the glaring white road under the blazing sunlight. Mr. Palgrave stared angrily after the slouching figure; stared after it, an uncompromising scowl upon his handsome, florid features, until it disappeared abruptly around a sudden turn half-way down the hill. Then he mounted the step of his barouche and settled himself in the exact center of the sun-heated leather cushion, a linen dust-cloth over his knees.

IT WAS a Tuesday afternoon, and later, at five o'clock, it was Mr. Palgrave's intention to call at Government House. Governor Arendrup was receiving that afternoon, as he did once a month, but between now and then there was an interval of an hour and a half which the consul-general meant to spend in making duty calls.

Claude, very erect, drove carefully down the hill, turned the sharp corner around which La Touche Penn had disappeared, and thence, by a devious route, descended the slight slope leading to the chief thoroughfare along the sea's edge. Here he turned to the left, passed that massive structure, the Grand Hotel, driving between it and Emancipation Park, turned once more to the left, and soon the wiry little carriage horses were sweating up one of Charlotte Amalia's steepest hills. They moved carefully around hairbreadth turns guarded by huge clumps of cacti, and at last emerged near the summit of Government Hill. Claude stopped before the entrance to a massive residence perched atop a still higher rise in the land.

Mr. Palgrave climbed steps to the stone and cement terrace of this house and gave to the expressionless black butler his card for Mrs. Talbot. The servant took his stick and hat and led the way up a flight of stairs to Mrs. Talbot's drawing-room. As the consul-general mounted behind his ebony guide he became aware of a tap-tapping, a light sound as though made by the fingers of a supple hand on a kitchen pan. The tapping went: "oóm—bom, bom; oóm—bom, bom; oóm—bom, bom," over and over, monotonously. Accompanying this beat was a light, almost a childish, voice; one of the black maids, probably, in some distant portion of the great house. The tune was the tune La Touche Penn had been whistling as he slouched down the hill. Mr. Palgrave mentally supplied the words:

> Weelum Palgrave is a Cha-Cha, b'la-hoo!
> Him are a koind of a half-a-Jew—
> Him go back to Trebizond!

It was maddening, this sort of thing. It should not be allowed. Here, in Mrs. Talbot's house! A choleric red disfigured Mr. Palgrave's handsome face as he walked into the drawing-room. It took him several minutes to reassume his accustomed urbanity. . . .

Something Mrs. Talbot said, too, was annoying.

"I am sure I can not say where I acquired the idea, Mr. Palgrave, but—somehow—it came to me that you were not remaining with us; that you were expecting to go back; to Armenia, was it not?"

"I have no such intention—I assure you." Mr. Palgrave felt himself suddenly pink in the face. He used his handkerchief. May, in this climate, is very warm. Mrs. Talbot hoped he would not mind the summer heat.

"We find the sea bathing refreshing," she had vouchsafed. . . .

Mr. Palgrave did not outstay the twenty-minute minimum for a duty call. As he descended the broad stairway he heard the tap-tapping once more, but now the words accompanying it were muted. There was no song. He found himself repeating the doggerel words to the tapping of that damnable pan:

Him go back to Trebizond.

Absurd! He should do nothing of the sort. Only fancy—blackamoors! To suggest such a thing—to him! He descended the steps to the roadway a picture of complacent dignity.

A tiny barefooted black child strolled past, an empty kerosene-tin balanced on her kinky, kerchiefed head. The child, preoccupied with a wilted bougainvillea blossom which she held between her hands, hummed softly, a mere tuneless little murmur, barely audible on the freshening Trade Wind of midafternoon. Mr. Palgrave, his perceptions singularly sensitive this afternoon, caught it, however. His directions for the next call were given to black Claude almost savagely.

PRECISELY at five he mounted the steps of Government House. He was saluted in form by the pair of Danish gendarmes, in their stiff Frederick the Great uniforms, from each side of the doorway. He subscribed his name and titles in the visitors' book. He gave up his hat and stick to another saluting gendarme, and mounted the interior stairway to the great drawing-room above.

Here all St. Thomas society congregated monthly at the governor's reception, and with those who had arrived on time this afternoon the drawing-room was half filled. The Governor's Band, outside on the east end of the iron gallery which runs along the front of Government House, started up an air. Officers, officials, the clergy, the town's gentry, the other resident consuls, and the ladyfolk of all these, passed solemnly in review before the governor, stiff in his black clothes, shaking hands formally in his box-like frock coat, his spotless white kid gloves.

Mr. Palgrave, still ruffled from his afternoon's experiences, greeted His Danish Majesty's representative in this loyal colony with a stiffness quite equal to the governor's, and passed within. Ladies seated at both ends of a vast mahogany table in the dining-room dispensed coffee and tea. Mounded along the table's sides stood great silver trays of "spread", half-sandwiches of white and brown bread covered with cheese, with preserves, with ground meats, with *liver-pastei.* At the sideboard Santa Cruz rum, made in the colony, French brandy imported from Martinique, and Danish beer in small bottles and served with fine pieces of ice in the glasses, were being rapidly dispensed by liveried negro servants to a crowd which stood eight deep.

From this group a burly figure, that of Captain the Honorable William McMillin, detached itself and accosted Mr. Palgrave. The captain, administrator of Great Fountain Estate over on Santa Cruz, here for the day on some estate business for his kinsmen the Comyns family who all lived in Scotland and for whom he managed their Santa Crucian sugar interests, had been as a freshly commissioned Cornet of Horse, one of Wellington's officers more than fifty years before, at Waterloo. The old gentleman invited Mr. Palgrave to a bottle of the Carlsburg beer, and the two Britons, provided with this refreshing beverage, sat down to talk together.

In their armchairs the two made a notable appearance, both being large-bodied, florid men, and the aged captain

wearing, as was his custom on state occasions, his ancient scarlet military coat. Outside the great open French windows, the band members on the gallery, between pieces, made themselves heard as they arranged their music. Save for the bandmaster, Erasmus Petersen, a Dane, all were negroes. Through the windows came minor musical sounds as a slide was shifted in an alto horn or as little runs and flutings tested the precision of a new tuning. In the midst of this, delicately, almost incidentally, the oboist ran his swart fingers over his silver keys, breathed into his instrument. A rippling, muted little quickstep came through the windows:

Weelum Palgrave is a Cha-cha, b'la-hoo!

Mr. Palgrave suddenly shifted in his armchair. Then he remembered that he could not appear to notice this deliberate slap in the face, and, though suddenly empurpled, he sat quiet. He collected his wits, invited the captain to dinner that evening, and excused himself.

Claude, attentive for once, noted his emergence below, extricated his barouche, reached the steps where the two wooden-soldierlike gendarmes were saluting his master.

"Home!" said Mr. Palgrave, acidly, stepping into the carriage.

THAT evening Mr. Palgrave opened his grief to his fellow Briton, as to a person of assured position and integrity, the consul-general's face quite purple between his vexation and the bottle of sound burgundy he had consumed at dinner.

The captain took his consul-general's annoyance lightly.

"Man, man!" he expostulated, "ye're no so clearly accustomed to 'Quashee' and his ways as mysel', I do assure you. Why —there's a song about *me!* My field-hands made it up, years ago. It runs:

Mars' McMillin la' fo' me,
Loike him la' to Waterloo!

"And it means that I command them—that is to 'la,' Mr. Palgrave—the same as I gave commands at Waterloo—there were a-precious few, I do assure you, sir. I was no more than a cornet at the time, my commission not two weeks old." The captain proceeded to pooh-pooh the Quashee songs as reason for serious annoyance.

But his explanations left Mr. Palgrave cold.

"Your negroes do not—er—*insist* upon your returning to the Low Countries to fight Waterloo all over again!" was his bitter comment. That suggestion that he return to Trebizond had bitten deep. . . .

He had Trebizond on his mind when he was retiring that night and it is not strange that he went back there where he had spent two profitable years before being assigned to Charlotte Amalia, in his dreams. Somehow, as the strange distortion of the dream-state provides, he was identified with the sage Firdûsi, a great hero of Armenian legend, that same Firdûsi who had defied a Shah of Persia and refused to compose a history of his life at the imperial command.

Identified with Firdûsi, of whom he had heard many tales, Mr. Palgrave suffered imprisonment in his dreams; was, like Firdûsi, summoned again and again into the Presence, always with refusal on his lips; always to be sent back to a place of confinement of increasing comfortlessness.

At last Palgrave-Firdûsi returned to an empty cell where for days he sat on the earthen floor, refusing to yield, to stultify himself. Then, on a gray morning, his jailer entered leading a blind slobbering negro who sat on the floor opposite him.

For an interminable period he suffered this disagreeable companionship. The Black was dumb as well as blind. He sat there, day after day, night after night, cross-legged on the hard floor.

At last Palgrave-Firdûsi could stand it no longer. He howled for his jailer, demanded audience. He was led to the throne room, his resolution dissipated, his one overwhelming desire to acquiesce—yes, yes; he would write—only let him be free of that slobbering horror which mewed to itself with its blank slab of a mouth. He threw himself face down before the throne. . . .

The impact of his prostration awakened him, shivering, in his great mahogany bed. The moonlight of the Caribees poured through the opened jalousies of the airy bedroom high on the hillsides of Charlotte Amalia; and through the open windows came eerily—it was three o'clock in the morning—the very ghost of a little lilting refrain in the cracked voice of some aged man:

Him go back—to Trebizond.

Mr. Palgrave groaned, rolled over in bed so that his better ear was undermost, sought to woo sleep again.

But now it was impossible to sleep. That tune—that devilish, that damnable tune — was running through his head again, tumultuously, to the small-drum throbbing of his heart. He groaned and tossed impatiently, miserably. Would morning never come?

IN A gray dawn Mr. Palgrave rose from an unrefreshing bed, tubbed himself half-heartedly. His face, as he looked at it in his shaving-mirror, wielding his Wednesday Wade & Butcher, seemed gray and drawn; there was no color in his usually choleric cheeks. The servants, at this hour, would not have arrived. There would be no morning tea ready.

At a little before seven, fully dressed, Mr. Palgrave descended the staircase to his office below. He sat down at his orderly desk, listening to the shuffle of early-morning bare feet outside there on the earthen hillside roadway before his fine house; to the clipped, grave snatches of the *creole* speech of the Blacks; to the occasional guffaws of the negroes about their early-morning occasions; gravely erect; carrying trays, fruits, great tins of cistern-water, atop kerchiefed heads.

Mechanically he reached for his writing-materials, dipped a pen in an inkwell, commenced to write. He wrote on and on, composing carefully, the edge of his mind engaged in listening for the song out there on the roadway. He discovered that he was tapping out its cadence with his foot on the scrubbed pitch-pine flooring underneath his desk: oóm—bom, bom; oóm — bom, bom; oóm — bom, bom; oóm—bom, bom!

He finished his letter, signed it meticulously, blotted it, folded it twice, then heard the latch of the remote kitchen door snap. He rose, walked into the dining-room, and spoke through the inner kitchen door to Melissa his cook who had just arrived:

"Make me some tea, at once, if you please."

"Yes, sar." It was the dutiful, monotonous, unhurried voice of old Black Melissa as she motivated herself ponderously in the direction of the charcoal barrel in the kitchen's corner.

Mr. Palgrave reflectively mounted the stairs to his bedroom. He was putting a keen edge on his Wednesday razor—he used a set of seven—before it dawned upon him that he had already shaved! He returned the razor to its case. What could be the matter with him? He looked musingly into his shaving-mirror, passed a well-kept hand reflectively over the

smooth cheeks into which the exercise of moving about and up and down the stairs had driven a little of his accustomed high color. He shook his head at his reflection in the glass, walked out into the upper hallway, redescended the stairs, once more entered his office.

What was this?

He frowned, stared, picked up from the desk the letter he had finished ten minutes before, examined it carefully. It was, unquestionably, in his own handwriting. The ink was barely dry. He laid it back in its place on the desk and began to pace the room, slowly, listening to Melissa's slow movings-about in the kitchen, to the arrival of other servants. He could hear their clipped greetings to the old cook.

Wondering at himself, at this strange mental world where he found himself, he seated himself firmly, judicially, in his ample desk chair, picked up the letter, read it through again with an ever-increasing wonderment. He laid it down, his thoughts turning, strangely, to Trebizond.

And Mr. Palgrave could not, for the life of him, recall writing this letter.

He was still sitting there, staring blankly at nothing, his brows drawn together in a deep frown, when Claude came in to announce tea prepared in the dining-room. "Tea," in St. Thomas, Continental fashion, is the name of the morning meal. "Breakfast" comes at one o'clock. Mr. Palgrave's cook had prepared amply that morning, but not bacon and eggs, nor even Scotch marmalade, availed to arouse him from his strange preoccupation.

After "tea" he sat again at his desk alone until ten o'clock, when his privacy was invaded by two sailors from a British vessel in the harbor, with consular business to transact. He gave these men his careful attention; later, his advice. He walked out with them an hour later, turned up the hill and strolled about the steep hillside streets for an hour.

It was nearly high noon when he returned. He passed the office, going upstairs to refresh his appearance after his walk. It was blistering hot outdoors under the May noon sunlight drenching the dusty roadways.

When he went into his office half an hour later he saw the letter once more. It was enclosed now, in an official envelope, addressed, too, in his own unmistakable handwriting, duly stamped for posting. Again, he had no slightest recollection of having done any of these things. He picked up the letter intending now to tear it across and then across again and fling the bits of paper into the waste-basket. Instead he sat with it in his hands, curiously placid, in an apathetic state in which he seemed not even to think. He ended by placing it in his coat pocket and was immediately afterward summoned to the one o'clock "breakfast" in the dining-room.

WHEN he awakened from his *siesta* that afternoon it was near four o'clock. He remembered the letter at once. He rose, and before his afternoon bath examined the coat pocket. The letter was not in the pocket. He decided to look for it on the desk later.

In half an hour, fresh and cool now after his bath, he descended the stairway and went straight into his office. The letter was on his mind, and, frowning slightly, he stepped toward the immaculately neat desk. He drew down his lip under his teeth in a puzzled expression. The letter was not on the desk.

The arrival of callers summoned him into the drawing-room. He did not give any thought to the letter again until dinner-time and then he was at the top of Government Hill at one of the British

houses and could only postpone his desire to find and destroy it.

The letter failed to turn up, and the next day came and passed, and the next after it, and the days stretched into weeks. He had almost forgotten the letter. It cropped up mentally now and then as a vague, half-remembered annoyance. Things were going better these days. The song and its varied accompaniments of drum-tapping, whistling, humming of the nearly soundless tune, the encompassing annoyance it had caused him—all these things seemed to have dropped out of the hearing, and consequently out of the mind of the consul-general. He felt, as he half realized, somewhat more at home now in Charlotte Amalia. Everybody, it appeared, was perfectly courteous to him. The atmosphere of vague hostility which had vaguely adumbrated his surroundings was gone, utterly dissipated. The charm of the town had begun to appeal to this sophisticated traveler of the earth's surfaces.

Then one morning among the letters which the Royal Mail steamer *Hyperion* had brought into the harbor the night before he discerned an official communication from his superiors in London.

He opened it before any of his other letters, as was natural. . . .

The Under-Secretary had written granting his urgent request to be sent back to Trebizond. He was requested to take immediate passage to any convenient Mediterranean port and to proceed thence direct to the Armenian capital. It was, at the moment, agreeable to the consular service that he should be there. Suggestions followed in the letter's text, designating various policies to be pursued.

He finished the many sheets of thin onion-skin paper, folded the letter and laid it on the desk, and sat, staring dully at his inkwell. He did not want to go back to Trebizond. He wanted to remain here. But—he had no choice in the matter. He cudgeled his brains warily. He recalled his singular apathy at the time when his letter—written, it seemed, as though subconsciously—had disappeared. He had not *wanted* to write that letter. He recalled that there had been confusion in his mind at the time—he could not, he recalled, remember the actual writing, nor sending it after it was written. There was something very strange here, something — unusual! Indubitably he had applied for transfer to Trebizond. To Trebizond he was ordered to go!

Charlotte Amalia, that coy Latin-brunette of a town with her *coquetteries* and her too-garish coloring, and her delicate beauties—Charlotte Amalia had schemed for his departure, forced his hand, driven him out. He sat there, at his desk, thinking, ruefully, of many things. Then his pride came to his rescue. He remembered the slights which had been put upon him, those intangible slights—the almost formless little tune with its absurd, gibberish words; the tapping of pans; the rattle and boom of the hill drums, those detestable night drums on which these stupid-looking, subtle blackamoors were always and forever, and compellingly, tapping, tapping, tapping.

And before very long Mr. Palgrave, who did not believe in magic and who pooh-poohed anything labeled "eery" or "occult" as absurd; who believed only in unmistakable matters like sound beef and County Families and exercise and the integrity of the British Empire and the invariable inferiority of foreigners—Mr. Palgrave came to see that in some fashion not accounted for in his philosophy Charlotte Amalia had played him a very scurvy trick—somehow.

Bestirring himself he began to examine the inventory which he kept of his household gear; many belongings without

which no British gentleman could be expected to exist. He indited to the harbor-master a cold, polite note, requesting notice of the arrival of vessels clearing for Mediterranean ports or ports on the Black Sea—Odessa for choice—and he began to formulate, in his small, precise handwriting, the list of duty-calls which must be made before his departure. In the pauses between these labors he wrote various polite, stiff notes, and in the very midst of such activities Claude summoned him to midday breakfast.

Leading the way to the dining-room after this announcement, Claude paused at the office doorway, turned a deprecating face to his employer.

"Yes?" said Mr. Palgrave, perceiving that Claude wished to address him.

"Yo' is leave us, sar," said Claude, with courteous absence of any inflection or emphasis on his words which would indicate that he was asking a question.

"Yes—I am leaving very shortly," replied Mr. Palgrave unemotionally. He added nothing to this statement. He was a stiff master to his servants, just but distant. Servants had their place and must be kept in it, according to Mr. Palgrave's scheme of life.

That night, his sleep being rather fitful, Mr. Palgrave noted that the drums were reiterating some message, insistently, up in the hills. . . .

Neither Claude, who as coachman-butler had the closest contact with his employer of any of the house servants, nor, indeed, old Melissa nor any of the others, made any further remark to their employer concerning his departure. This took place three days later, on a Netherlands vessel clearing for Genoa; and Mr. Palgrave was probably the very last person in St. Thomas who would have asked any personal question of a servant.

Yet he wondered, when it occurred to him—and that was often—just how Claude had known he was leaving. . . .

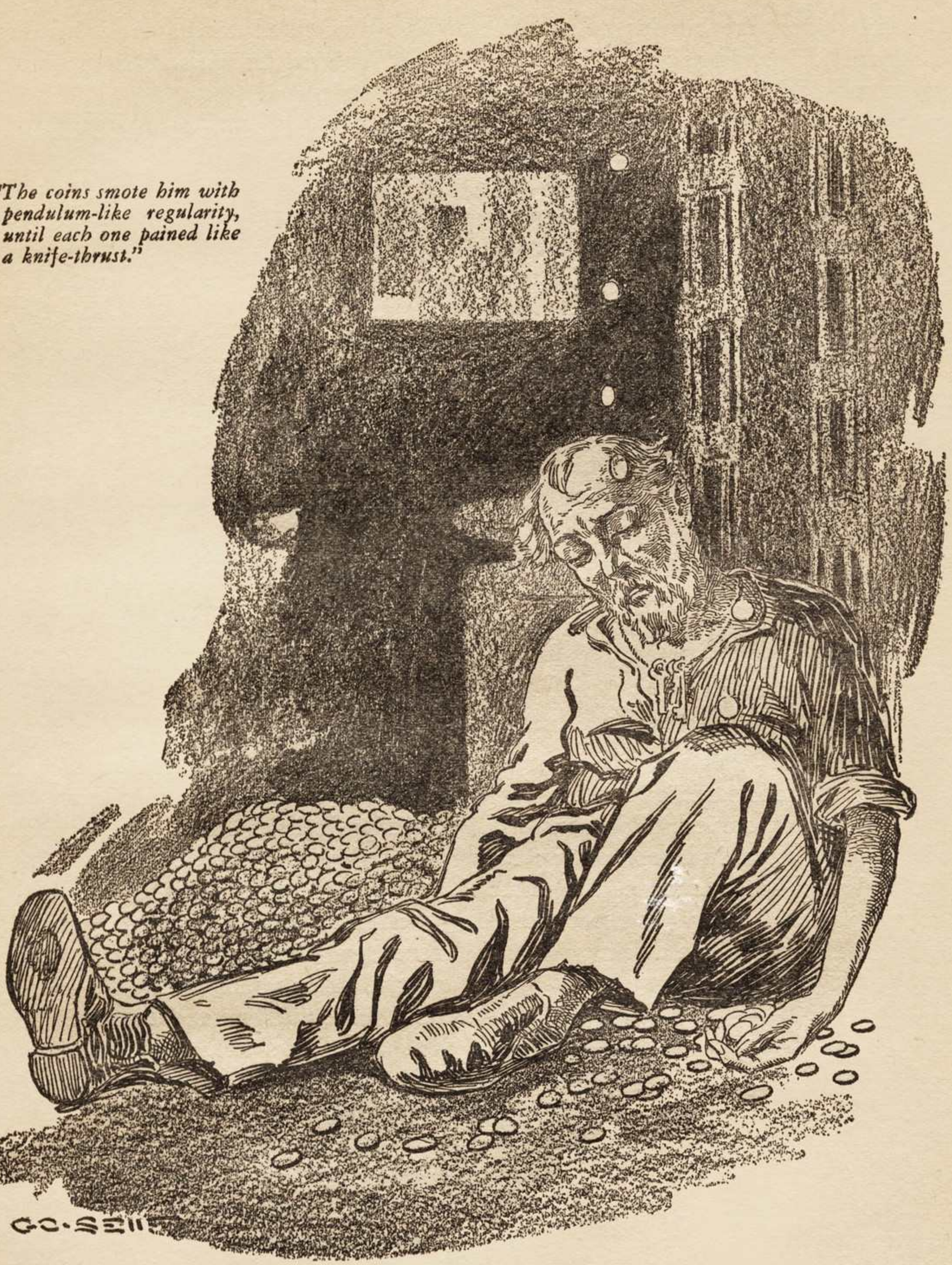
The Blood Veins of the Robot

By L. HARPER ALLEN

A grim story of a miser whose mechanical man was fed by a stream of golden coins

ARAM MANDRAGA was wizened, withered and old when he came alone from Armenia and settled down in a little shop just off Sutton Place. The place was dingy and dark, but stocked with rugs, pile upon pile, precious weaves of Ispahan, Tabriz, Aragh, Kashan, Hamadan, Kerman, Sarouk. To the fastidious few it soon became known; discriminating buyers, experienced dealers and decorators—and Aram Mandraga prospered.

Aram Mandraga had a god. Also, he revelled in a certain form of music, a



"The coins smote him with pendulum-like regularity, until each one pained like a knife-thrust."

never-failing symphony which solaced his soul. His god was money—his music the metallic clink of minted coins.

Always, as he walked, Mandraga would thrust his hands into his pockets and run his trembling fingers among the many coins he carried. It was joy to his spirit to hear them clink together. His eyes would brighten, his step would quicken and over his seared face would creep a smile, but it was a smile that chilled—the smile of a miser. He never

did this within the hearing of any one but himself. Mandraga was selfish of his music, and besides, it was pleasant to him to appear to be poor—it seemed to aid him in his business and afforded him, no doubt, protection against robbery and against prying eyes.

The covering was worn from the buttons on his coat; the cloth upon his elbows was thin and polished with long service. He feigned poverty so assiduously that he scarcely bought food sufficient to sustain him, and therefore he sometimes went hungry. Strangers who passed him on the street often thought of him as a beggar, and that pleased him considerably, for if the world believed him poor the world would not rob him. An odd character was Aram Mandraga!

If one had been sufficiently interested to have investigated, he would have been exceedingly surprized to discover that Aram Mandraga had purchased the property in which he dwelt and carried on his business. A mortgage had been foreclosed. The two-storied brick house on the little side street had been put up for sale. It had gone for a song. And some material part of Mandraga's accumulated wealth had provided the music.

The building was not large. It was certainly not beautiful. But it was strong—the walls were thick—and that sufficed. Into this house Mandraga had moved his stacks of rugs and a quantity of old furnishings. In the upper part he lived, behind closed shutters, its sole tenant.

When the nights were dark he would see that the shutters were fastened most securely, bolt the doors below stairs and above with the heavy bars with which every opening had been provided, and by the light of a sputtering candle unlock certain chests which were hidden about the quarters and filter through his trembling fingers the gold and silver coins that filled them. And his heart would pound in unwonted rhythm to their music.

Satisfied, Mandraga would then relock the chests, push them back under his bed or into their accustomed places, tie the small keys about his neck, blow out the candle and creep into bed, where the blended echoes of gold and silver would lull him to sleep. When there was a moon, he would open one of the shutters slightly. Enough light would filter through the iron bars with which the windows were additionally protected to make the candle an expensive luxury. Moonlight cost him nothing.

One by one the rugs on the floor below were disappearing; the stacks were growing smaller, the precious stock which he had moved into his dingy shop was becoming depleted. Expensive rugs they were, too; antiques, many of them, which he had disposed of at figures which ran into the thousands. Only Mandraga and the expert buyers knew their value—and Mandraga got their price. Checks, drafts, yellow bank-notes, bills, all these Mandraga quickly translated into metal coins —quarters, half-dollars, gold pieces of every denomination. The more money and the greater variety in sizes and apparent tone, the merrier the music. These coins were his slaves. He owned them, body and soul. They were the blood of his very life.

"Slaves!" he considered. "I have given my life for them! Now they are mine; they give their lives to me!"

He ruminated. Rugs! They had not been his slaves. They had but provided him with a means to obtain his end, to enthrall the hundreds of thousands of silver and golden slaves which were now imprisoned in the many chests. To others there was something indefinable in the mystic carpets of the East, romance,

dreams, perhaps, in their subdued coloring which had withstood the ravages of the centuries. To Mandraga they were drab, colorless—but worth their weight in silver and gold coins. They consumed nothing; as they aged, they grew more valuable. Slaves, human slaves, had required feeding. With age their value had decreased. And then—there was sickness —and loss. He had chosen well.

Years ago, he remembered, there were profits to be made in the traffic of slaves. In Armenia, Syria, Turkey, Persia, men had become rich in that business. They had made money that might just as well have been his. But he had chosen rugs! The buying and selling of slaves had a risk that terrified him. They were ill-treated and ill-fed; many of them were old and one or more might die on his hands. The loss of their lives was nothing, but—the loss of profits! If only he could have bought their souls. Souls never die, he had heard somewhere.

"My little slaves make music," he pondered. "But I want greater music—more regular music. Only at night I hear their voices; for more than twenty hours they are silent, hidden in the chests."

Could he but contrive some apparatus that would keep them playing their magic chords—their sweet symphony—forever? Could he find a way to listen to their continuous jingling day and night without cessation? Perhaps! Some mechanical contrivance could be fashioned which would accomplish this. He would build one, an automaton of some sort in which his silver and golden coins would course through slots in regular order, dropping one after another—now a gold piece against a silver coin; now two small silver coins against a deep-toned double eagle. What combinations he could provide for —the many different notes of the scale he could arrange to please his fancy! And the coins could roll along through these innumerable slots like blood in the veins of a man. That was it! Veins with gold and silver blood! It must be continuous —never-stopping—like a radio receiving set in constant synchronization with a never-silent broadcasting station. Aram Mandraga's eyes glittered with uncontrolled joy. He would be master of this never-ending bloodstream. Each coin would sing again and again its sweetest note. It would pass on through the mechanism of the machine—Mandraga's mechanical Golem—the monster concrete Robot he would build—and he would so contrive that each coin, after it fell, would again be lifted up by some mechanical device which he would construct, to take its place once more in the metal stream at the top. Continuous music! It might be made to go on—on—on—night and day!

WEEKS went by. Only a few rugs remained from the great store with which Mandraga had stocked his dingy shop. Another chest was now filled with metal coins. The music each night grew the sweeter and the more mellow as his horde increased. He was growing old, he reasoned now. Creeping age would soon enfeeble him. It took considerable exertion at times to drag the chests from beneath the bed and from under the window-seats which he had constructed to hide them from evil-intentioned eyes. A little while now, and he could sit idly by and listen to the musical clinking of the coins. He had been pondering over that idea of his—money making its own music; a constant, methodical jingling and blending of those wondrous voices. A plan had gradually formed itself in his mind. Materials had been accumulated. Hundreds of pieces of curved metal tubing, fiber-lined—long, short,

medium lengths—of many different sizes, had been cut to Mandraga's designs. These, with strangely contrived lifting-devices on endless chains, gears and other paraphernalia, were collected in the rear of the little shop downstairs where the rugs had once been stacked. Less than a dozen pieces of his once prized stock now remained. The rugs were vanishing, but the many chests were full.

Sacks of cement, piles of stone and sand, several sheets of perforated steel. Aram Mandraga's plans were at last complete. It had cost him many of his little blood-slaves to fashion the thing of concrete and metal which he had designed in his mind's eye—but he had made his resolve; his mechanical Robot was ready to be assembled. And then, music—never to be stopped—unless he so willed. The coins, his slaves! Constant-rushing blood through the metal and fiber veins of his automaton! Tingling music—always that music! The concrete Robot with the face and form of a gigantic man—his Slave. With the blood he would feed it, it would tingle with ever-pulsing life. The pressure of his finger, and the life would depart from its veins—and his music would likewise stop. But Mandraga's fingers would again start the brave music. Jingle, tinkle, all the thousand variations in tone would once more be resumed! His man of stone would live! Thousands of little slaves within the monster Slave—the little finger of Aram Mandraga to control them.

Rugs! Romance of the looms! Magic carpets of the East! Bah! They had been lifeless things. Only a means to the end. Money only mattered. Coins—hard, metallic silver and gold coins—they were his god. Their friendly voices, his sublime orchestra. And now—tap, tap, tap—their music might go on in continuous rhythm.

A few days passed. But one rug remained in the little dingy shop—a faded brown prayer rug from Kashan. Aram Mandraga took this to his living-quarters above. There would be more room in the shop below in which to mix the cement, when the workmen came.

THE next day and for many days thereafter, workmen were busy in the Mandraga house. Aram followed them about and directed. He moved his belongings into the front part of the upper floor. First, they walled in all the windows on the lower floor. Then the low ceiling in the rear half of the erstwhile shop was torn out, a solid dividing-wall built across the room, stairs constructed which led down to this squared room from the floor above.

When they had finished, the result of their labors stood in the center of the high, two-storied room. It was massively built, from the solid ground beneath the floor to the height of eighteen feet. Its general outlines were those of a man—but Mandraga had overlooked nothing—the finishing touches would be put on by his own hand. Plaster and cement had been prepared. He would mold the features into the semblance which he had designed. To the workmen, it had appeared only a machine of some sort which they were constructing. Mandraga would fashion its huge proportions in secret. He would color it in black and white; it would have thick red lips and a yellow face. Its eyes would move; its tongue would push in and out; its ears, as large almost as those of a young elephant, would twitch. It would show life—as long as the stream of the little coins flowed on through its metal veins.

Its walls were several inches thick, leaving an interior at its base nearly five feet wide. A man could walk about com-

fortably, standing erect. The floor of concrete sloped down from the center at a slight angle. The pinnacle at the center was flattened into a small cup-like platform about nine inches across. The slightly sloping floor was round in shape, with slots set in at intervals to accommodate the chain mechanisms which Mandraga had designed to elevate the various coins to the hopper of concrete constructed at the very top. The flattened tubes of various sizes curved from the hopper down into the space above the small, round, sloping-sided platform. Twisting and curving as they were, they had the appearance of entrails in a living mechanism. Each tube opened at some point directly over the exact center of the little platform. Mandraga had so adjusted each separate tube that a coin dropping from the hundred or more of these veins, as he had called them, would strike each upon the identical spot of the cup-like receiver. A little pile of coins would always remain there, against which the falling silver and gold would clink. The other coins would roll off into the sloping pit over the edges and be picked up by the constantly operating lifting-apparatus, to be carried once more to the hopper above. Then again, each coin would start once more upon its journey.

There were two small windows, a few inches square, set in the back of the concrete monster, just behind the shoulders. Through these, narrow shafts of light slanted downward to the apex of the cone-shaped sounding-platform upon which the coins would fall. Narrow slots in the window-shutters on the upper floor were arranged so that they could be opened at will, the outside light-rays permitted to penetrate to the small, barred openings. There would be the glint of sunlight upon the fast-falling pile of gold and silver coins, whenever Mandraga entered the little door and feasted his eyes upon the constant-flowing stream beating out its rhythm on the glowing anvil below the slots.

The little door in front was as strong as the door of a vault, as, in fact, it was. Mandraga had discovered this firmly built door among the cast-off debris in a building-wrecker's junk heap. The door and its framework had been set firmly into the concrete base of the man-shaped effigy. Three little keys, inserted one after another, turned one after another, permitted it to be opened. Keyholes were in the rear of the little iron door, as well as in front, so that it could be unlocked from the inside should occasion demand. When closed, the three steel bolts automatically shot into the sockets of the frame in the manner of a snap-lock. Mandraga carried the three little keys among the other keys on the string about his neck.

There was another door, set just inside the opening. It was fashioned of perforated steel sheets which Mandraga had gilded a burnished bronze. His fancy had streaked it with strange designs in red and black. It swung back into the chamber just sufficiently wide to let him squeeze through whenever he entered. When his music would play, the iron door would be left open—thrown wide; the mellow chords would filter through sweetly between the thousands of little openings in his improvised screen. What radio instrument could provide such harmony? Innumerable buttons were set into a control board just at the side of the outer door. A slight pressure on any one of them would close a corresponding opening among the many slots in the hopper at the top of the figure standing so weirdly in the high room. At Mandraga's finger tips were the nerve-centers which controlled the bloodstream of his

monstrous music-box. He would experiment in the manner of the man—Theremin by name, as he recalled it—who had drawn music from the air with the wave of his hands and the flourish of his fingers, blending the sounds of chaos into a perfect harmony. Thousands, millions of little voices were his to regulate in the fiber-lined tubes inside. He would make them play their melodies day and night. From his balcony above, where he had now set his bed, he could listen to their music even in his sleep—their intonations reverberating into his subconscious brain.

Time went on. The strange-looking monster stood forth in all its unearthly glory. Its wide eyes rolled this way and that in controlled abandon, the big black pupils as large as a plate. Its face was fashioned of rubber over a pliable mesh of wire. Levers and rollers kept it in motion, the cheeks distending, the heavy jaws and creased forehead moving slowly like the features of a live monster—or the product of a nightmarish dream. Yellow-white teeth would be exposed; the tip of a wide, red tongue would protrude from between them. Restless ears would quiver. The scalp below the matted black hair would move. Aram Mandraga had fashioned his masterpiece with studied care. It was inhumanly human.

His cleverest stroke of genius had been the building of the coin-lifting device. It required power. It must be continuously operative. There must be no expense. At first he had considered building some sort of perpetual-motion device. No! That wouldn't do. Such ideas were crazy. Mandraga would have none of them. So he purchased a small, strong, slow-speed motor, set it into a niche in the concrete base where its whir would not interfere with the mellow strains of the music-machine, and fitted a constant-dripping oiling attachment so that it would never become overheated with the continuous friction. It could whirl on for a year without attention. Then he tapped the electric wires which passed over his roof and led into the buildings on either side. He carefully concealed his theft so that prying eyes would not discover the two wires which he inserted through a hole he had drilled between the bricks and connected up with the little motor. There was his power. Power forever. It would cost him nothing. Thin copper tubing led down from the central oil-tank to each gear and pinion in the quiet-moving series of lifting cups. No friction would mar the plaintive strains which the many coins would play.

WHEN Mandraga had finished the fashioning of the strange-built vault which he had planned to house his little gold and silver slaves, he stood in admiration before the cyclopean monster of his creation—pleased with the work of his brain and hands. Now, he would start the blood-flow in its veins.

He carried the coins from the chests to the hopper in the head of the figure, lifting up the pressed-steel lid which formed the scalp and which locked into place by the manipulation of a lever from the inside of the chamber at the base. Trip after trip he made over the narrow planks from the edge of his chamber-balcony to the shoulders of his man of stone. The chests were empty—the hopper now full. In a moment he would start the motor, the hopper would vibrate convulsively as he had designed it, the current of gold and silver coins would slip into their appointed slots in much the same manner as the brass matrices are distributed in the magazine of the linotype machine. His man of stone and metal would be endowed with life. The blood-veins of the Robot would teem with yellow and silver-

white cells. His Slave—his Golem—his Frankenstein monster would live. He took down the planks. He sat on the edge of his overlooking balcony, his legs dangling over into the well below his feet. He pressed the switch-button which controlled the motor, close to his hand. The eyes began to move; the rubber-covered features to expand and contract. The coins were flowing. Then there came to his straining ears the clink, clink, clink of metal against metal. The melody of melodies had begun!

Day and night, Aram Mandraga sat on the edge of his balcony or in the rickety armchair before the golden perforated-steel door, the outer vault door thrown wide. He would squeeze inside sometimes and watch the ever-dropping stream of coins glinting in the rays of the slanting lights filtering down from the little windows above the shoulders. That would be the only light. The chamber would be in darkness except for that little patch of gold and silver rays beneath the hundreds of little slots adjusted to a nicety in the exact center of the coin-filled cup that formed the anvil against which the little musicians played their symphony. Their work done, their note struck, they would flow over into the slight-sloping pit like water over the lip of a fountain. Into the gutters around the circular deposit-pit they would fall. The little cups of the ever-moving elevators would pick them up and carry them back to continue their music.

Night and day, Mandraga would finger the little buttons on the slot control board, regulating the pace of the little devils of the machine. They obeyed him implicitly. They sang their varying moods. The thing of rubber and wire showed that it, too, was alive to the fascination of the metallic intonations resounding in the little chamber at its base. The ever-flowing stream gave it vitality. Its yellow face gleamed with joy and life; its eyes seemed to brighten with insane delight that matched the glistening pleasure shining forth through Aram Mandraga's own as he listened in idle ecstasy to the music dripping within the vault, rolling and ringing in sweetest harmony.

Day and night, night and day, the plaintive chimes played on. There was something almost pathetic in the childish way poor old Mandraga would unlock the vault door and sink into the armchair for his daily round of melody after a restful, blissful sleep. Going up and down the ladders while he had been molding his stone man into the creature that now stood grimly in the high-ceilinged room, had been toilsome work for a feeble old man like Mandraga. But the subsequent music had lent unusual strength to his already tottering legs and palsied hands.

"My little slaves," he observed, gleefully. "My prisoners, paid for with my life's blood!" He stood back and grinned up at the twitching rubber face. "And you—my creature; it's my blood that flows through your veins! It plays for me! It makes you live! It drips through your veins—drips—drips—drips; hard, firm metal—pounding against hard, firm metal that never yields; my little coins!"

He went back to his chair. He picked up the little prayer rug from Kashan—the last of his stock.

"Two hundred dollars you should have given me!" he pleaded. "Four hundred deep-toned voices that might fall through the half-dollar slots! Eight hundred soprano notes for the slots that hold my little quarters! Forty golden chimes in the slots that hold my half-eagles! Ten melodious double-eagles that might have given me music! You are useless—wasted—you are soft like a cushion——"

He pushed open the burnished-gold

screen with the strange designs in black and red. He squeezed through and stood in ecstasy before the little pile of gold and silver flowing over the lips of the small, raised platform beneath the slot-openings, bathed in the dimming rays filtering down through the little barred windows. He still clutched the faded brown prayer rug in his withered right hand.

He had set the slots at a measured pace. The bloodstream dropped methodically in the very center of the pile just beyond his feet. Drop—drop—drop; gold and silver-throated voices! All controlled by his little finger! He had drawn the iron vault door shut, the better to hear the magical music. A few minutes alone with his singing pleasure-makers! Then he would slip the three little keys in the lock, go outside to his deep armchair and listen to their harmony throughout the night. The concert was more wonderful than ever tonight. The filtering moonlight coming through the regulated openings in the upper window shutters, down into the music vault, glinted blue-white against the silver and gold. He crouched in a corner and closed his eyes, so that vision might not share with hearing. The music thrilled, then soothed his tired faculties, and at length his white head nodded and Mandraga slept.

WHEN Mandraga opened his eyes he knew not for the instant where he was, until his ear caught the sound of the falling coins tinkling into the gutters. He was chilled and aching with a sensation of great weight bearing him down. He tried to rise from his cramped posture, but his stiffened limbs responded weakly and he struggled to his feet with considerable difficulty. His footing slipped. He reeled, and would have fallen had not the walls of the vault supported him. He was seized with a choking sensation, and in nervous haste stretched his thin hand upward to clutch the string about his neck which held the keys. His trembling fingers touched it—fumbled nervously with it for a fraction of a moment. He would open the door—get out into the air; the little windows were not providing sufficient ventilation.

The string was between his fingers. It broke! The keys jingled down into the heaped pile of coins tumbling happily in the outward-sloping pit at his feet. As they struck, they rang with a clink that seemed to mock the methodical clink of the coins dropping down from the mouths of the slots above the little mound in the center. He reached down for them. His groping hands could not locate them among the shifting coins.

As the full significance of his appalling situation forced itself upon Mandraga, his knees gave way and he sank in a limp and motionless heap—a prisoner with his wealth. His eyes were closed. His head had fallen sidewise—directly under the slots above the heap of coins in the center. Each falling coin struck him on the temple and glanced off among its merry companions, to be picked up by the rising cups and started again upon its downward journey.

Mandraga was yet conscious, but without the power to move. His mind was active. The coins smote him with pendulum-like regularity, until each one pained like a knife-thrust.

"So hard—these metal coins," he whispered inwardly. "They strike so hard—metal strikes on metal—that makes my music—these tones are soft—as if—they strike on a cushion. That was it! A cushion—so that they wouldn't strike so hard! If only — my Kashan rug — my little prayer rug—was over my face—protecting me——" He tried to draw the rug

to his head, but his weakened fingers would not respond to the command of his will. It was no use. There could be no cushion to protect Mandraga's temple.

Now, the melody of the falling coins came to him indistinctly, as if they were a great way off, and he felt the pain no longer. Aram Mandraga was drifting—drifting in a golden ship over a golden sea. The shimmering waters rocked him gently. The waves covered him with glittering spray. Then Mandraga fell into a dreamless sleep—a sleep wherein the heart stops and the flickering lights of life go out. The coins continued to fall in measured accents, chanting a weird requiem and wasting their music. The motor whirred on relentlessly; the lifting cups replenished the hopper above the slot openings; the blood flowed on and on within the veins of the grim man of stone, whose twisting, grimacing yellow face fronted ominously the empty bed on the balcony.

The Abominable Snow Men

***By* FRANK BELKNAP LONG, Jr.**

Blue shadows lay upon the crater's rim,
And far above the town a traveller moved
In circles through the snow; his eyes were dim
From glint of sun on ice in worlds unproved.

A thousand feet below him at an inn
His host smiled wanly, said: "The fool will find
Small prints upon the snow—so small, so thin—
He will not know that they are prints which bind."

"He will not know that they are prints which bind!"
His very words gained substance on a height,
As to his knees the traveller fell, half-blind,
And grovelled in the dimness of his sight.

"They dwell in barrows on a skyward wold
And make no sound; shrill hunger is their goad:
'Tis said they feed on men when men are bold,
When men are scarce on flesh of fowl or toad."

The silence on the heights gave way to shrieks
As to a shattered cairn the traveller clung
And fought a shape with bright and slimy streaks
Of blood upon its fat, protruding tongue.

They came in swarms from out the crater's rim,
The thin snow men, abominable and cold;
They came in swarms, and tore him limb from limb
And strewed his flesh in ribbons on the wold.

THE FINISHING TOUCHES

By RENIER WYERS

A diabolical little story of an artist who painted a bestial picture of horrors that had better been left alone

TANDRIV said that he had come to borrow money. Blake gave it to him willingly. Had they not formerly been good friends? Of course that was long ago and Tandriv obviously had degenerated since then. Yet—Blake wanted to aid him in some way—just for "auld lang syne."

And for "auld lang syne" Blake tried to stir up conversation. "Is there anything else I can do?" he asked as his visitor pocketed the money.

"No!" replied Tandriv gruffly; then added with an attempt at courtesy, "I've been working hard. I'm nervous. Don't want to seem ungracious. Thanks."

Blake nodded. He found it difficult to realize that this wreck of a man was the Tandriv who had been his classmate but a few years before. The once thick, glossy black hair now hung in dead, graying strands over the tall wrinkled brow that had been fair and smooth. Deep grooves of bitterness were plowed in the pasty cheeks. The Tandriv eyes which had always been a bit too bright, now gleamed as two yellow-green orbs that were danger signals of approaching madness.

"Are you working on a painting?" Blake inquired tentatively.

"Yes."

"I'd like to see it sometime, Tandriv."

A cold smile that came dangerously close to being a sneer crept over the other's features. "You wouldn't like it, Blake. Our ideas of art differ. You've become famous for your flattering portraits, idealizing commonplace people, while I have—well, I'm here borrowing money tonight, from *you*."

His expression grew hateful. Springing to his feet he began pacing back and forth.

"But my time will come!" he cried, gesticulating wildly. "Too long the world has been blinded by illusions of piety and goodness—lies. You and everyone else striving for 'beauty' will be forgotten when I'm worshipped. There is no 'beauty' in real life or real art. There's only pain, and cruelty, and horror—that's what I'm painting."

Blake's curiosity was aroused. He remembered their art student days and how untractable Tandriv had been. No one could teach *him* anything about art! He refused to follow the classic standards of composition or color. Then, too, the recalcitrant Tandriv's choice of models had been the talk of the art colony. He would frequent the lowest dives in Paris and haunt the slums, looking for subjects to portray on canvas. Aged, drunken women; garbage-grubbing old men who had lived too long; idiots; misshapen cripples; lascivious-faced vixens; murderous Apaches; rat-like sneak-thieves—all were limned by the Tandriv brush in those early student years.

"If I remember correctly," said Blake, "what you are saying now is quite consistent with some of the ideas—and subjects—you entertained in Paris."

"Bah! That was only the beginning,"

snorted Tandriv. "I've made great strides since then."

"Toward what?"

"Toward what? Immortality! I'll prove it to you. Come to my place, Blake, and I'll show you a creation, the like of which no man has ever seen before—on canvas."

There was a fanatical enthusiasm in his manner and a hint of forbidden revelation in his tone that resulted in Blake's accompanying him.

A BRISK twelve-minute walk brought them to a bleak, treeless district of poverty-tainted tenements and ugly factory buildings.

"Here's an atmosphere you 'nice' artists avoid," said Tandriv as they strode along through the deserted streets. Save for the widely spaced street-lamps there was no light on the thoroughfare. Even the dwelling buildings were darkened, for people who must live in tenements must rise early and light bills drain the pennies from kitchen shelves.

"Here's where life is raw and unveneered," he added. "Here the *real* man comes to the surface, selfish, cowardly, and treacherous. Dog eat dog, you know. Beauty? Ha! In spots like this, in every big city on the globe, glorious man, made in His image and likeness, spawns the future criminals of the world. Don't think that this slum is but a phase of life with no relation to the rest of the city. It's the rotten heart of it; the enslavement of men, women and children behind those factory walls makes it possible for 'refined' ladies to pay you big prices for their portraits."

He tapped Blake's arm and turned down a side street, meaner than the rest. "We'll be there in a minute," he said.

Passing through an areaway between two tenement houses they came upon a refuse-littered yard. A white, full moon broke clear of the clouds and mercifully camouflaged the scene with white splashes of light and black shadow. Carefully stepping over and around heaps of rubbish and tin cans which prowling rats could not believe were quite empty, the two men came to Tandriv's door, at the side of a long, flat, brick house.

Once inside, Tandriv turned the switch on an unshaded light bulb. "What a depressing workshop!" thought Blake as he blinked his eyes and looked about. The light revealed the interior of the house as being one long, narrow room, its brick walls unpainted. No ceiling hid the cross-beam that supported the roof. Dirt and disorder were everywhere. Paints, canvases, clothing, and cooking-utensils were strewn about, indicative of the slovenliness of the man who ate, slept, and painted here.

Blake's attention, however, was soon drawn to a huge painting leaning against the rear wall of the studio. It reached from the floor to the roof and from one side wall to the other, fitting snugly between. It was fully fifteen feet high and at least three times as wide.

"Good Lord! Tandriv!" gasped Blake hoarsely. "What is it? What does it mean?"

Revolted, yet fascinated by the very hideousness of the painting, he stared at it for a long time. It was like looking into an immense window of hell, against which swarmed a myriad of things with distorted faces and ectoplasmic bodies, seeking to enter this world from a terrible dimension outside human ken.

Now Blake knew what Tandriv had meant when he said his earlier works had been "only the beginning." These things were the development. The painting was a decadent exaggeration of all evil with all trace of anything redeeming omitted. It was an array of bestial, libidinous

thoughts given a semblance of ugly, antehuman form by a brush that had been dipped in oils of primordial ooze. So crowded with the Things was the canvas that no background or perspective was shown.

One figure in particular, near the center of the picture, seemed to reveal the motif of the work to Blake's startled eyes. It had a sinister, elongated, ocher-colored face, surmounted by a gnarled forehead from which protruded two horns. Its upper torso was of human proportions but covered with bluish-green scales. Rearing up on two furry goat-like legs that terminated in cloven hooves, it appeared the most menacing of all because of its likeness to man and because of the malignant intelligence in its features.

"That shall be my masterpiece," Blake heard Tandriv hiss. "I'm putting my very *soul* into it. I've been planning it, sketching it for years—gathering material for its execution and seeking atmosphere for it in all parts of the world.

"You know that I started my search while we were studying together," he went on, "but you did not know what became of me after that. I've been everywhere. I've witnessed black masses presided over by apostates from every creed. I went eastward and southward to the cradle of the human race and human sin. I went farther eastward and lived among the outcasts from Lhassa who crouch in wind-swept caves of the Tibetan Himalayas. For more than a year, with my skin dyed black as coal, I officiated at voodoo rites in the West Indian jungle.

"Who is better qualified to paint that picture than I?" he concluded boastfully.

"But Tandriv, it's horrible—obscene. What are you striving for?"

"What difference does it make to you?" Tandriv retorted. "I tell you I've had a 'call' to make that painting—a commission from the powers that ruled before man and his gods and will rule again." Then, observing Blake's fixed stare, he added, "That central figure, which apparently interests you, is my guide and inspiration. Call him Lucifer, Ahrimanes, Belial, Satan, or what you will—names and words mean nothing. But my portrait will awaken the world to what and who he really is."

All vestige of sanity was wiped from his face as he raised his clenched fists and cried deliriously:

"Only a few more finishing touches and my work will be done. I must finish—I must paint what I see—the only things I see! Night and day, for years they have burned themselves into my brain. The real things of life, Blake—real! Real!"

"Then you and I see life differently," said Blake with an uneasy little laugh. He regretted having come to view this diabolic daub. Although he tried to look at it objectively, it had started a mental maelstrom in which his critical faculties and primal fears whirled about confusedly, making technical shop-talk impossible. Well, he didn't have to stand here gazing at the accursed picture. Besides, Tandriv, somewhat calmer now, was still decidedly unsociable. Apparently he wanted to get back to work at his evil miscreation. There was no use trying to reason with him. Blake left. . . .

Returning to his own apartment, he tried to forget what he had seen. But the pageant of foulness persistently intruded upon his consciousness. He dozed in fitful slumber. Every time he closed his eyes the painted horrors danced before him. After an interminable period of restless tossing he arose. Gray day was breaking.

MECHANICALLY donning his clothing he left the house. For some rea-

(Please turn to page 564)

COMING NEXT MONTH

"A STRANGE case," said the doctor. "Their brains have been affected by some great shock and their motor muscles are partly or wholly paralyzed. Be prepared for the worst."

He led me to a private ward. In it a twisted old man sat in a wheel-chair playing with a cane.

"That," said the doctor, "is Hayworth. He is blind."

I stared in disbelief. That pitiful, twisted creature my Viking friend? Impossible!

Suddenly the Thing looked up. I screamed in horror.

Have you ever seen a man who was terribly burned? That glassy texture of skin, like polished marble? Such was the face of my friend—shiny, slick, like some poisonous fish. He opened his eyes, and stared into brimming pools of horror. They were not the eyes of a person gone naturally blind. They looked as if they had been drilled with a red-hot poker. The whites were gone. Simply a black, burning depth remained. And yet, you understand, the eyeball was not destroyed.

"George," I cried. "It is Henry. Don't you know me?"

I approached.

Suddenly the creature drew back withered lips from yellow fangs. Staggering to its feet, it swung the heavy cane with the strength of a madman——

The frightful, the utterly horrible thing that cooked the brains and deformed the bodies of the occupants of the space-rocket as they swung about the moon on their return to earth makes a thrilling and blood-chilling story.

MOON MADNESS

BY WALLACE G. WEST

—ALSO—

THE WHISPERER IN DARKNESS
by H. P. Lovecraft

A story of outré beings from the newly discovered ninth planet—a story in which the horror rises and accumulates to a superb climax.

OLD ROSES
by Stella G. S. Perry

A touching story of the Vieux Carré of New Orleans—a weird story of appealing beauty and tenderness.

CREEPING FINGERS
by Loretta G. Burrough

What was it that slithered through the bathroom door and flopped into the tub? This gruesome mystery is thrillingly narrated and explained.

THE EARTH-OWNERS
by Edmond Hamilton

A strange story of beings from outside, that fought for the ownership of our world—a weird-scientific tale.

THE UNDEAD
by Amelia Reynolds Long

Sir James Thorne was dead and buried—but what was that flapping creature with the bloated face that spread wild terror upon the moor?

These are some of the super-excellent stories that will appear in the next issue. Also, another thrilling installment of *Tam, Son of the Tiger*, by Otis Adelbert Kline.

August WEIRD TALES out July 1

(Continued from page 562)

son not quite clear to himself he followed the route he and Tandriv had taken some hours before. As in a dream, he trudged through the morning fog and turned into the cold, damp areaway.

Stepping into the disordered little yard, he pulled himself up out of his somnambulistic state with a start. Something had happened! People were standing about. Poorly clad working-people from the neighborhood were standing in a huddled group, talking with subdued excitement; a note of superstitious awe ran through their murmuring. Two uniformed policemen stood guard before the door to Tandriv's studio.

" 'Tis the devil," Blake heard one pugnacious little old woman say, "that got Mister Tandriv. Didn't I hear him a-talkin' with the devil many a night? An' didn't I see the red fire of hell a-gleamin' through the cracks in his door and window shades?"

"Yes, yes, I heard him, too," said another woman, fumbling with a shawl about her head.

"He was after callin' to the devil ag'in last night," went on the first woman. "Then all of a sudden there's a rumblin' like thunder only there's no storm in the sky and the rumblin' comes from underground; and there's terrible wailin' like a thousand banshees and the red gleam lights up the whole alley so that you can see the rats run for cover."

" 'Twas the wailin' and screamin' that woke me," said a third woman. "I told my John to find out who's makin' the awful racket in Mister Tandriv's place. But John wouldn't get up, him sayin' it's none of our business what a crazy artist is doin' in the middle o' the night."

Waiting to hear no more, Blake shouldered his way through the crowd to the policemen, the elder of whom, after satisfying himself that Blake was not of the neighborhood or an idle curiosity-seeker, agreed to let him enter the studio.

"It's O. K., Cassidy," the officer remarked to his younger partner. "Maybe this man can throw some light on the case—he says he knew Tandriv. But mind you, don't either of you touch anything 'til the coroner comes."

Blake, escorted by the young patrolman, went inside. The place was a shambles. It was as though titanic forces had struggled here. Every piece of furniture was smashed. In the center of the debris was the mangled body of Tandriv.

"There's been hell to pay here," observed Cassidy as he and Blake stood over the corpse. Prepared as he was for the worst, Blake could not restrain a gasp of horror at what he saw. The body, grotesquely twisted, was heaped on the floor as though it had fallen from a great height or been violently hurled to the bare boards. From its twisted position it was apparent that both legs and arms were broken. The eyes of the victim were rolled upward, their pupils half hidden under the upper lids. As a final touch to the terrible deed, there was stamped on the dead man's brow the impression of a *cloven hoof*.

"We couldn't figure out what kind of a weapon made *that* mark," said Cassidy. "What do you think? What do you believe killed him?"

"They did—those Things," cried Blake impulsively, at the same time swinging about to point at the huge canvas that leaned against the rear wall. "They——"

He stopped short, his mouth agape, and stared with amazement. The broad expanse of gray-white canvas was blank!

"What were you saying, Mr. Blake?"

"Nothing, officer," he managed to reply weakly; "I don't—know. Let's go outside."

"Fletcher snatched for it and managed to deflect the muzzle."

TSANG, SEA CAPTAIN

By JAMES W. BENNETT

TSANG was fighting coolly, but with contemptuous ease the Count broke his holds, and Tsang was just able to avoid being rendered helpless. Once he was nearly caught by that neck grip which had so effectually disposed of Fletcher. Another time, he groaned as Mazzino tore at his hand, almost breaking the fingers.

Then Tsang seemed to tire. His parries grew less sure. The Count laughed. For Fletcher, it was a heart-breaking sound; it indicated triumph.

With a sigh, the small Chinese relaxed.

Fletcher made a mighty effort to rise, to go to Tsang's rescue. He lurched to his knees. A sobbing moan bubbled through his froth-covered lips. He closed his eyes, to shut out the sight of his friend's death——

This thrilling Chinese adventure story is one of the features of the Spring Issue of ORIENTAL STORIES, together with stories by Otis Adelbert Kline, Robert E. Howard, S. B. H. Hurst, Solon K. Stewart, and others, now on sale at all news stands — that marvelous new all-story magazine printed by the publishers of WEIRD TALES.—Adv.

*The Outsider**

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

That night the Baron dreamt of many a wo;
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared.

—Keats.

UNHAPPY is he to whom the memories of childhood bring only fear and sadness. Wretched is he who looks back upon lone hours in vast and dismal chambers with brown hangings and maddening rows of antique books, or upon awed watches in twilight groves of grotesque, gigantic, and vine-encumbered trees that silently wave twisted branches far aloft. Such a lot the gods gave to me—to me, the dazed, the disappointed; the barren, the broken. And yet I am strangely content and cling desperately to those sere memories, when my mind momentarily threatens to reach beyond to *the other*.

I know not where I was born, save that the castle was infinitely old and infinitely horrible, full of dark passages and having high ceilings where the eye could find only cobwebs and shadows. The stones in the crumbling corridors seemed always hideously damp, and there was an accursed smell everywhere, as of the piled-up corpses of dead generations. It was never light, so that I used sometimes to light candles and gaze steadily at them for relief, nor was there any sun outdoors, since the terrible trees grew high above the topmost accessible tower. There was one black tower which reached above the trees into the unknown outer sky, but that was partly ruined and could not be ascended save by a well-nigh impossible climb up the sheer wall, stone by stone.

I must have lived years in this place, but I can not measure the time. Beings must have cared for my needs, yet I can not recall any person except myself, or anything alive but the noiseless rats and bats and spiders. I think that whoever nursed me must have been shockingly aged, since my first conception of a living person was that of something mockingly like myself, yet distorted, shriveled, and decaying like the castle. To me there was nothing grotesque in the bones and skeletons that strewed some of the stone crypts deep down among the foundations. I fantastically associated these things with everyday events, and thought them more natural than the colored pictures of living beings which I found in many of the moldy books. From such books I learned all that I know. No teacher urged or guided me, and I do not recall hearing any human voice in all those years—not even my own; for although I had read of speech, I had never thought to try to speak aloud. My aspect

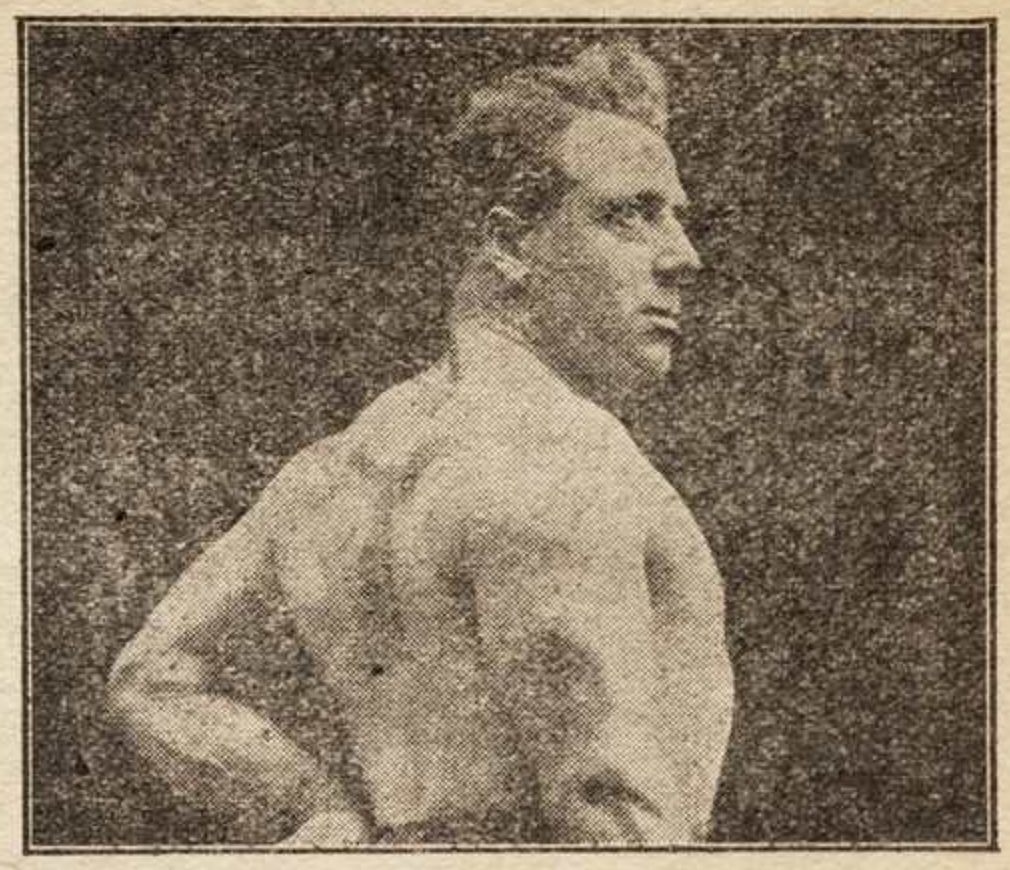
*From WEIRD TALES, April, 1926.

was a matter equally unthought of, for there were no mirrors in the castle, and I merely regarded myself by instinct as akin to the youthful figures I saw drawn and painted in the books. I felt conscious of youth because I remembered so little.

Outside, across the putrid moat and under the dark mute trees, I would often lie and dream for hours about what I read in the books; and would longingly picture myself amidst gay crowds in the sunny world beyond the endless forest. Once I tried to escape from the forest, but as I went farther from the castle the shade grew denser and the air more filled with brooding fear; so that I ran frantically back lest I lose my way in a labyrinth of nighted silence.

So through endless twilights I dreamed and waited, though I knew not what I waited for. Then in the shadowy solitude my longing for light grew so frantic that I could rest no more, and I lifted entreating hands to the single black ruined tower that reached above the forest into the unknown outer sky. And at last I resolved to scale that tower, fall though I might; since it were better to glimpse the sky and perish, than to live without ever beholding day.

IN THE dank twilight I climbed the worn and aged stone stairs till I reached the level where they ceased, and thereafter clung perilously to small footholds leading upward. Ghastly and terrible was that dead, stairless cylinder of rock; black, ruined, and deserted, and sinister with startled bats whose wings made no noise. But more ghastly and terrible still was the slowness of my progress; for climb as I might, the darkness overhead grew no thinner, and a new chill as of haunted and venerable mold assailed me. I shivered as I wondered why I did not reach the light, and would have looked down had I dared. I fancied that night had



GEORGE F. JOWETT, *Champion of Champions*

"I will give you nerves of steel and muscles like iron"

I WAS once a weakling. But I craved to be strong. I increased my chest from a puny 32 inches to 47 inches. I built up my weight to 200 pounds; neck to 18¾; biceps to 18; forearms to 15½; wrists to 8½; thighs to 26; my calves to 17.

Famous Athletes Indorse My Methods

My methods are indorsed by physicians and by Herman Gorner, the strongest man in the world; Arthur Dandurand, the Canadian Sandow; Arthur Gay, winner of the first prize in America's Most Perfect Man Contest; and Jim Londos, the famous wrestler.

Ask any of these men about my system and they will tell you there is no bunk about it. They will tell you that George F. Jowett plays the game square.

Pair of Dumbbells Free

To every person who takes my course I will give a pair of the patented Jowett Progressive Disk Dumbbells. They cannot be equaled for workmanship and muscle building. Here's another point—my course is laid out personally for each pupil. Every week you receive a new set of exercises in order of progression. You get Twelve Courses covering the Twelve Principles of Life and on conclusion of your course receive an emblem as a graduate of the Jowett Institute of Physical Culture. I guarantee to build you over in 90 days or return every penny.

Get My Big Free Book

All I ask is this: Send for my big free book, "The Thrill of Being Strong." You'll get a real kick out of it because of the photographs and because it shows how easily you, too, can have nerves of steel and muscles of iron. Snap to it, buddy, and get that coupon into the mail before another day goes by.

RUSH THE COUPON TODAY

THE JOWETT INSTITUTE OF PHYSICAL CULTURE
422 Poplar Street, Scranton, Pa.

Dear Mr. Jowett:
Without cost or obligation, please send me your illustrated booklet, **"The Thrill of Being Strong."**

Name.....

Address.....

56R

come suddenly upon me, and vainly groped with one free hand for a window embrasure, that I might peer out and above, and try to judge the height I had attained.

All at once, after an infinity of awesome, sightless crawling up that concave and desperate precipice, I felt my head touch a solid thing, and knew I must have gained the roof, or at least some kind of floor. In the darkness I raised my free hand and tested the barrier, finding it stone and immovable. Then came a deadly circuit of the tower, clinging to whatever holds the slimy wall could give; till finally my testing hand found the barrier yielding, and I turned upward again, pushing the slab or door with my head as I used both hands in my fearful ascent. There was no light revealed above, and as my hands went higher I knew that my climb was for the nonce ended; since the slab was the trap-door of an aperture leading to a level stone surface of greater circumference than the lower tower, no doubt the floor of some lofty and capacious observation chamber. I crawled through carefully, and tried to prevent the heavy slab from falling back into place, but failed in the latter attempt. As I lay exhausted on the stone floor I heard the eery echoes of its fall, but hoped when necessary to pry it up again.

Believing I was now at a prodigious height, far above the accursed branches of the wood, I dragged myself up from the floor and fumbled about for windows, that I might look for the first time upon the sky, and the moon and stars of which I had read. But on every hand I was disappointed; since all that I found were vast shelves of marble, bearing odious oblong boxes of disturbing size. More and more I reflected, and wondered what hoary secrets might abide in this high apartment so many eons cut off from the castle below. Then unexpectedly my hands came upon a doorway, where hung a portal of stone, rough with strange chiseling. Trying it, I found it locked; but with a supreme burst of strength I overcame all obstacles and dragged it open inward. As I did so there came to me the purest ecstasy I have ever known; for shining tranquilly through an ornate grating of iron, and down a short stone passageway of steps that ascended from the newly found doorway, was the radiant full moon, which I had never before seen save in dreams and in vague visions I dared not call memories.

Fancying now that I had attained the very pinnacle of the castle, I commenced to rush up the few steps beyond the door; but the sudden veiling of the moon by a cloud caused me to stumble, and I felt my way more slowly in the dark. It was still very dark when I reached the grating —which I tried carefully and found unlocked, but which I did not open for fear of falling from the amazing height to which I had climbed. Then the moon came out.

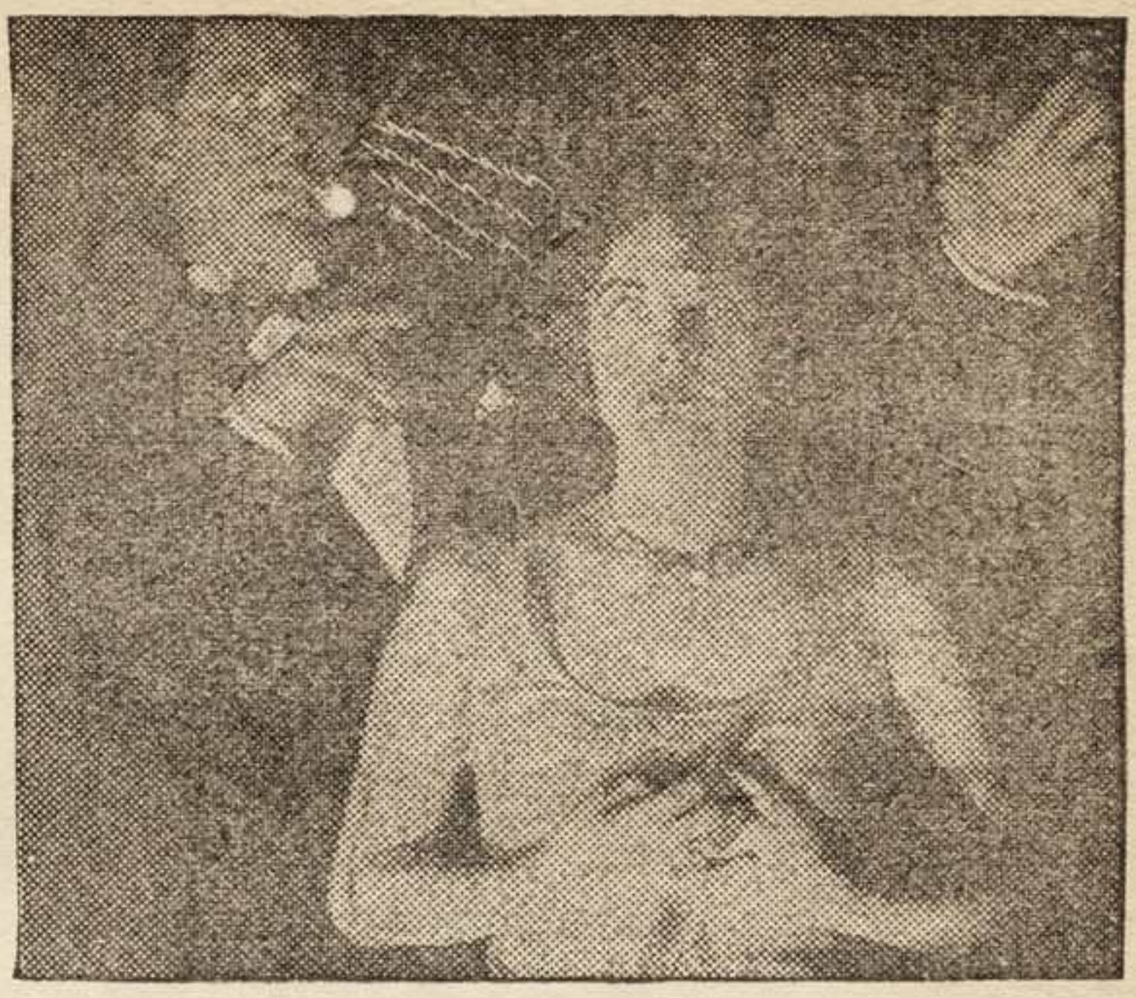
Most demoniacal of all shocks is that of the abysmally unexpected and grotesquely unbelievable. Nothing I had before undergone could compare in terror with what I now saw; with the bizarre marvels that sight implied. The sight itself was as simple as it was stupefying, for it was merely this: instead of a dizzying prospect of treetops seen from a lofty eminence, there stretched around me on the level through the grating nothing less than *the solid ground,* decked and diversified by marble slabs and columns, and overshadowed by an ancient stone church, whose ruined spire gleamed spectrally in the moonlight.

Half unconscious, I opened the grating and staggered out upon the white gravel path that stretched away in two directions. My mind, stunned and chaotic as it was, still held the frantic craving

for light; and not even the fantastic wonder which had happened could stay my course. I neither knew nor cared whether my experience was insanity, dreaming, or magic; but was determined to gaze on brilliance and gayety at any cost. I knew not who I was or what I was, or what my surroundings might be; though as I continued to stumble along I became conscious of a kind of fearsome latent memory that made my progress not wholly fortuitous. I passed under an arch out of that region of slabs and columns, and wandered through the open country; sometimes following the visible road, but sometimes leaving it curiously to tread across meadows where only occasional ruins bespoke the ancient presence of a forgotten road. Once I swam across a swift river where crumbling, mossy masonry told of a bridge long vanished.

Over two hours must have passed before I reached what seemed to be my goal, a venerable ivied castle in a thickly wooded park, maddeningly familiar, yet full of perplexing strangeness to me. I saw that the moat was filled in, and that some of the well-known towers were demolished; whilst new wings existed to confuse the beholder. But what I observed with chief interest and delight were the open windows — gorgeously ablaze with light and sending forth sound of the gayest revelry. Advancing to one of these I looked in and saw an oddly dressed company, indeed; making merry, and speaking brightly to one another. I had never, seemingly, heard human speech before; and could guess only vaguely what was said. Some of the faces seemed to hold expressions that brought up incredibly remote recollections, others were utterly alien.

I NOW stepped through the low window into the brilliantly lighted room, stepping as I did so from my single bright



You Can Learn HYPNOTISM ...or No Cost Try FREE 5 Days!

DON'T be unpopular, lonesome, or unhappy a minute longer. Now you can make your life what you want it to be—now you can win admiration, success and big money—through the strange power of hypnotism. I'll show you how to use this great force to help you master every situation or *The Five Day Trial is FREE!*

In just a few hours I'll teach you the hidden secrets of Hypnotism—the methods used by the great operators—the amazing things you can accomplish once you understand this mighty power. You can use it to overcome obstacles, achieve your fondest ambitions and become MASTER of yourself, friends and acquaintances—either sex. See for yourself how Hypnotism can banish fear, worry and opposition—improve your memory—increase your earnings—and *force* others to give you the good things in life you deserve!

In his startling NEW book, *The Science of Hypnotism*, the world famous hypnotist—Prof. L. E. Young—reveals the most carefully guarded secrets of this fascinating subject. He not only explains the methods of noted hypnotists, step by step—but tells clearly all about the nine stages of hypnotism, the Hypnotic Mirror, Mental Telepathy, how to select your subjects, magnetic healing, methods of hypnotizing, how to waken the subject, how to make money out of hypnotism!

Mysteries of Hypnotism Revealed

How to Hypnotize at a glance Susceptible Subjects
How to Hypnotize by Telephone
How to Give an Entertainment
How to Make Others Obey You
Overcoming Bad Habits
How to do Dozens of Hypnotic Feats
Use of Hypnotism in Operations

Try 5 Days FREE— Send No Money

So confident are we that Prof. Young and his great book will quickly teach you the science of hypnotism, that we will send you a copy without one cent in advance! Simply clip and mail the coupon below. When the book arrives pay the postman the special low price of $2.50 plus few cents postage. Then test the powers of Hypnotism 5 days! If not amazed and delighted return the book and money will be refunded at once! Mail the coupon now.

FRANKLIN PUBLISHING CO.
800 N. Clark St., Dept. G-860, Chicago

Franklin Publishing Co., Dept. G-860
800 N. Clark St., Chicago, Illinois.

Please send me your amazing new book—*The Science of Hypnotism*—by Prof. Young. When the book arrives I'll pay the postman only $2.50 plus postage. If I am not satisfied after 5 days' trial, I may return the book and you are to refund my money.

*Name*_____

Street and No. _____

*Town*_____ *State*_____

If you are likely to be out when postman calls send $2.50 with coupon and we'll pay delivery charges. Customers outside U. S. must send cash with order.

moment of hope to my blackest convulsion of despair and realization. The nightmare was quick to come, for as I entered, there occurred immediately one of the most terrifying demonstrations I had ever conceived. Scarcely had I crossed the sill when there descended upon the whole company a sudden and unheralded fear of hideous intensity, distorting every face and evoking the most horrible screams from nearly every throat. Flight was universal, and in the clamor and panic several fell in a swoon and were dragged away by their madly fleeing companions. Many covered their eyes with their hands, and plunged blindly and awkwardly in their race to escape, overturning furniture and stumbling against the walls before they managed to reach one of the many doors.

The cries were shocking; and as I stood in the brilliant apartment alone and dazed, listening to their vanishing echoes, I trembled at the thought of what might be lurking near me unseen. At a casual inspection the room seemed deserted, but when I moved toward one of the alcoves I thought I detected a presence there—a hint of motion beyond the golden-arched doorway leading to another and somewhat similar room. As I approached the arch I began to perceive the presence more clearly; and then, with the first and last sound I ever uttered—a ghastly ululation that revolted me almost as poignantly as its noxious cause—I beheld in full, frightful vividness the inconceivable, indescribable, and unmentionable monstrosity which had by its simple appearance changed a merry company to a herd of delirious fugitives.

I can not even hint what it was like, for it was a compound of all that is unclean, uncanny, unwelcome, abnormal, and detestable. It was the ghoulish shade of decay, antiquity, and desolation; the putrid, dripping eidolon of unwholesome revelation, the awful baring of that which the merciful earth should always hide. God knows it was not of this world—or no longer of this world—yet to my horror I saw in its eaten-away and bone-revealing outlines a leering, abhorrent travesty on the human shape; and in its moldy, disintegrating apparel an unspeakable quality that chilled me even more.

I was almost paralyzed, but not too much so to make a feeble effort toward flight; a backward stumble which failed to break the spell in which the nameless, voiceless monster held me. My eyes, bewitched by the glassy orbs which stared loathsomely into them, refused to close; though they were mercifully blurred, and showed the terrible object but indistinctly after the first shock. I tried to raise my hand to shut out the sight, yet so stunned were my nerves that my arm could not fully obey my will. The attempt, however, was enough to disturb my balance; so that I had to stagger forward several steps to avoid falling. As I did so I became suddenly and agonizingly aware of the *nearness* of the carrion thing, whose hideous hollow breathing I half fancied I could hear. Nearly mad, I found myself yet able to throw out a hand to ward off the fetid apparition which pressed so close; when in one cataclysmic second of cosmic nightmarishness and hellish accident *my fingers touched the rotting outstretched paw of the monster beneath the golden arch.*

I did not shriek, but all the fiendish ghouls that ride the night-wind shrieked for me as in that same second there crashed down upon my mind a single and fleeting avalanche of soul-annihilating memory. I knew in that second all that had been; I remembered beyond the frightful castle and the trees, and recognized the altered edifice in which I now stood; I recognized, most terrible of all, the unholy abomination that stood leering

before me as I withdrew my sullied fingers from its own.

But in the cosmos there is balm as well as bitterness, and that balm is nepenthe. In the supreme horror of that second I forgot what had horrified me, and the burst of black memory vanished in a chaos of echoing images. In a dream I fled from that haunted and accursed pile, and ran swiftly and silently in the moonlight. When I returned to the churchyard place of marble and went down the steps I found the stone trap-door immovable; but I was not sorry, for I had hated the antique castle and the trees. Now I ride with the mocking and friendly ghouls on the night wind, and play by day amongst the catacombs of Nephren-Ka in the sealed and unknown valley of Hadoth by the Nile. I know that light is not for me, save that of the moon over the rock tombs of Neb, nor any gayety save the unnamed feasts of Nitokris beneath the Great Pyramid; yet in my new wildness and freedom I almost welcome the bitterness of alienage.

For although nepenthe has calmed me, I know always that I am an outsider; a stranger in this century and among those who are still men. This I have known ever since I stretched out my fingers to the abomination within that great gilded frame; stretched out my fingers and touched *a cold and unyielding surface of polished glass.*

Tam, Son of the Tiger

(Continued from page 463)

ported her while she knelt and drank from the stream, using her cupped hands. When she signified that she had enough, he helped her to her feet once more. She seemed greatly refreshed.

Pointing to the split skull of the tiger, she said:

GUARANTEED

These well known brands only slightly used are taken from cars changing to our New Super Service Custom Built Tires. Carefully selected and guaranteed.

We have such great confidence in these tires that we guarantee them for 15,000 miles against blowouts, bruises and rim cuts. Any tire failing to deliver this mileage will be replaced at half price. This great Company has been satisfying customers all over America for sixteen years. YOU TAKE NO RISK. If any tire you order is not satisfactory upon delivery return to us at once for refund.

High Pressure Cords			BALLOON CORDS		
Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3	$2.20	$1.00	29x4.40	$2.30	$1.10
30x3½	2.25	1.00	29x4.50	2.40	1.15
31x4	2.95	1.15	30x4.50	2.45	1.20
32x4	2.95	1.15	30x4.95	2.90	1.35
33x4	2.95	1.15	28x5.25	2.95	1.35
34x4	3.50	1.15	30x5.25	2.95	1.35
32x4½	3.20	1.45	31x5.25	3.10	1.35
33x4½	3.20	1.45	32x6.00	3.20	1.40
34x4½	3.45	1.45	33x6.00	3.20	1.45
30x5	3.60	1.75	32x6.50	3.50	1.66
33x5	3.60	1.75	33x6.75	3.75	1.75
35x5	4.45	1.75	All Other Sizes		$3.50

All tubes new—guaranteed first quality. Send only $1.00 deposit for each tire, balance C. O. D. Deduct 5 per cent if you send full price with order.

AMERICAN TIRE COMPANY, Dept. 935-H
1329 South Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois

BE A MAN!

Full of the ambition, pep and vitality of husky young manhood. Our Vitality Tablets are especially compounded to renew vigor, increase natural powers, and improve vitality. A pleasant surprise awaits you. Stop experimenting. Be safe and sure. Satisfaction or money back. Send $2 for large box, or pay on delivery, plus postage. $3 for extra strength for severe cases after long illness or overwork.
Wineholt Laboratories, Bx. 206, Woodbine, Pa.

LONELY HEARTS

LET us arrange a romantic correspondence for you. Meet your sweetheart thru the world's foremost high-class social correspondence club, a club for refined lonely people. Members everywhere; strictly CONFIDENTIAL, efficient and dignified service. We have made thousands of lonely people happy, why not you? Write for FREE Particulars.
EVA MOORE, BOX 908. JACKSONVILLE, FLA.
I HAVE A SWEETHEART FOR YOU

SANITARY
Rubber Goods
of all kinds mailed postpaid by us in plain, sealed wrapper. Write for mail-order price list, saving 50%. Dept. 14, Novelty Rubber Co., 11 Chatham St., Hamilton, Ontario.

End LIQUOR HABIT Quick
Will mail FREE TRIAL of harmless Noxalco. Can be given secretly in food or drink for Whiskey, Gin, Home Brew, Wine, Moonshine, Beer, etc. Your request for Free Trial will promptly bring trial supply by return mail and full $2.00 treatment which you may try under our 30 Day Refund Guarantee. Give Noxalco a trial at our risk. Write today.
ARLEE CO. DEPT. 34 BALTIMORE, MD.

SWEETHEARTS
Want one? Hundreds waiting for you everywhere. Write today for sealed particulars and descriptions. P. O. Box 4707-W, San Francisco, Calif.

FALSE TEETH USERS all over the world should immediately know the joy and health benefit of E-Dent-2 that marvelously Cleans, Purifies, Preserves Plates; removes Film, Stain, Odor. 2c stamp brings you big 30 days' free package. NELSON LAB., PASADENA, CALIF., DEPT. E.

"That was a marvelous stroke. I am beholden to you for my life."

Tam flushed.

"It was nothing," he replied. "A great swordsman taught me, and I have had much practise on the hard skulls of buffaloes."

"Then you are a hunter. Can you find meat for me? I have not eaten for three days, and am faint from hunger."

"I will get you much meat, and quickly," responded Tam. He picked up his *yatagan* and wiped it on the flank of the tiger. Here was meat, but not of a kind that he could bring himself to eat. Leopards, caracals, ounces, or any other felines were all right for food according to his ideas, but despite Lozong's teaching he could not get over the feeling that tigers were his own kind—that to eat the flesh of one of these beasts would be an act of cannibalism. And it was quite evident that the girl did not consider the beast he had slain fit for food.

"Come with me," he invited.

Together, they leaped the little brook, crossed the grass plot, and entered the bamboo thicket. As they were traversing this, Tam heard the sound for which he had been listening—the discordant cry of a peacock.

"Follow quietly behind me," he said. "There is food."

As he moved silently through the bamboos, he took his bow from the quiver, strung it, and drew forth an arrow. The bow twanged, and a magnificent bird fell to the ground, where it fluttered for a moment, then lay still.

BACK to the brook they went, to pluck, draw and wash the bird, and to build a cooking fire. Soon they were broiling slabs of peacock breast impaled on green bamboo over the hot coals.

"It tastes even better than it looks," said the girl as she sampled her first mouthful.

"It is the favorite meat of tigers," replied Tam between mouthfuls, " and they are good judges of meat. They live on it."

"You seem to know a great deal about tigers," said the girl. "Tell me who you are, and more about yourself."

"My name is Tam," he replied, "and I was raised by a white tigress.'"

"By a white tigress!" she exclaimed. "The prophecy!"

"What prophecy?"

"It is a secret. I should not have mentioned it."

"Never mind," replied Tam, "I'll forget it. Prophecies bore me, anyhow. Tell me who *you* are, and where you live."

"My name is Nina," she said, "and I live in Iramatri."

"Never heard of that country," said Tam, "but I've heard the name, Nina. She was a goddess, one of the first goddesses, in fact. They worshipped her about five thousand years ago."

"And longer," replied the girl. "Fifty thousand years ago men worshipped Nina."

"There are no records that old," said Tam, "so how could you know that?"

As he spoke, he looked into her eyes. She was regarding him oddly. For some reason a chill ran down his spine.

"Why, *you* wear a uræus!" he exclaimed, noticing her serpent diadem for the first time. "Nina was a serpent goddess!"

As he uttered these words her eyes flashed with a strange light like that of the rubies that smoldered in the uræus. They seemed to burn into his very being, bringing a disconcerting sensation of utter helplessness. He tried to move, to shake off the feeling, but found himself as powerless as if he had suddenly been

turned to stone. The meat which he was holding over the coals burned to a crisp, unheeded.

"You know much for a modern earthling," said the girl, finally. "I thought the world had forgotten Nina."

As suddenly as it had come, Tam's feeling of helplessness departed.

"So it has, almost," replied Tam. "She has been worshipped under the names of Ishtar, Isis, Ashtoreth, Tanit and Persephone. As Tanit she still has a few followers in the vicinity of old Carthage, and as Ishtar, superstitions concerning her are preserved throughout the world, though her followers are referred to as witches and wizards."

"She withdrew from the world five thousand years ago," said Nina, "because of the crimes that were committed in her name. Zealots stained her altars with human blood. Parents offered their children to be burned by sadistic priests, thinking to please her. These same priests corrupted her vestal virgins, then, urged by their lust for gold, made brothels of her temples. And when she left the world of earthlings, the priests set up graven images in her place, and called upon the people to worship these in her stead. She could have destroyed them all, but preferred to leave them to work out their own destruction."

"Which they did to perfection," said Tam. "There are ruins scattered around the Mediterranean from Rome to Karnak which testify to that. But tell me, how is it that you know so much about this goddess. Can it be that you——?"

He paused suddenly, as there came to his ears a sound like the roll of distant thunder—or elephants stampeding. The girl heard it at the same time, and they both stood up. Looking out over the waving grass tips, Tam saw, converging toward them, a semicircle of beasts that

GRAY HAIR PENCIL

Instantly changes **GRAY HAIR** to **youthful color.** Latest method known ***to keep gray away*** from Roots, Temples and Parting. Cannot be detected. Will not fade or wash off. Delights both men and women.

It's FREE Gray hair pencil GIVEN to quickly introduce Oratex. Just send name and address

Send For It Now!

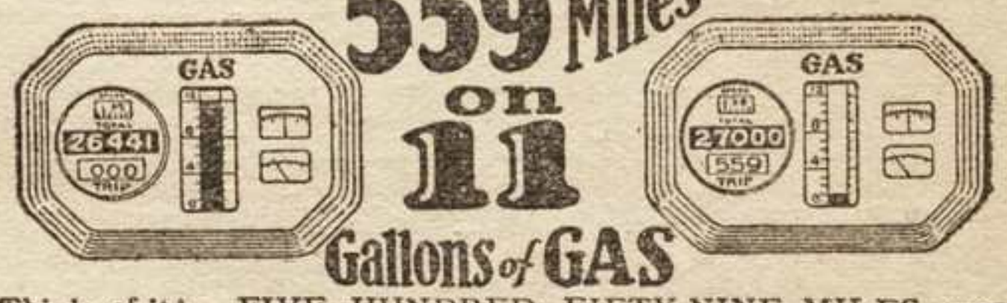
JUEL DENN, 1434 N. Wells St., Dept. A-735 Chicago

LONELY? Meet your sweetheart. Receive interesting letters, photos. Many attractive and wealthy. Stamp appreciated.

W. T. BRAUN, 353 W. 47th, Chicago

August Issue WEIRD TALES, Out July 1

Over the Mountains from Los Angeles 559 Miles on 11 Gallons of GAS



Think of it! FIVE HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE MILES over rough mountainous country burning only ELEVEN GALLONS OF GASOLINE. Imagine more than FIFTY MILES TO THE GALLON. That is what the WHIRLWIND CARBURETING DEVICE does for D. R. Gilbert, enough of a saving on just one trip to more than pay the cost of the Whirlwind.

THE WHIRLWIND SAVES MOTORISTS MILLIONS OF DOLLARS YEARLY

Whirlwind users, reporting the results of their tests, are amazed at the results they are getting. Letters keep streaming into the office telling of mileages all the way from 22 to 59 miles on a gallon, resulting in a saving of from 25% to 50% in gas bills alone.

Mark A. Estes writes, "I was making 17 miles to the gallon on my Pontiac Coupe. Today, with the Whirlwind, I am making 35 5-10 miles to the gallon."

P. P. Goerzen writes: "34-6-10 miles with the Whirlwind, or a gain of 21 miles to the gallon."

R. J. Tulp: "The Whirlwind increased the mileage on our Ford truck from 12 to 26 miles to gallon and 25% in speed."

Car owners all over the world are saving money every day with the Whirlwind, besides having better operating motors. Think what this means on your own car. Figure up your savings—enough for a radio—a bank account—added pleasures. Why let the Oil Companies profit by your waste? Find out about this amazing little device that will pay for itself every few weeks.

FITS ALL CARS

In just a few minutes the Whirlwind can be installed on any make of car, truck or tractor. It's actually less work than changing your oil, or putting water in your battery. No drilling, tapping or changes of any kind necessary. It is guaranteed to work perfectly on any make of car, truck or tractor, large or small, new model or old model. The more you drive the more you will save.

SALESMEN AND DISTRIBUTORS WANTED
FREE SAMPLE AND $100.00 A WEEK OFFER

Whirlwind men are making big profits supplying this fast selling device that car owners cannot afford to be without. Good territory is still open. Free sample offer and full particulars sent on request. Just check the coupon.

GUARANTEE

No matter what kind of a car you have--no matter how big a gas eater it is--The Whirlwind will save you money. We absolutely guarantee that the Whirlwind will more than save its cost in gasoline alone within thirty days, or the trial will cost you nothing. We invite you to test it at our risk and expense. You are to be the sole judge.

FREE TRIAL COUPON

WHIRLWIND MFG. CO.,
Dept. 562-A, Station C, Milwaukee, Wis.

Gentlemen: You may send me full particulars of your Whirlwind Carbureting device and tell me how I can get one free. This does not obligate me any way whatever.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

COUNTY_____ STATE_____

☐ Check here if you are interested in full or part-time salesman position.

were larger by far than the biggest elephants he had ever seen. They were twelve to thirteen feet high at the shoulders, and the tops of their massive heads on long, arched necks, were from fifteen to sixteen feet above the ground. They were almost hairless, but protected by skin as thick and leathery as that of the rhinoceros.

Mounted on these huge beasts were giant riders, terrible of mien and most extraordinary in appearance. At first Tam thought there were two on each beast, but as they drew closer he saw that each rider was of immense size and had two pairs of arms. They were a white race, but pasty white, as if they had never seen sunlight. Each monster carried a long-shafted trident couched like a lance, a bronze mace with a hideous human head graven on the knob, and an immense *tulwar*, a sword with a curved blade and an elaborate guard. The fourth hand, weaponless, held the reins which guided the giant steed.

The riders wore brazen helmets, flat collars of the same material that represented twining serpents, bangles on their wrists and arms, and the skins of animals wrapped about their loins. One, who seemed to be the leader, wore a magnificent golden helmet decorated with three faces like his own, one on each side and one in the back. In addition to the snake collar, his torso was covered with scale-armor, and he wore a long necklace of white human skulls.

"The gods of India!" exclaimed Tam. "And I thought they had no real existence!"

"Save me! Hide me!" pleaded the girl. And Tam saw in her eyes the same look of horror that had been there when first he saw her. "If I can not escape them, the world—your world—is doomed!"

He took her hand, and together they

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912,

Of Weird Tales, published monthly at Indianapolis, Indiana, for April 1, 1931.

State of Illinois } ss.
County of Cook }

Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Wm. R. Sprenger, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Weird Tales and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business manager are:

Publisher—Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Ind.

Editor—Farnsworth Wright, 840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Managing Editor—None.

Business Manager—William R. Sprenger, 840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member must be given.)

Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Ind.
Wm. R. Sprenger, 840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Farnsworth Wright, 840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.
George M. Cornelius, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Indiana.
George H. Cornelius, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Indiana.
P. W. Cornelius, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Indiana.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state). None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is_____. (This information is required from daily publications only.)

WM. R. SPRENGER,
Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of April, 1931. RICHARD S. GOULDEN,
[SEAL] Notary Public.
My commission expires May 4, 1934.

sprinted for the bamboo thicket. But they had not gone a hundred feet when they were halted by a shower of stones, and there charged out at them from the thicket a mob of hairy, shambling creatures, man-like and yet ape-like. They were armed with slings and clubs, and each carried a bag of large pebbles that hung from a cord around his neck.

"They saw our smoke and sent the Zargs to cut off our retreat before they charged," said the girl. "We are in a trap."

Tam quickly strung his bow, and sent an arrow through the breast of the foremost Zarg. He fell without a sound, and the others paused, but did not cease hurling their stones. By this time the giant riders had come within range. Tam brought down the first of these with an arrow through the left eye. Then he heard a shout from the gold-helmeted leader:

"Dismount, Asoza, and cut down the youth."

A pasty-faced giant, fully eight feet in height, swung down from his high saddle and ran forward, whirling his *tulwar* and mace until they whistled in the air.

Tam launched an arrow, which glanced from the brazen collar. They he whipped out his *yatagan* and *dah,* and awaited the onslaught. As they came together, the giant swung his *tulwar* in a neck-cut that would have decapitated the youth had it landed. But Tam ducked, and extended his point, wounding his adversary in the groin.

After that they fenced, blade clashing with blade, and Tam was sorely put to it, not only to defend himself from the whistling *tulwar* but to avoid the smashing blows of the heavy mace.

While he was thus occupied, he saw the golden-helmeted leader swiftly ride up to where the girl stood, stoop, and swing

PERSONALITY and CHARACTER ANALYSIS

What the Stars Have in Store for You

Send birthdate and 12 cents (coin or stamps) for sample personality and character analysis covering vocational guidance, marriage, health, lucky days, etc., as prepared by an eminent astrologer.

J. M. SIMMONS & CO.
109 N. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

MARRY!

If you want "A Rich Wife!", or "Wealthy Husband!", send for our big (FREE) list of descriptions. ("ONE") may be your ideal.

AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY
Box 100-AD. Detroit, Michigan

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Song Writing

SONGWRITERS: READ "SONG REQUIREMENTS of Talking Pictures, Radio and Records," an explanatory, instructive book SENT FREE to aspiring writers of words for songs. We compose, arrange music and secure copyrights. Write today. Newcomer Associates, 1674-Z Broadway, New York.

SONG-POEM WRITERS—WE COMPOSE MUSIC. Guarantee publisher's acceptance. National 1475WE-Broadway New York.

SONG POEM WRITERS—"REAL" PROPOSITION. Hibbeler, D-156, 2104 Keystone, Chicago.

Help Wanted

POSITIONS ON OCEAN LINERS; EXPERIENCE unnecessary. List of positions free. 292-G, Mount Vernon, N. Y.

Astrology

KNOW YOUR FUTURE—YOUR COMPLETE PERsonal forecast—25 large pages. Employment, love, marriage, etc. Give Birthdate. Pay 75c and postage when delivered. Complete satisfaction or money back. Thurston, K-20 W. Jackson, Chicago.

Old Gold Wanted

MAIL US YOUR DISCARDED JEWELRY, GOLD Crowns, Watches, Diamonds. Money sent at once. Goods Returned if our offer refused. United States Smelting Works, Dept. 19, Chicago.

Personal

LONELY HEARTS. JOIN OUR CLUB. THE World's Greatest Social Extension Bureau. Make new friends. We have a companion or sweetheart for you. Many worth 5,000 to 75,000. Photos, descriptions, introductions free. Send no money. Standard Club. Box 607, Grayslake, Ill.

LETTER CLUB FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. Big paper free, send for one. Eastern Agency 22, Bridgeport, Conn.

CORRESPONDENCE CLUB—BOOK OF PHOTOS and descriptions of wealthy members sent free in plain wrapper. The Exchange, Dept. 24, Kansas City, Mo.

CORRESPOND—25 LOVELY GIRLS' ADDRESSES, photos 10c. ARTS, BE-1611, Denver.

NEXT MONTH

The Whisperer in Darkness

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

AN EERY novel by one of the supreme masters of the weird tale. A story of the horror that stalked the Vermont hills—a great masterpiece of outré literature—a goose-flesh tale of unthinkable evil from Space—a shuddery tale of dread and menace that will make the chills run up and down your spine.

AFTER two years of silence, Mr. Lovecraft has written a horror-story that will be acclaimed by many as the greatest weird story ever written. This triumph of sheer nightmare horror will be published complete in the

August issue of

WEIRD TALES

On Sale July 1st

To avoid missing your copy, clip and mail this coupon today for SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER.

WEIRD TALES
840 N. Michigan Ave.,
Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed find $1.00 for which send me the next five issues of WEIRD TALES to begin with the August issue ($1.25 in Canada). Special offer void unless remittance is accompanied by coupon.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

her up in front of him, kicking and struggling. He had been fencing carefully before, but this sight made him reckless. Springing in close, he delivered a savage shoulder cut. His blade bit through the brazen collar, and shearing flesh and bone alike, sliced down through the heart of his adversary.

But he paid for his temerity. The heavy mace, swinging wildly in one of the four flailing hands, collided with the side of his head. There was a brief flash of a million multi-hued sparks, and oblivion.

Left for dead by his strange enemies, Tam comes to his senses only to face new and undreamed-of perils. Read of his thrilling adventures in the August WEIRD TALES, on sale July 1st.

PHANTOMS

By ALICE I'ANSON

Icy finger-tips of rain
Tap upon my window-pane;
Lonely specters pace the gloom
Of my ivy-mantled room
When the last faint bars of light
Usher in the boundless night!
Foolish passions, brief and vain,
Agonies of joy and pain,
Not a single one was worth
All the pangs that gave it birth!
They are dead as drifted leaves
Underneath the dripping eaves
Or as blasted fruit that falls
By an orchard's crumbling walls!
When the chill November flood
Pours, and pours; until my blood
Is cold as the half-frozen rain,
Darkness brings the ghostly train;
And their pitiful unrest
Stirs wild longings in my breast!