Weird Tales

Oct. 1931

The Unique Magazine

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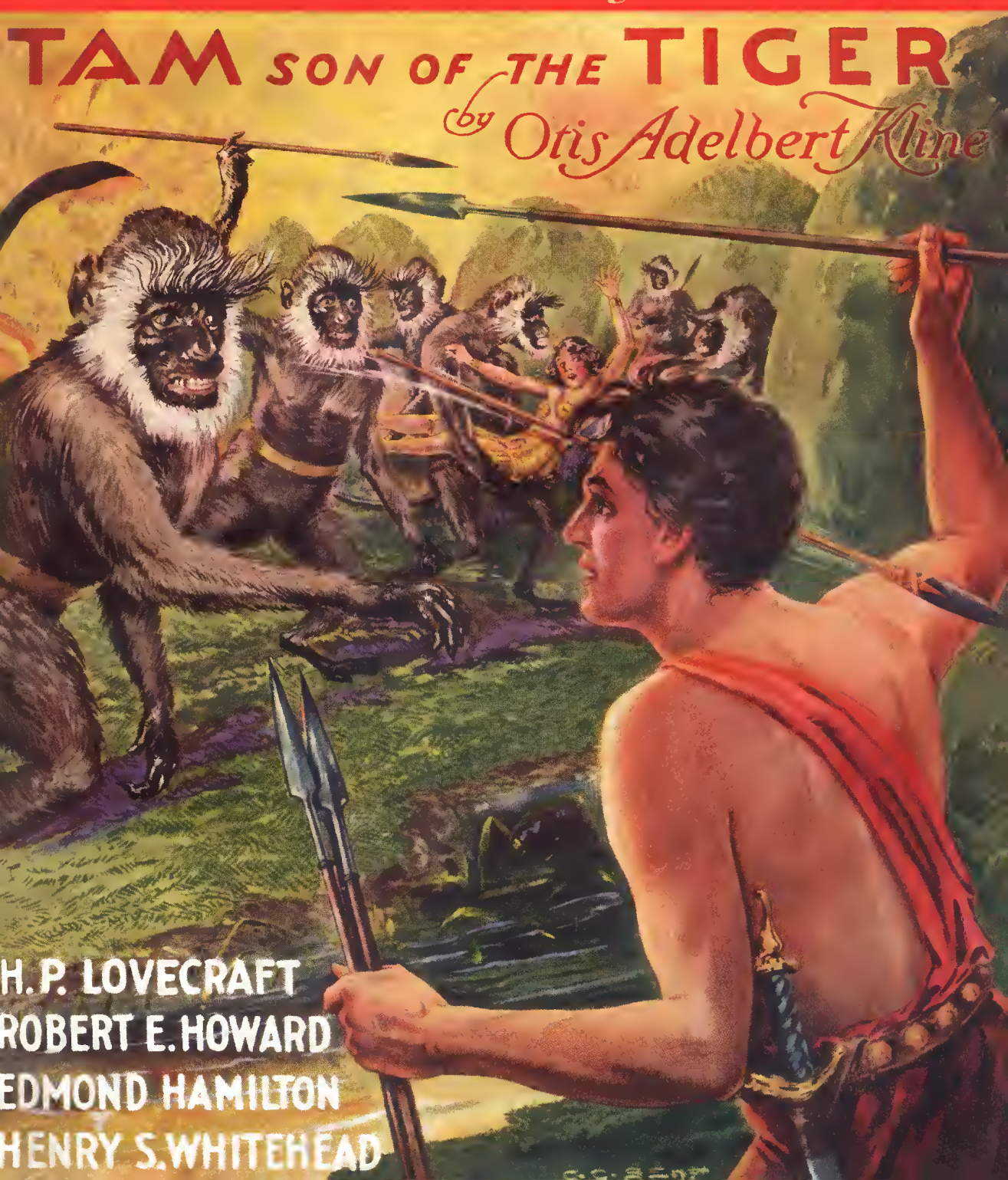
TAM SON OF THE TIGER

by Otis Adelbert Kline



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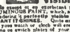

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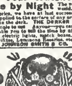

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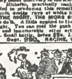

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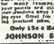

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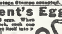

Box contains 12 eggs. When lit with a match, each one gradually hatches itself into a snake several feet long, which curls and twists about in a most life-like manner. Price per Box, 10c postpaid, 3 for 25c.

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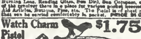

Exact reproduction of a real pistol, actually fires REAL BLANK CARTRIDGES of miniature size. Illustration is actual size. 1¾ inches long, with ring at end for attaching to watch chain. Loads like a regular pistol. Pull the trigger and it goes off with a loud bang. Pistol is break open type, illustration shows position for loading. Made entirely of high grade steel, nickel plated, octagon barrel, handsomely engraved handles, complete in box with cleaning rod. PRICE $1.75. Also furnished with pearl handles, $2.50. BLANK CARTRIDGES, 60c per box of 25. JOHNSON SMITH & CO., Dept. 980, RACINE, WIS.

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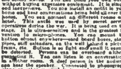
Apparatus and Directions for a Number of Mysterious Tricks, Enough for an Entire Evening's Entertainment . . . $1.00



Anyone Can Do Them

It is great fun mystifying your friends. Get this Conjurer's Cabinet, and you will be the cleverest fellow in your district. It contains the apparatus for ten first-class tricks, including The MAGIC BALL AND VASE TRICK (a wooden ball is placed inside, and upon replacing the lid has disappeared and is found in someone else's pocket); The HINDOO TRICK CARDS (can be made to change completely no less than five times); DISAPPEARING COIN BOX (a coin, placed in the wooden box, vanishes entirely or changes into a coin of another denomination), The GLASS GOBLET TRICK (a coin is dropped into a glass of water and when the water is poured out the coin has vanished and is found somewhere else), the RIBBON FACTORY FROM THE MOUTH TRICK (a seemingly endless supply of colored paper ribbons comes out of your mouth), the DISAPPEARING HANDKERCHIEF (a handkerchief held in the hand mysteriously vanishes), the WIZARD'S RING COIN TRICK, the ENCHANTED BOTTLE (no one but yourself is able to make it lay down), the GREAT HAT AND DICE TRICK (a large dice is placed on top of a hat, disappears, and is found underneath yet no one has touched the hat), and last, but not least, the GREAT PHANTOM CARD TRICK, or two from five leaves nothing. Full instructions are sent for performing each trick. In addition to the above, a number of other feats and illusions are fully explained for which you can easily make or procure the necessary apparatus. Price complete $1.00 postpaid.

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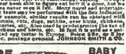
BABY TANK

25 Cents



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Most remarkable toy ever invented. By drawing the Tank backward, either with the hand or over the floor or table and then placing it down it will crawl along, overcoming all obstacles, in the same life-like manner as the larger Tank that proved so deadly in the great war. What makes it go is somewhat of a mystery, for there is no mechanism to wind up as is usually understood with mechanical toys, yet this tank will keep plodding along ten times longer than the ordinary run of toys. It will perform dozens of the most wonderful stunts. 25c prepaid.

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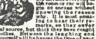

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Weird Tales

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XVIII NUMBER 3

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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Contents for October, 1931

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

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THE publication of H. P. Lovecraft's story, *The Whisperer in Darkness*, has evoked many expressions of enthusiasm from you, the readers. The story easily took first place in popularity among all the tales in the August issue.

Anthony Amato, of Ridgeley, West Virginia, writes to the Eyrie: "I simply had to write to tell you how much I enjoyed the August issue. You certainly deserve a lot of praise for the wonderful collection of stories the magazine contained this month. The one that stands out foremost, that really is a weird tale in the fullest sense of the word, is *The Whisperer in Darkness*. What a story! Mr. Lovecraft almost convinces the reader that he is relating a true story. Believe it or not, I can feel the shivers racing up and down my back even now, as I write this letter."

"*The Whisperer in Darkness* is one of the most interesting stories that I have ever read," writes R. L. C. Bergman, of Toledo, Ohio. "I have known that your magazine was on the market for a long time, but heretofore its covers and inside illustrations were so terrible that I would not have taken it as a gift. At last the illustrations are decent. I have just finished reading my first copy."

Writes J. Vernon Shea, Jr.: "*The Whisperer in Darkness* stands out as indubitably the finest weird tale of the year. It once more proves the superiority of H. P. Lovecraft over all other weird tale writers, and is a fit companion to *The Outsider, The Dunwich Horror, Pickman's Model, The Rats in the Walls,* and *The Call of Cthulhu*. What a splendid climax it has, and with what shuddery horror it insinuates itself forever into our memories! Yet I must protest against the accompanying illustration for somewhat spoiling the effect of that climax."

A letter from Gertrude Hemken, of Chicago, says: "My favorite stories in the August Weird Tales are all of them except *Moon Madness* and *The Earth-Owners*, which belong in a science magazine. However, I will admit that these were both excellent stories, and I enjoyed them. I am very enthusiastically following *Tam, Son of the Tiger*. It is the kind of story that is not easily forgotten, and I read that first of all the stories featured in the magazine. *The Whisperer in Darkness* is very gruesome, and is a fitting story for WEIRD TALES. I am glad to note that you are giving us little Jules de Grandin again. He is the most amusing person I've met in stories so far, and I congratulate the author on his successful brain-child. I do not speak or understand enough French to hold any conversation, but the exclamations and phrases that the little Frenchman uses are sufficiently plain enough for me to understand."

(Please turn to page 294)

(Continued from page 292)

Writes Mrs. E. A. Wenzler, of Wyandanch, New York: "In the past there have been some very good stories in WEIRD TALES, but I think none as charming as that in the August issue, *Old Roses*. It finely portrays Old World delicacy and feeling and atmosphere, is odd and striking without the elements of hatred and other dark influences brought in, is beautiful all through. I have a suggestion: Can't WEIRD TALES reserve a wee sma' corner somewhere for the ghost tale's own monthly domain? It would be nice to be able to go to some nook in the magazine once a month, say 'The Chimney Corner,' or something like that for a heading, where ghost tales could hold forth in their own comfortable manner, so that the ghostly-inclined could gather and listen for five or ten minutes once a month to what an old chimney has seen. A real ghost tale could not harm anyone once a month—those impatient for skyward journeys would not have to listen to the doings in the Chimney Corner but could go roving along the Milky Way and other spheres to their hearts' content. Habits form easily, and this should be a nice one."

"I have been reading your magazine for three years," writes William C. Levere, of West Haven, Connecticut, "but this is my first attempt to enter the Eyrie. Your stories are excellent, but please give us some more weird-scientific stories by Edmond Hamilton. He is, in my opinion, your best author. Three of his works I consider masterpieces. These are *The Plant Revolt, The Mind-Master,* and *The Horror City.* I have read and re-read these gems of science fiction many times, and each time I can not but admire what brilliant stories they are. His Interstellar Patrol stories are also very fine."

Julius Schwartz, of New York City, writes to the Eyrie: "I read my first WEIRD TALES about four months ago, and was so pleased with it that I bought all the back numbers of WEIRD TALES I could lay my hands on. My favorite stories are the science-fiction type. Many readers claim that Edmond Hamilton always uses the same plot, and should therefore be barred from WEIRD TALES. Mebbe so, but these readers got to admit the situations his heroes get into, and the weird and fantastic enemies that attack our earth, were never heard of before in the annals of science-fiction. The best story in the August issue is *The Earth-Owners,* by Edmond Hamilton, and is closely followed by Lovecraft's weird and unusual tale, *The Whisperer in Darkness.*"

Writes Laurence Vibbert, of Waterville, Connecticut: "I am very glad that WEIRD TALES is to be again published once a month. Two months of waiting for your superb magazine were too long. May I ask what is the matter with Jules de Grandin? Here's hoping he reappears very soon. *Tam, Son of the Tiger,* promises to be very interesting. I also enjoyed *Moth* very much. However, interesting as science stories are, I wish to see more really weird stories than ever. *The Finishing Touches* by Renier Wyers was very well done."

Thelva B. Ellis, of Trenton, New Jersey, who evidently likes a happy ending to the stories she reads, writes to the Eyrie: "Because your magazine is so unusual, so bizarre, and so very different, I enjoy it thoroughly. However, the story entitled *The Seeds of Death,* by David H. Keller, left me with an overwhelming sense of disappointment. The writer tried to compel our sympathy to turn to the Duke of

(Please turn to page 296)

Tales From the Book That Zealous Reformers Once Burned in Public!

At Last!

Censorship No Longer Denies You This Thrill of Thrills—

Tales from THE GREAT DECAMERON...

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Between its pages, the thrill of a lifetime of reading awaits you. Before your very eyes is unfolded the glittering pageantry of a golden age now vanished—an age when passion, intrigue and high-riding romance held full sway. Past you, in a breath-taking parade, sweep some of the most beautiful, yet unprincipled, women of all time—woman whose intense fascination fired men's blood and even altered the fates of empires . . . Here you will find tales of scarlet days, when a robust world drank of life and love to its very dregs!

READ

—how a certain noble lady slipped into her husband's chamber by stealth, and changed places with his mistress in order to win back his love.

—how a tiny mole on a woman's breast, condemned her to death and wrecked three lives!

—how a princess of highest rank was humiliated beyond all toleration in her own bed-chamber by a cavalier whose "veins ran fire instead of blood!"

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(Continued from page 294)

Freud, but in my estimation he wasn't deserving of the hero rôle, but rather the young American, James Garey, but very little was said about him. Too bad that the combined efforts of two superior (?) male brains couldn't outwit one female mind, with a crooked twist in it at that! To my way of thinking the story would have been more satisfying to the readers if the two men had been able to work somehow in harmony with each other and had compelled the fair Helen to really swallow her own 'seed of death' and suffer as she had made others suffer. The two men should then have accidentally or otherwise discovered something to overcome the effects of the seeds, brought all the men who were still living to normal again and destroyed the horrible growth of the beautiful orchids so dear to the happiness of the modern Circe."

Writes Wilfred B. Talman, of Brooklyn: "You certainly should have a rose pinned on you for the most recent issue of WEIRD TALES. Really, it's something to wave flags about, in my opinion. I must pick my flaws, of course, so I'll have to say that the story about the rug merchant with the money-clinking machine was the only weak link in the issue."

"Congratulations on your August issue," writes Robert Leonard Russell, of Mount Vernon, Illinois. "It is as good as any you have published yet. I liked all your stories in this issue and especially *The Whisperer in Darkness*, H. P. Lovecraft's supreme tale of outré horror. I most certainly hope that Mr. Lovecraft will write more stories soon, say four or five a year, and perhaps a sequel to the *'Whisperer.' Tam, Son of the Tiger,* becomes more interesting at each new turn of a page. Your Tam cover on the August issue was also very good. Is the story *Lukundoo* by Edward Lucas White, which is reprinted in *The Omnibus of Crime,* the same story formerly published in WEIRD TALES? The story I refer to was a tale of tiny heads which grew from carbuncles on an explorer's body." [Yes. *Lukundoo* was first published in WEIRD TALES, in the issue of November, 1925.—THE EDITORS.]

A letter from A. B. Leonard, of Portsmouth, Ohio, says: "I see in the July number that Robert Leonard Russell of Mount Vernon, Illinois, has re-raised the rumpus about your cover designs, and I want to add my kick too. Why not have a vote on the question and settle once for all the problem of whether or not we are going to have pictures of beautiful women on the front covers? Personally I prefer to look at a picture of a woman rather than of a dinosaur—if I want to study a reptile I will go to a museum. Another point I wish to bring up is that a picture seems to need a woman in it to make it weird. The picture of a nude woman in a wild canyon would be weird, but the same picture with a man instead of a woman, or a dog instead of a woman, would not be weird at all. It seems that weirdness depends on a contrast between a beautiful woman and some wild or gruesome object. Pictures of women—a woman contemplating a skull—a woman caressing a tiger's head—a woman, beautiful and nude, looking at a death mask of an old man. Weird? And how! So come on and give us some covers that are truly weird—and beautiful. Let the two or three old maids who object to them go and subscribe to some kindergarten magazine. You will never miss them because of the increase in

(Please turn to page 298)

(Continued from page 296)

number of those who prefer roses to lilies, wine to ginger ale, and beautiful women to rampagious dinosaurs."

J. Wasso, Jr., of Pen Argyl, Pennsylvania, writes to the Eyrie: "Mr. Robert L. Russell, of Mount Vernon, Illinois, is correct. Your cover censors are ridiculous! The nude or semi-nude in its place is perfectly proper. Those who see anything degrading in the nudes on the covers of W. T. must have minds that reek with filth and corruption! There is no evil in beholding the nude human form except in the debased mind of the beholder."

"The August WEIRD TALES is certainly a distinguished number, containing as it does *The Whisperer in Darkness* with its blood-freezing and apocalyptic hints of outer horror," writes Clark Ashton Smith from his home in Auburn, California. "I was glad to see August W. Derleth's little story, *Prince Borgia's Mass,* and I also liked very much the tender and exquisite *Old Roses,* by Stella G. S. Perry."

Writes Chester R. Imes, of Springfield, Ohio: "I've just finished my first WEIRD TALES and believe it is the magazine I have been looking for. The story I liked best was *Moon Madness. Creeping Fingers* and *The Undead* were also very fine. I like weird stories of ghosts, vampires, werewolves and the supernatural rather than scientific tales of the future. I think your magazine is doing a great service to humanity in that it opens new channels of thought."

Readers, what is your favorite story in this issue? The most popular story in the August issue, as shown by your votes and letters, is H. P. Lovecraft's tale, *The Whisperer in Darkness,* as we stated at the beginning of this Eyrie.

My Favorite Stories in the October Weird Tales Are:

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

I do not like the following stories:

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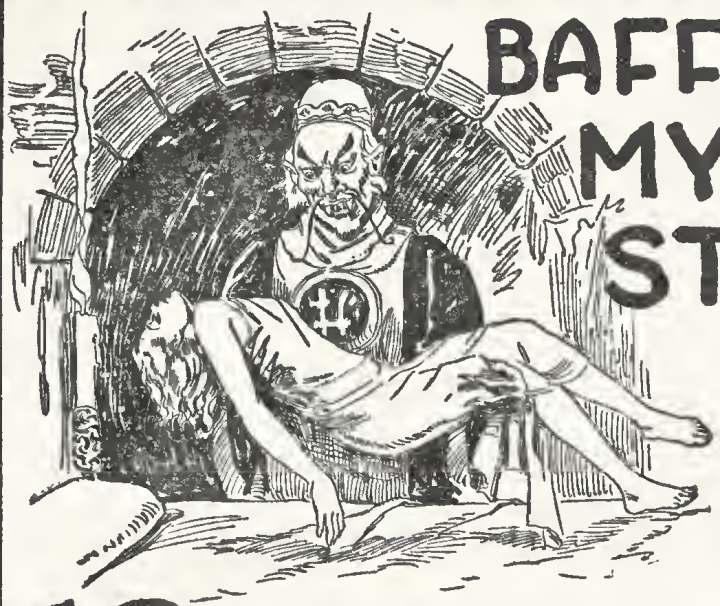

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THE DREAM MAKERS

By A. LESLIE.

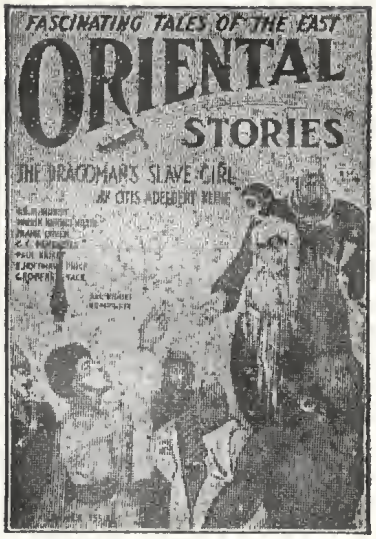
We are they who saw—
The flowering fields and templed hills
When earth and sun
And flaunting star
Were but cold mists that swirled,
Shapeless, in the aching void
Of utter space.

We saw—
Greece in her golden glory,
And the iron hand of Rome,
Before the Isles
Had cleft the seething waters,
Long ere the Seven Hills
Rose from the plain.

Aye! and we saw—
Limned in the shuddering heavens,
The vision of a world
Rebuilded
On the Bright Agony
Of Gethsemane!

The Dragoman's Slave Girl

By Otis Adelbert Kline



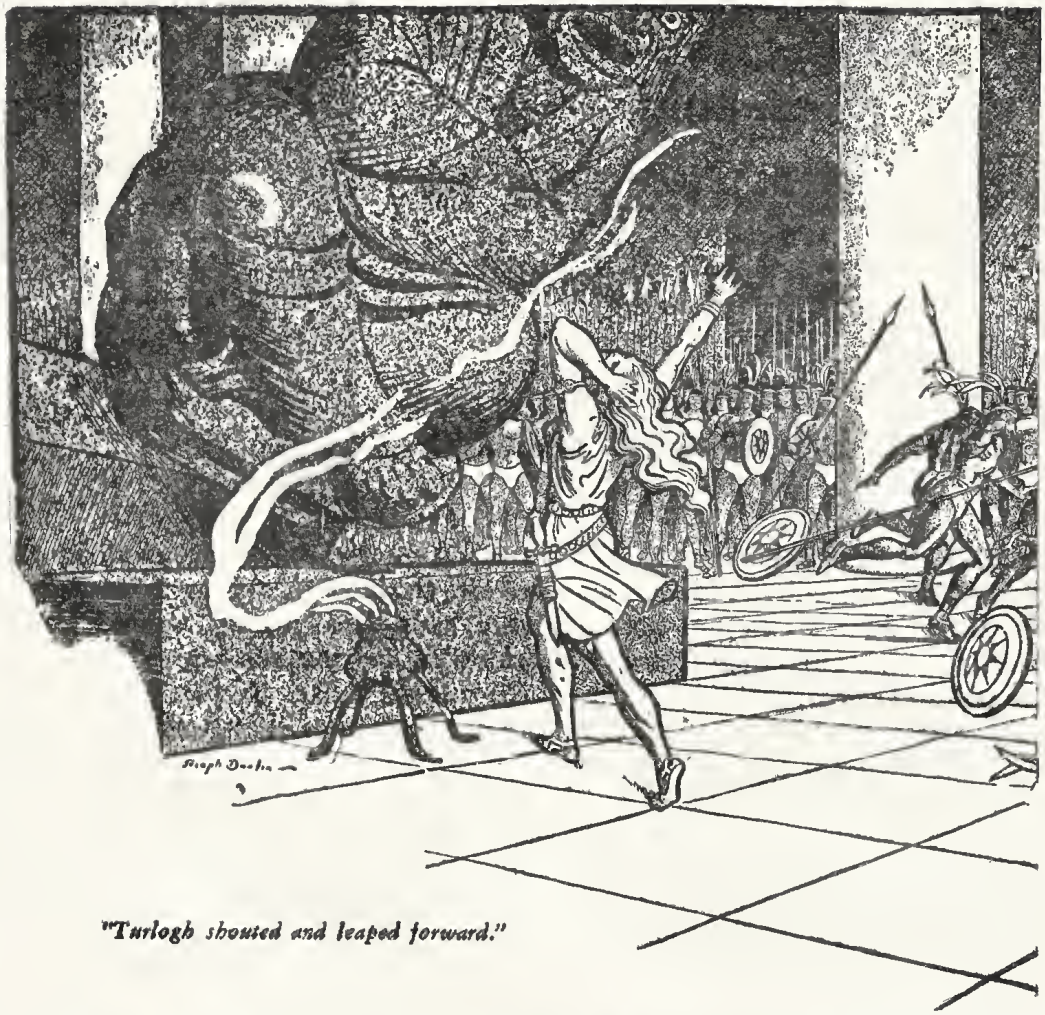
I STOOD there in the slave mart, idly looking on while they auctioned off girls and women, tall and short, young and old, fat and thin, willing and unwilling. There were slant-eyed, golden-skinned girls from Cathay, supple, brown-skinned nautch-girls from Hind, Nubian maids and matrons whose bodies were like polished ebony, and Abyssinians of the color of coffee. Then came the Circassians, Armenians, Persians, Nestorians and Yezidees, some quite good to look upon. But none interested me.

I turned to go, when suddenly I heard a chorus of "Oh's!" and "Ah's!" from the entire assembly. Looking back toward the auction block, I was smitten with admiration for the witching vision of feminine loveliness that stood thereon. Then, scarcely knowing what impelled me to do so, I elbowed and jostled my way to a position just in front of the platform, and stood like the others, gaping up at the wondrous frail creature who, standing there beside her auctioneer was as a gazelle beside an overgrown wart hog. Nor had Almighty Allah ever before vouchsafed me the privilege of beholding such grace and beauty.

Her eyes were large and brown, and their sleepy lids and lashes were kohled with Babylonian witchery. Her mouth was like the red seal of Suleiman Baalshem, Lord of the Name, on whom be peace, and her smile revealed teeth that were matched pearls. The rondure of her firm young breasts, strutting from her white bosom beneath the glittering beaded shields, was as that of twin pomegranates. And her slender waist swayed with the grace of a branchlet of basil, above her rounded hips.

The flat-nosed, red-bearded auctioneer, after clumsily describing the charms of her whose beauty defied description, called for bids. I had but a hundred sequins, but this girl was worth thousands—

The swift-moving sequence of events that followed when Hamed the Attar, who tells this story, dared to bid against the Pasha for the slave girl make a thrilling story that will hold you spellbound. Read this and other thrilling stories by such authors as Warren Hastings Miller, S. B. H. Hurst, Paul Ernst, Frank Owen, G. G. Pendarves, E. Hoffmann Price, Geoffrey Vace and others in the current issue of



"Turlogh shouted and leaped forward."

The Gods of Bal-Sagoth

By ROBERT E. HOWARD

Red welter of war and bloodshed—a vivid weird adventure-tale of the Orkney Islands in the time when Canute the Dane ruled England

1. Steel in the Storm

LIGHTNING dazzled the eyes of Turlogh O'Brien and his foot slipped in a smear of blood as he staggered on the reeling deck. The clashing of steel rivaled the bellowing of the thunder, and screams of death cut through the roar of waves and wind. The incessant lightning flicker gleamed on the corpses sprawling redly, the gigantic horned figures that roared and smote like huge demons of the midnight storm, the great beaked prow looming above.

The play was quick and desperate; in the momentary illumination a ferocious bearded face shone before Turlogh, and his swift ax licked out, splitting it to the chin. In the brief, utter blackness that followed the flash, an unseen stroke swept Turlogh's helmet from his head and he

struck back blindly, feeling his ax sink into flesh, and hearing a man howl. Again the fires of the raging skies sprang, showing the Gael the ring of savage faces, the hedge of gleaming steel that hemmed him in.

Back against the mainmast Turlogh parried and smote; then through the madness of the fray a great voice thundered, and in a flashing instant the Gael caught a glimpse of a giant form—a strangely familiar face. Then the world crashed into fire-shot blackness.

Consciousness returned slowly. Turlogh was first aware of a swaying, rocking motion of his whole body which he could not check. Then a dull throbbing in his head racked him and he sought to raise his hands to it. Then it was he realized he was bound hand and foot—not an altogether new experience. Clearing sight showed him that he was tied to the mast of the dragon ship whose warriors had struck him down. Why they had spared him, he could not understand, because if they knew him at all, they knew him to be an outlaw—an outcast from his clan, who would pay no ransom to save him from the very pits of Hell.

The wind had fallen greatly but a heavy sea was flowing, which tossed the long ship like a chip from gulf-like trough

to foaming crest. A round silver moon, peering through broken clouds, lighted the tossing billows. The Gael, raised on the wild west coast of Ireland, knew that the serpent ship was crippled. He could tell it by the way she labored, plowing deep into the spume, heeling to the lift of the surge. Well, the tempest which had been raging on these southern waters had been enough to damage even such staunch craft as these Vikings built.

The same gale had caught the French vessel on which Turlogh had been a passenger, driving her off her course and far southward. Days and nights had been a blind, howling chaos in which the ship had been hurled, flying like a wounded bird before the storm. And in the very rack of the tempest a beaked prow had loomed in the scud above the lower, broader craft, and the grappling irons had sunk in. Surely these Norsemen were wolves and the blood-lust that burned in their hearts was not human. In the terror and roar of the storm they leaped howling to the onslaught, and while the raging heavens hurled their full wrath upon them, and each shock of the frenzied waves threatened to engulf both vessels, these sea-wolves glutted their fury to the utmost—true sons of the sea, whose wildest rages found echo in their own bosoms. It had been a slaughter rather than a fight—the Celt had been the only fighting man aboard the doomed ship—and now he remembered the strange familiarity of the face he had glimpsed just before he was struck down. Who——?

"Good hail, my bold Dalcassian, it's long since we met!"

Turlogh stared at the man who stood before him, feet braced to the lifting of the deck. He was of huge stature, a good half head taller than Turlogh who stood well above six feet. His legs were like columns, his arms like oak and iron. His beard was of crisp gold, matching the massive armlets he wore. A shirt of scale-mail added to his war-like appearance as the horned helmet seemed to increase his height. But there was no wrath in the calm gray eyes which gazed tranquilly into the smoldering blue eyes of the Gael.

"Athelstane, the Saxon!"

"Aye—it's been a long day since you gave me this," the giant indicated a thin white scar on his temple. "We seem fated to meet on nights of fury—we first crossed steel the night you burned Thorfel's skalli. Then I fell before your ax and you saved me from Brogar's Picts—alone of all the folk who followed Thorfel. Tonight it was I who struck you down." He touched the great two-handed sword strapped to his shoulders and Turlogh cursed.

"Nay, revile me not," said Athelstane with a pained expression, "I could have slain you in the press—I struck with the flat, but knowing you Irish have cursed hard skulls, I struck with both hands. You have been senseless for hours. Lodbrog would have slain you with the rest of the merchant ship's crew but I claimed your life. But the Vikings would only agree to spare you on condition that you be bound to the mast. They know you of old."

"Where are we?"

"Ask me not. The storm blew us far out of our course. We were sailing to harry the coasts of Spain. When chance threw us in with your vessel, of course we seized the opportunity, but there was scant spoil. Now we are racing with the sea-flow, unknowing. The steer sweep is crippled and the whole ship lamed. We may be riding the very rim of the world for aught I know. Swear to join us and I will loose you."

"Swear to join the hosts of Hell!" snarled Turlogh. "Rather will I go down with the ship and sleep for ever under the

green waters, bound to this mast. My only regret is that I can not send more sea-wolves to join the hundred-odd I have already sent to Purgatory!"

"Well, well," said Athelstane tolerantly, "a man must eat—here—I will loose your hands at least—now, set your teeth into this joint of meat."

Turlogh bent his head to the great joint and tore at it ravenously. The Saxon watched him a moment, then turned away. A strange man, reflected Turlogh, this renegade Saxon who hunted with the wolf-pack of the North—a savage warrior in battle, but with fibers of kindliness in his make-up which set him apart from the men with whom he consorted.

The ship reeled on blindly in the night, and Athelstane, returning with a great horn of foaming ale, remarked on the fact that the clouds were gathering again, obscuring the seething face of the sea. He left the Gael's hands unbound but Turlogh was held fast to the mast by cords about legs and body. The rovers paid no heed to their prisoner; they were too much occupied in keeping their crippled ship from going down under their feet.

At last Turlogh believed he could catch at times a deep roaring above the wash of the waves. This grew in volume, and even as the duller-eared Norsemen heard it, the ship leaped like a spurred horse, straining in every timber. As by magic the clouds, lightening for dawn, rolled away on each side, showing a wild waste of tossing gray waters, and a long line of breakers dead ahead. Beyond the frothing madness of the reefs loomed land, apparently an island. The roaring increased to deafening proportions, as the long ship, caught in the tide rip, raced headlong to her doom. Turlogh saw Lodbrog rushing about, his long beard flowing in the wind as he brandished his fists and bellowed futile commands. Athelstane came running across the deck.

"Little chance for any of us," he growled as he cut the Gael's bonds, "but you shall have as much as the rest——"

Turlogh sprang free. "Where is my ax?"

"There in that weapon-rack. But Thor's blood, man," marvelled the big Saxon, "you won't burden yourself now——"

Turlogh had snatched the ax and confidence flowed like wine through his veins at the familiar feel of the slim, graceful shaft. His ax was as much a part of him as his right hand; if he must die he wished to die with it in his grip. He hastily slung it to his girdle. All armor had been stripped from him when he had been captured.

"There are sharks in these waters," said Athelstane, preparing to doff his scale-mail. "If we have to swim——"

The ship struck with a crash that snapped her masts and shivered her prow like glass. Her dragon beak shot high in the air and men tumbled like ten-pins from her slanted deck. A moment she poised, shuddering like a live thing, then slid from the hidden reef and went down in a blinding smother of spray.

Turlogh had left the deck in a long dive that carried him clear. Now he rose in the turmoil, fought the waves for a mad moment, then caught a piece of wreckage that the breakers flung up. As he clambered across this, a shape bumped against him and went down again. Turlogh plunged his arm deep, caught a sword-belt and heaved the man up and on his makeshift raft. For in that instant he had recognized the Saxon, Athelstane, still burdened with the armor he had not had time to remove. The man seemed dazed. He lay limp, limbs trailing.

Turlogh remembered that ride through the breakers as a chaotic nightmare. The tide tore them through, plunging their

frail craft into the depths, then flinging them into the skies. There was naught to do but hold on and trust to luck. And Turlogh held on, gripping the Saxon with one hand and their raft with the other, while it seemed his fingers would crack with the strain. Again and again they were almost swamped; then by some miracle they were through, riding in water comparatively calm and Turlogh saw a lean fin cutting the surface a yard away. It swirled in and Turlogh unslung his ax and struck. Red dyed the waters instantly and a rush of sinuous shapes made the craft rock. While the sharks tore their brother, Turlogh, paddling with his hands, urged the rude raft ashore until he could feel the bottom. He waded to the beach, half carrying the Saxon; then, iron though he was, Turlogh O'Brien sank down, exhausted and soon slept soundly.

2. *Gods from the Abyss*

TURLOGH did not sleep long. When he awoke the sun was just risen above the sea-rim. The Gael rose, feeling as refreshed as if he had slept the whole night through, and looked about him. The broad white beach sloped gently from the water to a waving expanse of gigantic trees. There seemed no underbrush, but so close together were the huge boles, his sight could not pierce into the jungle. Athelstane was standing some distance away on a spit of sand that ran out into the sea. The huge Saxon leaned on his great sword and gazed out toward the reefs.

Here and there on the beach lay the stiff figures that had been washed ashore. A sudden snarl of satisfaction broke from Turlogh's lips. Here at his very feet was a gift from the gods; a dead Viking lay there, fully armed in the helmet and mail shirt he had not had time to doff when the ship foundered, and Turlogh saw they were his own. Even the round light buckler strapped to the Norseman's back was his. Turlogh did pause to wonder how all his accouterments had come into the possession of one man, but stripped the dead and donned the plain round helmet and the shirt of black chain mail. Thus armed he went up the beach toward Athelstane, his eyes gleaming unpleasantly.

The Saxon turned as he approached. "Hail to you, Gael," he greeted, "We be all of Lodbrog's ship-people left alive. The hungry green sea drank them all. By Thor, I owe my life to you! What with the weight of my mail, and the crack my skull got on the rail, I had most certainly been food for the sharks but for you. It all seems like a dream now."

"You saved my life," snarled Turlogh, "I saved yours. Now the debt is paid, the accounts are squared, so up with your sword and let us make an end."

Athelstane stared. "You wish to fight me? Why—what——?"

"I hate your breed as I hate Satan!" roared the Gael, a tinge of madness in his blazing eyes, "Your wolves have ravaged my people for five hundred years! The smoking ruins of the Southland, the seas of spilled blood call for vengeance! The screams of a thousand ravished girls are ringing in my ears, night and day! Would that the North had but a single breast for my ax to cleave!"

"But I am no Norseman," rumbled the giant in worriment.

"The more shame to you, renegade," raved the maddened Gael, "Defend yourself lest I cut you down in cold blood!"

"This is not to my liking," protested Athelstane, lifting his mighty blade, his gray eyes serious but unafraid, "Men speak truly who say there is madness in you."

Words ceased as the men prepared to go into deadly action. The Gael approached his foe, crouching panther-like, eyes ablaze. The Saxon waited the onslaught, feet braced wide apart, sword held high in both hands. It was Turlogh's ax and shield against Athelstane's two-handed sword; in a contest one stroke might end either way. Like two great jungle beasts they played their deadly, wary game, then——

Even as Turlogh's muscles tensed for the death-leap, a fearful sound split the silence! Both men started and recoiled. From the depths of the forest behind them rose a ghastly and inhuman scream. Shrill, yet of great volume, it rose higher and higher until it ceased at the highest pitch, like the triumph of a demon, like the cry of some grisly ogre gloating over its human prey.

"Thor's blood!" gasped the Saxon, letting his sword-point fall, "What was that?"

Turlogh shook his head. Even his iron nerve was slightly shaken. "Some fiend of the forest. This is a strange land in a strange sea. Mayhap Satan himself reigns here and it is the gate to Hell."

Athelstane looked uncertain. He was more pagan than Christian and his devils were heathen devils. But they were none the less grim for that.

"Well," said he, "let us drop our quarrel until we see what it may be. Two blades are better than one, whether for man or devil——"

A wild shriek cut him short. This time it was a human voice, blood-chilling in its horror and despair. Simultaneously came the swift patter of feet and the lumbering rush of some heavy body among the trees. The warriors wheeled toward the sound, and out of the deep shadows a half-naked woman came flying like a white leaf blown on the wind. Her loose hair streamed like a flame of gold behind her, her white limbs flashed in the morning sun, her eyes blazed with frenzied terror. And behind her——

Even Turlogh's hair stood up. The thing that pursued the fleeing girl was neither man nor beast. In form it was like a bird, but such a bird as the rest of the world had not seen for many an age. Some twelve feet high it towered, and its evil head with the wicked red eyes and cruel curved beak was as big as a horse's head. The long arched neck was thicker than a man's thigh and the huge taloned feet could have gripped the fleeing woman as an eagle grips a sparrow.

THIS much Turlogh saw in one glance as he sprang between the monster and its prey who sank down with a cry on the beach. It loomed above him like a mountain of death and the evil beak darted down, denting the shield he raised and staggering him with the impact. At the same instant he struck, but the keen ax sank harmlessly into a cushioning mass of spiky feathers. Again the beak flashed at him and his sidelong leap saved his life by a hair's breadth. And then Athelstane ran in, and bracing his feet wide, swung his great sword with both hands and all his strength. The mighty blade sheared through one of the tree-like legs below the knee, and with an abhorrent screech, the monster sank on its side, flapping its short heavy wings wildly. Turlogh drove the back-spike of his ax between the glaring red eyes and the gigantic bird kicked convulsively and lay still.

"Thor's blood!" Athelstane's gray eyes were blazing with battle lust, "Truly we've come to the rim of the world——"

"Watch the forest lest another come forth," snapped Turlogh, turning to the woman who had scrambled to her feet and stood panting, eyes wide with wonder. She was a splendid young animal,

tall, clean-limbed, slim and shapely. Her only garment was a sheer bit of silk hung carelessly about her hips. But though the scantiness of her dress suggested the savage, her skin was snowy white, her loose hair of purest gold and her eyes gray. Now she spoke hastily, stammeringly, in the tongue of the Norse, as if she had not so spoken in years.

"You—who are you men? Whence come you? What do you on the Isle of the Gods?"

"Thor's blood!" rumbled the Saxon; "she's of our own kind!"

"Not mine!" snapped Turlogh, unable even in that moment to forget his hate for the people of the North.

The girl looked curiously at the two. "The world must have changed greatly since I left it," said she, evidently in full control of herself once more, "else how is it that wolf and wild bull hunt together? By your black hair, you are a Gael, and you, big man, have a slur in your speech that can be naught but Saxon."

"We are two outcasts," answered Turlogh, "You see these dead men lining the strand? They were the crew of the dragon ship which bore us here, storm-driven. This man, Athelstane, once of Wessex, was a swordsman on that ship and I was a captive. I am Turlogh Dubh, once a chief of Clan na O'Brien. Who are you and what land is this?"

"This is the oldest land in the world," answered the girl, "Rome, Egypt, Cathay are as but infants beside it. I am Brunhild, daughter of Rane Thorfin's son, of the Orkneys, and until a few days ago, queen of this ancient kingdom."

Turlogh looked uncertainly at Athelstane. This sounded like sorcery.

"After what we have just seen," rumbled the giant, "I am ready to believe anything. But are you in truth Rane Thorfin's son's stolen child?"

"Aye!" cried the girl, "I am that one! I was stolen when Tostig the Mad raided the Orkneys and burned Rane's steading in the absence of its master——"

"And then Tostig vanished from the face of the earth—or the sea!" interrupted Athelstane, "He was in truth a madman. I sailed with him for a ship-harrying many years ago when I was but a youth."

"And his madness cast me on this island," answered Brunhild; "for after he had harried the shores of England, the fire in his brain drove him out into unknown seas—south and south and ever south until even the fierce wolves he led murmured. Then a storm drove us on yonder reef, though at another part, rending the dragon ship even as yours was rended last night. Tostig and all his strong men perished in the waves, but I clung to pieces of wreckage and a whim of the gods cast me ashore, half dead. I was fifteen years old. That was ten years ago.

"I found a strange terrible people dwelling here, a brown-skinned folk who knew many dark secrets of magic. They found me lying senseless on the beach and because I was the first white human they had ever seen, their priests divined that I was a goddess given them by the sea, whom they worship. So they put me in the temple with the rest of their curious gods and did reverence to me. And their high-priest, old Gothan—cursed be his name!—taught me many strange and fearful things. Soon I learned their language and much of their priests' inner mysteries. And as I grew into womanhood the desire for power stirred in me; for the people of the North are made to rule the folk of the world, and it is not for the daughter of a sea-king to sit meekly in a temple and accept the offerings of fruit and flowers and human sacrifices!"

She stopped for a moment, eyes blazing. Truly, she looked a worthy daughter of the fierce race she claimed.

"Well," she continued, "there was one who loved me—Kotar, a young chief. With him I plotted and at last I rose and flung off the yoke of old Gothan. That was a wild season of plot and counter-plot, intrigue, rebellion and red carnage! Men and women died like flies and the streets of Bal-Sagoth ran red—but in the end we triumphed, Kotar and I! The dynasty of Angar came to an end on a night of blood and fury and I reigned supreme on the Isle of the Gods, queen and goddess!"

She had drawn herself up to her full height, her beautiful face alight with fierce pride, her bosom heaving. Turlogh was at once fascinated and repelled. He had seen rulers rise and fall, and between the lines of her brief narrative he read the bloodshed and carnage, the cruelty and the treachery—sensing the basic ruthlessness of this girl-woman.

"But if you were queen," he asked, "how is it that we find you hunted through the forests of your domain by this monster, like a runaway serving wench?"

Brunhild bit her lip and an angry flush mounted to her cheeks. "What is it that brings down every woman, whatever her station? I trusted a man—Kotar, my lover, with whom I shared my rule. He betrayed me; after I had raised him to the highest power in the kingdom, next to my own, I found he secretly made love to another girl. I killed them both!"

Turlogh smiled coldly: "You are a true Brunhild! And then what?"

"Kotar was loved by the people. Old Gothan stirred them up. I made my greatest mistake when I let that old one live. Yet I dared not slay him. Well, Gothan rose against me, as I had risen against him, and the warriors rebelled, slaying those who stood faithful to me. Me they took captive but dared not kill; for after all, I was a goddess, they believed. So before dawn, fearing the people would change their minds again and restore me to power, Gothan had me taken to the lagoon which separates this part of the island from the other. The priests rowed me across the lagoon and left me, naked and helpless, to my fate."

"And that fate was—this?" Athelstane touched the huge carcass with his foot.

Brunhild shuddered. "Many ages ago there were many of these monsters on the isle, the legends say. They warred on the people of Bal-Sagoth and devoured them by hundreds. But at last all were exterminated on the main part of the isle and on this side of the lagoon all died but this one, who has abided here for centuries. In the old times hosts of men came against him, but he was greatest of all the devil-birds and he slew all who fought him. So the priests made a god of him and left this part of the island to him. None comes here except those brought as sacrifices—as I was. He could not cross to the main island, because the lagoon swarms with great sharks which would rend even him to pieces.

"For a while I eluded him, stealing among the trees, but at last he spied me out—and you know the rest. I owe my lives to you. Now what will you do with me?"

Athelstane looked at Turlogh and Turlogh shrugged. "What can we do, save starve in this forest?"

"I will tell you!" the girl cried in a ringing voice, her eyes blazing anew to the swift working of her keen brain. "There is an old legend among this people—that men of iron will come out of the sea and the city of Bal-Sagoth will fall! You, with your mail and helmets, will seem as iron men to these folk who know nothing of armor! You have slain Groth-golka the bird-god—you have come out of the sea as did I—the people will

look on you as gods. Come with me and aid me to win back my kingdom! You shall be my right-hand men and I will heap honors on you! Fine garments, gorgeous palaces, fairest girls shall be yours!"

Her promises slid from Turlogh's mind without leaving an imprint, but the mad splendor of the proposal intrigued him. Strongly he desired to look on this strange city of which Brunhild spoke, and the thought of two warriors and one girl pitted against a whole nation for a crown stirred the utmost depths of his knight-errant Celtic soul.

"It is well," said he. "And what of you, Athelstane?"

"My belly is empty," growled the giant. "Lead me to where there is food and I'll hew my way to it, through a horde of priests and warriors."

"Lead us to this city!" said Turlogh to Brunhild.

"Hail!" she cried flinging her white arms high in wild exultation. "Now let Gothan and Ska and Gelka tremble! With ye at my side I'll win back the crown they tore from me, and this time I'll not spare my enemy! I'll hurl old Gothan from the highest battlement, though the bellowing of his demons shake the very bowels of the earth! And we shall see if the god Gol-goroth shall stand against the sword that cut Groth-golka's leg from under him. Now hew the head from this carcass that the people may know you have overcome the bird-god. Now follow me, for the sun mounts the sky and I would sleep in my own palace tonight!"

THE three passed into the shadows of the mighty forest. The interlocking branches, hundreds of feet above their heads, made dim and strange such sunlight as filtered through. No life was seen except for an occasional gayly hued bird or a huge ape. These beasts, Brunhild said, were survivors of another age, harmless except when attacked. Presently the growth changed somewhat, the trees thinned and became smaller and fruit of many kinds was seen among the branches. Brunhild told the warriors which to pluck and eat as they walked along. Turlogh was quite satisfied with the fruit, but Athelstane, though he ate enormously, did so with scant relish. Fruit was light sustenance to a man used to such solid stuff as formed his regular diet. Even among the gluttonous Danes the Saxon's capacity for beef and ale was admired.

"Look!" cried Brunhild sharply, halting and pointing. "The spires of Bal-Sagoth!"

Through the trees the warriors caught a glimmer, white and shimmery, and apparently far away. There was an illusory impression of towering battlements, high in the air, with fleecy clouds hovering about them. The sight woke strange dreams in the mystic deeps of the Gael's soul, and even Athelstane was silent as if he too were struck by the pagan beauty and mystery of the scene.

So they progressed through the forest, now losing sight of the distant city as tree tops obstructed the view, now seeing it again. And at last they came out on the low shelving banks of a broad blue lagoon and the full beauty of the landscape burst upon their eyes. From the opposite shores the country sloped upward in long gentle undulations which broke like great slow waves at the foot of a range of blue hills a few miles away. These wide swells were covered with deep grass and many groves of trees, while miles away on either hand there was seen curving away into the distance the strip of thick forest which Brunhild said belted the whole island. And among those blue

dreaming hills brooded the age-old city of Bal-Sagoth, its white walls and sapphire towers clean-cut against the morning sky. The suggestion of great distance had been an illusion.

"Is that not a kingdom worth fighting for?" cried Brunhild, her voice vibrant. "Swift now—let us bind this dry wood together for a raft. We could not live an instant swimming in that shark-haunted water."

At that instant a figure leaped up from the tall grass on the other shore—a naked, brow-skinned man who stared for a moment, agape. Then as Athelstane shouted and held up the grim head of Grothgolka, the fellow gave a startled cry and raced away like an antelope.

"A slave Gothan left to see if I tried to swim the lagoon," said Brunhild with angry satisfaction. "Let him run to the city and tell them—but let us make haste and cross the lagoon before Gothan can arrive and dispute our passage."

Turlogh and Athelstane were already busy. A number of dead trees lay about and these they stripped of their branches and bound together with long vines. In a short time they had built a raft, crude and clumsy, but capable of bearing them across the lagoon. Brunhild gave a frank sigh of relief when they stepped on the other shore.

"Let us go straight to the city," said she. "The slave has reached it ere now and they will be watching us from the walls. A bold course is our only one. Thor's hammer, but I'd like to see Gothan's face when the slave tells him Brunhild is returning with two strange warriors and the head of him to whom she was given as sacrifice!"

"Why did you not kill Gothan when you had the power?" asked Athelstane.

She shook her head, her eyes clouding with something akin to fear: "Easier said than done. Half the people hate Gothan, half love him, and all fear him. The most ancient men of the city say that he was old when they were babes. The people believe him to be more god than priest, and I myself have seen him do terrible and mysterious things, beyond the power of a comman man.

"Nay, when I was but a puppet in his hands, I came only to the outer fringe of his mysteries, yet I have looked on sights that froze my blood. I have seen strange shadows flit along the midnight walls, and groping along black subterranean corridors in the dead of night I have heard unhallowed sounds and have felt the presence of hideous beings. And once I heard the grisly slavering bellowings of the nameless Thing Gothan has chained deep in the bowels of the hills on which rests the city of Bal-Sagoth."

Brunhild shuddered.

"There are many gods in Bal-Sagoth, but the greatest of all is Gol-goroth, the god of darkness who sits forever in the Temple of Shadows. When I overthrew the power of Gothan, I forbade men to worship Gol-goroth, and made the priests hail, as the one true diety, A-ala, the daughter of the sea—myself. I had strong men take heavy hammers and smite the image of Gol-goroth, but their blows only shattered the hammers and gave strange hurts to the men who wielded them. Gol-goroth was indestructible and showed no mar. So I desisted and shut the doors of the Temple of Shadows which were opened only when I was overthrown and Gothan, who had been skulking in the secret places of the city, came again into his own. Then Gol-goroth reigned again in his full terror and the idols of A-ala were overthrown in the Temple of the Sea, and the priests of A-ala died howling on the red-stained altar before the black god. But now we shall see!"

"Surely you are a very Valkyrie," muttered Athelstane. "But three against a nation is great odds—especially such a people as this, who must assuredly be all witches and sorcerers."

"Bah!" cried Brunhild contemptuously, "there are many sorcerers, it is true, but though the people are strange to us, they are mere fools in their own way, as are all nations. When Gothan led me captive down the streets they spat on me. Now watch them turn on Ska, the new king Gothan has given them, when it seems my star rises again! But now we approach the city gates—be bold but wary!"

THEY had ascended the long swelling slopes and were not far from the walls which rose immensely upward. Surely, thought Turlogh, heathen gods built this city. The walls seemed of marble and with their fretted battlements and slim watch-towers, dwarfed the memory of such cities as Rome, Damascus and Byzantium. A broad white winding road led up from the lower levels to the plateau before the gates and as they came up this road, the three adventurers felt hundreds of hidden eyes fixed on them with fierce intensity. The walls seemed deserted; it might have been a dead city. But the impact of those staring eyes was felt.

Now they stood before the massive gates, which to the amazed eyes of the warriors seemed to be of chased silver.

"Here is an emperor's ransom!" muttered Athelstane, eyes ablaze. "Thor's blood, if we had but a stout band of reavers and a ship to carry away the plunder!"

"Smite on the gate and then step back, lest something fall upon you," said Brunhild, and the thunder of Turlogh's ax on the portals woke the echoes in the sleeping hills.

The three then fell back a few paces and suddenly the mighty gates swung inward and a strange concourse of people stood revealed. The two white warriors looked on a pageant of barbaric grandeur. A throng of tall, slim, brown-skinned men stood in the gates. Their only garments were loin-cloths of silk, the fine work of which contrasted strangely with the near-nudity of the wearers. Tall waving plumes of many colors decked their heads, and armlets and leglets of gold and silver, crusted with gleaming gems, completed their ornamentation. Armor they wore none, but each carried a light shield on his left arm, made of hard wood, highly polished, and braced with silver. Their weapons were slim-bladed spears, light hatchets and slender daggers, all bladed with fine steel. Evidently these warriors depended more on speed and skill than on brute force.

At the front of this band stood three men who instantly commanded attention. One was a lean hawk-faced warrior, almost as tall as Athelstane, who wore about his neck a great golden chain from which was suspended a curious symbol in jade. One of the other men was young, evil-eyed; an impressive riot of colors in the mantle of parrot-feathers which swung from his shoulders. The third man had nothing to set him apart from the rest save his own strange personality. He wore no mantle, bore no weapons. His only garment was a plain loin-cloth. He was very old; he alone of all the throng was bearded, and his beard was as white as the long hair which fell about his shoulders. He was very tall and very lean, and his great dark eyes blazed as from a hidden fire. Turlogh knew without being told that this man was Gothan, priest of the Black God. The ancient exuded a very aura of age and mystery. His great eyes were like windows of some forgotten temple, behind which passed

like ghosts his dark and terrible thoughts. Turlogh sensed that Gothan had delved too deep in forbidden secrets to remain altogether human. He had passed through doors that had cut him off from the dreams, desires and emotions of ordinary mortals. Looking into those unwinking orbs Turlogh felt his skin crawl, as if he had looked into the eyes of a great serpent.

Now a glance upward showed that the walls were thronged with silent dark-eyed folk. The stage was set; all was in readiness for the swift, red drama. Turlogh felt his pulse quicken with fierce exhilaration and Athelstane's eyes began to glow with ferocious light.

Brunhild stepped forward boldly, head high, her splendid figure vibrant. The white warriors naturally could not understand what passed between her and the others, except as they read from gestures and expressions, but later Brunhild narrated the conversation almost word for word.

"Well, people of Bal-Sagoth," said she, spacing her words slowly, "what words have you for your goddess whom you mocked and reviled?"

"What will you have, false one?" exclaimed the tall man, Ska, the king set up by Gothan; "you who mocked at the customs of our ancestors, defied the laws of Bal-Sagoth, which are older than the world, murdered your lover and defiled the shrine of Gol-goroth? You were doomed by law, king and god and placed in the grim forest beyond the lagoon——"

"And I, who am likewise a goddess and greater than any god," answered Brunhild mockingly, "am returned from the realm of horror with the head of Groth-golka!"

At a word from her, Athelstane held up the great beaked head, and a low whispering ran about the battlements, tense with fear and bewilderment.

"Who are these men?" Ska bent a worried frown on the two warriors.

"*They are iron men who have come out of the sea!*" answered Brunhild in a clear voice that carried far; "the beings who have come in response to the old prophecy, to overthrow the city of Bal-Sagoth, whose people are traitors and whose priests are false!"

At these words the fearful murmur broke out afresh all up and down the line of the walls, till Gothan lifted his vulture-head and the people fell silent and shrank before the icy stare of his terrible eyes.

Ska glared bewilderedly, his ambition struggling with his superstitious fears.

Turlogh, looking closely at Gothan, believed that he read beneath the inscrutable mask of the old priest's face. For all his inhuman wisdom, Gothan had his limitations. This sudden return of one he thought well disposed of, and the appearance of the white-skinned giants accompanying her, had caught Gothan off his guard, Turlogh believed, rightly. There had been no time to properly prepare for their reception. The people had already begun to murmur in the streets against the severity of Ska's brief rule. They had always believed in Brunhild's divinity; now that she returned with two tall men of her own hue, bearing the grim trophy that marked the conquest of another of their gods, the people were wavering. Any small thing might turn the tide either way.

"People of Bal-Sagoth!" shouted Brunhild suddenly, springing back and flinging her arms high, gazing full into the faces that looked down at her, "I bid you avert your doom before it is too late! You cast me out and spat on me; you turned to darker gods than I! Yet all

this will I fogive if you return and do obeisance to me! Once you reviled me—you called me bloody and cruel! True, I was a hard mistress—but has Ska been an easy master? You said I lashed the people with whips of rawhide—has Ska stroked you with parrot feathers?

"A virgin died on my altar at the full tide of each moon—but youths and maidens die at the waxing and the waning, the rising and the setting of each moon, before Gol-goroth, on whose altar a fresh human heart forever throbs! Ska is but a shadow! Your real lord is Gothan, who sits above the city like a vulture! Once you were a mighty people; your galleys filled the seas. Now you are a remnant and that is dwindling fast! Fools! You will all die on the altar of Gol-goroth ere Gothan is done and he will stalk alone among the silent ruins of Bal-Sagoth!

"Look at him!" her voice rose to a scream as she lashed herself to an inspired frenzy, and even Turlogh, to whom the words were meaningless, shivered. "Look at him where he stands there like an evil spirit out of the past! He is not even human! I tell you, he is a foul ghost, whose beard is dabbled with the blood of a million butcheries—an incarnate fiend out of the mist of the ages come to destroy the people of Bal-Sagoth!

"Choose now! Rise up against that ancient devil and his blasphemous gods, receive your rightful queen and deity again and you shall regain some of your former greatness. Refuse, and the ancient prophesy shall be fulfilled and the sun will set on the silent and crumbled ruins of Bal-Sagoth!"

FIRED by her dynamic words, a young warrior with the insignia of a chief sprang to the parapet and shouted: "Hail to A-ala! Down with the bloody gods!"

Among the multitude many took up the shout and steel clashed as a score of fights started. The crowd on the battlements and in the streets surged and eddied, while Ska glared, bewildered. Brunhild, forcing back her companions who quivered with eagerness for action of some kind, shouted: "Hold! Let no man strike a blow yet! People of Bal-Sagoth, it has been a tradition since the beginning of time that a king must fight for his crown! Let Ska cross steel with one of these warriors! If Ska wins, I will kneel before him and let him strike off my head! If Ska loses, then you shall accept me as your rightful queen and goddess!"

A great roar of approval went up from the walls as the people ceased their brawls, glad enough to shift the responsibility to their rulers.

"Will you fight, Ska?" asked Brunhild, turning to the king mockingly. "Or will you give me your head without further argument?"

"Slut!" howled Ska, driven to madness, "I will take the skulls of these fools for drinking-cups, and then I will rend you between two bent trees!"

Gothan laid a hand on his arm and whispered in his ear, but Ska had reached the point where he was deaf to all but his fury. His achieved ambition, he had found, had faded to the mere part of a puppet dancing on Gothan's string; now even the hollow bauble of his kingship was slipping from him and this wench mocked him to his face before his people. Ska went, to all practical effects, stark mad.

Brunhild turned to her two allies. "One of you must fight Ska."

"Let me be the one!" urged Turlogh, eyes dancing with eager battle-lust. "He has the look of a man quick as a wildcat, and Athelstane, while a very bull for

strength, is a thought slow for such work——"

"Slow!" broke in Athelstane reproachfully. "Why, Turlogh, for a man my weight——"

"Enough," Brunhild interrupted. "He must choose for himself."

She spoke to Ska, who glared red-eyed for an instant, then indicated Athelstane, who grinned joyfully, cast aside the bird's head and unslung his sword. Turlogh swore and stepped back. The king had decided that he would have a better chance against this huge buffalo of a man who looked slow, than against the black-haired tigerish warrior, whose cat-like quickness was evident.

"This Ska is without armor," rumbled the Saxon. "Let me likewise doff my mail and helmet so that we fight on equal terms——"

"No!" cried Brunhild. "Your armor is your only chance! I tell you, this false king fights like the play of summer lightning! You will be hard put to hold your own as it is. Keep on your armor, I say!"

"Well, well," grumbled Athelstane, "I will—I will. Though I say it is scarcely fair. But let him come on and make an end of it."

The huge Saxon strode ponderously toward his foe, who warily crouched and circled away. Athelstane held his great sword in both hands before him, pointed upward, the hilt somewhat below the level of his chin, in position to strike a blow to right or left, or parry a sudden attack.

Ska had flung away his light shield, his fighting-sense telling him that it would be useless before the stroke of that heavy blade. In his right hand he held his slim spear as a man holds a throwing-dart, in his left a light, keen-edged hatchet. He meant to make a fast, shifty fight of it, and his tactics were good. But Ska, having never encountered armor before, made his fatal mistake in supposing it to be apparel or ornament through which his weapons would pierce.

Now he sprang in, thrusting Athelstane's face with his spear. The Saxon parried with ease and instantly cut tremendously at Ska's legs. The king bounded high, clearing the whistling blade, and in midair he hacked down at Athelstane's bent head. The light hatchet shivered to bits on the Viking's helmet and Ska sprang back out of reach with a blood-lusting howl.

And now it was Athelstane who rushed with unexpected quickness, like a charging bull, and before that terrible onslaught Ska, bewildered by the breaking of his hatchet, was caught off his guard—flat-footed. He caught a fleeting glimpse of the giant looming over him like an overwhelming wave and he sprang in, instead of out, stabbing ferociously. That mistake was his last. The thrusting spear glanced harmlessly from the Saxon's mail, and in that instant the great sword sang down in a stroke the king could not evade. The force of that stroke tossed him as a man is tossed by a plunging bull. A dozen feet away fell Ska, king of Bal-Sagoth, to lie shattered and dead in a ghastly welter of blood and entrails. The throng gaped, struck silent by the prowess of that deed.

"Hew off his head!" cried Brunhild, her eyes flaming as she clenched her hands so that the nails bit into the palms. "Impale that carrion's head on your sword-point so that we may carry it through the city gates with us as token of victory!"

But Athelstane shook his head, cleansing his blade: "Nay, he was a brave man and I will not mutilate his corpse. It is no great feat I have done, for he was

naked and I full-armed. Else it is in my mind, the brawl had gone differently."

Turlogh glanced at the people on the walls. They had recovered from their astonishment and now a vast roar went up: "A-ala! Hail to the true goddess!" And the warriors in the gateway dropped to their knees and bowed their foreheads in the dust before Brunhild, who stood proudly erect, bosom heaving with fierce triumph. Truly, thought Turlogh, she is more than a queen—she is a shield woman, a Valkyrie, as Athelstane said.

Now she stepped aside and tearing the golden chain with its jade symbol from the dead neck of Ska, held it on high and shouted: "People of Bal-Sagoth, you have seen how your false king died before this golden-bearded giant, who being of iron, shows no single cut! Choose now—do you receive me of your own free will?"

"Aye, we do!" the multitude answered in a great shout. "Return to your people, oh mighty and all-powerful queen!"

Brunhild smiled sardonically. "Come," said she to the warriors; "they are lashing themselves into a very frenzy of love and loyalty, having already forgotten their treachery. The memory of the mob is short!"

Aye, thought Turlogh, as at Brunhild's side he and the Saxon passed through the mighty gates between files of prostrate chieftains; aye, the memory of the mob is very short. But a few days have passed since they were yelling as wildly for Ska the liberator—scant hours had passed since Ska sat enthroned, master of life and death, and the people bowed before his feet. Now—Turlogh glanced at the mangled corpse which lay deserted and forgotten before the silver gates. The shadow of a circling vulture fell across it. The clamor of the multitude filled Turlogh's ears and he smiled a bitter smile.

THE great gates closed behind the three adventurers and Turlogh saw a broad white street stretching away in front of him. Other lesser streets radiated from this one. The two warriors caught a jumbled and chaotic impression of great white stone buildings shouldering each other; of sky-lifting towers and broad stair-fronted palaces. Turlogh knew there must be an ordered system by which the city was laid out, but to him all seemed a waste of stone and metal and polished wood, without rime or reason. His baffled eyes sought the street again.

Far up the street extended a mass of humanity, from which rose a rhythmic thunder of sound. Thousands of naked, gayly plumed men and women knelt there, bending forward to touch the marble flags with their foreheads, then swaying back with an upward flinging of their arms, all moving in perfect unison like the bending and rising of tall grass before the wind. And in time to their bowing they lifted a monotoned chant that sank and swelled in a frenzy of ecstasy. So her wayward people welcomed back the goddess A-ala.

Just within the gates Brunhild stopped and there came to her the young chief who had first raised the shout of revolt upon the walls. He knelt and kissed her bare feet, saying: "Oh great king and goddess, thou knowest Zomar was ever faithful to thee! Thou knowest how I fought for thee and barely escaped the altar of Gol-goroth for thy sake!"

"Thou hast indeed been faithful, Zomar," answered Brunhild in the stilted language required for such occasions, "nor shall thy fidelity go unrewarded. Henceforth thou art commander of my own bodyguard." Then in a lower voice she added: "Gather a band from your own retainers and from those who have espoused my cause all along, and bring

them to the palace. I do not trust the people any more than I have to!"

Suddenly Athelstane, not understanding this conversation, broke in: "Where is the old one with the beard?"

Turlogh started and glanced around. He had almost forgotten the wizard. He had not seen him go—yet he was gone! Brunhild laughed ruefully.

"He's stolen away to breed more trouble in the shadows. He and Gelka vanished when Ska fell. He has secret ways of coming and going and none may stay him. Forget him for the time being; heed ye well—we shall have plenty of him anon!"

Now the chiefs brought a finely carved and highly ornamented palanquin carried by two strong slaves, and Brunhild stepped into this, saying to her companions: "They are fearful of touching you, but ask if you would be carried. I think it better that you walk, one on each side of me."

"Thor's blood!" rumbled Athelstane, shouldering the huge sword he had never sheathed, "I'm no infant! I'll split the skull of the man who seeks to carry me!"

And so up the long white street went Brunhild, daughter of Rane Thorfin's son in the Orkneys, goddess of the sea, queen of age-old Bal-Sagoth. Borne by two great slaves she went, with a white giant striding on each side with bared steel, and a concourse of chiefs following, while the multitude gave way to right and left, leaving a wide lane down which she passed. Golden trumpets sounded a fanfare of triumph, drums thundered, chants of worship echoed to the ringing skies. Surely in this riot of glory, this barbaric pageant of splendor, the proud soul of the North-born girl drank deep and grew drunken with imperial pride.

Athelstane's eyes glowed with simple delight at this flame of pagan magnificence, but to the black haired fighting-man of the West, it seemed that even in the loudest clamor of triumph, the trumpet, the drum and the shouting faded away into the forgotten dust and silence of eternity. Kingdoms and empires pass away like mist from the sea, thought Turlogh; the people shout and triumph and even in the revelry of Belshazzar's feast, the Medes break the gates of Babylon. Even now the shadow of doom is over this city and the slow tides of oblivion lap the feet of this unheeding race. So in a strange mood Turlogh O'Brien strode beside the palanquin, and it seemed to him that he and Athelstane walked in a dead city, through throngs of dim ghosts, cheering a ghost queen.

3. The Fall of the Gods

NIGHT had fallen on the ancient city of Bal-Sagoth. Turlogh, Athelstane and Brunhild sat alone in a room of the inner palace. The queen half reclined on a silken couch, while the men sat on mahogany chairs, engaged in the viands that slave-girls had served them on golden dishes. The walls of this room, as of all the palace, were of marble, with golden scrollwork. The ceiling was of lapis-lazuli and the floor of silver-inlaid marble tiles. Heavy velvet hangings decorated the walls and silken cushions; richly made divans and mahogany chairs and tables littered the room in careless profusion.

"I would give much for a horn of ale, but this wine is not sour to the palate," said Athelstane, emptying a golden flagon with relish. "Brunhild, you have deceived us. You let us understand it would take hard fighting to win back your crown—yet I have struck but one blow and my sword is thirsty as Turlogh's ax which has not drunk at all. We hammered on the gates and the people fell down and

worshipped with no more ado. And until a little while ago, we but stood by your throne in the great palace room, while you spoke to the throngs that came and knocked their heads on the floor before you—by Thor, never have I heard such chattering and jabbering! My ears ring till now—what were they saying? And where is that old conjurer Gothan?"

"Your steel will drink deep yet, Saxon," answered the girl grimly, resting her chin on her hands and eyeing the warriors with deep moody eyes. "Had you gambled with cities and crowns as I have done, you would know that seizing a throne may be easier than keeping it. Our sudden appearance with the bird-god's head, your killing of Ska, swept the people off their feet. As for the rest—I held audience in the palace as you saw, even if you did not understand, and the people who came in bowing droves were assuring me of their unswerving loyalty—ha! I graciously pardoned them all, but I am no fool. When they have time to think, they will begin to grumble again. Gothan is lurking in the shadows somewhere, plotting evil to us all, you may be sure. This city is honeycombed with secret corridors and subterranean passages of which only the priests know. Even I, who have traversed some of them when I was Gothan's puppet, know not where to look for the secret doors, since Gothan always led me through them blindfolded.

"Just now, I think I hold the upper hand. The people look on you with more awe than they regard me. They think your armor and helmets are part of your bodies and that you are invulnerable. Did you not note them timidly touching your mail as we passed through the crowd, and the amazement on their faces as they felt the iron of it?"

"For a people so wise in some ways they are very foolish in others," said Turlogh. "Who are they and whence came they?"

"They are so old," answered Brunhild, "that their most ancient legends give no hint of their origin. Ages ago they were a part of a great empire which spread out over the many isles of this sea. But some of the islands sank and vanished with their cities and people. Then the red-skinned savages assailed them and isle after isle fell before them. At last only this island was left unconquered, and the people have become weaker and forgotten many ancient arts. For lack of ports to sail to, the galleys rotted by the wharves which themselves crumbled into decay. Not in the memory of man has any son of Bal-Sagoth sailed the seas. At irregular intervals the red people descend upon the Isle of the Gods, traversing the seas in their long war-canoes which bear grinning skulls on the prows. Not far away as a Viking would reckon a sea-voyage, but out of sight over the sea rim lie the islands inhabited by these red men who centuries ago slaughtered the folk who dwelt there. We have always beaten them off; they can not scale the walls, but still they come and the fear of their raid is always hovering over the isle.

"But it is not them I fear; it is Gothan, who is at this moment either slipping like a loathly serpent through his black tunnels or else brewing abominations in one of his hidden chambers. In the caves deep in the hills to which his tunnels lead, he works fearful and unholy magic. His subjects are beasts—serpents, spiders, and great apes; and men—red captives and wretches of his own race. Deep in his grisly caverns he makes beasts of men and half-men of beasts, mingling bestial with human in ghastly creation. No man dares guess at the horrors that have

spawned in the darkness, or what shapes of terror and blasphemy have come into being during the ages Gothan has wrought his abominations; for he is not as other men, and has discovered the secret of life everlasting. He has at least brought into foul life one creature that even he fears, the gibbering, mowing, nameless Thing he keeps chained in the furtherest cavern that no human foot save his has trod. He would loose it against me if he dared. . . .

"But it grows late and I would sleep. I will sleep in the room next to this, which has no other opening than this door. Not even a slave-girl will I keep with me, for I trust none of these people fully. You shall keep this room, and though the outer door is bolted, one had better watch while the other sleeps. Zomar and his guardsmen patrol the corridors outside, but I shall feel safer with two men of my own blood between me and the rest of the city."

She rose, and with a strangely lingering glance at Turlogh, entered her chamber and closed the door behind her.

ATHELSTANE stretched and yawned. "Well, Turlogh," said he lazily, "men's fortunes are unstable as the sea. Last night I was the picked swordsman of a band of reavers and you a captive. This dawn we were lost outcasts springing at each other's throats. Now we are sword brothers and right-hand men to a queen. And you, I think, are destined to become a king."

"How so?"

"Why, have you not noticed the Orkney girl's eyes on you? Faith there's more than friendship in her glances that rest on those black locks and that brown face of yours. I tell you——"

"Enough," Turlogh's voice was harsh as an old wound stung him. "Women in power are white-fanged wolves. It was the spite of a woman that——" He stopped.

"Well, well," returned Athelstane tolerantly, "there are more good women than bad ones. I know—it was the intrigues of a woman that made you an outcast. Well, we should be good comrades. I am an outlaw, too. If I should show my face in Wessex I would soon be looking down on the countryside from a stout oak limb."

"What drove you out on the Viking path? So far have the Saxons forgotten the ocean-ways that King Alfred was obliged to hire Frisian rovers to build and man his fleet when he fought the Danes."

Athelstane shrugged his mighty shoulders and began whetting his dirk.

"I had a yearning for the sea even when I was a shock-headed child in Wessex. I was still a youth when I killed a young eorl and fled the vengeance of his people. I found refuge in the Orkneys and the ways of the Vikings were more to my liking than the ways of my own blood. But I came back to fight against Canute, and when England submitted to his rule, he gave me command of his house-carles. That made the Danes jealous because of the honor given a Saxon who had fought against them, and the Saxons remembered I had left Wessex under a cloud once, and murmured that I was overly-well favored by the conquerors. Well, there was a Saxon thane and a Danish jarl who one night at feast assailed me with fiery words and I forgot myself and slew them both.

"So England—was—again—barred—to—me. I—took—the—Viking—path—again——"

Athelstane's words trailed off. His hands slid limply from his lap and the

(Please turn to page 421)

OLD CITY OF JADE

By THOMAS H. KNIGHT

The story of a strange city in the South American jungles, whose inhabitants were immersed in a weird sleep

WE WERE in a beastly tight corner, a hopeless half-dozen of us flat on our faces in a shellhole, cut off, barraged, cold meat, about at the end of things, when I first met Cedric Lawrence Baxter.

I call it a shellhole, though really it was a crater into which a truck could duck and hide; but at that, not so deep that at any moment it could not be plowed and spattered a little deeper by one of the mortar bombs the Germans were so generously tossing at us.

I was a First Looey in those piping days of hate, and had been ordered out with a double handful of men to see what could be done about a few vicious machine-gun nests which were holding up, it seemed, the entire Allied armies. My men had dropped before those devilish guns like a pitiful swath of unripe grain tossed into the flicking knives of a giant reaper. Checked and beaten from our purpose, only six of us reached the doubtful haven of that shellhole. Every German gun in the country began potting us, which was the only objection we had to our habitating the crater.

It was a rather strategic position. From its vantage point we were able—when we could get in a shot—to tumble a gunner across his hot-barreled gun in nice fashion, and that was the very thing for which we had been ordered out.

Then some of the more ambitious Heinies climbed trees to get the odds of altitude against our sharpshooting, but that did not last long. At sniping, two—in fact six of us—could play, and we did. We dumped them out of their branches like lead-stuffed crows.

But it couldn't last long. All they had to do was to land one cannon-cracker in among us and—yes, we had reason to believe we were at the end of things all right.

"You guys can stay here an' wait to get all scattered around if you want to!" shouted Runt Ford with a blistering oath. "I'm goin'!" And before we could stop him he had gone over the rim of the crater in a last mad run. Not away from the enemy though! With fixed bayonet, a fixed expression on his face, a fixed purpose in his heart, he went at them!

Runt took perhaps three steps. A hail of metal twanged the air above our ears, over our crater; then the heavy whine of it stopped, waiting for the next enmaddened one of us to make the break.

But before any more of us decided upon a last rush across the machine-gun punctured spaces, our side reached up its sleeve and played an unexpected ace in the shape of a begoggled laddie flying a reckless Spad.

That chap showed the German marksmen to just what an art machine-gunnery could be developed. His Spad roared and plunged and twisted and dove and came and went, its twin guns all the while spurting a spray of death. By the time he had played his hand and had shot the obstinate nests empty of active members, we—the five of the shellhole—had taken advantage of the interruption and had tumbled into our own trenches.

But the lad of the flaming Vickers paid for his timely temerity. Some of those flying bullets had clipped him. He came down on edge; landed on his nose. We, staring wide-eyed, saw the dark smudge

"Cedric and I stood frozen still."

of smoke puff from the wreck; saw the merciless lick of the flame; saw his body dangling from the cockpit. Helpless and trapped, he and his wreck at once became the target of various scattered weapons.

So the five of the shellhole, backed by the full rifle-power of the whole trench, sallied forth again. We jerked him out of his sizzling coffin, and while the lead whistled its song about our ears and flaked up little puffs of dust at our feet, he came in to safety on my back.

Then we went out in force and took the trench the Spad had cleared of guns for us; and kept going, taking more trenches and more ground until our little sortie became a successful, big onward "push." And it all started with the reckless devil from the skies who popped in just in time to root out the nests and make the sacrifice play that allowed five desperate runners to make home.

THUS I met Cedric—a name that does not altogether typify a hombre who can shoot the eyelashes off an enemy while dropping out of the skies on the end of a wing — and we became fast friends. But we actually saw little of each other until we were home again.

And then, because I had a deep feeling for the long, unhandsome flyer who

had saved me from playing a harp before I was ready, and because, I suppose, he had a soft spot for the soldier on whose back he had traversed a certain wicked stretch of France, we kept in touch with each other. But little did I guess that some day he would lead me into as eery an experience, as strange, as almost unbelievable an adventure as any man ever experienced.

After the war I followed Cedric's peacetime flying triumphs with a great deal of pleasure. Often he would drop in to explain some new gadget to make his plane do this or that, or to talk over his next cross-country flight. When he flew across the top of South America, the first to do it, in splendid time, I was particularly proud.

"Cede, old boy," I congratulated him when next he popped in, "you've got Lindy spliced to the mast now, haven't you? Sure was a dandy flight. Thrown away your old hats?"

"Not from what you mean, Soldier," he answered, addressing me as he always did. "But my head's swelled all right from plans I have in it. And you, my boy, are in on 'em. Put your feet up on the table and I'll tell you about it."

"All right, shoot!" I agreed. And I heard about it; and in the hearing of it let myself in for the experience I consider the queerest, the most fantastic a man ever went into.

"When I left Quito, Ecuador, to fly over that South American wilderness," explained Cedric, his pipe going like a blast furnace, "I came, after about six hours, to the Orinoco. That shining river was a fine guide over the thick sea of waving trees and jungle, and for a while I followed it. Then I left it to cut across lots, and after a bit—I know I can find it again—I saw something I'm willing to bet eyes haven't looked on for—well, however long it is since that pre-historic civilization faded away."

"What was it?" I asked, at once interested.

"I passed over a deep, wide gulley," went on Cedric, "and about the middle of it, on the top of a cone-like hill, I saw a shining greenish square of something. I couldn't tell what it was. It seemed to be of about three or four acres.

"I circled over it and saw then that in the bottom of that valley was a town laid out in regular squares about the size of our city blocks, but I couldn't determine anything further. I couldn't get close enough. I couldn't, Soldier, get into the valley.

"All the air around there was clear, but the air in that valley was transparent to the point that the little town looked as though it were set in a spotless block of clear, clear crystal. And when I gave it another look I decided, Soldier me boy, that the green square on the top of the hill was a water-tank or reservoir."

"Why couldn't you find out?" I broke in. "What do you mean—you couldn't get into the valley?"

"Just exactly that. There's no air in that hollow. Or perhaps I should say the air's not right. The moment I dropped in below the level of the sides of the valley, it became hard breathing. The deeper I went the harder it got. I had to get out. It was just the same as trying for altitude without oxygen."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" I asked.

"A-h-h!" smiled Cedric, puffing great clouds from his pipe. "A timely question, my sharpshooter. I'm going to look into that valley. Pop in and pay that town a call. There's not supposed to be such high-grade civilization as that down there, but any village that sports a reservoir or a swimming-tank like that should

be worth looking into. And, Soldier, you shall go with me."

"Oh, I shall, shall I? Suppose I——"

"Listen. I have new style oxygen masks I was about ready to offer the government. We'll try 'em out. A mask a lot like the old army style with a small, easily carried tank of concentrated breath to go on your back. We'll drop into that valley and——"

"But—but—are there places to land? Isn't it all jungle?" I stalled.

"All around, yes. But in the valley there are fields."

"But why pick on me? You need another pilot. Or a navigator. I don't know a propeller from a tail spin. Get yourself an archeologist, a scientific dude——"

"Listen, Soldier. The malamute who goes with me slings a gat on each hip, a machine-gun on his back, and he knows how to use 'em. You're elected. I'll take one of your learned bozos next time, after you and I've shot up the town if that seems the right and proper thing to do. Who knows what we'll run into? I want some one along who can put a bullet twixt the peepers of those saber-toothed tigers we might find."

So about three weeks later I was seeing the top of South America from the enclosed cockpit of a fleet, sturdy plane, looking down upon those oceans and oceans of heavy jungle, and deciding that a forced landing would carry all the earmarks of being "just too bad." I was somewhat relieved to remember I had left my affairs at home in good shape.

Nor had Cedric forgotten the machine-gun he had threatened would be on my back. I chaffed him quite a bit about that unnecessary weight sticking out on the bow of our ship, but, like a schoolboy with a tin sword at his side hoping to find Indians or pirates or something up the next alley, the long awkward sky-bird only smiled and said it was there if we needed it, which we might. Before many hours would pass I was to be glad my staunch friend had played the boy and brought it along

WE REACHED the Orinoco toward the end of that first day out from Quito, and as the shades of night came upon us rested on its broad surface at the foot of a high tapering cliff that pierced into the heavens like a great finger. Among other things Cedric's plane was shod with a wheel-pontoon landing combination that here proved his ingenuity along these lines.

"Here's where we leave the river in the morning," Cedric had said as he sweetly put her down, "and cut due east for about two hundred miles. Then we'll keep our eyes peeled."

It was after about two hours flying next morning that, following Cedric's pointing finger, I looked down to see a great deep valley, in the center of which gleamed the greenish square of the reservoir. My heart was pumping hard within me as I made out down beyond the shining surface of the water a little symmetrical town. When Cedric pointed the nose of our brave ship, *The Hummingbird,* down into that valley of mystery, every fiber of my being responded to the excitement of the moment.

I felt a tickling in my throat, a shortness of breath, but I was too excited to give much thought to it until Cedric pointed to the masks hanging in readiness before us. Then I knew that he, too, was feeling the rarity of the atmosphere.

I opened the little cabin door and leaned out to watch that square come glimmering up to us, and almost watched too long. For, as I then hurriedly donned my mask, I was gasping for breath, almost suffocated. As Cedric had said, there *was* no air in that valley. Not

breathable air, at least. I turned the oxygen into my mask through the tap on my shoulder and drank deeply of it.

My pilot companion skimmed the top of the green surface. Then he shouted, his words echoing my decision: "It's not water. Solid. Looks like ice. A transparent rock. Or marble."

"Can you land on it?" I wanted to know, shouting back. "Only looks like about a hundred feet across. Look, Cede!" I cried, excitement taking me as we swept on and over the town. "It's made of the same stuff. See how it sparkles. Cede! We're unearthing something, all right! This place is inhabited. It's in up-to-the-minute preservation. Can you put her down on that small surface?"

I could see that Cedric shared my excitement. His hands gripped the wheel of the plane until the knuckles of his hands stood out in tight whiteness. Then my eyes turned again to the snug little town, a town of almost fairy beauty. The buildings, or homes, or whatever they were, appeared to be of only one story, low and squat, but the town was laid out in squares very much the size of our city blocks; the streets were clean.

"Must be sleeping or hiding," I shouted to Cedric as he swung again toward the square hill-top. "Think you can land?"

He paid no attention to me; so I took the hint and sat silent while my comrade, who certainly knew his joy-sticks, put our big crate safely down on that tricky landing-place. Almost stalling, almost pancaking, he managed to maintain just enough glide to put his wheels down on the near edge of the surface we had once believed was green water. We rolled along. The other edge and the immediate drop beyond came toward us quickly. Cedric ruddered his plane into a half-circle, thus gaining distance in which to stop, and on the opposite edge, the very edge, we came to rest.

"Whew!" our expressions through the glass of our masks said to each other. "Gosh! Close enough!"

He stopped his engine, and the sudden quieting of humming motor and singing wires and struts in the strange peace of that weird valley seemed doubly quiet. Then we turned our ship to be in readiness for a possible hurried take-off, and set our faces toward the long flight of green steps that led to the hushed city below. Silently we gazed into the valley; then, our hands instinctively settling upon the pistols at our hips, we faced each other.

It was mighty queer. Mighty queer. Why did we see no sign of life? No movement? Why hadn't some one heard us? Why weren't the streets already crowded with curious, staring natives of some race or another, instead of this strange, empty stillness?

"Soldier, my son," said Cedric, talking plainly but quietly through his mask, "something wrong here. Have they all fled? Did we scare 'em that much? Are they hiding from us—or *for* us? What do you say?"

"I say let's find out," I replied. "Pump a shell into your chambers, Cede, and let's go. I wouldn't miss the rest of this for anything on earth or anywhere else."

Without a word, Cedric started to descend the steps. I followed, my holster flaps open, my fingers ready to find my pistol butts.

IT WAS a long way down, but after a while, treading cautiously we were upon their streets, my own heart the noisiest thing I could hear. At once we could see that everything was in splendid preservation, seeming to be neither very old nor weather-worn. And yet there was still no sign of life.

But what a veritable fairy town we were in! Marble I had at first believed it all to be, but now I decided it was jade, all of that same greenish hue. The little houses — huts almost — all a-glitter beneath the sun. Then we turned the first corner into another street—and stopped dead in our tracks!

For there upon that street was life! There, before us, to be faced, to be dealt with, were natives. Either friend or foe they were, the important thing we must at once, and perhaps all too soon, find out.

Down the street a little, in the shade of the houses on our side, lay a native, a golden-bronzed Indian, fast asleep, a gaudy blanket across his chest. Half-way down the block, flat on his side enjoying the sun, lay a dog. On the opposite side, his head deep in the great basket of fruit against which he lolled as he sat, slept another native. Above and behind him, perched on a ledge over a door, I saw a great gorgeous parrot.

"Sleepy lot," muttered Cedric. "Must be siesta-ing. The watchdogs down here don't watch, do they? But we gotta wake 'em. Gotta find out things."

So like a pair of schoolboys out on a prank, we crowded behind the corner of a house as Cedric uttered a medium-sized "Hey!" Then another, a little larger "Hey!"

But neither dog nor parrot nor man ruffled a hair, waved a feather or flicked an eye. Cedric and I looked at each other. Through the mask I could see his wondering face. Mine, I know, was questioning, wondering. It felt white and bloodless. We were anxious, eager, excited. And in addition, some other feeling was beginning to grip us.

We shouted together then, each ready to bolt furiously if our voices brought too abrupt a response, but the sleepers slept on. We made ourselves conspicuous on the street then, our pistols in our hands. Cedric raised his weapon, and though I feared the sound of its fierce crash in that death-like quiet, I feared the sticky silence about me more.

The pistol roared, the echoes pounded back and forth across the street, but the four before us refused to hear.

"They're dead," I whispered, a light sweat on my brow. "They're dead. This is a city of the dead! Something's happened!"

"You're darn tootin', somethin's happened," laughed Cedric somewhat strangely. "However did you figure that out?" Then, quickly overcoming our little case of nerves, we started toward the man nearest us.

Cautiously we went, suspecting trickery, our pistols in readiness. As Cedric at last went down on a knee beside the native, I, remembering what I'd heard of these fellows and watching for a sudden jerking-forth of a short spear or a poison blow-pipe, stood close guard, my pistol ready to beat him to the kill.

"Dead!" said Cedric, straightening up.

"Dead?"

"Yes. Dead. Don't you see, Soldier? No oxygen in the valley; all wiped out. It's only our masks that let us live."

"Yes," I agreed, "but it couldn't have happened more than a few days ago." Then with a new, important thought striking me, "Cede, how long will our tanks last?"

"Hours. Come on. Let's see it all."

CEDRIC started on, but I, curious, perhaps morbid, knelt by the sleeper. I put my hand on his bronzed arm and jumped hastily back.

"Cede! Look here! Feel!" I commanded through the glass of my mask. I placed Cedric's fingers upon the silent one's arm, and saw him try to indent the flesh. I saw his fingers—as I had felt

mine—fruitlessly endeavor to make a depression in the iron-like flesh.

"Cede, we're dreaming. We're both crazy," I said excitedly, "or else nicely fooled. This isn't a man. This is an image. A painted iron or stone image."

"Not on your life! This is deeper than you and I imagine," argued Cedric. "He's real, but this atmosphere has done something to him. Preserved him wonderfully. When we go we'll take him along. Some one who understands these things ought to look into——"

"Cede!" I gasped. "Perhaps — perhaps—why of course, he's been that way a long time. Years! Hundreds!"

"Yes, by gum! Thousands! Heck, man! This sorta gets under your hide. Come on."

We paused as we passed those little houses to gaze inside, but we saw nothing more startling than a few lolling figures until we were half-way down the street.

And then in a dwelling different from the others in that it was built of a blue stone instead of the green, we saw a sight—a tableau of beauty too splendid for words.

The sun streamed in through a substance something like glass in an opening in the wall, to throw its crimson rays, as though it were a spotlight upon a Belasco stage, onto a couch. A couch draped in royal, colorful draperies. A couch around which sat and lay and lolled five or six beautiful handmaidens. A couch upon which lay the most exquisitely beautiful creature I have ever seen.

Cedric and I stood frozen still. My heart pounded. My eyes stared till they hurt. A thousand, perhaps ten thousand years may have elapsed since that vacuum-like valley full of death had descended upon these sleepers to slowly, gently suffocate them, and then to preserve them so mysteriously. And now, after all those long years, a gangling, homely aviator had brought an ignorant soldier to look upon them. Two unscientific idiots who now cursed their ignorance and their inability to appreciate properly the treasures of antiquity upon which they gazed.

Cedric and I slowly, reverently, stepped into the room. We were passing among royalty, we knew. Admiringly we gazed upon the splendid golden forms of the beautiful, lightly clad maidens. I stood by the royal bed and gazed deeply upon its mistress.

Not of Maya, not of Toltec blood was she. There was none of the heavy Aztec features or Indian aquilinity. This girl was ancient and of gilded flesh, but if it were not for her color would have passed as a present-day type of American womanhood—a thousand-year-dead golden Ayesha beyond even Rider Haggard's wildest dreams.

I felt Cedric's hand upon my arm. I followed him out, my knees unsteady, a great covering of perspiration all about me and beneath my mask. I saw Cedric lean against a house-front, saw him operate the tap of his oxygen tank. I regulated mine, and after I had cut off my supply a little, I felt somewhat better.

We crossed to the dog in the street, so life-like and sleepy-like in his death that I found myself lightly wondering if the fleas upon him were hard and flint-like, also. The flesh of the man with his head in the fruit was like that of his brother across the street. The fruit was more wonderful than I've ever seen, but like the flesh of the natives—hard as iron. The parrot above his head had one eye open. He looked without seeing at the two strange men from some other world, demons whose masked faces were not like his old master's.

I turned my oxygen off a bit more as we passed up that street, not especially

interested now in the open doors and the few lolling figures. A queer feeling had me by the throat; my head was swimming. I wanted to sit down to rest, to sleep — to sleep. But by that time we knew it was the death, the slow, gentle death of the valley, reaching out for us.

"Soldier," said Cedric wearily, "come on. Don't quit. Let's—let's get out. It—it's gettin' to us."

But we couldn't get out. Up on the corner he was the first to stagger and fall. I fell beside him. But what did it matter? Had we not found something of which the rest of the world could not even dream? Why not sink gently down and sleep peacefully in the heart of our find? Sleep is the tonic, the medicine for the weary, and I was weary.

Just before I dozed into deep oblivion I turned off my oxygen completely, too senseless to wonder if good old Cedric had done the same or why we were doing it. An old wizened bronzed man in a near doorway was the last thing I saw. An old fellow stretched out flat in his peaceful death — stretched out flat — flat——

I DON'T know how long I slept. The sun looked at about midday when next I awoke. I sat up straight to find I had thrown my mask partly off sometime during my heavy slumber. Cedric was lying flat on his back, still as death, his mask lifted from his nostrils. I reached out, found his pulse; then again my eyes sleepily rested on the old man before me.

Dreamily, still not caring to move, I watched that old man, absently pondering the fact that we were breathing and living without our masks, pondering whether to wake Cedric and move on or rest a little longer; wondering, too, about the feeling of heaviness in my lungs, the ache and prickle in my bones and very sinews.

My eyes must be bothering me, also, I decided, for they made me believe I had seen a shudder pass over the frame of the old man before me. All part of my lethargy, of course, I realized. And then—I saw his finger twitch!

I shook Cedric roughly. I was frightened. He awoke like a man doped. But I shook him fiercely, seeing as I shook a jerking of the fingers of the old man who had been asleep a thousand, or perhaps ten thousand, years.

"Cede!" I gasped, pointing, "he's awake. He's coming alive!"

"Who? What did you—you're crazy," murmured Cedric, sleepily. "Just plain drunk or——" Then he stopped, his words, or his oath of surprize, frozen on his lips.

Cedric rose to his knees, seeing with staring eyes the old man roll over on his side. Then we helped each other to our feet and went staggering along to make our escape. Up on top of the hill over that long flight of steps our great friendly plane was waiting. We hurried to get to it, eager to hear the roar of its motor again.

But we were too late. As we turned into that street again from which the long green steps led to the top of the hill and the *Humming-bird,* we ran into six or eight tall, splendid men of bronze and gold. They stood transfixed, their surprize even greater than ours. But only for a moment did their surprize stay them. Those almost naked fellows uttered one combined yell and showed us their heels. Then we hurried on, more strongly now, for the long stairway.

But, with courage returning, they waylaid us. Out from another street they poured to overwhelm us, to pinion my arms behind me, to make my still sleepy brain believe from their ferocity that it was "finis" for us.

A few high shouts. A lot of flourish-

ing of hands and arms, and then I saw that fast, desperate punishment was to be mine. My guards dropped away, leaving only two to hold me, a matter those two golden giants found a very simple task. Between them, at the length of their arms, I stood as helpless as a rabbit tacked on a door, facing a third man—the executioner.

That devil held a short spear in his hand. He measured the distance between us, drew his weapon back once, twice, as he gaged and sighted for my heart. Then for the third time he drew back his arm, the muscles rippling and tautening for the thrust. Foolishly, in my helplessness, I realized he'd hurl it right through me. I saw the muscles knot, closed my eyes.

Then I heard a scuffle, a gasp for breath, the crack of a heavy, friendly automatic. The fellow before me pitched flat on his face at my feet. Good old Cedric! Once an ace, always an ace. Again he had played a high card!

I fought then, but I might have saved my efforts. Awed as my guards certainly were by the magic of the thunder and the sudden death, yet they bravely held me tight. And next moment Cedric was again overpowered.

But his shot had for some reason or other changed their tactics. In their midst we were hurried back over the street to the blue house of the Princess. The man we had first found was gone now. The dog came to snap at our heels; the parrot was flapping his wings.

Then we were again in the presence of the beautiful girl and her attendants. Her warriors jabbered out their story, explaining to that gorgeous, now living Ayesha the facts concerning us as though they had merely napped for a minute or two to awaken and find us there; not as though they had slept a death sleep for years upon years, centuries upon centuries.

THE Princess did not like us. That was easy to see. Her expression was one of fear and distrust. Any mercy we may have expected from her womanly heart became quickly a hope lost.

She looked closely at Cedric, staring at his mask. Then one of the men stepped up and gingerly examined it.

"Take it off, Chingascook," cried Cedric. "I almost forgot the blasted thing was still there." He bent his head and shook it, and the native, seeing it fall away from the face behind it, jerked it off.

I watched the Princess. Watched her for the least sign of pleasure or kindness. A smile from her would be an eagerly clutched-at straw, for we knew that the next executioner who stepped up to heave a javelin would not have Cedric's pistol to contend with. They had us too securely now for that. But the face of the Princess showed no emotion. Her eyes were not kindly toward Cedric.

Then they jerked off my mask. And this time, after a long, long look—and I can say it with modesty for Cedric was, despite everything else about him, a very homely owl — the eyes of the Princess grew soft, her lovely mouth lost its harshness.

"Well, for the love of old razor blades!" approved Cedric heartily, "if you're not making a hit, Soldier my boy, you sheik!" But his slight hilarity was soon checked. These people had evidently been a race of fast thinkers. And now they carried this characteristic on, their little nap not changing them a trifle.

The Princess pointed to Cedric and gave a command. We were taken out on the street. They held poor old Cedric tight while I stared at it all, horror-eyed. Then another executioner stood before him, a spear in his hand, his muscles tensed.

"Don't! Stop!" I yelled, coming to my

senses at last. I struggled free, fighting mad. But before I could take a step, before I could draw a gun, they had me again. The devils! If I could only have got my gun in my hand! Two shots and Cedric would have been released. Then with his guns blazing, too, we could have——

Just a dream. We were helpless. I was jerked back. The executioner spread his feet wide again, balanced himself for the thrust. I closed my eyes. I couldn't watch it. Not watch poor old Cedric go out like——

Then another sudden shout. A multitude of shouts. Down the street came a running figure, pointing back over his shoulder as he came to the crest of the hill behind the town. At once all eyes turned to where, like a great winged insect, stood our plane.

The Princess and her wise men stood and stared. Then we started off toward it, Cedric being marshaled along in front while I walked, still held, by the side of the litter upon which the Princess was carried. Her eyes were upon me all the time, and after a little the man on my right released me and then I felt, in place of his, the soft, warm hand of the Princess snuggle into mine!

"Soldier, dear heart," sang out Cedric over his shoulder to me, still able to meet things with a laugh though we knew not what we went to next moment. "Soldier, this looks a little better. They're taking us up to find out what the old *Humming-bird* can be. If we get half a break, make it a whole one. If you get a hand loose, pull some of your old army stuff and put a bullet into each of my cops, won't you? If I can get my mitts on my gats I'll do the same for you, eh, what?"

"Nothing else, Cede," I called back, the Princess looking up with an amused smile. "If only we can get to our guns!"

After a while we stood by the great plane, our brains full of a single thought. If we could man the splendid craft and roll her over the edge she would float us to safety. All we needed was a half-minute of swift, free action. If I could keep them off for that little time, Cedric would have the engine roaring. I'd do it if I could! "Give me half a break," I muttered and prayed twixt clenched teeth, "and I'll——"

"Well, if the Queenie ain't taken to little Soldier like he wuz her long-lost soulmate," I heard Cedric say in laughing sarcasm, though it struck me queer again that a man with the sense Cedric had could see anything funny at such a time. "Soldier, is your brain working? Do you know you hold a cute li'l hand like a yap when a pistol butt cries out to you? Snap out of it!"

But I was not so completely asleep as it had looked to Cedric. I knew what I could do with an automatic, but I wanted no false starts. I was waiting for that moment when clean, fast action could turn any slight chance offered into a successful get-away. But I had action thrust upon me.

The Princess' litter had been carried near one of the *Humming-bird's* smooth wings. I stood beside her and watched a fellow come through the crowd to her carrying a large, heavy blade. A type of machete for jungle work. A knife, the keen edge of which was of copper, nicely tempered, a "lost" art in keeping with the "lost" tribe we had found.

He walked to the wing and without any more ado swung his arm for a blow. Cedric yelled and struggled to be free. I dropped my lady's lovely hand, took two fast steps toward the chopper, and swung my fist as heavily and straightly as I could. The blade went one way, the would-be finder-out of what a wing was made of the other.

Confusion, shouting, milling, a clos-

ing-in on us then, with knives and spears a-sparkle in the sun. I jerked my automatic and did to Cedric's guards what he said he'd do for me. And because I was busy about that business and was overlooking the guard who still held my left wrist, Cedric saved my life from the fellow's knife-thrust by living up to his promise.

Then Cedric, with a great bound or two, had gone—had ducked into the cabin of the plane and with all speed had set his spark and throttle and gadgets ready for motion. I heard his starter grinding the motor over as I raced for the plane. Then there came a sharp stinging in the back of my head, then—darkness.

I MUST have been unconscious for perhaps only a minute. I came back to my senses to see, first of all, that Cedric had gone. Gone! All I had to do to see what had become of him was to follow the eyes of the excited natives. The *Humming-bird* was off in the valley, a little above our level, headed for home.

There was silence on that square as they watched, fascinated, the great bird that had gone, taking one of their visitors with it. Then they saw me there sitting up, and some of them rushed to me. My hand still held my pistol, while beside me lay the spear that luckily must have hit me broadside on.

I sprang to my feet, drawing my other gun, and backing away. They'd never take me now if I could help it! A spear came hurtling. I ducked. Over my shoulder I heard the whiz of it. Then I plunked out a shot, and the javelin-hurler, tasting my lead, fell on his face. Another arm in that crowd now closely ringing me in and forcing me backward ever closer and closer to the edge, drew back for a throw. But I tossed first and the knees of another sagged and let him down.

"Devils!" I told them. "I'll teach you back numbers a thing or two 'fore you get me. You'll not take me!" Cedric was gone! Hard to believe—that! That Cedric would—desert! Out of the corner of my eye I saw the glisten of the sun on the wings of the speeding *Humming-bird.* "Crack!" spoke my Colt again. I took another pace back.

I was on the edge then, a smoking pistol in each hand. I'd stay there till the last shot. Then, when they rushed me, I'd go on over. A nice finish to my little archeological venture! A nice way out with a guy—Crack!—you'd called buddy —Crack!—off in the heavens headed for —Crack!—home!

I turned and glanced down into the depth of the valley. Ugh! Below me I saw a pile of white, gleaming bones. Circling over them I saw great birds. Some of the scavengers were down on the pile fighting, tearing. The latest victim, of course. And I—I would be the next. A white man, perhaps their first, to go their sacrificial way. To go plunging toward the hideous birds that, with these other brutes, had slept a long, long sleep to wake again to their beastly——

Then they came at me. I ducked and dodged and flung out my hot metal, kneeling on the edge of the bright surface, one foot over, ready to go.

Then a devilish roar behind me, a thunder of a million guns in the air, and the mass of humanity pushing me over the edge wilted and crumbled. Machine-gun fire!

I had forgotten the gun that Cedric, in what I had called foolishness, had mounted on the nose of the plane; had, in fact, in the hot moments and my desperate plight and determination to make every shot count, forgotten Cedric.

But now, as he swept over, I threw

out the empty clips from my pistols, inserted full ones, a fresh hope in my heart. Cedric roared on, swung around, came back. Slowly, once again, that big ship flopped in onto the small square and rolled to me. I raced toward it. Cedric appeared at the cabin door, guns in hands to cover my flight. Then, before I could prevent it, it had happened!

One of the Indians, anything but a coward—to give the devil his due in the face of mysterious happenings that must have been magic to him—came creeping under the fuselage and thrust his spear into Cedric's breast. Cedric fell back in the cabin and I made one more shot count on that prehistoric, thousand-year-old, dead-for-centuries murderer.

Then I sprang into the ship, dragged Cedric's body clear of the controls, took my place in the pilot's seat. I had watched Cedric operate the ship, of course; knew what this and that was for, but as for flying—a kite had always buffaloed me.

But now I gave that ship the gun, tore that valley loose with the roar of our exhausts, dropped that big, powerful ship off the edge of the hill-top. I lifted her, swung around, headed for where I believed the Orinoco to lie. With one hand on the wheel, I ripped open Cedric's tunic with the other. He was bleeding profusely. Was I to lose him now after all we'd gone through? But what could I do? Jungle beneath me! Good old Cedric, staunch companion, bleeding to death at my feet.

I held my handkerchief tightly against his wound, staunched it, steadied my great quivering bird as she hurled forward, and for the first time really realized what I had done. There I sat in behind the controls of the powerful plane, driving her, keeping her on even keel, feeling her answer the pressure of my finger tips, yet really knowing no more about flying than did the men of bronze back there on the hill-top. It frightened me. If she stalled, if we hit a pocket, if—if—oh, a thousand and one if's!—what should I do? And Cedric at my feet perhaps dying, perhaps—dead!

Then the silver of the great river catching the last flashes of the evening sun; and soon at full throttle I was over it. I eased down slowly, feeling my way, teaching myself the way down in a long glide. The river came up. Up! Up! Could I make it? I'd have to, or else—well, just as well a crash and the crocodiles as the spear through the body.

But I made it! A smooth one! And without waiting to anchor I turned to Cedric, then the medicine case, and in a little while I felt better about things; felt proud as punch about my air ability, thankful about Cedric.

We spent the night there. Next morning, with Cedric holding his own, I took off in a fashion I wished Cedric could have seen. Luck stayed with me. All day I — green — never with a wheel or joy-stick in my hand before, kept her going, and at the close of day again brought her in over Quito.

Tickled? Boy, that's not the word! I'd show 'em. "When they came out to greet us and found me operating that crate, wouldn't they shout?" I asked myself in my glee. Up came the field. Down we went. Easily. Nicely. A sweet glide. Man, I had it! What it took to run a plane I——

"Wham!" Something didn't work right. A "stall," I believe they call it. Not enough gliding angle. We went down flat, stood up on our nose, hung a while end on end, turned over.

I WAS in one bed, Cedric in the next some time after that, both decidedly the worse for rough treatment.

"Sorry I busted her up, Cede," I said for not the first time.

"Sorry nothing, idiot! Lots more where she came from. Soldier, you did yourself proud, but I'll have to teach you a bit before our next trip."

"Next! Next?"

"That's what I said. But say, Soldier, why did they, after all those years, come to life just when we sent in our card to 'em? Why did that suffocating something, that lack of proper air in that valley, lift away just when the butler announced us?"

"I've been thinking of that," I answered. "And it was because we *did* drop in, Cede. We stirred up the air. Our big old crate—gosh! I'm sorry she cracked up. I mean I'm sorry I cracked her up. Anyway, our crate opened up a current, started good air flowing in as we circled around. A breeze coming in did the rest."

"Right you are. That's my solution, too. No, I don't suppose we'll go back. I don't care for their funny little ways. But don't forget, Soldier, that you and I know; that you and I've seen; that you and I've been entertained by, in fact, down there somewhere east of the Orinoco, a tribe that slept for a thousand years or more. A race of handsome, splendid men, and beautiful, beautiful—my gosh! Soldier, wasn't your sweetie a gorgeous 1000 B. C. flapper?"

SATAN'S CIRCUS

By ELEANOR SMITH

A grim, tragic tale of the strange horror that surrounded the wife of the circus-owner

I ONCE asked a circus artist, whom I knew to have worked at one time with the Circus Brandt, whether or not he had enjoyed traveling with this well-known show. His reply was a curious one. Swiftly distorting his features into a hideous grimace, he spat violently upon the floor. Not another word would he say. My curiosity was, however, aroused, and I went next to an old Continental clown, now retired, who had the reputation of knowing every European circus as well as he knew his own pocket.

"The Circus Brandt?" he said thoughtfully. "Well, you know, the Brandts are queer people, and have an odd reputation. They are Austrian, and their own country-people call them gipsies, by which they mean nomads, for the Brandts never pitch in their own land but wander the whole world over as though the devil himself were at their heels. In fact, some call them Satan's Circus."

"I thought," I said, "that the Circus Brandt was supposed to be a remarkably fine show?"

"It is," he said, and lit his pipe; "it's expensive, ambitious, showy, well run. In their way these people are artists, and deserve more success than they have had. It's hard to say why they're so unpopular, but the fact remains that no one will stay with them more than a few months, and, what's more, wherever they go, India, Australia, Rumania, Spain, or Africa, they leave behind them a nasty, unpleasant sort

"Suddenly there was tumult in the peaceful cage."

of reputation as regards unpaid bills, which," he added, blowing smoke into the air, "is odd, for the Brandts are rich."

"How many Brandts are there?" I inquired, for I wished to know more about Europe's most elusive circus.

"You ask too many questions," said he, "but, this being my last reply to them, I don't mind telling you that there are two, and that they are man and wife. Carl and Lya. The lady is a bit of a mystery, but if you ask my opinion I would say that she is of Mexican blood, that she was at some time or other a charmer of snakes, and that of the two, she is on the whole the worse, although that is saying a good deal. However, all this is pure guess-work on my part, although, having seen her, I can tell you that she's a handsome piece, still a year or two on the right side of forty. And now," he said firmly, "I will speak no more of the Circus Brandt."

And we talked instead of Sarrasani, of Krone, of Carmo, and of Hagenbeck.

A year passed, and I forgot the Circus Brandt, which no doubt during this period of time wandered from Tokio to San Francisco and Belgrade up to Stockholm and back again as though the devil himself were at its heels.

And then I met an old friend, a famous juggler, whom I had not seen for many months. I offered him a drink and asked him where he had been since our last meeting. He laughed and said that he

had been in hell. I told him I was not much of a hand at riddles. He laughed again.

"Oh, hell," he said, "perhaps that's an exaggeration. But anyhow I've been as near to it as ever I want to. I've been touring with the Circus Brandt."

"The Circus Brandt?"

"Exactly. The Balkan states, Spain, North Africa. Then Holland and Belgium, and finally France. I cleared out in France. If they'd doubled my salary, I'd not have stayed with them."

"Is the Circus Brandt, then," I asked, "as rough as all that?"

"Rough?" he said. "No, it's not rough. I can stick roughness. What I can't stand, however, is working with people who give me the creeps. Now you're laughing, and I'm not surprized, but I can assure you that I've lain awake at night in my wagon sweating with fear, and I'm by no means a fanciful chap."

By this time I was keenly interested.

"Please tell me," I asked, "what it was that frightened you so much."

"That I can't do," he replied, and ordered another drink, "for the fact is that I, personally, was not treated badly during the tour. The Brandts were very civil to me—too civil, in fact, for they'd ask me into their wagon sometimes for a chat between shows, and I hated going—it gave me goose-flesh down my back. Somehow—and you'll laugh again, I know—it was like sitting there talking to two big cats that were just waiting to pounce after they'd finished playing with you. I swear I believed, at the time, that Carl and Lya could see in the dark. Now, of course, that's ridiculous, and I know it, but I still get the creeps when I think about them. I must have been nervy, over-tired, you know, at the time."

I asked whether any one else at the circus had been similarly affected by the Brandts, and he wrinkled his brows, trying to remember, with obvious distaste, any further details of his tour.

"There's one thing that happened so that all could see," he remarked after a pause, "and that was in a wild part of Rumania, somewhere near the Carpathian mountains. We were passing through a little village, on our way to a town a few miles distant, and the peasants came flocking out to watch us pass, which was, of course, only natural, for the show is a very fine one. Then, in the village street, a van stuck, and the Brandts came out of their big living-wagon to see what had happened."

"Well?" I asked, for he paused again.

"Well, it was funny, that's all. They scattered like rabbits — rushed into their cottages and banged the doors. The wagon was shoved out of the rut and we went on, but in the next village there was no sign of life, for everything was deserted and the doors were barred. But on each door was nailed a wreath of garlic-flowers."

"Anything else?" I asked, for he had relapsed into silence.

"Oh, one little thing I remembered noticing. The menagerie. The Brandts seldom bother to inspect that part of the show. They're too busy about the ring and the ticket-office. But one day she—Madam Brandt—had to go through the horse-tent and the menagerie to find some agent who was talking to the boys there. It really was a bit odd—the noise was blood-curdling. It was as though the lions and tigers were frightened; not angry, you know, or roaring for their food, but quite a different sort of row. And, when she had gone, the horses were sweating. I felt 'em myself, and it was a chilly day."

"Really," I said, "it's time you came back."

"Oh," he replied, "I don't expect you to believe me. Why should you? I

wouldn't have talked if you hadn't asked me about the Circus Brandt. I'd just have said I was glad to be home. But as you asked me . . . oh, well, one day I'll tell you why I left them in France. It's not a pretty story. But I won't tell it tonight. I avoid the Brandts as a bedtime topic — I've been dreaming about them lately."

2

IT TOOK me some time to coax the juggler's tale from him. One morning, however, as we were walking along Unter den Linden in pale but radiant spring sunshine he consented to tell it. Translated into English, this is the story:

While the Circus Brandt was touring Northern Africa, when it was in fact only a few days from Tangier, a man arrived asking for work. He was, he said, an Alsatian, and had been a stoker, but his ship had abandoned him at Tangier and he had been seeking a job ever since. This man was interviewed by Carl Brandt himself, who had been accosted by him on the lot. They were a curiously contrasted pair as they stood talking together outside the steps of the Brandt's palatial living-wagon. The Alsatian was fair, a big, handsome young man with thick blond hair, a tanned skin, and honest, rather stupid, blue eyes. Carl Brandt was tall, too, but emaciated, wasted, and swarthy dark; he had a smooth darting black head like a snake's head; his long face was haggard, and yellow as old ivory; he wore a tiny dark Imperial beard; his black eyes were feverishly alive in heavy purple hollows and his teeth were sharp and broken and rotten. He was said to drug, and indeed he had very much the appearance of an addict. While the two men were talking, the door of the wagon opened and Madam Brandt appeared on the threshold asking her husband what the stranger wanted of him. She herself was incidentally a remarkably handsome woman, although no longer young. She was powerfully but gracefully made, with quantities of shining blue-black hair, delicate features, oblique, heavy-lidded eyes, and one of those opaque white skins that always look like milk. She had no color, but was all black and white. Even her lips were pale, not being painted, and her face was heart-shaped against the shadow of her dark hair. She wore white in hot countries and black in the North, but somehow one never noticed that she was not dressed in colors. She seldom looked at the person to whom she was talking, so that when she did it was rather a shock. Her voice was low, and she never showed her teeth, making one imagine that they must be bad, like her husband's.

Both Brandts stayed talking to the Alsatian for about ten minutes in the hot sunshine. It was impossible to eavesdrop, but once the Alsatian was heard reiterating rather warmly that he was a stoker by profession. Finally, however, Carl Brandt took the man off to the head keeper of the menagerie and said that he was to be given work. The Alsatian, for his part, said that his name was Anatole and that he was used to rough jobs. Soon afterward the circus went on toward Tunis.

The new hand, Anatole, was a good-natured, genial, simple fellow who soon became popular not only with the tent-men and grooms but also with the more democratic of the performers, who amused themselves, during the tedium of long "jumps," by making him sing to them, for he had a rich and beautiful voice. Generally he sang German lieder or long-forgotten French music-hall songs, but sometimes he favored them with snatches of roaring, racy, impudent ballads couched in an *argot* with which they were every one unfamiliar. On one occasion, before the evening show, when

Anatole was shouting one of these coarsely cheerful songs inside the Big Top the flap was suddenly opened to reveal Madam Brandt's pale watchful face in the aperture.

Instantly, although some of the small audience had not seen her, a curious subtle discomfort fell upon the gay party. Anatole, whose back was turned toward the entrance, immediately became aware of some strain or tension among his listeners, and wheeling round, stopped abruptly in the middle of a bar. The little group scrambled awkwardly to its feet.

Madam Brandt murmured in her low voice:

"Don't let me interfere with your concert, my friends. Go on, you"—to Anatole—"that's a lively song you were singing. Where did you pick it up?"

Anatole, standing respectfully before her, was silent. Madam Brandt did not look at him or seem to concern herself with him in any way, but sent her oblique eyes roving over the empty seats of the great tent, yet somehow, in some curious way, it became obvious to her listeners that she was stubbornly determined to drag from him an answer.

Anatole at length muttered:

"I learned the song, Madam, on board a Portuguese fruit-trader many years ago."

Madam Brandt made no sign of having heard him speak.

After this incident, however, she began to employ the odd hand on various jobs about her own living-wagon with the result that he had less time to sing and not much time even for his work in the menagerie. Anatole, good-humored and jovial as he was, soon conceived a violent dislike of the proprietress which he took no pains to hide from his friends, who were incidentally in hearty agreement with him on this point. Every one hated the Brandts—many feared them.

The circus crossed to Spain and began to tour Andalusia. Several performers left, new acts were promptly engaged. Carl Brandt had always found it easy to rid himself of artists. Ten minutes before the show was due to open he would send for some unlucky trapezist and pointing to the man's apparatus, complicated and heavy, slung up to one of the big poles, he would say casually:

"I want you to move that to the other side of the tent before the show."

The artist would perhaps laugh, thinking the director was making some obscure joke.

Brandt would then continue, gently: "You had better hurry, don't you think?"

The artist would protest indignantly. "It's impossible, sir; how can I move my apparatus in ten minutes?"

Brandt would watch him, sneeringly, for a few seconds. Then he would turn away, saying suavely:

"Discharged for insubordination," and walk off to telegraph to his agent for a new act.

Madam Brandt took a curious perverse pleasure in teasing Anatole. She knew that he feared her, and it amused her to send for him, to keep him standing in her wagon while she polished her nails or sewed or wrote letters, utterly indifferent to his presence. After about ten minutes she would look up, glancing at some point above his head, and ask him, in her soft languid voice, if he liked circus life and whether he was happy with them. She would chat for some time, casually asking him searching questions about the other performers; then suddenly she would look direct at him, with a strange brooding stare, while she said:

"Better than tramp ships, isn't it, eh? You are more comfortable here than you were as a stoker, I suppose?"

Sometimes she would add: "Tell me

something about a stoker's life, Anatole. What were your duties, and your hours?"

Always, when she dismissed him, his hair was damp with sweat.

THE Circus Brandt wandered gradually northward toward the Basque country, until the French border was almost in sight. They were to cut across France into Holland and Belgium, then back again. The Brandts could never stay long anywhere. Just before the circus entered French territory Anatole gave his notice to the head keeper. He was a hard worker and so popular with his mates that the keeper went grumbling to Carl Brandt, who agreed to an increase of salary. Anatole refused to stay on.

Madam Brandt was in the wagon when this news was told to her husband. She said to Carl: "If you want the Alsatian to stay, I will arrange it. Leave it to me. I think I understand the trouble, and, as you say, he is a useful man."

The next day she sent for Anatole, and after ignoring him for about five minutes she asked him listlessly what he meant by leaving them.

Anatole, standing rigid near the door, stammered some awkward apology.

"Why is it?"

"I have—I have had offered me a job."

"Better than this?" she pursued, stitching at her work.

"Yes, Madam."

"Yet," she continued idly, "you were happy with us in Africa, happy in Spain. Why not then in France?"

"Madam——"

She snapped a thread with her teeth.

"Why not in France, Anatole?"

There was no reply.

Suddenly she flung her sewing to the ground and fixed him with an unswerving glance. Something leaped into her eyes that startled him, an ugly, naked, hungry look that he had never before seen there. Her eyes burned him, like a devil's eyes. She said, speaking rapidly, scarcely moving her lips:

"I will tell you why you are afraid of France—shall I, Anatole? I have guessed your secret, my friend. . . . You are a deserter from the Foreign Legion and you are afraid of being recaptured. That is it, isn't it? Oh, don't trouble to lie; I have known ever since Africa. It's true, isn't it, what I have said?"

He shook his head, swallowing, unable to speak.

It was a hot day and he wore only a thin shirt. In a second she sprang from her chair across the wagon and threw herself upon him, tearing at this garment with her fingers. Terrified, he struggled, but she was too quick, too violent, too relentless. The shirt ripped in two and she saw upon his white chest the seam of livid scars.

"Bullet wounds!" she laughed in his ear, "a stoker with bullet-wounds! I was right, wasn't I, Anatole?"

He was conscious, above his fear, of a strange shrinking sensation of repulsion at her proximity. God, he thought, she's after me. And he was sickened, as some people are sickened by the sight of a deadly snake. And then, surprizingly, he was saved.

She darted away from him, sank down in her chair, snatched up her sewing. Her quick ear had heard the footsteps of Carl Brandt. Anatole stood there dazed, clutching the great rent in his shirt. Carl Brandt entered the wagon softly, for he always wore rubber soles to his shoes. His wife addressed him in her low unflurried voice.

"You see Anatole there? He has just been telling me why he is afraid to come with us to France. He is a deserter from the Foreign Legion. Look at the wounds there, on his chest."

Anatole gazed helplessly at the long

yellow face of Brandt, who stared at him for some moments in silence.

"A deserter?" Brandt said at length, and chuckled. "A deserter? You needn't be afraid, my lad, to come with us to France. They've something better to do than hunt for obscure escaped legionaries there. Oh, yes, you'll be safe enough. I'll protect you."

And he stood rubbing his hands and staring thoughtfully at Anatole with his gleaming black eyes. Anatole, to escape from them, promised to stay. He had the unpleasant sensation of having faced in the wagon that afternoon not one snake but two. He disliked reptiles.

He meant to bolt, but he had lied to Madam Brandt when he talked of a new job, and he was comfortable where he was. He was, too, an unimaginative creature and the horrors of the Legion now seemed very remote. Soon he was in France, utterly unable to believe that he was in any danger. To his delight his mistress ignored him after the scene in the wagon. She had obviously realized, he thought to himself, that he found her disgusting, almost obscene, in spite of her good looks. And he would have been completely happy had he not known that he had made a dangerous enemy.

3

THE Circus Brandt employed as lion-tamer an ex-matador, a man named "Captain" da Silva. This individual was not best pleased with his situation. He had lost his nerve about a year before, but after working the same group of lions for ten months he had become more confident and consequently more content. Then, without any warning, Carl Brandt bought a mixed group of animals and told da Silva to start work at once. The tamer was furious. Lions, tigers, bears and leopards! He shrugged his shoulders and obeyed sulkily. Soon the mixed group was ready for the ring, and appeared for a week with great success.

Then one morning da Silva went to the cages and found his animals in a wild abnormal state. Snarling, bristling, foaming at the mouth, they seemed unable even to recognize their tamer. He stared at them in cold dismay. A comrade, coming to watch, whispered in his ear.

"She walked last night."

Da Silva shuddered. There was a legend in the Circus Brandt that whenever the animals were nervous or upset Lya Brandt, the "she-devil," had walked in her sleep the night before, wandering into the menagerie and terrifying the beasts who presumably knew her for what she was.

The tiger roared, and was answered by the lioness. Da Silva listened for a minute, then turned to his companion.

"I'm off. I wouldn't work these cats tonight for a fortune. There are other circuses in the world. The Circus Brandt must find another tamer."

In twenty minutes' time he was at the railway station.

Carl Brandt heard the news in silence. Then he raised his arm and struck his head keeper savagely on the mouth. Wrapping his black cloak about his tall thin figure he left the office and sought his own wagon. His wife was engaged in drinking a cup of coffee. They eyed each other in silence for a moment.

Then she said, calmly:

"It's da Silva, I suppose?"

"Da Silva, yes. Already he has gone. Now who will work the mixed group?"

She drained her cup and answered thoughtfully:

"I know of several tamers."

"Probably. And how long will they take to get here?"

"Exactly," she said, pouring out more coffee, "that, I agree, is the great objec-

tion. Is there no one on the lot who could work the cats for a week or two?"

"What nonsense are you talking?"

She put her hand over her eyes. "You seem to forget Anatole. An escaped Legionary in French territory. Would he disobey your orders, do you think?"

There was a pause.

"I'll send for him," said Brandt at length.

They were silent as they waited for the Alsatian. When he came in Lya did not look at him, but began to polish her nails.

Carl Brandt turned his yellow wrinkled face toward Anatole. His eyes were dark and smoldering hollows. He said gently, pleasantly:

"You know that da Silva has left?"

"Yes, sir." Anatole was perplexed. He could not imagine why he had been sent for.

"There is no one, now, to work the animals until a new tamer is engaged."

"No, sir."

"It is not my custom to fail my patrons. I show always what I advertise. The new tamer should be here in a week. It is about this week that I wish to speak."

Another pause. Anatole's heart began to pump against his ribs. A monstrous suspicion was forming in his mind.

Brandt said placidly:

"I am about to promote you, my friend. For a week you shall be tamer and work the mixed group."

Anatole turned dusky red. He was furiously angry, so angry indeed that his fear of the silent woman sitting at the table vanished entirely. No longer conscious of her presence he blurted out violently:

"What, you wish me to go in the cage with those animals? Then you must find some one else; I'm not such a fool. I wouldn't do it for a fortune."

Brandt smiled, showing his black, broken teeth. His wife, utterly indifferent, continued to paint her nails bright red. Brandt said pleasantly:

"Are you perhaps in a position to dictate, my friend? I may be wrong, of course, but I am under the impression that we are now in French territory. *French territory.* Charming words, eh?"

Anatole was silent. He thought suddenly and with horror of the Legion—blistering sun, filth, and brutality. He thought, too, of the salt-mines, that ghastly living death to which he would inevitably be condemned in the event of capture. Then he remembered the animals as he had last seen them, ferocious, maddened, abnormal. He shook his head.

"That's bluff," he said shakily; "I'm no tamer. You can't force me into the cage."

Carl Brandt chuckled. The delicate yellow ivory of his skin seamed itself into a thousand crinkles. He pulled out his watch.

"Five minutes, Anatole, to come with me to the menagerie. Otherwise I telephone the police. If I may be permitted to advise you, I suggest the menagerie. Even the belly of a lion is preferable, I should imagine, to the African salt-mines. But take your choice."

Madam Brandt, snapping an orange-stick in two, now obtruded herself quietly into the conversation.

"No, Anatole," she said musingly, "it will not be possible to run away in the night. The Herr Director will take trouble, great trouble, to have you traced. The Herr Director has no wish to shelter criminals."

Once again she looked directly at him, fixing him with the burning and threatening glance that was like a sword. Then she dropped her eyes, absorbed in her manicure.

A pause.

Brandt glanced at his watch.

"I must remind you, Anatole, that you

have only two minutes left," he said with an air of great courtesy. "How many years did you serve in the Legion, I wonder? And is it eight years in the salt-mines for deserters or perhaps more?"

"I'll work the animals," said Anatole shortly. He knew that Lya Brandt had read his thoughts, and he wiped the sweat from his face as he went toward the menagerie. It was not possible for the mixed group to appear at the matinee, but it was announced to the circus in general that the cats would work that night without fail. Anatole was to spend the afternoon rehearsing them.

His face was gray as he shut himself in the cage armed only with a tamer's switch. Outside the bars stood two keepers with loaded revolvers. They, too, were nervous. The animals stood motionless to stare at the stranger, hackles raised, restless yellow eyes fixed upon him. Around the cage were painted wooden pedestals, upon which the animals were trained to sit at the word of command. The Alsatian now gave that command. They took no notice. He repeated it louder, slapping the bars with his switch, and they scattered, in a sudden panic, to take up their accustomed seats. He pulled out the paper hoop through which the lions must jump. They snarled for several minutes, striking out with their savage paws; then, in the end, possibly deciding that obedience was less trouble, they bounded through the hoop with an ill grace. The two keepers, and Anatole as well, were soon streaming with perspiration as though they had been plunged into water. The Alsatian was now, however, more confident. He turned to the bears.

Twenty minutes later Carl Brandt rejoined his wife in the living-wagon. She was standing near the window with her back toward him.

"Better than I expected," said the director coolly. "I see no reason why things should not go well tonight. He has courage, this Legionary! And what good fortune that we are in France!"

Madam Brandt made no reply, nor did she turn her head. She seemed utterly indifferent to the affairs of Anatole.

That evening the Alsatian was supplied with a splendid sky-blue uniform and cherry-colored breeches from the circus wardrobe. He dressed himself mechanically, taking no notice of the dresser's encouragements. Out on the lot his comrades glanced at him sympathetically. One or two, unconscious of his antecedents, warned him to defy Brandt and keep out of the cage. Anatole merely shook his head, incapable of giving an explanation.

"I must go; it is useless to warn me," he said at length.

And the circus folk were unanimous in their bitter abuse of the Brandts.

It was dusk. The bandsmen, splendid in their green and gold uniforms, played the overture inside the huge tent. A group of clowns, glittering in brilliant spangles, stood waiting to make their comic entry. Behind the clowns, six or seven grooms controlled twenty milk-white Arab stallions with fleecy white manes and tails. These horses were magnificent in scarlet trappings. The Chinese troupe, dark kimonos over gorgeous brocade robes, diligently practised near the bears' cage. Anatole sat on a bale of hay near the tigers, deaf to the advice muttered in his ear by various comrades. The circus proceeded.

Up in the dome of the tent two muscular young men in peach-colored tights flung themselves from bar to bar with thrilling grace and swiftness. Down below the attendants rapidly constructed a vast cage, staggering beneath sections of

heavy iron bars. Soon the cage was ready; the aerialists had swung themselves down from the dome. The band crashed out a chord, and Anatole, the Legionary, stepped into the cage, bowing modestly in response to the applause which greeted his spectacular entrance. Then an iron door was slid aside and down the narrow tunnel crept a file of tawny shapes.

Lions, tigers, leopards, bears. Gracefully they padded into the arena, stretching themselves, rubbing against the bars of the cage, yawning at the bright lights, showing their teeth, slinking with a catlike agility about the ring.

Gripping his switch, Anatole uttered the first command. One minute later the animals were seated with a certain docility upon their wooden pedestals. Anatole produced his hoop. At first the people of the circus held their breath; then, gradually, as five minutes passed they relaxed. He was doing well. They sighed with relief. The climax of the act was a tableau during the course of which the animals grouped themselves, standing erect on their hind legs, about the trainer, who himself sprang upon a pedestal, arm upraised to give more effect to this subjugation of the beasts. The biggest tiger lay at his feet during the tableau, and while the other animals soon assumed their accustomed positions when ordered, the tiger was at first always unwilling to fling himself upon the sawdust.

Posing the lions and leopards, Anatole, one foot on the pedestal, spoke briskly, curtly, to the great beast, which stared at him sulkily, motionless save for the twitching of its tail. A second passed, seeming longer than a minute to the circus watchers. The tiger continued to stare, and Anatole, banging at the bars with his switch, pointed stubbornly at the ground at his feet.

His back was toward the ring entrance and he did not see the grooms and attendants draw back respectfully to allow some one to pass through the red velvet curtains. His comrades did, and nudged one another, for Madam Brandt seldom came near the arena during a performance. She stood for a moment near the curtains, tall and straight in her flowing white dress, her face pale against the dense blackness of her hair.

Then, suddenly, there was tumult in the peaceful cage as, snarling furiously, the animals leaped from their pedestals to dash themselves savagely against the bars. Caught by surprize, Anatole turned, slashing with his switch, shouting, oblivious of the sullen tiger behind him. A leopard, maddened with fright, collided against him and sent him stumbling to the ground. With the fierce swiftness of a mighty hawk the great tiger sprang. A thick choking growl that made the blood run cold, yells of terror from the crowd and then the crack of two revolver shots. Armed with hose-pipes the menagerie men drove the animals back. The tiger was wounded in the shoulder and clawed the ground, biting at itself in a frenzy of fear and pain.

Anatole lay doubled up on the sawdust looking like a rag-dummy, so limp and twisted was his body. On the bright blue of his uniform oozed a clotted stream of red. His face? Anatole had no longer a face; only a huge and raw and gaping wound. Opening a side door they dragged his body from the cage and swiftly wrapped it in the gorgeous coat of a Chinese acrobat standing near by. Screaming, weeping, cursing, the horrified audience fought, struggling and stampeding to leave the tent. In the noise and tumult Madam Brandt slipped through the red velvet curtains and vanished like a white shadow.

Pale-faced, haggard, the bandsmen were ordered to play their most cheerful march. Soon the tent was empty, save for a little group of brightly-clad people bending over the huddled shape that was Anatole and for a doctor, hastily summoned, who soon went away, for there was nothing for him to do.

THAT night the body was laid temporarily in a little canvas dressing-room belonging to the clowns. It was late before the show-people retired to bed, but by one o'clock in the morning all was still in the tent-town of Brandt's Circus. Only the night watchman, a stolid, unimaginative fellow, paced slowly up and down swinging his lantern, but from time to time a lion would whimper and growl in the silence of the night, or a horse kick impatiently against the wooden partition of its stall.

It was the watchman, however, who afterward related to his comrades what he saw during this lonely vigil. . . . It was about an hour before dawn, and the man was lolling on a heap of hay, relieved, no doubt, to think the night would soon be over, when all at once his quick ear caught the soft sound of approaching footsteps. He turned, hiding his lantern beneath his coat. It was Madam Brandt, of course, walking slowly, like a sleep-walker, across the deserted arena toward the dressing-rooms, seeming no more tangible than a shadow, a white shadow that gleamed for a moment in the darkness and then was gone, swallowed by the gloom of the night. Now the watchman was a brave fellow, and inclined to be inquisitive. He slipped off his shoes and crept after her.

Madam Brandt glided straight to the little dressing-room wherein lay the mangled body of the Legionary. The watchman had not dared to bring his lantern, and it was therefore difficult for him to see what was happening, but at the same time he managed to observe quite enough. He glimpsed her white figure kneeling down near the dark shape on the floor; as he watched she struggled with some drapery or other, and he saw that she was trying to drag away the sheet that covered the corpse; having apparently achieved her purpose she remained still for a moment, staring at what she saw; this immobility, which lasted only for a second, was succeeded by a sudden revulsion of feeling more horrible than anything that had gone before, for with all the ferocity of a starving animal she flung herself upon the body, shaking it, gripping it tight to steady its leaden weight, while she thrust her face, her mouth, down upon that torn and bleeding throat . . . then in the distant menagerie the lions and tigers broke the silence of the night with sudden tumult.

* * * * * * *

"YES," said the juggler after a long pause, "we liked Anatole. He was a good comrade, although, mind you, he had probably been a murderer and most certainly a thief. But in the Circus Brandt, you know, that means nothing at all."

"Where is the Circus Brandt now?" I asked, after another pause.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Poland, I think; or possibly Peru. How can I tell? The Brandts are gipsies, nomads. Here today, gone tomorrow. Possibly they travel fast because there is always something to hush up. But who can say? The devil has an admirable habit of looking after his friends."

I was silent, for I was thinking both of Lya Brandt and Anatole. Suddenly I felt rather sick. "Look here," I said, "do you mind if we don't talk any more about the Brandt Circus for the moment?"

"They struggled and reeled in mad battle, Harkness grasping Brant's pistol hand."

The Shot from Saturn

By EDMOND HAMILTON

A startling weird tale about an attempted invasion of Earth by the planet Saturn

I REMEMBER well now the day on which the first news of the thing reached me. Brant and I were going over some erratic orbit-calculations of our classes and mutually cursing the fate that had made us astronomy instructors, when the door of the study flew open and Dr. Harkness, our superior, burst inside. His face was alight with excitement and in his hand was a folded newspaper.

"Brant! Fraser! You remember our observations of Saturn two months ago?" he shot at us.

We stared at him. "Why, of course," Brant finally answered.

"You remember what we saw with the reflectors?" he pursued.

"That little light jetting toward us from Saturn's upper limb?" asked Brant. "Yes,

of course we remember, but what's all this about?"

Harkness thrust the paper toward us. "Read that and you'll see," he said excitedly.

We took the paper. The article he indicated was a small item on an inner page. It bore a Quebec dateline and stated briefly that a meteor of great size had apparently fallen two nights before in the great forests east of Hudson Bay and some hundreds of miles north from Quebec.

The sky had been lit for miles by a livid flare and the meteor itself had been glimpsed falling, a great glowing body flashing slantwise down from the southern skies. It had apparently fallen in the unpeopled and little-known forest tracts near the headwaters of the Martana River. The nearest people to it were the inhabitants of Storton, a hamlet nearly a hundred miles down the river, but of course none of these had been interested enough to start a search for the fallen meteor.

We looked up, astonished. "Just another meteorite, it seems," I said. "What's it got to do with Saturn?"

"It came from Saturn," Harkness answered.

"From Saturn?" we repeated together. "What the devil——"

"The thing's beyond doubt!" he said swiftly. "Two months ago we and other astronomers saw that tiny light jet out for an instant from Saturn almost directly toward us. The thing was unprecedented and none knew what could have caused it. It came to me even then, though, that it might be the work of intelligence, might be even a strange signal of some kind, or some great work of intelligent beings.

"That was but a wild hypothesis of mine, but now it has been verified! For now it is evident that the light we saw was caused by the firing of a great projectile out from Saturn toward the earth! And that projectile, that shot from Saturn, has reached earth and flashed down up there in the great northern woods, mistaken for a falling meteor by those who saw it! It's beyond doubt, I tell you!"

We could only stare. "But that postulates intelligent life on Saturn," Brant finally objected, "and as an astronomer you know as well as I do that by all accepted theories no life could exist there."

Harkness shook his head impatiently. "This isn't theory, Brant, it's fact! We saw that shot fired and we know now that it struck earth up there in the trackless forest. It is an unavoidable corollary that intelligent beings on Saturn fired it."

"But with what purpose?"

"We can't guess as yet," Harkness answered, "but there is one sure way to learn, and that is to go up and find that fallen meteor, or projectile, and examine it. I'm going to form a small expedition to do just that—Bates and Gall and Webster will go, I know—and you, too, Brant. I tell you this thing is of unprecedented importance."

"Well, it will probably start an unprecedented argument, at least," was Brant's comment.

HIS prediction was almost fulfilled when Dr. Harkness, two days later, announced his theory and purpose as to the fallen meteor.

Dr. Harkness began his statement by describing concisely the curious light-jet on Saturn that had been seen by a half-dozen or more observers two months before. He pointed out that it could very possibly have been caused by the firing of a great projectile, and then passed to the meteor that had fallen in the northern

woods, identifying it as the projectile in question.

It had not only reached earth no sooner after the sighting of the light-jet than a high-speed projectile might be expected to do, but had also approached earth from the direction of Saturn. There could be small doubt therefore, he concluded, that it was actually the projectile that had been seen fired, and as such to find it and examine it might yield startling results.

Thus far Dr. Harkness. He found himself met from the first by a very real skepticism concerning his theories.

The light-jet that had been seen on Saturn was beyond denial, but few astronomers gave it the startling interpretation he had given it. Many accounted it the result of great volcanic disturbances on the planet, while others considered it due to aurora-like electrical effects. Scores pointed out that whatever had caused the light-jet there was no real connection between it and the fallen meteor, and that to regard the latter as a projectile shot from Saturn was to enter the realm of the fantastic.

Saturn, they pointed out, had never been regarded by science as a possible abode of even the lowest forms of life. Its temperature was very low and though its surface was forever hidden from the peering telescope by the swirling mists that surround the planet, none could doubt that it was a frozen world on which no life could exist. The suggestion that Saturn held life intelligent enough to launch a projectile across space to the earth was not, therefore, to be taken seriously.

Dr. Harkness was not backward in answering these criticisms. He insisted that since Saturn was an older world than earth, what life existed upon it must be very old also, and logically farther advanced in intelligence than we of earth. That increased intelligence, he averred, would be sufficient to counteract the increasing cold and adverse conditions and maintain life upon the planet, not to speak of such a comparatively minor feat as sending a projectile across the gulf to earth.

Thus Harkness and his critics argued the matter in the next few days until he finally announced that in any case he was starting in the next week to find and examine the meteor or projectile for himself. His party would consist, he stated, of Dr. Everett Bates, the angular and acid head of Raines Observatory and the least imaginative of astronomers; Dr. Ralph Gall, one of Harvard Observatory's brilliant staff; Professor Clark Webster, the California astrophysicist; and his own assistant instructor, Paul Brant.

"Sorry I couldn't include you, too, Fraser," Harkness told me on the day before their departure. "But some one has to stay here at the university with our classes."

"Oh, Fraser doesn't mind," Brant grinned. "Fraser would far rather spend the summer with his students than up in the north woods. He'd much rather——" But there, at my threatening expression, he desisted.

Harkness was smiling absently. "Well, we may find nothing but a cinder at that," he said. "But I think not—I think somehow that this business is going to prove of tremendous importance."

On the next day, the last of May, Harkness and his party entrained for Quebec and Storton. The newspapers two days later told of their reaching Storton, the village on the lower Martana from which they were to start north in their search. I had also a message from Harkness there in which he stated that they

had found a powered river-boat that would hold their equipment and themselves, and would shortly start upstream in that, having decided not to augment their party by any of the local inhabitants.

A short news dispatch from Storton two days after recorded the start of the five up the river. That was, I knew even then, the last word from them for some time, since with their small party and single boat it was obviously impossible for them to keep up any continuous communication or contact with the village from the forests northward.

Despite this I waited anxiously enough for word in the next weeks, for I realized by then from the tenor of comment that Dr. Harkness had in fact staked his scientific reputation upon his venture. If he found but a mere meteor it would be something of a blow, I knew, for he had been so positive that the thing was actually a projectile from the other planet that he had rather over-emphasized his belief in the statements he had made.

DAYS passed into weeks and as there came no word from the party I became rather anxious concerning them, since in the great forest stretches they were almost as isolated from civilization as though upon the moon. Then at last, after more than a month, the silence on their part was broken by a message and my anxiety concerning them was dissolved in an excitement that was not confined to myself or to the university, but that was, in days, almost world-wide.

The message, sent in duplicate to the university officials and to myself, was flashed from Storton and was signed by Dr. Bates. Leaving Dr. Harkness and Brant and the rest of the party up the river at the scene of activity, Bates had come down alone in the boat to give notice to me and to the world of their activity in that month of silence, and to give word of Dr. Harkness' amazing success.

For they had found the meteor and it was a projectile!

That was the first stunning fact in Bates' excited and almost incoherent message. But he had more than that to tell, and the rest was as astounding.

Dr. Harkness and his four companions, he stated, had travelled up the Martana River with no untoward accidents except for the near-capsizing of their boat in a rapid. They had before starting prepared a rough chart on which was located the approximate district in which the meteor had fallen, this obtained by graphing the directions from which its fall had been seen by far-separated observers. When they reached that district, a hundred miles up the river, they had made camp and had started their search.

Almost at once, Bates related, they had come upon what they sought. It lay not a mile from the river, in a grassy valley opening clear for a short distance through the forests. They had found the thing half buried by its crash into the earth. But though covered with a hard, crusted cinder, their first glance had told them that it was no meteor but a projectile, being in shape like a cylinder with one end pointed, twenty feet in length and eight in diameter.

Bates told of their excited inspection of the thing, of their chipping away the cinder that covered it and their finding a curious door in the projectile's metal side which could be opened from outside as well as from within. They had opened it after some effort. They had found inside a few simple mechanisms designed to supply breathable air in the projectile during flight, some supplies of what seemed food, and also what appeared to be records in a form of picture-writing.

These things Bates only mentioned, though, his and our excitement centering on what else they found in the projectile. Bodies—the dead bodies of Saturnians!

Bates' description of them in his message was so excited and incoherent that it could only be made out that the Saturnians, though somewhat man-like in form, had been much different from any humans of earth. There were four of them in the projectile and, Bates told, all had apparently been killed by the projectile's impact against earth, their heads or brain cases being crushed beyond recognition and their bodies broken. Daring pioneers across the void, they had perished at the instant they reached earth.

This epochal message of Bates ended by saying that Harkness and his companions were remaining for further study with the projectile. Bates had been sent down to Storton in the boat to flash word of their find to the world and also to request certain things which Harkness' party needed to facilitate their investigation of the projectile. A list of these was sent separately to myself.

The things specified in the list seemed rather odd to me, including electrical apparatus, transformers and static-condensers and cables and the like, and also some flat sections of metal whose size was carefully specified, with tools for joining them, materials for mixing concrete in a small way, and tackles and pulleys of various sorts. The list was almost as hard to understand and incoherent as Bates' message.

According to Harkness' request, I, Fraser, was to procure these things with all possible speed and leave with them at once for Storton, where Dr. Bates would await me and proceed with me up the river to Dr. Harkness' camp. Knowing what profound excitement his discovery would arouse in the world, Harkness had added that I could bring with me a small party of scientists and newspaper-men, not to exceed a dozen in number.

Thus ended the lengthy and rather incoherently worded message which Dr. Bates wired us from Storton. In hours it had set the scientific world afire with excitement.

Dr. Harkness had been right! It had been in truth, then, a shot from Saturn that had struck up there in the great forest! A projectile in which four beings of another world had been hurled across the millions of miles of space between Saturn and earth! And though they had perished in the shock of landing, who could say what knowledge their coming might not bring to us, what vistas it might not open? Within a day the newspapers were ablaze with the thing, and in that time I myself had attained to a fame or notoriety which I had never expected.

Not only was I assistant to Dr. Harkness, whose great discovery this was, but I was known to have been designated by him to take up to him the further supplies needed. In the next crowded few days, while I hurriedly assembled the equipment and materials Harkness had listed, I found myself besieged by those who wished to accompany me to the camp of the scientists. All such requests, though, I turned over to the officials of the university, who in the end selected those who formed our party.

Since Harkness had been definite in wanting no more than a dozen accompanying me, the party was strictly limited. When we started four days later, there were besides myself four news-writers representing the great press-syndicates, and seven scientists, all of prominence. I need mention only the names of Halsen and Gray, the biologists; Rockford, the Pennsylvania astronomer who had been one of the few to give any support at first

to the projectile theory; and McGregor, one of the young wizards of the biggest of electrical corporations, to show the caliber of those who made up our party.

It was on July 13th that we left New York for Quebec, the equipment that I had assembled at Harkness' request going with us in a special car. The odd nature of some of that equipment rather puzzled us all, but in the excitement of the start we gave it little thought.

We did not tarry in Quebec longer than to proceed from station to station, though we found awaiting us there newspaper-writers and photographers in plenty. I remember that on the next day as we bumped north toward Storton on the narrow-gage connecting-line we amused ourselves with some of the newspaper accounts. The imagination of the press had apparently been fired, and on the strength of Bates' meager description long accounts were given of the projectile and its finding and even of the dead Saturnians that had been found in it.

Some enterprising journals went so far, indeed, as to make up for themselves speculative pictures of the Saturnians, their wires to Bates for more information having received no answer. They drew highly colored pictures of a hypothetical Saturnian civilization, discussed the planet's conditions as though after a personal visit, and set us all laughing in one case by a serious prediction that within a short time Saturn and earth would be connected by a projectile-line with regular arrivals and departures.

Yet laugh as we did, we were almost as completely excited. Better than most, perhaps, we who were astronomers realized the colossal nature of this achievement of the Saturnians, despite their perishing at the moment of accomplishment. And we were tensely eager to inspect the projectile in which they had hurtled across the great gulf, and more eager still to see the dead Saturnians who were the first evidence to earth that not only on earth did the universe hold life, and life that was intelligent and conscious.

IT WAS on the afternoon of the 16th that our train bumped into the lumber village of Storton. The entire population of the little place was gathered around its unpainted station to watch us disembark, though the somewhat stolid villagers showed small sign of excitement at the tremendous event that had taken place a hundred miles to the north. Dr. Bates was on hand to meet us also, and it was at that meeting that there shadowed me for the first fleeting time the growing sense of the strange and oppressive in which I was to move thenceforward.

For when we emerged it was young Halsen, one of the biologists, who happened to step down first, I just behind him. I saw Dr. Bates come striding down the platform toward our party, recognizing his tall, angular figure and impatient, intellectual face, his gaze intent upon us. To my astonishment, though, he grasped the hand of young Halsen first and shook it, addressing him.

"Fraser!" he was saying "I'm glad you've arrived!"

Halsen stared at him, guessing his identity. "I'm afraid we've never met, Dr. Bates," he said in a moment, "though of course I've heard much of your work. This is Fraser—I thought you knew him——"

Bates stared from Halsen to me astoundedly, and then his face broke into a strained smile. "Why, of course I know him!" he exclaimed, taking my own hand. "Eyesight went back on me there for a moment, Fraser, for I thought he was you. Harkness will be glad to see you—you've brought the stuff he listed?"

"Right here with us," I told him. "This is Dr. Halsen — Professor Gray — Dr. Rockford——"

Bates bowed rather jerkily as I made introductions. His whole manner seemed strange to me, his speech thick and incoherent at moments, and interspersed with grammatical errors astonishing to any who knew as well as I did his ordinarily precise manner and speech. He explained these things to me, though, as our party walked along the single street to Storton's one hotel. And in the explanation I received a staggering shock.

"Everything's ready to start up the river tomorrow," he told me first. "I've three boats ready besides my own, and they'll hold your friends and the equipment you brought, as well as a few workmen I'm taking back up from this village. Harkness will be glad to see you."

"And Brant?" I asked, but to my surprize he only looked oddly at me and then turned away.

"Brant!" I exclaimed, clutching Bates' arms in sudden apprehension, and he turned slowly back to me.

"Fraser, you'll have to hear it now," he said, "though I hadn't meant to tell you until later. Brant is mad!"

"Mad!"

"Stark and raving mad, yes. From the first we were under a mental excitement and strain that was terrific after we'd found the projectile. We were all a little crazy over it, I think—I know you think me queer now—but Brant was worst of all. He went clear off his head before we realized it."

"What happened?" I asked tensely.

"Brant had a gun," he answered, "and before we knew it he tried to shoot Harkness—fired point-blank at him! He missed, and was going to shoot again when we rushed him. Before we could catch him, though, he had bounded off into the forest yelling, and we saw nothing of him for a week. One night, though, he took a shot out of the dark at us and got Webster in the shoulder. Harkness and Gall and I searched the forest for him but he managed to elude us. That was two weeks ago, and though we haven't seen him since he must be lurking still around the camp, a sheer homicidal maniac. God knows how he manages to live in the forest."

"Brant mad," I said slowly. "Brant mad!"

It was that fact that was foremost to me in the next days as we travelled up the river. Brant mad! He had been my chum for years, and his calm, humorous mind seemed to me the last that would have ever broken beneath any strain. The horror and unexpectedness of it was staggering to me, and the excitement over the stupendous shot from Saturn and all it might mean to earth which formerly had gripped me faded from the foreground of my mind in contrast with it.

Rockford and Halsen and the others of our party showed their sympathy when they too heard, but I could see that to them it was a small enough matter when compared to the great fact of the coming of the Saturnians. They were as impatient as I to reach the end of our trip, not for my reasons but for ones as great to them. Our whole trip up the river was under a tension that gave it a flavor of the unreal.

Our four boats fought with throbbing motors up against the currents of the Martana, between green walls of vegetation that were the ramparts of the endless forests about us. From dawn until darkness each day we fought the currents, and Bates, now very different from the precise and mathematical figure of a few months past, kept us moving at the highest speed possible. To our eager questions he gave brusk answers, withdrawing

into himself, his voice harsh as he directed the half-dozen workmen he had brought with us.

Yes, that journey now seems in truth an unreal interlude, with behind us a world waiting eagerly for further information, and with ahead of us the strange projectile and stranger dead beings that in it had crossed the great deep from world to spinning world. One picture of those unreal days and nights remains clear in my memory, though—that of Bates' angular figure hunched outside our firelight at night, staring up broodingly at the yellow spark southwestward that was Saturn. Staring and staring—out at Saturn——

It was after ten days on the river that we came in late morning to the end of that trip, our boats heading in to a natural little cove where we found Harkness and Webster awaiting us.

As we stepped ashore Bates led me forward. "Here's Fraser at last," he said.

Harkness gripped my hand tightly. "Fraser, you can't know how glad I am you've got here," he told me. "You've brought the things I asked for?"

I was shocked. His familiar face was changed even more than that of Bates, lined and with his eyes somehow set and strange. Webster, too, was jerky in manner, his shoulder tied in a heavy bandage.

"I've brought everything, Harkness," I answered. "But what about Brant? Bates has told me that——"

"That Brant is mad," Harkness interrupted. "Yes. He is. The mental strain here—it has made a homicidal maniac out of him, Fraser. He's tried to kill me twice, did wound Webster here, and is roaming the forests here now full of delusions, a complete madman. We've hunted and can't even get near him."

Before I could say more the others were around us, greeting Harkness and Webster excitedly, with a babel of questions. Harkness raised his hand.

"Please—not here," he said. "You'll see everything shortly, but now we must get these boats unloaded and the equipment started toward our camp. Bates, you and Webster will see to that? Then the rest of us can go on to the camp."

Leaving Bates and Webster to supervise the workmen unloading the equipment and supplies, therefore, we started with Harkness along a narrow path hacked through the thick underbrush of the forests that stretched sea-like around us. The path wound upward and inward from the river, and our party of a dozen or so seemed noisy enough as we followed Harkness along the hacked way. As we went on I wondered half despairingly where in the forests around us Brant might be lurking, driven by insane and murderous delusions, perhaps half dead from hunger and exposure.

IN LESS than a half-hour we emerged from the thick woods into a short and narrow valley, grassy and unwooded. A thousand feet from us in this lay the projectile.

It was half hidden from us by the heaps of earth which they had excavated from around it, but we could see its shape clearly. A big cylinder of gray metal that tapered to a blunt point at one end, it was a score of feet from base to tip and a third or a half that in diameter. It lay slantwise in a broad hole in the earth that had been formed by their diggings around it. Gall, waiting there, greeted us.

We followed Harkness toward it, staring wonderingly. There was a round thick door swinging open in the projectile's side half-way between base and tip, apparently made to close somewhat like the breech of a great gun, and Harkness led us in through this. The interior was

strangely disappointing in its simplicity. I do not know just what we had expected to find—intricate mechanisms and cogs and wheels, I suppose—but there was little to inspect.

We could see that a second cylinder was swung in some way inside the outer one, for shock-absorbing purposes, no doubt. There were no windows, but at two points the metal of the walls had been treated to make it quite as transparent as glass. There was an oxygen-production and air-purifying apparatus astonishingly like the similar equipment of our human experience, and a metal rack along one side held many cubes of white, pith-like substance that had formed the food-supply of the Saturnians in the projectile. There were flat tanks that must have held water or other drink, but these were empty.

The only other apparatus in the projectile was one near the cone-like nose of it, a square metal case behind the point or nose, which was connected by tubing with other flat cases attached to the walls, and which was at one point linked to a little control-box with a simple double-handled rheostat and switch. Near this, where the body of the cylinder began, were four squat swinging little platforms or chairs, one of the transparent portions of the wall being just above them.

Harkness pointed to the mechanism in the nose. "That's an electrical-repulsion mechanism," he said. "We found some odd picture-records or writing I'll show you later, and could make out the principle of the whole thing. That mechanism draws static electricity from the condensers you see attached to the walls, and is intended to stab forth a repelling charge of static just before the projectile reaches its goal, and so break its fall and prevent an annihilating crash."

"The projectile has then no motive-power of its own?" Rockford asked keenly.

"None at all," Harkness replied. "It was shot from Saturn toward the earth just as a bullet is shot from a gun, though not by explosives but by electrical power, as I'll explain later. The mechanism in the nose is, as I say, for braking purposes only."

"But I don't understand it, then," Halsen interjected. "If they had this method of braking the projectile's fall and used it, and they must have used it or the projectile would have been shattered, how does it happen that the four Saturnians inside were still killed by the shock?"

Harkness stared at him, shaking his head. "It's rather strange," he admitted. "But so it was, for we found them crushed and dead. I can only surmise that they had underestimated the force of the impact, and though they used enough repulsion to keep the projectile from striking with shattering force, it still struck with enough violence to crush them inside it."

"And where are the dead Saturnians, then?" Halsen asked. "You didn't destroy the bodies, man—creatures of another planet? If you did, by all that's holy in the science of biology I'll——"

We all smiled at his excitement, though it held us to almost as high a degree. "No, we saved them, or what was left of them," Harkness told him. "I think you'll find them curious."

"Curious isn't the word," said Gall. "They're so unlike anything on earth that they're rather appalling."

"This way," Harkness directed. "We hollowed a cave for them in the valley's side for their better preservation—they'd have decomposed irreparably without the chemicals we used on them."

He and Gall led the way, with the rest of us an excited throng behind them, from

the projectile toward the valley's sloping side, where a black opening yawned. It was a cave excavated hastily in the soft earth, and we saw it was not large. Harkness picked up an electric lantern by the entrance and we followed him in, or the first few of us did, stooping and rubbing against the damp earth sides of the entrance. We found ourselves in a narrow, close little cave, and on its floor in a row lay the bodies of the four dead Saturnians.

We stared, tensely enough, and I found myself whispering, "Crustacean men!" They were such, in fact, to all appearances. I suppose that when they stood each must have been five feet or more in height. The long trunk or torso of each was cased in hard black shell of true crustacean look, and the short two lower limbs on which they had stood were stiff and jointed, and crustacean-like, as were the short upper limbs or arms. It was these that gave the otherwise unhuman bodies an oddly man-like appearance.

The heads had been apparently in each a bulbous shell-cased one set close on the upper trunk, but this was surmise only on our part because both heads and upper bodies were so horribly crushed and mangled as to be unrecognizable. The legs of all but one, too, had snapped beneath the shock, and in all the shell of the bodies was cracked. Instead of blood a black fluid had poured from them and clotted beside the bodies, and even over the reek of preservative chemicals which had been crudely produced and used upon them, there came to us from the four still crushed bodies an alien and repellent odor.

We stared at them. It was a curious moment, that in the dim-lit little cave. The four grotesque crushed bodies lying there before us marvelling men, the four who had dared across a void unthinkable to meet death at the very end of their stupendous journey. I found myself wondering out of what ages of crustacean evolution they had risen, what crustacean hordes Saturn might not hold—swarming races alien to man yet greater perhaps than man in knowledge and power.

Harkness broke the awed silence. "You see the broken condition of even the limbs," he said. "They were all so when we found them—huddled together in the projectile and apparently instantly slain by the shock."

"Too bad that the heads should have been crushed so completely," Halsen said. "They have the characteristic chitinous integument of crustacea but no trace of the usual segment-structure of crustacean bodies. I'd have given a lot to have examined the brain of one of them."

Harkness nodded at the biologist's comment. "A pity that the heads were crushed into nothing," he agreed. "But brain or none, it's obvious enough that they were of a high order of intelligence. Their very achievement in flashing from Saturn to earth proves that."

"I wonder why they came," I said. "To have themselves shot to earth in that projectile—they must have had some strong reason."

"That's true, isn't it?" Rockford commented. "We've been all so excited over the great fact of their coming we've hardly thought of why they came."

Harkness shook his head. "The purposes of beings like that are beyond our speculations, I'm afraid," he said. "But we may learn that, and other things, before long. Now that you have come——"

With that perplexing half-statement he ended as we emerged from the cave, leaving Halsen and Gray so engrossed in their examination of the dead Saturnians that it was clear nothing for the time being could drag them forth. We found that

the workmen under Bates and Webster were arriving with the supplies and equipment we had brought, and already our half-dozen tents were being run up beside the two tents already pitched at the valley's end. The place had almost the appearance of a small village, alive with activity.

Harkness and Gall left us then to unpack our belongings and talk excitedly of what we had seen. The next hours they occupied in bringing to the camp the remaining equipment in the boats, and by nightfall it was all under canvas.

I FOUND an opportunity in those busy few hours, though, to question Webster and Gall separately about Brant's strange insane outburst. Both seemed under the same mental strain as Bates and Webster, their gaze almost a stare and their speech often oddly obstructed also. But both corroborated what I had already heard of Brant's maniacal attempt on their lives, Webster pointing mutely to the now-healing wound that Brant's bullet had made. A sick despair held me. It seemed to me that these alien beings who had crashed to their own deaths here, shot from an alien world, had released an alien madness—one that had made of Brant a lurking madman, that had inspired his murderous attacks on his own friends, that had affected even the minds of Harkness and the others, as was evident in their actions and speech.

I think that I alone realized this sinister atmosphere of the place, for the two biologists thought of nothing but the crushed alien bodies, and the others of the projectile and its origin. That night when we were eating around a long, makeshift table between the tents, electric lanterns dispelling the night around us, Rockford brought up the latter question.

"You said you had found definitely from indications or records inside the projectile how it was shot from Saturn, Harkness?" he asked.

Harkness nodded. "Yes, we made it out without much trouble. Of course we knew that no explosives could have done it, for if powerful enough to hurl a projectile across the millions of miles between Saturn and earth, they'd have blasted it to fragments at the moment of firing. The propelling force of the projectile was the static charge of Saturn itself."

"The static charge of Saturn?" some one said, a little incredulously, and Harkness nodded quietly.

"Just that. Every planet has like earth a terrific static-electricity charge, is in fact a huge Leyden jar that is never discharged, because there is no way for it to discharge. The Saturnians found a way, that is all. They devised a method of turning loose the whole static charge of their planet for a moment or two beneath the projectile, repelling it with all that immeasurable force, since the projectile was given a like charge and so was repelled by the planet's charge. Repelled with such immense power, it was hurled out from Saturn at tremendous speed, and being pointed toward earth reached and struck this world."

"Is such a method really workable?" Rockford asked.

"I think you'll agree that it is after we set up the equipment you brought with you," Harkness told him.

"You mean you're going to test the thing?" Rockford asked.

"We are going to do much more than test it," was Harkness' calm reply. "The projectile is going to be shot out again into the void, this time from earth back to Saturn, and this time Bates and Webster and Gall and I are going inside it!"

We could not have been more astound-

ed had a bomb burst among us. Rockford found his voice first.

"Harkness—are you mad?" he demanded.

Harkness eyed us levelly. "What objections to the idea are there? Why, it is a chance to do what men have never done before, to flash to another planet! We have the projectile and we know how to operate it. With the projectile's oxygen-apparatus and our own food and water supply the thing will be easy. All that will be necessary is to set up the mechanism that will fire it out to Saturn.

"It was for that that I had you bring up here the equipment I specified. We can quickly set up the flat metal starting-disk on which the projectile will be set. We will have set up beside it the apparatus after the Saturnians' plan that will when operated turn the whole enormous repellent force of earth's static charge onto the projectile and send it flashing out in a dazzling burst of light and power as it was shot out from Saturn. If the four Saturnians who were then in it could reach earth, we can reach Saturn!"

"But they reached earth dead!" I exclaimed. "Crushed by the terrific shock as you would be when you reached Saturn!"

Harkness shook his head. "They underestimated the shock of contact and perished by it. We will not underestimate and will accomplish what they tried to do, will set up communication and contact between Saturn and earth. Think what it may mean for us to visit Saturn and return!"

"But why start from here?" Rockford put in. "Why not take the projectile back to civilization—then start——"

"How long would it take to transport the projectile out of here?" Harkness demanded. "No, the only way is to start from here, and the sooner the better. If we wait long there will be such hordes of curiosity seekers here that we can do nothing. In two days we can set up the equipment and great static-ring necessary to fire the projectile out, and so two nights from now we four will start out in it to Saturn!"

His words were followed by a silence of amazement on our part, and in that silent pause there came something that startled us more than anything we had yet experienced. It was a voice, a high, ragged voice that ripped to us from the darkness just outside the ring of lantern-light in which we were gathered.

"You will *not* start!" it rasped, and with the words flame spurted from the darkness as a pistol-shot cracked.

At the first word Harkness had thrown himself back and that alone saved him, for the bullet hummed past him an inch away. We were all on our feet in an instant. And there at the edge of our light-area, half visible against the darkness beyond, stood Brant! Brant, his clothes torn and stained, a ragged unshaven figure, his eyes burning like flames of madness and with a pistol raised still in his hand! But an instant we saw him and then as Harkness and Webster leaped with guns raised he had thrown himself back into the darkness.

Harkness and Webster were firing shot after shot into the darkness after him! I leaped, struck up their arms.

"Don't shoot—it was Brant! Brant!" I cried, astounded. "My God, Harkness, you don't want to kill him?"

Harkness' eyes were blazing. "I or any of us will kill him on sight!" he exclaimed. "The man's a homicidal maniac, I tell you—didn't you see for yourself? That's the third time he's tried to kill some of us!"

"But you can't shoot him down because he's mad!" I exclaimed. "To kill Brant—

you must be mad yourself, Harkness, to think of it!"

Rockford intervened. "Harkness is partly right, Fraser," he said. "Brant is no longer Brant but a dangerous wild animal. You saw yourself what a murderous maniac he's become—he must have been lurking out there in the darkness waiting for a chance."

"But we could all form a searching-party and beat the forests around here for him," I suggested. "Ten to one we could find him and tie him up, take him back down the river. This may be only a temporary insanity, and if Harkness will postpone the preparation of the projectile for a few days, we can——"

"I will *not* postpone it!" Harkness' voice was high and harsh. "I tell you that the greatest venture in the history of either earth or Saturn is not going to come to nothing out of pity for a single crazed man. The work is going on and two nights from now we are going to start!" And he strode off to his tent.

That night in my own tent my heart-sickness deepened. For Rockford and McGregor and Halsen and the rest, I could see, held with Harkness that the preparation of the projectile was of far more moment than the securing of my crazed friend. They discussed the project from end to end and were forced to concede that if Harkness and the other three could really utilize earth's static charge as the Saturnians had utilized that of their planet, they would be shot forth from earth by it with sufficient force to hurl them to the other world.

If they did reach Saturn, we speculated, what would they find? It was evident enough that the Saturnians had science beyond ours, to launch their projectile across the void as they had done. It might well be, then, as Harkness had said, that the earth-visitors who reached the other planet might set up thus a communication between the two that would work immeasurably to our advantage. For it was evidently only by physical visits thus that the two worlds could ever communicate, the Heaviside layer around earth preventing the sending or receiving of any radio or electrical signals.

Yet I could not forget those crushed crustacean bodies. Man-like as they were in some respects, it was plain that these sons of Saturn had come up from ages of crustacean evolution instead of mammal evolution, rising to intelligence as great or greater than ours but by far different paths. Could ever, I wondered, two such alien races as they and we meet and remain friends? Or would intelligence bridge the gulf between them?

There was on the part of Harkness and the others, though, no such doubt apparent. For on the next morning began the work of setting up the equipment we had brought.

THE open valley might have been some construction camp, so busy we all were in the next two days. Harkness and Webster and Gall and Bates seemed dominated and driven by tremendous purpose, and drove us in turn. They had lost all semblance of their ordinary selves and seemed to have become monomaniacs. They explained nothing to us, but ordered Rockford, Halsen, all of us, as though we were on a par with the hired workmen that had come with us. We worked under their directions without understanding half of what we did.

Concrete reinforcements were quickly sunk into the ground, and upon them was set a metal ring ten feet in diameter, made from the sections we had brought with us. Tube-like connections ending in fans of diverging copper strips were sunk deep in the earth around the ring, and led

through strangely circuited coils to the ring's edge. All of this, we understood, was destined to release earth's static charge into the ring and hurl the projectile out from that ring, but the details were beyond our comprehension and the confidence and sureness with which Harkness and Webster and the others directed us was amazing, considering that it was only by an examination of the projectile and the mechanisms and records inside it that they had gained the knowledge necessary.

By the afternoon of the second day the ring and mechanisms were finished and we strained with tackle and roughly made shears to swing the projectile into place onto it. That done, the tilt of the ring, which had been carefully measured, kept the projectile pointed up in a southerly direction toward the ecliptic, and toward a spot along it which Saturn would near at midnight. At midnight the circuit of the mechanisms around the ring would be closed and the projectile, with Harkness and Webster and Gall and Bates inside it, would be hurled out by all earth's tremendous static charge, the closing of the circuit giving the projectile a like charge and thus instantaneously repelling it and flinging it outward. It would be aimed at a spot a little beyond Saturn on the ecliptic, though, to allow for the Saturnian orbital motion.

Thus with the projectile in place Harkness kept the rest busy that afternoon's remaining hours in inspecting and testing the vital oxygen-apparatus, storing the concentrated food and water in it, testing the projectile's own static-recoil mechanism that would break its fall on reaching Saturn. The four hardly gave heed to us now other than to snap orders at us, so driven were they by excitement as they approached the end of the work and the beginning of their venture. I saw that Gall and Bates were standing guard around the projectile by then with automatics swinging at their hips, apparently taking no further chances of mad attacks by Brant.

We had seen nothing of Brant during those two days, though as busy as we all were with the preparation of the projectile, we had had small chance to do so. Rockford had assured me that as soon as Harkness and his three started in the projectile we would search the forests for Brant as I had desired and take him back with us to civilization, where his insanity might pass. With this assurance I had to be content, for by then Rockford and Halsen and the rest were nearly as excited over the great venture of Harkness and the others as they were themselves.

To me in those two days, though, it had all seemed utterly unreal. The coming of the Saturnians, the finding of their projectile by Harkness and his four companions, that was unprecedented enough but not unexplainable. But this wild resolve of Harkness and Bates and Gall and Webster to use the projectile to hurtle back to Saturn, the insane haste with which they had rushed preparations for the venture, their callousness in their excitement to the fate of their companion who was roaming the forests demented—all these things made the whole business seem out of reason.

But Harkness drove steadily on with the last preparations, and the coming of darkness that night found the projectile ready on the ring from which it would leap out into space. I think now that by then we were all worked up to a pitch of tense excitement such as few men have experienced. Harkness and his three companions were the most steady of us all by then,. going over projectile and mechanism for the last time, explaining to Rockford and Halsen how the circuits were to

be closed at midnight, when the four would be in the projectile ready to flash out. There would be a tremendous upflash of light and force from the ring when the circuits were closed, we knew, but we and the surrounding mechanisms would not be in its path.

So the first hours of night passed, with the yellow light-spot of Saturn creeping farther across the sky and with the projectile on the tilted ring aimed upward like a great pointing finger. By the time the hour of eleven had passed, with less than an hour remaining before the projectile's start, a terrific tension was upon us all. Bates and Gall, still armed, were remaining by the projectile's door while Harkness and Webster went over the mechanisms and switches with Rockford for a last time. The others were gathered excitedly around them, and as I made my way back to my tent for the colored glasses we were all to wear as protection against the great upflash of light, I saw that the end of the valley in which were the tents was deserted.

Behind me the looming projectile and the excited throng around it made a weird scene in the light of the electric lanterns suspended about it. I turned, looking back at it, as I entered my tent. Then from somewhere in the tent's dark interior was a rush of movement and before I could turn or cry I was crushed to earth and held tightly, a hand over my mouth and my arms pinioned as though by superhuman force. Helpless, I looked up at the dark figure crouching on me to see, in a gleam of light through the tent-flap, the haggard, wild face of Brant!

I knew cold fear then such as I had never experienced, for Brant's eyes still were burning, mad. Gripping me, though, he was whispering tensely to me.

"Fraser! Fraser, you hear me? It's Brant, and I'm not mad—you must believe me—not mad!"

He bent closer. "You'll not cry out if I release you? You'll listen to me, Fraser—just listen to me? I know you think I'm insane but if you'll just listen——"

"I'll listen," I managed to choke, and as he released me I sat up beside him in the tent's dark interior. "Keep steady, Brant, and you'll be all——"

His bitter laugh cut across my words. "All of which means that you think I'm mad yet and are trying to soothe me. Fraser, it was Harkness and Bates and Gall and Webster who told you I was mad, wasn't it? And you believed it when you saw me trying to kill them two nights ago?"

"They told me," I said, "and I did see——"

"Fraser," he said slowly and clearly, "Harkness and Gall and Webster and Bates told you nothing, for they died weeks ago, really. The four who told you, the four who are out there now making ready to flash to Saturn, are not they. They have the bodies of Harkness and Bates and Gall and Webster, yes—*but in those bodies are the brains of the four Saturnians who came to earth in that projectile!*

"Fraser, it's true! You must not think me mad! When we five came up here we found the projectile, truly enough, where it had fallen. But outside it were the four Saturnians, the four monstrous crustacean-men, who had reached earth in it unharmed! They had weapons—strange forces—and they captured and held us. They did not bother questioning us but used instruments, mechanisms, that drew knowledge from our brains as though water from a tank!

"They swiftly learned our speech, our

knowledge of earth's general features and peoples and resources. In the process we were able to make out much concerning them. They had indeed been shot to earth from Saturn, we learned, four of the countless millions of crustacean peoples that inhabit that world. They had been shot to earth because Saturn had become almost too cold for continued life, and because the Saturnians wished to know whether earth would be a habitable world for them!

"They had been shot to earth to learn whether it was habitable and to return to Saturn with a report. If they returned and reported it habitable all the Saturnian hordes would pour across space in projectiles to earth! But if they did not return at all, the Saturnians would know that it was uninhabitable and so would give up the idea and would seek some other world for conquest.

"The four Saturnians had reached earth and had seen at once that it was habitable for their races. They had started to construct the great static-mechanisms and ring that would be necessary to hurl their projectile back to Saturn, but this would take them long with their limited equipment, and their capture of us had suggested to them an easier way. They would transpose their four Saturnian brains into four of our human bodies, and then, posing as four humans, would send for the equipment needed and would be shot back to Saturn with it!

"That is what they did. I saw them with their dissolving forces and super-anesthetics cutting open Harkness' skull, removing and destroying his human brain, and then removing the brain of one of themselves and placing it in the skull of Harkness. When it was finished Harkness rose to all appearances the same as ever, but he was no longer really Harkness but a Saturnian, a Saturnian brain cased in Harkness' human body!

"With Harkness assisting, they did the same then with the others until in all appearances they were four humans, Harkness and Webster and Gall and Bates, able with the knowledge they had gained from us to talk and behave like humans, yet really Saturnians! They meant, I know, to gain further knowledge from me and then kill me before outsiders came, but I managed to escape them, and lurked in the forests around this camp, my one purpose to kill these four Saturnians masked in the bodies of my four friends before they could get back to Saturn with the news that would bring a terrible invasion down upon our world!

"I saw Bates, the pseudo-Bates, start down the river to send off word to the world for the equipment they needed. In the meantime they prepared the projectile to confirm their story, and took their dead and useless crustacean Saturnian bodies to save as evidence that the Saturnians in the projectile had been killed on reaching earth. They crushed the heads and upper bodies into fragments so that the absence of a brain in each of those bodies would not be detected.

"I knew what their plans were and tried to kill them twice but could not. The night after you came I tried again, and you, seeing, thought me mad as they had told you. In the last days I have seen you all setting up the static-mechanisms under their direction, to send them back to Saturn in human bodies, never doubting that they were other than the four men you knew, and never dreaming that in so doing you were preparing doom for earth. For if they start out tonight, if they reach Saturn, it means that doom indeed, a dread invasion of millions of crustaceans that will sweep humanity from the earth!"

As BRANT'S desperate whisper ceased I felt my own brain spinning. I clutched his arm convulsively.

"Saturnian brains in human bodies! My God, Brant, it's impossible—insane——"

"It's true! Think back, Fraser—you must see that it's true!"

My thoughts stabbed back. A thousand unexplained little incidents of the preceding days rushed to my mind. Bates' non-recognition of me when he had met us at Storton—his and the others' occasional strange thickness of speech and jerkiness of manner—Harkness' callousness toward Brant's fate—the strange feature of the projectile found intact yet the Saturnian bodies inside it crushed—it all rushed upon me, staggeringly.

"My God, it is true then!" I whispered. "Four Saturnian brains—in those human bodies—but what can we do?"

Brant clutched my arm. "Fraser, that projectile must not start! If they reach Saturn in it, it is the end for humanity, for across the void from Saturn will flash countless projectiles crammed with crustacean hordes to conquer earth. There is no time to explain to the others now—in moments they start—and it is we who must hold them here——"

His words were cut short by a metallic clang from the distance!

"They've entered the projectile!" I cried. "We're too late!"

"No!" he shouted. "Quick, Fraser!"

Somehow in the next instant we were out of the tent and running toward the projectile and its surrounding mechanisms. The projectile's door was closed, and ready in it, I knew, were the four Saturnians masked in the bodies of Harkness and Bates and Webster and Gall. Rockford's hands were on the great double switches that would close the circuits, the others standing in a silent, awe-struck circle about him.

"Rockford!" I screamed. "Wait!"

Rockford whirled, astonished. His hand was still on the switches and Brant's gun came up. "Rockford—back from those switches!"

"They're both mad!" Rockford shouted to the others. "Catch them—it's time for the projectile to start——!"

"For the love of God, Rockford, don't——" My cry was cut short by the others rushing upon me. There was a clang as the projectile's door swung open! Harkness was emerging, eyes twin flames of hate. He was shouting to the others in the projectile, crying to them to close its door while he threw the switches, sacrificing himself to send the other three back to Saturn with the word that would bring doom to earth!

But as he raced toward the switches Brant was ahead of him, had met him! They struggled, reeled in mad battle, Harkness gripping Brant's pistol-hand. The others were upon me but as I saw Bates and Gall and Webster pouring out of the projectile too I fired toward them almost without aim, and Gall crumpled. Rockford and the rest crushed me to the ground in the next instant. Bates and Webster were running toward the wild scene with guns upraised and with deadly purpose.

But at that moment Brant wrenched his hand free from Harkness' grasp and brought his heavy pistol down in a blow that crashed through Harkness' skull as though it were of cardboard! Twin detonations split the night as Bates and Webster fired together, but at almost the same instant Brant's pistol seemed to explode interminably, and Webster and Bates staggered and swayed and fell! Then Halsen and Gray were on Brant,

tearing the pistol from him, both of us clutched by a score of hands.

"Fraser! Brant! You've killed them—killed your own friends—killed them!" Rockford was crying crazily.

I could not speak, but Brant, sagging in their grasp, pointed down to the limp body of Harkness beneath him. "Look!" he said only, pointing to the shattered skull. Beneath should have shown the gray brain but instead there was only a strange black smooth mass at which Halsen stared, unbelievingly, Gray and he bending as though unable to credit their eyes, Rockford and all the others as stupefied as the two biologists.

"My God!" Halsen choked. "Harkness' brain gone, and that in place of it! What——"

"You wanted the brains of those four dead Saturnians to examine, Halsen," said Brant. "Well—there's one of them—and you'll find the others in the skulls of the other three." And as they stared, staggered, releasing us, the stupefying explanation dawning on them, Brant looked up toward Saturn's yellow spark up amid the stars. "Waiting up there—waiting—for the word that will never come now, the attack on earth that will never take place. But none of us can blame them, surely, for they fought only for their world and race as we for ours—as we for ours——"

BLACK TERROR

By HENRY S. WHITEHEAD

A story of vodu—on the West Indian island of Santa Cruz strange beliefs can cause death from sheer terror

I WOKE up in the great mahogany bed of my house in Christiansted with an acute sense of something horribly wrong, something frightful, tearing at my mind. I pulled myself together, shook my head to get the sleep out of my eyes, pulled aside the mosquito-netting. That was better! The strange sense of horror which had pursued me out of sleep was fading now.

I groped vaguely, back into the dream, or whatever it had been—it did not seem to have been a dream; it was something else. I could now, somehow, localize it. I found now that I was listening, painfully, to a sustained, aching sound, like a steam calliope fastened onto one high, piercing, raucous note. I knew it could not be a steam calliope. There had been no such thing on the Island of Santa Cruz since Columbus discovered it on his Second Voyage in 1493. I got up and into my slippers and muslin bathrobe, still puzzled.

Then abruptly the note ended, cut off clean like the ceasing of the drums when the Black people are having one of their *ratas* back of the town in the hills.

Then, and only then, I knew what it was that had disturbed me. It had been a woman, screaming.

I ran out to the semi-enclosed gallery which runs along the front of my house

"Damballa," it said clearly, and moaned.

on the Copagnie Gade, the street of hard-pounded earth below, and looked down.

A group of early risen Blacks in nondescript garb was assembled down there, and the number was increasing every instant. Men, women, small Black children were gathered in a rapidly tightening knot directly in front of the house, their guttural mumbles of excitement forming a contrapuntal background to the solo of that sustained scream; for the woman, there in the center, was at it again now, with fresh breath, uttering her blood-curdling, hopeless, screeching wail, a thing to make the listener wince.

Not one of the throng of Blacks touched the woman in their midst. I listened to their guttural Creole, trying to catch some clue to what this disturbance was about. I would catch a word of the broad *patois* here and there, but nothing my mind could lay hold upon. At last it came, the clue; in a childish, piping treble; the clear-cut word, *Jumbee.*

I had it now. The screaming woman believed, and the crowd about her believed, that some evil witchery was afoot. Some enemy had enlisted the services of the dreaded witch-doctor—the *papaloi*—and something fearful, some curse or charm, had been "put on" her or some one belonging to her family. All that the word "Jumbee" had told me clearly.

I watched now for whatever was going to happen. Meanwhile I wondered why a policeman did not come along and break up this public gathering. Of course the policeman, being a Black man himself, would be as much intrigued as any of the others, but he would do his duty nevertheless. "Put a Black to drive a

Black!" The old adage was as true nowadays as in the remote days of West Indian slavery.

The woman, now convulsed, rocking backward and forward, seemed as though possessed. Her screams had now an undertone or cadence of pure horror. It was ghastly.

A policeman, at last! Two policemen, in fact, one of them Old Kraft, once a Danish top-sergeant of garrison troops. Kraft was nearly pure Caucasian, but, despite his touch of African, he would tolerate no nonsense. He advanced, waving his truncheon threateningly, barking hoarse reproaches, commands to disperse. The group of Black people began to melt away in the general direction of the Sunday Market, herded along by Sergeant Kraft's dark brown patrolman.

Now only Old Kraft and the Black woman who had screamed remained, facing each other in the street below. I saw the old man's face change out of its harsh, professional, man-handling frown to something distinctly more humane. He spoke to the woman in low tones. She answered him in mutters, not unwillingly, but as though to avoid being overheard.

I spoke from the gallery.

"What is it, Herr Kraft? Can I be of assistance?"

Old Kraft looked, recognized me, touched his cap.

"Stoopide-ness!" exploded Old Kraft, explanatorily. "The woo-man, she haf had——" Old Kraft paused and made a sudden, stiff, dramatic gesture and looked at me meaningly. His eyes said: "I could tell you all about it, but not from here."

"A chair on the gallery for the poor woman?" I suggested, nodding to him.

"Come!" said he to the woman, and she followed him obediently up the outside gallery steps while I walked across to unfasten the door at the gallery's end.

WE PLACED the woman, who seemed dazed now and kept a hand on her head, in one of my chairs, where she rocked slowly back and forth whispering to herself, and Kraft and I went inside the house, where I led him through to the dining-room.

There, at the sideboard, I did the honors for my friend Sergeant Kraft of the Christiansted Police.

"The woman's screaming awakened me, half an hour early," I began, invitingly, as soon as the sergeant had been duly refreshed and had said his final "skoal," his eyes on mine in the Danish manner.

"Yah, yah," returned Kraft, nodding a wise old head. "She tell me de Obi-man fix her right, dis time!"

This sounded promising. I waited for more.

"But joost what it iss, I can not tell at-all," continued Kraft, disappointingly, as though aware of the secretiveness which should animate a police sergeant.

"Will you have—another, Herr Kraft?" I suggested.

The sergeant obliged, ending the ceremony with another "skoal." This libation, as I had hoped, had the desired effect. I will spare Kraft's accent, which could be cut with a knife. What he told me was that this woman, Elizabeth Aagaard, living in a village estate-cabin near the Central Factory, a few miles outside of Christiansted, had a son, one Cornelis McBean. The young fellow was what is locally known as a "gallows-bird," in short a gambler, thief, and general bad-egg. He had been in the police court several times for petty offenses, and in jail in the Christiansfort more than once.

But, as Kraft expressed it, "it ain' de thievin' dat make de present difficoolty." No! It was that young Cornelis McBean had presumed beyond his station, and had

committed the crime of falling in love with Estrella Collins, the daughter of a prosperous Black storekeeper in one of Christiansted's side streets. Old Collins, utterly disapproving, and his words to McBean having had no effect whatever upon that stubborn lover, had, in short, employed the services of a *papaloi* to get rid of McBean.

"But," I protested, "I know Old Collins. I understand, of course, how he might object to the attentions of such a young ne'er-do-well, but—a storekeeper like him, a comparatively rich man, to call in a *papaloi*—it seems——"

"Him Black!" replied Sergeant Kraft with a little, significant gesture which made everything plain.

"What," said I, after thinking a little, "what particular kind of *ouanga* has Collins had 'put on' him?"

The old sergeant gave me a quick glance at that word. It is a meaningful word. In Haiti it is very common. It means both talisman and amulet; something, that is, to attract, or something to repel, to defend the wearer. But here in Santa Cruz the magic of our Blacks is neither so clear-cut nor (as some imagine) quite so deadly as the magickings of the *papalois* and the *hougans* in Haiti's infested hills with their thousands of *vodu* altars to Ougoun Badagris, to Damballa, to the Snake of far, dreadful Guinea. Over even so much as the manufacture of *ouangas* I may not linger. One can not. The details——

"It is, I think, a 'sweat-ouanga'," whispered Old Kraft, and went a shade lighter than his accustomed sunburned ivory. "De wooman allege," he continued, "that the boy sicken an' die at noon —today. For that reason she is walk into de town early, because there is no help. She desire to bewail-like, dis trouble restin' 'pon her head."

Kraft had given me all the information he possessed. He rated a reward. I approached the sideboard a third time.

"You will excuse me again, Sergeant. It is a little early in the day for me. Still, 'a man can't walk on one leg!' "

The sergeant grinned at this Santa Crucian proverb which means that a final stirrup-cup is always justified, and remarked:

"He should walk goot—on three!" After this reference to the number of his early-morning refreshments, he accepted the last of these, boomed his "skoal," and became a police sergeant once more.

"Shall I take de wooman along, sir?" he inquired as we reached the gallery where Elizabeth Aagaard still rocked and moaned and whispered to herself in her trouble.

"Leave her here, please," I replied, "and I will see that Esmerelda finds her something to eat." The sergeant saluted and departed.

"Gahd bless yo', sar," murmured the poor soul. I left her there and went to the kitchen to drop a word in the sympathetic ear of my old cook. Then I started toward my belated shower-bath. It was nearly seven by now.

AFTER breakfast I inquired for Elizabeth Aagaard. She had had food and had delivered herself at length upon her sorrows to Esmerelda and the other house-servants. Esmerelda's account established the belief that young McBean had been marked for death by one of the oldest and deadliest devices known to primitive barbarism; one which, as all Caucasians who know of it will assure you, derives its sole efficacy from the psychology of fear, that fear of the occult which has stultified the African's mind through countless generations of warfare against the jungle and the dom-

inance of his fetish-men and *vodu* priests.

As is well known to all students of African "magic," portions of the human body, such as hair, the clippings of nails, or even some garment long worn in contact with the body, is regarded as having a magical connection with the body itself and a corresponding influence upon it. A portion of the shirt which has been worn next the body and which has absorbed perspiration is especially highly regarded as material for the making of a protective charm or amulet, as well as for its opposite, planted against a person for the purpose of doing him harm. Blood, etc., could be included in this weird category.

In the case of young Cornelis McBean, this is what had been done. The *papaloi* had managed to get hold of one of Cornelis' shirts. In this he had dressed the recently buried body of an aged negro who had died a few days before, of senility. This shirt, after it had been in the coffin for three days and nights, had been cunningly put back for Cornelis to find and wear again. It had been, supposedly, mislaid. Young McBean, finding it in his mother's cabin, *had worn it again.*

And, as if this, in itself enough to cause his death from sheer terror as soon as he knew of it, was not sufficient, it had just come to the knowledge of the mother and son by the curious African method known as the Grapevine Route, that a small *ouanga,* made up of some of Cornelis' nail-parings, stubble of a week's beard collected from discarded lather after a shaving, various other portions of his exterior personality, had been "fixed" by the Christiansted *papaloi,* and "buried against him."

This meant that unless the *ouanga* could be discovered and dug up and burned, he would die at noon. As he had learned of the "burying" of the *ouanga* only the evening before, and as the Island of Santa Cruz has an area of more than eighty square miles, there was, perhaps, one chance in some hundred trillion that he could find the *ouanga,* disinter it, and render it harmless by burning. Taking into consideration that his ancestors for countless eons had given their full and firm belief to this method of murder by mental processes, it looked as though young Cornelis McBean, ne'er-do-well, Black island gallow's-bird, aspiring admirer of a young negress somewhat beyond his station in life according to African West Indian caste systems, were doomed to pass out on the stroke of twelve that day.

That, with an infinitude of detail, was the substance of the story of Elizabeth Aagaard.

I sat and looked at her, quiet and humble now, no longer the screaming fury she had appeared to be at that morning's crack of dawn. And as I looked at the poor soul, with the dumb, distressed motherhood in her dim eyes from which the unchecked tears ran down her coal-black face, it came to me that I wanted to help; that this thing was outrageous; wicked with a wickedness far surpassing the ordinary sinfulness of ordinary people. I did not want to sit by, as it were, and allow the unknown McBean to pass out at the behest of a paid rascal of a *papaloi* merely because unctuous Old Collins had decided on that method for his exit from this life—a matter involving, perhaps, fifteen dollars' fee to the witch-doctor; the collection and burial of some bits of offal somewhere on Santa Cruz.

I could imagine the young Black fellow, livid with a nameless fear, a complex of ancient, inherited, unreasonable dreads, shivering, cowering, sickened to his dim soul by what lay ahead of him, three hours away when twelve should strike from

the Christiansfort clock in the old tower by the harbor; writhing helplessly in his mind before the approach of the ghastly doom which he had brought upon himself because he had happened to fall in love with brown Estrella Collins, whose sleek brown father carried a collection-plate every Sunday up and down the aisle of his place of worship!

There was an element of absurdity in it all, now that I was actually sitting here looking at McBean's mother. She had given up now, it appeared, was resigned to the fate of her only son. "Him Black!" Old Kraft had remarked.

That thought of the collection-plate in Old Collins' pudgy, storekeeper's hands, reminded me of something.

"What is your church, Elizabeth?" I inquired suddenly.

"Me English Choorch, sar—de boy also. Him make great *shandramadan,* sar, him gamble an' perhaps a tief, but him one-time communicant, sar."

An inspiration came to me then. Perhaps I could prevail upon one of the English Church clergy to help. It was, when one came down to the brass tacks of the situation, a question of *belief.* A similar *ouanga,* "buried against" me, would have no effect whatever, because to me, such a means of getting rid of a person was merely the height of absurdity, like the charm-killing of the Polynesians by making them look at their reflection in a gourd of water and then shaking the gourd and so destroying the image! Perhaps, if Elizabeth and her son could be persuaded to do their parts . . . I spoke long and earnestly to Elizabeth.

At the end of my speech, which had emphasized the superior power of Divinity when compared to even the most powerful of the African fetishes, even the dreaded snake himself, Elizabeth, her hopes somewhat aroused, I imagined, took her departure, and I jumped into my car and ran up the hill toward the English Church rectory.

FATHER RICHARDSON, the pastor, himself a West Indian born, was at home. To him I explained the case. When I had ended——

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Canevin," said the clergyman. "If only they would realize—er—precisely what you told the woman; that Divinity is infinitely more powerful than their beliefs! I will accompany you, at once. It is, really, the release, perhaps, of a human soul. And they come to us clergy over such things as the theft of a couple of coconuts!"

Father Richardson left me, came back in two minutes with a black bag, and we started for Elizabeth Aagaard's village along a lovely shore road by the gleaming, placid, blue Caribbean.

The negro estate-village was surprizingly quiet when we arrived. The clergyman got out at Elizabeth's cabin, and I drove the car out of the way, off the road into rank guinea-grass. I saw Father Richardson, a commanding, tall figure, austere in his long, black cassock, striding in at the cabin door. I followed, and got inside just in time to witness a strange performance.

The Black boy, livid and seeming shrunken with terror, cowered under a thin blanket on a small iron bedstead. Over him towered the clergyman, and just as I came in, he stooped and with a small, sharp pocket-knife cut something loose from the boy's neck and flung it contemptuously on the hard-earth floor of the cabin. It landed just at my feet and I looked at it curiously. It was a small black bag, of some kind of cotton material, with a tuft of black cock's feathers at its top which was bound around with many windings of bright red thread. The

whole thing was about the size of an egg. I recognized it as a protective amulet.

His teeth chattering, the cold fear of death upon him, the Black boy protested in the guttural *Creole*. The clergyman answered him gravely.

"There can be no half-way measures, Cornelis. When a person asks God for His help, he must put away everything else." A mutter of assent came from the woman, who was arranging a small table with a candle in the corner of the cabin.

From his black bag Father Richardson now took a small bottle with a sprinkler arrangement at its top, and from this he cast a shower of drops upon the *ouanga* charm lying on the floor. Then he proceeded to sprinkle the whole cabin with his holy water, ending with Elizabeth, myself, and finally, the boy on the bed. As the water touched his face the boy winced visibly and shuddered, and suddenly it came over me that here was a strange matter; again, I daresay, a matter of belief. The change from the supposed protection of the charm which the priest had cut away from his neck and contemptuously tossed away, to the prescribed method of the Church must have been, somehow, and in some obscure mental fashion, a very striking one to the young fellow.

The bottle went back into the bag and now Father Richardson was speaking to the boy on the bed:

"God is intervening for you, my child, and — God's power is supreme over all things, visible *and invisible*. He holds all in the hollow of His hand. He will now put away your fear, and take this weight from your soul, *and you shall live*. You must now do your part, if you would be fortified by the Sacrament. You just purify your soul. Penance first. Then——"

The boy, now appreciably calmer, nodded his head, and the priest motioned me out, including the woman in his gesture. I opened the cabin door and stepped out, closely followed by Elizabeth Aagaard. I left her, twenty paces from her cabin, wringing her hands, her lips murmuring in prayer, while I went and sat in my car.

Ten minutes later the cabin door opened and the priest beckoned us within. The boy lay quiet now, and Father Richardson was engaged in repacking his black bag. He turned to me:

"Good-bye, and—thank you. It was very good of you to bring me."

"But—aren't you coming?"

"No"—this reflectively. "No—I must see him through." He glanced at his wrist-watch. "It is eleven-fifteen now. It was at noon you said——"

"I'm staying with you, then," said I, and sat down on a chair in the far corner of the little cabin room.

THE priest stood by the bedside, looking down at the Black boy, his back to me. The woman was, apparently, praying earnestly to herself in another corner, out of the way. The priest stooped and took the limp hand and wrist in his large, firm white hands, and counted the pulse, glancing at his watch. Then he came and sat beside me.

"Half an hour!" he murmured.

The Black woman, Elizabeth, prayed without a sound in her corner on the hard, earth floor, where she knelt, rigidly. We sat, without conversation, for a long twenty minutes during which the sense of strain in the cabin became more and more apparent to me.

Abruptly the boy's mouth fell open. The priest sprang toward him, seized and chafed the dull-black hands. The boy's head turned on the pillow and his jaws came together again, his eyelids fluttering. Then a slight spasm, perceptible through

the light covering, ran through him, and, breathing a few times deeply, he resumed his coma-like sleep. The priest now remained beside him. I counted off the minutes to noon. Nine—eight—seven—at least, three minutes before noon. When I had got that far I heard the priest's deep, monotonous voice reciting in a low tone. Listening, I caught his words here and there. He held the boy's hand while the words rolled out low and impressively.

". . . to withstand and overcome all assaults of thine adversary . . . unto thee ghostly strength . . . and that he nowise prevail against thee." Then, dropping a note, to my surprize, the clerical voice of this most Anglican of clergymen began to declaim the words of an older liturgical language: ". . . *et effugiat atque discedat omnis phantasia et nequitia . . . vel versutia diabolicae fraudis omnisque spiritus immundis adjuratis. . . .*"

The words, gaining in volume with the priest's earnestness, rolled out now. I saw that we were on the very verge of noon, and, looking back to the bed from my glance at my watch, I saw convulsion after convulsion shake the thin body on the bed. Then the cabin itself began to tremble in a sudden wind that had sprung up from nowhere. The dry palm fronds lashed back and forth outside and the whistle of the wind blew under the crazily hung door. The muslin curtain of the small window suddenly billowed like a sail. Then, suddenly, the harsh voice of the Black boy.

"Damballa!" it said, clearly, and moaned.

Damballa is one of the Greater Mysteries of the *vodu* worship. I shuddered in spite of myself.

But now higher, more commanding, came the voice of Father Richardson, positively intoning now—great sentences of Power, formulas interposed, as he himself stood, interposed, between the feeble Black boy and the Powers of Evil which seemed to seek him out for their own fell ends. The priest seemed to stretch a mantle of mystical protection over the grovelling, writhing body.

The mother lay prone on the dirt floor, now, her arms stretched out cross-like—the last, most abject gesture of supplication of which humanity is physically capable. As I glanced down at her I saw, in the extreme corner of the little room, something oddly shaped projecting from a pile of discarded garments.

It was now exactly noon. As I looked carefully at my watch, the distant stroke of the Angelus came resoundingly from the heavy bell of St. John's Church. Father Richardson ceased his recitation, laid back the boy's hand on the coverlid, and began the Angelus. I stood up at this, and, as he finished, I plucked his sleeve. The wind, curiously enough, was gone, utterly. Only the noon sun beat down suffocatingly on the iron roof of the frail cabin. Father Richardson looked at me inquiringly. I pointed to that corner, under the pile of clothes. He walked to the corner, stooped, and drew out a crude wooden image of a snake. He glanced accusingly at Elizabeth, who grovelled afresh.

"Take it up, Elizabeth," commanded Father Richardson, "break it in two, and throw it out of the doorway."

The woman crawled to the corner, lifted the thing, snapped it in two, and then, rising, her face gray with fear, opened the cabin door and threw out the pieces. We went back to the bedside, where the boy breathed quietly now. The priest shook him. He opened swimming eyes, eyes like a drunken man's. He goggled stupidly at us.

"You are alive—by the mercy of God," said the priest, severely. "Come now, get up! It is well past noon. Here! Mr.

Canevin will show you his watch. You are not dead. Let this be a lesson to you to leave alone what God has put outside your knowledge."

The boy sat up, still stupidly, the thin blanket drawn about him, on the side of the bed.

"We may as well drive back now," said Father Richardson, picking up his black bag in a business-like manner.

As I turned my car to the right just outside the estate-village stone gateway, I glanced back toward the village. It swarmed with Blacks, all crowding about the cabin of Elizabeth Aagaard. Beside me, I heard the rather monotonous voice of Father Richardson. He seemed to be talking to himself; thinking aloud, perhaps.

"Creator—of all things—visible *and invisible.*"

I drove slowly to avoid the ducks, fowls, small pigs, pickaninnies and burro-carts between the edge of town and the rectory.

"It was," said I, as I held his hand at parting, "an experience—that."

"Oh—that! Yes, yes, quite! I was thinking—you'll excuse me, Mr. Canevin—of my afternoon sick-calls. My curate isn't quite over that last attack of dengue fever. I have a full afternoon. Come in and have tea with us—any afternoon, about five."

I drove home slowly. A West Indian priest! That sudden wind—the little wooden snake—the abject fear in the eyes of the Black boy! All that had been merely in the day's work for Father Richardson, in those rather awkward, large, square hands, the hands which held the Sacrament every morning. Sometimes I would get up early and go to church myself on a weekday morning, along the soft roads through the pre-dawn dusk along with scores of soft-stepping, barefooted Blacks, plodding to church in the early dawn, going to get strength, power, to fight the age-long battle between God and Satan—the Snake—here where the sons of Ham tremble beneath the lingering fears of that primeval curse which came upon their ancestor because he dared to laugh at his father Noah.

TAM, SON OF THE TIGER

By OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

An utterly strange story of a subterranean world under the Tibetan plateau, with the very gods of Asia as actors

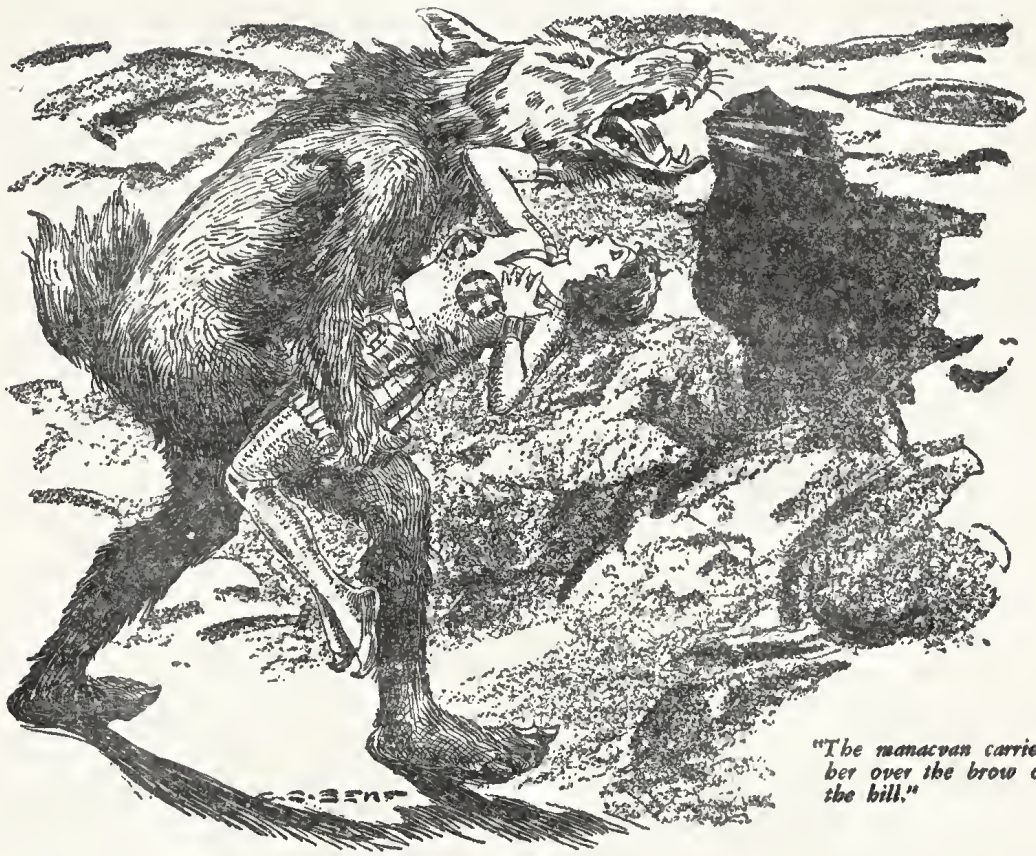
The Story Thus Far

"YOUR son, Tam, has been carried off by a white tigress."

These words greeted Major Charles Evans, American sportsman, when he returned to the Burmese village where he had left his two-year-old son, to go on a tiger hunt.

But instead of devouring the boy, as his father thought, the white tigress adopted him.

Tam's foster mother had been reared



"The manacvan carried her over the brow of the hill."

by a lama named Lozong, who had left her with her cub in a ruined pagoda in the heart of the jungle, while he went on a ten-year pilgrimage. Returning, he found the cub full-grown, and Tam, about twelve years old, living and acting like a tiger.

The erudite lama taught Tam much from his store of knowledge. In his youth he had been a brigand and a mighty fighter, and he took great delight in teaching the boy the use of weapons.

Tam made friends with many jungle creatures, including a huge elephant which he named Ganesha. At the age of twenty, he had acquired a good education, a knowledge of the jungle such as only its creatures possess, and an almost uncanny ability with weapons.

One day Ganesha strayed off into the jungle. While hunting for him, Tam rescued a beautiful girl in golden armor from a man-eating tiger. Speaking a language which resembled both Sanskrit and Tibetan, both of which Tam understood, she told him her name was Nina, and that she was princess of a country called Arya in a subterranean world called Iramatri.

They were attacked by a band of four-armed giants riding on beasts larger than elephants. The girl was carried off and Tam, stunned by a blow from a mace, was left for dead.

When Tam came to his senses, Ganesha the elephant was standing over him. Riding Ganesha, Tam followed the trail of Nina's abductors, which led through a secret passageway under the hills into a strange subterranean jungle lighted by a blue-white radiance which streamed down through the silver mists that formed the

sky. Here he was dragged down from his elephant by an andrewsarchus—a huge prehistoric carnivore.

In the meantime, Tam's father, who had sworn to devote his life to killing tigers, had seen Nina's bodyguard massacred by the four-armed white giants, or Saivas. They had trailed these strange beings, and in doing so, met Lozong, who, with the white tigress and her striped offspring, were looking for Tam.

They joined forces and followed Tam into the underground world, coming within sight of him in time for the father to rescue his son from the andrewsarchus by a long-range shot. Then Tam's father and his party were surrounded by a party of blue four-armed giants.

Not knowing that his father had saved his life, Tam continued on the trail of Nina's abductors. He was ambushed and taken, a prisoner, to a Saivan city, where he was condemned to be devoured by a hideous creature in an underground pit. Escaping from the pit, he climbed into a baggage chariot, and managed to rescue Nina from the warriors who were taking her to Siva.

Lozong and the two tigers had, meanwhile, escaped from the blue giants, and set out to find Tam's trail. He found the trail of Ganesha, and supposed that Tam was still riding it, so he followed. He was surprized to find, later, that Ganesha had been searching for Tam, as his trail presently merged with that of Tam and Nina, traveling on foot.

In the meantime, as they journeyed through the jungle, Nina told Tam that they must reach the Place of the Gods ahead of Siva, in order to petition them not to let him have the ancient and terrible weapons with which he could easily conquer all mankind. To do this they would have to go to her capital, Aryatun, first, to equip an expedition.

That night, Tam wove a nest in the treetop. On the following morning, he found some fruit and was taking it up to the sleeping girl when a marbled tree-cat leaped on him, knocking him off a limb a hundred feet above the ground.

In the meantime a band of Zargs, hairy allies of the Saivas, had found their retreat and surrounded the tree. At this moment, Ganesha, followed by the lama and the two tigers, came upon the scene.

CHAPTER 13

A Treetop City

As TAM plunged headlong toward the ground a hundred feet below him, with the marbled tree-cat clinging to his back, he instinctively flung out his hands to save himself. One came in contact with a small branch and he grasped it, clinging with all his might. It was not strong enough to bear his weight, but it served to check his downward progress for an instant. And during that instant, the claws of the creature tore loose from his back, so that, though both man and beast were still falling, the huge cat was now beneath.

While they hurtled groundward, both tried desperately to save themselves by means of intervening limbs, but none of these was large enough to afford a hold for either.

With the agility common to all felines, the big cat alighted on all fours. Scarcely had it struck the earth, ere Tam, equally agile, lit on its back with both feet. The terrific impact of his fall broke the spine of the beast, and the fact that the arched back acted as a powerful spring saved his legs from a like fate.

But though its back was broken and its hind quarters were now useless, the tree-cat was not yet dead. It had fallen into the midst of a mass of yelling, milling Zargs, and one unfortunate troglodyte

chanced to blunder against it. He was instantly seized in the powerful front paws of the dying animal, and literally chewed to bits.

Tam, meanwhile, had toppled against another Zarg, who seized him by the throat and bore him to earth with a yell of triumph. Recovering from the daze induced by his fall, Tam drew back a foot and sent it with pile-driver force into the midriff of his adversary. With a grunt of surprize and pain, the Zarg let go, and flew in a wide parabola, to alight at the feet of the charging bull elephant. Ganesha seized him with his trunk, swung him aloft for an instant, and then dashed him against a tree with bone-crushing force.

Tam was on his feet in an instant, his *tulwar* flashing in shimmering arcs. And at each flash one of the troglodytes fell.

The attacking Zargs were in confusion now. Most of them fought defensively and with only one object—escape. Several dashed back down the forest lane through which they had come. They met their doom in the form of two charging beasts, one striped, the other white, and a tall, slim yellow man in a red robe, who swung a double-curved sword with deadly efficiency.

As Lozong and the two tigers came upon the scene there remained but a dozen of the troglodytes. These, seeing the reinforcements, abandoned all attempts at even defensive fighting, and attempted flight.

Nina, who had been breathlessly watching the battle from the branches of the tree, saw their purpose and shouted to Tam:

"Don't let them get away. If they do they will bring an army of Saivas, and we shall be lost."

Fleet-footed Tam cut down three of them. The tigers pulled down four more, and Ganesha slew another. Lozong, who couldn't run fast enough to catch them, sheathed his *yatagan* and whipped bow and arrows from his quiver. Before his deadly marksmanship, two fell, but the remaining two disappeared in the dense tangle of vegetation.

Nina had, meanwhile, reached the lower branches of the tree, but was unable to descend the thick trunk.

"Two got away," she cried. "We must leave at once."

Tam held up his arms and she dropped into them. He stood her on her feet and turned to greet Lozong, who had just returned from his fruitless chase. With a glad cry, he embraced his old instructor, patted the trunk of Ganesha and stroked the heads of the two tigers, while Nina stood back, fearful of the elephant and the two ferocious beasts.

Having greeted his four faithful friends, Tam put his arm around the shoulders of the shrinking girl and introduced the lama. When he had presented Lozong, he spoke to each beast in its own language, making it plain that Nina was not only not to be harmed, but that it was to protect her as it would protect him. Gingerly she patted the friendly trunk of Ganesha at Tam's bidding, scratched Leang behind the ear, and stroked the striped back of Chiam.

Then, at a command from Tam, she was hoisted to the neck of the elephant. Lozong was lifted up behind her, and Tam led the way through the jungle while the two tigers ranged along on either side.

Presently Tam bethought himself of the fruit he had tucked in his robe. Much of it had been lost, and some was bruised and crushed, but enough remained for them to break their fast on. He fed one to Ganesha, who then hoisted him up between his two companions. They breakfasted as they rode along on the broad, swaying back. During the ride the lama told of having met a man who was un-

doubtedly Tam's father, and of the subsequent capture of Major Evans and his party by the four-armed blue giants. Tam was surprized and delighted to learn that his father was looking for him, and asked Lozong a thousand questions about him. Nina was overjoyed to learn that Dhava, the faithful captain of her bodyguard, was still alive, as she had believed him slain with the others.

"I don't think Vishnu will have them executed," she said, when the lama had finished his account of the capture of the major's party. "That is not the way of the Preserver. And if they are still alive when I get back to my capital, I'm sure I can persuade the Lord of the Vaishnavas to release them."

UNDER the urging of his young master, Ganesha maintained a swift pace all day long. But he commenced to weary when the orange glow of evening began to replace the blue-white day blaze. Presently they came to the bank of a small stream where the elephant and tigers drank eagerly.

"The beasts must have food and rest," Tam told Nina. "Do you think it will be safe to stop here for a while?"

"We have a good start," she replied, "as the Zargs were compelled to first find the Saivas, then take them back to where they discovered us before they could even begin to follow the trail. I believe it will be reasonably safe to stop for a short time. And when it is dark they will not be able to trail us until the advent of the night-light. As for food and rest, we all need both."

The three dismounted stiffly, for it had not been easy to cling to the broad, swaying back all day. Ganesha instantly shuffled away to forage for himself. The two tigers slunk silently into the forest shadows—hunting.

When the girl and the two men had drunk their fill at the stream, Tam borrowed Lozong's bow and arrows and went off into the jungle in search of meat.

The orange glow turned rapidly to red as he silently trod the soft, moist leaf-mold which formed the jungle carpet. With bow and arrow in readiness, he kept to the bank of the stream for a time, looking for some creature that might prove edible. Serpents and lizards there were, of a thousand varieties, ranging in size from a length of a few inches to gigantic and formidable proportions. The smaller ones did not look particularly appetizing, and some of the larger monsters appeared fully capable of turning the tables on him if he should seek to utilize them for food.

Presently, however, he saw a creature which gave promise of a dish that would attract an epicure—a gigantic green frog about seven feet in length, squatting on a flat ledge of stone that overhung the stream.

Drawing the arrow back to his ear, he took careful aim at one large, gold-rimmed eye, and let fly. The missile sped true to the mark, and with a startled croak, the big batrachian flopped into the shallow stream beneath the ledge, its brain transfixed. Tam plunged into the water, and seizing the still-kicking creature by one leg, dragged it up on the bank. Whipping out his *tulwar,* he cut off all four legs. Then he twisted a grass rope by which he slung them over his shoulder, and started back toward where he had left his companions, carrying enough meat from one frog to feed a squad of hungry men.

As he cautiously made his way along the bank of the stream, ever on the lookout for a sudden attack by one of the dangerous denizens of this strange jungle, he heard the snap of a twig, the scraping of bark, and the rustling of leaves overhead. He looked up and saw, peering down at

him, its beady eyes glistening beneath its beetling brows, an enormous monkey fully as large as a tall man. Except for its immense size, it might have been an ordinary hanuman monkey of the Burmese and Indian jungles. Its hands and face were black like those of its smaller outer-earthly prototype, and it was covered with grayish brown hair.

But there was something about this monkey, other than its great size, which distinguished it from its simian cousins of the upper jungles. For in its glittering eyes was a look of intelligence that was strangely human. Strapped about its hairy waist was a belt from which there hung a curved knife like an Indian *kukrie*. Its left hand held a bundle of short javelins, and from its right another, even as he looked, hurtled toward him.

Tam dodged just in time—the keen weapon grazing his shoulder and plunging deep into the leaf-mold at his feet. Then his bow twanged, and the big simian came tumbling and crashing through the branches to the ground. He was about to bend over his fallen enemy when another javelin came hurtling down from the higher branches. Whipping a second arrow from the sheath, he aimed at a moving patch of brownish gray, and let fly, but evidently missed, as his second antagonist disappeared in the shadows.

For some time he waited, another arrow in readiness, but saw no sign of the second simian, which had evidently come to the conclusion that, in this instance, discretion was the better part of valor.

Examining the beast he had shot, Tam found that his arrow had pierced its heart. He appropriated its javelins and belted its *kukrie* about his waist. Then he returned to camp.

He found Lozong and Nina sitting beside a small fire which the former had started. In a little glade near by, Ganesha was plucking and devouring leaves and young twigs. On the bank of the stream, Leang, the white tigress, and Chiam, her striped offspring, were tearing at the remains of a large purple lizard they had killed.

Using some sharpened green sticks which the lama had prepared, the three of them grilled the white frog-meat over the coals. They found it delicious—fully as tender and delicately flavored as the frog legs of outer earth.

While they ate, Tam told Nina about his encounter with the giant simians, and showed her the weapons he had taken from his fallen foe.

"We must be near the border of Hanumavarta," she said. "You have slain one of the subjects of the monkey-god, Hanuman. It is a pity you did not slay the other, for now Hanuman will be notified of our coming. It is impossible to turn back—there are too many Zargs and Saivas behind us. And our passage through Hanumavarta will be doubly hazardous by the fact that we have been discovered."

"How do we get to Hanumavarta?" asked Tam.

With the butt of her green stick, she drew a crooked line in the earth beside the fire.

"This," she said, "represents the River Hin, a tributary of the great River Ind. Where the Hin branches off from the Ind, Hanumavarta begins. The Hin separates Hanumavarta from Saivarta, while the Ind, the river you crossed when taken into the city of the Saivas, separates Saivarta from Vaishnavarta. It also serves as the dividing line between Hanumavarta and Vaishnavarta, and separates Brahmavarta from Arya. It rises in Indravarta somewhere north of Indratun, and empties into the face of the cliff down which you came when you entered Iramatri."

DARKNESS fell before they had finished their meal. They cooked the surplus meat to preserve it, and wrapped it in the broad leaves of a plant resembling the pandanus. It was then decided that they would sleep until moonrise, or the advent of the violet-silver night-light which corresponded to moonlight in this strange world, after which they would set out once more.

With the elephant browsing near by and the two tigers sleeping only a short distance away, they did not think it necessary to post a guard. Lozong, who had the rare faculty of being able to awake whenever he willed to do so, was to call the others.

It seemed to Tam that he had slept for only a few moments when he felt the hand of the lama on his shoulder, shaking him. The violet-silver night-light had not yet appeared, and beyond the ruddy ring cast by the dying embers of the campfire was absolute darkness.

"What's the matter?" he mumbled, sleepily. "The light hasn't come yet. Why have you awakened me?"

"Matter enough," replied Lozong. "The princess is gone! Some one or something carried her off while we slept!"

Tam was wide awake in an instant. He threw a handful of dry twigs on the fire and stirred them until they blazed up brightly. Then he carefully examined the spot where the girl had been lying when he fell asleep. With a sudden exclamation, he caught up a wisp of grayish brown hair and showed it to Lozong. The lama glanced at it, and instantly comprehending its import, nodded.

Tam dropped the hair into the fire and examined the bough which overhung the place where the girl had been sleeping. Here he found what he had expected to find — broken twigs and bruised bark. Nor was there a trace of monkey-tracks on the ground about the fire. It was quite apparent that the girl had been carried off through the treetops by a minion of Hanuman.

"There is no trail," said Lozong. "How can we follow?"

"But there is a trail," Tam replied. "It leads through the treetops. When the silver light comes I shall be able to see and follow. You can come along on the ground with the beasts."

"But suppose I should lose you. How could I locate you again?"

"The Princess has told us that the country of Hanuman lies across the river. No doubt she has been taken there, so we must find a way to cross. When I have found her I will travel on the ground. I will then look for your trail and you can look for mine."

AS SOON as the silver light flooded the dark jungle, Tam sprang into the tree and set off on the trail left by Nina's abductor, swinging through the branches and along rope-like lianas, with ape-like agility. He was more than thankful, now, for the many hours spent in the treetops of the Burmese jungle with the monkeys and gibbons, for without that training his quest for Nina would have been hopeless.

In addition ro the *tulwar* and mace he had taken from the Saiva guard, Tam now carried the *kukrie* and javelins of the monkey—the former in his belt and the latter slung in a bundle across his back by their carry-thong. Because they were delayed by obstacles on the ground which they were forced to circle, Tam soon left the lama and the three beasts far behind.

The trail followed the winding bank of the stream on which they had camped, and soon brought him to its mouth, where it emptied into the River Hin. This stream was narrower than the Ind, so that in some places the treetops and lianas arched completely across it.

He crossed on a swaying liana, the top of which was worn smooth and nearly denuded of bark by much use. On the other side were many monkey trails, crossing and recrossing each other in a network that was most confusing. They slowed him up considerably.

The advent of the blue-white day-blaze found him far past the River Hin in the tangled jungles of Hanumavarta, with the trail becoming more difficult to follow all the time. Tired, thirsty, and hungry, he paused for a rest, munching the pieces of cooked frog's flesh he had brought with him.

Rested, and with his hunger satisfied, but with his thirst still upon him, Tam resumed the trail. As he penetrated deeper and deeper into the country of Hanuman he was forced many times to hide behind tree trunks, thick limbs, or dense foliage, while large parties of monkey warriors, armed with *kukries* and javelins, passed overhead.

About midday, the fresh scent of the trail told him that he had almost caught up with his quarry. Above, and all around him, he heard a medley of chattering, whooping, and loud singing notes which told him that a large band of monkeys was near. Then the trail led him up to the very treetops, and he came upon a sight that filled him with amazement. For here, over a space that covered several acres, the branches and lianas were interwoven to form a great level mat of green.

Projecting above this arboreal greensward, and woven from the same living materials, were fully a hundred conical huts with low entrances. They were placed in orderly rows, all of which radiated from a large, round central hut like spokes from the hub of a wheel. The place swarmed with giant simians of the kind he had seen the evening before, both male and female, and was overrun with monkey children of various sizes and ages, the youngest clinging to their mothers or being carried by them.

But the sight that made his blood boil was the slender, gold-clad form of Nina draped limply over the shoulder of a stalwart warrior who marched toward the central hut, followed by a gesticulating, chattering company of the hairy rabble.

With a snarl of rage he unslung his bundle of javelins and dashed forward. But he had not taken more than ten steps when there was a harsh, guttural call from behind him, which told him that his presence had been discovered.

He turned and hurled a javelin at a black face, framed in grayish brown hair, which peered at him from the door of a hut. The weapon flew true to the mark, but it stilled the voice of his betrayer too late.

As he turned to resume his pursuit of Nina's abductor, the green huts spewed forth a whole army of simian warriors, aroused by that guttural cry.

Ringed by the hairy fighters which were swiftly closing in on him, Tam quickly pivoted, hurled javelin after javelin until his hands were empty. They rushed in, then, and he knew that further fighting against such odds was hopeless. Nevertheless, he whipped out his *tulwar*, resolving that if die he must, he would sell his life dearly.

CHAPTER 14

The Judgment of Vishnu

AT THE command: "Up with them, warriors," from the lips of the leader of the four-armed blue giants, Tam's father, Major Evans, was swung up before one of the mounted Vaishnavas. Doctor Green was lifted to the saddlebow of the warrior who rode beside him, and the next two warriors in line carried Yusuf and Dhava, similarly seated.

"Where are they taking us?" the major asked, as he had been unable to understand the conversation of the blue ones.

"To Vaishnatun, capital of Vaishnavarta," replied the doctor. "We are to be judged by Vishnu, himself."

"I suppose we'll be boiled in oil, or something pleasant like that," said the major.

"Perhaps," replied his friend. "But I would rather stand accused before the throne of Vishnu than any of these other heathen gods. They call him 'The Preserver,' you know. If that means anything we may be able to get out of this alive."

"There's more than one way of preserving things—or people," retorted the major. "The Egyptians had a rather efficient method. But it's no use trying to cross our bridges before we come to them."

"Rather let us hope for the best and make the most of this strange adventure," said the scientist. "Already we have made vast and undreamed-of discoveries, and I am convinced that we are on the threshold of still greater revelations. I find the experience intensely interesting."

"And so should I, purely from the standpoint of adventure, were it not for one thing."

"What's that?"

"I'm worried about Tam. If I could be sure that he is alive and well, nothing else would matter. I know I hit the beast that had him down, but whether I killed it or not is the question. If I didn't, it surely must have torn him to bits."

"Oh, I don't know. Judging from what Lozong told us about the lad, he's quite some scrapper. The old lama said he had vanquished more than one tiger, barehanded. And an andrewsarchus wouldn't have much of an edge on a tiger, if any. I'd pull myself together and quit worrying if I were you. Worry has never helped any one."

"Pretty hard thing for a father to do, Doc, but I'll try."

At this point the cavalcade plunged into a narrow jungle path which necessitated travel in single file, and the conversation of the two friends was cut off.

After several hours of this they emerged on a broad stone highway, where the riders re-formed into four columns and put their huge beasts to the gallop.

There followed mile after mile of hard roadway in endless procession, cutting through the dense jungle like a gleaming white river winding through a green-walled canyon.

Major Evans was a seasoned rider on almost every kind of beast that man used for transportation on the outer earth, but the queer pitching gait of the creature on which he now rode was unlike anything he had previously encountered. Despite his endeavor to accustom himself to it, he soon grew extremely weary and saddle-sore. The fact that he had no stirrups and that the narrow saddlebow on which he sat had not been designed as a seat, added to his discomfort. Nor could he steady himself by gripping the pommel, because of his bound hands. But whenever he lurched precariously, one of the four hands of the giant blue rider behind him grasped his arm and prevented his falling.

Presently the cavalcade came to a stop at a wayside station. Here grooms rushed out to take care of the animals, and the warrior riders, dismounting, entered a low shed where food and drink were spread for them. The bound prisoners were unceremoniously flung into a corner, with a guard set over them, nor were they offered refreshment of any kind until their captors had eaten their fill. Then their hands were unbound, and the remains of the feast were placed before them.

"Hospitable people, these Vaishnavas," drawled the major, tasting the flavor of a mug of something that looked and smelled much like ale. "Eat all they can hold before they serve the guests.

"Must be an old Vaishnavan custom," replied the doctor. "But the food and drink are not so bad."

"Quite adequate," agreed the major, helping himself to a second slab of cold meat. "This haunch of baluchitherium—or is it protoceratops?—is delicious. And the ale would do credit to any pub in jolly old England."

"I believe I could learn to like these big blue devils in spite of their rough ways," said the scientist as the foaming beverage sent a rosy glow through him.

Yusuf, the major's Pathan servant, ate in silence. So did Dhava, the Aryan.

The meal over, the hands of the four prisoners were bound once more. Then they were hoisted up before the blue riders, and the journey was resumed.

For many weary hours they rode through the green jungle canyon. At length, when the blue-white day-blaze began to fade into the orange glow of twilight, a great walled city loomed before them. With the exception of the immense and striking central building, the sole material employed appeared to be blue granite. The lower part of the central edifice was also of this material. But up from its roof and completely dominating the scene, there towered three lofty spires. The one in the center was of burnished gold, and was slightly taller than the other two, which were of gleaming silver.

"Quite some city," remarked the major, who was riding neck and neck with the doctor once more. "And look at those spires!"

"Gigantic symbols of Vishnu," replied the scientist. "That must be his temple or palace."

Shortly thereafter they came to the massive metal gates of the city. There was a ringing challenge from the watchtower, answered by the chief of the warriors who rode at the head of the cavalcade. Then the gates swung open and the procession moved into the city.

Straight up to the triple-spired building they rode, while such grotesque, multi-limbed blue monsters as happened to be on the street paused to stare at the strange prisoners.

When they drew up before the central building, all the giant riders dismounted, turning their big white mounts over to grooms, who led them down a ramp which evidently led to one of the basement floors of the edifice. All the riders but four were dismissed by the chief. Then, followed by the four, each of whom guarded one of the prisoners, he led the way up a flight of granite steps to a doorway guarded by two soldiers. Exchanging salutes with these, he strode down a long hallway, his warriors hurrying the prisoners after him.

There were challenges and salutes at various points, as different guards were encountered along the way. But at length they came to an arched opening where they were halted and examined by an officer.

"Whom have you here?" he asked the chief of the warriors.

"Four prisoners to be judged by His Majesty," replied the chief. "One is an Aryan and three are from the outer world. I found them trespassing on our game preserves."

"Wait here," directed the officer, and withdrew. About twenty minutes later, he returned.

"His Glorious Majesty, Vishnu, Brother of Indra and God of the Shining

Firmament, is ready to judge," he announced. "Advance."

The major and his three companions were suddenly forced down to their knees. Their warrior conductors also knelt, as did the chief and the officer. Then, walking on its knees, the little procession made its way into an immense arched throneroom or chapel. The Vaishnavas and Aryan, whose knees were calloused, were evidently accustomed to this means of locomotion, but the prisoners from outer earth found the surface of the floor tiles hard on their kneecaps.

They passed down a central aisle between two large groups of kneeling worshippers, to a position before a high throne on which sat the only figure in the entire place that was not kneeling. Vishnu, like his warriors, was dark blue in color, and four-armed. His four hands held a heavy mace, a conch shell, a *chakra,* and a lotus blossom. From time to time he passed the lotus beneath his nostrils as if inhaling its perfume. His blue features were impassive, almost as if carved from stone, but were given an unearthly expression by a trident, evidently painted on the forehead, the central prong of which was yellow and the outer prongs white. He wore a golden crown in which many bright jewels sparkled. Countless other gems glittered and scintillated on his golden collar and armlets, and on finger and toe rings. He sat with his legs crossed and the soles of the feet turned upward. On each side of the throne knelt a number of richly decked Vaishnavas, evidently nobles, ecclesiastics and court dignitaries.

"What charge, Kushti?"

The lips of the being on the throne had moved to ask the question, but the other features remained motionless.

"The Aryan twice passed through the portal and trespassed on Your Majesty's Lands. The others, men of the outer world, passed once through the portal, and also unlawfully entered Your Majesty's game preserves. When we rode up to arrest them they slew twenty of my warriors with strange thunder-sticks which they brought with them from the outer world."

"You have brought the thunder-sticks?"

"I have, O Great God of the Shining Firmament."

"Good. I will have my sages examine them. And now to the judgment. Your name, Aryan?"

"Dhava," replied the kneeling prisoner.

"You have heard the charges of Kushti. Do you deny your guilt?"

"As captain of her guard, I followed my princess," replied Dhava. "If that be guilt, then am I guilty."

"I have been informed of the movements of the Princess of Arya," said Vishnu. "It seems that she would start trouble in Iramatri, perhaps a bloody war, by opposing the Lord Siva in his projected conquest of the outer earth. This trouble and this war, I, The Preserver, am bound to prevent by such means as lie within my power. As for the conquest of the outer earth, I am not interested either in aiding or preventing it. For the most part, the outer earthlings have forgotten the gods, and it is meet that the gods should turn their faces from them."

"But Siva has captured the Princess—is holding her prisoner. When her people learn of this, they will arise in their wrath and smite the Saivas, for they all love the Princess. There will be a war such as Iramatri has never known."

"That," said Vishnu, "is precisely the reason I shall prevent their learning of it. No living Aryan knows of this, save you. And you I will detain—setting you at a useful occupation to keep you out of mischief. And now, what of these

others? Can they speak for themselves, or must our language be interpreted?"

"I will speak for my friends and myself," replied the doctor.

"Good. What are you outer earthlings doing in Iramatri, and why were you trespassing on my lands? Never mind your names. They will be recorded later, and are probably unpronounceable, anyway."

"My friend here," said the doctor, indicating the major, "came to Iramatri in search of his son Tam, known as the son of the white tigress, who entered your world in order to rescue the Princess of Arya from the Saivas. The dark-skinned man, his servant, and I, his friend, accompanied him. We found Dhava, stunned, among the massacred soldiers of the Princess, and he acted as our guide."

"The son of the white tigress!" exclaimed Vishnu. "This is most extraordinary! We have a prophecy . . . but no matter. No weak outer-earthling could possibly fulfil it."

"Outer-earthling he is, but you miscall him weak," retorted the scientist. "With my own eyes I saw a dead tiger, the skull of which he had split in two with a single blow of his *tulwar*. And it is said that he has vanquished many other tigers, barehanded."

"These things, also, are mentioned in the prophecy," said Vishnu. "But I can not credit them to any outer-earthling without a thorough investigation. In the meantime, you and your companions will be detained with this Aryan—and will be given work, that the time may pass quickly for you. I have spoken."

"His Majesty has spoken," chorused the kneeling occupants of the room. "All glory, might and majesty to Vishnu the Preserver, God of the Shining Firmament and Brother of Indra."

The audience over, the prisoners were backed out of the throneroom on their knees. Then they were taken away to a building in another part of the city where their hands were unbound and they were given food and drink. Here they were interrogated by an officer, who made a careful record of their names, ages, weights, heights, etc. When he had finished with them they were taken to the smiths, who bolted heavy slave collars around their necks. This done, they were herded into a pen with a number of other slaves, and left for the night.

EARLY the next morning, as soon as they were fed, they were escorted by armed guards along with a number of other slaves, to a place where a building was being erected. Most of the slaves were Vaishnavas, though there were represented among them also the red, four-armed giants of Brahmavarta, the Saivas, the minions of Indra, and quite a few Aryans. The Vaishnava slaves were criminals, impressed into slavery for petty offenses, and the others were trespassers on the lands of Vishnu, caught in the act and condemned to slavery for life.

The major and his three companions were put to work with sixteen other slaves under the direction of an overseer armed with a short-handled trident. Their task was squaring immense oblong blocks of blue granite for use in the building under construction. They were furnished with chisels, mallets and saws for the purpose. Although the work was not nearly so hard as that of the masons who were required to lift and fit the bulky slabs in place, it was so difficult for those unaccustomed to it that the four were exhausted that evening when they dragged their weary way back to the slave enclosure, herded by the guards.

That evening, after they had eaten and drunk, the four flung themselves on the

ground in a little group apart from the others.

"Nice pleasant job his four-armed majesty picked out for us," grunted the doctor, massaging the muscles of his arms. "Looks as if we're in for life, too."

"I'd hate to think of having to spend the rest of my days dressing down blue granite," said the major.

"You may as well begin to think of it now as any time," replied the scientist. "I've been mulling over it all day, and I can't see where there's a possible way out for us."

"I refuse to believe there's no way out," declared the major. "Like you, I've been thinking the thing over, and a plan has occurred to me. It's a bit indefinite, as yet. And I know it will be damned dangerous—may, in fact, get us all killed. But if it works, there's a chance for some of us, at least, to get away. For my part, I'd as soon rot as go on indefinitely, smoothing off stones for these blue devils."

"And so would I," agreed his friend. "Let's have the plan. Don't worry about eavesdroppers, as nobody but Yusuf can understand us."

And so, while the weary slaves snored around them, the major outlined his plan to his friend and his servant. Later, the doctor translated it for Dhava, the Aryan, who thought it might be practicable.

Then all turned in, that they might rest and strengthen themselves for the ordeal of the morrow.

CHAPTER 15

The Dog-faced Men

As TAM stood, *tulwar* in hand, surrounded by the ring of giant monkey warriors and resolving to sell his life as dearly as possible, he suddenly saw a means of escape. The loosely woven mat of branches and lianas on which he stood was not more than a foot thick. A deft slash, and his blade bit clear through it, making a clean cut a yard in length. Two more swift blows, and he had cut a triangular hole amply large to admit his body.

He sheathed his *tulwar* and leaped through the opening just as the charging simians, detecting his plan, hurled a shower of javelins at him. The weapons tore into the mat of branches all around him as he dropped, but his quickness had saved him from injury. He was not yet out of danger, however. As he swung away through the dense tangle of branches and vines beneath the woven platform, a chattering mob of grayish-brown forms squeezed through the hole after him. Javelins cut the twigs and leaves around him, and thudded into the larger branches, as he scurried for the dark area beneath the center of the arboreal city. Here, absolute darkness reigned, even when the day-blaze was at its brightest, and there was some hope of eluding his pursuers.

For more than an hour, Tam played a dangerous game of hide and seek with the minions of Hanuman, always hiding in the darkest part of the area beneath the arboreal city. Presently he found a place, just beneath the woven floor, which was surrounded by such a thick tangle of branches and vines and reached by such a circuitous route that he felt momentarily secure, and paused to rest.

Above and all around him was the simian chatter, loudest just above him. During the excitement of his discovery of the arboreal city, and the subsequent pursuit, he had paid no special attention to the *meaning* of this chatter. But now as he rested and listened, there came to him memories of the language of the relatively tiny hanumans of the upper jungles, which he had learned to understand and to duplicate. The tones of these large

subterranean cousins of theirs were deeper and more voluminous, but the language was similar. In it, however, were mixed a number of early Aryan words, resembling the speech of the human inhabitants of Iramatri. And it was evident that a violent quarrel was taking place above him.

The meaning of this jumbled, half-human speech became clear to him as he listened. He heard one brute say:

"The golden *sá** should be given to me, O chief, as it was I who captured her."

"The *sá* is mine, hunter," replied a deep, rumbling voice. "All things brought in from the chase belong to your chief, who is responsible only to the great god, Hanuman."

"But the *sá* is not a thing of the chase, brought in to be eaten. I would take her to mate, like any *sá* of our race, as is the custom when one of our warriors captures a strange *sá*."

"The golden *sá* is not of our race, and the rule does not apply. Nor did you win her in combat. You only stole her as she slept, and carried her away. Leave the *sá* with me, and go to your hut. I have spoken."

A chorus of voices said:

"The chief has spoken. Come, hunter, let us depart."

But the hunter replied:

"Depart then, warriors of the council. I remain to claim the *sá* from our chief by combat, as is my right."

"This is a *sá* of another race, and you can not so claim her," replied the rumbling voice of the chief.

"Justice, warriors of the council," cried the hunter. "I appeal to you from this unjust decision."

"A *sá* is a *sá*," said one. "Her race should not matter."

"It does not matter," said another.

"It is his right to challenge," said a third.

"According to law, the chief must fight him for her," said a fourth.

"Enough," rumbled the chief. "I will fight this upstart. I only wished to spare him, but since he insists, I will kill him. Then the *sá* will be mine. I have spoken."

"The chief has spoken," echoed the councilors. "We will go outside and wait for the winner to announce his victory."

DURING this conversation, Tam had stealthily drawn himself up until he could peer through the interlaced branches which formed the floor above him. He was looking into the single large room which formed the interior of the central hut toward which Nina was being carried when he was driven from the city by the simian warriors.

While he watched, the councilors, twelve in all, departed through the arched doorway. The last to go out dropped several vines across the opening, thus deepening the gloom in the interior of the hut.

In its center loomed two shadowy forms. The chief, a magnificent, heavily muscled specimen, drew his *kukrie*, and unbuckling his belt, flung it into a corner. The hunter, though fully as tall as his chief, was more slender and wiry. He also drew his *kukrie* and flung his belt away. Then, crouching low, their weapons held before them, the two sprang at each other, snarling between bared yellow fangs and hurling forceful simian invective.

At first, Tam was unable to locate Nina, but by creeping around beneath the floor he was finally able to see her, lying against the wall of the hut, bound hand and foot.

While the two contestants fought, he

*She.

swiftly made his way to a position just beneath her, and drawing his *kukrie*—his long *tulwar* being useless in so cramped a space—hacked and slashed away the interwoven branches and vines beside her until he had cut a good-sized hole.

Cautiously he drew himself up and peered through the opening. The two embattled simians were rolling over and over on the floor, a mass of flying feet and tails. They tore at each other with their yellow fangs and stabbed and cut with their *kukries,* until both were covered with blood. Yet neither, it seemed, had been able to injure the other vitally.

Assuring himself that the two contestants were quite busy with their own affairs, Tam turned his attention to the bound girl. She was lying with her face toward the wall, so had not seen him. Nor had she heard him cut the hole in the floor, because of the noise made by the fighting simians.

He leaned over, and placing his mouth close to her ear, whispered:

"It's Tam. Make no outcry and don't be afraid. I'll loose you in a moment."

Deftly he slashed the bonds that prisoned her ankles and wrists. She sat up, flexing her cramped arms. But before he could lower her through the orifice he had cut, there came a terrific roar from the center of the room. The chief had just succeeded in slaying the hunter, and upon turning to claim the prize of combat, had espied Tam. Covered with blood and foam, and brandishing his gory *kukrie,* he was a fearsome sight as he leaped at this new and unexpected rival.

There was no time to draw his *tulwar,* but Tam extended his *kukrie* in time to meet the onslaught of the charging monster. Deftly he parried a slash designed to disembowel him, and followed through with a thrust that would have spitted the monkey chief through the middle had the brute not nimbly leaped back. Then they circled and clinched, each grasping the knife-wrist of the other, and striving to reach his enemy's jugular with his teeth.

Tam soon found that he was getting the worst of it in this type of fighting, because of the long, sharp fangs of his adversary. Suddenly changing his tactics, he swung his head to one side, lowered it, and butted the big simian in the side of the jaw. The hairy monster broke from the clinch and staggered back, shaking his head to clear it. But when Tam leaped in to finish his supposedly dazed enemy, he was met by a trick he had never before encountered.

Half turning, the big monkey suddenly whipped his long, muscular tail around Tam's legs, squeezing them together and throwing him heavily. As he struck the floor, he lost his *kukrie,* which dropped into the interstices between the woven vines and branches.

With a cry of triumph the monkey chief leaped upon his fallen enemy, and raised his *kukrie* aloft to plunge it into his heart. Tam grasped the knife wrist with his left hand, and unhooking his mace from his belt with the right, swung it back and drove a smashing blow at the snarling face above him. The heavy, rugged knob bit clear through the simian forehead and smashed into the brain. The *kukrie* dropped from nerveless fingers, and the hairy monster slumped forward on his intended victim without a sound.

Tam flung the gory carcass from him and staggered to his feet. Appropriating the chief's *kukrie* and a bundle of javelins he found near by, he hurried over to Nina, who had by this time recovered the use of her limbs, which had been numbed by the tight bonds.

After helping Nina through the hole he had cut in the floor he went back, and

dragging the fallen monkey chief up beside it, let himself down. Then he pulled the huge carcass over the hole so that it would be completely concealed until such time as the simians should decide to remove their fallen chief. This might delay them only a few moments, or for several hours, but any delay at all would give the two fugitives that much more of an opportunity to get away.

Tam slung the javelins over his back, using the long cord with which they had been wrapped. Then, catching Nina up with one arm, he began the long descent to the ground, dropping from limb to limb in the darkness as silently as a shadow, despite the weight he carried.

All about him, and sometimes startlingly close at hand, he could hear the simian warriors calling to each other, and judged that not less than a hundred were engaged in the search for him. As he drew nearer the ground the cries grew fainter and fainter, apprising him that the main search was in the upper reaches of the jungle. This was as he had expected, and clinched his decision to try to get away on the ground.

Presently his bare feet alighted on the carpet of rotted branches and leaves that covered the soil. Here he stood Nina on her feet.

"Let's have a look at that little instrument of yours," he said, "so we can tell which way to go."

She took the little box from her belt pouch, and together they studied the luminous dial.

"We are only a few *varsads* north of the River Ind," she told him, after consulting the instrument, "and about seventy *varsads* south of Hanumatun, the capital of Hanumavarta. I think it will be best to strike out for the Ind and follow its western bank."

Tam, whose sense of direction never failed him either in darkness or light, instantly set out on the new course, leading Nina by the hand through the murky tangle. Presently, as they drew away from the area beneath the center of the tree city, it grew lighter and they were able to distinguish objects around them. This made it necessary for them to observe the greatest caution in order not to be seen, and Tam was compelled to put into play every art of concealment known to jungle-dwellers in order that they might not be apprehended by the clever, bright-eyed searchers from the treetop city.

Had he been alone, this would not have been easy. But with Nina in her shining armor it was rendered trebly difficult. At length he hit upon the plan of draping her with leafy branches. These broke the glint of the day-blaze on her armor in the open places, and when she moved in the undergrowth it was as if she had become a part of it.

After several hours of arduous travel they reached the bank of the great River Ind. Here they found a little inlet, screened by an arch of overhanging branches and lianas. They drank and threw themselves down to rest.

Presently Tam crawled out on a low limb hanging over the water, and after much perseverance, succeeded in spearing several small fish. When the orange glow in the sky announced the advent of darkness, he kindled a small cooking-fire, making a spark by striking the back of his *kukrie* against a stone, and using very dry material so that there would be little smoke, a large column of which might have betrayed their position to the searching monkey warriors.

The fish, grilled over the hot coals, were rather bony, but a most welcome and delicious meal, nevertheless, to the two tired and hungry travelers.

After they had eaten, Tam wove a nest in the upper branches of a tree, completing it before darkness set in. Then he

covered the embers of their fire with moist earth, and they retired for the night.

Despite the terrific din made by the river monsters and the strange and terrible denizens of the jungle, they slept the sleep which utter exhaustion brings.

The following day they crossed the stone highway which connects Hanumatun with Vaishnatun, and three days later, still following the Ind and subsisting on fruits, and the fish and game which fell to Tam's javelins, they came to the River Bra, a small tributary of the Ind which formed the boundary between Hanumavarta and Brahmavarta. About a mile back from its mouth they were able to ford it at a shallow rapid. Swimming at the deeper places was almost sure to be fatal on account of the monsters lurking in its waters. Even crossing on an improvised raft above the lairs of these great saurians would have been extremely hazardous. But in the shallows they could easily be seen, and therefore avoided.

ONCE they were in Brahmavarta, the character of the terrain underwent a considerable change. Instead of the dense tree-clad jungles they now came to a low country, clothed for the most part with jointed grasses, and sparsely dotted with clumps of cryptogamous trees and shrubs. In the lower, marshy places, great dinosaurs wallowed among gigantic fungi and other primordial vegetation. Above their heads pterodactyls sailed on membranous wings. And mighty reptilian herbivora cropped the grass or stripped the leaves from the trees and shrubs around them.

The very air was charged with moldy, miasmatic odors, punctuated with whiffs that were reminiscent of snake dens Tam had visited, or the lairs of crocodiles into which he had poked.

Stalking on their powerful hind legs with their armor-plated heads towering high above the ground, tyrannosaurs, tyrants of the reptilian world, moved ponderously about, feared by the greater as well as the lesser herbivora, and from time to time pouncing on such prey as suited their fancy, gripping it with their relatively tiny forefeet and rending and tearing it with their immense, steam-shovel jaws. There were frightful bellowings and roarings, and the screeches of panic-stricken ostrich dinosaurs, queer reptiles resembling the birds for which they are named, as they swiftly fled from the scenes of carnage.

Through this weird country of fearful sights, smells and sounds, Tam and Nina moved with the utmost caution, avoiding the swampy areas and taking advantage of such cover as the place afforded. In stretches where the grass was short they were often compelled to worm their way along the ground in order not to be seen. Where the vegetation was taller, they progressed more swiftly and comfortably, though they were constantly compelled to turn aside for fearsome creatures in their path, the presence of which Tam, with his jungle-trained and abnormally acute senses, could usually detect long before they were in sight.

It took them two days to cross this marsh of primitive vegetation swarming with prehistoric monsters. During this time they had not eaten, and their only drink had been the warm water they scooped from stagnant pools, muddy-tasting and scummed with algæ. It was, therefore, with a feeling of marked relief that they reached higher ground—a formation of low, rugged hills on which were many outcroppings of gray stone. The vegetation was sparse, and the only trees were a few stunted conifers. Here they decided to turn back toward the Ind,

where they could get clear flowing water to drink and fish for food.

They were passing through a grove of bushy trees when Tam suddenly heard a swishing noise above his head. Before he could even look up, a noose settled around his neck and was jerked taut. Then he was hauled up, kicking and strangling, by some one or something hidden in the thick foliage above him.

Half choked though he was, Tam did not lose his presence of mind. Grasping the rope with his left hand, he whipped his *kukrie* from his belt with his right. A deft slash freed him, and he dropped to the ground.

So swiftly and silently had the unseen enemy attacked that Nina, who had been walking only a few paces ahead, knew nothing of it until she heard Tam fall.

Wrenching the coarse noose from around his neck, Tam peered up into the branches where a length of rope was just disappearing. He could see no living creature, but launched a javelin at the point where the rope ended. There was a peculiar yelping cry, and what Tam at first took to be a naked white man tumbled from the tree. It struck the ground at his feet, and as it lay there, gasping its last, he saw that its face was not that of a man, but more nearly resembled that of a dog or wolf. And it had a long, bushy tail like the brush of a fox.

Glancing at Nina, Tam saw that she had paled, and was regarding the dying creature on the ground with a look of horror.

"What is this monstrous thing?" he asked.

"A *manacvan*," she replied. "In Arya we call them man-dogs, or dog-faced men. They travel in packs, and where one is found, others are sure to be close by. Their favorite food is the flesh of human beings. Men who fall into their hands are instantly eaten, but women and girls who get into their clutches are said to be horribly mistreated before they are finally torn to pieces and devoured."

Tam thought of the werewolf legends so prevalent among Aryan-speaking peoples, and wondered if they had been inspired by traditions of such creatures as these.

"Do you think it likely that there are other creatures like this one near by?" he asked.

"It is more than likely," she replied. "And it is quite possible that some of them heard the death cry of this one and will come to investigate. We had best be going."

As if for the purpose of promptly confirming her words, there suddenly appeared, dashing over the brow of the hill with a coil of rope thrown over its shoulder, a *manacvan* very closely resembling the one Tam had slain. But this creature quite obviously had not come to investigate the death cry of its fellow. It had too much important business of its own to attend to. Crouching low, sometimes running on two feet, sometimes scampering on all fours with its brush-like tail between its legs, it glanced fearfully over its shoulder from time to time with unmistakable signs of terror.

The *manacvan* had not traveled more than a hundred feet down the hillside when there suddenly burst into view the most fearsome and awe-inspiring creature Tam had ever beheld. No wonder the *manacvan* fled before such a monster. It was like a horned toad the size of a rhinoceros, or a rhinoceros covered with armor-plate thickly studded with sharp spikes from eight to ten inches in length. Its neck was protected by a flaring bony ruff edged with sharp spikes. Projecting from the bridge of its vulture-like beak was a horn fully two feet in length. The beast came dashing down the hillside with a speed surprizing in so ponderous a crea-

ture, and gaining rapidly on the *manacvan*. Closer and closer the horrific monster drew to its quarry with each mighty bound. But just is it opened its great beak to seize its intended victim, the dog-faced man, with a final yelp of fear, plunged into the mouth of a burrow beneath a projecting rock.

The pursuing monster came to a sudden sliding halt, and with a bellow of baffled rage inserted its horned snout into the hole. Unable to enter, it began digging with its three-toed scaly front feet, scattering dirt and stones over a fan-shaped area behind it. But its efforts in this direction soon ceased. Evidently it had come to a stratum of solid stone against which even those mighty armed and armored feet were powerless.

Backing out of the hole, the thing bellowed disconsolately. Then it spied Tam and Nina, who had, in the meantime, begun a stealthy retreat over the hill.

For a moment the horned monster stood rigid in the attitude of a pointer dog—its scaly tail sticking straight out behind it. Then, with a single thunderous bellow, it charged.

Tam guessed the import of that sound, and turning, saw that they were pursued.

"Run," he told Nina. "No man can hope to outrun this monster, but it may be that I can delay it long enough to enable you to escape."

"If you stay, then I'll stay to help you," cried Nina. She snatched a javelin from the bundle at Tam's back, and stood resolutely beside him.

But Tam did not wait for the creature to come up to them. Instead, he charged toward it, and hurled a javelin with all his might. The weapon glanced from the monster's armor-plate with no apparent effect. He hurled a second javelin, but with the same result. Then, seeing the hopelessness of this mode of defense, he whipped out the long, heavy *tulwar* he had taken from the Saiva guard, and stopped to receive the charge of the horned horror.

Nina, determined to stand by Tam to the last, had in the meantime started forward to join him. But she was suddenly jerked off her feet by a coarse grass rope that whipped down around her arms from behind, pinioning them to her sides. She cried out to attract Tam's attention, shrieking again and again as two powerful hairy arms caught her up. Then, with the ugly muzzle of a *manacvan* close to her face, she was carried back over the brow of the hill and dragged through the low entrance of a dark, stinking den on the other side.

Meanwhile, Tam, although he had plainly heard the cries of Nina, had attributed them to her fear of the charging brute, and had not even glanced back. As the monster came thundering up, its sharp nasal horn extended to toss him, he leaped lightly to one side and brought his *tulwar* down on the armor-plated head with all the strength and skill at his command.

Read the exciting outcome of Tam's encounter with the most fearful monster of the subterranean world, and of Nina's capture by the hideous dog-faced man, in the November WEIRD TALES, *on sale October 1st.*

The Resurrection of the Rattlesnake

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

A brief story of the terror that lurked in Avilton's library and the tragic event that ensued

"NO, AS I've told you fellows before, I haven't a red cent's worth of faith in the supernatural."

The speaker was Arthur Avilton, whose tales of the ghostly and macabre had often been compared to Poe, Bierce and Machen. He was a master of imaginative horrors, with a command of diabolically convincing details, of monstrous cobweb suggestions, that had often laid a singular spell on the minds of readers who were not ordinarily attracted or impressed by literature of that type. It was his own boast, often made, that all his effects were secured in a purely ratiocinative, even scientific manner, by playing on the element of subconscious dread, the ancestral superstition latent in most human beings; but he claimed that he himself was utterly incredulous of anything occult or fantasmal, and that he had never in his life known the slightest tremor of fear concerning such things.

Avilton's listeners looked at him a little questioningly. They were John Godfrey, a young landscape painter, and Emil Schuler, a rich dilettante, who played in alternation with literature and music, but was not serious in his attentions to either. Both were old friends and admirers of Avilton, at whose house on Sutter Street, in San Francisco, they had met by chance that afternoon. Avilton had suspended work on a new story to chat with them and smoke a sociable pipe. He still sat at his writing-table, with a pile of neatly written foolscap before him. His appearance was as normal and non-eccentric as his handwriting, and he might have been a lawyer or doctor or chemist, rather than a concocter of bizarre fiction. The room, his library, was quite luxurious, in a sober, gentlemanly sort of fashion, and there was little of the outré in its furnishings. The only unusual notes were struck by two heavy brass candlesticks on his table, wrought in the form of rearing serpents, and a stuffed rattlesnake that was coiled on top of one of the low bookcases.

"Well," observed Godfrey, "if anything could convince me of the reality of the supernatural, it would be some of your stories, Avilton. I always read them by broad daylight—I wouldn't do it after dark on a bet. . . . That one about the invisible fantasm with bloody footprints, for example. . . . By the way, what's the yarn you are working on now?"

"It's about a stuffed serpent that suddenly comes to life," replied Avilton. "I'm calling it *The Resurrection of the Rattlesnake.* I got the idea while I was looking at my rattler this morning."

"And I suppose you'll sit here by candlelight tonight," put in Schuler, "and go on with your cheerful little horror without turning a hair." It was well known that Avilton did much of his writing at night.

Avilton smiled. "Darkness always helps me to concentrate. And, considering that so much of the action in my tales is nocturnal, the time is not inappropriate."

"You're welcome," said Schuler, in a jocular tone. He arose to go, and God-

frey also found that it was time to depart.

"Oh, by the way," said their host, "I'm planning a little week-end party. Would you fellows care to come over next Saturday evening? There'll be two or three others of our friends. I'll have this story off my chest by then, and we'll raise the roof."

Godfrey and Schuler accepted the invitation, and went out together. Since they both lived across the bay, in Oakland, and both were on their way home, they caught the same car to the ferry.

"Old Avilton is certainly a case of the living contradiction, if ever there was one," remarked Schuler. "Of course, no one quite believes in the occult or the necromantic nowadays; but anyone who can cook up such infernally realistic horrors, such thoroughgoing hair-frizzlers as he does, simply hasn't the right to be so cold-blooded about it. I claim that it's really indecent."

"I agree," rejoined his companion. "He's so damnably matter-of-fact that he arouses in me a sort of Hallowe'en impulse: I want to dress up in an old sheet and play ghost or something, just to jar him out of that skeptical complacency of his."

"Ye gods and little ghosties!" cried Schuler. "I've got an inspiration. Remember what Avilton told us about the new story he's writing—about the serpent that comes to life?"

He unfolded the prankish idea he had conceived, and the two laughed like mischievous schoolboys plotting some novel deviltry.

"Why not? It should give the old lad a real thrill," chuckled Godfrey. "And he'll think that his fictions are more scientific than he ever dreamed before."

"I know where I can get one," said Schuler. "I'll put it in a fishing-creel, and hide the creel in my valise next Saturday when we go to Avilton's. Then we can watch our chance to make the substitution."

ON SATURDAY evening the two friends arrived together at Avilton's house, and were admitted by a Japanese who combined in himself the rôles of cook, butler, housekeeper and valet. The other guests, two young musicians, had already come, and Avilton, who was evidently in a mood for relaxation, was telling them a story, which, to judge from the continual interruptions of laughter, was not at all in the vein for which he had grown so famous. It seemed almost impossible to believe that he could be the author of the gruesome and brain-freezing horrors that bore his name.

The evening went successfully, with a good dinner, cards, and some pre-war Bourbon, and it was after midnight when Avilton saw his guests to their chambers, and sought his own.

Godfrey and Schuler did not go to bed, but sat up talking in the room they occupied together, till the house had grown silent and it was probable that everyone had fallen asleep. Avilton, they knew, was a sound sleeper, who boasted that even a rivet-factory or a brass orchestra could not keep him awake for five minutes after his head had touched the pillow.

"Now's our chance," whispered Schuler, at last. He had taken from his valise a fishing-creel, in which was a large and somewhat restless gopher-snake, and softly opening the door, which they had left ajar, the conspirators tiptoed down the hall toward Avilton's library, which lay at the farther end. It was their plan to leave the live gopher-snake in the library in lieu of the stuffed rattler, which they would remove. A gopher-snake is somewhat similar to a rattler in its markings; and, in order to complete the verisimilitude, Schuler had even provided himself with a set of rattles, which he

meant to attach with thread to the serpent's tail before freeing it. The substitution, they felt, would undoubtedly prove a trifle startling, even to a person of such boilerplate nerves and unrelenting skepticism as Avilton.

As if to facilitate their scheme, the door of the library stood half open. Godfrey produced a flashlight, and they entered. Somehow, in spite of their merry mood, in spite of the schoolboy hoax they had planned, and the Bourbon they had drunk, the shadow of something dim and sinister and disquieting fell on the two men as they crossed the threshold. It was like a premonition of some unknown and unexpected menace, lurking in the darkness of the book-peopled room where Avilton had woven so many of his weird and spectral webs. They both began to remember incidents of nocturnal horror from his stories—happenings that were ghoulishly hideous or necromantically strange and terrible. Now, such things seemed even more plausible than the author's diabolic art had made them heretofore. But neither of the men could have quite defined the feeling that came over them or could have assigned a reason for it.

"I feel a little creepy," confided Schuler, as they stood in the dark library. "Turn on that flashlight, won't you?"

The light fell directly on the low bookcase where the stuffed rattler had been coiled, but to their surprize, they found the serpent missing from its customary place.

"Where is the damned thing, anyway?" muttered Godfrey. He turned the light on the neighboring bookcases, and then on the floor and chairs in front of them, but without revealing the object of his search. At last, in its circlings, the ray struck Avilton's writing-table, and they saw the snake, which, in some mood of grotesque humor, Avilton had evidently placed on his pile of manuscript to serve in lieu of a paperweight. Behind it gleamed the two serpentine candlesticks.

"Ah! there you are," said Schuler. He was about to open his creel when a singular and quite unforeseen thing occurred. He and Godfrey both saw a movement on the writing-table, and before their incredulous eyes the rattlesnake coiled on the pile of paper slowly raised its arrow-shaped head and darted forth its forky tongue! Its cold, unwinking eyes, with a fixation of baleful intensity well-nigh hypnotic, were upon the intruders, and as they stared in unbelieving horror, they heard the sharp rattling of its tail, like withered seeds in a wind-swung pod.

"My God!" exclaimed Schuler. "The thing is alive!"

As he spoke, the flashlight fell from Godfrey's hand and went out, leaving them in soot-black darkness. As they stood for a moment, half petrified with astonishment and terror, they heard the rattling again, and then the sound of some object that seemed to strike the floor in falling. Once more, in a few instants, there came the sharp rattle, this time almost at their very feet.

Godfrey screamed aloud, and Schuler began to curse incoherently, as they both turned and ran toward the open door. Schuler was ahead, and as he crossed the threshold into the dim-lit hall, where one electric bulb still burned, he heard the crash of his companion's fall, mingled with a cry of such infinite terror, such atrocious agony, that his brain and his very marrow were turned to ice. In the paralyzing panic that overtook him, Schuler retained no faculty except that of locomotion, and it did not even occur to him that it would be possible to stop and ascertain what had befallen Godfrey. He had no thought, no desire, except to put the length of the hall between

himself and that accursed library and its happenings.

Avilton, dressed in pajamas, stood at the door of his room. He had been aroused by Godfrey's scream of terror.

"What's the matter?" the story-writer queried, with a look of amiable surprize, which turned to a real gravity when he saw Schuler's face. Schuler was as white as a marble headstone and his eyes were preternaturally dilated.

"The snake!" Schuler gasped. "The snake! the snake! Something awful has happened to Godfrey—he fell with the thing just behind him."

"What snake? You don't mean my stuffed rattler by any chance, do you?"

"Stuffed rattler?" yelled Schuler. "The damned thing is alive! It came crawling after us, rattling under our very feet a moment ago. Then Godfrey stumbled and fell—and he didn't get up."

"I don't understand," purred Avilton. "The thing is a manifest impossibility—really quite contrary to all natural laws, I assure you. I killed that snake four years ago, in El Dorado County, and had it stuffed by an expert taxidermist."

"Go and see for yourself," challenged Schuler.

Avilton strode immediately to the library and turned on the lights. Schuler, mastering a little his panic and his dreadful forebodings, followed at a cautious distance. He found Avilton stooping over the body of Godfrey, who lay quite still in a huddled and horribly contorted position near the door. Not far away was the abandoned fishing-creel. The stuffed rattlesnake was coiled in its customary place on top of the bookshelves.

Avilton, with a grave and brooding mien, removed his hand from Godfrey's heart, and observed:

"He's quite dead—shock and heart-failure, I should think." Neither he nor Schuler could bear to look very long at Godfrey's upturned face, on which was stamped as with some awful brand or acid an expression of fear and suffering beyond all human capacity to endure. In their mutual desire to avoid the lidless horror of his dead staring, their eyes fell at the same instant on his right hand, which was clenched in a hideous rigidity and drawn close to his side.

Neither could utter a word when they saw the thing that protruded from between Godfrey's fingers. It was a bunch of rattles, and on the endmost one, where it had evidently been torn from the viper's tail, there clung several shreds of raw and bloody flesh.

The Captain Is Afraid

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

A brief tale of African magic, an anthropomorphic tale about a witch doctor

IT TOOK Major Henry Grafton three hours to get to the outpost where, he had been informed, Captain Winter, the Commander, was in some sort of trouble. The servant who ran out to meet him seemed devilish glad to see him, and the other servant on the porch waved at him almost eagerly.

"Now," he said, as he made his way up the path at the servant's side, "what is it?"

"Captain Winter, he is ill," answered the servant quickly enough. The man's name, Grafton remembered, was Laka. "He will not leave the house, and at night everything is kept tight closed—which is not good for Captain Winter."

"Well, I'll see Winter right off. . . . Has he seen a doctor, by the way?"

"No, sir. Captain Winter has seen no doctor. He does not wish it. Besides, there are no doctors."

"True enough," rejoined Grafton, smiling wryly.

"Nor is that necessary, for his illness is not of the body, sir. It is of the mind."

"What do you mean, Laka? Africa's not getting him, I hope?"

The servant shrugged his shoulders eloquently. "It is not to be said. We do not know. Captain Winter is afraid."

"Afraid!" echoed Grafton sharply. He stopped suddenly. "Tell me, Laka, what has he been doing?"

Laka looked away. He said, "Captain Winter is afraid of a little white dog."

Major Grafton strode forward. "I'll see him at once."

CAPTAIN WINTER lay in the darkened room, close to the wall. Grafton remembered him as a tall, rather heavy-set man not unhandsome in his way.

"Hello, Grafton," said Winter from the bed. "I can tell your voice miles away."

"We heard you were ill," said Grafton shortly. "And I got sent up to look into it."

"Who told you I was ill?" Captain Winter's voice betrayed irritation.

"Your man, Laka, sent down a note saying you refused to leave this room, and added that you were giving peculiar orders."

Winter chuckled softly. "Poor Laka—poor old man. I must have forgotten him. But tell me, Grafton, you didn't notice a dog outside—skulking in the brush—a little white dog?"

There was a note of uneasiness in Winter's voice that did not escape Grafton.

"No," said he, "I didn't. Is it your dog?"

"No," replied Winter shortly.

Grafton coughed. "Tell me why you're afraid of that dog," he said.

"Why——!" exclaimed Winter, then subsided suddenly. "Oh, I see—Laka, again."

Grafton nodded.

For a moment Winter stared at the lattices behind Grafton. "Well, I'll tell you. I'm not expecting you to believe me, mind, but I'll tell you, now that you've asked for it."

"You haven't mixed into anything

with the natives, I hope," said Grafton suddenly.

"Unfortunately, I have. Got into a thorough squall with them and had to shoot one of them. Now they've got their witch doctor out after me. Must I add that I think that white dog out there has a lot to do with the business?"

"What?" Grafton cut in shortly.

"Well, they say that their witch doctor can change himself into any form he wishes—and then they warned me that a little white dog would be after me. He'd bite me and then I'd die. It's pleasant, eh? I've kept myself here, and ordered all the doors and windows closed tightly all the time. Now I've got a fever, blast them!"

"You can't very well blame the fever on them," said Grafton coldly.

"No, I suppose not," returned Winter. "I see you don't believe me."

"I can believe some of the stuff I'm told about these witch doctors, but not all of it. When it comes to believing that a man can take the form of a dog—well, I'll let you go it alone."

Grafton strode to the lattices and threw them open. The added light showed Winter to be more pale and haggard-looking than Grafton had thought from the tone of his voice during their conversation.

"You do look bad," he said, sympathetically.

"If you don't mind, I'd rather you closed the lattice, Grafton. It's not that I'm particularly afraid during the day—it's at night that this devilish business gets me. So far, too, no one's been able to see the blasted dog but myself—not even Laka."

"That's not strange," said Grafton. He smiled a little, then bent over the bed and said, "Come, now, Winter, you'd best snap out of that. You need some exercise, some air."

Winter did not appear to have heard him, for he went on talking as if Grafton had said nothing. "On the little table there you'll find my revolver. If you see the dog, shoot at it with that. Don't waste the bullets—they're of silver, the only thing that does any good in a case like this. I can't seem to hit him somehow, and most of the time he doesn't come close enough."

GRAFTON went out of the room and sought out Laka. "I think he's pretty bad, Laka," he said. "Seems to be a little delirious. Has he been that way long?"

Laka said, "Not delirious, sir."

"He seems to believe that the white dog you spoke to me about is a witch doctor coming to get him."

"That may be," said Laka placidly. "It has happened so already."

"Tell me, Laka," said Grafton, after a pause, "have you seen this white dog?"

Laka nodded. Then he said, "Yes, sir. Sometimes in the night I have seen him. I think, too, that it is a witch-dog."

"You are not afraid of him?" challenged Grafton.

Laka said, "No, sir. He does not come here for me. No, I am not afraid of him. But I am afraid for Captain Winter, sir."

Grafton muttered something under his breath. "Well," he said at last, "there's only one thing to do, and that's to show Winter that he's wrong about that dog. I'll keep his lattice open tonight and watch beside it."

Laka looked troubled. "No," he said, "I wouldn't do that. You may not see the dog, sir; what then?"

Having once made up his mind, nothing would keep Grafton from carrying out his wish. He had to tell Captain

Winter about it, and at once Winter raised a storm of worried protest.

"He'll get me then, Grafton," he said.

"The way you're keeping yourself in here, he'll get you in the end, anyway. Ever think of that?"

"I'll not be able to sleep with you here, with the lattice open and that dog just outside."

"But you'll be able to sleep so much better after I've shown you there's nothing in it."

Captain Winter subsided mumbling.

DARKNESS came suddenly. Grafton sat at the open lattice, his weapon on his knees. He was smoking, and the red glow of his cigarette caught Winter's eye each time he turned in his bed.

"Blast it, old man, if you don't close the lattice, I'll go mad!"

Grafton shook his head. "I'm waiting for that dog, and I'll get him when he comes—and if he comes."

It was close on midnight, when Winter called out in a low hushed voice.

"Grafton! You see him? He's out there, coming this way! For God's sake, close that lattice!"

Grafton said, "There's nothing there, Winter. You're seeing things."

"No, no. My God, Grafton, close the lattice. He's coming for me!" Winter sprang from the bed and threw himself against the lattices, pulling them together.

Amazed, Grafton got to his feet and made for Winter. "See here, Winter," he said. "You're doing yourself the worst sort of harm that way. Don't give in to this thing; that's the only way to save you. There's no dog out there, and I'm going to prove it."

Abruptly he opened the lattices wide.

Then something happened with the rapidity of a lightning flash. A white streak appeared from somewhere, seemed to touch Captain Winter, and shot off into the darkness of the brush outside. Captain Winter screamed once, sharply, then sank to the floor with a little choked moan.

Grafton fired at the streak three times in rapid succession; then, since he had not noticed Winter crumple to the floor, ran out into the darkness after the dog.

In the brush he found a native dying. Even as he looked at him, noticing that he had been struck by two bullets—the third had evidently gone wild—the native shuddered and lay still. Grafton needed no second glance to tell him that the native's painted body was that of a tribal witch doctor.

As he stood looking at the still body, not quite understanding what had happened, and seeking to deny the solution that rose within himself, he heard the swift patter of running feet. He turned, and saw Laka running toward him.

As Laka came up, Grafton pointed. "Something in it, Laka. I've got him."

Laka looked at him strangely. He said, "For God's sake, Laka, don't look at me that way. What is it? Something has happened — quickly, tell me, Captain Winter——"

Laka's eyes were inscrutably cold. "Captain Winter," he said, "is dead."

"Dead!" echoed Grafton in a voice he did not recognize as his own. "What happened?"

"He was bitten, I think. Yes, in the throat. By a little white dog, sir."

The Strange High House in the Mist

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

Eery shapes visited the nameless hermit who dwelt in his sky-perched cottage and communed with forgotten gods

IN THE morning mist comes up from the sea by the cliffs beyond Kingsport. White and feathery it comes from the deep to its brothers the clouds, full of dreams of dank pastures and caves of leviathan. And later, in still summer rains on the steep roofs of poets, the clouds scatter bits of those dreams, that men shall not live without rumor of old strange secrets, and wonders that planets tell planets alone in the night. When tales fly thick in the grottoes of tritons, and conchs in seaweed cities blow wild tunes learned from the Elder Ones, then great eager mists flock to heaven laden with lore, and oceanward eyes on the rocks see only a mystic whiteness, as if the cliff's rim were the rim of all earth, and the solemn bells of buoys tolled free in the æther of faëry.

Now north of archaic Kingsport the crags climb lofty and curious, terrace on terrace, till the northernmost hangs in the sky like a gray frozen wind-cloud. Alone it is, a bleak point jutting in limitless space, for there the coast turns sharp where the great Miskatonic pours out of the plains past Arkham, bringing woodland legends and little quaint memories of New England's hills. The sea-folk in Kingsport look up at that cliff as other sea-folk look up at the pole-star, and time the night's watches by the way it hides or shows the Great Bear, Cassiopeia, and the Dragon. Among them it is one with the firmament, and truly, it is hidden from them when the mist hides the stars or the sun. Some of the cliffs they love, as that whose grotesque profile they call Father Neptune, or that whose pillared steps they term "The Causeway;" but this one they fear because it is so near the sky. The Portuguese sailors coming in from a voyage cross themselves when they first see it, and the old Yankees believe it would be a much graver matter then death to climb it, if indeed that were possible. Nevertheless there is an ancient house on that cliff, and at evening men see lights in the small-paned windows.

The ancient house has always been there, and people say One dwells within who talks with the morning mists that come up from the deep, and perhaps sees singular things oceanward at those times when the cliff's rim becomes the rim of all earth, and solemn buoys toll free in the white æther of faëry. This they tell from hearsay, for that forbidding crag is always unvisited, and natives dislike to train telescopes on it. Summer boarders have indeed scanned it with jaunty binoculars, but have never seen more than the gray primeval roof, peaked and shingled, whose eaves come nearly to the gray foundations, and the dim yellow light of the little windows peeping out from under those eaves in the dusk. These summer people do not believe that the same One has lived in the ancient house for hundreds of years, but can not prove their heresy to any real Kingsporter. Even the Terrible Old Man who talks to leaden pendulums in bottles, buys groceries with centuried Spanish gold, and keeps stone idols in the yard

of his antediluvian cottage in Water Street can only say these things were the same when his grandfather was a boy, and that must have been inconceivable ages ago, when Belcher or Shirley or Pownall or Bernard was Governor of His Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts-Bay.

Then one summer there came a philosopher into Kingsport. His name was Thomas Olney, and he taught ponderous things in a college by Narragansett Bay. With stout wife and romping children he came, and his eyes were weary with seeing the same things for many years, and thinking the same well-disciplined thoughts. He looked at the mists from the diadem of Father Neptune, and tried to walk into their white world of mystery along the titan steps of The Causeway. Morning after morning he would lie on the cliffs and look over the world's rim at the cryptical æther beyond, listening to spectral bells and the wild cries of what might have been gulls. Then, when the mist would lift and the sea stand out prosy with the smoke of steamers, he would sigh and descend to the

"Nevertheless there is an ancient house on that cliff, and at evening men see lights in the small-paned windows."

town, where he loved to thread the narrow olden lanes up and down hill, and study the crazy tottering gables and odd-pillared doorways which had sheltered so many generations of sturdy sea-folk. And he even talked with the Terrible Old Man, who was not fond of strangers, and was invited into his fearsomely archaic cottage where low ceilings and wormy panelling hear the echoes of disquieting soliloquies in the dark small hours.

Of course it was inevitable that Olney should mark the gray unvisited cottage in the sky, on that sinister northward crag which is one with the mists and the firmament. Always over Kingsport it hung, and always its mystery sounded in whispers through Kingsport's crooked alleys. The Terrible Old Man wheezed a tale that his father had told him, of lightning that shot one night *up from* that peaked cottage to the clouds of higher heaven; and Granny Orne, whose tiny gambrel-roofed abode in Ship Street is all covered with moss and ivy, croaked over something her grandmother had heard at second-hand, about shapes that flapped out of the eastern mists straight into the narrow single door of that unreachable place—for the door is set close to the edge of the crag toward the ocean, and glimpsed only from ships at sea.

At length, being avid for new strange things and held back by neither the Kingsporter's fear nor the summer boarder's usual indolence, Olney made a very terrible resolve. Despite a conservative training—or because of it, for humdrum lives breed wistful longings for the unknown—he swore a great oath to scale that avoided northern cliff and visit the abnormally antique gray cottage in the sky. Very plausibly his saner self argued that the place must be tenanted by people who reached it from inland along the easier ridge beside the Miskatonic's estuary. Probably they traded in Arkham, knowing how little Kingsport liked their habitation, or perhaps being unable to climb down the cliff on the Kingsport side. Olney walked out along the lesser cliffs to where the great crag leaped insolently up to consort with celestial things, and became very sure that no human feet could mount it or descend it on that beetling southern slope. East and north it rose thousands of feet perpendicular from the water, so only the western side, inland and toward Arkham, remained.

ONE early morning in August Olney set out to find a path to the inaccessible pinnacle. He worked northwest along pleasant back roads, past Hooper's Pond and the old brick powder-house to where the pastures slope up to the ridge above the Miskatonic and give a lovely vista of Arkham's white Georgian steeples across leagues of river and meadow. Here he found a shady road to Arkham, but no trail at all in the seaward direction he wished. Woods and fields crowded up to the high bank of the river's mouth, and bore not a sign of man's presence; not even a stone wall or a straying cow, but only the tall grass and giant trees and tangles of briars that the first Indian might have seen. As he climbed slowly east, higher and higher above the estuary on his left and nearer and nearer the sea, he found the way growing in difficulty till he wondered how ever the dwellers in that disliked place managed to reach the world outside, and whether they came often to market in Arkham.

Then the trees thinned, and far below him on his right he saw the little hills and antique roofs and spires of Kingsport. Even Central Hill was a dwarf from this height, and he could just make out the ancient graveyard by the Congregational Hospital, beneath which rumor said some terrible caves or burrows

lurked. Ahead lay sparse grass and scrub blueberry bushes, and beyond them the naked rock of the crag and the thin peak of the dreaded gray cottage. Now the ridge narrowed, and Olney grew dizzy at his loneness in the sky. South of him the frightful precipice above Kingsport, north of him the vertical drop of nearly a mile to the river's mouth. Suddenly a great chasm opened before him, ten feet deep, so that he had to let himself down by his hands and drop to a slanting floor, and then crawl perilously up a natural defile in the opposite wall. So this was the way the folk of the uncanny house journeyed betwixt earth and sky!

When he climbed out of the chasm a morning mist was gathering, but he clearly saw the lofty and unhallowed cottage ahead; walls as gray as the rock, and high peak standing bold against the milky white of the seaward vapors. And he perceived that there was no door on this landward end, but only a couple of small lattice windows with dingy bull's-eye panes leaded in Seventeenth Century fashion. All around him was cloud and chaos, and he could see nothing below but the whiteness of illimitable space. He was alone in the sky with this queer and very disturbing house; and when he sidled around to the front and saw that the wall stood flush with the cliff's edge, so that the single narrow door was not to be reached save from the empty æther, he felt a distinct terror that altitude could not wholly explain. And it was very odd that shingles so worm-eaten could survive, or bricks so crumbled still form a standing chimney.

As the mist thickened, Olney crept around to the windows on the north and west and south sides, trying them but finding them all locked. He was vaguely glad they were locked, because the more he saw of that house the less he wished to get in. Then a sound halted him. He heard a lock rattle and a bolt shoot, and a long creaking follow as if a heavy door were slowly and cautiously opened. This was on the oceanward side that he could not see, where the narrow portal opened on blank space thousands of feet in the misty sky above the waves.

Then there was heavy, deliberate tramping in the cottage, and Olney heard the windows opening, first on the north side opposite him, and then on the west just around the corner. Next would come the south windows, under the great low eaves on the side where he stood; and it must be said that he was more than uncomfortable as he thought of the detestable house on one side and the vacancy of upper air on the other. When a fumbling came in the nearer casements he crept around to the west again, flattening himself against the wall beside the now opened windows. It was plain that the owner had come home; but he had not come from the land, nor from any balloon or airship that could be imagined. Steps sounded again, and Olney edged around to the north; but before he could find a haven a voice called softly, and he knew he must confront his host.

Stuck out of a west window was a great black-bearded face whose eyes were phosphorescent with the imprint of unheard-of sights. But the voice was gentle, and of a quaint olden kind, so that Olney did not shudder when a brown hand reached out to help him over the sill and into that low room of black oak wainscots and carved Tudor furnishings. The man was clad in very ancient garments, and had about him an unplaceable nimbus of sea-lore and dreams of tall galleons. Olney does not recall many of the wonders he told, or even who he was; but says that he was strange and kindly, and filled with the magic of unfathomed voids of time and space. The

small room seemed green with a dim aqueous light, and Olney saw that the far windows to the east were not open, but shut against the misty æther with dull thick panes like the bottoms of old bottles.

That bearded host seemed young, yet looked out of eyes steeped in the elder mysteries; and from the tales of marvelous ancient things he related, it must be guessed that the village folk were right in saying he had communed with the mists of the sea and the clouds of the sky ever since there was any village to watch his taciturn dwelling from the plain below. And the day wore on, and still Olney listened to rumors of old times and far places, and heard how the kings of Atlantis fought with the slippery blasphemies that wriggled out of rifts in ocean's floor, and how the pillared and weedy temple of Poseidonis is still glimpsed at midnight by lost ships, who know by its sight that they are lost. Years of the Titans were recalled, but the host grew timid when he spoke of the dim first age of chaos before the gods or even the Elder Ones were born, and when *the other gods* came to dance on the peak of Hatheg-Kla in the stony desert near Ulthar, beyond the River Skai.

It was at this point that there came a knocking on the door; that ancient door of nail-studded oak beyond which lay only the abyss of white cloud. Olney started in fright, but the bearded man motioned him to be still, and tiptoed to the door to look out through a very small peephole. What he saw he did not like, so pressed his fingers to his lips and tiptoed around to shut and lock all the windows before returning to the ancient settle beside his guest. Then Olney saw lingering against the translucent squares of each of the little dim windows in succession a queer black outline as the caller moved inquisitively about before leaving; and he was glad his host had not answered the knocking. For there are strange objects in the great abyss, and the seeker of dreams must take care not to stir up or meet the wrong ones.

Then the shadows began to gather; first little furtive ones under the table, and then bolder ones in the dark panelled corners. And the bearded man made enigmatical gestures of prayer, and lit tall candles in curiously wrought brass candlesticks. Frequently he would glance at the door as if he expected some one, and at length his glance seemed answered by a singular rapping which must have followed some very ancient and secret code. This time he did not even glance through the peephole, but swung the great oak bar and shot the bolt, unlatching the heavy door and flinging it wide to the stars and the mist.

And then to the sound of obscure harmonies there floated into that room from the deep all the dreams and memories of earth's sunken Mighty Ones. And golden flames played about weedy locks, so that Olney was dazzled as he did them homage. Trident-bearing Neptune was there, and sportive tritons and fantastic nereids, and upon dolphins' backs was balanced a vast crenulate shell wherein rode the gray and awful form of primal Nodens, Lord of the Great Abyss. And the conchs of the tritons gave weird blasts, and the nereids made strange sounds by striking on the grotesque resonant shells of unknown lurkers in black sea-caves. Then hoary Nodens reached forth a wizened hand and helped Olney and his host into the vast shell, whereat the conchs and the gongs set up a wild and awesome clamor. And out into the limitless æther reeled that fabulous train, the noise of whose shouting was lost in the echoes of thunder.

All night in Kingsport they watched that lofty cliff when the storm and the mists gave them glimpses of it, and when toward the small hours the little dim windows went dark they whispered of dread and disaster. And Olney's children and stout wife prayed to the bland proper god of Baptists, and hoped that the traveller would borrow an umbrella and rubbers unless the rain stopped by morning. Then dawn swam dripping and mist-wreathed out of the sea, and the buoys tolled solemn in vortices of white æther. And at noon elfin horns rang over the ocean as Olney, dry and light-footed, climbed down from the cliffs to antique Kingsport with the look of far places in his eyes. He could not recall what he had dreamed in the sky-perched hut of that still nameless hermit, or say how he had crept down that crag untraversed by other feet. Nor could he talk of these matters at all save with the Terrible Old Man, who afterward mumbled queer things in his long white beard; vowing that the man who came down from that crag was not wholly the man who went up, and that somewhere under that gray peaked roof, or amidst inconceivable reaches of that sinister white mist, there lingered still the lost spirit of him who was Thomas Olney.

And ever since that hour, through dull dragging years of grayness and weariness, the philosopher has labored and eaten and slept and done uncomplaining the suitable deeds of a citizen. Not any more does he long for the magic of farther hills, or sigh for secrets that peer like green reefs from a bottomless sea. The sameness of his days no longer gives him sorrow, and well-disciplined thoughts have grown enough for his imagination. His good wife waxes stouter and his children older and prosier and more useful, and he never fails to smile correctly with pride when the occasion calls for it. In his glance there is not any restless light, and if he ever listens for solemn bells or far elfin horns it is only at night when old dreams are wandering. He has never seen Kingsport again, for his family disliked the funny old houses and complained that the drains were impossibly bad. They have a trim bungalow now at Bristol Highlands, where no tall crags tower, and the neighbors are urban and modern.

But in Kingsport strange tales are abroad, and even the Terrible Old Man admits a thing untold by his grandfather. For now, when the wind sweeps boisterous out of the north past the high ancient house that is one with the firmament, there is broken at last that ominous, brooding silence ever before the bane of Kingsport's maritime cotters. And old folk tell of pleasing voices heard singing there, and of laughter that swells with joys beyond earth's joys; and say that at evening the little low windows are brighter than formerly. They say, too, that the fierce aurora comes oftener to that spot, shining blue in the north with visions of frozen worlds while the crag and the cottage hang black and fantastic against wild coruscations. And the mists of the dawn are thicker, and sailors are not quite so sure that all the muffled seaward ringing is that of the solemn buoys.

Worst of all, though, is the shrivelling of old fears in the hearts of Kingsport's young men, who grow prone to listen at night to the north wind's faint distant sounds. They swear no harm or pain can inhabit that high peaked cottage, for in the new voices gladness beats, and with them the tinkle of laughter and music. What tales the sea-mists may bring to that haunted and northernmost pinnacle they do not know, but they long to extract some hint of the wonders that knock at the cliff-yawning door when

clouds are thickest. And patriarchs dread lest some day one by one they seek out that inaccessible peak in the sky, and learn what centuried secrets hide beneath the steep shingled roof which is part of the rocks and the stars and the ancient fears of Kingsport. That those venturesome youths will come back they do not doubt, but they think a light may be gone from their eyes, and a will from their hearts. And they do not wish quaint Kingsport with its climbing lanes and archaic gables to drag listless down the years while voice by voice the laughing chorus grows stronger and wilder in that unknown and terrible eyrie where mists and the dreams of mists stop to rest on their way from the sea to the skies.

They do not wish the souls of their young men to leave the pleasant hearths and gambrel-roofed taverns of old Kingsport, nor do they wish the laughter and song in that high rocky place to grow louder. For as the voice which has come has brought fresh mists from the sea and from the north fresh lights, so do they say that still other voices will bring more mists and more lights, till perhaps the olden gods (whose existence they hint only in whispers for fear the Congregational parson shall hear) may come out of the deep and from unknown Kadath in the cold waste and make their dwelling on that evilly appropriate crag so close to the gentle hills and valleys of quiet, simple fisher folk. This they do not wish, for to plain people things not of earth are unwelcome; and besides, the Terrible Old Man often recalls what Olney said about a knock that the lone dweller feared, and a shape seen black and inquisitive against the mist through those queer translucent windows of leaded bull's-eyes.

All these things, however, the Elder Ones only may decide; and meanwhile the morning mist still comes up by that lonely vertiginous peak with the steep ancient house, that gray, low-eaved house where none is seen but where evening brings furtive lights while the north wind tells of strange revels. White and feathery it comes from the deep to its brothers the clouds, full of dreams of dank pastures and caves of leviathan. And when tales fly thick in the grottoes of tritons, and conchs in seaweed cities blow wild tunes learned from the Elder Ones, then great eager vapors flock to heaven laden with lore; and Kingsport, nestling uneasy on its lesser cliffs below that awesome hanging sentinel of rock, sees oceanward only a mystic whiteness, as if the cliff's rim were the rim of all earth, and the solemn bells of the buoys tolled free in the æther of faëry.

BITTER RETURN

By ALFRED SPRISSLER

A five-minute story

AS Dirck van Heuvelen walked nervously down the leafy tunnel of the Grachtstraatje that early autumn evening it seemed that the five years he had been away had been but a moment. The same lindens, the same stones in the road, the same placid canal; nothing was changed, and he sensed that Siska would be the same also, unchanged by five years of married life.

He told himself it was a quixotic thing thus to return to see her. He had left the university immediately following that tense night when, a sudden emotional flame igniting their souls, he had taken her into his arms and kissed her. And after he had heard from her lips that she loved him, he saw the thing was impossible. He knew the mischief that could arise from his love for the wife of a professor, and, since he was a student in one of the men's classes, it might possibly end in tragedy. But it was their youth that had done it; for the lack of sympathy from her brilliant husband, several years older than she, had made Siska go to this student for comradeship. But love——

So he had fled. And after five years in Rotterdam, his stories and his two novels having gained popularity, and his reputation as the interpreter of youth having been made, he had felt that he had to see Siska. A month hence that feeling, that burning desire to see her if only to look upon her golden hair and to hear her sweet, low and liquid voice, had become so intense that it was unendurable. He fought it as best he could, but finally, after a month of mental flagellation, he had come back to Oudedorp. To see her through a window, from a distance, would suffice, he knew, and the very sight of her would enable him to return to his neglected work refreshed and strengthened.

He sat down upon the stone bench at the roadside, the very bench on which he and Siska had sat many years ago. She had not complained of Willem's treatment nor of his neglect. A professor of mathematics could not be expected to give much time to his young wife, but even his spare time had been taken up with his piano playing. Her pathetic eyes, her evident longing for someone who understood, had caused Dirck to forget the realities and to take her in his arms.

And he remembered how he had stroked her golden hair, which reminded him of the spun gold casques the peasant dames of his native village wore beneath their high caps on feast days, as he had tried to comfort her. He recalled how the pent-up grief, like the first gush of water through a dike, had poured out in long, agonizing sobs. How futile his attempts to pacify had been!

He looked up, and in the eery half-light of the leafy tunnel of the Grachtstraatje he made out a white-clad figure coming toward him. It was Siska. He took her hand, and gently led her to the bench.

Some subtle, analysis-defying change had taken place with her. Her face, always charming, had taken on an ethereal beauty, the very poignancy of which made him mute. Her magnificent hair, like an aureole, was unchanged, and he caressed its golden fineness with reverent fingers.

She spoke. "It has been long, Dirck,

but I have waited very patiently." She paused, and he kissed her eyes. "And I have watched over your work," she went on. "Your success has been my own."

He kissed her lips, noting that they were icy. "Every word was for you, dearest. . . . I had to see you. It is rash, but I felt I must. . . ."

They sat there on that stone bench for time unmeasured. No word was spoken, nor was there need of any.

"I must go now, Dirck," she finally said, gently disengaging herself from his grasp and rising. "And remember, love, I shall wait for you." And powerless to detain her, he watched her walk down the Grachtstraatje, toward her house. But some vagrant moonbeam picked the gold of her hair, and it seemed to Dirck that he could see the golden tresses long after the white of her dress had become invisible in the distant gloom. Some time later, he took the same direction.

Even from the roadway he could hear Van de Bijl playing the *Moonlight Sonata.* The professor, Dirck thought, had always been playing the *Moonlight Sonata.* Five years ago he had played it just as badly as now. Through the window the young man saw Van de Bijl, a trifle grayer, seated before the battered grand piano, plodding over the familiar notes with mathematical precision.

Grasping the heavy brass knocker Van Heuvelen knocked once.

The music stopped, and Dirck heard Van de Bijl's heavy tread. Suddenly the upper half of the door swung inward, leaving him bathed in the pool of outpouring light.

Van de Bijl peered at him. "So it's you, Van Heuvelen," he remarked, acidulously, but not opening the lower half of the door. "You're unexpected."

"Rather," said Dirck, "but I just met Madam Van de Bijl up the Grachtstraatje. She told me to come here, that she would wait for me."

A terrible change distorted Van de Bijl's face. Dirck thought he was seized with a fit.

"Are you crazy, swine?" cried the professor, when he had acquired some measure of control. "Siska died a month ago!"

ALONE in his compartment on the train bearing him back to Rotterdam, Dirck went back over the incident carefully. The appearance of Siska, he told himself, had been the result of the working of an overwrought imagination centered too intently on one subject over too long a period of time. On that bench in the Grachtstraatje, in the atmosphere of their old love, his mind had dwelt so much on Siska that it had conjured up her image and her dear words. And pleased with himself at so settling a difficult problem, he reached for his pipe and tobacco. But as he did so he started, his eyes staring.

On the sleeve of his coat, like a thin-spun yellow thread, lay a long golden hair.

THE RED SAIL

By CHARLES HILAN CRAIG

Through life after life he experienced that terrible drowning episode—a tale of reincarnation

HILGARD THE MIGHTY stood proud and slim and straight in the bow of his ship while the red sail cracked in the breeze and the brawny oarsmen bent to their work. The tiny ship went through the water like a live thing and the coast of Norway was far, far behind and the coast of Britain was ahead, a fair mark in a purple sea under a cloudless blue sky.

When they had ravaged the town the Norse carried away the best of the plunder to their ship and were bent on turning about to return again to the country they loved so dearly. Hilgard the Mighty, always first ashore, always last to go on board, stood knee-deep in the flood and looked back again on the ruined town.

Hilgard called upon his men to await him and strode back to the shore through threatening surf. A maiden stood there.

Hilgard, heretofore impervious to the wiles of women, looked deep into the blue eyes of the Saxon girl. Those eyes were alluring and beautiful, albeit very troubled. The stern set of her lips alone marred an unescapable beauty. She looked at him without malice, without hatred, but her lips curled in scorn.

"Beast!" she said in a low tone, but the beauty of her voice roared in his ears as would the dull and distant thunder of a thousand sails. He looked still into her eyes and there arose in him an alien desire.

"This woman goes with me," he roared back across the water to Old Eric, who was minding the helm.

Old Eric came to his side, bounding through the waves, his harsh face set in still harsher mold.

"She does not go," cried Old Eric.

"She goes with me," answered Hilgard stubbornly.

"Hilgard," said Old Eric, "the strain of Loki is upon you. She goes not, else tonight you feast with your fathers in Valhalla and the curse be upon you forever."

In the woman's face there was no semblance of fear when Hilgard drew her roughly to him and lifted her in his arms and carried her through the surf to the ship.

The red sail groaned in the wind and the men bent to their oars and the ship leaped through the water. Night came upon them, black and ominous, and the storm came and ere dawn Hilgard the Mighty was with his fathers in Valhalla.

2

THE captain was a cold harsh man who had early made his mark as a warrior in Cæsar's army. He was a fighting man who would have none of woman, but held aloof from her as one accursed; but when his ship crossed from Gaul to the shore of Britain and he stood watching the flames which were eating out the guts of the town he looked twice into the eyes of another woman.

Her eyes were blue like the sky and her hair was golden like the sand and her skin compared to the skin of the Roman beau-

ties as would the white rose compare with the pink. Her brow was very fair, her nose straight, her lips rich and inviting.

He came to her and looked deep into her eyes and the harsh masque of his face softened a little.

"You are . . . who are you?"

"Feldah, my name."

"Have I seen you then in Rome?"

Her terror and hatred melted under his eyes.

"I have never traveled so far as Rome."

"Was it then in Gaul?"

"I have never been across the sea."

"Where then have I seen you?"

"I know not. I have never been from this place."

He looked at her and cursed under his breath. She was lying. He knew he had seen her, yet this was his first trip to Britain.

"Have you seen aught of me before?"

She shook her head.

Puzzled, he frowned and bit his lip. It was a deep matter to fathom. He carried her with him to the ship in the grim darkness that was falling. Standing under the sail when a haggard moon was risen he held her close to him and looked at her.

"Where?"

She raised her eyes to his suddenly, fear showing in them.

"I remember—oh, so vaguely. There was a Viking ship with a red sail. There were many oarsmen. You—and I. Then a storm . . ."

Driving up into the North Sea the ship perished and all on board.

3

CAPTAIN DE CRIE of Bonaparte's army landed with his small group of men on the British coast to lay certain devious plans for the approaching invasion. DeCrie was among Napoleon's most trusted lieutenants, for none other could be given this most important mission. In the guise of peasants they set about their work so effectually that they had finished within the week.

In the tavern on the night they were to leave, DeCrie first saw the little girl of the blue eyes and golden hair. It came upon him at once that the maid was known to him, and he turned his eyes away from her and looked only to his drink.

When he had got outside he stood for a moment inadvertently near the lighted window. She walked past him and saw his face and exclaimed involuntarily. Like a flash DeCrie, who was a man used to emergencies, clapped his hand over her mouth and carried her with him into the darkness.

"Mon Dieu," he kept whispering over and over to himself.

At the appointed place a small boat awaited him. The men cried out at the sight of the woman, but they rowed them to the larger boat and got under way toward France.

When the maid was quieted DeCrie went to her and laughed triumphantly and said, "Your tale was not to be told."

"What do you mean?"

"You would have betrayed me."

"I? No!"

"But yes. You recognized me."

"No," she said levelly. "I do not know you. I thought I did, but I do not."

"But I have seen you before. Was it in Paris?"

"No."

She looked at him. He was staring out to sea.

"There is a memory," he whispered, "a bitter sweet memory of a ship rolling under a red sail and the oars of many men, of a blue-eyed maiden on the sands

of an ancient Britain; of death. There is a memory of Cæsar's host, again of a blue-eyed maid on a newer England. And death yet again . . ."

Wide eyed with wonder she looked at him—and remembered.

"Always a ship," she whispered. "And always death."

Captain DeCrie did not live to report to Napoleon.

4

JOHN ROBERTSON saw her first when she was shown to the chair opposite him in the crowded dining-car on the way to the pleasure resort. He had just started to attack the slender fish course when she sat down. At first he paid her no attention, but noting the beauty of her hand his gaze followed up a slender white arm to her shoulder, to her chin, to her eyes of a lustrous blue.

"Why, hello," he said.

She hesitated before answering and then presently said, "Hello."

"Oh. I thought at first that I knew you," he said half apologetically. "But perhaps I haven't had the pleasure."

Her eyes threw him a puzzled glance.

"It is very strange," she said. "But I had the same feeling—that I know you, that I have known you somewhere, sometime in the past."

"I live in America," he said. "This is my first trip abroad."

"And I live in London. I never have been to America."

"Better come over," he told her.

"No," she smiled. "I fear that I never could stand the trip. You see I'm terribly afraid of the sea."

His eyes widened.

"Sometimes," he said, "I have dreams about Vikings and a ship with a red sail and sailors and a watery death—silly rot."

"I have had the same dreams," she said quietly.

"Do you believe in reincarnation?" he asked suddenly.

"No."

"Then how do you account for our knowing each other—for our dreams?"

"I can't account for them. It is all so strange—those dreams of a powerful man carrying me away to sea. And always there is storm and battle and death."

He looked at her, a grim tightening gripping his heart.

They spent the afternoon together when they had reached the resort, and in the early evening he drew her down to the side of the water.

"Let's take a ride in the boat."

She drew back in dismay.

"I—I'm afraid."

Laughing he lifted her in his arms and put her in the boat and gripped the oars and rowed away from the bank. The water was remarkably free of boaters, and despite the falling darkness her fear died. Under his stroke the lights of the boat-house fell far behind.

It came to them both at the same instant.

The rock tore a deep gash in the bottom of the craft and the water swirled through.

She was brave. There was in her voice no note of hysteria as she said, "It has come. Always, always it has come. Always, dear, it must come. Water . . . together a moment . . . then death . . ."

Robertson saw it too at the same moment, but he laughed aloud.

"It is fate," she said.

"Fate be damned. We'll beat fate," he told her.

He gripped her as the boat sank from beneath them, churning the water. She remained very quiet as he started to swim.

(Please turn to page 432)

The Wolf-Leader*

By ALEXANDRE DUMAS

CHAPTER 7

The Boy at the Mill

FINDING it impossible either to cut off or pull out the accursed hair, the only thing left for Thibault to do was to hide it as well as he could, by bringing the other hair over it; everybody would not, he hoped, have such eyes as Agnelette.

As we have already said, Thibault had a fine head of black hair, and by parting it down the side, and giving a certain turn to the front lock, he trusted that the one hair would pass unobserved.

He recalled with envy the young lords whom he had seen at the court of Madame de Maintenon, for, with their powdered wigs to cover it, the color of their hair, whatever it might be, was of no moment. He, unfortunately, could not make use of powder to hide his, being prohibited from doing so by the sumptuary laws of the period.

However, having successfully managed, by an adroit turn of the comb, to hide his one red hair artistically under the others, Thibault decided to start again on his premeditated visit to the fair owner of the mill. He was careful this time, instead of inclining to the left, to verge toward the right, fearing to meet Agnelette if he followed the same path as he had taken that morning.

Emerging, therefore, on to the road leading to LaFerté-Milou, he then took the footpath which runs direct to Pisseleu across the fields. Arriving at Pisseleu, he continued along the valley in the direction of Croyolles, but had scarcely pursued this lower road for more than a few minutes, when, walking just ahead of him, he saw two donkeys being driven by a tall youth, whom he recognized as a cousin of his, named Landry. Cousin Landry was head boy at the mill, in the service of the owner whom Thibault was on his way to visit, and as the latter had but an indirect acquaintance with the widow Polet, he had counted on Landry to introduce him. It was a lucky chance therefore to come across his cousin like this, and Thibault hastened to overtake him.

Hearing footsteps behind him echoing his own, Landry turned and recognized Thibault. Thibault had always found Landry a pleasant and cheerful companion, and he was therefore very much astonished to see him looking sad and

*This remarkable werewolf novel, by Alexandre Dumas, *fils*, is not included in the published collections of Dumas' works in English, and will therefore be new to our readers, except those who have had the good fortune to read the story in the original French.

This story began in WEIRD TALES for August

troubled. Landry waited for Thibault to come up to him, letting his donkeys go on alone. Thibault was the first to speak:

"Why, Cousin Landry," he asked, "what's the meaning of this? Here am I, putting myself out and leaving my work to come and shake hands with a friend and relation that I have not seen for more than six weeks, and you greet me with a face like that!"

"Ah, my dear Thibault," replied Landry, "what would you have of me? I may greet you with a gloomy face, but, believe me or not as you will, I am truly delighted to see you."

"That may be as you say, but you do not appear so."

"What do you mean?"

"You tell me you are delighted to see me in a tone of voice fit to bring on the blue-devils. Why, my dear Landry, you are generally as bright and lively as the click-clack of your mill, and singing songs to accompany it, but today you are as melancholy as the crosses in the cemetery. How now then? Has the mill stopped for want of water?"

"Oh! not that! There is no want of water; on the contrary, there is more than usual, and the sluice is kept constantly at work. But, you see, instead of corn, it is my heart that is in the mill, and the mill works so well and so incessantly, and my heart is so ground between the stones that there is nothing left of it but a little powder."

"Indeed! Are you so miserable then at the mill?"

"Ah! would to God I had been dragged under the wheel the first day I put my foot inside it!"

"But what is it? You frighten me, Landry! . . . Tell me all your troubles, my dear lad."

Landry gave a deep sigh.

"We are cousins," continued Thibault, "and if I am too poor to give you a few crowns to help you out of any money trouble you are in I can at least give you some words of good advice if it is a matter of the heart that is causing you grief."

"Thank you, Thibault; but neither money nor advice can do me any good."

"Well, anyhow, tell me what is the matter; it eases trouble to speak of it."

"No, no; it would be useless; I will say nothing."

Thibault began to laugh.

"You laugh?" said Landry, both angry and astonished. "My trouble makes you laugh?"

"I am not laughing at your trouble, Landry, but at your thinking that you can hide the cause of it from me, when it is as easy as anything to guess what it is."

"Guess then."

"Why, you are in love; nothing more difficult than that to guess, I can swear."

"I, in love!" exclaimed Landry; "who has been telling you lies like that?"

"It is not a lie, it is the truth."

Landry again drew a deep sigh, more laden with despair even than his former one.

"Well, yes!" he said, "it is so, I am in love!"

"Ah! that's right! You have spoken out at last!" said Thibault, not without a certain quickening of the pulse, for he foresaw a rival in his cousin. "And with whom are you in love?"

"As to that, Cousin Thibault, you will have to drag the heart out of my breast before I tell you."

"You have told me already."

"What? I have told you who it is?" cried Landry, staring at Thibault with astonished eyes.

"Certainly you have."

"Surely you can not mean it!"

"Did you not say that it would have been better for you to have been dragged under by the mill wheel the first day you entered into the service of Madame Polet,

than to have been taken on by her as chief hand? You are unhappy at the mill, and you are in love; therefore, you are in love with the mistress of the mill, and it is this love which is causing your unhappiness."

"Ah, Thibault, pray hush! What if she were to overhear us?"

"How is it possible that she can overhear us; where do you imagine her to be, unless she is able to make herself invisible, or to change herself into a butterfly or a flower?"

"Never mind, Thibault, you keep quiet."

"Your mistress of the mill is hard-hearted then, is she? And takes no pity on your despair, poor fellow?" was Thibault's rejoinder; but his words, though seemingly expressive of great commiseration, had a shade of satisfaction and amusement in them.

"Hard-hearted! I should think so indeed!" said Landry. "In the beginning, I was foolish enough to fancy that she did not repulse my love. . . . All day long I was devouring her with my eyes, and now and then, she too would fix her eyes on me, and after looking at me a while, would smile. . . . Alas! my dear Thibault, what happiness those looks and smiles were to me! . . . Ah! why did I not content myself with them?"

"Well, there it is," said Thibault philosophically. "Man is so insatiable."

"Alas! yes; I forgot that I had to do with some one above me in position, and I spoke. Then Madame Polet flew into a great rage; called me an insolent beggar, and threatened to turn me out of doors the very next week."

"Phew!" said Thibault, "and how long ago is that?"

"Nearly three weeks."

"And the following week is still to come?" The shoemaker as he put the question began to feel a revival of the uneasiness which had been momentarily allayed, for he understood women better than his cousin Landry. After a minute's silence, he continued: "Well, well, you are not so unhappy after all as I thought you."

"Not so unhappy as you thought me?"

"No."

"Ah! if you only knew the life I lead! Never a look, or a smile! When she meets me she turns away, when I speak to her on matters concerning the mill, she listens with such a disdainful air, that instead of talking of bran and wheat and rye, of barley and oats, of first and second crops, I begin to cry, and then she says to me, *Take care!* in such a menacing tone, that I run away and hide myself."

"Well, but why do you pay your addresses to this mistress of yours? There are plenty of girls in the country round who would be glad to have you for their wooer."

"Because I love her in spite of myself. I can not help it, so there!"

"Take up with some one else; I'd think no more about her."

"I could not do it."

"At any rate, you might try. It's just possible that if she saw you transferring your affections to another, the mistress of the mill might grow jealous, and might then run after you, as you are now running after her. Women are such curious creatures."

"Oh, if I was sure of that, I would begin to try at once . . . although now——" and Landry shook his head.

"Well, what about . . . now?"

"Although now, after all that has happened, it would be of no use."

"What has happened then?" asked Thibault, who was anxious to ascertain all particulars.

"Oh! as to that, nothing," replied

Landry, "and I do not even dare speak of it."

"Why?"

"Because, as they say with us, 'Best let sleeping dogs lie'."

Thibault would have continued to urge Landry to tell him what the trouble was to which he referred, but they were now near the mill, and their explanation would have to remain unfinished, even if once begun. What was more, Thibault thought that he already knew enough; Landry was in love with the fair owner of the mill, but the fair owner of the mill was not in love with Landry. And, in truth, he feared no danger from a rival such as this. It was with a certain pride and self-complacency that he compared the timid, boyish looks of his cousin, a mere lad of eighteen, with his own five feet six and well-set figure, and he was naturally led into thinking that, however little of a woman of taste Madame Polet might be, Landry's failure was a good reason for believing that his own success was assured.

THE mill at Croyolles is charmingly situated at the bottom of a cool green valley; the stream that works it forms a little pond, which is shaded by pollard willows and slender poplars; and between these dwarfed and giant trees stand magnificent alders, and immense walnut trees with their fragrant foliage. After turning the wheel of the mill, the foaming water runs off in a little rivulet, which never ceases its hymn of joy as it goes leaping over the pebbles of its bed, starring the flowers that lean coquettishly over to look at themselves in its clear shallows with the liquid diamonds that are scattered by its tiny waterfalls.

The mill itself lies so hidden in a bower of shrubs, behind the sycamores and weeping willows, that until one is within a short distance of it, nothing is to be seen but the chimney from which the smoke rises against the background of trees like a column of blue-tinted alabaster. Although Thibault was familiar with the spot, the sight of it filled him, as he now looked upon it, with a feeling of delight which he had not hitherto experienced; but then he had never before gazed on it under the conditions in which he now found himself, for he was already conscious of that sense of personal satisfaction which the proprietor feels on visiting an estate which has been obtained for him by proxy. On entering the farm-yard, where the scene was more animated, he was moved to even greater ecstasy of enjoyment.

The blue and purple-throated pigeons were cooing on the roofs, the ducks quacking and going through sundry evolutions in the stream, the hens were clucking on the dung-heap, and the turkey-cocks bridling and strutting as they courted the turkey-hens, while the brown and white cows came slowly in from the fields, their udders full of milk. Here, on one side, a cart was being unloaded; there, as they were being unharnessed, two splendid horses neighed and stretched their necks, now freed from the collar, toward their mangers; a boy was carrying a sack up into the granary, and a girl was bringing another sack filled with crusts and the refuse water to an enormous pig that lay basking in the sun waiting to be transformed into salt-pork, sausages, and black puddings; all the animals of the ark were there, from the braying donkey to the crowing cock, mingling their discordant voices in this rural concert, while the mill, with its regular click-clack, seemed to be beating time.

Thibault felt quite dazzled; he saw himself the owner of all that he now looked upon, and he rubbed his hands together with such evident pleasure that

Landry, if he had not been so absorbed in his own trouble, which grew ever greater as they drew nearer to the house, would certainly have noticed this apparently causeless emotion of joy on his cousin's part. As they entered the farm-yard, the widow, who was in the dining-room, became aware of their presence, and seemed very inquisitive to know who the stranger was who had returned with her head boy. Thibault, with an easy and confident manner, went up to the dwelling-house, gave his name, and explained to her that, having a great wish to see his cousin Landry, he had decided to come over and introduce himself to her.

The mistress of the mill was extremely gracious, and invited the newcomer to spend the day at the mill, accompanying her invitation with a smile that Thibault took as a most favorable augury.

Thibault had not come unprovided with a present. He had unhooked some thrushes which he had found caught in a snare set with rowan-berries, as he came through the forest; and the widow sent them at once to be plucked, saying as she did so, that she hoped Thibault would stay to eat his share of them. But he could not help noticing that all the while she was speaking to him, she kept on looking over his shoulder at something which seemed to attract her attention, and turning quickly, he saw that the preoccupation of the fair owner of the mill had evidently been caused by watching Landry, who was unloading his asses. Becoming conscious that Thibault had noticed the wandering of her looks and attention, Madame Polet turned as red as a cherry, but, immediately recovering herself, she said to her new acquaintances:

"Monsieur Thibault, it would be kind of you, who appear so robust, to go and help your cousin; you can see that the job is too heavy a one for him alone." And so saying, she went back into the house.

"Now, the devil!" muttered Thibault, as he looked first after Madame Polet and then at Landry, "is the fellow after all more fortunate than he suspects himself, and shall I be forced to call the black wolf to my assistance to get rid of him?"

However, he went as the owner of the mill had asked him, and gave the required assistance. Feeling quite sure that the pretty widow was looking at him through some chink or other of the curtain, he put forth all his strength, and displayed to the full his athletic grace, in the accomplishment of the task in which he was sharing.

The unloading finished, they all assembling in the dining-room where a waiting-maid was busy setting the table. As soon as dinner was served, Madame Polet took her place at the head of the table, with Thibault to her right. She was all attention and politeness to the latter, so much so indeed that Thibault, who had been temporarily crestfallen, took heart again, filled with hope. In order to do honor to Thibault's present, she had herself dressed the birds with juniper-berries, and so prepared, no more delicate or appetizing dish could well have been provided. While laughing at Thibault's sallies, however, she cast stealthy glances now and again at Landry, who she saw had not touched what she herself had placed on the poor boy's plate, and also that great tears were rolling down his cheeks, and falling into the untasted juniper sauce. This mute sorrow touched her heart; a look almost of tenderness came into her face, as she made a sign to him with her head, which seemed to say, so expressive was it, "Eat, Landry, I beg of you." There was a whole world of loving promises in this little pantomime. Landry understood the gesture, for he nearly choked himself trying to swallow the bird at one mouthful, so eager was he to obey the orders of his fair mistress.

Nothing of all this escaped Thibault's eye.

He swore to himself, using an oath that he had heard in the mouth of the Seigneur Jean, and which, now that he was the friend of the devil, he fancied he might use like any other great lord: "Can it be possible," he thought, "that she is really in love with this slip of a youth? Well, if so, it does not say much for her taste, and more than that, it does not suit my plans at all. No, no, my fair mistress, what you need is a man who will know how to look well after the affairs of the mill, and that man will be myself or the black wolf will find himself in the wrong box."

Noticing a minute later that Madame Polet had finally gone back to the earlier stage of sidelong glances and smiles which Landry had described to him, he continued, "I see I shall have to resort to stronger measures, for lose her I will not; there is not another match in all the countryside that would suit me equally well. But then, what am I to do with Cousin Landry? His love, it is true, upsets my arrangements; but I really can not for so small a thing send him to join the wretched Marcotte in the other world. But what a fool I am to bother my brains about finding a way to help myself! It's the wolf's business, not mine."

Then in a low voice: "Black wolf," he said, "arrange matters in such a way, that without any accident or harm happening to my Cousin Landry, I may get rid of him." The prayer was scarcely uttered, when he caught sight of a small body of four or five men in military uniform, walking down the hill-side and coming toward the mill. Landry also saw them; for he uttered a loud cry, got up as if to run away, and then fell back in his chair, as if all power of movement had forsaken him.

CHAPTER 8

Thibault's Wishes

THE widow, on perceiving the effect which the sight of the soldiers advancing toward the mill had upon Landry, was almost as frightened as the lad himself.

"Ah! dear God!" she cried, "what is the matter, my poor Landry?"

"Say, what is the matter?" asked Thibault in his turn.

"Alas!" replied Landry, "last Thursday, in a moment of despair, meeting the recruiting-sergeant at the Dauphin Inn, I enlisted."

"In a moment of despair!" exclaimed the mistress of the mill. "And why were you in despair?"

"I was in despair," said Landry, with a mighty effort, "I was in despair because I love you."

"And it is because you loved me, unhappy boy, that you enlisted?"

"Did you not say that you would turn me away from the mill?"

"And have I turned you away?" asked Madame Polet, with an expression which it was impossible to misinterpret.

"Ah, God! then you would not really have sent me away?" asked Landry.

"Poor boy!" said the mistress of the mill, with a smile and a pitying movement of the shoulders, which, at any other time, would have made Landry almost die of joy, but, as it was, only doubled his distress.

"Perhaps even now I might have time to hide," he said.

"Hide!" said Thibault, "that will be of no use, I can tell you."

"And why not?" said Madame Polet, "I am going to try, anyhow. Come, dear Landry."

And she led the young man away, with every mark of the most loving sympathy.

Thibault followed them with his eyes:

"It's going badly for you, Thibault, my friend," he said; "fortunately, let her hide him as cleverly as she may, they have a good scent, and will find him out."

In saying this, Thibault was unconscious that he was giving utterance to a fresh wish.

The widow had evidently not hidden Landry very far away, for she returned after a few seconds of absence; the hiding place was probably all the safer for being near. She had scarcely had time to take breath when the recruiting-sergeant and his companions appeared at the door. Two remained outside, no doubt to catch Landry if he should attempt to escape. The sergeant and the other soldier walked in with the confidence of men who are conscious of acting under authority. The sergeant cast a searching glance round the room, brought back his right foot into the third position and lifted his hand to the peak of his cap.

The mistress of the mill did not wait for the sergeant to address her, but with one of her most fascinating smiles, asked him if he would like some refreshment, an offer which no recruiting-sergeant is ever known to refuse. Then, thinking it a favorable moment to put the question, she asked them while they were drinking their wine, what had brought them to Croyolles Mill. The sergeant replied that he had come in search of a lad, belonging to the mill, who, after drinking with him to his Majesty's health and signing his engagement, had not reappeared. The lad in question, interrogated as to his name and dwelling-place, had declared himself to be one Landry, living with Madame Polet, a widow, owner of the mill at Croyolles. On the strength of this declaration, he had now come to Madame Polet, widow, of Croyolles Mill, to reclaim the defaulter.

The widow, quite convinced that it was permissible to lie for a good cause, assured the sergeant that she knew nothing of Landry, nor had any one of that name ever been at the mill.

The sergeant in reply said that Madame had the finest eyes and the most charming mouth in the world, but that was no reason why he should implicitly believe the glances of the one or the words of the other. He was bound, therefore, he continued, "to ask the fair widow to allow him to search the mill."

The search was begun; in about five minutes the sergeant came back into the room and asked Madame Polet for the key of her room. The widow appeared very much surprized and shocked at such a request, but the sergeant was so persistent and determined that at last she was forced to give up the key. A minute or two later, and the sergeant walked in again, dragging Landry in after him by the collar of his coat. When the widow saw them both enter, she turned deadly pale. As for Thibault, his heart beat so violently that he thought it would burst, for without the black wolf's assistance, he was sure the sergeant would never have gone to look for Landry where he had found him.

"Ah! ah! my good fellow!" cried the sergeant in a mocking voice, "so we prefer the service of beauty to the King's service? That is easy to understand; but when one has the good fortune to be born in his Majesty's domains and to have drunk his health, one has to give him a share of service, when his turn comes. So you must come along with us, my fine fellow, and after a few years in the King's uniform, you can come back and serve under your old flag. So, now then, march!"

"But," cried the widow, "Landry is not yet twenty, and you have not the right to take him under twenty."

"She is right," added Landry, "I am not twenty yet."

"And when will you be twenty?"

"Not until tomorrow."

"Good," said the sergeant, "we will put you tonight on a bed of straw, like a medlar, and by tomorrow, at daybreak, when we wake you up, you will be ripe."

Landry wept. The widow prayed, pleaded, implored, allowed herself to be kissed by the soldiers, patiently endured the coarse pleasantry excited by her sorrow, and at last offered a hundred crowns to buy him off. But all was of no avail. Landry's wrists were bound, and then one of the soldiers taking hold of the end of the cord, the party started off, but not before the lad of the mill had found time to assure his dear mistress, that far or near, he would always love her, and that, if he died, her name would be the last upon his lips. The beautiful widow, on her side, had lost all thought of the world's opinion in face of this great catastrophe, and before he was led away, she clasped Landry to her heart in a tender embrace.

When the little party had disappeared behind the willows, and she lost sight of them, the widow's distress became so overpowering that she became insensible, and had to be carried and laid on her bed. Thibault lavished upon her the most devoted attention. He was somewhat taken aback at the strong feeling of affection which the widow evinced for his cousin; however, as this only made him applaud himself the more for having cut at the root of the evil, he still cherished the most sanguine hopes.

ON COMING to herself, the first name the widow uttered was that of Landry, to which Thibault replied with a hypocritical gesture of commiseration. Then the mistress of the mill began to sob. "Poor lad!" she cried, while the hot tears flowed down her cheeks, "what will become of him, so weak and delicate as he is? The mere weight of his gun and knapsack will kill him!"

Then turning to her guest, she continued:

"Ah! Monsieur Thibault, this is a terrible trouble to me, for you no doubt have perceived that I love him! He was gentle, he was kind, he had no faults; he was not a gambler, nor a drinker; he would never have opposed my wishes, would never have tyrannized over his wife, and that would have seemed very sweet to me after the two cruel years that I lived with the late Monsieur Polet. Ah! Monsieur Thibault, Monsieur Thibault! It is a sad grief indeed for a poor miserable woman to see all her anticipations of future happiness and peace thus suddenly swallowed up!"

Thibault thought this would be a good moment to declare himself; whenever he saw a woman crying, he immediately thought, most erroneously, that she only cried because she wished to be consoled.

He decided, however, that he would not be able to attain his object without a certain circumlocution.

"Indeed," he answered, "I quite understand your sorrow; nay, more than that, I share it with you, for you can not doubt the affection I bear my cousin. But we must resign ourselves, and without wishing to deny Landry's good qualities, I would still ask you, *Madame*, to find some one else who is his equal."

"His equal!" exclaimed the widow, "there is no such person. Where shall I find so nice and so good a youth? It was a pleasure to me to look at his smooth young face, and with it all, he was so self-composed, so steady in his habits! He was working night and day, and yet I could with a glance make him shrink away and hide. No, no, Monsieur Thibault, I tell you frankly, the remembrance of him will prevent me ever wishing to look at another man, and I know that

I must resign myself to remaining a widow for the rest of my life."

"Phew!" said Thibault; "but Landry was very young!"

"There is no disadvantage in that," replied the widow.

"But who knows if he would always have retained his good qualities. Take my advice, *Madame*, do not grieve any more, but, as I say, look out for some one who will make you forget him. What you really need is not a baby-face like that, but a grown man, possessing all the qualities that you admire and regret in Landry, but at the same time sufficiently mature to prevent the chance of finding one fine day that all your illusions are dispersed, and that you are left face to face with a libertine and a bully."

The mistress of the mill shook her head; but Thibault went on:

"In short, what you need is a man who, while earning your respect, will at the same time make the mill work profitably. You have but to say the word, and you would not have to wait long before you found yourself well provided for, my fair *Madame*, a good bit better than you were just now."

"And where am I to find this miracle of a man?" asked the widow, as she rose to her feet, looking defiantly at the shoemaker, as if throwing down a challenge. The latter, mistaking the tone in which these last words were said, thought it an excellent occasion to make known his own proposals, and accordingly hastened to profit by it.

"Well, I confess," he answered, "that when I said that a handsome widow like you would not have to go far before finding the man who would be just the very husband for her, I was thinking of myself, for I should reckon myself fortunate, and should feel proud, to call myself your husband. Ah! I assure you," he went on, while the mistress of the mill stood looking at him with ever-increasing displeasure in her eyes, "I assure you that with me you would have no occasion to fear any opposition to your wishes: I am a perfect lamb in the way of gentleness, and I should have but one law and one desire; my law would be to obey you, my desire to please you! And as to your fortune, I have means of adding to it which I will make known to you later on. . . ."

But the end of Thibault's sentence remained unspoken.

"What!" cried the widow, whose fury was the greater for having been kept in check until then. "What! You, whom I thought my friend, you dare to speak of replacing him in my heart! You try to dissuade me from keeping my faith to your cousin! Get out of the place, you worthless scoundrel! Out of the place, I say! or I will not answer for the consequences; I have a good mind to get four of my men to collar you and throw you under the mill wheel."

Thibault was anxious to make some sort of response, but, although ready with an answer on ordinary occasions, he could not for the moment think of a single word whereby to justify himself. True, Madame Polet gave him no time to think, but seizing hold of a beautiful new jug that stood near her, she flung it at Thibault's head. Luckily for him, Thibault dodged to the left and escaped the missile, which flew past him, crashing to pieces against the chimney-piece. Then the mistress of the house took up a stool, and aimed it at him with equal violence; this time Thibault dodged to the right, and the stool went against the window, smashing two or three panes of glass.

At the sound of the falling glass, all the youths and maids of the mill came running up. They found their mistress flinging bottles, water-jugs, salt-cellars, plates, everything that came to hand, with

all her might at Thibault's head. Fortunately for him Widow Polet was too much incensed to be able to speak; if she had been able to do so she would have called out: "Kill him! Strangle him! Kill the rascal! the scoundrel! the villain!"

On seeing the reinforcements arriving to help the widow, Thibault endeavored to escape by the door that had been left open by the recruiting-party, but just as he was running out, the pig, that we saw taking its siesta in the sun, being roused out of its first sleep by all this hullabaloo, and thinking the farm people were after it, made a dash for its sty, and in so doing charged right against Thibault's legs. The latter lost his balance and went rolling over and over for a good ten paces in the dirt and slush.

"Devil take you, you beast!" cried the shoemaker, bruised by his fall, but even more furious at seeing his new clothes covered with mud. The wish was hardly out of his mouth, when the pig was suddenly taken with a fit of frenzy, and began rushing about the farm-yard like a mad animal, breaking, shattering, and turning over everything that came in its way. The farm hands, who had run to their mistress on hearing her cries, thought the pig's behavior was the cause of them—and started off in pursuit of the animal. But it eluded all their attempts to seize hold of it, knocking over boys and girls, as it had knocked Thibault over, until at last, coming to where the mill was separated from the sluice by a wooden partition, it crashed through the latter as easily as if it were made of paper, threw itself under the mill wheel, and disappeared as if sucked down by a whirlpool.

The mistress of the mill had by this time recovered her speech. "Lay hold of Thibault!" she cried, for she had heard Thibault's curse, and had been amazed and horrified at the instantaneous way in which it had worked. "Lay hold of him! Knock him down! He is a wizard, a sorcerer! a werewolf!"—applying to Thibault with this last word one of the most terrible epithets that can be given to a man in our forest lands. Thibault, who scarcely knew where he was, seeing the momentary stupefaction which took possession of the farm people on hearing their mistress's final invective, made use of the opportunity to dash past them, and while one went to get a pitchfork and another a spade, he darted through the farm-yard gate and began running up an almost perpendicular hill-side at full speed, with an ease which only confirmed Madame Polet's suspicions; for the hill had always hitherto been looked upon as absolutely inaccessible, at any rate by the way Thibault had chosen to climb it.

"What!" she cried, "what! you give in like that! You should make after him, and seize hold of him, and knock him down!" But the farm servants shook their heads.

"Ah! *Madame!*" they said, "what is the use, what can we do against a werewolf?"

CHAPTER 9

The Wolf-Leader

THIBAULT, fleeing from before Madame Polet's threats and her farm servants' weapons, turned instinctively toward the forest, thinking to take shelter within it, should he chance to come across one of the enemy, for he knew that no one would venture to follow him there, for fear of any lurking dangers. Not that Thibault had much to fear, whatever kind of enemy he met, now that he was armed with the diabolical power which he had received from the wolf. He had only to send them where he had sent the widow's pig, and he was sure of being rid of them. Nevertheless, con-

scious of a certain tightening of the heart when from time to time the thought of Marcotte came back to him, he acknowledged to himself that, however anxious to be rid of them, one could not send men to the devil quite as readily as one sent pigs.

While thus reflecting on the terrible power he possessed, and looking back at intervals to see if there were any immediate need to put it into use, Thibault, by the time night fell, had reached the rear of Pisseleu. It was an autumn night, dark and stormy, with a wind that tore the yellowing leaves from the trees, and wandered through the forest ways with melancholy sighs and moanings. These funereal voices of the wind were interrupted from time to time by the hooting of the owls, which sounded like the cries of lost travelers, hailing one another. But all these sounds were familiar to Thibault and made very little impression upon him. Moreover, he had taken the precaution, on first entering the forest, of cutting a stick, four feet long, from a chestnut tree, and adept as he was with the quarterstaff, he was ready, armed thus, to withstand the attack of any four men. So he entered the forest with all boldness of heart, at the spot which is known to this day as the Wolf's Heath.

He had been walking for some minutes along a dark and narrow glade, cursing as he went the foolish whims of women, who, for no reason whatever, preferred a weak and timid child to a brave, strong, full-grown man, when all of a sudden, at some few paces behind him, he heard a crackling among the leaves. He turned and the first thing he could distinguish in the darkness was the glowing light in a pair of eyes which shone like live coals. Then, looking more closely, and forcing his eyes to penetrate the gloom, he saw that a great wolf was following him, step by step. But it was not the wolf that he had entertained in his hut; that was black, while this was a reddish-brown. There was no mistaking one for the other, either as to color or size. As Thibault had no reason to suppose that all the wolves he came across would be animated with such benevolent feelings toward him as the first with which he had had dealings, he grasped his quarterstaff in both hands, and began twirling it about to make sure he had not forgotten the knack of using it. But to his great surprize the wolf went on trotting quietly behind him, without evincing any hostile intention, pausing when he paused, and going on again when he did, only now and then giving a howl as if to summon reinforcements.

Thibault was not altogether without uneasiness as regards these occasional howls, and presently he became aware of two other bright spots of light in front of him, shining at intervals through the darkness which was growing thicker and thicker. Holding his stick up in readiness to hit, he went forward toward these two lights, which remained stationary, and as he did so, his foot seemed to stumble against something lying across the path . . . it was another wolf. Not pausing to reflect whether it might not be unwise now to attack the first wolf, Thibault brought down his staff, giving the fellow a violent blow on the head. The animal uttered a howl of pain, then shaking his ears like a dog that has been beaten by its master, began walking on in front of the shoemaker.

Thibault then turned to see what had become of the first wolf: it was still following him, still keeping step with him. Bringing his eyes back again to the front, he now perceived that a third wolf was walking alongside to the right, and turning instinctively to the left, saw a fourth flanking him on that side, too. Before

he had gone a mile, a dozen of the animals had formed a circle round him.

The situation was critical, and Thibault was fully conscious of its gravity. At first he tried to sing, hoping that the sound of the human voice might frighten away the animals; but the expedient was vain. Nt a single animal swerved from its place in the circle, which was as exactly formed as if drawn with compasses. Then he thought he would climb up into the first thick-leaved tree he came to, and there wait for daylight; but on further deliberation, he decided that the wisest course was to try to get home, as the wolves, in spite of their number, still appeared as well-intentioned as when there was only one. It would be time enough to climb up into a tree when they began to show signs of any change of behavior toward him.

At the same time we are bound to add that Thibault was so disquieted in mind that he had reached his own door before he knew where he was; he did not at first recognize his own house. But a still greater surprize awaited him, for the wolves who were in front now respectfully drew back into two lines, sitting up on their hind legs and making a lane for him to pass along. Thibault did not waste time in stopping to thank them for this act of courtesy, but dashed into the house, banging the door to after him. Having firmly shut and bolted the door, he pushed the great chest against it, that it might be better able to resist any assault that might be made upon it. Then he flung himself into a chair, and began at length to find himself able to breathe more freely.

As soon as he was somewhat recovered, he went and peeped through the little window that looked out on the forest. A row of gleaming eyes assured him that far from having retired, the wolves had arranged themselves symmetrically in file in front of his dwelling.

To any one else the mere proximity of the animals would have been most alarming, but Thibault, who shortly before had been obliged to walk escorted by this terrible troop, found comfort in the thought that a wall, however thin, now separated him from his formidable companions.

THIBAULT lit his little iron lamp and put it on the table; drew the scattered wood-ashes of his hearth together and threw on them a bundle of chips, and then made a good fire, hoping that the reflection of the blaze would frighten away the wolves. But Thibault's wolves were evidently wolves of a special sort, accustomed to fire, for they did not budge an inch from the post they had taken up.

The state of uneasiness he was in prevented Thibault from sleeping, and directly dawn broke, he was able to look out and count them. They seemed, just as on the night before, to be waiting, some seated, some lying down, others sleeping or walking up and down like sentinels. But at length, as the last star melted away, all the wolves with one accord rose, and uttering the mournful howl with which animals of darkness are wont to salute the day, they dispersed in various directions and disappeared.

Thibault was now able to sit down and think over the misadventure of the previous day, and he began by asking himself how it was that the mistress of the mill had not preferred him to his cousin Landry. Was he no longer the handsome Thibault, or had some disadvantageous change come over his personal appearance? There was only one way of ascertaining whether this was so or not, namely, by consulting his mirror. So he took down the fragment of looking-glass hanging over the chimney-piece, and carried it toward the light, smiling to him-

self the while like a vain woman. But he had hardly given the first glance at himself in the mirror, before he uttered a cry, half of astonishment, half of horror. True, he was still the handsome Thibault, but the one red hair, thanks to the hasty wishes which had so imprudently escaped him, had now grown to a regular lock of hair, of a color and brilliancy that vied with the brightest flames upon his hearth.

His forehead grew cold with sweat. Knowing, however, that all attempts to pluck it out or cut it off would be futile, he made up his mind to make the best of the matter as it stood, and in future to forbear as far as possible from framing any wishes. The best thing was to put out of his mind all the ambitious desires that had worked so fatally for him, and go back to his humble trade. So Thibault sat down and tried to work, but he had no heart for the job. He pondered over matters, asking himself whether it was not a miserable thing to be sweating one's heart out merely for the privilege of leading a painful and wretched existence, when by judiciously directing one's wishes one might so easily attain to happiness. Formerly, even the preparation of his frugal meal had been an agreeable distraction, but it was so no longer; when hunger seized him and he was forced to eat his piece of black bread, he did it with repugnance, and the envy, which had hitherto been nothing more than a vague aspiration after ease and comfort, was now developed into a blind and violent hatred toward his fellow creatures.

Still the day, long as it seemed to Thibault, passed away like all its fellows. When twilight fell, he went outside and sat down on the bench which he had made himself and placed in front of the door, and there he remained, lost in gloomy reflections. Scarcely had the shadows begun to darken, before a wolf emerged from the underwood, and, as on the previous evening, went and lay down at a short distance from the house. As on the evening before, this wolf was followed by a second, by a third, in short by the whole pack, and once more they all took up their respective posts preparatory to the night's watch. As soon as Thibault saw the third wolf appear, he went indoors and barricaded himself in as carefully as the evening before; but this evening he was even more unhappy and low-spirited, and felt that he had not the strength to keep awake all night. So he lighted his fire, and piled it up in such a way that it would last till the morning, and throwing himself on his bed, fell fast asleep.

When he awoke, it was broad daylight, the sun having risen some hours before. Its rays fell in many colors on the quivering autumn leaves, dyeing them with a thousand shades of gold and purple.

Thibault ran to the window; the wolves had disappeared, leaving behind only the mark of where their bodies had lain on the dew-covered grass.

Next evening they again congregated before his dwelling; but he was now growing accustomed to their presence, and had come to the conclusion that his relations with the large black wolf had somehow awakened sympathetic feelings toward him in all other individuals of the same species, and he determined to find out, once for all, what their designs toward him really were. Accordingly, thrusting a freshly sharpened bill-hook into his belt, and taking his boar-spear in his hand, the shoemaker opened his door and walked resolutely out to face them. Having half expected that they would spring upon him, he was greatly surprized to see them begin to wag their tails like so many dogs on seeing their master approach. Their greetings were so expressive of friendliness that Thibault even ventured to stroke one or two of

them on the back, which they not only allowed him to do, but actually gave signs of the greatest pleasure at being thus noticed.

"Oh! ho!" muttered Thibault, whose wandering imagination always went ahead at a gallop, "if these queer friends of mine are as obedient as they are gentle, why, here I am, the owner of a pack unequaled by any my Lord Baron has ever possessed, and I shall have no difficulty whatever now in dining on venison whenever the fancy so takes me."

He had hardly said the words, when four of the strongest and most alert of the four-footed beasts separated themselves from the others and galloped off into the forest. A few minutes later a howl was heard, sounding from the depths of the underwood, and half an hour afterward one of the wolves reappeared dragging with it a fine kid which left behind it a long trail of blood on the grass. The wolf laid the animal at Thibault's feet, who, delighted beyond measure at seeing his wishes not only accomplished but forestalled, broke up the kid, giving each of the wolves an equal share, and keeping the back and haunches for himself. Then with the gesture of an emperor, which showed that he now at last understood the position he held, he ordered the wolves away until the morrow.

EARLY next morning, before the day broke, he went off to Villers-Cotterets, and at the price of a couple of crowns, the innkeeper of the *Boule-d'Or* took the two haunches off his hands.

The following day, it was half of a boar that Thibault conveyed to the innkeeper, and it was not long before he became the latter's chief purveyor.

Thibault, taking a taste for this sort of business, now passed his whole day hanging about the taverns, and gave no more thought to the making of shoes. One or two of his acquaintances began to make fun of his red lock, for however assiduously he covered it with the rest of his hair, it always found a way of getting through the curls that hid it, and making itself visible. But Thibault soon gave it plainly to be understood that he would take no joking about the unfortunate disfigurement.

Meanwhile, as ill luck would have it, the Duke of Orleans and Madame de Montesson came to spend a few days at Villers-Cotterets. This was a fresh incentive to Thibault's madly ambitious spirit. All the fine and beautiful ladies and all the gay young lords from the neighboring estates, the Montbretons, the Montesquieus, the Courvals, hastened to Villers-Cotterets. The ladies brought their richest attire, the young lords their most elegant costumes. The Baron's hunting-horn resounded through the forest louder and gayer than ever. Graceful amazons and dashing cavaliers, in red coats laced with gold, passed like radiant visions, as they were borne along on their magnificent English horses, illuminating the somber depths of the wood like brilliant flashes of light.

In the evening it was different; then all this aristocratic company assembled for feasting and dancing, or at other times drove out in beautiful gilt carriages bedizened with coats of arms of every color.

Thibault always took his stand in the front rank of the lookers-on, gazing with avidity on these clouds of satin and lace, which lifted now and then to disclose the delicate ankles encased in their fine silk stockings, and the little shoes with their red heels. Thus the whole cavalcade swept past in front of the astonished peasantry, leaving a faint exhalation of scent and powder and delicate perfumes.

And then Thibault would ask himself why he was not one of those young lords in their embroidered coats; why he had not one of these beautiful women in their rustling satins for his mistress. Then his thoughts would turn to Agnelette and Madame Polet, and he saw them just as they were, the one a poor little peasant girl, the other nothing more than the owner of a rustic mill.

But it was when he was walking home at night through the forest, accompanied by his pack of wolves, which, from the moment the night fell and he set foot inside the forest, no more thought of leaving him than the King's bodyguard would dream of leaving their royal master, that his broodings took their most disastrous turn. Surrounded by the temptations which now assailed him, it was only what was to be expected that Thibault, who had already gone so far in the direction of evil, should break away from what little good was still left in him, losing even the very remembrance of having once led an honest life. What were the few paltry crowns that the landlord of the *Boule-d'Or* gave him in payment for the game which his good friends the wolves procured for him? Saved up for months, even for years, they would still be insufficient to satisfy a single one of the humblest of the desires which kept tormenting his brain. It would be scarcely safe to say that Thibault, who had first wished for a haunch of the Baron's buck, then for Agnelette's heart, and then for the widow Polet's mill, would now be satisfied even with the Castle at Oigny or Longpont, to such extravagant issues had his ambition been excited by those dainty feet, those trim ankles, those exquisite scents exhaled from all those velvet and satin gowns.

At last one day he said to himself definitely that it would be the veriest folly to go on living his poor life when a power so tremendous as he now possessed was at his disposal. From that moment he made up his mind that, no matter if his hair should grow as red as the crown of fire which is seen at night hanging over the great chimney at the glass works of Saint Gobain, he would exercise this power of his to the accomplishing of the most high-flown of his ambitions.

(To be continued next month)

The Gods of Bal-Sagoth

(Continued from page 319)

whetstone and dirk dropped to the floor. His head fell forward on his broad chest and his eyes closed.

"Too much wine," muttered Turlogh. "But let him slumber; I'll keep watch."

Yet even as he spoke, the Gael was aware of a strange lassitude stealing over him. He lay back in the broad chair. His eyes felt heavy and sleep veiled his brain despite himself. And as he lay there, a strange nightmare vision came to him. One of the heavy hangings on the wall opposite the door swayed violently and from behind it slunk a fearful shape that crept slavering across the room. Turlogh watched it apathetically, aware that he was dreaming and at the same time wondering at the strangeness of the dream. The thing was grotesquely like a crooked gnarled man in shape, but its face was bestial. It bared yellow fangs as it lurched silently toward him, and from under penthouse brows small reddened eyed gleamed demoniacally. Yet there was something of the human in its countenance; it was neither ape nor man, but an unnatural creature horribly compounded of both.

Now the foul apparition halted before him, and as the gnarled fingers clutched his throat, Turlogh was suddenly and fearfully aware that this was no dream but a fiendish reality. With a burst of desperate effort he broke the unseen chains that held him and hurled himself from the chair. The grasping fingers missed his throat, but quick as he was, he could not elude the swift lunge of those hairy arms, and the next moment he was tumbling about the floor in a death grip with the monster, whose sinews felt like pliant steel.

That fearful battle was fought in silence save for the hissing of hard-drawn breath. Turlogh's left forearm was thrust under the apish chin, holding back the grisly fangs from his throat, about which the monster's fingers had locked. Athelstane still slept in his chair, head fallen forward. Turlogh tried to call to him, but those throttling hands had shut off his voice—were fast choking out his life. The room swam in a red haze before his distended eyes. His right hand, clenched into an iron mallet, battered desperately at the fearful face bent toward his; the beast-like teeth shattered under his blows and blood splattered, but still the red eyes gloated and the taloned fingers sank deeper and deeper until a ringing in Turlogh's ears knelled his soul's departure.

Even as he sank into semi-unconsciousness, his falling hand struck something his numbed fighting-brain recognized as the dirk Athelstane had dropped on the floor. Blindly, with a dying gesture, Turlogh struck and felt the fingers loosen suddenly. Feeling the return of life and power, he heaved up and over, with his assailant beneath him. Through red mists that slowly lightened, Turlogh Dubh saw the ape-man, now encrimsoned, writhing beneath him, and he drove the dirk home until the dumb horror lay still with wide staring eyes.

The Gael staggered to his feet, dizzy and panting, trembling in every limb. He drew in great gulps of air and his giddiness slowly cleared. Blood trickled plentifully from the wounds in his throat. He noted with amazement that the Saxon still slumbered. And suddenly he began to feel again the tides of unnatural weariness and lassitude that had rendered him helpless before. Picking up his ax, he shook off the feeling with difficulty and

stepped toward the curtain from behind which the ape-man had come. Like an invisible wave a subtle power emanating from those hangings struck him, and with weighted limbs he forced his way across the room. Now he stood before the curtain and felt the power of a terrific evil will beating upon his own, menacing his very soul, threatening to enslave him, brain and body. Twice he raised his hand and twice it dropped limply to his side. Now for the third time he made a mighty effort and tore the hangings bodily from the wall. For a flashing instant he caught a glimpse of a bizarre, half-naked figure in a mantle of parrot-feathers and a headgear of waving plumes. Then as he felt the full hypnotic blast of those blazing eyes, he closed his own eyes and struck blind. He felt his ax sink deep; then he opened his eyes and gazed at the silent figure which lay at his feet, cleft head in a widening crimson pool.

And now Athelstane suddenly heaved erect, eyes flaring bewilderedly, sword out. "What——?" he stammered, glaring wildly, "Turlogh, what in Thor's name's happened? Thor's blood! That is a priest there, but what is this dead thing?"

"One of the devils of this foul city," answered Turlogh, wrenching his ax free, "I think Gothan has failed again. This one stood behind the hangings and bewitched us unawares. He put the spell of sleep on us——"

"Aye, I slept," the Saxon nodded dazedly. "But how came they here——"

"There must be a secret door behind these hangings, though I can not find it——"

"Hark!" From the room where the queen slept there came a vague scuffling sound, that in its very faintness seemed fraught with grisly potentialities.

"Brunhild!" Turlogh shouted. A strangled gurgle answered him. He thrust against the door. It was locked. As he heaved up his ax to hew it open, Athelstane brushed him aside and hurled his full weight against it. The panels crashed and through their ruins Athelstane plunged into the room. A roar burst from his lips. Over the Saxon's shoulder Turlogh saw a vision of delirium. Brunhild, queen of Bal-Sagoth, writhed helpless in midair, gripped by the black shadow of a nightmare. Then as the great black shape turned cold flaming eyes on them Turlogh saw it was a living creature. It stood, man-like, upon two tree-like legs, but its outline and face were not of a man, beast or devil. This, Turlogh felt, was the horror that even Gothan had hesitated to loose upon his foes; the arch-fiend that the demoniac priest had brought into life in his hidden caves of horror. What ghastly knowledge had been necessary, what hideous blending of human and bestial things with nameless shapes from outer voids of darkness?

Held like a babe in arms Brunhild writhed, eyes flaring with horror, and as the Thing took a misshapen hand from her white throat to defend itself, a scream of heart-shaking fright burst from her pale lips. Athelstane, first in the room, was ahead of the Gael. The black shape loomed over the giant Saxon, dwarfing and overshadowing him, but Athelstane, gripping the hilt with both hands, lunged upward. The great sword sank over half its length into the black body and came out crimson as the monster reeled back. A hellish pandemonium of sound burst forth, and the echoes of that hideous yell thundered through the palace and deafened the hearers. Turlogh was springing in, ax high, when the fiend dropped the girl and fled reeling across the room, vanishing in a dark opening that now gaped in the wall. Athelstane, clean beserk, plunged after it.

Turlogh made to follow, but Brunhild,

(Please turn to page 424)

COMING NEXT MONTH

WHAT unimaginable horror of protoplastic life, what loathly spawn of the primordial slime had come forth to confront us, we did not pause to consider or conjecture. The monstrosity was too awful to permit of even a brief contemplation; also, its intentions were too plainly hostile, for it slithered toward us with an unbelievable speed and celerity of motion, opening as it came a toothless mouth of amazing capacity. As it gaped upon us, revealing a tongue that uncoiled like a long serpent, its jaws widened with the same extreme elasticity that accompanied all its other movements. We saw that our departure from the fane of Tsathoggua had become most imperative, and turning our backs to all the abominations of that unhallowed shrine, we crossed the sill with a single leap and ran headlong in the moonlight through the suburbs of Commoriom.

Our lungs were intolerably strained, were ready to burst with this heroic effort, and the various fatigues of the day had told upon us all too grievously: but when we saw at our heels the black monster, following us with a serpentine and undulating ease, like a torrent that descends a long declivity, our flagging limbs were miraculously re-animated, and we plunged from the betraying light of the road into the pathless jungle, hoping to evade our pursuer in the labyrinth of boles and vines and gigantic leaves. We stumbled over roots and fallen trees, we tore our raiment and lacerated our skins on the savage brambles, we collided in the gloom with huge trunks and limber saplings that bent before us, we heard the hissing of tree-snakes that spat their venom at us from the boughs above, and the grunting or howling of unseen animals when we trod upon them in our precipitate flight. But we no longer dared to stop or look behind. . . .

The horror that was consummated in the dark temple of the god Tsathoggua will be revealed in our next issue in a thrilling, goose-flesh story:

The Tale of Satampra Zeiros

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

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THE GHOST THAT NEVER DIED
by Elizabeth Sheldon

An unusual ghost story, about a young woman and an old man who were done to death by the ghost of a person who was still alive.

These are some of the super-excellent stories that will appear in the next issu. Also, another thrilling installment of Otis Adelbert Kline's fast-moving story, *Tam, Son of the Tiger,* and Alexandre Dumas' exciting tale, *The Wolf-Leader.*

November WEIRD TALES Out October 1

(Continued from page 422)

reeling up, threw her white arms around him in a grip even he could hardly break. "No!" she screamed, eyes ablaze with terror, "do not follow them into that fearful corridor! It must lead to Hell itself! The Saxon will never return! Let you not share his fate!"

"Loose me, woman!" roared Turlogh in a frenzy, striving to disengage himself without hurting her. "My comrade may be fighting for his life!"

"Wait till I summon the guard!" she cried, but Turlogh flung her from him, and as he sprang through the secret doorway, Brunhild smote on the jade gong until the palace re-echoed. A loud pounding began in the corridor and Zomar's voice shouted: "Oh queen, are you in peril? Shall we burst the door?"

"Hasten!" she screamed, as she rushed to the outer door and flung it open.

Turlogh, leaping recklessly into the corridor, raced along in darkness for a few moments, hearing ahead of him the agonized bellowing of the wounded monster and the deep fierce shouts of the Viking. Then these noises faded away in the distance as he came into a narrow passageway faintly lighted with torches stuck into niches. Face down on the floor lay a brown man, clad in gay feathers, his skull crushed like an egg-shell.

How long Turlogh O'Brien followed the dizzy windings of the shadowy corridor he never knew. Other smaller passages led off to each side but he kept to the main corridor. At last he passed under an arched doorway and came out into a strange vasty room.

Sombre massive columns upheld a shadowy ceiling so high it seemed like a brooding cloud arched against a midnight sky. Turlogh saw that he was in a temple. Behind a black red-stained stone altar loomed a mighty form, sinister and abhorrent. The god Gol-goroth! Surely it must be he. But Turlogh spared only a single glance for the colossal figure that brooded there in the shadows. Before him was a strange tableau. Athelstane leaned on his great sword and gazed at the two shapes which sprawled in a red welter at his feet. Whatever foul magic had brought the Black Thing into life, it had taken but a thrust of English steel to hurl it back into the limbo from whence it came. The monster lay half across its last victim—a gaunt white-bearded man whose eyes were starkly evil, even in death.

"Gothan!" ejaculated the startled Gael.

"Aye, the priest—I was close behind this troll or whatever it is, all the way along the corridor, but for all its size it fled like a deer. Once one in a feather mantle tried to halt it, and it smashed his skull and paused not an instant. At last we burst into this temple, I close upon the monster's heels with my sword raised for the death-cut. But Thor's blood! When it saw the old one standing by that altar, it gave one fearful howl and tore him to pieces and died itself, all in an instant, before I could reach it and strike."

Turlogh gazed at the huge formless thing. Looking directly at it, he could form no estimate of its nature. He got only a chaotic impression of great size and inhuman evil. Now it lay like a vast shadow blotched out on the marble floor. Surely black wings beating from moonless gulfs had hovered over its birth, and the grisly souls of nameless demons had gone into its being.

And now Brunhild rushed from the dark corridor with Zomar and the guardsmen. And from outer doors and secret nooks came others silently—warriors, and priests in feathered mantles, until a great throng stood in the Temple of Darkness.

(Please turn to page 426)

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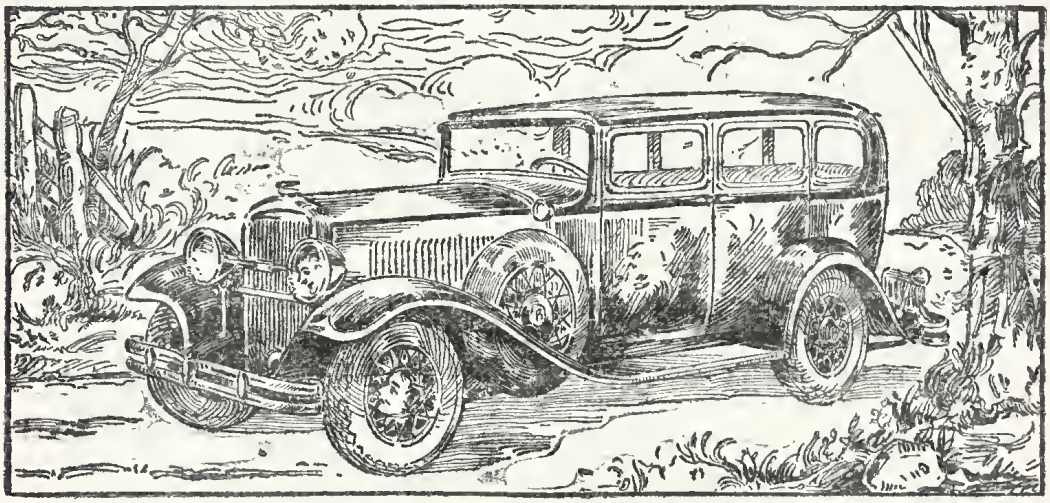

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(Continued from page 424)

A fierce cry broke from the queen as she saw what had happened. Her eyes blazed terribly and she was gripped by a strange madness.

"At last!" she screamed, spurning the corpse of her arch-foe with her heel, "at last I am true mistress of Bal-Sagoth! The secrets of the hidden ways are mine now, and old Gothan's beard is dabbled in his own blood!"

She flung her arms high in fearful triumph, and ran toward the grim idol, screaming exultant insults like a madwoman. And at that instant the temple rocked! The colossal image swayed outward, and then pitched suddenly forward as a tall tower falls. Turlogh shouted and leaped forward, but even as he did, with a thunder like the bursting of a world, the god Gol-goroth crashed down upon the doomed woman, who stood frozen. The mighty image splintered into a thousand great fragments, blotting from the sight of men for ever Brunhild, daughter of Rane Thorfin's son, queen of Bal-Sagoth. From under the ruins there oozed a wide crimson stream.

Warriors and priests stood frozen, deafened by the crash of that fall, stunned by the weird catastrophe. An icy hand touched Turlogh's spine. Had that vast bulk been thrust over by the hand of a dead man? As it had rushed downward it had seemed to the Gael that the inhuman features had for an instant taken on the likeness of the dead Gothan!

Now as all stood speechless, the acolyte Gelka saw and seized his opportunity.

"Gol-goroth has spoken!" he screamed. "He has crushed the false goddess! She was but a wicked mortal! And these strangers, too, are mortal! See — he bleeds!"

The priest's finger stabbed at the dried blood on Turlogh's throat and a wild roar went up from the throng. Dazed and bewildered by the swiftness and magnitude of the late events, they were like crazed wolves, ready to wipe out doubts and fear in a burst of bloodshed. Gelka bounded at Turlogh, hatchet flashing, and a knife in the hand of a satellite licked into Zomar's back. Turlogh had not understood the shout, but he realized the air was tense with danger for Athelstane and himself. He met the leaping Gelka with a stroke that sheared through the waving plumes and the skull beneath, then half a dozen lances broke on his buckler and a rush of bodies swept him back against a great pillar. Then Athelstane, slow of thought, who had stood gaping for the flashing second it had taken this to transpire, awoke in a blast of awesome fury. With a deafening roar he swung his heavy sword in a mighty arc. The whistling blade whipped off a head, sheared through a torso and sank deep into a spinal column. The three corpses fell across each other and even in the madness of the strife, men cried out at the marvel of that single stroke.

But like a brown, blind tide of fury the maddened people of Bal-Sagoth rolled on their foes. The guardsmen of the dead queen, trapped in the press, died to a man without a chance to strike a blow. But the overthrow of the two white warriors was no such easy task. Back to back they smashed and smote; Athelstane's sword was a thunderbolt of death; Turlogh's ax was lightning. Hedged close by a sea of snarling brown faces and flashing steel they hacked their way slowly toward a doorway. The very mass of the attackers hindered the warriors of Bal-Sagoth, for they had no space to guide their strokes, while the weapons of the seafarers kept a bloody ring clear in front of them.

Heaping a ghastly row of corpses as

they went, the comrades slowly cut their way through the snarling press. The Temple of Shadows, witness of many a bloody deed, was flooded with gore spilled like a red sacrifice to her broken gods. The heavy weapons of the white fighters wrought fearful havoc among their naked, lighter-limbed foes, while their armor guarded their own lives. But their arms, legs and faces were cut and gashed by the frantically flying steel and it seemed the sheer number of their foes would overwhelm them ere they could reach the door.

Then they had reached it, and made desperate play until the brown warriors, no longer able to come upon them from all sides, drew back for a breathing-space, leaving a torn red heap before the threshold. And in that instant the two sprang back into the corridor and seizing the great brazen door, slammed it in the very faces of the warriors who leaped howling to prevent it. Athelstane, bracing his mighty legs, held it against their combined efforts until Turlogh had time to find and slip the bolt.

"Thor!" gasped the Saxon, shaking the blood in a red shower from his face. "This is close play! What now, Turlogh?"

"Down the corridor, quick!" snapped the Gael, "before they come on us from this way and trap us like rats against this door. By Satan, the whole city must be roused! Hark to that roaring!"

In truth, as they raced down the shadowed corridor, it seemed to them that all Bal-Sagoth had burst into rebellion and civil war. From all sides came the clashing of steel, the shouts of men, and the screams of women, overshadowed by a hideous howling. A lurid glow became apparent down the corridor and then even as Turlogh, in the lead, rounded a corner and came out into an open courtyard, a vague figure leaped at him and a

heavy weapon fell with unexpected force on his shield, almost felling him. But even as he staggered he struck back and the upper-spike on his ax sank under the heart of his attacker, who fell at his feet. In the glare that illumined all, Turlogh saw his victim differed from the brown warriors he had been fighting. This man was naked, powerfully muscled and of a copperish red rather than brown. The heavy animal-like jaw, the slanting low forehead showed none of the intelligence and refinement of the brown people, but only a brute ferocity. A heavy war-club, rudely carved, lay beside him.

"By Thor!" exclaimed Athelstane, "the city burns!"

Turlogh looked up. They were standing on a sort of raised courtyard from which broad steps led down into the streets and from this vantage-point they had a plain view of the terrific end of Bal-Sagoth. Flames leaped madly higher and higher, paling the moon, and in the red glare pigmy figures ran to and fro, falling and dying like puppets dancing to the tune of the Black Gods. Through the roar of the flames and the crashing of falling walls cut screams of death and shrieks of ghastly triumph. The city was swarming with naked, copper-skinned devils who burned and ravished and butchered in one red carnival of madness.

The red men of the isles! By the thousands they had descended on the Isle of the Gods in the night, and whether stealth of treachery let them through the walls, the comrades never knew, but now they ravened through the corpse-strewn streets, glutting their blood-lust in holocaust and massacre wholesale. Not all the gashed forms that lay in the crimson-running streets were brown; the people of the doomed city fought with desperate courage, but outnumbered and caught off guard, their courage was futile. The red men were like blood-hungry tigers.

"What ho, Turlogh!" shouted Athelstane, beard a-bristle, eyes ablaze as the madness of the scene fired a like passion in his own fierce soul, "the world ends! Let us into the thick of it and glut our steel before we die! Who shall we strike for—the red or the brown?"

"Steady!" snapped the Gael. "Either people would cut our throats. We must hack our way through to the gates, and the Devil take them all. We have no friends here. This way—down these stairs. Across the roofs in yonder direction I see the arch of a gate."

THE comrades sprang down the stairs, gained the narrow street below and ran swiftly in the way Turlogh indicated. About them washed a red inundation of slaughter. A thick smoke veiled all now, and in the murk chaotic groups merged, writhed and scattered, littering the shattered flags with gory shapes. It was like a nightmare in which demoniac figures leaped and capered, looming suddenly in the fire-shot mist, vanishing as suddenly. The flames from each side of the streets shouldered each other, singeing the hair of the warriors as they ran. Roofs fell in with an awesome thunder and walls crashing into ruin filled the air with flying death. Men struck blindly from the smoke and the seafarers cut them down and never knew whether their skins were brown or red.

Now a new note rose in the cataclysmic horror. Blinded by the smoke, confused by the winding streets, the red men were trapped in the snare of their own making. Fire is impartial; it can burn the lighter as well as the intended victim; and a falling wall is blind. The red men abandoned their prey and ran howling to and fro like beasts, seeking escape; many, finding this futile, turned back in a last unreasoning storm of madness as a blind-

ed tiger turns, and made their last moments of life a crimson burst of slaughter.

Turlogh, with the unerring sense of direction that comes to men who live the life of the wolf, ran toward the point where he knew an outer gate to be; yet in the windings of the streets and the screen of smoke, doubt assailed him. From the flame-shot murk in front of him a fearful scream rang out. A naked girl reeled blindly into view and fell at Turlogh's feet, blood gushing from her mutilated breast. A howling, red-stained devil, close on her heels, jerked back her head and cut her throat a fraction of a second before Turlogh's ax ripped the head from its shoulders and spun it grinning into the street. And at that second a sudden wind shifted the writhing smoke and the comrades saw the open gateway ahead of them, aswarm with red warriors. A fierce shout, a blasting rush, a mad instant of volcanic ferocity that littered the gateway with corpses, and they were through and racing down the slopes toward the distant forest and the beach beyond. Before them the sky was reddening for dawn; behind them rose the soul-shaking tumult of the doomed city.

Like hunted things they fled, seeking brief shelter among the many groves from time to time, to avoid groups of savages who ran toward the city. The whole island seemed to be swarming with them; the chiefs must have drawn on all the isles within hundreds of miles for a raid of such magnitude. And at last the comrades reached the strip of forest, and breathed deeply as they came to the beach and found it abandoned save for a number of long skull-decorated war canoes.

Athelstane sat down and gasped for breath. "Thor's blood! What now? What may we do but hide in these woods until those red devils hunt us out?"

"Help me launch this boat," snapped

Turlogh. "We'll take our chance on the open main——"

"Ho!" Athelstane leaped erect, pointing, "Thor's blood, a ship!"

The sun was just up, gleaming like a great golden coin on the sea-rim. And limned in the sun swam a tall, high-pooped craft. The comrades leaped into the nearest canoe, shoved off and rowed like mad, shouting and waving their oars to attract the attention of the crew. Powerful muscles drove the long slim craft along at an incredible clip, and it was not long before the ship stood about and allowed them to come alongside. Dark-faced men, clad in mail, looked over the rail.

"Spaniards," muttered Athelstane. "If they recognize me, I had better stayed on the island!"

But he clambered up the chain without hesitation, and the two wanderers fronted the lean somber-faced man whose armor was that of a knight of Asturias. He spoke to them in Spanish and Turlogh answered him, for the Gael, like many of his race, was a natural linguist and had wandered far and spoken many tongues. In a few words the Dalcassian told their story and explained the great pillar of smoke which now rolled upward in the morning air from the isle.

"Tell him there is a king's ransom for the taking," put in Athelstane. "Tell him of the silver gates, Turlogh."

But when the Gael spoke of the vast loot in the doomed city, the commander shook his head.

"Good sir, we have no time to secure it, nor men to waste in the taking. Those red fiends you describe would hardly give up anything—though useless to them—without a fierce battle and neither my time nor my force is mine. I am Don Roderigo del Cortez of Castile and this ship, the *Gray Friar*, is one of a fleet that sailed to harry the Moorish Corsairs. Some days agone we were separated from the rest of the fleet in a sea skirmish and the tempest blew us far off our course. We are even now beating back to rejoin the fleet if we can find it; if not, to harry the infidel as well as we may. We serve God and the king and we can not halt for mere dross as you suggest. But you are welcome aboard this ship and we have need of such fighting men as you appear to be. You will not regret it, should you wish to join us and strike a blow for Christendom against the Moslems."

In the narrow-bridged nose and deep dark eyes, as in the lean ascetic face, Turlogh read the fanatic, the stainless cavalier, the knight errant. He spoke to Athelstane: "This man is mad, but there are good blows to be struck and strange lands to see; anyway, we have no other choice."

"One place is as good as another to masterless men and wanderers," quoth the huge Saxon. "Tell him we will follow him to Hell and singe the tail of the Devil if there be any chance of loot."

4. *Empire*

TURLOGH and Athelstane leaned on the rail, gazing back at the swiftly receding Island of the Gods, from which rose a pillar of smoke, laden with the ghosts of a thousand centuries and the shadows and mysteries of forgotten empire, and Athelstane cursed as only a Saxon can.

"A king's ransom—and after all that blood-letting—no loot!"

Turlogh shook his head. "We have seen an ancient kingdom fall—we have seen the last remnant of the world's oldest empire sink into flames and the abyss of oblivion, and barbarism rear its brute

head above the ruins. So pass the glory and the splendor and the imperial purple—in red flames and yellow smoke."

"But not one bit of plunder——" persisted the Viking.

Again Turlogh shook his head. "I brought away with me the rarest gem upon the island—something for which men and women have died and the gutters run with blood."

He drew from his girdle a small object—a curiously carved symbol of jade.

"The emblem of kingship!" exclaimed Athelstane.

"Aye—as Brunhild struggled with me to keep me from following you into the corridor, this thing caught in my mail and was torn from the golden chain that held it."

"He who bears it is king of Bal-Sagoth," ruminated the mighty Saxon. "As I predicted, Turlogh, you are a king!"

Turlogh laughed with bitter mirth and pointed to the great billowing column of smoke which floated in the sky away on the sea-rim.

"Aye—a kingdom of the dead—an empire of ghosts and smoke. I am Ard-Righ of a phantom city—I am King Turlogh of Bal-Sagoth and my kingdom is fading in the morning sky. And therein it is like all other empires in the world—dreams and ghosts and smoke."

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THE DEVIL'S BRIDE

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A thrilling weird novel about Jules de Grandin

The Red Sail

(Continued from page 405)

He cried out for aid, but there was no one to hear. The lake seemed deserted now. It was as if a grim and inexorable master of destiny were guiding them to doom. He held her up in the water so that her face was above it, and laughed defiance at the gathering darkness. He swam, she with her hand on his shoulder, cutting through the water slowly, hauling her. In an hour his muscles seemed bursting, but the lights were far distant.

Presently she sensed his fatigue and said, "Let me go and you swim on alone. You could get there."

He laughed in his weariness.

"I love you," he said.

Another hour. The lights were torturing phantoms in a vague and incredible distance. The canopy of stars hung like a grotesque ceiling. The wind caressed the surface of the water, fanning up gentle waves. Through all of John Robertson's being there came a wave of nostalgia, deadening and terrifying. A moment he was ready to give up, then felt her hand press harder on his shoulder.

"Can we do it?" she asked in a dull voice.

"Yes," he said harshly. "Yes, yes!"

He fought on and on in despair, his heart breaking, till with a hoarse cry he felt his feet touch the bottom. He stood up and carried her ashore and stood with her in his arms, stood looking out over the water, his clothes streaming, his lips bloody, his heart pounding, his hair soaked, his eyes flashing despite his deathly weariness.

For the barest fraction of a second, then, it seemed to him that far out in the darkness he saw the red sail of a Viking ship dip to him in proud and triumphant salute.

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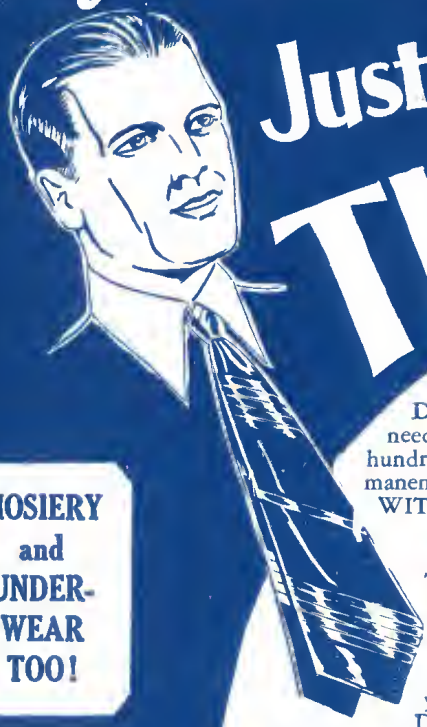

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