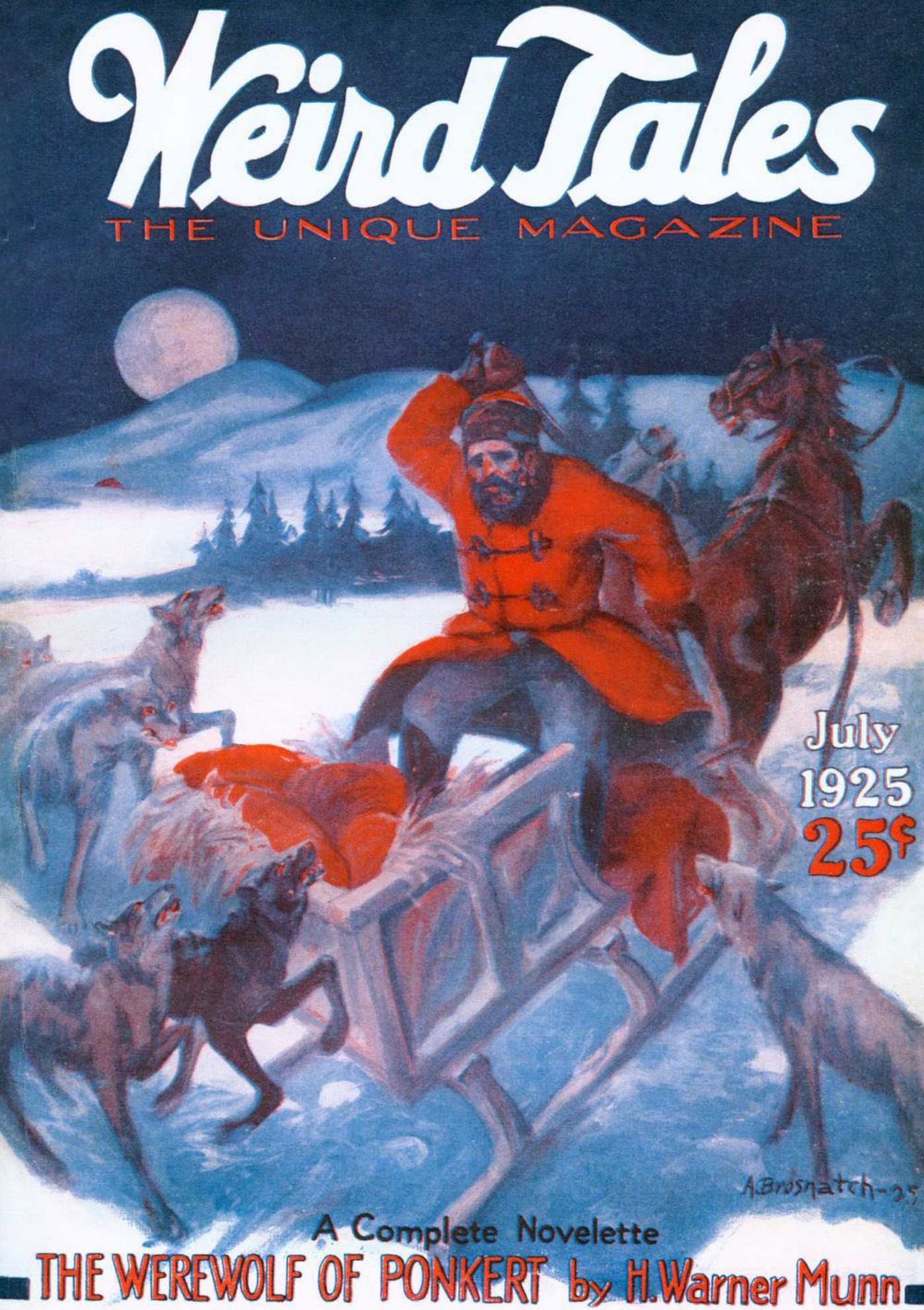
Weird Tales

THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE



A Complete Novelette

THE WEREWOLF OF PONKERT by H. Warner Munn

THE HOP-OFF
Round-the-World flyers leaving Clover Field, Santa Monica, Cal., on 30,000 mile trip.
(Wide World Photo.)

Daring Young Men Needed in Aviation

THERE is no field of work in the world today which offers such amazing opportunities to young men of daring and who love adventure as does Aviation. Although still in its infancy, there is a crying demand in Aviation for young men with courage, nerve and self-reliance. For those who can qualify there will be thousands of highly paid jobs which will lead quickly and surely to advancement and success.

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME VI NUMBER 1

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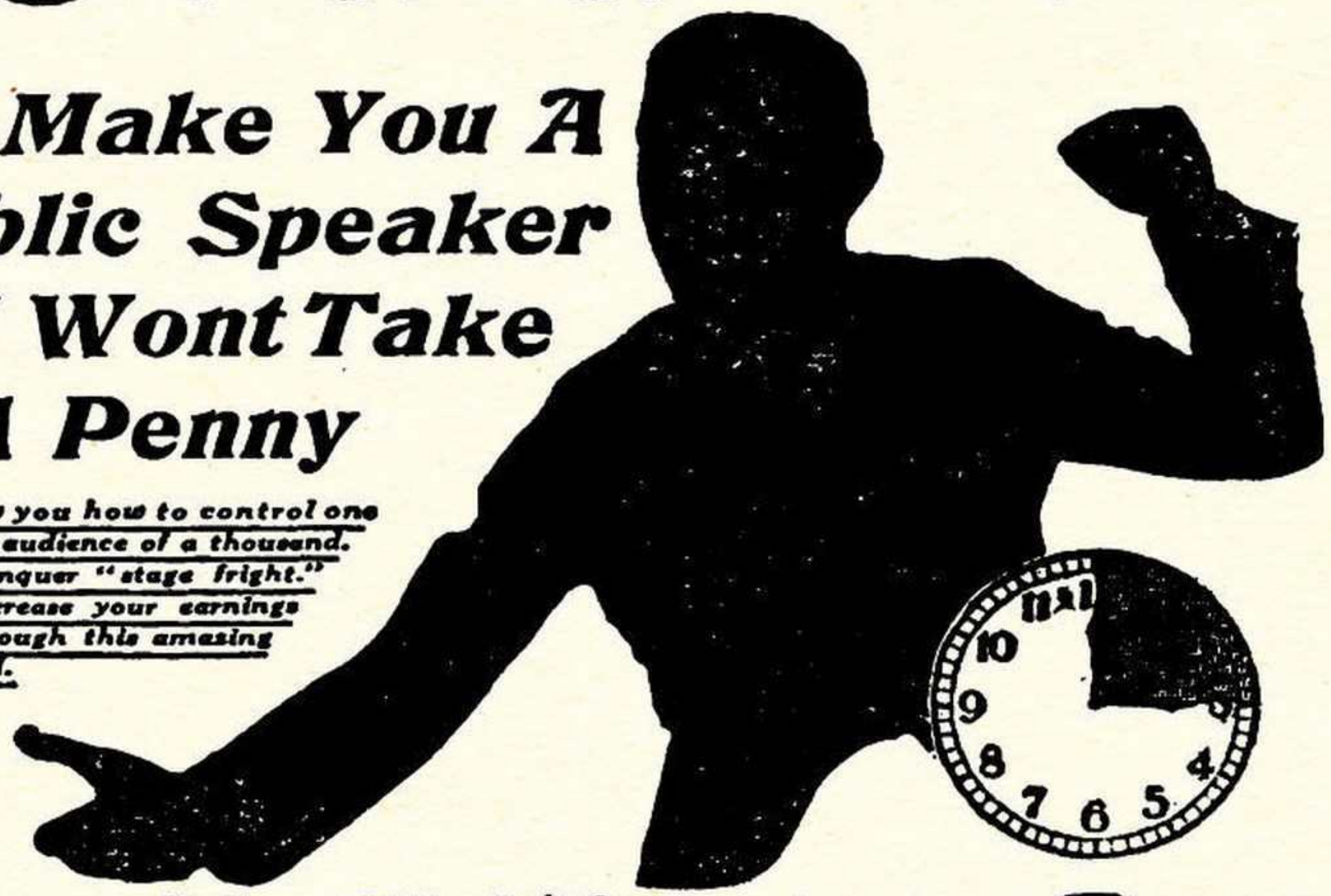

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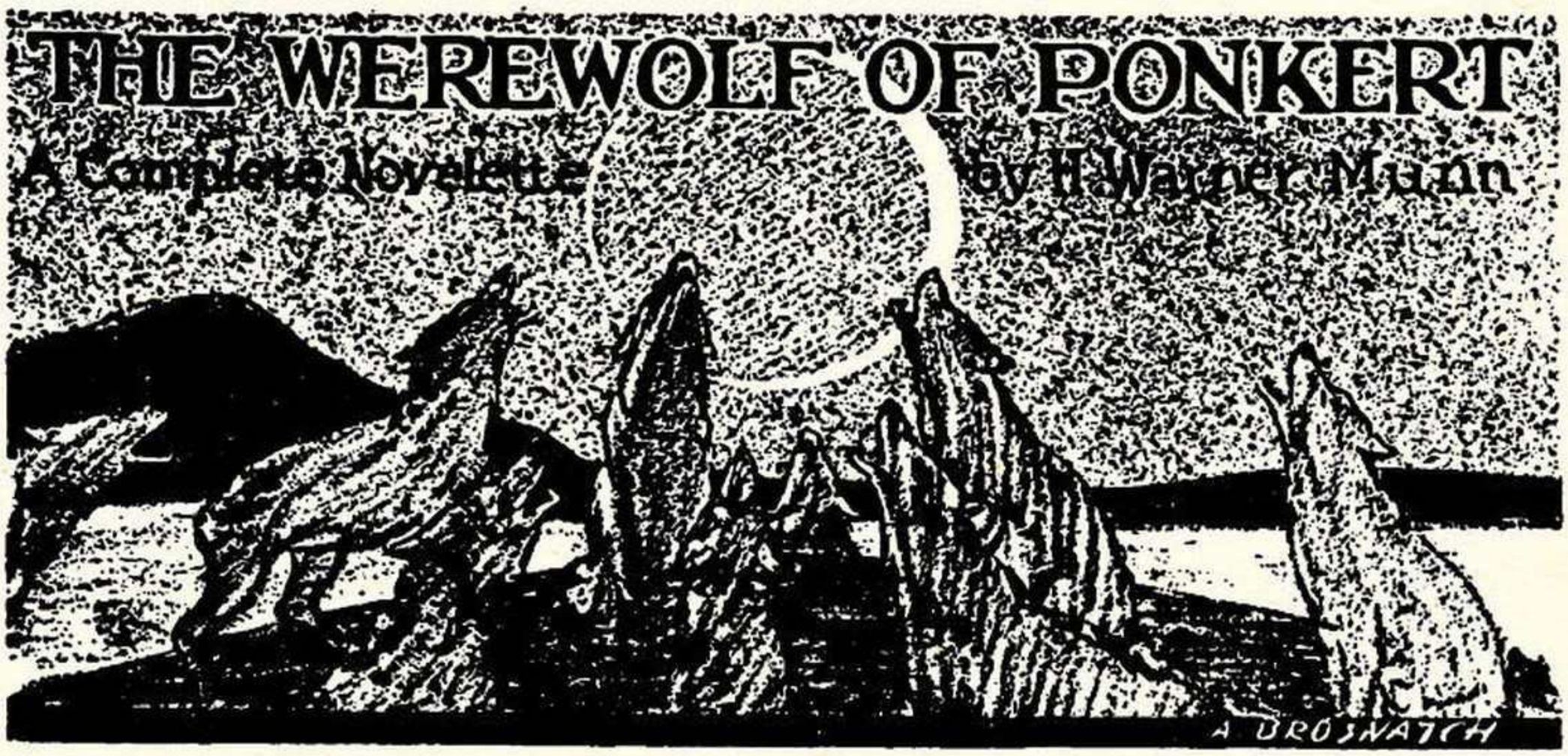
THE WEREWOLF OF PONKERT

A Complete Novelette

by H. Warner Munn



They are neither brute nor human—
They are neither man nor woman—
They are Ghouls.
—*Poe:* The Bells.

PROLOGUE

IN THE past, when I toured in France, invariably I made a point of never failing to stop at a certain tavern, about thirty miles from Paris. I will not give you more definite directions for reaching it, for it was a discovery of my own and as such I would share it with no one. The fact that the inn has very pretty serving maids is but incidental, the real reason of my visits being the superlative excellence of the wine.

Many a night have I and the old Pierre sat, smoked and drunk till the wee hours of the morning, and many have been the experiences we have exchanged of wild, eery adventure in various parts of the globe. Pierre also was a great traveler and seeker after adventure before he drifted into the backwater of this placid village, to finish there the remainder of his days.

One night (or morning, I should say), Pierre grew indiscreet under the influence of his nectar, and let fall a few words so pregnant of possibilities that I scented a mystery at once; and when he was sober I demanded an explanation. And, having said so much, seeing that he could not dissuade me, he brought forth proof of his dark hints in regard to a horrible occurrence in the annals of his family.

The proof was a book, bound in hand-tooled leather and locked by a silver clasp. When open it proved to be written in a crabbed hand in old Latin on what was apparently parchment, which was now yellow with age, but must when new have been remarkably white.

It comprized only four leaves, each a foot square and glued or cemented to a thin wooden backing. They were written on only one side and completely covered with this close, crabbed Latin.

On the back of the book were two iron staples, and hanging from each, several links of heavy rusted chain. Evidently, like most valuable books which were available to the public in the past, it had been chained fast to something immovable to prevent theft.

Unfortunately, I cannot read Latin, or in fact any languages but French and English, although I speak several. So it was necessary for my friend to read it to me, which he did.

After I had recovered from the numbness which the curious narrative had thrown over me, I begged him to read it again—slowly. As he read, I copied; and here is the tale for you to judge and believe as you see fit. Told in Hungarian, transcribed in Latin, translated into modern French and from that into English, it is probably both garbled and improved. No doubt anachronisms abound, but be that as it may, it remains without dispute the only authentic document known of a werewolf's experiences, dictated by *himself*.

1

HAVING but a few hours in which to live, I dictate that which follows, hoping that someone thereby may be warned by my example and profit by it. The priest has told me to tell my story to him and he will write it down. Later it will be written down again, but I do not care to think of that now.

My name is Wladislaw Brenryk. For twenty years I lived in the village where I was born, a small place in the northeastern part of Hungary. My parents were poor and I had to work hard—harder, in fact, than I liked, for I was born of a languid disposition. So I used my wits to save my hands, and I was clever, if I do say it myself. I was born for trading and bargaining, and none of the boys I grew to manhood with could beat me in a trade.

Time went on, and before I had reached manhood my father died in a pestilence. Although my mother was pestilence-salted (for she had the plague when she was a girl and recovered), she soon gave up, grew weaker and weaker, finally joining my father in the skies. The priest of our village said that it was the trouble in her lungs that killed her, but I know better, for they had loved each other much.

Alone and lorn for the first time in my life, I could not bear to remain longer amongst the scenes of my happy boyhood. So on a fine spring morning I set forth carrying on my back those possessions which I could not bring myself to part with, and around my waist a well-stuffed money belt, filled with the results of my trading and the sale of our cottage.

For several years I wandered here and there, horse-trading for a time, then again a peddler of jewelry and small articles. Finally I came to Ponkert, and started a small shop in which I sold beautiful silks, jewels and sword hilts. It was the sword hilts that sold the best. They were highly decorated with golden filligree and encrusted with precious stones. Chiefs and moneyed nobles would come or send messengers for many miles to obtain them. I gained a reputation for honesty and fair dealing, likewise a less enviable notoriety for being a miser. It is true that I was careful and cautious, but I defy anyone to prove that I was parsimonious.

I HAD closed up the shop for the night and harnessed the horses for the long drive home, when for the first time I wished that I lived in the village instead of being so far away. I had always enjoyed the ride before; a man can think much in a ten mile ride and it gave an opportunity to clean my mind of the day's worries and bickering, so as to come to my dear wife and little daughter with thoughts of only them.

What made me look forward with anxiety to the long ride home was the many broad gold pieces secreted in my wallet. I had never been molested on that road, but others had been found robbed and partly devoured, with tracks of both man and beast about them in the snow. Obviously, thought I at the time, thieves had beaten them down, leaving them for the wolves.

But there was a disturbing factor in the problem: not only were the bodies horribly mutilated and the beast tracks about them extraordinarily large for wolf tracks, but the feet of the men were unprotected by any covering whatever! Barefooted men roaming through the forests, in the snow, on the slim likelihood of discovering prey which could be forced to yield wealth! The very idea was improbable. If I had only known then what I know now, my entire life might have been changed, but it was not so to be.

To return to my story: It was known that I had a large amount of money in my possession, for that afternoon the chief of a large Tartar caravan, which was passing through, had stopped at my shop and taken six of my best sword hilts with him, leaving their equivalent in gold. So I had cause enough to worry. I looked about for some sort of weapon, and found a short iron bar, which I tucked beneath the robes of the sleigh; then I spoke to the mares, and we were off on the long ride home.

For a long time we went creaking along, the sleigh runners squeaking on the well-packed snow. Frost was in the air, and the stars gleamed down coldly upon the dark forest, hardly lighting the road. As yet the moon had not risen.

I turned from the main traveled highway and took the river road. This left the forest behind, but the traveling was much worse. Exposed to the winds, the light snowfall of the morning had drifted, and the roadway was choked. I thought of leaving the road and taking to the smooth surface of the river which gleamed brightly to the left, but this would have meant a mile or more extra to travel, for the river curved in a great bend opposite our home, and there was an impassable barrier of small trees and brush for some distance.

The moon was now rising over the hill I had just quitted, and as the beams struck upon me, I was suddenly seized by a fit of the most unaccountable terror. This peculiar feeling held me rigid in my seat. It seemed as if a hand of ice had been suddenly laid upon the back of my neck.

The mares, it was evident, had felt this strange thrill also, for they imperceptibly increased their speed without urging of mine. Indeed, I could not have moved a muscle while that spell was upon me.

Soon we dipped down into the hollow at the hill's foot, and the power that had frozen me was removed. A strange feeling of exaltation and happiness swept over me, as if I had escaped from some terrible and unthinkable danger.

"Hai!" I shouted, rising in the sleigh and cracking my whip.

The mares responded nobly and we started to climb the next hill. As we did so, a fiendish howling came down the wind, but faintly, as if it were some distance away. I stopped the mares and stood up in the sleigh, the better to listen.

Faintly and far away sounded the cries, mellowed by distance. Then they grew louder and louder as the brutes came nearer, and over the top of the hill I had just quitted swept the devilish pack! They were on my trail, and it was only too plain that before I could reach home they would be upon me.

There was only one chance, and I took it. I clucked to the horses and turned them on to the ice of the river where lay a straight, smooth roadway. As long as the mares kept their feet, I was safe. But if one should stumble ——!

Then that same spell of horror threw its icy mantle over me again; I sagged back; the mares took the bit in their teeth; and we rushed like a thunderbolt down the river.

Little puffs of diamond dust shot from the ice into my lap, as the steel-shod hoofs rang and clicked. On we tore, while I sat in the sleigh like a stone, unable to move a muscle. Faster and faster we rushed between the banks of brush that fringed the icy causeway.

Fainter re-echoed the demoniac ululations behind me, until at last they ceased altogether and the horses gradually slackened their furious pace.

Here the spell left me, nor did it ever come again. Now we traveled at a trot, which slowed until the mares were but walking along, their panting breath paling their dark heaving sides to gray, in the frosty air.

Then we rounded the bend, and I saw black, open water ahead. Here progress, perforce, ceased. There was no way out, except to turn back and mount the bank where less underbrush grew, then into the smooth plain beyond and homeward.

So I tugged at the rein, and we swerved half-way around. In that moment of unpreparedness, all became confusion.

A gloating chuckle sounded evilly from the farther bank, and five great gray shapes charged at me across the ice.

TO THINK was to act with me. I have always been a creature of impulse, and almost instinctively I turned back, slashing the mares till they reared and we plunged straight forward into the onrushing mass of bodies. This resolute move took the beasts by surprize and halted them. They scattered, and I was through, with a clear road before me. But my escape was not so to be accomplished.

Silently, from the shelter of an overhanging rock, trotted two more of the creatures; a very giant of a beast, gaunt and gray, beside which moved a small black one. Roaring, the gray flung himself at the horses, which reared and plunged in terror; and the rest were upon me from the rear.

Then, turmoil of battle, pandemonium of sound, through which cut like a knife the scream of a horse. One was down! I felt the sleigh lurch to one side; heavy bodies struck at me, sharp teeth tore; but I kept my balance until one, such was his velocity, struck me and laid me flat in the bottom of the sleigh, himself rebounding and shooting over the side.

Something offered itself to my hand, something cold and metallic. I raised my arm, smote, felt steel bite bone, felt bone crunch beneath my stroke. I laid about me like a madman, with the bar, and cleared a space. I stood erect and waited for the attack.

But no instant attack followed. The menace of the bar was apparently too strong, and one by one they sank down on their haunches to rest or to wait. Jaws gaped wide and tongues lolled. Panting, they rested after the long run.

As I stood there in the sleigh, watching them, it seemed as if they were laughing, ghoul-like, at my horrible plight. As I soon found, they were!

I became conscious of a noise behind me, a small noise, such as the wind might make blowing a dead leaf across the bare ice; a sound like dead twigs rustling in the breeze, a faint scraping of claws, a padding of feet; and turning, I looked straight into the red glaring dots which were the eyes of the black wolf!

I shouted hoarsely, swung up the bar and brought it down with every ounce of force that I possessed. Unfortunately for myself, the beast, and Hungary, the great gray creature which ran at his side swerved and took the blow instead, squarely between the eyes.

He grunted, choked; a stream of blood shot from his mouth and nos-

trils. His eyelids opened and closed convulsively. Then he collapsed. The bar had crashed halfway through his head.

I whirled, expecting to be overwhelmed by the six that still lived, but to my intense surprize the surge of bodies that I had seen from the tail of my eye, when I struck at the black wolf, had subsided and they were now loping round and round the sleigh.

As they moved, the stricken mare followed them with her pain-filled eyes, while the one that was unharmed struggled constantly to be free. As the black leader passed me in the circling rout, I, likewise, slowly turned to keep him always in sight. Instinct told me that from him would come my greatest danger.

Now I noticed a strange thing: about the necks of each of the five gray beasts there hung upon a thong a leathern pouch, about the size of a large fist. These pouches hung flat and flaccid as if they were empty. The black, examine as closely as I might, wore none.

Then, as with one accord, they stopped in their tracks, and sank on their haunches. That for which they had been waiting had at last occurred. There seemed to be some sort of a silent signal given. Simultaneously they lifted their heads and loosed a long, low wail, in which seemed to hang all the desolation and loneliness of eternity. Thereafter none moved or uttered a sound.

Everything was deathly still. Even the wind, which had been sporting in the undergrowth, had now faded into nothingness and died. Only the labored breathing of the two mares and the hoarse panting of the brutes were to be heard.

Little red eyes, swinish and glittering like hell-sparks, shone malevolently at me by the reflected light of the now fully risen moon.

In this unaccountable pause I had time to see the full beauty of the trap. As I have stated, the river formed a great bow, and while I was traveling on the curve between nock and nock, they quitted the river and waited at the rapids, the line of their pursuit forming the string to the bow.

Also, for the first time, I could examine carefully and note what manner of beasts these were that held me in their power.

Far from being wolves, as my first thought had been, they were great gray animals, the size of a large hound, except the leader, who was black and more the size and shape of a true wolf. All, however, had the same general appearance, and the same characteristics. A high intelligent brow, beneath which gleamed little red piglike eyes, with a glint of a devil in their glance; long and misshapen hind quarters, which caused them to move with a rabbitlike lope when they ran; and most terrifying of all, they were almost hairless and possessed not the slightest rudiment of a tail!

THE circle was so arranged that as I stood, wary of possible attack, I could see four of the six. The small black creature was directly in front of me, tongue hanging out, apparently chuckling to himself in anticipation of some ghastly joke to follow.

Two were behind me, in whichever way I turned, but the night was so still that I could have heard them approaching long before they could have rushed me.

As I watched the creatures, I suddenly noticed that they were no longer glaring at me, but at something behind and beyond me and on the ground. I whirled, fearing a charge, but not a move anywhere in the circle had taken place. So I glanced with the tail of my eye for a rush at my back, and set myself to solve the mystery.

There was nothing before me, on the bare ice, but here and there a white line extended across the river, caused by the snow drifting into cracks. Now I noticed that across one of these there lay, inside the circle, the dead body of the thing that I had slain with the bar. The four creatures which I could now see were watching this intently. I did likewise, with senses alert for treachery. I glanced from one end of the warped, twisted and broken thing, to the other. Somehow it seemed more symmetrical than before; longer in a way, and of a more human cast of feature.

Then—God! Shall I never forget that moment?

I looked at its right forepaw, or where its right forepaw should have been and was not. A white hairless hand had taken its place!

I screamed, hoarsely and horribly, grasped my bar firmly, leapt from the sleigh and rushed into the pack, which, risen, was waiting to receive me.

Everything from that moment until my arrival home in the morning is a blur. I remember a black figure, standing erect before me, burning eyes which fixed me like a statue of stone, a command to strip and a sharp stinging pain in the hollow of my elbow, where the great vein lies.

Then more dimly, I seem to recall a moment of intense anguish as if all my bones were being dislocated and re-set, a yelping, howling chorus of welcome, a swift rushing over ice on all fours, and a shrill sharp screaming, such as only a horse in mortal fear can give!

Then there is a clear spot of recollection in which I was eating raw flesh and blood of my own mare, with snarling creatures like myself gorging all around me.

How I reached home, I have not the slightest idea, but the next that I remember is a warm room and my dear wife's face bending over mine. All after that, for nearly a week, was delirium, in which I raved incessantly, so they told me, of wolves which were not wolves, and a black fiend with eyes like embers.

2

WHEN I was well again I went to the scene of my adventure, but the ice had broken up in an early thaw, and only the swollen river rolled where I had been captured. At first, I thought that my half-remembered fancies were freakish memories, born of delirium, but one night in the early spring, as I lay in bed, only half asleep, something occurred which robbed me of this hope. I heard the long, melancholy wail of a wolf! Calling and appealing, it drew me to the window in hopes of seeing the midnight marauder, but nothing was visible as far as I could see, so I turned to go back to bed again. As I moved away from the window it came again, insistently calling. A powerful attraction drew me. I silently opened the window and melted into the darkness outside.

It was a warm spring evening as I padded silently along on bare feet, through the forest, drawn in a direction that led toward the thickest portion of the wood. I must have gone at least for half a mile under the influence of a strange exhilaration that had come over me, like that of a lover who keeps a tryst with his beloved.

Then the wailing cry echoed again, but with a shock I realized that there was no sound in the wood save the usual night noises. I realized the truth! The sound did not exist in reality, but I was hearing with the ears of the spirit rather than my fleshly ones. I suspected danger, but it was too late to turn back.

A figure rose to a standing posture, and I recognized the master, as he called himself, and we also, later. Under a power not my own, I stripped off my night garments, concealed them in a hollow tree which

the master showed me, and fell to the ground, a beast! The master had drunk my blood, and the old story that I had never quite believed, to the effect that if a *wampyr* drinks one's blood, he or she has a power over that person that nothing can break, and eventually he also will be a *wampyr*, was coming true.

We raced off into the night, were joined later by the other five, and paused for a time in the forest. Here the master transformed himself, and I also. We stood there, and for the first time I heard the master's voice.

"Look well!" it croaked. "Look well! Welcome you to the pack this man?" (From the tone and actions I judged that he was speaking by rote, and using set phrases for the occasion.) Here there arose a howl of assent.

"Look well!" he said to me. "Look well! Do you wish to be one of these?" pointing to the pack. I covered my eyes with my hands and shrank back. "Think well," he spoke again, catching my bare shoulder with one talon, and mouthing into my ear. "Will you join my band of free companions, or furnish them with a meal tonight?" I could imagine that a death's-head grin overspread his features at this, though my eyes were still blinded.

"You have a choice," he said. "We do not harm the poor, only the rich, although now and then we take a cow or horse from them, for that is our due. But the rich we slay, and their jewels and fine gold are ours. I take none myself, all belongs to my companions. What do you say?"

I cried "No!" as loudly as I could, and stared defiantly into his face. Over his shoulder I noted that the pack was gradually moving in, stealthily with eager leering looks.

"Ha!" he cackled, as I paled before that menace; "where now is your bravery? Make your choice. Die here and now, or make a promise to obey me unswervingly, to deviate not a jot from my orders, no matter what they may be, and be my willing slave. I will make you rich beyond your wildest dreams, your people shall wear sables and ermine, and the king himself will be proud to acknowledge you as friend. Come, what say you?" he asked.

I hesitated, temporizing. "Why do you single out me? I have never harmed you, do not even know you. There must be hundreds stronger than I and more willing, within easy reach. Why not use those you have or take someone else?"

"There must be seven in the pack," he answered simply. "You slew one. therefore must you take his place. It is but justice."

Justice! I laughed in his face. Justice, that a man fighting for his life should also perish if, slaying one of his enemies, he himself still lived!

My laughter infuriated him. "Enough delay!" he cried impatiently. "Come, decide! Go to them, or promise to obey! Death or life. Which? Do you promise?"

What a terrible choice I was offered! A horrible death beneath fangs of beasts which should never have existed, with no one ever to know that I had resisted the temptation of proffered life; or an even more terrible existence as one of these unnatural things, half man, half demoniac beast! But if I chose death, I should have a highly problematical hope of future life in the skies, and my wife and daughter would be left alone.

If I chose life, I should have high adventure to season my prosaic existence; I should have wealth with which I could buy a title. Besides, something might happen to save me from the fate which otherwise would sometime inevitably overtake me. Is it any wonder to you, why I chose as I did? Would you not do the same, in my predicament? Even if I had it all to do over again, knowing what I now know, I think I should say again

that which I answered the master: "I promise!"

But God! if I had only chosen death!

The things that I saw, heard, and did that night made a stain on my soul that all eternity will never erase. But finally they were over, and we separated, each returning to his home, and the master where no one knows.

I resumed my form by the tree, and as I did so, I remembered the events that had taken place that night. I fell prone on the grass, screaming, cursing, and sobbing, to think of my fate to come. I was damned forever!

ALTHOUGH I have called myself a *wampyr*, I was not one in the true sense of the word, at the time of which I speak. Neither were any of the rest of my companions, except the master, for although we ate human flesh, drank blood, and cracked bones to extract the last particle of nourishment therefrom, we did so to assuage our fierce hunger more than because it was necessary for our continued existence. We ate heartily of human food also, in the man form, but more and more we found it unsatisfying and came to possess a cannibalistic appetite, which only flesh and blood would conquer.

Gradually we were leaving even this for a diet consisting solely of blood. This, in my firm belief, was that which the master lived upon. His whole appearance bore this out. He was incredibly aged, and I believe an immortal. (He still may be, for no one has seen him dead, although they tell me that he is.)

His face was like a crinkled, seamed piece of time-worn parchment, coal-black with age. His eyes glittered with youth, seeming to have almost a separate existence of their own. Gradually, very gradually, the expressions of our faces were changing also, and we were turning into true *wampyrs* when self-brought catastrophe overtook us.

I will not dwell long upon the year or so in which I was the master's slave, for our dark and bloody deeds are too numerous to mention in detail. Some nights we wandered about in fruitless search and returned empty-handed, but usually we left death and destruction behind us. Most times, however, we would be summoned on some definite foray, which culminated in each of us being, the next day, somewhat richer.

We delighted in killing horses and cattle. We went blood-mad on these occasions, sometimes even leaving our original trail to take up an attractive scent of ox or cow. For these, I do not condemn myself, in so far as no human souls were destroyed in these slaughters, to become *wampyrs* after death. But as I think of those who are ruined forever because of me, I shudder at the thought!

On one occasion when we dragged down humans, my conscience has always rested easily. We had set out on the track of a sleigh, loaded with wealthy travelers from foreign parts; an old man and his two grandsons about three to five years of age. We followed for several miles to find the sleigh lying on its side, the horses gone, and the three travelers, stiff and stark on the dark stained snow, which was churned by many footprints of horse and man. Enraged, not by the murder (for we ourselves had intended no less), but by the loss of our anticipated loot, we took up the trail which led away toward the mountains. Five men on horseback made up the party. They spurred their horses to the utmost when we sang the Hunger Song, baying as we ran, but they were too slow for us. One by one, we pulled them down, slew the slayers and despoiled the thieves, which was a grim and ghastly jest.

But not often could I console myself thus. Many were the helpless and harmless that we removed from existence, and more horrible did we become. Day by day we were growing

hardened and inured to our lot, and only rarely did my soul sicken as at my first metamorphosis. At one of these times, I crept into the village church. It was late at night, and except for myself the building was empty.

I knelt at the altar and unburdened my soul. I confessed everything to the unhearing ears of the Great-hearted One, abased myself and groveled on the floor. For hours it seemed, I prayed and begged that I might be given a sign, some small hope, that I should not be damned forever. . . . No sign!

I cursed, screamed and prayed; for a time I must have been mad.

Finally I left. At the church door I bared my head and looked up at the sky across which dark clouds were scudding, obscuring the stars. I rose on tiptoe, shook my fist at the racing clouds, cursed God Himself and waited for the lightning stroke, but none came. Only a light rain started to fall and I arrived home, drenched to the skin, with a heavier load on my heart than when I left.

Yet even then, so mysterious are the ways of an inscrutable Providence, my salvation was approaching in a horrible guise. For on that night I had the thought which was to result in annihilation for us all.

3

SOMETIMES, when I walked the village streets, I had met people who seemed to glance furtively at me with a wild look. These glances were quickly averted, but by them I had begun to decide within myself just who were the other members of the pack. Growing bolder and more certain, I had accosted certain of them, to find myself correct.

One by one, I sounded them out, but found only Simon the smith to be of my own sentiments toward our gruesome business. The rest all exulted in the joyous hunt, and could not, we were certain, be persuaded to revolt against this odious enslavement.

But gradually, as we became more hardened and unprincipled, more calloused to the suffering we caused, we had become yet more greedy and rapacious. Here Simon and I found a loophole to attack.

As I have said before, the master never took any of the money, jewels or other portable valuables which we found on the bodies or amongst the possessions of those whom we slew.

So I dropped a word here, a hint there, a vague half-question to one individual singly and alone, while Simon did the same. The gist of all our arguing was, "What does the master take?"

This was a very pertinent question, for it was obvious to all of them that the master was not leader for nothing. He obtained something from each corpse when he went to it, alone, and we sat in the circle, waiting eagerly for the signal to rush in.

To me it was plain that this was nothing more material than the life blood of the slain unfortunates, which kept the master alive! Simon and I said nothing of this, gradually forming the opinions of the others to the effect that the immortal souls were absorbed into the master's being, giving him eternal life.

This staggering thought opened great possibilities in the minds of most, and as we thought, all; later I was to learn to my sorrow that not all were so credulous. But more and more they became dissatisfied, less patiently did they restrain themselves from leaping in ahead of their turn, on our bandit raids. For working in their minds, like worms in carrion, or smoldering sparks in damp cloth, which will presently burst into flame, was this: "Why not be immortal myself?"

So were discord and revolt fomented, and so was I the unwitting cause

of my further undoing and, strangely enough, my redemption.

Now, my wife was a good woman, and I am sure that she loved me as much as I loved her, but this very love worked our ruin. All people have a weakness in one way or another, and she was no exception to the rule. She was jealous—insanely jealous!

My frequent absences, which I thought had been unnoticed, since I had been careful not to make the slightest noise in opening the window and quitting the house, had been observed for weeks.

I found later that one had told the master what Simon and I had started, and it was the only female member of our pack. But he had already perceived, with his cunning senses, the almost imperceptible signs of revolt against his absolute power. Determining to crush this at the start, he decided to make an example of someone to bind the rest more closely to him by means of a new fear.

Why he chose me instead of Simon I have not the faintest idea, unless it was that I was more intelligent than the ignorant clods that made up the rest of the pack. But so it was, I was chosen to be the victim, and this is the way he set about to bind me forever to him.

He enlisted the aid of old Mother Molla, who was regarded as a witch that had sold her soul to the devil. How she got into the house I never was able to discover, for the original excuse was either forgotten later, or merely left untold. But to the house she came one day, probably obtaining an entrance on some flimsy pretext of begging for cast-off clothing, or of borrowing some cooking utensil.

Before she left she casually mentioned that she had seen me in the early morning before sunrise, coming past her hut. There were only two houses in that part of the wood, Mother Molla's and the charcoal burner's, whose name was Fiermann. All would have yet been well, but the old hag insinuated that "Fiermann had a young and pretty daughter and that he himself was in town very often over night." And so the seeds of suspicion were planted in my wife's mind.

She said that she ordered the hag out, and helped her across the threshold with a foot in her back, and when the old witch picked herself out of the mud she screamed, "Look for yourself, at half an hour before midnight," and hobbled away cackling to herself.

The mischief was done. At first my wife resolved to think nothing about the matter, but it preyed on her mind and gnawed at her heart. So to ease her suspicions she worked away a knot in the partition; and that night when I had gone to bed she waited and watched.

She saw me fling back the clothes and step out of bed, fully dressed, then walk silently across the floor and open the window slowly and carefully, vanishing into the moonlit night. At first, she told me later, she was horrified and heartbroken to think me unfaithful; then she resolved to go away or kill herself, so she would not be a hindrance to me any longer. But finally her emotions changed and vanished until only hate was left. She resolved to watch and wait to see what might befall. She sat by the knothole until I came back just as the cock crew; then she went to bed herself, to toss about sleeplessly until morning.

Night after night she waited, sometimes fruitlessly, for it was not every night that the silent call summoned us to the rendezvous. But when in a period of three weeks I had stealthily stolen out eight times, and she had satisfied herself that Fiermann had also been away, by artfully questioning his girl, her suspicions were confirmed. He was with the pack, but

neither knew that. So she decided to confront me with the facts and tell me to choose between the two, "herself, the mother of my child, or this upstart chimney-sweep" (I use her own words).

All this time the master's mind was working upon hers to such effect, that although she thought she was choosing her own course of action, in reality she was following the plans which the master had made for her.

ONE night I heard the silent howl, which never failed, when I was in the man form, to send a chill down my back. I had been expecting this for several days, and had remained dressed each night until midnight, to be in readiness for the summons.

I stepped carefully to the window and released the catch that held it down, then lifted—. What was this? It stuck! I tugged harder with no better results.

Well, then, I should have to use the door. It was dangerous, but might be done. At all means, anything was preferable to going wild within the house. So I turned and was struck fairly in the eyes by a splinter of yellow light. Someone was on the other side of the partition door with a lighted candle, and the door was slowly opening!

Instantly I knew that I was discovered. I bounded toward the bed, intending to simulate sleep until she had gone away, but the door flew open with a crash, and my wife stood in the doorway with a scornful look on her face, and a candle held high, which cast its rays upon me. It was too late to hope for escape, so I attempted to brazen it out.

"Well, what is it?" I asked gently.

"What were you doing at the window?" she said.

"It is so hot in here that I was going to let some air in," I replied.

"To let air in, or yourself out?" came, though spoken in a low tone, as a thunderclap to me.

I was struck dumb, and then she told me the whole story as she knew it. The mass of lies with which old Molla must have started her mind in a ferment poured into my consciousness in a heap of jumbled words.

Again came the howling cry, that only I could hear, and I thought I detected a note of anger in it at my delay.

"At first," she said, "I did not believe, but when I saw with my own eyes—"

"Silence!" I roared with such vehemence that the window rattled.

"I will be heard!" she cried. "I have nailed down the window and you shall not pass through this door tonight!"

She slammed the door, and stood dauntlessly before it! My heart went out to her in this moment. That blessed, bright little figure, standing there so bravely, made me forget why I must go. I took a step toward her —and that long eery wail, which only re-echoed in my brain, sounded much more wrathfully—and nearer!

Torn between two desires, I stood still. My face must have been a mask of horror and anguish, for she looked at me in amazement, which softened to pity.

"What is it, dear?" she whispered. "Have I wronged you after all? Won't you tell me, darling?"

Then I felt the pangs of change beginning and knew that the transformation would follow quickly. I seized a heavy stool, and flung it through the window, following it as quickly myself. If I was to escape, not a second could be wasted.

With a swiftness I had never dreamed she possessed, she ran to me as I crouched in the window with my hands on the side, and one knee on the sill, drawing myself up and over.

She seized me by the hair and dragged my head back, crying meanwhile, "No! No! No! You shall not go. You are mine and I shall keep

you! That slut Stanoska will wait long tonight!"

Then she pulled so mightily that I fell upon my back. All was lost! It was too late, for I no longer had any desire to leave! Although I still maintained the outward appearance of a man, I thought as a beast.

I have often thought that the change first took place in the brain and later in the body. I shrieked demoniacally, and another cry arose outside the house, sounding loud through the broken window.

She paled at the sound and shrank back against the table, terrified at my wild and doubtless uncanny appearance. I sprang to my feet, tearing madly at my clothes, ripping them from my body in pieces. I had all the terror of a wild animal now for encumbering clothing or anything like a trap.

When completely stripped, I howled again loudly and fell upon all fours, a misshapen creature that should never have existed. I had become a wild beast! But it was not *I*, who slunk, bellying the floor, hair all abristle with hate, toward the horror-stricken figure by the table; it was not *I*—I swear before the God that soon will judge me—who crouched and sprang, tearing with sharp, white fangs that beautiful white throat I had caressed so often!

At a sound outside, I turned, standing astride my victim, and ready to fight for my kill.

With forepaws on the window sill, through the broken pane a wolf's head peered. With hellish significance it glanced at the door of the next room wherein lay our little girl, asleep in her cradle, then turned its eyes upon me in a mute command.

It was I, the man spirit, who for a moment ruled the monstrous form into which my body had been transmuted. It was the man, myself, who curled those thin beastly lips into a silent, menacing grin, who stalked forward, stiff-legged, hackles raised and eager for revenge!

As swiftly as the head had appeared it withdrew and suddenly came again, curiously changing in form. Its outlines grew less decided, everything seemed to swim before my eyes. I grew giddy, and there visibly the wolf's head changed into that inscrutable parchment mask of the master. Those youthful eyes glared balefully into mine, with a smoky flame behind them.

I felt weak; again the beast was in the ascendant, and I forgot my human heritage. Lost was all memory of love or revenge. I, the werewolf, slunk through the door, over to the cradle, gloatingly stood anticipating for a moment while blood dripped from my parted jaws on my little girl's clean shift. Then I clamped down my jaws on her dress, and heedless of her puny struggles, or her cries, I rose with a long clean leap through the broken window bearing my contribution to the ghoulish feast!

Then to my tortured memory comes one of those curious blank spots that sometimes afflicted me. I dimly remember snarls of fighting animals, and more faintly still, sounds of shots, but that must be the delirium of my wounds that speaks, for it could not be possible at that time of night that one might be wandering about armed with such an untrustworthy weapon.

Soon it was over. Over! I, the last of our line, took up the horrible hunt, blithe and rejoicing.

Down the valley roared the hell-pack, and at the head the master. Foam from my bloody jaws flecked the snow with pink as we galloped along, and mounted the hill like a wave breaking on the beach. We were racing along at full speed with the master still ahead and the rest of the pack strung out at varying distances behind, when suddenly he turned in midleap, and alighting, confronted us.

The one who was directly in front of me, and behind the master, dug his feet into the ground and slid in order to avoid collision. I was going so swiftly I could not stop, and piled up on my mate. The next instant we were at the bottom of a struggling, clawing, snapping heap. For a moment we milled and fought, while the master sat on his haunches, and lolled his tongue out of gaunt grinning jaws, breath panting out in white, moist puffs.

Then we scattered as if blown apart, and also settled into a resting position, a very sheepish-looking pack of marauders. At that moment I felt taking place within me the tearing, rending sensation that always preceded the transforming of our bodies from one form to another. My bones clicked into slightly different positions; I began to remember that I was human, and stood erect, a man again.

All of my companions had been transformed likewise, and were standing where they had stopped.

What a contrast! Six men, white men, each a giant in strength, bound till death and after (as the un-dead which walk but do not move with mortal life), bound to a thing which I cannot call a man. A black creature only four feet high, which physically the weakest of us might have crushed with one hand. But six men were slavishly obedient to his every order, and moved in mortal fear of him. The pity of it! Only two of us were still human enough to understand that we were damned forever and had no means of escape. To look at their faces made that plain, for deeply graven there were lines that brutalized them, marking our swift progress toward the beast.

I was changing also. I had been told frequently how bad I looked, and my friends thought I should rest more, for it was plain that I was overtaxing my energies; but I always changed the subject as soon as possible, for I knew the real reason of my appearance.

But now the master was advancing. An irresistible force urged me toward him, and as I moved the others closed in about me, so that he and I stood in the center of a small circle.

Then he raised his hand, paw, or talon (I cannot say which, for it resembled all three), and spoke shrilly in a piping feeble voice, for the second and last time in my acquaintance with him.

"Fellow comrades." He leered at me, and I grew hot with rage but said nothing. "I have gathered you here with me tonight to give you a warning that you may use for your own profit. Leave me to do as I see fit and all will be well, but try for one instant to change my course of action or to attack me and you will curse the day you were born."

Then he lost control of himself.

"Fools!" he shrilled; "cursed ignorant peasant fools, you who thought you could kill me, whom even the elements cannot harm! Idiots, clumsy dolts, who tried to plot against the accumulated intelligence of a thousand years, listen to me speak!"

Thunderstruck at this sudden outburst, we staggered and reeled under the revelation which came next.

"From the very first," he cried, "I saw through your stupid intrigue against me, and I laughed to myself. Every move you made, every word you spoke in the seeming privacy of your hovels, I knew long before you. This is nothing new to me. Eighty-four times has this been tried upon me, and eighty-four times have I met the problem in the same way. I have made an example of one of you to warn the rest, and there he stands!"

He whirled swiftly and thrust an ash-gray claw at my face. For some time I had been realizing now what he was about to say, and at this sudden blow I averted my eyes from his and sprang at his throat.

We went down together, and he would have died there and then, but they tore us apart. Poor, blind fools! Again he stood erect, rubbing his throat where I had clutched it, and again he croaked, never glancing at me, as I was held powerless by three men.

"All of you have children, wives, or parents dependent upon you, and defenseless. I saw to that before I chose you, having this very thing in mind. I can at any time change any one of you to a beast by the power of my will, wherever I may be. To-morrow, if you still resist me I will change you, or you," darting his paw at each in quick succession.

From the circle rose cries of "No! No! Do not do that! I am your man," and "Master, you are our father; do with us as you like!"

Triumphant he laughed, there in the snowy plain beneath the starry sky, then bent his gaze upon me. Seizing my chin, he forced my eyes to meet his, and growled, "And you? What say you now?"

I could not resist those burning eyes.

"Master," I muttered, "I am your willing slave."

"Then get back to your den," he cried, giving me a push that sent me prone in the snow, "and wait there till I summon you again."

The pack changed from men back to brutes again, and raced off toward the forest, and though I tried to follow, I could not move until the sound of their cries had faded away into the distance. Finally I rose and went to my dreary home again.

I WILL pass over briefly what followed; I do not think I could repeat my thoughts as I stumbled along through the night, nearly freezing from lack of clothing and the exposure that resulted.

Dawn was just arriving when I came in sight of the four walls I had so recently called home. I staggered in, and sank into a chair, too listless to build a fire.

After a while, mechanically, I dressed myself, started a blaze in the fireplace, and bethought myself of hiding the body, which lay in the other room, until I could flee. Plan after plan suggested itself to my mind, but all were soon cast aside as useless. Tired out, I buried my head on my arms, as I sat by the table, and must have dozed away some little time.

Suddenly I was aroused from the dull apathy into which I had fallen by a small timid knock on the door. My first thought was that I was discovered. A fit of trembling overcame me, which quickly passed, but left me too weak to rise.

Again sounded the rap, followed by the rasp of frosty gravel as footsteps haltingly passed down the clean-swept path.

Suddenly a plan had formulated itself in my poor distracted brain. I steeled my will to resolute action, hastened to the door, and threw it wide. No one was in sight.

Bewildered, I looked about, suspicious of more wizardry, and between two of the trees that fringed the road I spied a figure slowly traveling toward the village.

"Hai!" I shouted, cupping my hands at my mouth. "What do you want? Come back!"

As the figure turned and approached me, I recognized the half-witted creature who limpingly traveled from village to village during the summer months, working when compelled by necessity to do so, but more often begging his food and shelter from more fortunate people.

"Why do you knock at my door?" I asked, as kindly as I could, when he had come near to me.

"I came last evening," he said, "and the lady that lives here said that she was alone and would not let me in or give me anything, but if later I would come when her husband

had returned, she would let me have some old clothes, and something good to take with me. So I slept with the cows, and now I am come again."

I forced myself to speak composedly.

"You are a good lad, and if you will do something for me I will see that you receive new clothing and much money. Here is proof that I mean well," and I tossed a broad gold piece to his feet.

Wildly did he scramble in the dust of the path, but I had no mood to laugh, ridiculous as his action would have seemed at another time. He whimpered in his eagerness to be off, looked into my face, and cowered as does a dog that expects a blow.

Some of my agony of spirit must have been reflected in my face, for he shrank away, all his joy vanished, and he faltered fearfully, "What would you have me do, master?"

His pitiable aspect struck to my heart, and the words I had been about to speak died still-born on the end of my tongue. I shall never reveal to anyone what my intention had been, but something nobler and purer than I had ever known enlivened my soul. I drew myself to my full height, glared defiantly at the quivering wretch and cried, "Go you to Ponkert. Arouse the people and bring the soldiers from the barracks. I am a werewolf and I have just slain my wife!"

His eyes seemed starting from his head, his nerveless and palsied limbs carried him shakily down the path, the while he watched me over his shoulder as if he expected to see me turn into a wolf and ravenously pursue him. At the end of the path he bethought himself of flight, threw the gold piece down and started with a curious reeling run toward the village.

A little wind was now rising, blowing flurries of snow and leaves about, and the round evil eye of yellow metal lay and blinked at the morning sun until a little whirlwind of dust collapsed on it and buried its gleam. But although I could not see it I knew it was there, the thing that all men slave, war, and die for, that all men desire, and obtaining are not satisfied, the struggle for which has maimed and damned more souls than any other one thing that has ever been. I went in, shut the door, and left it outside in the dirt, whence it came and where it belongs.

IT MIGHT have been a minute or a year that I sat at the table, with my head buried in my arms, for any memory that I have of it, but so I found myself when I was roused by a dull roar of many voices outside. Opening the door, I stepped out and waited, expecting nothing less than instant death.

A crowd of about fifty persons came surging up the road, and seeing me standing there, passively waiting, milled and huddled together, each anxious to be in at the death, but none caring to be in the forefront and first to meet the dreaded werewolf.

Much coaxing and urging was given certain of the crowd to send them to me, but none was eager for fame.

Finally stepped out one tanner, clad only in his leather apron, and carrying a huge fish-spear in his right hand.

"Come," he shouted; "who follows if I lead?"

Just then sounded the pounding of hoofs, far down the road.

"He who comes must hasten," thought I, "if he would see the finish."

The tanner harangued the steadily growing mob without avail, none desiring to be the first.

At last I was out of the common rut in which the rest of the village was sunken. What a moment! Even in my hopeless situation I could not help but exult. Seventy-five or one hundred against one, and not a man dare move!

At last the tanner despaired of assistance and slowly moved toward me, now and then casting a glance behind to be assured of an open lane of retreat if such was necessary.

I believe, in that moment, that had I leapt forward at them, the whole flock of sheep would have fled screaming down the road; but I did nothing of the kind. I did not move, or even make any resistance when the tanner seized me by the shoulder, his spear ready for the deadly stroke. Why should I? Life had no longer any interest for me!

Finding that I stood passively, the tanner released my shoulder, grasped the spear in both hands and towered above me, his mighty muscles standing out like ropes on his naked arms and chest. The whole assemblage held its breath, the silence was that of death, and a loud clatter of hoofs twitched every head around as if they all had been worked simultaneously by a single string. Straight into the crowd, which broke and scattered before it, came a huge black horse, ridden by a large man, in the uniform of the king's soldiery. As he came he smote right and left with the flat of his long straight sword.

Down came the spear, and down swept the sword full upon the tanner's head. He fell like a poleaxed steer, while the spear buried itself for half its length in the ground by the door.

"This man is mine!" he shouted. "Mine and the king's! He must go with me for trial and sentence; touch him at your peril."

The crowd murmured angrily, started for us, but disintegrated again before the rush of half a company of soldiers that had followed their captain.

4

"And so, sirs," I was concluding my narrative in the prison barracks at Ponkert, "you see to what ends have I been brought by the machinations of this creature. I do not ask for life myself, for I shall be glad to die, and it is but just that I should; but give me revenge, and I will burn in hell for eternity most happily."

For a time I thought that the officer would deny me, for he ruminated long before he spoke.

"Can you," he said, "entrap this hideous band, if I and my men will give you help?"

I leapt from my chair and shouted, "Give me a dozen men, armed, and not one of those fiends will be alive tomorrow morning!"

Carried away by my enthusiasm, he cried, "You shall have fifty and I will lead them myself;" but then more gravely, "you realize that we cannot leave one alive? That all must die? All?"

I nodded, and looked him squarely in the eyes.

"I understand," I said. "When we have won, do with me as you will. I shall not resist, for I am very tired, and shall be glad to rest. But until then, I am your man!"

"You are brave," he said simply, "and I wish I need not do that which I must. Will you grip hands with me before we leave?" he asked almost diffidently.

I said nothing, but our hands met in a strong clasp, and as he turned away I thought I saw moisture fleck his cheek. He was a man, and I wish I had known him earlier. We could have been friends, perhaps; but enough of that.

Some distance from Ponkert there stands a wood, so dense that even at midday there in the center of the forest, only a dim twilight exists. Here sometimes laired the pack. At night we made it our meeting place, and now and again in the thickest recesses one or more of us would spend the day in seclusion. So, knowing this, I made my plans.

I tore my clothes, and dabbled them in blood, wound a bloody bandage

around my head, and the soldiers tied my hands securely behind me, also putting a cord about my neck.

Toward evening we set out, about eighty of us in all, including the rustics who trailed along behind, carrying improvised arms, such as hay-forks, clubs, and farm implements which were clumsy, but deadly.

Straight through the heart of the wood we passed, I traveling in the midst, reeling along with head down as if worn out, which indeed I was. Now and then the soldier who held the other end of the cord would jerk fiercely, almost causing me to stumble, and on one of these occasions I heard a sullen, stifled growl from a thicket which we were passing. No one else apparently heard; I cautiously lifted my head, and saw a form slink silently into the darker shadows. I had been observed, and the plan was succeeding!

We then passed from the forest and came into the sunlight once more. Between the wood and the hills flowed the river that before had served me so ill. Overlooking this there frowned a great castle that had once dominated the river and the trade routes which crossed the plain on the other side. But this was long ago, so long that the castle builders had passed away, their sons, and theirs also, if indeed there ever were such, leaving only the castle to prove they had ever lived.

As the years went on, various parties of brigands had held the great stone structure, and wars had been fought around and within. Slowly, time and the elements had worked their will unchecked, until the central tower squatted down one day and carried the rest of the castle with it.

Still there remained a strong stone wall, which had enclosed the castle once, but now formed a great square, thirty feet in height, around a shapeless mountain of masonry in the center. Under this imposing monument lay the last who had ever lived there, and some say that their ghosts still haunt the ruins, but I never saw any, or met one who had. At each side of the square, in the walls there stood an iron gate. These were still well preserved, but very rusty, so rusty indeed, that it was impossible to open them, and we were obliged to find an easier mode of entrance.

Finally we discovered a large tree, which, uprooted by a heavy wind, had fallen with its top against the wall, and so remained, forming a bridge which connected the wall and the ground by a gentle incline.

To gain the courtyard it was necessary to follow the wall around to where it faced the plain. Here a large section had fallen inward, leaving the wall but twenty feet in height at that point. Here we went down, by the rope which had tormented me so, and prepared our trap.

It was very simple; I was the bait and we knew that when the time came for the change, they would follow my trail unless the master was warned, and once inside the walls could not leap out. We could then slay them at our leisure, for we were more than ten to one, although many of the farmers had refused to enter the haunted castle and returned to the village.

AT LAST it became near midnight, and faintly, far away, I heard the cries down below me in the wood.

"The time is near," I whispered to the captain as we stood in the enclosure. "I hear them gathering."

"Be ready," he warned the men. "Hide yourselves in the rocks. They come!"

Eagerly we waited, though none was visible now except the captain and two or three soldiers, standing by the pile of masonry.

As I waited near a large pile of stone blocks, I heard someone cry sharply, "Now!"

Shooting lights danced before my eyes, followed by black oblivion, and

I fell forward on my face. I had been clubbed from behind.

When I became conscious again the stars still gleamed brightly overhead, but they no longer interested me. My sole thought was to escape from these two-legged creatures that held me prisoner. Again I was the beast!

For the first time I had not been aware of the transition when it took place. Now I had no recollection of my past, and for all I knew I might never have been anything but a quadruped.

Came swiftly the realization that I was being called insistently. From the tail of my eye I saw a man standing beside me, but a little distance away. Perhaps I might escape!

I drew my legs up, and my muscles tightened for the spring. I would leap the wall, I would flee for my life, I would . . . and then a tremendous weight came crashing down on my hind quarters, breaking both my legs.

The pain was excruciating! I gave vent to a scream of curdled agony which was answered by howls of mingled encouragement and rage from beyond the wall. Then down from the wall came leaping, one at a time, five great gray brutes. They had followed my trail and come, as they thought, to save me, not dreaming they were being led into a trap.

The soldiers had been wiser than I, for they had foreseen what I had failed to see: that if my story was true, inevitably when my nature changed I would betray them to my comrades.

Between man and wild beast there can be no compromise, so they stunned me, and then toppled down a heavy stone, pinning me to the ground. Instead of warning the pack as I undoubtedly would have done had I but known earlier that they were present, I screamed for help, for the sudden pain drove any other emotion from my mind.

Now all was confusion. Howl of beast, and shout of man, mingled in chorus with clash of pike and fang. Now and again, but infrequently, a shot punctuated the uproar, but these new weapons are too slow to be of practical use, so it was a hand-to-paw, and cheek-to-jowl conflict.

The five were giving a far better account of themselves than I had dreamed possible. Springing in and out again, with lightning movements they could tear a man's throat out and be gone before he could defend himself. The confusion was so great, the press so thick, that a man might kill his comrade by accident. I saw this happen twice.

Now only four were visible, springing to and fro, fighting for their lives like cornered rats, and gradually forcing their way to the wall whence they had come. One must be down!

But no! I saw the missing one, old Mother Molla, rending with sharp white fangs at something which lay half hidden beneath her. A soldier stole silently behind her, and with a mighty display of strength thrust a pike completely through her body. But other eyes than mine had seen the cowardly stroke. The next instant he went down and was buried from sight in the center of the snarling pack. Now the pack was, for several seconds, in a tight knot of bodies, and while they thus remained the soldiers leapt in, pikes and clubs rising and falling. Before Mother Molla had reached the corner toward which she was slowly crawling, coughing out, meanwhile, her life in bloody bubbles, the remainder of the pack had avenged her and died themselves.

It was at this critical moment that a head peered over the wall and two bright little red eyes took in the scene. Why the master had thus delayed his arrival I cannot explain. But whatever his faults he was at least no coward, for the first inkling the men had of his presence was the sight of

the black wolf springing down and landing on the heap of dead bodies which had represented his former vassals.

With a bound he was in the midst of the soldiers, fighting with fang and claw. They scattered like sheep, but returned, forming now a close-packed circle around him, barring all egress. Now his only chance of life lay in motion so swift that it would be unsafe to aim a weapon at him for fear of injuring one of the men.

He saw now clearly that all was lost, and quite obviously perceived that flight was his only hope. He gave me a glance of encouragement as I lay there raving and frothing, snapping at, and breaking my teeth upon, the cold unyielding rock that held me down; and he rushed madly about the inside of the circle, searching for a weak spot in it. So in they pressed, striking now and then as he passed, but harming him not.

With hot red tongue hanging from his slavering jaws, he raced about the encircling cordon of foes. Soon was his plan of action made. He leapt in midstride straight at an ignorant yokel who wielded a hay-fork. The poor fool struck clumsily, instead of dodging, which mistake was his last, for he missed. Instantly the master had torn out his throat with a single snap and was streaking toward the castle wall.

Now the way was clear; puffs of snow rose behind, before him, and on either side, but apparently he bore a charmed life, for none of the missiles struck him. As he reached the wall he left the ground in the most magnificent leap I have ever seen, from either man or beast, hung by his forefeet twenty feet above the ground for the space of time in which a man might count ten; then, while bullets be-starred the ancient masonry all about him, he wildly scrambled with his hind feet to draw himself up, and was soon over the wall and gone!

They rushed to the rusted gates, but their very haste defeated their efforts, and by the time they reached the open the plain was bare of life. But over the hill to the eastward floated a derisive mocking howl. The master's farewell! From that day to this he has never been seen in Ponkert. Thus ended the *wampyr's* rule!

So now is my ordeal ended, the master ousted, and the fear that held sway over the village is finished. I, out of all the pack that ravaged the land for many miles, alone am left alive. Somewhere perhaps the master still roams silently, stealthily, in the cool darkness of our nights, but I am certain that never again will he return to Ponkert, for here is my assurance.

When his power crumbled to dust in the courtyard of that ancient castle, and he was forced to flee for his life, his last look and cry to me intimated that he would return and rescue me from my captors. There must have been some spark of humanity in that savage heart, something that would not allow him to leave those who had sworn allegiance to him; for witness that magnificent leap from the courtyard wall to the very midst of his foes, to save the one surviving member of his band.

He did return!

While I lay in the barrack dungeon, recovering from my broken bones and other injuries (for I must be in good health before I am permitted to expiate my crime), one night about a week after the fight I heard the old familiar silent cry.

I recognized the master's call and responded. I thought of all things I should like to tell him and could not through two feet of stone wall. I went over in my mind the whole series of actions by means of which I had escaped from his horrible enslavement.

Beginning with the involuntary murder of my wife and child, I related without uttering a spoken word

that which I had done, and ended with the moment when I saw him leap the gap, a fugitive. I know he understood, for after a few seconds of silence, just outside the wall there arose the blood-chilling howl of a wolf. Higher and higher it rose, a long sobbing wail of hate, an undulating crescendo of sound; it thinned to a thread whose throaty murmur was drowned in the rushing trample of heavy feet overhead and the crash of exploding powder. Flash after flash tore the velvet night, mingling with the shouts of the soldiers who were firing from the windows, and at some time in the tumult the master turned his back on Ponkert for the last time, I trust.*

UTTERLY alone in the world, friendless and forlorn, I quit tomorrow this mortal form that has known such strange changes.

I go with no reluctance whatever, for I have nothing to live for, and the sooner gone, the sooner I shall expiate my sins, and at last win through to where I am expected. For I cannot believe that I shall suffer in torment forever.

Yet, I would even forego that bliss for the greater one of being a beast again and the master a man, so that I might feel my fangs sink into his black wrinkled throat, and feel the blood spurt warm into my mouth. Oh, to rip, to tear, to slash at that fiend, and have him utterly in my power! To feel his bones crunch beneath my powerful jaws, and to tear his flesh with them!

Yet—sometimes I think perhaps he was once as I, was tempted, fell, sinking lower and lower. Perhaps he, too, was not wholly to blame, but even as I, was weak and doomed from the beginning. Is it the fault of the pot that it is misshapen in the making?

They tell me that every pang I suffer now will shorten my punishment in the future. What my pains on earth shall be I know not. I may be broken on the wheel or stretched upon the rack, but I am resigned and fortified against my fate.

But there is one thing of which I am positive, for they have told me, to add pang upon pang, that I shall be flayed alive, my hide tanned like a beast's, and my dark and gloomy history written upon it for all to read who can!

I have never heard of these things being done before, but I have no doubt that they will be done to me. However, I care not. So much have I suffered in heart and thought that no bodily discomfort can surpass my other torments. I am resigned. May he who reads take warning. Farewell to all whom I know and have known. Farewell!

* * *

WHEN the manuscript was finished I sat thinking for a little time. So this book was written on a human hide, which when occupied had enclosed Pierre's ancestor.

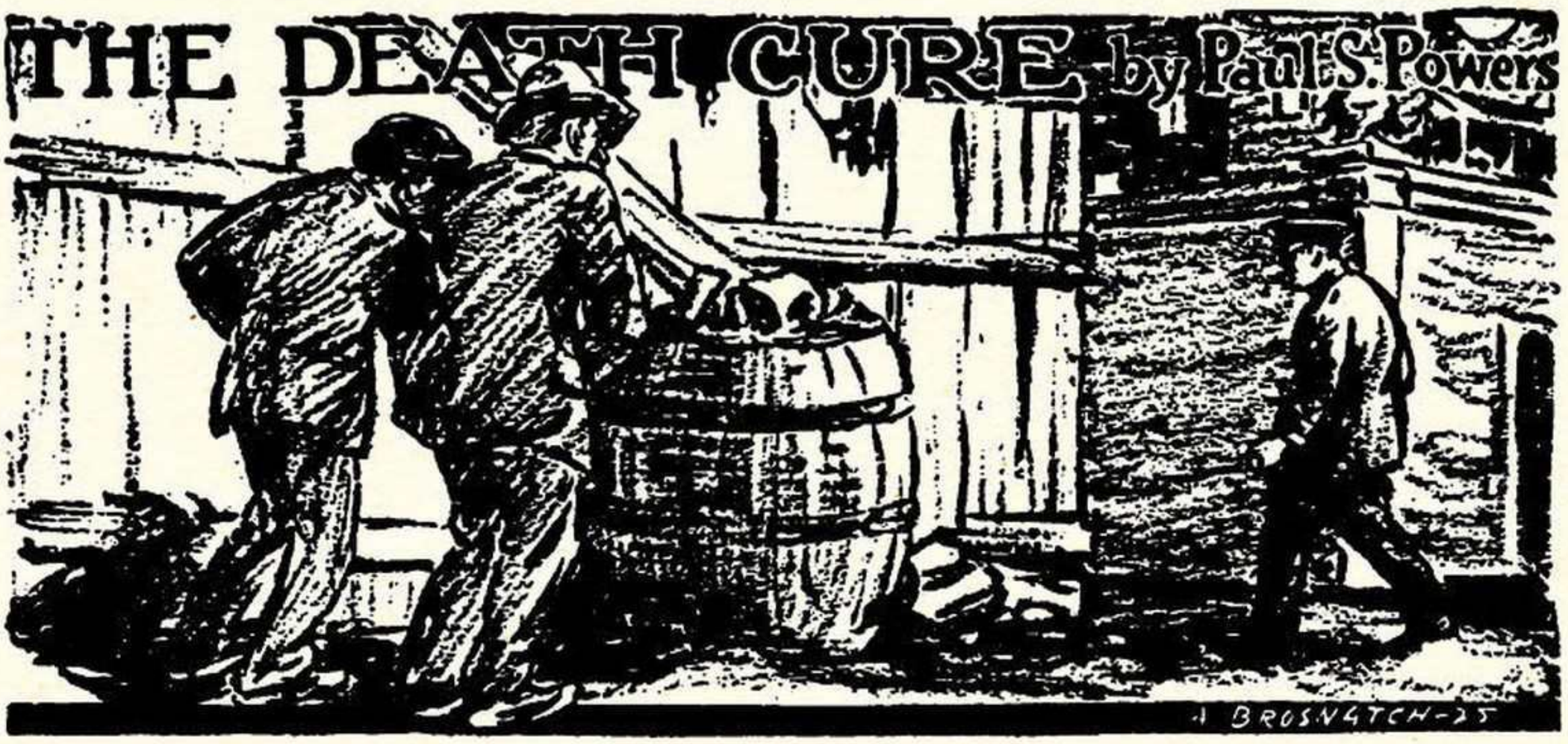
"I thought," said I to the old man, "that you told me that the person described in the narrative was your *grandpère* many times removed. But here it relates that his only child was murdered by himself. How do you explain that?" I asked.

"You will remember perhaps that he told how, after the flight from the cottage, immediately succeeding the act was a blank, save for a vague remembrance of shots. What is more probable than that someone aroused by the howling in the night should fire blindly at the noise, not once but several times. Granted that, it is probable that, frightened by the unexpected noise, the beasts would leave their prey. Such is the legend that has accompanied the book for cen-

(Continued on page 143)

** Here there was a marginal note on the old parchment in a differently colored ink, and apparently at a much later period of time, for it is this: "Never since that bygone day has this town been troubled by either vampire or werewolf."*

THE DEATH CURE by Paul S. Powers



Author of "Monsters of the Pit"

UNDER the ghastly glare of a swinging street lamp two human derelicts met. The first was a youth with an aged and dissipated face, and at the first sight of the man from the alleyway he stopped with a low whistle. It was answered, and the other night wanderer beckoned from beyond the light. The second man might have been fifty. He looked sixty-five. The drawn face, pinched and distorted with suffering, told the secret. The youth knew that it was a drug face, and the light of the lamp told him what it was. Morphine!

"Well, kid," breathed the older man in a tense whisper, "slip me the junk!"

Broadway Charlie looked down at the derelict's trembling and twisted hand and broke into a dismal laugh. The fellow was clutching a five dollar bill.

"So you got fooled, too," he said. "I've been waiting on this corner for two hours."

The drug addict groaned, and then peered into the wild eyes of the youth with a look of sudden hopefulness.

"Cocaine, eh?"

"God, yes," whined Broadway, "and I haven't had a whiff for days. Just took a flyer at the Tombs, and I've been waiting for Whispering Willie. He's ditched me, or else he's pinched. For a few grains of snow, I'd—"

"Yes, I know," snarled the older man. "You've got it easy—if it was morphine, or heroin, you'd know what it is to suffer. I'll die, sure as the devil, if I don't get it pretty soon. If something's happened to our peddler we've got to get it somewhere else, that's all! What time is it, kid?"

Broadway shook his head with a scowl.

"Soaked," he explained. "It's about 1 o'clock, though. Not much chance, out this way at this time of night."

"Then we'll make a chance," gritted the derelict.

He introduced himself as Tim the Spotter, and explained that he had arrived in the city only a few days before. Here he had met the dope peddler, who had promised to deliver two cubes of the "poppy", on the corner at midnight. He whispered that he had been on the lookout since 11 o'clock, and knew of a place where some dope—both cocaine and morphine, perhaps—could be stolen. It was the office of a physician, he told the youth, and the last time he had passed that way he had noticed that

the windows of the inner office were still lighted. Maybe he would sell them some, and if not—. The Spotter tapped his pocket suggestively, and Broadway could see there a bulge that looked very much like lead pipe.

"I don't know about those docs," said Broadway. "Only one in a thousand will sell any, and there ain't many who'd give a guy that if he was dying. I've always got mine from peddlers—it's more safe. I don't want to go back to the Tombs."

"Neither do I," leered the Spotter. "But I'm goin' after the junk—are you going to be in on this deal?"

Broadway's answer was a muttered curse of horror and agony. He placed the ends of his nervous fingers in his mouth and fastened his teeth in them.

"God!" he whispered. "It's the bugs again—I can't stand this!—they're crawling underneath my skin—I know they ain't really there—but it'll drive me nuts if I don't get a few grains of snow. Yes, I'll go with you—I've got to have some—I've got to!"

WITH the Spotter leading the way, they moved off into the night. Broadway broke into a nervous trot, and his companion cursed him softly and held him back. A policeman was passing the glare that fell from the next arc light, and for a few minutes the two waited discreetly. Then, the danger over, they passed up a dark alley, and came out upon an even darker street than the one they had left. Creeping in the shadows they passed a row of two-story brick houses, and then reached a solitary one at the end of the branch street. The upper windows were still lighted, but the remainder of the block was draped in a velvet gloom. In the distance they could hear the hum of an occasional motor car on the boulevard, but that was all. It was a great night for a job, anyway, as the Spotter had said.

"That's the place," said he, triumphantly. "The light's still on. Now use a little judgment and do as I say."

A dark stairway opened on the street, and above it shone a sign in faded gold letters. Broadway made it out with difficulty.

"Dr. Abram La Forne, Specialist in Diseases of the Mind and Brain," he repeated. "What does all that mean, Tim?"

Tim the Spotter shook his head.

"It's beyond me, unless he's an asylum doctor—what's the difference? He's got what we want and we're going to get it!"

Broadway shivered, and shook his head.

"I have the creeps anyway, tonight, without going up there. You go up and see what you can do. Whistle if you need me."

"And expect me to divvy, eh?" snarled the Spotter. "Come on—you fool. We might have to knock him in the head to get it, but—"

The Spotter patted his coat pocket.

"All right," sighed Broadway. "Here goes."

With a look around to see that he was unwatched, Broadway quickly ascended to the first landing. Here he paused to whisper with his companion.

"There's a light under this door," he said.

"I don't hear a sound," rejoined the Spotter. "This is going to be the grapes—I'll bet he's alone."

Broadway could near nothing save the regular and melancholy tick of a clock somewhere in the building. He held back for a moment, then went ahead with a shrug. He must have something, and have it quickly!

He knocked at the door, with the Spotter only a few steps behind him. He knocked again, as he heard a faint movement from beyond the door.

"Come in."

As THE door yielded, the two men staggered inside. Broadway paused while his eyes grew accustomed to the bright light, and then rubbed his eyes and looked again at the man before him. He shuddered violently, and had the Spotter not been directly behind him, he would have turned and fled.

Was this thing human? Broadway felt a cold chill creep up from his spine to the roots of his hair. Was this a dope dream, or was it reality? If this was La Forne and this place was his office, Broadway wished that he was miles away. Yet here was this little man smiling at them over a blood-bespattered apron—smiling and nodding like a manikin! And such a face! Broadway had never seen a face like this one, not even in the terrible dreams and visions that his drug sometimes brought him. It was a small shrunken face overshadowed by a huge skull. The eyes were veiled behind heavy-lensed spectacles, but the mouth was fascinating. A close student would have called it a cruel mouth, but at present the thin lips were writhed into a smile. Broadway looked at the yellow skin stretched over the horrible mask, and shivered. It looked like parchment.

"Come in, gentlemen," said the doctor in a voice that made his visitors think of the clink of iron on ice. "What can I do for you at this late hour?"

He smiled again, as he closed the door, but when he had turned and scrutinized his strange callers, the distortion faded.

"Suppose you take the iron bar, or whatever it is, out of your coat pocket. I'm sure you will find no use for it here."

The Spotter started, looked guilty, and placed a trembling hand on his lead pipe. Broadway held his breath, and waited for the sickening impact. It never came. The morphine addict's eyes were held for an instant like a bit of iron in a vise. What he read in the doctor's eyes he never told, but he withdrew his weapon and placed it gently on the table. Broadway breathed easier.

"There, that will do," murmured the doctor. "That's fine. Now I suppose you two drug addicts came here after—dope?"

The two men cast anxious glances toward the closed door.

"You want morphine, don't you?" he asked, staring at Tim the Spotter through his heavy glasses. Then as the derelict gulped nervously: "It's easy enough to fathom," smiled the doctor, unpleasantly, "to the professional eye. Your pupils are contracted and very unequal and your skin, facies, and manner also point to morphinism. It's just as easy to diagnose your companion's case. Cocaine! Pupils dilated, face clammy, hallucinations of perception—you are digging at imaginary parasites at your fingertips, I see. Quite common—these delusions."

Broadway felt as if he were being slowly dissected beneath the searching eyes of the scientist. He coughed uneasily. How did this man know of those little bugs crawling through his tissues? It was uncanny. Tim the Spotter was not so easily frightened.

"Don't kid us, doc," he spoke up, in a husky voice. "You're right. We do need the dope, and we need it bad. Do we get it—just a little?"

He was pleading now.

"We'll do anything for you—anything, doc, if you'll only—"

The doctor shook his head, and smiled sarcastically.

"You'd do anything?" he sneered. "No matter what I asked—for a few grains of morphine?"

"God, yes," whimpered the wreck before him. "Anything—but I've got to have a shot, doc!"

The doctor's face underwent a change. His high forehead wrinkled into a thoughtful frown. Drumming

on the table, he looked the two drug victims over with a searching eye. Broadway noticed that a horribly yellowed skull rested on this table, a few inches from the doctor's hand. Mentally he compared the skull with the doctor's head, and shuddered.

"And you?" The doctor shot the question at Broadway Charlie with an abruptness that shook the youth from his revery.

"Just a few grains of the snow, doctor," he whispered, "and I'd do anything!"

The doctor smiled again, and again a cold twinge crept up Broadway's spine. The scientist's demeanor changed at the young man's answer, and he removed his spattered apron with an apology.

"I have been dissecting in the back room," he explained. "A rather bloody job. A brain case, of course, as that's my specialty. The fellow died of cerebral edema, and it's very interesting. Care to see it?"

Broadway's face went a shade whiter.

"This fellow's getting on my nerves," he whispered in the Spotter's ear. "As soon as he comes through, I'm getting out of here. I can't stand much of this!"

"Shut up," breathed the older man. "Let me handle this!"

THE doctor was busy scrubbing his hands in disinfecting soap, and while his back was turned, Broadway looked about him feverishly. What a ghastly place this was! Books! Books everywhere, and the shelves that lined the study overflowed in great stacks on the floor. And charts, the like of which Broadway had never seen and hoped never to see again. Huge diagrams of the brain, and the dissected human body, stared at him from the walls, and in the darkest corner a skeleton was hanging suspended from a slender wire. Broadway's mind, already unbalanced from the use of cocaine, seemed to sway close to the snapping point. God! This place was awful—terrible! If he could only have a whiff of the snow, now, to steady his raw nerves! He noticed that the Spotter, too, was trembling. Whether it was the thought of morphine or the fear of the doctor Broadway did not know. But he knew that *he* was very much afraid.

"Well," said the scientist, drying his hands carefully. "I'll see to your case first, Mr. —"

"Tim Smith," supplied the Spotter, licking his lips, feverishly.

"Well, Mr. Smith," smiled the doctor, "what's your dose? How much of the drug have you been using?"

"Four grains," whimpered the Spotter. "Let me have it quick—doc!"

He fumbled at his inside pocket and drew out a battered and dirty "hypo". The physician eyed the instrument contemptuously.

"It's a mystery to me how you men live," he snapped. "Every time you use that filthy needle you are flirting with tetanus and worse. Can't you keep them sterile? Here, if you must have your drug, you'll at least take it the way it should be given."

He opened a drawer in his desk and extracted a hypodermic syringe and withdrew the plunger from the glass barrel. He then filled it with distilled water, and lighting an alcohol lamp, sterilized the needle in the flame. The two men watched him with fascinated eyes, and when they saw him insert a key in another drawer, they stirred impatiently. The doctor had extracted a vial of amber glass from the inner drawer and was now shaking a dozen or so of tiny white tablets into the barrel of the syringe. While the little pellets dissolved, he turned and faced them with an ironic smile.

"It's another mystery to the profession," he said, shaking the needle, "how the morphine addict can take

seven or eight times the normal dose and carry it. There's enough of the drug to kill six men—normal men. I suppose you think I am doing you a service. Neither of you has long to live. The younger of you has possibly a span of five years with his cocaine, and you, Mr. Smith, have six months or a year. Your cyanosis does not lie, my friend. In a month you'll be taking six grains of the stuff, then seven, but you'll never live to take eight."

The Spotter shivered, and shifted from one foot to the other, uneasily. The doctor had turned toward the light and was forcing the air bubble from the needle.

"All right, doc," sighed Tim. "Let me have the shot and let me go."

The physician raised his eyebrows until they appeared over his spectacles.

"I believe you made me a promise," he began.

The men shuddered, looked toward the closed door, and then, seeing no other way, nodded.

"That's fine," beamed the little scientist. "Now roll up your sleeve."

When the Spotter had complied, and a small area of his dirty arm was washed clean with alcohol, the doctor, with a sudden movement, thrust the needle into the lean flesh of the addict's arm. Tim did not wince, but his eyes bulged with satisfaction as the plunger was shot down and he felt the solution sink deep into his tissues. As it was absorbed into his blood stream, he heaved a great sigh of relief.

"Thanks, doc," he muttered. "That's like living again—God! But I was needing it bad."

The Spotter's face had changed, and he had drawn himself erect. He looked like a human being again, now that the devils had ceased hammering at his brain and body. He felt like a starving man, after a feast. Feverishly, he rubbed his arm, and smiled across at Broadway, who was waiting impatiently for his dose. Tim drew a cigarette from his pocket, lit it, and puffed luxuriously. He felt a living, breathing man once more. What a hell the last twelve hours had been!

The doctor had brought out a bottle from some mysterious place, and Broadway felt that he could almost scream, when he read the label over his shoulder. Cocaine hydrochlorid! The youth shivered with anticipation when the doctor uncorked it and weighed out a few grains of the deadly white crystals on a pair of scales.

"I use this drug for a local anesthetic and mydriatic," exclaimed the physician, "but I'll violate the Harrison narcotic law once again, and let you have a few grains, as you seem to be really suffering."

"Believe me, doctor," said Broadway, "no one shall ever find out from me."

The doctor's smile thrilled the youth with something akin to horror. What was this man? What was the explanation of all this?

"No, no one shall ever find out—from you," said the doctor, absently, as he washed out the hypodermic syringe and refilled it with cocaine and water.

"Never mind the needle, doc," said Broadway, becoming suddenly distrustful and not a little frightened. "I'll sniff it—I don't want a shot."

"You'll take it this way, or not at all," snapped the physician.

Broadway tried to resist, but his will failed him at the thought of that blissful alkaloid that was his for the taking. He took it.

In a space of some sixty seconds life changed from black to white, in the stimulated mind of Broadway Charlie. No longer was there the

dull void in his brain, the cramp in his limbs, and the "bugs" had ceased their endless journey at his finger-tips. He felt the wild stimulant racing through his veins, and creeping into his brain. Soon Broadway, like Tim, had shaken off his fear and horror, and was talking and laughing with the genial physician. This doctor was a friend to the sufferers of mankind — a philanthropist — more than that—a god! He wondered what he had seen in this little doctor a few minutes before to excite his horror and loathing. The world was a bright place, after all!

"Well, doc," grinned the Spotter, "what is it you want us to do? Want to swipe a body, do you, and you think we might help you?"

The doctor answered the smile by a faint upward distortion of his thin lips. He took a cigar from a box on his desk and lit it, carefully.

"No," he said, at length. "What you two are going to do for me won't be hard. In fact, it's easy. Why, you really can't help doing it, you see. It's very simple, and it will save you both a great deal of misery and suffering, perhaps."

He flicked the ashes from his cigar, and again his lips writhed in a terrible smile.

"I want you to die!" he said. "Die—and in a few minutes!"

The laughter and humor fled from Broadway Charlie's face, and the Spotter's eyes seemed to start from their sockets. Was this man mad!

"It will be easy," said the scientist. "In fact, you can't help doing it for me. I made sure of that. Remember—you promised to do anything, and though you are both depraved and abnormal men, you will do very nicely for an experiment tonight—one that I have been planning for a long time. Lucky you came here, tonight, or I should have had some trouble."

The Spotter gasped, and shook his head. Something seemed to be creeping about his brain. He suddenly realized that he was becoming very, very sleepy. Through glazing eyes, he saw Broadway dash wildly for the door, only to be stopped by the doctor's revolver, and those dreadful eyes. The Spotter sank back into his chair with a contented sigh, and felt the walls of the office fade into immeasurable distance.

"Don't try to get away," smiled Dr. La Forne. "Sit down."

Broadway did so, without knowing why. He could have wrenched the gun from the feeble hand of the little physician, he felt sure—but those eyes!

"You murderer!" he sobbed. He had seen the Spotter's head drop down upon his chest, and his anger overcame his morbid fear.

"Not yet," murmured the scientist. "If my experiment is successful I can bring him back again. But first we'll let him die."

Broadway, overcome with a sickening terror, started to rise—to reach the door at all costs—he cared little if this mad doctor did shoot—he must fly—get away! This was horrible! But he fell back into his chair again in amazement.

"My legs!" he cried. "My legs! I can't move them!"

The doctor nodded.

"Hyoscin," he murmured. "I gave you both an equal amount of the drug, along with your narcotic. You will be conscious for quite some time yet, as the cocaine acts as a chemical antagonist. Morphine, on the other hand, hurries the action of the hyoscin. Your friend will soon be dead. He is in a deep coma."

Broadway's mind was clear, and yet he could not move his paralyzed lower limbs. He wanted to scream—to shout; but instead he watched the doctor with fascinated eyes. The

(Continued on page 138)

FARTHINGALE'S POPPY

by Eli Colter

"WELL, then, the whole question is—could Gordoon come back? If the dead return, in any fashion, we can get a solution to the ghastly enigma."

Lawrence, puffing absent-mindedly at his vile pipe, leaned back in his chair and watched his host's face with covert eyes.

"Gentlemen, the case is closed. Ascertain whether or not the dead can come back. Simplest matter on earth." Bob Wasson, a cynical smile on his good-humored mouth, bowed in elaborate mockery to the three men gathered in his rooms. "I should suggest that we leave it to Professor Lawrence, here. He's the original Gullible Guy, spook chaser and solver of psychic problems. Can the dead come back, Larry?"

"Don't know, I'm sure. I should like to find out," Lawrence answered mildly, unruffled by Wasson's sarcasm. "If there is any way of reaching Frank Gordoon, I shall certainly discover it before I give up, your inane contention to the contrary notwithstanding! I've gone rather far already. I'm certain Frank knows I'm trying to reach him. Certain he's trying to reach me, too. What's the matter with you fellows? Haven't you any respect for Frank's memory?" The rebuke wiped Wasson's cynical smile out of existence.

"I wouldn't say that, Larry, if I were you. We've as much respect and affection for Frank's memory as you have. It's simply that—to us—your continual harping on this spiritualistic stuff seems somewhat ridiculous."

"Why ridiculous?" Lawrence interrupted defensively.

"Oh, it's so futile," Wasson answered soberly. "There's been such a lot of bunk talked about conversing with the dead, so much fakery going on among mediums, such a lot of windy blah over nothing at all and getting no results. One finally comes to the point where anything remotely approaching psychic phenomena is considered empty hokum. Why, man alive!" Wasson's eyes lit with excitement at the very thought. "You ought to know that if there were any possible basis for belief in this business of reaching the dead, we three would be the first to back you up in trying to establish communication with Frank Gordoon. But it simply can't be done, and it looks rather silly to see a man of your intelligence placing credence in obvious chimeras." The flash of excitement died out of Wasson's eyes, and he leaned

against the wall with a shrug as he finished speaking.

"And it looks rather silly to see a man of your intelligence vigorously refuting everything he cannot instantly understand. And it's worse than silly to deride anyone who has a belief incompatible with your own," Lawrence retorted warmly. "It's poor taste. I don't expect to find Gordoon stalking along some dismal lane, clad in a sheet and clanking a chain, you know. I expect to find the same old lovable nut we used to know—see him, and hear him too, maybe. You poor blockheads don't want to bet so high on the cards in sight. I have an ace in the hole. Gordoon loved—poppies."

"Well, for cat's sake, what has that to do with the price of shoes?" Jim Farthingale pursed his mouth, with meticulous precision, blowing a ring of smoke, but he shot Lawrence a glance, and there was a peculiar expression on his face. Lawrence turned his head, and his eyes narrowed slightly as he included all three of the others in his reply:

"Gentlemen," he said softly, "*Farthingale has a poppy.*"

Farthingale started.

FRANK GORDOON had been chum and comrade to them all. But he had lived closest to the understanding and affection of Jim Farthingale. The two had been students together at the same medical school. Both of them had risen to well deserved heights in their profession. Then, in the full flush of his career, Frank Gordoon had died. Very strangely had Frank Gordoon died!

He had been found on his own wide lawn, under a balsam poplar tree. The servants had discovered him early in the morning, stretched at full length, easily, as if he had lain down and passed away in a comfortable sleep. Organically he had been sound. No marks of any kind were on the body. No trace of poison in the stomach or blood. The mystery of his death had caused no little consternation in the old circle which had been composed of himself, Farthingale, Wasson, who was a portrait painter; Lawrence, the architect; and Arturo Benito, a tenor in a noted grand opera company.

Benito was mostly an absentee member of the group, since the greater portion of his time was spent, necessarily, in the East where the opera held forth during season. Just now he was on a two months' vacation and had come directly to the city where the circle had its existence. Naturally, the talk had turned upon the strange death of Frank Gordoon. Every conceivable idea admitting of a cause for mortality had been raised, followed to a logical conclusion and discarded. Wasson had remarked that he would give anything he possessed to know just how Gordoon had gone out, but of course that was a thing known only to Frank. It was then Lawrence had countered with the remark that all they had to do was reach Gordoon, and they might "get an answer to the ghastly enigma."

During all this discussion Benito had been silent. But at Lawrence's later mention of the poppy owned by Farthingale, and at the doctor's resultant start, the singer sat up in his chair and looked intently at Farthingale.

"See here, Farthy. When did you say he died?"

"Sometime in the early morning, the night of the tenth, exactly two months ago yesterday." Farthingale glanced at the singer interrogatively. "Why?"

"Most queer." Benito frowned, and a look of puzzlement came into his eyes. "Just two months ago tonight we were singing *Monna Vanna*. There isn't much opportunity for the tenor in that score, but I was in good voice and made the most of it. In the last

act, as I stood in my bonds, someone in the gallery began cheering. Another took it up, and another, and presently the whole house was shouting 'bravo.' Very unusual. Then, I can't say why, I was impelled to look down. There at my feet lay a poppy. Just a single, bright red poppy. Afterward I found that no one had seen it thrown there. No one knew from whence it had come. Oddly enough, I instantly thought of Gordoon and his fondness for that particular flower. Now, what do you make of that?"

"A good deal," Lawrence said quickly. "Gordoon himself, of course."

"Nonsense!" Benito's objection was involuntary. "But it was singular. I think—"

"Well I think we'll all be getting the jim-jams if we don't change the subject," Wasson cut in smoothly. "I move we all go down to the grill and massacre some food. Is it unanimous?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" Farthingale rose with alacrity, quite evidently relieved at the termination of the conversation anent Gordoon.

THE four men got into their wraps and passed down the stairs, and as they came out into the street Lawrence drew Benito back, allowing the other two men to get a few paces ahead. Benito peered at the architect through the shadows of the trees caused by the street lamps, and Lawrence answered his questioning look in an undertone.

"I wanted to ask you about that poppy, Arturo. Didn't you say you were in bonds? I've never seen *Monna Vanna*. What kind of bonds?"

"Why, my hands were tied together, behind my back."

"Helpless—hands tied behind your back. Hands tied—Gad! That's it! I'm right!" Lawrence's low exclamation was so vehement that Benito looked at him in astonishment.

"Whatever are you saying, Larry? Right—what are you right about?"

"Frank, of course! That's what he was trying to tell you. *He's* helpless, too. *His* hands are tied."

"For heaven's sake, what are you trying to get at?" Benito stared through the night's shadows, startled by the significance back of the architect's assertion.

"We'll get to it later," Lawrence evaded. "I'm going to turn over that ace in the hole the first chance I can grab. What I want to see now is that poppy of Farthingale's. Old doc and Bob Wasson are two of the rankest materialists I know. Farthy's the worse of the two. He says all doctors are materialists. He and Wasson refuse to take seriously any of my attempts to reach Gordoon. There was something mighty queer about the way he died. I mean to find out what it was. And since he's the only one who knows—what's the logical thing to do? I want to ask you, Arturo. *you* don't think this business of recalling the dead is all rot, do you?"

"No," Benito answered slowly, "I don't say it's *all* rot. But most of it is. I don't doubt there may be isolated individual instances that might make one sit up and take notice. There must have been something real to give the fakers groundwork for their machinations. What it is I don't pretend to have the faintest idea. If I really thought there was any way of reaching Frank I'd be the first one to aid you. You evidently have a theory?"

"I certainly have!" Lawrence's words tripped over each other in the haste to get themselves said. "Both as to what sent him out, and as to how we might reach him. Farthy believes he took poison. I can't agree with him. Gordoon didn't look like a man who'd taken poison. He looked like a man asleep. There wasn't any vibration of poison around his body. I'm sensitive to vibrations, and I'd stake

my life on that! See here, Arturo, didn't you say that poppy was red?"

"The poppy tossed at my feet? But certainly! Why?"

"Just an added proof. A yellow or pink one would not have been so positive a proof. Gordoon was mad about poppies. Red poppies. Had 'em all over his place."

"I remember," Benito replied, nodding. "Something about France, wasn't it? Flanders?"

"Yes." Lawrence dropped his voice to a whisper. "He and Farthy went through the war together. Frank used to say he could never forget the poppies over there, thousands of 'em. Red field poppies. He said every poppy was born of a pint of blood. And when he built his new house—you've never seen it, worse luck—he planted a perfectly huge bed of those red field poppies. In the center of the bed he mapped out a star-shaped piece of turf, across which he wrote with some kind of bright red moss: "LEST WE FORGET." Farthingale said it was sentiment. Hates sentiment. Sneers at it. But after Gordoon died old Farthy buys a potted poppy and places it in his living room. It must be about ready to bloom by this time."

"SAY, you two!" Farthingale paused, turned and waited till Benito and Lawrence had caught up with him and Wasson. "Let's ditch the grill and go up to my place. I'll have old George beat up an omelet and dig up a bottle. What say?"

The suggestion met with warm assent and approval, but to both Benito and Lawrence the poppy about to bloom was a far greater lure than the promised omelet and bottle. The four men sauntered on together, and conversation languished between the singer and the architect concerning the dead man. Some fifteen minutes later the quartet of comrades entered the doctor's roomy house, settled comfortably in the living room and fell into a lazy, desultory round of talk as they waited George's culinary triumph.

Involuntarily Benito made a swift survey of the room in search of the poppy. It stood conspicuously on the library table set into the deep bay window, planted in an ordinary florist's pot of large size. The foliage had attained luxurious growth, but there was no blossom visible. It was one of those big oriental poppies which send forth numerous consecutive blooms before their season is done. Involuntarily, as he had sought the poppy with his eyes, Benito spoke.

"When will your poppy bloom, Doc?" The singer's question brought Farthingale round with a start. The doctor had been standing by the floor register, conversing in low tones with Wasson. He passed off his start with a nonchalant shrug, frowned, glanced quickly at the poppy and replied lightly:

"Oh, it has already bloomed three times. I cut off the flowers and threw them away. They—they weren't the right color." He turned back to Wasson almost abruptly, as if he would avoid further questioning anent his pet plant.

Benito raised his brows at Lawrence. Then without any further word the singer got to his feet and crossed the room for the purpose of more closely inspecting the poppy. Three blunt stem ends showed plainly where Farthingale had clipped the blooms. But from the very center of the plant rose another bud. It was, as yet, only a hard green bulb through which showed no hint of a petal to disclose the color of the flower. As Benito returned to his seat he caught both Lawrence and Farthingale watching him closely. The doctor's expression was baffling, but Lawrence's was patently eager and intent.

As a matter of fact, Lawrence's thoughts were beginning to assume

the belligerent. Farthy's touchiness over his poppy was transparent; he didn't want to be suspected of sentimentality. But what was under both Farthingale's and Wasson's assumption of crass unbelief?

Lawrence rather suspected them of a jealously guarded susceptibility. But how to reach it? He had tried a number of ways to pierce their armor; subtle insinuation, candid inquiry, veiled statement. It had got him nowhere. Well, he'd just try the bombing system! Certainly events had played into his hand this evening—Benito's recital of his poppy experience in *Monna Vanna*—Wasson's first earnest reply to his own ideas—the excursion to Farthingale's house. Here was his chance. Right in the lion's den he would turn over that hole card!

He leaned forward in his chair and said firmly: "See here, Farthy. Your claim concerning Gordoon's death is absurd. Why should he *want* to die? He didn't. I know it. If ever a man wanted to live it was Frank Gordoon. And though he didn't intend going so far, I believe he was responsible for his own death. That is—if he's *dead*."

"What!" Farthingale wheeled with a sharp ejaculation and stared at the architect.

"Personally," Lawrence went on smoothly, ignoring him, "I'm not so sure Frank is dead." A moment he hesitated. All along he had been mild and noncombatant under their jibes. Well, taste or no taste, he'd give them some of their own medicine. He finished curtly: "If I could get a little assistance from you poor dolts we might be able to call him back."

"Shall I have a padded cell fitted out for you?" Wasson put in with mock solicitude. "Or will an ordinary one do?"

"Oh, leave him alone, he's harmless." Farthingale lit his pipe and flipped the match into the stand-tray beside him. "I have no doubt whatever that poison did for Frank. Some of those little-known poisons that leave no trace. I fancy you're quite right when you say he went farther than he intended, Larry. For about two years he had been experimenting with such poisons. Some East Indian lore set him going on them."

"East Indian lore! That's at the bottom of the whole hideous business!" Lawrence cut the doctor short. "Farthy, tell Arturo and Bob what happened when Frank had the typhoid three years ago."

"He asked us never to repeat it," Farthingale objected. "What good can it do?"

"A lot of good. When he asked us never to repeat it he certainly never suspected any such contingency as this. Go ahead. Tell 'em, technically."

"Why—he died, that's all." Farthingale turned to Wasson and Benito and went on reluctantly. "Heart stopped beating. Pulse ceased. I closed his eyes and folded his hands—pronounced him dead. Then one of his hands moved slightly. I felt for his heart action. It had begun again. Larry was there. He and I and the nurse went to work like mad. Pulled old Frank through. But that's nothing so unusual. I don't know why he wanted it kept quiet, I'm sure."

"Well, I know!" Lawrence sprang to his feet, facing the other three. "When he was strong enough to talk again, he was all worked up over what had happened to him. You know what a colossal will the man had. Never saw anything like it! Well, when his heart stopped beating he was still fully conscious. Then he became aware that his jaw had dropped, his eyes rolled up. He tried to move 'em. Couldn't. Found that all control over his physical body had been suspended. He felt Farthy close his eyes and fold his hands. Heard him say he was dead. But — he determined he

wouldn't die. He set that irresistible will of his to remaining conscious. He kept saying over and over—'I will not lose consciousness—I *will not* lose consciousness'—steadily, like a mantram. Presently he felt a peculiar warmth in his chest. Tried to move one of his hands—the fingers twitched—heart began beating again. Now, what do you say happened?"

"Simple as A B C," Wasson answered. "His will kept him alive and the body was forced to go on functioning. The will's a powerful thing."

"At least, a will like Frank Gordoon's," Benito put in.

"Right!" Lawrence glanced keenly at Farthingale, but the doctor remained silent. "That got under Frank's hide. That's what he didn't want repeated. He began brooding over it—the capacity of the will, you know. He came to the conclusion that if the will could bring him back, *it could send him out.* He bought a lot of books on mysticism and adeptship. *Hatha Yoga,* and all that stuff. This *Yoga* is a kind of Hindoo ascetic philosophy. By attaining a high degree of adeptship, the *Yogi* claims to obtain union with the universal spirit and accrue certain occult powers which free him from physical laws. The hindoo word *Yoga* means the union of the individual with the divine. The Hindoos have spread that doctrine since Heck was a pup. Well, Frank got going on that rigmarole. Took all kinds of queer exercises, dieting, posturing, breathing, intellectual concentration—in secret."

"Funny he never told me anything about it," interrupted Farthingale.

"Not at all," Lawrence answered sharply. "You're such a hard-boiled skeptic that he was afraid to discuss it with you. He knew I was ready to believe in anything occult that even approaches reason, so he came to me. He knew I wouldn't laugh at him, and he feared you would."

"I certainly should have," Farthingale admitted coldly. "In fact, I'm laughing now. Ridiculous!" His mouth corners lifted in a scornful chuckle of derision.

"It's you who are ridiculous!" Lawrence retorted harshly. "You're such a damned fatuous infidel! Frank knew you'd find that he was studying something Indian, so he told you he was investigating poisons. Poisons, hell! He was studying like all possessed on the ramifications of the will! I ask you to consider the will of Frank Gordoon! He began to practise what he studied. He attained a certain amount of efficiency. He got so he could pass in and out of his body at his own pleasure. But he wouldn't stay over a few minutes. He was lured powerfully by the weird things he saw over there, but he was afraid he might remain out too long and find it impossible to get back. *And I tell you that is what happened!* He was so interested in that immense realm of the unknown that he overtaxed his as yet undeveloped technical ability, and when he came to returning to his body, he couldn't quite accomplish it."

"Man alive, Larry, you can't really believe that?" Benito leaned forward in consternation. The doctor had lost his sneer, and Wasson's face was wry with a queer expression of baffled bewilderment.

"I do believe it!" Lawrence began pacing the floor. Suddenly he stopped directly in front of the three grouped over the register. "Why, you poor, stupid unbelievers! I've got to jolt you out of your complacent materialism. Those Hindoos attained an astounding degree of adeptship. Frank told me of one chap who left his body in a trance. According to pre-arranged plans with some of his buddies who believed in him, these buddies buried the body in a vault, sowed wheat over it, allowed the wheat to grow, mature and ripen. Mowed the

wheat, opened the vault and disinterred the body. The adept came back from out there, reassumed his body, got up and thanked them. And the body had been buried six months."

"How is that possible?" Benito interrupted. "How could the body escape disintegration? Why, they can't even allow a man to remain too long in a state of hypnotism. The natural poisons of the body, not being thrown off through regular channels, would cause death."

"Frank explained that, too," Lawrence replied swiftly. His face was drawn, his eyes blazing with eagerness to master their unbelief. "He said there was a kind of tenuous inner body attached to the physical organism, called the astral body. In sleep the spirit, or what we know as the intelligence, enters the astral body and roams at will on the astral plane, which is an etheric counterpart of the physical plane. Hence dreams. The astral body is attached to the physical by an elastic cord, similar to the umbilical cord which attaches the body of an unborn child to its mother. So long as that cord remains unbroken the forces of energy, which give life, sustain life and *are* life, continue to flow through the physical, and the body remains in a perfect state of preservation. Poisonous effluvia can neither permeate nor accumulate, since all animation is suspended. Only when that astral cord is severed does death take place, the body become mere unenergized matter, and disintegration ensue. The adept merely assumes the astral body and leaves the physical in a trancelike sleep."

"But, Larry—"

"Don't interrupt me!" Lawrence turned upon Wasson savagely. "That's what happened to Frank. Think of it! There he roams, out in the vast space of the unknown. What terrors he may be encountering, what horrible suffering he may be enduring, longing to get back, despairing, unable to accomplish return without aid! And you, who could help him, you sit around here and sneer like a lot of idiotic Doubting Thomases and let him wander, and let his body lie in a vault until something snaps that cord and all we knew of him rots in the ground!"

"My God! What a ghastly hypothesis!" breathed Wasson.

"Hypothesis!" Lawrence leaned over Wasson with blazing eyes, pounding his right fist into his left palm frantically. "There you go! Hypothesis! It's no hypothesis. It's true—true—*true*, I tell you! I know! Frank follows me around day and night. He knows I believed. I've tried to reach him. Tried and tried till I'm half mad with my impotency! I've got to have aid. I can't reach him *alone!*"

"Let's try to be calm." Benito's voice shook as he said it. "Granting that such might be the case, wasn't the body embalmed?"

"No." Farthingale's face was white. "*His* blood drained from his veins? *His* heart pierced by a scalpel? Frank was nearer than a brother. I couldn't stand the thought of it. I insisted that he be buried just as he was laid out. Couldn't even stand having him buried in the ground—food for worms." Farthingale shivered. "I had him placed in a pine coffin in a vault, right where the sun shines through the door full over his face. He—he loved the sun!" Farthingale's face twitched.

"You *think* it was sentiment guiding you!" Lawrence turned his burning eyes on the doctor. "Farthy—it was Frank himself influencing you. He knew if his body was embalmed the last chance was gone. Do you think that magnificent will would give up, even after he found return impossible? Even after his body was buried? Even after you persisted in your puerile unbelief and accepted his loss? No! Not he! He's driving me,

driving me! I can't sleep! I can't eat! I can't even think any more! He won't let me rest till I've gone to the last ditch in an effort to help him get back!"

"Good God! If such a thing were true!" Wasson whispered.

"I've told you it *is* true!" The architect clenched his hands and shook them in the air. "And if we four would set our wills together, calling him, believing, we could reach him. Right here and now! But I can't do it alone! My God! I can't do it—*alone!* And there he lies in that vault, and we argue and fume like a pack of asinine imbeciles, and any moment he may go beyond our reach!"

"No, sir!" Wasson sprang to his feet. His face had gone whiter than Farthingale's. "If there is the remotest chance that you're right we're going to do our damndest to bring that man back to us. Tell us what to do."

"That goes for me, too," Benito concurred quietly, rising. But his eyes sputtered like burning powder. Lawrence's face quivered, and he turned to Farthingale, breathing heavily, like a man at the end of a long race.

"Farthy—you? We can't do it as an experiment. You've got to *believe!*" Farthingale's face was pasty, and the lines in his cheeks deepened like scars. His mouth worked convulsively as he answered:

"I *want* to believe!" In his tense utterance the doctor dropped all pretense of jeering skepticism. "Don't you understand? I want to—but I can't. You've called me a rank materialist. I am. But if Frank could come back there's no man on earth would go farther to help him accomplish it than I!"

A SIGH breathed in Lawrence's ears, a sigh of relief, of hope. He glanced sharply around the group.

"Who sighed?"

Each man shook his head. Lawrence's face was the color of chalk. "Frank! Frank! He's here! I tell you he's here right now! He knows what we're trying to do. Oh, my God, Farthy, it rests with you! Believe! Can't you *believe?*"

"I would if I could!" Farthingale's face worked uncontrollably. "If Frank is really here, he knew me. He knew how I felt. If he still exists here—there—anywhere—can't he give me a sign by which I can know him? If this is true and not some fantastic distortion of the imagination, he has untold power. Why, those Hindoos could make furniture rise in the air—make unseen instruments play exquisite music—make plants grow and bloom before your eyes. A sign! Can't he give us a sign?"

Farthingale's words were followed by a silence, a silence that settled over the room and gripped them into rigidity. And in the middle of it Lawrence cried out, pleading:

"Frank! A sign! *Give us a sign!*" In the deathlike hush that followed Benito whispered wildly:

"God Almighty—look at the poppy!"

THE eyes of the four men turned as one to the florist's pot on the table across the room. From the center of the foliage the bud was rising on its stem, slowly, steadily, as if all the force of creation were behind it. Steadily the calyx began to open. Steadily the petals within it unfolded and spread backward. Before them, settling into motionless calm, stood a full-blown poppy, crimson as new blood.

"Frank!" Farthingale's voice quivered, broke, raised to a cry. "Frank! The other three blooms I cut from that plant were spotless *white!* Oh, God! *Frank!*"

"Quick!" Lawrence seized the doctor's hand. "Join hands—into a circle—flow of magnetism! Quickly! Set your mind on Frank. Close your eyes. Call up a mental picture of his face. Call him! Call him! Frank —*we believe!*"

Acting like automatons, the other men obeyed him. Strained faces lifted, eyes closed, every atom of conscious intelligence exerted in an attempt to reach the man who had gone beyond. Silence! What a silence! Aching! Potent—tense—racking! Then another presence—surely, intangibly, vague as the wind, but another presence! And a voice! Out of the air over their heads—a voice. The voice of Frank Gordoon.

"At last! God, I thought I'd never get you! I stayed too long—couldn't get back! The astral cord still intact. All I need is—a little help—from that side. Help—will you help?"

"God in heaven—*yes!* Of course! Tell us what to do!" It was Farthingale, the unbeliever.

"Go get my body. Instantly! Bring it here. Quick! Any moment may be too late!"

The whisper faded, and for a time the men remained locked in the vise of their emotion. Then Farthingale broke the circle with a mighty oath.

"Come on! What are we waiting for? Didn't you hear what he said? Any moment may be too late! Come on!"

Out the door in a wild scramble. Down the stairs. Into Farthingale's high-powered car. It was a mad ride through the night. Farthingale at the wheel disregarded alike petty obstacles and speed laws. The great motor roared into the cemetery, coughed to a perilous halt. The men ripped down the top of the touring car and went on a run to the vault. Farthingale whipped out his key, flung back the door, and rushed into the burial place. By the aid of his flashlight they located the black pine coffin enclosing the body of Frank Gordoon. They lowered the bier, carried it outside, relocked the vault gate of grilled ironwork, hurried the coffin to the car and placed it across the tonneau.

Farthingale leaped under the wheel and the other three wedged into the tonneau to hold the coffin from slipping. Slower was the homeward journey. Farthingale took a roundabout road leading to his place, keeping a sharp lookout for late pedestrians. Once safely arrived, the men carried their burden into the house and placed it on the floor of the living room.

Lawrence knelt, turned the screws, lifted the lid and laid it on the floor. Four badly shaken men stared into the still face of Frank Gordoon. And it was, as Lawrence had said, the face of a man asleep. The face of a man in a deep trance. Suspended animation showed in every line of the thin features, but very certainly they lacked the peculiar rigidity of death. Still staring, Lawrence got to his feet, held out his hands, motioning the men into their former position.

"We've done it, Frank," he whispered. "What now?"

Again they stood with raised faces and closed eyes, in a circle, this time around the head of the coffin. And after a long silence again came the echo of Frank Gordoon's voice.

"Will. That's all. Will that I shall come back. Lord—what I've seen—what I can tell! It's now or never. Farthy—as you loved me, will —will—*will* that I shall return!"

For a moment stark terror paralyzed them. Terror of this thing they faced, the unknown that held him they had once cherished as closest and dearest. Terror of their own impotency. Terror of the clay-cold body at their feet. Then the love of man for man triumphed in the crisis.

With a mighty upheaval of spirit, every one of them called upon every faculty at his command, and that concerted force surged upward, calling to Frank Gordoon.

The atmosphere became charged with some unnamable energy. The very air was alive, pulsing like an animate thing. Then suddenly it seemed to Farthingale that he was Benito, Lawrence, Wasson, himself, all rolled into one. To each man came the same weird impression. They were fused into one personality, one individuality, one soul, willing, calling, crying out in a terrible silence to Frank Gordoon.

Then they became aware of the dominating, overpowering presence of Gordoon himself. Each man was four, the four one, and each man was more than all the conduit for the spirit of the man who lay at their feet. Then with unconconceivable quickness the air cleared, settled, became normal. Each man felt the passing of the other spirit from his immediate atmosphere. Each man lost the consciousness of the other three. Each man was again himself—himself alone.

IN THE wake of that great moment the four felt a terrific let-down. Felt their wills fall back upon themselves, spent. Weakened, shaken with the great effort expended, the material brain slowly resumed its commonplace functioning. And as they stood so, still with closed eyes, Lawrence was the first to speak.

"Too late!"

"Failed! God!" Farthingale whispered, stricken. "Fool's errand! Serves us right! Robbing a grave in the dead of the night. Trying to override the laws of the universe. Frank! *Frank!*"

They were afraid to open their eyes. Afraid to look at the body of the man who had been. What now—with the cord broken—the spirit passed farther into that vast unknown? Dust! Dust! Then a chuckle reached their ears. A hearty, amused chuckle. And a voice:

"Farthy, you poor old decadent agnostic! Look at your poppy!"

The men broke from the circle, springing back involuntarily at the well-remembered tones. Eyes flew open, faces blanched, necks craned forward. Frank Gordoon, the flush of life banishing the pallor of his skin, was sitting up in the black coffin. He chuckled again at the expressions chasing each other across the features of his old comrades—fear, incredulity, belief, hysterical delight—but this time the chuckle was tinged with warmest affection.

"Why, we pulled it off, you infants!" He stretched his arms, tentatively feeling his weakened, lax muscles. "I'm here! Do I have to get up and clean the whole bunch before you can believe your eyes? Here, help me out of this damned box. I'm loppy as a sick kitten. Farthy, go tell George to make that omelet for *five*—but first, look at your poppy!"

The eyes of the men turned with concerted gaze to the library table. The single bloom on the spreading plant was as white as alabaster.

The Sudden Death *of* Luke A. Lucas

By HAROLD E. SOMERVILLE

"MY LORD, Luke! You here?"

Gasping the words, Ed Bosworth halted, thunderstruck, at the door.

"Come in, old fellow. You look upset. What's wrong?" Luke A. Lucas—he of the mighty brain and the intellectual dome—cleared a stack of law books from a chair and placed it for his caller. Bosworth, without taking his astonished eyes from the attorney, slowly seated himself.

"Let me feel of you," he said, extending a hand and grasping the arm of Lucas. "You *are* here, ain't you?"

"And why shouldn't I be? These are my office hours."

"But I heard you was dead! Came in to congratulate your partner—I mean, condole him. Excuse me."

"Eh—what's that you say?" Luke leaned forward, his brows knit. "Heard I was dead? Where'd you hear such nonsense as that?"

"On the street. Three or four folks spoke of it. Said it was too bad about poor Luke."

"I've been at home with a touch of rheumatiz for a day or two. But I don't even look *sick*—do I?"

"No, Luke, you don't."

"Who told you I was dead?"

"Well, old Bill Marsh, for one. Said it was your heart. Henry Bass thought it was acute indigestion. Mel Barker heard you had a shock. Otto Rummelfinger understood—"

Lucas, very much alive, sprang to his feet and reached for his hat.

"I'll go see Marsh about this," he declared. "You come along, Ed."

THEY hurried up the village street to the office of Luke's chief professional rival. Bill was at his desk.

"What do you mean, you old scoundrel," demanded Lucas, "by spreading rumors that I am dead?"

"Why—I—I heard you was!" The surprize betrayed by Marsh was unmistakably genuine.

"Where in the devil did you hear that stuff?"

Marsh reflected.

"I think Si Latham was the first who told me. Then Joel Burke—"

But Lucas was gone, Bosworth at his heels.

In Latham's grocery store Si was weighing out a sack of flour for a customer. At sight of the supposedly dead he lowered the scoop, and its contents whitened the floor.

"Luke Lucas!" he groaned. "Ed, be I seein' things? Or is that Luke standin' there beside you?"

"It's Luke," testified Bosworth. "I felt of him to make certain sure."

FROM Latham, the trail was followed to Smith's Sanitary Barber Shop; thence to Whitney's drug store; across the street to Atherton's Dry Goods Emporium; next to Mrs. Garrison's millinery parlors; up the hill to the cottage of Miss Parker, the spinster dressmaker; and finally to the office of the *Weekly Argus*.

Orman Holt, the editor "and prop.", took one look at Luke A. Lucas and bolted out of the rear door.

Thirty seconds later he returned.

"I've stopped the press, Luke," he announced.

"You was printing my death in the paper?"

"Just heard about it fifteen minutes before I closed the forms. Only had time to squeeze in a paragraph to say that 'As we go to press we learn with deep regret . . .' Hadn't run off more'n a dozen copies, and I've thrown 'em away. . . . You showed up in the nick o' time, Luke. What started that yarn?"

The editor, it appeared, had his information from a most reliable source, the truthful lips of the Reverend Joshua Stebbins. To the Reverend Joshua went Lucas.

"Well! Well!" exclaimed the clergyman. "This is indeed a most gratifying surprize!"

"I'm cheating you out of a funeral fee," Luke reminded him.

"My dear man!" beamed the sky pilot, raising a hand in protest. "Such a thought never entered my mind."

The pastor had learned of Luke's reported demise from Simon Cook, the village teamster. And the Reverend Mr. Stebbins gave full credence to the story, for Cook had it direct from Dr. Ferguson.

So to Ferguson's office. Here the appearance of the living ghost occasioned no astonishment.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" inquired the doctor, when Luke and Ed were seated. "And which one shall I do it for?"

"We're both well and strong," replied the lawyer. "Do we look it?"

"You do."

Ferguson lifted his eyebrows interrogatively.

"But I am a dead man, doctor, by your own statement," announced Lucas.

"Is this a joke?" the physician asked. "I may be dense, but I fail to get the point."

Luke A. Lucas, he of the mighty brain and the intellectual dome, spoke slowly and accusingly.

"You told Simon Cook that I was dead. The story has gone all over town. It even got into the *Argus*. I could sue you for slander."

"Man alive!" exclaimed the doctor, not realizing the peculiar fitness of his expletive. "I never said any such thing! Not to Simon Cook or anyone else!"

His denial was uttered with convincing emphasis. Lucas, more than ever bewildered, accepted it.

"I knew," said he, "that it wasn't like you to make up a story out of whole cloth. But we're such good friends that I figured maybe you were having a little fun at my expense. . . . I'm sorry, Doc, to have come to you with this, but Parson Stebbins said Cook got it direct from you. . . . Guess I owe you a box of cigars. . . . And now I'll be getting after Cook. We'll see what the stupid ass has to say for himself."

LUKE and Ed arose and moved toward the door. . . .

The doctor's gaze at that moment wandered to a smooth, white object reposing on his desk and remained fixed there for fully ten seconds. Then he burst out in uproarious laughter.

He lifted the thing and displayed it to his callers.

"Here!" he said; "this explains your story. It's one I ordered recently. It arrived yesterday. I had just unpacked it when Simon came in with a bruised finger. He picked it up and looked it over—never had seen one before, I imagine. He asked me what it was—he's addicted, you know, to the foolish question habit.

"'Oh,' I said, offhand, 'that's Luke Lucas's skull.'

"And the doggone fool must have thought I meant it."

THE WHITE QUEEN OF THE COROLANS

A Two-Part Setial

by Arthur Thatcher

Author of "The Valley of Teeheemen" and "The Last of the Teeheemen"

THERE were three in the group concealed by the foliage of the thicket in which they had taken temporary refuge. They had paused a short time before in the clump of shrubbery, which covered some fifty square yards of ground, and they planned to remain until nightfall would furnish them the opportunity to gain the tangled undergrowth of the great jungle, the outline of which was dimly visible two miles away. Back of their hiding place, a mile from the thicket, rose towering mountain peaks. From the base of the mountains to the distant jungle border stretched an almost treeless plain, save for the occasional thickets similar to the one in which the three were hiding.

Two of the group were young women. Their skin was white in color, but bronzed by repeated contact with the tropical sunshine. The younger of the two was dressed in a one-piece trapping fashioned from the skin of a leopard. The folds fell below her thighs and extended upward across one of her shoulders. A band, woven by hand from some native fiber, held the locks of hair, cut Egyptian fashion, closely to her head.

The other woman resembled her companion in dress, but was not so tall, and her hair was darker. The man of the party was ebony in color. He carried a long spear, while a bow and quiver filled with arrows were suspended across his back.

A snake, some two feet in length, came gliding toward the thicket, and, at its approach, the man struck it across the back with his spear. With an experienced ability, he sought the poison sac back of the fangs of the reptile, and, when he had opened it, began dipping the points of the arrows in the venom.

While the warrior was thus engaged, the taller of the two girls rose to her feet to gain a better view of something that had attracted her attention in the distance.

The other joined her, and the man desisted from his poisoning of the arrow points to look in the direction indicated by his two companions.

"The Corolans again!" exclaimed the taller girl, turning her brown eyes to meet the black ones of her companion.

"Yes," agreed the other, answering in the language of their people. "But there are only two of them. They may pass this thicket without

even thinking to look therein, as several other searching parties have done. If they come this way in so few numbers, death shall be theirs, for we with our bows and arrows can easily shoot the two approaching, under cover of these bushes."

"May they pass a different way!" responded the other. "To be recaptured and confined in the prison pits would mean certain death. If we are again taken, we shall be closely guarded against any further effort to escape, until the day we die."

Crouching like hunted animals among the bushes of the thicket, the three watched the advance of the two figures across the sandy, rock-strewn plain.

When the two men had arrived at a point opposite the thicket, they changed their course and came directly toward the small grove of scrub trees and bushes.

2

Two days before this, the American steamer *Mariana* had encountered a tropical hurricane of enormous proportions. The vessel was driven from her course, and during the hours of the night crashed against a reef off the African coast. Following the crash, the ship began going down at the prow. The crew manned the life-boats, and several passengers on the vessel went over the sides with the crew. Captain Benjamin Ware and his first mate, William Stillwell, remained at their posts, after the tradition of the sea.

When the last life-boat had disappeared in the engulfing swirl of water and storm, a giant effort of the sea lifted the badly crippled ship again and drove it high upon the reef. This effort was the climax of the storm, for the rage of the hurricane then began to abate.

When morning dawned, Ware and Stillwell from the deck viewed the distant shoreline that lay beyond the chain of reefs upon which the *Mariana* had been driven.

"Our next move must be to reach the shore," announced Captain Ware to his companion. "We are in some wild section of southern Africa, but just where, I am not able to state. Fate has saved us from death in the sea."

"We were driven a long way off our course," replied Stillwell.

"Yes," agreed Ware. "There are several boats left, as the *Mariana* always carried a surplus supply of life-boats. We can reach the shore in one of these, and follow the shoreline or cut across the country in an effort to reach some post of civilization. I have been wondering regarding the fate of the crew and the five passengers."

"They may have made the shore," suggested Stillwell. "If they could have rowed into the water beyond this chain of reefs, they would have been safe, for the reefs here rob the breakers of their fury."

"We had better arm ourselves for the trip," Ware advised. "In the tropics one never knows what dangers lurk in the jungles."

The two prepared breakfast in the cook's cabin, and after the repast, each obtained a heavy rifle and side arms from the ship's supply. They lowered one of the remaining life-boats and began the trip to the shore, which lay a quarter of a mile before them.

When the nose of the life-boat touched the beach, the two jumped to the land and pulled the vessel as far up on the sand as they could. Each shouldered one of the packs, which had been made up of articles intended to prove useful in case of an enforced sojourn in the wilderness, and plunged into the dense undergrowth beneath the giant overspreading trees.

From that hour they traveled constantly, until they approached the mountains beyond the sandy plain

that terminated with the beginning of the dense jungle growth.

When they arrived at the edge of the jungle, they viewed the three mile expanse of desert between them and the walls of the mountains.

"We'll push on and camp close to the foot of the range," Ware announced, as they emerged from the jungle after a short rest. "We'll cross the mountain range before us, which is not a high one, and possibly encounter evidences of civilization in the valley that must lie beyond."

The two marched slowly across the sandy and rock-strewn expanse, until they approached a point opposite the thicket where the two young women and the dark-skinned native were hiding.

THE girl with the light hair fitted an arrow to her bow, and her companion imitated her example. The dark-skinned male withdrew from the quiver one of the arrows he had recently poisoned, and fitted it to his bowstring.

The two men who had turned toward the thicket on the plain stopped and looked about as if contemplating changing their course. As they paused, the younger girl spoke excitedly to her companion.

"They are not Corolans, Maleta! They are men of a white race—men such as I have never seen before."

"True, Zema," echoed her companion. "They may be more ferocious than the Corolans, though. It may be best to slay them anyhow and not take any chances."

The men were less than fifty paces from the thicket. The ebony-colored man fitted the arow to his bowstring and drew it back, but the girl designated as Zema suddenly seized the arrow.

"Wait, Vespar," she commanded. "They may prove to be friends."

Captain Ware, who was in advance of his companion, caught the movement of Zema in the thicket, as she rushed to the side of Vespar to restrain him from discharging the poisoned arrow. He raised his rifle and whispered a warning to Stillwell, who imitated his example.

"We had better halt," suggested Ware; "there is a chance of the thicket's being occupied by human beings, as well as animals, and we may be approaching an ambush. And we must remember the danger of some great beast's springing upon us."

Another movement in the bushes ahead caused them to throw the rifles to their shoulders. As they saw Zema advancing from the thicket toward them, they again lowered their weapons. Following Zema came her companion, Maleta, and some distance back of the two girls Vespar emerged from the hiding place.

Captain Ware and Stillwell advanced and extended their hands to the girls, noting their attire with interest. In response to the questions of the two sailors, the girls shook their heads, smilingly indicating their inability to understand the language of the men.

"We may as well follow our original intention and make a camp in this thicket for the night," suggested Ware. "Our three new companions do not show any disposition to leave here either. We may acquire a knowledge of their lingo by camping near them, and be able to obtain reliable information as to our present whereabouts and what direction we should take to find the nearest port or post of civilization."

"The idea appeals to me," Stillwell agreed. "This rambling about in a wilderness of which you know nothing at all is like sailing a vessel without chart or compass. It's merely guesswork, and the chances of reaching port are uncertain. One is just as likely to drive upon the rocks."

"We'd better kindle a fire," said Ware. Addressing Vespar, he spoke

the word "fire" and began gathering brush. The black man understood, and assisted the two in gathering dry wood from the thicket. When the blaze was going, the five seated themselves on the ground near by. Pointing to the fire, Zema addressed Ware and spoke the word as she had heard him say it. "Fire," she said. Then in her native tongue she spoke the word signifying the same thing.

The next hour was spent in this manner by the five, until the two men had completed preparing their evening meal from the stock of ship's goods which they carried.

They invited the others to eat with them, and the two girls accepted their invitation. Zema indicated by signs and words that Vespar would not eat with them, but was going on to the plain as soon as night would come and slay meat for himself and them.

The girls tasted of the food with some hesitancy, and then, as they observed Ware and Stillwell eating, they forsook their timidity and enjoyed the repast before them.

"This is strange food for the girls," remarked Ware, addressing Stillwell in English. "They are the whitest savages I ever saw. From the color and texture of their skins one would readily suppose they were of the purest Caucasian blood."

"They are clearer in type than most white women," agreed Stillwell. "They are unusually intelligent and could easily pick up a speaking knowledge of our language in a few weeks."

"We can probably acquire their tongue much more quickly," said Ware. "Their language, I should judge, contains a limited vocabulary."

"Why are they camping in this thicket here on the plain?" queried Stillwell. "This is certainly not their natural environment. Let us question them, if it is possible to make them understand."

Ware followed Stillwell's suggestion. Pointing to himself, he called his name, and then to Stillwell he repeated the latter's; then he pointed toward the country beyond the jungle through which they had come and announced, "We live far away. Where do you live?"

Zema nodded understandingly, and pointing to herself repeated her name, then that of her companion and of the negro. Pointing to the distant mountain, she pronounced the word "Corolan". Then she placed her hands to her throat, and by her actions conveyed to the sailors that she had left the land of Corolan because of violence to herself and the other girl.

"We'll just stick around this locality for a few more days, or even weeks if necessary," suggested Ware to Stillwell. "We can obtain a speaking knowledge of their language and find out what there is to be learned of our present location."

Darkness fell upon the plain, and the distant mountains loomed in dark outline under the light of the first stars of the evening. Vespar spoke to Zema and, at her nod, he walked from the thicket and set out across the plain.

"Gone for game," remarked Ware when the native had disappeared in the surrounding darkness.

Two hours later, Vespar staggered into camp, bearing across his shoulders a deer that he had slain.

3

For two weeks the five remained in the thicket camp. The spot was ideal for the purpose. A great spring furnished moisture for the vegetation of the thicket, and from the same source the party obtained a plentiful supply of water for all purposes.

Ware and Stillwell progressed rapidly in the language of the natives and learned from Zema that she had fled from the city of Corolans to escape death, which a jealous rival had planned.

"We are sisters," she told the sailors, referring to herself and Maleta. We were reared in the hut of Chalci, the father of Vespar. Chalci was black like Vespar, but we were white. We were the only white women in the land of the Corolans. Chalci told us that our father was at one time king of the Corolans, and that when he died we were very small. Before his death, he named Chalci as king of the Corolans, and upon the latter's death we were to come to the leadership of the people, I as their queen.

"When Chalci died, I ascended to the throne and leadership of the Corolans. I reigned for a year, until five weeks ago, Mitsu, the daughter of Agan, our greatest warrior, decided to be queen of the Corolans, and with her father's aid, our rights were overthrown. I and my sister were cast into prison with Vespar and others who had been loyal to our cause.

"Mitsu ordered the slaughter of all the prisoners in the arena of the Corolans. We learned of the order through our guards, and escaped by night from the prison when Vespar overwhelmed the warrior left to watch us. The Corolans, when they discovered our escape, followed us, and have many times crossed and recrossed the plain toward the jungle in search for us. Should we again be captured, we should be thrown to the beasts in the pit of the arena so that Mitsu, the black queen, might see us devoured."

When Zema had completed her explanation of why she and her sister were camping in the thicket, Vespar, as was so often his custom, set forth in chase of game that ventured nightly from the jungle on to the treeless expanse of the plain. When he had slain a deer a quarter of a mile from the thicket camp, he shouldered the animal and started on the return trip. He did not see the hundred or more shadowy forms that rose from the ground and followed him.

When he entered camp, he threw the animal to the ground and prepared to remove the hide. Ware and Stillwell were watching him, their rifles leaning against the impromptu bunks .they had constructed of brush and leaves.

A hundred great savages leapt from the various sides of the thicket and overpowered them before they could offer resistance. The blacks tied the hands of the three men behind their backs, and seated themselves in a circle on the ground about their captives. The chief of the war party then addressed the prisoners.

"Agan has sought many days for Zema, Maleta and the son of Chalci," he said, "and now have his efforts been rewarded. He will take the white queen of the Corolans to her old home, and there let her furnish sport in the arena for the new queen, Mitsu. The men and women of the Corolans shall watch the beasts of the arena tear her flesh from her white bones. She has found for herself a white mate and one for her sister. These shall go to the city of the Corolans and view what the men of the Corolans shall see."

The chief ceased speaking, and, after placing a strong guard about the prisoners, the entire war party lay down and slept on the ground about the thicket.

WHEN the day broke, the party prepared to begin its march to the land of the Corolans.

When they awoke, Ware and Stillwell made their way to their rifles and managed to pick them from the ground. Zema, seeing their efforts, advanced to them and assisted in getting the weapons in a position so that they might carry them in spite of their bonds.

The attention of Chief Agan was attracted to the packs belonging to the men. He examined the contents with much interest, admiring the tin

of the canned goods for a long time. Then he decided that the packs should be transported to the land of the Corolans. He sought some warrior who was willing to carry the packs, but several, after lifting them, gave grunts of disapproval and threw the packs to the ground. Then an idea struck the chief's mind.

"The white males shall carry the packs," he commanded.

With his own hands he released the bonds of the two men and helped to place the packs upon the backs of Ware and Stillwell. At the command of Agan the entire party moved forward. The line of march extended in the direction of the mountains in the distance.

"The city of the Corolans lies in a valley accessible through a narrow defile in the mountain range," Zema explained, as she walked by the side of Captain Ware. "We shall reach the place after a five hours' march."

"Have all of the people of the Corolans you speak of, who were loyal to you and your sister, been slain?" he questioned.

"I believe that they have all died by this time," she replied. "There were little more than three hundred who fought for me. The blacks, who wanted to see one of their own number in the chair as their ruler, numbered more than five thousand. We were too few to offer much resistance."

After an hour of steady marching, the defile in the mountain range was reached, and the company began filing along the narrow route between the mountain walls.

The column was suddenly brought to a halt. Ware and Stillwell looked before them and noted what had caused the stopping of the march. A number of wild horses hitched together in pairs, on which rode an equal number of fierce-appearing black warriors, were crowding through the defile. The horsemen were standing upright on the backs of their chargers.

"They are the fiercest men of the Corolans," Zema explained to Ware and Stillwell. "There are several hundred of them, who ride the fierce wild horses they capture on the plains beyond the city of the Corolans. They always lead the charges of the army against the enemy when our people are at war with some other tribe. They trample the vanguard of the enemy forces under the hoofs of their wild steeds. Their charges never fail to throw consternation into the forces of the enemy, and always make the work of the footmen easy and victorious."

The horsemen before the party on foot finally got their steeds turned again in the other direction and started out of the defile. The march was continued, and thirty minutes later the company emerged upon a plain.

"There is the city of the Corolans," announced Zema, pointing far before her. Ware and Stillwell looked in the direction indicated, and ascertained what appeared to be an enormous square of rock resting in the heart of the plain. Closer approach revealed that the first impression received was due to the high rock wall that completely enveloped the city.

"This place we are approaching harks back to antiquity," Ware remarked to Stillwell. "It is a fortified city, if we may judge from the powerful barrier its people have constructed about their places of habitation. They are a tribe of unusually capable natives."

The riders of the wild horses had galloped to the city far in advance of the approaching foot party. They spread the news of the recapture of the white queen of the Corolans and her sister. When the marching company had approached to within a quarter of a mile of the wall, a procession of warriors, accompanied by

more than a hundred teams of the wild horses and their riders, came from the city to meet the men under Agan's command.

In the advancing rabble were several crude chariots. The wheels had been fashioned from the sawed trunks of enormous trees, and holes had been bored in the center to furnish connection with the body of the chariot. Each of the crude vehicles was drawn by six of the wild horses, the animals being piloted by three riders on their backs.

For a moment Zema paused and grasped the arm of Ware, as she viewed the approach of the chariot with the other forces.

"Mitsu the black queen is coming," she said.

4

THE two forces soon met, and Ware noted the occupants of the chariot designated as the royal carriage of the Corolans. This chariot was larger and more elaborately constructed than the others. In addition to the warriors on the horses that drew the vehicle, four powerful warriors armed with wide-headed spears rode with the black queen, who stood in the prow of the chariot.

The royal chariot drew up to the place where Ware, Stillwell and the two white girls had halted. The men for the first time viewed the black queen of the Corolans.

When her chariot drew to a halt, she stepped from the vehicle and approached the spot where Zema was standing.

Mitsu was as tall as Zema. She lacked the latter's gracefulness of form, and where Zema was muscular and sinewy, Mitsu appeared fat and flabby. Her features were typical of the majority of the Corolans thus far encountered. Her nose was flat, mouth decidedly negroid in its formation, and the hair short and curly.

"The white usurper of the throne of the Corolans has been brought back to die," Mitsu announced, leering at Zema. "Too long has the blood of another nation been at the head of the great people of the plains. Tomorrow shall she be thrown to the great beasts in the arena, and her white companions shall see them rend the flesh of her body. Then shall we see if there are any champions who are willing to fight the beasts and save Zema and her white sister Maleta."

Mitsu, after this denouncement, returned to the royal chariot and resumed her position in the prow of the vehicle. The entire company turned and proceeded toward the gate.

"Though our hands are free," announced Ware, turning to Stillwell, "our chances of escaping this bunch or even putting up a good fight are rather undesirable. At the present our better plan is to follow the drift of events."

"They would overpower us if we attempted to shoot our way out." agreed Stillwell. "We had best watch for a better opportunity to escape than the present one, a chance when we may take the two white women with us to safety."

When the entrance to the city had been reached, Mitsu spoke a few words to the four guards of the royal chariot. The drivers of the wild horses halted their charges, and the four giant blacks stepped from the chariot and advanced toward Zema and Maleta.

"The black queen will lead the white ones at the rear of her chariot through the streets," announced the leader of the four, laying a heavy hand on the shoulder of Zema.

Stillwell's hand stole to the butt of the revolver in the holster at his hip. Ware noted the movement, but, placing his hand by way of restraint on Stillwell's arm, cautioned: "Wait."

The black giants placed a heavy leather thong about the neck of Zema

and secured the other end to the body of the chariot. Maleta was then fastened in the same manner.

Ware and Stillwell were commanded to follow the royal chariot as closely as possible. The march through the streets of the city of the Corolans then began. As the march progressed, Mitsu called to the drivers of the horses attached to the royal chariot to speed their animals. The horses lunged forward, and Zema and Maleta were obliged to exert themselves to the utmost to keep up with the vehicle. Zema began to tire, and at a wild lunge of the animals attached to the chariot, she was pulled from her feet and dragged headlong after the royal carriage.

Mitsu laughed hysterically as she saw the form of her rival dragged in the dust of the street. She called again to the drivers of the chariot. "Not so fast now," she commanded. "We will spare the white she for the sports in the arena tomorrow."

Zema regained her feet with the aid of Maleta, who had been able to keep pace with the rapidly moving car. The chariot slowed down as the horses came again to a prancing walk.

Ware and Stillwell had been angry observers of the actions of the black queen. Several times they were tempted to bring their rifles to bear upon the black queen and her consort. They were possessed with the additional fear, too, that the report of the rifles, strange noises to the animals hitched to the chariot, might precipitate a wild runaway and lead to the death of both Zema and Maleta.

THE royal chariot finally halted before an enormous building. The four guards of the black queen stepped from the vehicle and released Zema and Maleta. They guarded the two until the approach of Ware and Stillwell. The two men, with Zema and Maleta, were led by the guards through one of the doorways in the base of the great rock structure.

When the guards receded, the outer door, which was a heavy wooden slab fashioned from a portion of the main trunk of one of the great trees of the distant jungles, was closed and Ware and Stillwell began taking an inventory of their surroundings.

"We are in the prison pits of the arena," Zema explained, her brown eyes meeting the gray ones of Captain Ware with an expression that depicted a fear of her present environment. "Above this place rise the tiers of seats, where the people of the Corolans sit and watch the games. In other parts under the seats are stationed the cages of the great animals. Tomorrow, Zema and her sister will be sent into the arena. A certain number of beasts will be let loose upon her. If she is powerful enough to kill them with the weapon she is permitted to select, then she may go free. She may also have the privilege of naming a champion to defend her. The champion must enter the arena and combat the beasts and keep them away both from Zema and himself."

"Is the champion permitted to name his own weapons?" queried Ware.

"He has that privilege," replied Zema. "A spear, or a bow with arrows, is of little effect against a half dozen hungry beasts. They starve the creatures to increase their ferocity."

The door of the prison chamber was opened, and Vespar, who had been retained outside when the four white people were placed in the room beneath the arena, was led into the place.

"Since you refuse to fight for the black queen against the Morians," said the chief of the party of guards who had brought Vespar into the place, "then you, too, must take your chance in the arena."

When the guards had again receded from the chamber, Zema approached Vespar with the excited inquiry: "What of the Morians? I heard the guards speak of your refusing to fight against them."

Vespar folded his powerful arms across his chest.

"The Morians," he replied, "are planning a surprize attack upon the city of the Corolans. The spies of the Corolans returned to the city shortly after you were cast into prison and reported that the Morians have organized a great army and may be expected to come any time. Their great war chieftain, the mightiest spearman in this country, Carno, is leading the army in person. The Corolans are anxious to have every man who is a great fighter in their ranks. They offered Vespar many inducements if he would join the army of the Corolans and help in the fight against the army of Carno. Vespar refused the offer."

Zema turned to Ware at the conclusion of Vespar's announcement.

"May the Morians come hurriedly, and may their efforts be successful!" she said. "When Zema was queen of the Corolans, she was on friendly terms with the Morians. Since she was deposed, Mitsu has antagonized them and renounced the alliance that was formed between the Corolans and the Morians by Zema during her reign. If Zema could have reached the land of the Morians, she would have been welcomed."

"The opportunity may yet come," Ware encouraged her.

He noted a place in her apparel that had been torn when she fell and was dragged after the chariot in the streets of the city. Several bruises and scratches were apparent on her lower limbs.

"If they attack the city at once," she continued, "the danger from without will save us for a time from the perils of the arena."

For the remainder of the day the five engaged in conversation and discussed possible plans for making their escape. When evening came, several of the guards entered the chamber and served food to the captives.

"You may eat tonight," grinned the big chief of the guards, "but the animals of the arena will not be fed. Their time will be tomorrow, and their appetites must be made keen for the banquet in the arena."

5

THE night in the prison chamber was spent without interruption. Ware and Stillwell sought in vain for some avenue of escape, but were met everywhere by the obstruction of massive masonry. They finally abandoned their attempts after several hours of futile effort, spent in attempting to remove some of the stones from the walls by scraping aside the mortar.

"The people who fashioned this mortar were experts," announced Ware, pausing in his efforts. "The present race of Corolans never made the cement from which this mortar is fashioned, and they never built the city which they now occupy. The race was undoubtedly of ancient origin and has long ago passed away."

Stillwell agreed with Ware. "Our best chance is to use our weapons in the arena tomorrow," he said. "If the Corolans adhere to their rules, we can at least shoot our way through the menace of the animals, unless they turn loose too many of the beasts upon us at one time."

"We may as well abandon our attempts to escape from this prison," said Ware. "We had better all sleep in order to be on edge for the things that confront us tomorrow."

The five lay down on the floor of the prison and awoke only when the guards entered the place early the next morning with food for them.

"This will be your last time to taste of the fruits of the fields," volunteered the guard who brought the basket of food into the place. "The people will assemble before high sun for the games in the arena. Mitsu, the queen, has so ordered, for to wait until after high sun may see us fighting with the men of the Morians."

"May the Morians be successful!" exclaimed Zema, defiantly. "Long live their great leader, Carno! May he fight forever if he has Corolans to battle with!"

The guard peered for a moment angrily at Zema, then he shrugged his shoulders and started from the chamber. "The white queen may talk now," he said, "but her voice will soon be silent."

He walked from the place, and the others standing guard without the entrance closed the massive door.

Two hours later the door again opened.

"The white males will come with Agan to the arena," announced the guard who entered.

He was followed immediately by a dozen of the warriors of Agan.

Ware and Stillwell hesitated.

"Go with them," Zema advised. "You cannot help Zema and Maleta here. The chance may come later, for the Morians may strike. Go."

The two followed the leaders of the black guards from the place. Some fifty of the best warriors of the Corolans had been detailed to accompany Ware and Stillwell into the arena. The company marched about the great stone structure and finally arrived at the entryway into the upper part of the building.

Ware and Stillwell found themselves walking into an enormous stadium fashioned from stone and capable of seating ten thousand people. The seats for the spectators rose high above the arena center, which resembled a great pit of enormous circumference.

The two white men were commanded to sit down on the stone blocks close to the edge of the arena pit. Across from them was reserved a section of the arena seats for the black queen Mitsu. She entered shortly afterward with a guard of five hundred enormous black warriors. The assembled populace rose to their feet and roared a greeting to the black queen.

Mitsu bore a short spear in one of her hands, and at the sign of public greeting she raised the spear in token of recognition of the demonstration given by her subjects. Then she advanced to the seat reserved for her near the edge of the arena pit.

When the black queen had taken her place in the gallery of the arena, a dozen of the Morians who had been taken in a raid were led into the arena.

A short time later, a hundred teams of the wild horses with their fierce riders entered the arena and galloped fiercely about the outer edge of the pit. The eys of the riders were riveted on Mitsu.

At the time she deemed proper, she raised the spear in her right hand. The wild horses were turned from the course they had been following about the outer edge of the arena pit toward the captives, standing helpless in the center.

The rush of the madly galloping animals was irresistible. The men on the floor of the arena pit were knocked down and trampled to death beneath the blows from the hoofs of the wild steeds of the Corolans. Ware and Stillwell viewed the bloody tragedy with sensations of disgust.

When the captives had been trampled and retrampled by the wild horses, the black queen again raised her spear in token of satisfaction with the spectacle. The horses whisked from the arena pit under the direction

of their riders, and a group of warriors entered the pit and removed the trampled bodies from the place.

"We must remove the dead from the arena before we release the hungry animals upon other captives," explained one of the guards near Ware and Stillwell. "The greatest sensation comes next, one that the men of the Corolans will never forget. The white queen and her sister will be fed to the wild beasts, the great leopards and hungry lions."

As the guard ceased speaking, a wild shout issued from the crowd. Ware and Stillwell looked into the pit again and saw what had caused the commotion. Zema and Maleta had been led into the center of the arena by one of the chiefs of the guards. Agan, the chief general of the Corolans, had also entered the arena and accompanied the captives with their guards to the center of the great pit.

"The hour of vengeance has come!" announced Agan, raising a heavy spear in his right hand. "The white she who reigned over the men of the Corolans is to die. The sins committed by her white father against the men of the Corolans and their children in the years gone past will be visited upon the head of that ruler's daughter, the white queen Zema.

"Agan, the general of all the forces of the Corolans, awards to Zema the same chance as that given to any other captive to be offered in the arena. She may fight the beasts with either spear or bow, just as she may select, or if there is one in the arena who cares to fight in her behalf, he may do so and choose his weapons. Agan knows that there is none who is willing to die for the white queen in an effort to save her from the fangs of the leopards. He therefore commands Zema to name her weapons. The same rules are ordered for her sister, Maleta."

Zema opened her mouth to reply, when she was interrupted by the voice of Ware from the edge of the arena pit.

"The white males will battle with the animals in the arena for the lives of Zema, the white queen, and her sister, Maleta!" he called. "They will use only the bright sticks which they have always carried."

Agan walked toward the place where Mitsu, the black queen, was sitting. He conversed with her as she leaned far over the edge of the gallery toward him.

The general returned toward the center of the arena.

"Mitsu will grant the request of the white males," he replied. "They may use their sticks to fight the wild beasts from the white queen and her sister."

At the announcement of Agan, Ware, followed closely by Stillwell, let himself over the edge of the arena gallery and dropped into the pit. The two walked to the center of the arena and took their places by the sides of Zema and Maleta. Agan and his cohorts retreated toward the exit.

When they had left the arena, the door of the entrance was let down. On the opposite side of the arena Ware and Stillwell saw three doors lift in the side of the pit wall. In the mouth of one of the openings, Ware detected the great head of an enormous lion.

The beast came from its prison lair into the sunlight, and as it made its exit, a wild yell of excitement came from the spectators in the gallery. Another lion followed the first one, and then another. The three beasts gazed upward for a moment at the crowd in the gallery, and then, seeing the little group in the center of the arena, they began a slinking advance toward the four.

As the lions began their advance, Ware saw four great leopards emerge from one of the other openings, and

two more lions coming from the last of the three prison cages.

"They have released all the beasts upon us!" exclaimed Zema in terror. "Mitsu is giving us no chance at all!"

"Be calm," commanded Ware as he took aim at the foremost of the advancing beasts. "You take the one back of the big fellow, Stillwell," he ordered hurriedly.

The report of the rifles of Ware and Stillwell broke above the babble of human voices from the gallery of the arena. The men of the Corolans for the first time in their lives heard the report of firearms. A sudden hush fell upon the assemblage, as they saw the wind carry the smoke from the muzzle of the two weapons, and with surprize they saw two of the great lions rolling in their death agonies on the rock floor of the arena pit. The bullets of Ware and Stillwell had found their targets with deadly effect.

"Get the lions first!" cautioned Ware, as he turned his aim to another of the beasts that had halted for a moment, puzzled at what had happened to its two fellows.

Again his rifle spoke, and Stillwell's weapon followed. Two more of the lions began tearing in anger at the leopards and the other lion crowding around them. Ware poured another shot into the body of the second beast, which he had only badly wounded. Stillwell's aim had been more certain, and he had slain his animal with the single bullet.

The leopards retreated to the far side of the arena, leaving the one great lion for the time as the only antagonist. The men of the Corolans remained immovable in their seats. The fear of the power in the strange weapons carried by the white males held them spellbound.

At this juncture, several warriors suddenly entered the gallery of the arena.

"To the walls! To the walls!" they cried aloud. "The men of the Morians are approaching the city.

The utmost confusion reigned. A warrior of the Corolans in his excitement leapt into the arena pit. The great leopards were slinking near where he fell, and sprang upon the unfortunate man with terrible ferocity. His fellows listened for a moment, horrified at his screams for help, then abandoned him to his fate as they fled from the gallery to rally at the outer walls of the city to fight the approaching forces of Carno, the chieftain of the Morians.

6

WARE and Stillwell turned both of their rifles toward the last of the approaching lions, while the confusion following the announcement of the messengers regarding the approach of the Morians was at its height.

Mitsu, her countenance livid with anger, saw the last of the great beasts roll to the floor of the arena.

Shaking her spear defiantly at the four in the pit, Mitsu called out: "The vengeance of Mitsu will come later, when she has driven away the forces of the Morians. Until her return, the white queen and her males can starve in the arena."

The black queen left the gallery with her consort, and went toward the city walls to inspire her people in the coming conflict.

When the last of the lions rolled upon the arena floor in its death agonies, Ware turned to Zema and questioned: "How can we best escape from the pit of this arena?"

"Only through some of the exits. The only ones open now are those into the dens of the animals. We may be able to open the inner doors leading from the outside courts of the arena into the prison dens. In that manner, we can effect an exit from this place."

"Let's not delay to kill the leopards so long as they do not try to kill us," said Ware, leading the advance toward the openings in the side of the arena pit whence the lions and leopards had emerged.

The four rushed into the lion pit. Their disappearance was not observed by any of the Corolans, as the warriors had completely evacuated the place in their haste to reach the city walls and resist the advance of the Morians.

When they had entered the pit, Zema reached for the leather rope used in raising and lowering the door of the lion pit. She pulled at the cord, but it had been fastened in the gallery of the arena above. Ware noted her intentions, and whipping out his knife, he severed the strip of leather. The door dropped into position and shut much of the daylight out of the place.

When their eyes had become accustomed to the pervading darkness of the lion pit, the four sought the exit into the inner courts of the lower portion of the arena.

Zema, who had visited the lion pits in the arena during her reign as queen of the Corolans, was familiar with the place and soon located the wooden door. She sought the bar used from the outer court to hold the great door in place. She borrowed the knife of Ware, and inserted the point between the edge of the door and the side of the opening which it closed. The knife point struck the wooden bar holding the door in position. She began sawing at the bar. Ware, noting her action, relieved her, and he and Stillwell took turns until they had severed the holding bar in two. As the bar was cut away, the door of the pit was readily pushed aside.

The four stood in the outer court of the lower part of the arena. The place was temporarily deserted, as the entire force of the Corolans had been mobilized along the city walls.

"There is an underground exit from the palace of the queen," Zema informed, "that leads under the walls of the city into the outer plain. It is to that exit we must take our way. It may be left unguarded for the present, as it is known only to the royal house and the chief captains of the Corolans. If it is guarded, there will be but few in charge of the exit. The sticks that speak like thunder and slay lions can certainly destroy the warriors who may be in charge of keeping the secret exit. Zema learned of the exit when she was queen, and she has often left the city and entered it again in that manner."

"How far is it to the palace of Mitsu?" questioned Ware, grasping the bare arm of Zema as they walked to the entrance of the outer court of the lower section of the arena.

"But a little way," she said, lifting her eyes to meet his at the touch of his hand on her arm. A flush of color mounted to her cheeks as she answered.

The four left the arena and walked in the direction indicated by Zema. The way was deserted. All of the people of the Corolans were at the walls.

The grounds of the palace were approached, and Ware cast a curious glance at the great structure of stone before them.

"Our greatest danger lies before us," Zema explained. "We can best enter by boldly walking into the place. A few shots from your magic sticks will frighten away any opposition we may expect to encounter, until we can gain the underground courts of the palace and the entrance of the tunnel that leads into the plain beyond."

Following Zema's suggestion, the four walked toward the great entrance of the structure. Zema, through former acquaintance, released the mechanism that held the outer door in position. As it swung open, the four proceeded into an enormous court.

The place resembled a great conservatory, for a profusion of flowers were blooming.

Zema conducted them to a wide stone stairway, which led to the lower courts of the palace. They reached the bottom of the stairs and followed a long corridor which led past several entrances into the various underground courts. Zema finally halted as they approached another of the openings.

"The tunnel entrance begins from a point in the court before us," she announced.

Ware and Stillwell led the advance into the place. As they entered, their appearance was greeted by two powerful warriors who hurriedly began fitting arrows to their bowstrings. The first one fell before the accurate shooting of Stillwell, and the other went down at the crack of Ware's weapon before the arrow that he had fitted to the bowstring could be released. The arrow shot upward as the warrior's fingers released the half-drawn bow in his death struggles.

"Into the tunnel!" ordered Ware, rushing past the dying blacks. "If the Morians are the friends of Zema, then we may expect safety once we are within their lines!"

7

THE four rushed into the opening in the side of the underground chamber indicated by Zema as the beginning of the exit from the city to the plains.

They had proceeded a hundred yards along the underground corridor before the darkness became intense.

"It wasn't for nothing that I put a small flashlight in my pack," Stillwell observed; drawing one from a pocket of his trousers. "I had an idea that the thing might prove useful at night if we were obliged to travel through the jungle during the hours of darkness."

Stillwell assumed the lead, casting the light along the floor of the tunnel. The progress of the party continued unmolested, until finally they halted at the suggestion of Zema.

"It may be better to proceed in darkness from this point," she advised. "If we go forward with the light shining, our approach will be noted by the guards at the secret exit to the plain, if there are any there, and we may be ambushed and slain. But if we walk in darkness, even if our approach is detected, our enemies cannot determine until we emerge into the sunlight who we are. If they block the exit, you can destroy them as you did the two warriors in the room guarding the entrance into the lower courts of the palace."

Stillwell released the button of the flashlight and shut off the light. The four groped their way slowly forward in the darkness. As they proceeded, a faint ray of light began to loom in the distance.

"We are close to the exit upon the plain," Zema explained.

The advance continued until they emerged from the mouth of the tunnel on to the plain, a thousand feet from the walls of the city.

Scarcely had they emerged before their exit was detected by a company of more than a score of the warriors of the Corolans, who had been in hiding in an adjacent thicket, watching the activities of the distant army of the Morians and guarding the approach to the secret entrance under the walls of the city in case the Morians should discover it.

At sight of the four, they came rushing from their place of concealment, brandishing spears and fitting arrows to their bowstrings.

Ware and Stillwell opened fire at more than a hundred paces, and two of the leaders of the Corolans rolled to the sands at their feet. A repetition of the firing sent two more rolling, and the charge of the giant blacks

halted. A dozen of them discharged their bows, but the arrows fell short or passed wide of the four.

Ware and Stillwell again fired, and at the sight of two more of their number falling to the earth, the remainder of the company of Corolans turned and fled to the cover of the thicket from which they had emerged.

"We must hasten from this spot," Zema warned. "The death of the guards in the palace may have been discovered, and if such has happened we may expect pursuit through the tunnel at any moment. We must go to the army of Carno for protection."

At her suggestion the four hastened across the plain. Ware and Stillwell watched for another charge from the Corolans remaining in the thicket, but the latter apparently had no intention of again molesting the four at the risk of meeting a fate similar to that experienced by their fellows.

THE report of the rifles had carried across the plain to the ears of the army of Morians, who were planning their attack upon the city of the Corolans.

Carno, the powerful leader of the army, was holding a council of war with his chief captains, when the band of Corolans emerged from the thicket a half mile away and attacked the two men accompanying Zema and Maleta. The warriors of the Morians listened to the repeated volleys in wonderment. Then Carno spoke.

"The Corolans are fighting with a strange enemy," he spoke, "one that speaks with a voice like that of the storm. Carno beholds smoke like that which issues from the fire mountain in the land of the Morians. The new enemy kills with a strange stick."

The members of the war council watched the spectacle in the distance and saw the Corolans retreat to the thicket whence they had emerged. They saw the four, from whom the Corolans had fled, again start across the plain, taking a course that would bring them into the camp of the Morians.

"We will advance to meet the strange men," announced Carno.

Followed by the members of the council and a company of warriors who were hastily summoned, he led the advance across the plain to meet Ware and Stillwell with the two women. As the two parties approached, Carno recognized Zema.

"It is the white queen of the Corolans," he announced to the followers. "She has escaped from her bondage and is coming to join the Morians. Carno learned from a warrior of the Corolans whom he captured that Zema was no longer queen, but had been overthrown by Mitsu, the daughter of Agan. It was the forces of Mitsu who recently attacked the unprepared people of the Morians in their fields and carried away a score of them to furnish sport for their people in the arena of the Corolans. It is upon Mitsu and her people that Carno seeks vengeance."

The four white people encountered the advancing force of the Morians.

Carno raised his hand in salutation. Zema raised her hand in similar greeting. Then she explained briefly to Carno what had occurred since Mitsu's acquisition of the throne of the Corolans. She terminated her statement by telling of the tragic slaughter of the captive Morians in the arena under the hoofs of the fierce steeds of the wild horsemen.

Carno listened in silence to the story of Zema.

"Zema, the white queen, is welcome to the land of the Morians," he said. "Her white companions are welcome also. Carno for the present is going to make war against the Corolans to punish them for the depredations committed against his people. Zema, her sister and the white warriors may go, for Zema knows the way to the

land of the Morians, or she may stay with the army of Carno until after the Corolans are defeated."

"I do not wish to leave the army of the Morians," she said, "until I have done all to rescue one of my faithful followers who is still in the prison under the arena in the city of the Corolans. Vespar is the one to whom I refer. He refused to fight against the Morians when offered clemency for so doing, but chose to die in the arena with me. He is the last of those loyal to me."

"Vespar shall be saved if it is in the power of Carno to rescue him," replied the chieftain.

"We are going to offer our services to Carno," spoke Ware, indicating himself and Stillwell.

"Carno will be glad," replied the chief, "for he has heard the thunder of the mountain sticks which spit smoke. In the distance he saw the men of the Corolans fall, when the weapons of the white males spoke."

A commotion began in the army of the Morians a short distance away. Thousands of warriors rose to their feet from the position in which they had been sitting and formed long ranks across the plain with their spears thrust forward.

The men of the Corolans poured from the great gate of their city. An enormous cavalcade of wild horsemen preceded the footmen. Last from the city came the royal chariot of the black queen, accompanied by about fifty similar vehicles.

"Carno will have a difficult time stopping the charge of the chariots and the wild horsemen," remarked Stillwell. "The wild horsemen are the shock troops of the Corolans, and they will attempt to ride completely over the ranks of the Morians and break their lines to pieces."

Zema turned and replied to Stillwell.

"The warriors of the Corolans are fierce and successful fighters," she said. "The Morians are peace-loving and make war only to avenge a wrong or resist a foe. They have a mighty leader in Carno."

"The charge of the wild horsemen will be terrific," said Ware. "The army of the Morians has no horsemen with which to counter their advance."

"The Morians are brave," responded Zema.

"You and Maleta should hasten to their land," said Ware, turning to the white queen. "This will be a dangerous place for you both, and if the Morians are defeated, the Corolans will undoubtedly slaughter their army, and they would seek you out and slay you first if they caught sight of you back of the Morian lines."

"Zema will remain with the army of the Morians," the girl announced decidedly. "She can shoot a bow with as good aim as a black warrior, and so can Maleta."

"It is my wish that you leave the scene of the battle," Ware persisted. "I cannot fight so well if I know that you are in danger. You and Maleta retire to the border of the jungle, and Stillwell and I will join you after the fight is over."

"It is not Zema's custom to be commanded," she smiled at Ware, "but if she must, then she will do as the white warrior says. She will wait for his coming under the big trees along the jungle border."

With Maleta, she turned from the spot, and walked toward the distant line of trees and their attendant undergrowth. The two white men watched them until Zema turned and looked back toward them. They waved, and the girls returned their salutation of farewell, then proceeded on their way.

WARE and Stillwell walked toward the ranks of the men of the Morians who were awaiting the advance of the army of the Corolans across the plain.

The forces of footmcn of the latter were preceded by the long line of horsemen, and interspersed with the members of the cavalcade were the chariots. The vehicle of Mitsu alone remained in the rear of the army of the Corolans. In each of the great chariots were stationed a dozen of the best warriors of the enemy

The advancing force rapidly moved to where the Morians were awaiting their coming in silence. At a signal from Agan, the wild horsemen broke into a furious gallop toward Carno's waiting army.

As the yelling horsemen came charging across the plain, the warriors of Carno suddenly shifted their positions at the command of their general to meet the coming assault. They formed in three rows. The lower row of Morians rested the butts of their long lances against the ground, the shaft projecting some twelve feet before them. The second row assumed a similar attitude, while the men of the third rank laid their spears to the earth and fitted arrows to their bows.

"Carno is a wise general," exclaimed Ware to Stillwell, as he noted the manner in which the army of Morians shifted to receive the assault of the fast-riding horsemen. "They will impale the wild steeds upon their spear points. Nothing but the wildest kind of a beast can be urged against such a bristling front of sharp points as the Morians present."

"Right," agreed Stillwell, raising his rifle and sighting at one of the horses attached to one of the fastest war chariots.

Ware imitated his example, and the chargers aimed at went down mortally wounded, following the report of the rifles. The fallen animals tangled up the others hitched to the vehicle, and several of the beasts attached to the chariots went down in a tangled confusion. Three of the riders of the chariot-pullers were caught in the general tumble, while many of the warriors standing in the vehicles pitched headlong from their positions at the sudden checking of speed.

Ware shifted his aim to another of the fast moving chariots, and Stillwell also followed suit. The results were even more confusing than those obtained from the first shots. The chariot horse which fell before the bullet from Ware's rifle, overthrew two of his companions and overturned the chariot, pinning several of the occupying warriors under its weight. The uninjured horses regained their feet and ran away, dragging the overturned chariot and their dead companion for a distance, until they broke away from both and ran wildly toward the advancing lines of footmen of the Corolans.

A wild yell of delight arose from the ranks of the Morians as they witnessed the events on the plain.

The confusion occasioned by the attack of Ware and Stillwell against the chariots continued but did not deter the rapid advance of the horsemen. Onward they charged, leaving the tangled chariots with their horses and riders at the rear. As they neared the lines of the Morians, the wild riders who had been sitting astride their chargers assumed the upright position on the backs of their teams and drew back their javelins for the assault upon the waiting enemy.

The impact against the tiers of lances was terrific. A crash sounded along the entire line as lances were splintered against the solid bones of racing animals. Men and horses writhed in one seething mass. The bowmen of the Morians took a fearful toll of the wild horsemen, whose upright position as they approached the line had rendered them an easy target for the former's aim. Scores fell from the backs of their chargers, their vitals pierced completely through with arrows.

THE wild horsemen were unable to break the ranks of the Morians, and scores of their animals broke from the line and raced madly back toward the footmen who were rushing forward on the run.

The demounted horsemen fought furiously, but found the reformed ranks of the Morians incapable of penetration. For every Morian who was killed, a dozen of the horsemen found themselves impaled upon the spear points of the longer lances of their enemies.

They fell back and were swallowed up in the advancing ranks of foot spearmen. The black queen followed the footmen of her army, shrieking epithets against the enemy and shouting encouragement to her men.

The two armies crashed. The cunning generalship of Carno soon became apparent. At a sign from their leader the ranks of Morians swerved into a series of snakelike bends.

The Corolans mistook the varied movements for a retreat in different parts of the battle front. Their warriors followed into the loops formed by the ranks of the Morians who had retired a short distance.

When their enemies had followed into the loops in the line, the Morians at the sides of these pockets advanced toward one another with a murderous assault in an effort to close the necks of the various loops and trap hundreds of their opponents. Their efforts were successful in a number of places, and the slaughter of the Corolans thus trapped became terrible. At a signal from Carno, a general movement forward was begun.

Agan, who had been fighting valiantly in the ranks of his warriors, saw his men begin falling back and gave the signal for a general defensive retirement toward the city whence they had issued. The drivers of the royal chariot turned their horses and started to retire to the city in advance of the army.

Stillwell, who had been pumping bullets into the ranks of the Corolans, changed his aim and brought down one of the horses attached to the royal chariot. At the same time a bullet from Ware's gun picked off one of the three drivers. A wild runaway ensued which ended in the hurling of the black queen and her attendants from the chariot to the rock-strewn plain. She regained her feet, and with her attendants fled rapidly toward the city gate.

The retirement of Agan and his men toward the city became more rapid and the retreat soon developed into a rout. A handful of the best warriors rallied about Agan and obstructed the advance of the Morians toward the city, until the major portion of the remnant of the Corolans' army had entered. Agan and his men then retired, resisting the advance of the Morians until the gate was reached.

Carno ordered his men to withdraw from before the walls and reform their ranks in case of a surprize return attack from the Corolans, who had rallied to the walls to defend their city against further assault.

"This fracas is over for the time," Stillwell remarked as he rejoined Ware. "What shall we do now?"

"Join the two girls who are waiting for us at the edge of the jungle," said Ware; "then we can await further developments and action on the part of Carno, the Morian chieftain."

The two acted on Ware's suggestion, and started toward the point along the jungle border where the girls had indicated that they would await their coming after the battle.

They reached the place, but found no traces of the two. Zema and Maleta had disappeared.

[TO BE CONCLUDED]

A Frightful Tale of a Carnivorous Tree

THE PLANT-THING

By R. G. MACREADY

"THIS morning, Dick, I have something special for you," said Norris, city editor of the *Clarion*, as I approached his desk. "Interview with Professor Carter. You've heard of him, of course?"

"Certainly," I replied. "There are some rather weird stories concerning him."

"Exactly. And the latest of these stories is that Carter is conducting wanton vivisection on a prodigious scale. Holder, of the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, went over yesterday to investigate but was turned away at the gate. He laid the matter before me and I promised to try for an interview."

"Who started the vivisection story?"

"Several farmers, according to Holder. During the past four months they've sold Carter more than a hundred and fifty pigs, sheep and calves. It is well known that the professor is a scientist and not a stock-raiser; ergo he dissects the animals. . . . Can you start now?"

EN ROUTE to the Carter home I stopped at a hardware store and bought a thirty-foot length of rope. I foresaw difficulty in securing admittance to the professor's domain.

While driving, I brought to mind everything I knew about him. Four years ago he had bought the old Wells place, ten miles west of town. No sooner had it passed into his hands than he commenced the construction of a high board wall about the five acres, in the center of which the house was situated. The wall completed, he had moved in with a young lady, apparently his daughter, and eight Malay retainers. From that time on he and his household might have been dead for all the town saw of them. Our tradesmen made frequent trips to the place, but all their business was transacted with a Malay at the gate.

I drove rapidly and soon came in sight of my destination, which stood on a hill a half mile back from the road. Five minutes later I drew up before the gate, and in response to my hail the Malay appeared. He was a nice-looking young chap, dressed irreproachably, and spoke excellent English. I gave him my card and after a perfunctory glance at it he shook his head.

"I am sorry, sir, but it is the master's order that no one be admitted; and if you will pardon my saying so, least of all, representatives of the press."

"But my business is urgent. Serious charges have been laid against him, and it is possible that I may be the medium by which these charges are refuted."

The Malay's ivory teeth flashed in a smile.

"Thank you, sir, but I do not doubt that the master is able to take care of himself. Good day." This last was spoken in a tone of polite finality as he turned on his heel and walked away.

I entered my car and drove back to the highway. However, I was determined to get that interview by crook if not by hook; if I may say it, this

policy of mine had made me star reporter of the *Clarion's* staff. So I continued on down the road a few hundred yards and parked the car in the grove, where it was hidden well. I then took the coil of rope and made my way through the grove, which swung in a huge, narrowing semicircle up the hillside to the northwest corner of the Carter grounds. Arrived there under the fifteen-foot wall, I looked cautiously about me. So far as I could see, I was unobserved.

Just within the wall grew a great oak, one of whose major branches extended well outside. Quietly I flung one end of my rope over this limb, fashioned a running noose and drew the rope tight. Then slowly I wormed up the barrier.

From the top I gazed down upon a glory of wonderful, luxuriant flora. Stately ferns waved gently in the stirring air, beautiful flowering shrubs were interspersed here and there, while everywhere in the emerald grass, still wet with dew, nodded strange, exotic plants. Ever a lover of flowers, I forgot my mission as I looked. There came to my nostrils odors more fragrant and elusive than any I had heretofore known.

Suddenly I crouched low. On noiseless feet there passed beneath me a Malay, who had emerged without warning from a clump of ferns. He paused for a moment to brush an insect from a shrub, then disappeared from view in a thicket of high, green bushes.

Stealthily I slid to the ground and started toward the house, guiding myself by the observations I had made while on the wall. It was very likely, indeed, that the professor would kick me forth the instant he discovered my presence, but at any odds I should have something to tell the readers of the *Clarion*. Too, my audacity might count in my favor.

I HAD not gone far before I became conscious of an odor utterly different from the others. It was vague, but none the less disquieting. A feeling of loathing and dread pervaded me, a desire to clamber back over the wall and return to the city. The scent came again, much stronger, and I stood irresolute for several minutes, fighting down a sense of faintness as well as the longing to take flight. Then I advanced. In thirty seconds I came to the edge of a small, open space. At what I beheld, I put out a hand to a large fern to steady myself.

In the middle of that tiny clearing grew a thing which, even now, I shudder to describe. In form it was a gigantic tree, unspeakably stunted, fully twelve feet in diameter at the base and twenty-five feet high, tapering to a thickness of two feet at the top, from which depended *things*—I cannot call them leaves—for all the world resembling human ears. The whole was of a dead, drab color.

Dreadful as was the appearance of the thing, it was not that which made me reel as I looked. It was writhing and contorting, twisting itself into all manner of grotesque shapes. And *eyes* were boring into me, freezing the current of my blood.

Something rustled in the grass. I looked down and saw an immense creeper snaking toward me. For the first time I observed that it was joined to the trunk of that frightful thing, and so near the ground that I had not seen it for the tall grass. With a cry of horror I turned to run.

The creeper leapt at me and fastened around my middle with horrible force. I felt something in me give way. Frantically, I struck and tore at the ghastly, sinuous girdle that encircled me, undulating like the tentacle of an octopus. Fruitless, fruitless! I was drawn relentlessly forward.

I screamed. In the trunk of the thing there had appeared a mighty,

red-lipped orifice. The tentacle tightened and I was lifted off my feet toward that orifice.

A BEAUTIFUL girl was bending over me when I opened my eyes. She spoke, in a musical voice: "Please do not move. One of your ribs is broken."

A tall, gray-haired man who had been standing in the background now came to my bedside.

"I am glad that I came in time, my boy. Otherwise. . ."

He was Professor Carter. He presented the girl as his daughter Isobel.

Here one of the dark-skinned servants entered with some articles, which he deposited upon the center table.

"I am going to set your rib," announced the professor. And forthwith he took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves. When the job was finished to his satisfaction, I besought him to telephone to town for a taxicab.

"I shall certainly do no such thing," he said. "I insist that you remain our guest until you are recovered."

ISOBEL CARTER proved a wonderful nurse during the three days that followed. Indeed, the moment I had first looked into her deep black eyes, I knew that I loved her. I should have liked to remain in bed indefinitely with her to care for me, but was ashamed to do so. On the third morning I was moving cautiously about the house, she supporting my steps, although there was no need of it. The professor joined us.

No mention had been made of my weird adventure in the grounds, but at my request he now told me how I had been saved from the hideous creature.

"Your first cry reached my ears as I was walking toward the house and I immediately dashed in its direction. You were about to be swallowed when I arrived. I gave a sharp command, and my travesty released you."

"It obeyed your command?" I exclaimed incredulously.

"Precisely. It acknowledges me as its master. For six months, its period of life so far, I have superintended its growth and ministered to its needs.

"But *what* is it?"

A dreamy look came into Carter's eyes.

"For many years my brother scientists have sought for the so-called 'missing link' between man and ape. For my part, I dare to believe that I have discovered the 'link' between the vegetable and animal kingdoms. The creature out there, however, has, to my mind, not as yet passed the initial stage of its development. Whether it will attain the power of locomotion remains to be seen."

He paused, gazing out of the window, then continued.

"Twenty years ago, in Rhodesia, I chanced upon a carnivorous plant that gave me my clue. Since then I have labored unremittingly, crossing and recrossing my specimens, and you have seen the result. It has cost me three-fourths of my fortune, and countless trips to Asia and Africa."

He indicated a vast pile of manuscript on the table.

"The life history, precedents included, of my travesty. It will form the basis of a work which, I do not doubt, will revolutionize science."

Glancing at the clock, he rose to his feet.

"It is feeding time. Do you care to accompany me?"

I assented, and we went out.

THE thing remembered me, for the huge tentacle swept out in my direction, curling impotently in the empty air. I shuddered, and kept my distance.

A Malay appeared leading a calf. It was lowing piteously, for it had sensed danger.

The tentacle thrashed about, endeavoring to clutch the animal, which lunged back, wild with terror. The man wrapped his arms about it and hurled it forward. It was seized. A loud cracking of bones broke the momentary silence, and was followed by an agonized cry. Six feet from the ground the great orifice gaped wide. The calf disappeared. A fleeting second and the mouth closed. There was no sign of its location; the trunk was smooth and unbroken.

A nausea had gripped me during the scene. The professor and the Malay were apparently indifferent. They conversed briefly. Then, linking his arm in mine, Carter led the way back to the house. As we walked thither, I broached the subject of departure. He would not hear of it, insisting that I stay until Saturday.

While in his study I had noticed an elephant-gun in a corner. I asked him whether he had done any big-game hunting.

"That gun? Tala had me get it. He asserted that he could foretell tragedy in connection with the creature; that a day would come when I should lose control of it. I scouted the idea, but to humor him purchased the weapon, which stands there loaded in the event need of it arises. Still, it would assuredly break my heart if anything necessitated the slaying of my travesty."

At the door of his study he excused himself and went in. Isobel carried me off to the veranda hammock. As we talked, it was inevitable that the subject of the plant-thing should come up, and a shadow crossed her face as we discussed it.

"Tala says that Father does not know how dangerous it is. He is right. But Father will not listen."

THE next morning I again went with Professor Carter to the little clearing.

It was a sheep this time. The poor beast was paralyzed with fright, and stood passive, waiting for death.

The tentacle shot forth, wavered a second, then encircled, not the sheep, but Professor Carter, who seemed stricken by surprize.

He ripped out an order: "Off!"

The tentacle only tightened. Agony settled upon Carter's face. I sprang forward to drag him back. The tentacle released its hold for one lightning flash, then seized us both. We strove in vain against the viselike cable. The Malay, with a wild cry, turned and rushed down the path, shouting as he ran.

The thing was playing with us as a cat plays with mice it has caught. It could have crushed us effortlessly, but the tentacle tightened by degrees. In spite of all we could do, we felt that we were being dragged forward to where the frightful red mouth yawned. Our eyes bulged, and I could see that Carter's face was taking on a greenish tinge. I extended my free arm and our hands clasped. Then there was the roar of a gun at close quarters and the tentacle gave a spasmodic jerk that flung us twenty feet. We rose, staggering.

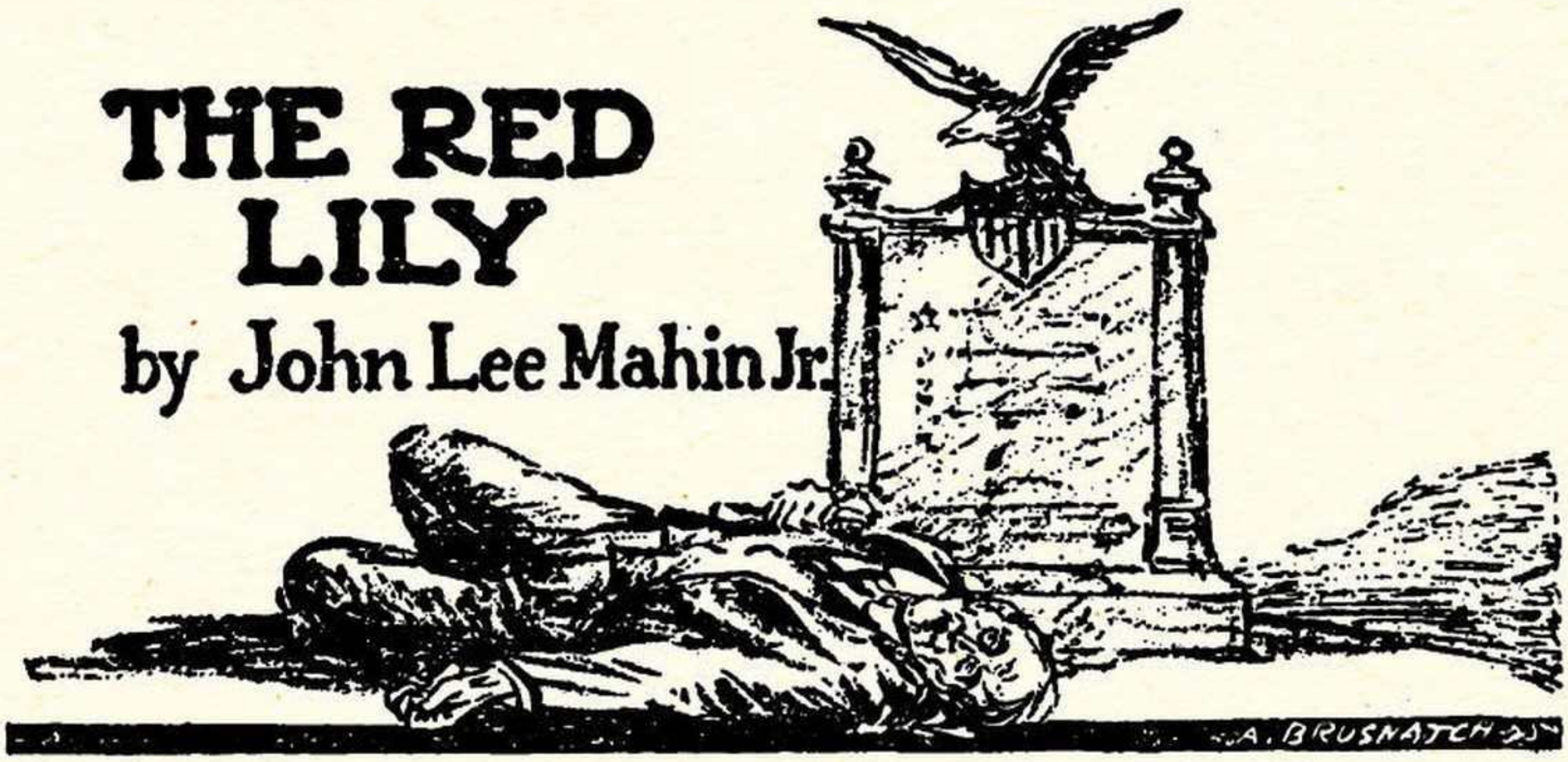
Tala stood by, the smoking elephant-gun in his hands, staring at the thing. Following his eyes we discerned a large, ragged hole in its trunk, from which a stream of *blood* was flowing and forming a great pool on the ground.

Even as we looked, the travesty went into the death-agonies. And as it writhed it emitted a sound that forever haunts me. Presently its struggles ceased. The professor buried his face in his hands.

I had not noticed Isobel's presence. Now I turned and saw her beside me, gazing with horror-filled eyes at the terrible drooping form. I took her away from that tragic spot, for I knew that Professor Carter wished to be alone.

THE RED LILY

by John Lee Mahin Jr.



NOBODY in Birndale ever knew much about old Jim Creighton. Moreover, none of the inhabitants ever cared a great deal about knowing. "That was the way you felt about him," they said. Perhaps, when his stoop-shouldered figure, accompanied by that of his ten-year-old son, first appeared in the community and took possession of the ramshackle cottage on the outskirts of the town, some degree of interest had been aroused, but that was a long time ago, before the war even.

Like many other more remote sections of the country, Birndale had rather forgotten the war. After the passing of the final fervor, and the many pattings on the back with which the town had greeted the return of its khaki-clad representatives in the great struggle, the employers of Birndale had given "the boys" back their old jobs, and then promptly forgotten. "The war was a ghastly dream," came the words from Birndale's pulpits; "it should remain as such—a dream." So, as a child forgets a nightmare by creeping into the shelter of the parental bed, the inhabitants of Birndale dismissed the war with a convenient and philosophic shrug of their shoulders.

Thus everybody put the war from his mind—that is, everybody except old Jim Creighton.

There were twenty-nine names on Birndale's honor roll, which had been erected in the square at the center of the town. There was one gold star. It found its place beside the name "James Creighton, Jr."

The unveiling of the "tablet" (it was nothing more than a blue and white, gilt-edged, wooden structure, topped by a screaming eagle over the fitting emblem of an American shield in appropriate colors) was a momentous occasion. Speeches by the board of selectmen and a visiting colonel of the National Guard, acquired for the purpose, sang the praises of Birndale's heroes, and, with the echoes of the armistice bells still in its ears, the town rewelcomed "her boys." A holiday was declared; "the boys" paraded.

Of course, there was a solemn note to the affair. Old Jim Creighton, he who hitherto had scarcely been noticed, was called to the platform and publicly presented with the town's sympathies. "Poor old Jim—his boy didn't come back, you know." Women wept silently; men shook his hand grimly and told him he "ought

to be proud just the same." A black-leafed wreath was put at the base of the honor roll. Through it all, old Jim Creighton stood like a man in a trance; his slight frame seemed to have become more stooped than ever; the haggard expression about his eyes and the bitterness of his mouth sought to solve the bewildering change of attitude that was suddenly shown him.

They had never addressed him as "Good old Jim" before; it took him off his feet. They had never before referred to his son as anything but "Creighton's boy" or "that good-for-nothing young Jim Creighton." Oh, yes! He'd heard them. He remembered when the school board had come in protest against his not making Jim go to school; he was "held responsible" then. They had come out to the ramshackle cottage and warned him of the boy's "bad habits"; he had been frequenting the pool parlors and making undesirable companions of the rowdies in Hudson Falls, the neighboring mill town, they told him. They had classed them both as a "nuisance", he remembered, him and this boy they were now mourning with their praises, his boy, his Jim, red, big red. . . ."

And suddenly something snapped in old Jim Creighton's brain. All at once he commenced to shout in incoherent ravings; with a wild sweep of his arms he pushed his way from the platform and through the gathered crowd, laughing a fanatical, mocking laugh, terrible to hear. An eruption of obscenities, a tirade against their sympathy so strange to him, suddenly broke forth from his lips and denounced their hypocrisy, and terminated by telling them that "every damned one of them could go to hell!"

Thus passed the after-the-war fever in Birndale. The erection of the town's honor roll, which had been first announced by the committee as being of "temporary form", gradually became to be considered as permanent. Plans for the granite tablet with the proposed bust of James Creighton, Jr., surmounting it, slowly dropped from discussion; the Birndale Honor Roll Committee, as though by a tacitly mutual agreement, ceased to convene. The germ of the rather pleasant sentiment of sorrow, by which the patriotism of the citizens and their feeling for the fitness of things had been wont to build a memorial for their single dead hero, had been rudely destroyed through the weird and volcanic display of fury exhibited by that hero's own father. Birndale could not understand it, that was all. Old Jim Creighton was termed "queer—through the boy's death, you know." It was much the easiest way.

Yes, the old man was queer all right. It was not long before people passing along the road that led past the tumbled-down cottage began to notice strange developments. Old Jim was building something, they said. Heavy sheets of plate glass, wooden frames, steel rods and piping littered the surrounding ground about his house, and two workmen (from Hudson Falls it became known) were seen daily about the Creighton place, working under the direction of old Jim. Birndale did not waste any time solving the new mystery. Somebody inquired of one of the workmen "just what was going on."

"Hanged if I kin figger out jest what the old gazabo thinks he's doin'," was the reply. "First he sez it's gonna be a greenhouse, quite natural like, an' then a funny look comes into his eye an' he mumbles around a bit. 'Redhouse,' he sez, 'red as blood.' Once he give Hank an' me quite a start, I'll tell the world. He sez kinda weird like, 'They're going to be red, red lilies, each one a dead man's soul.' Somethin' like that, anyways."

Then, as though imparting a new idea, the workman pointed to his head and added: "Between you an' me, buddy, I think the old goofer's nutty, but anyhow Hank an' me gets our pay reg'lar."

BIRNDALE was more mystified than ever, to say the least. The workman's story only served to whet their already insatiable curiosity to a greater desire for more complete knowledge. The old man was rapidly becoming an enigma to them. He showed himself in town only once a week now, when he walked into Lem Stokes' grocery to fill a large sack with provisions and carry them back to the ramshackle cottage. Lem said he never uttered a word during the transaction, only laid down a piece of paper on the counter with everything he wanted written out on it, paid over the money and left.

It was on one of these weekly expeditions into town that he was seen to enter the bank, and it was not long after he had left the cashier's wicket that Birndale was thoroughly acquainted with what had happened. Creighton had drawn out all his money! It was not a startling sum, according to the report from the bank —three or four thousand dollars—but it had closed his account. What was he going to do with it? Would a greenhouse cost that much? Nobody in Birndale knew just exactly how much a greenhouse would cost. If there were to be lilies, there would necessarily have to be bulbs, of course. It was suggested that the old man ought to be placed in an asylum—much the best thing, you know. Lilies, what an idiotic idea! Really, the old man was crazy. What did old Jim Creighton know about botany, anyhow? Red lilies, of all things! That meant grafting, expert care, experiments, and all that sort of thing. The board of health ought to do something.

But for some unexplainable reason nobody did anything toward investigating the sanity of old Jim Creighton's mind. Perhaps, a certain irresistible curiosity to await the result of his strange actions restrained them; perhaps it was a sense of pity —the old man seemed harmless enough. Nevertheless, there was something else.

People were afraid of him.

That was it; even though they would not admit their fear to one another, the whole town was afraid of him. He was not spoken of tolerantly as "old Jim Creighton" any more. Two years had evoked a sinister metamorphosis in him. Gradually it had become just "Creighton", uttered quickly, and accompanied by a furtive glance of the speaker to see if by any chance the old man was standing behind him. It was uncanny; it gave one the creeps. Some persons swore they had looked from their windows late at night and seen his stoop-shouldered figure shuffling past—shuffling, yet not making a sound. Their timidity was the object of many scoffings. What would the old simpleton be doing in town in the middle of the night? Yet those who laughed had found themselves glancing from their windows the next night, and one or two did not laugh when the subject was mentioned again. Evidently, Creighton's nocturnal prowlings were a little more than mere rumor.

Moreover, his face, the indefinable expression of fierceness, repelled any sort of eye-to-eye glance. His eyes had become like those of a ferret, cunning, quick and shiftily sly, sunk deep in their sockets and surrounded by weazened skin and sallow cheeks. His thin-lipped mouth sneered incessantly, portraying a continual hatred; and when he walked, his unshaven, gray-bearded chin seemed a pendulum for his ratlike head, swinging it from side to side like that of a caged animal.

Thus had old Jim Creighton evolved from his chrysalis of obscurity, from the former tolerance with which Birndale had always considered him, into a maniacal, sinister being that incited terror in the community. Children, instead of following him with tittering fascination and half-uttered taunts as had been their custom hitherto, now fled in the opposite direction when his approach became known. No longer were curs set upon him at the command of a youthful "sic 'em"; they slunk off with their tails between their legs, whining. Even if so ordered, it is doubtful if the dogs would have complied. Their animal sense told them they would encounter a superior ferociousness, a silent, more animalistic savageness than their canine anger could assimilate.

And this man, this sinisterly distorted figure of a man, was growing lilies, large, beautiful white lilies which one glimpsed through the long sheets of plate glass. For Creighton's greenhouse had been finished since the preceding autumn, and passers-by could discern through its panes, rendered almost opaque by the warm air circulating inside, the many rows of snow-white blossoms, opening up their petals to the rays of the spring sun. Among them was always Creighton, a hazy form, working, watering, digging and planting. Yet, as far as any one was able to discover, none of the blossoms had ever displayed the slightest shade of red.

Once Lem Stokes summoned his nerve when Creighton came into the grocery on one of his weekly visits. Lem always did possess a lot of nerve; he seemed about the only person in Birndale who was not actually wary of Creighton, probably because he was the only one that ever transacted any business with him.

"How're the lilies doing, Ji—— er —Mr. Creighton?"

Even then Lem wished he had held his tongue. He suddenly remembered that this was probably the first time Creighton had been spoken to in Birndale for almost two years. As though to retrieve his mistake, he added: "Any red ones yet?"

That sounded worse, Lem thought. He was a fool to have said a thing. He did not expect a reply. But he got one.

"Eh? What's that, Mr. Stokes?"

The voice was oily, craftily slow.

"What's that again, Mr. Stokes? Red ones?"

Creighton's eyes gleamed suddenly from under the bushy brows, a peculiar, gurgling chuckle in his throat. Lem described it afterward as the manner in which the devil might laugh.

"Red ones?" the slow words continued. "Oh, yes, they'll be red ones all right! Big red ones! And the biggest ones'll drip, Mr. Stokes—you'll see 'em, hear 'em drip—big red drops, Mr. Stokes."

And then he went out muttering: "Red, red—they'll be red, all right—red, big red. . . ."

It was about this period when people began wondering just how Creighton managed to survive. Where was his income? The building of the greenhouse must have easily taken up the small capital which he had drawn from the bank, they argued, along with the bulbs, the special boxes and soil. They remembered he used to work on odd jobs around the town a long time ago, raking lawns, weeding gardens and that sort of thing, but he had stopped that. They knew no one employed him any more.

Then, one day, he was seen boarding a train at the station; it was a through express, too, a train that never stopped at Birndale except on special occasion, and that was only when somebody got off or on who was

either a railroad official or held a special permit from the authorities.

Birndale did not realize that this through express had been ordered to stop at its station for just one reason: to allow old Jim Creighton to get on board.

As he was not seen buying a ticket, no one knew his destination. It was only known that he did not return that day, nor the next, nor even the next. He was gone from Birndale for about a week. When he returned, he carried two large boxes—bulbs they were; the tufts of green stem, already sprouted, were protruding from one of the corners.

These trips by Creighton gradually increased in number, coming at long and irregular intervals. That year, in fact, he was away from Birndale four times, his absence at each period lasting about a week, his leaving always by boarding the through express, and his returning from each trip with a quantity of bulbs and other paraphernalia for his greenhouse. Once he returned wearing a new suit, an ill-fitting garment which augmented even more his stooped figure. Birndale saw but one solution for the mysterious journeys: they embodied a source of income for old Creighton. But how?

If they had taken the trouble of following him on one of these trips, they would have learned how. It would have been a shock to them, a revolting shock.

The train bore Creighton southward, along the banks of the long, broad river, rushing him toward the metropolis at its mouth. But the metropolis was not his destination, not before other things had been done. When about an hour's run from the great city, the train came to a panting stop with a grinding of brakes, only long enough to allow a single passenger to get off. That passenger was always Creighton, and his leaving the train always occurred in the darkness of the early morning, but an hour or so before dawn. There followed an automobile ride through silent streets, with no word spoken between the driver and the other occupant. The car finally passed through a heavily barred gate, which swung slowly open at its approach, and came to a standstill within high surrounding granite walls; a muffled word or two with uniformed men, the jangling of keys and the opening of more iron gates until a small room was reached —and then Creighton started to work. . . . .

Creighton's work on these occasions never took up a great deal of time; in fact, it was only a matter of a few seconds. It merely consisted in his closing an electric circuit by pushing down the black handle of a copper switch which was on the wall of the small room. And just as Creighton pushed down that switch, dawn broke outside, dispelling the darkness of the night.

And the instant that Creighton's hand pressed the two copper bars to their resting place, a man died in an adjoining room—a human soul left its mortal body, sent on its unknown flight by the force of many thousands of volts. . . . .

That was how old Jim Creighton earned money to buy his lily bulbs, to supply his greenhouse, and to sustain his weazened body. It is rather difficult to believe that he killed men to live, that the beautiful, white blossoms were reared and nourished because the hearts of sweating men ceased beating; but it was true. Through several centuries, the sharp ax wielded over the head on the block had evolved into the closing of a small electric switch by the hand of a stoop-shouldered old man with demon countenance. Well, somebody had to do it. Why not Creighton? Besides, he was paid for it, paid handsomely. A person ought to be paid well for taking another person's life, shouldn't he?

For five years old Jim Creighton closed copper switches at the break of dawn in that little room in the state penitentiary. For five years, whenever his hand was called, it grasped the black handle and sent the death-dealing voltage on its way. Many men, with heads shaved, arms and legs pinioned to the sides of the last chair they would ever occupy, sat in an agony of suspense, until Creighton's hand twisted their bodies into unconsciousness. The same morning invariably found the old executioner in the great city a little to the south, rummaging about the seed stores and the florists, asking questions, frequenting the library for botanical data. The warden had given him the usual amount—he must grow a red lily—they had all been so white—for five long years now. . . .

Then one day, a biting March wind driving a thick rain of sleet through the somberness of the late afternoon, the shrill screech of the locomotive's whistle sounded on the bend of track above Birndale. The through express rumbled to a stop before the station, and its accustomed passenger climbed into the end car.

As the train pounded on again, down the long gray breadth of river, the sleet hurled itself against the car windows with redoubled fury, voicing tattoo of small, ticking noises. The red plush seat on which Creighton was sitting was damp. A pungent odor of wet wood and steam permeated the car, arising from the leaky radiator that sputtered protestingly at one end. Creighton was the only occupant.

The mask of cold, glittering insanity that usually covered his shriveled features seemed unsettled. Something was wrong. The distorted brain throbbed in its attempt to fathom what was the matter with him. At times the troubled expression of a child grappling with something it does not understand invaded his countenance, making it appear almost foolish in its mixed portrayal. The old man was breaking, although his cramped mind refused to let him see it. Creighton's wasted body, his diseased brain, were falling under an inevitable strain that was slowly eating its path, dragging him down.

A brakeman opened the door at the end of the car, allowing the rush of air to whisk up a crumpled newspaper from the floor and whirl it across Creighton's knees. With a muttered curse, he flung the paper from him. He had not looked at a newspaper since the day he saw his boy's name on the casualty list.

There was another reason why Creighton never read a newspaper, resulting from his journeys down the river valley to that "special stop." Somewhat contrary to the cruel cunning of his insanity, he entertained a morbid fear of seeing the printed name of any man he was going to put to death or of anyone whose lime-covered corpse he knew lay lifeless as the result of his pulling down that black-handled copper switch. Funny sentiments for an executioner, even a lunatic, weren't they?

Hours passed. They seemed minutes to Creighton. None of the other trips had ever troubled him before. It was not the voice of a conscience, long silenced; a maniac is never bothered with a conscience. It was more a vague feeling of impending disaster; his head pained frightfully, little throbbing stabs shooting through his temples. If he could only grow a red lily—that was the trouble! He must grow a red lily soon, or something would happen. He'd go insane if he didn't grow a red lily. He wouldn't go to the city this time, he decided. He'd go right back to his greenhouse. Perhaps they'd be red, dripping red, when he saw them again. A grimacing smirk, by which the old man portrayed a contented happiness at his decision, came over his features. Yes,

they'd be red this time; he was sure of it. Red!

The little room with the copper switch seemed smaller than usual. Creighton had difficulty in breathing; there was not enough air. His fingers trembled violently as they wrapped themselves around the black handle. There was extra current on; it crackled across the closing gap. He thought he heard some one cry out. . . . .

THE events of the next night in Birndale have long been a matter of horrified discussion in the town. It was a horrible thing, you know, to hear Creighton's wild shouts and fanatical ravings, reverberating through the streets, cutting the darkness. They grew louder as the night wore on. Now and then he screamed, a high-pitched, blood-curdling yell, that set people shivering at their windows. The peculiar part of it was that no one saw him; they could only hear those fiendish cries, as he raved from one street to another. By their sound he seemed to be walking in a wide circumference, which gradually narrowed in radius, always toward the center of town.

A posse was routed from their beds to hunt him down and overpower him, but they could not find him. Follow as they would in the wake of his screams, he always eluded them. Nobody in Birndale slept that night. Children cowered terrified in the arms of equally frightened fathers and mothers. The screams grew in volume, echoing and re-echoing, until just before dawn, when they ceased with the muffled report of a shot.

They found him dead in the morning, stretched out beneath the weather-beaten honor roll in the center of the square, a small, shriveled, lifeless form, a bullet through his head, put there by the revolver which lay a little way from his gnarled hand. Tightly clutched in his other hand was the torn and crumpled section of a newspaper. When they pried it from the cold fingers, viselike in their grip of death, they read of the execution of a certain well-known criminal and murderer, that had taken place the preceding morning, a certain John "Knife" Dolan.

But the face in the picture above the headlines was not that of John "Knife" Dolan—they who lived in Birndale knew that—they remembered. The picture showed the unmistakable features of James Creighton, Jr.—young Jim Creighton, whose gold-starred name was on the tablet above them. Evidently he had not fallen in France. Perhaps, with memory gone from shell-shock, he had returned to find no employment—an old story, no employment but crime and murder. Perhaps he had drifted to the underworld as Birndale always said he would, naturally, and with a sane mind. Nobody ever knew.

But old Jim Creighton had grown a red lily.

It lay crushed under one weazened arm, and the crimson flow from the gray temple dripped down upon its petals, once the whiteness of virgin snow, but now dyed a deep red—a deep, dripping red.

The UNNAMABLE

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

Author of "The Festival," "The Music of Erich Zann," etc.

WE WERE sitting on a dilapidated seventeenth-century tomb in the late afternoon of an autumn day at the old burying ground in Arkham, and speculating about the unnamable. Looking toward the giant willow in the center of the cemetery, whose trunk has nearly engulfed an ancient, illegible slab, I had made a fantastic remark about the spectral and unmentionable nourishment which the colossal roots must be sucking in from that hoary, charnel earth; when my friend chided me for such nonsense and told me that since no interments had occurred there for over a century, nothing could possibly exist to nourish the tree in other than an ordinary manner. Besides, he added, my constant talk about "unnamable" and "unmentionable" things was a very puerile device, quite in keeping with my lowly standing as an author. I was too fond of ending my stories with sights or sounds which paralyzed my heroes' faculties and left them without courage, words, or associations to tell what they had experienced. We know things, he said, only through our five senses or our religious intuitions; wherefore it is quite impossible to refer to any object or spectacle which cannot be clearly depicted by the solid definitions of fact or the correct doctrines of theology—preferably those of the Congregationalists, with whatever modifications tradition and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle may supply.

With this friend, Joel Manton, I had often languidly disputed. He was principal of the East High School, born and bred in Boston and sharing New England's self-satisfied deafness to the delicate overtones of life. It was his view that only our normal, objective experiences possess any esthetic significance, and that it is the province of the artist not so much to rouse strong emotion by action, ecstasy, and astonishment, as to maintain a placid interest and appreciation by accurate, detailed transcripts of every-day affairs. Especially did he object to my preoccupation with the mystical and the unexplained; for although believing in the supernatural much more fully than I, he would not admit that it is sufficiently commonplace for literary treatment. That a mind can find its greatest pleasure in escapes from the daily treadmill, and in original and dramatic re-combinations of images usually thrown by habit and fatigue into the hackneyed patterns of actual existence, was something virtually incredible to his clear, practical, and logical intellect. With him all things and feelings had fixed dimensions, properties, causes, and effects; and although he vaguely knew that the mind sometimes holds visions and sensations of far less geometrical, classifiable, and workable nature, he believed himself justified in drawing an arbitrary line and ruling out of court all that cannot be experienced and understood by the average citizen. Besides, he was almost sure that nothing can be really "unnamable". It didn't sound sensible to him.

Though I well realized the futility of imaginative and metaphysical arguments against the complacency

of an orthodox sun-dweller, something in the scene of this afternoon colloquy moved me to more than usual contentiousness. The crumbling slate slabs, the patriarchal trees, and the centuried gambrel roofs of the witch-haunted old town that stretched around, all combined to rouse my spirit in defense of my work; and I was soon carrying my thrusts into the enemy's own country. It was not, indeed, difficult to begin a counter-attack, for I knew that Joel Manton actually half clung to many old-wives' superstitions which sophisticated people had long outgrown; beliefs in the appearance of dying persons at distant places, and in the impressions left by old faces on the windows through which they have gazed all their lives. To credit these whisperings of rural grandmothers, I now insisted, argued a faith in the existence of spectral substances on the earth apart from and subsequent to their material counterparts. It argued a capability of believing in phenomena beyond all normal notions; for if a dead man can transmit his visible or tangible image half across the world, or down the stretch of the centuries, how can it be absurd to suppose that deserted houses are full of queer sentient things, or that old graveyards teem with the terrible, unbodied intelligence of generations? And since spirit, in order to cause all the manifestations attributed to it, cannot be limited by any of the laws of matter; why is it extravagant to imagine psychically living dead things in shapes—or absences of shapes—which must for human spectators be utterly and appallingly "unnamable"? "Common sense" in reflecting on these subjects, I assured my friend with some warmth, is merely a stupid absence of imagination and mental flexibility.

TWILIGHT had now approached, but neither of us felt any wish to cease speaking. Manton seemed unimpressed by my arguments, and eager to refute them, having that confidence in his own opinions which had doubtless caused his success as a teacher; whilst I was too sure of my ground to fear defeat. The dusk fell, and lights faintly gleamed in some of the distant windows, but we did not move. Our seat on the tomb was very comfortable, and I knew that my prosaic friend would not mind the cavernous rift in the ancient, root-disturbed brickwork close behind us, or the utter blackness of the spot brought by the intervention of a tottering, deserted seventeenth-century house between us and the nearest lighted road. There in the dark, upon that riven tomb by the deserted house, we talked on about the "unnamable", and after my friend had finished his scoffing I told him of the awful evidence behind the story at which he had scoffed the most.

My tale had been called "The Attic Window", and appeared in the January, 1922, issue of *Whispers*. In a good many places, especially the South and the Pacific coast, they took the magazines off the stands at the complaints of silly milksops; but New England didn't get the thrill and merely shrugged its shoulders at my extravagance. The thing, it was averred, was biologically impossible to start with; merely another of those crazy country mutterings which Cotton Mather had been gullible enough to dump into his chaotic "Magnalia Christi Americana", and so poorly authenticated that even he had not ventured to name the locality where the horror occurred. And as to the way I amplified the bare jotting of the old mystic—that was quite impossible, and characteristic of a flighty and notional scribbler! Mather had

indeed told of the thing as being born, but nobody but a cheap sensationalist would think of having it grow up, look into people's windows at night, and be hidden in the attic of a house, in flesh and in spirit, till someone saw it at the window centuries later and couldn't describe what it was that turned his hair gray. All this was flagrant trashiness, and my friend Manton was not slow to insist on that fact. Then I told him what I had found in an old diary kept between 1706 and 1723, unearthed among family papers not a mile from where we were sitting; that, and the certain reality of the scars on my ancestor's chest and back which the diary described. I told him, too, of the fears of others in that region, and how they were whispered down for generations; and how no mythical madness came to the boy who in 1793 entered an abandoned house to examine certain traces suspected to be there.

It had been an eldritch thing—no wonder sensitive students shudder at the Puritan age in Massachusetts. So little is known of what went on beneath the surface—so little, yet such a ghastly festering as it bubbles up putrescently in occasional ghoulish glimpses. The witchcraft terror is a horrible ray of light on what was stewing in men's crushed brains, but even that is a trifle. There was no beauty; no freedom—we can see that from the architectural and household remains, and the poisonous sermons of the cramped divines. And inside that rusted iron straitjacket lurked gibbering hideousness, perversion, and diabolism. Here, truly, was the apotheosis of the unnamable.

COTTON MATHER, in that demoniac sixth book which no one should read after dark, minced no words as he flung forth his anathema. Stern as a Jewish prophet, and laconically unamazed as none since his day could be, he told of the beast that had brought forth what was more than beast but less than man—the thing with the blemished eye—and of the screaming drunken wretch that they hanged for having such an eye. This much he baldly told, yet without a hint of what came after. Perhaps he did not know, or perhaps he knew and did not dare to tell. Others knew, but did not dare to tell—there is no public hint of why they whispered about the lock on the door to the attic stairs in the house of a childless, broken, embittered old man who had put up a blank slate slab by an avoided grave, although one may trace enough evasive legends to curdle the thinnest blood.

It is all in that ancestral diary I found; all the hushed innuendoes and furtive tales of things with a blemished eye seen at windows in the night or in deserted meadows near the woods. Something had caught my ancestor on a dark valley road, leaving him with marks of horns on his chest and of apelike claws on his back; and when they looked for prints in the trampled dust they found the mixed marks of split hooves and vaguely anthropoid paws. Once a post-rider said he saw an old man chasing and calling to a frightful loping, nameless thing on Meadow Hill in the thinly moonlit hours before dawn, and many believed him. Certainly, there was strange talk one night in 1710 when the childless, broken old man was buried in the crypt behind his own house in sight of the blank slate slab. They never unlocked that attic door, but left the whole house as it was, dreaded and deserted. When noises came from it, they whispered and shivered; and hoped that the lock on that attic door was strong. Then they stopped hoping when the horror occurred at the parsonage, leaving not a soul alive or

in one piece. With the years the legends take on a spectral character—I suppose the thing, if it was a living thing, must have died. The memory had lingered hideously—all the more hideous because it was so secret.

DURING this narration my friend Manton had become very silent, and I saw that my words had impressed him. He did not laugh as I paused, but asked quite seriously about the boy who went mad in 1793, and who had presumably been the hero of my fiction. I told him why the boy had gone to that shunned, deserted house, and remarked that he ought to be interested, since he believed that windows retained latent images of those who had sat at them. The boy had gone to look at the windows of that horrible attic, because of tales of things seen behind them, and had come back screaming maniacally.

Manton remained thoughtful as I said this, but gradually reverted to his analytical mood. He granted for the sake of argument that some unnatural monster had really existed, but reminded me that even the most morbid perversion of nature need not be *unnamable* or scientifically indescribable. I admired his clearness and persistence, and added some further revelations I had collected among the old people. Those later spectral legends, I made plain, related to monstrous apparitions more frightful than anything organic could be; apparitions of gigantic bestial forms sometimes visible and sometimes only tangible, which floated about on moonless nights and haunted the old house, the crypt behind it, and the grave where a sapling had sprouted beside an illegible slab. Whether or not such apparitions had ever gored or smothered people to death, as told in uncorroborated traditions, they had produced a strong and consistent impression; and were yet darkly feared by very aged natives, though largely forgotten by the last two generations —perhaps dying for lack of being thought about. Moreover, so far as esthetic theory was involved, if the psychic emanations of human creatures be grotesque distortions, what coherent representation could express or portray so gibbous and infamous a nebulosity as the specter of a malign, chaotic perversion, itself a morbid blasphemy against nature? Molded by the dead brain of a hybrid nightmare, would not such a vaporous terror constitute in all loathsome truth the exquisitely, the shriekingly *unnamable?*

THE hour must now have grown very late. A singularly noiseless bat brushed by me, and I believe it touched Manton also, for although I could not see him I felt him raise his arm. Presently he spoke.

"But is that house with the attic window still standing and deserted?"

"Yes," I answered. "I have seen it."

"And did you find anything there —in the attic or anywhere else?"

"There were some bones up under the eaves. They may have been what that boy saw—if he was sensitive he wouldn't have needed anything in the window-glass to unhinge him. If they all came from the same object it must have been an hysterical, delirious monstrosity. It would have been blasphemous to leave such bones in the world, so I went back with a sack and took them to the tomb behind the house. There was an opening where I could dump them in. Don't think I was a fool—you ought to have seen that skull. It had four-inch horns, but a face and jaw something like yours and mine."

At last I could feel a real shiver run through Manton, who had moved very near. But his curiosity was undeterred.

"And what about the window-panes?"

"They were all gone. One window had lost its entire frame, and in the other there was not a trace of glass in the little diamond apertures. They were that kind—the old lattice windows that went out of use before 1700. I don't believe they've had any glass for a hundred years or more—maybe the boy broke 'em if he got that far; the legend doesn't say."

Manton was reflecting again.

"I'd like to see that house, Carter. Where is it? Glass or no glass, I must explore it a little. And the tomb where you put those bones, and the other grave without an inscription—the whole thing must be a bit terrible."

"You did see it—until it got dark."

My friend was more wrought upon than I had suspected, for at this touch of harmless theatricalism he started neurotically away from me and actually cried out with a sort of gulping gasp which released a strain of previous repression. It was an odd cry, and all the more terrible because it was answered. For as it was still echoing, I heard a creaking sound through the pitchy blackness, and knew that a lattice window was opening in that accursed old house beside us. And because all the other frames were long since fallen, I knew that it was the grisly glassless frame of that demoniac attic window.

Then came a noxious rush of noisome, frigid air from that same dreaded direction, followed by a piercing shriek just beside me on that shocking rifted tomb of man and monster. In another instant I was knocked from my gruesome bench by the devilish threshing of some unseen entity of titanic size but undetermined nature; knocked sprawling on the root-clutched mold of that abhorrent graveyard, while from the tomb came such a stifled uproar of gasping and whirring that my fancy peopled the rayless gloom with Miltonic legions of the misshapen damned. There was a vortex of withering, ice-cold wind, and then the rattle of loose bricks and plaster; but I had mercifully fainted before I could learn what it meant.

MANTON, though smaller than I, is more resilient; for we opened our eyes at almost the same instant, despite his greater injuries. Our couches were side by side, and we knew in a few seconds that we were in St. Mary's Hospital. Attendants were grouped about in tense curiosity, eager to aid our memory by telling us how we came there, and we soon heard of the farmer who had found us at noon in a lonely field beyond Meadow Hill, a mile from the old burying ground, on a spot where an ancient slaughterhouse is reputed to have stood. Manton had two malignant wounds in the chest, and some less severe cuts or gougings in the back. I was not so seriously hurt, but was covered with welts and contusions of the most bewildering character, including the print of a split hoof. It was plain that Manton knew more than I, but he told nothing to the puzzled and interested physicians till he had learned what our injuries were. Then he said we were the victims of a vicious bull—though the animal was a difficult thing to place and account for.

After the doctors and nurses had left, I whispered an awestruck question:

"Good God, Manton, but *what was it?* Those scars—*was it like that?*"

And I was too dazed to exult when he whispered back a thing I had half expected—

"*No—it wasn't that way at all.* It was everywhere—a gelatin—a slime—yet it had shapes, a thousand shapes of horror beyond all memory. There were eyes—and a blemish. It was the pit—the maelstrom—the ultimate abomination. Carter, *it was the unnamable!*"

THE WONDERFUL THING

A DREAM STORY

by Henry S. Whitehead

Author of "Sea Change," "The Fireplace," etc.

NONE of his acquaintances would have had the face to call Mr. James O'Hara a dreamer. In Zachary Taylor's day that was as much a term of reproach as it is today; as it was in the time of Joseph!

He was just twenty-four when he elected, after due conference and counsel had been taken, to leave the paternal home in Newark, New Jersey; for seeking one's fortune was in the air even seven years before the California gold strike began to strew on the transcontinental routes the long lines of bleaching bones which have been there ever since.

Unlike most, Mr. O'Hara did not go West. Instead, he went into Connecticut, which was a prudent decision, however little it might promise adventure. Just then, in Connecticut there were opportunities for a skilful land-surveyor and engineer without the necessity of braving the wilderness with a pair of derringers.

He traveled from Peck Slip by the Hartford packet, and early the next morning up on the forward deck, with swirling mist dissipating itself in curling wisps as it faded into the mellow crispness of a July morning, the soft greenery of the gentle hills above the Narrows Gorge, just below Middletown, caught his fancy, and it was at Middletown instead of Hartford that he disembarked, among the fertile farms of that good bottomland. He had no intention, though, of delving into the land for a living. His work lay on the surface, measuring rods, perches and poles for other people.

Mr. O'Hara obtained a small house at a bargain on High Street near the Wesleyan College, and shortly, on the strength of his gilt-edged recommendations, steady employment on the new Central Vermont Railway east of the river, a solid, permanent, and highly-paid piece of work after his own heart.

For his household he secured the services of Abel and Judy, once tobacco-field slaves, and Judy cooked, while old Abel pitted his everlasting "miseries" against serving Mr. O'Hara's meals when he was at home, and toting the fireplace logs when advancing autumn claimed its toll of firewood.

MR. O'HARA'S professional duties took so much of his time that he had had little time for social intercourse with the Middletown gentry,

and, beyond an occasional afternoon spent in Westfield or Walnut Grove with his fowling-piece after ruffed grouse or quail, he had seen little of the lovely country to the north, west, and south of Middletown. He had never, for example, penetrated as far as Durham, among its foothills to the west, until he went there by the imaginative route of his great dream.

He had been wakeful one night, puzzling out a way to save his employers as much as possible on bridging a tumbling trout stream, and it was very late when he fell asleep.

He dreamed with a clearness he had never known before in a mere dream (as he told himself afterward, many times), and the dream began with his breakfast. He could hear old Abel muttering to himself behind the kitchen door as he ate. Judy must have been blowing him up harder than usual, he thought, and smiled to himself at their odd ways. He would give Abel a half twist of tobacco for solace.

He was aware that he had taken this day off from his work across the river. This was, in fact, a very extra-special kind of day! Shortly, as soon as breakfast was over, he would be going upstairs again and titivating himself in a more-than-ordinary toilet. Great things were afoot.

He had decided, he knew, upon his second-best pair of nankeen trousers, those which had the pigskin straps, as being somewhat better made than his very newest pair; and these were now lying, carefully folded and brushed, across the straight back of a chair in his dressing room.

He finished his breakfast leisurely, and then mounted the stairs and dressed himself very carefully. He polished the outer case of his globular Rentnow watch, and tightened those pigskin trouser-straps a hole tighter before drawing them on over his shining boots. Ah! that was it! As if he had been melted and run into them! With a large silk handkerchief he polished the gleaming surface of his beaver hat until it glistened like the coat of Sallie, his saddle-mare. He brushed his thick, black hair carefully and turned the edges forward in a sweep above his shapely ears. Finally (most delicate task of all) he held his breath and tied his cravat. Then he pulled smartly together the lapels of his fine broadcloth coat, and descended.

He mounted Sallie at the door, Abel grinning from ear to ear to see the master so spandily groomed this morning, and set out, Sallie caracoling, upon his way to Durham.

He rode slowly, along a road still thick with summer's dust, a road scented with the almost sickly sweet of the maturing hardhack and the occasional head-turning breath of fox grapes. He noted pleasantly every rabbit that darted across his path; he smiled amusedly at the strutting purple grackles, like diminutive crows, infesting the newly cleared cornfields. As he passed through shaded bits where woodlots hemmed the road, grouse drummed boomingly in the thickets. It seemed to him as if he were traveling this road after many and many a previous journey, and that a tryst lay ahead.

At high noon he entered the Durham Village high street, through straggling shanties and outhouses at its beginning, where some elderly blacks, like Abel and Judy, were engaged in clearing the interminable cornfields. Then he passed row after row of great, gaunt tobacco barns. Last came the more pretentious and decorative dwellings of Main Street.

Past all these familiar places the young man rode blithely, along the side of the road where the deep dust lay somewhat less chokingly thick.

At last he drew rein and dismounted before the very finest of the Main Street dwellings, quite a man-

sion with fluted Grecian pillars fronting a broad porch; and he tied Sallie to an iron hitching post with a horse's head atop, one of those the Douglas Pump Works in Middletown was beginning to supply to the more esthetic-minded of its clients. He opened the gate, not without some emotional flutterings in the region of his broad chest, and approached the house along a flagged walk with its stones set wide apart, and the grass between neatly sickle-shorn.

The gate, weighted with an iron melon (also a product of the Pump Works), shut to behind him with a smart click, and he raised his eyes to the porch.

Thereon was a lady, her banded hair low over her ears, herself swathed in summery flowered muslin. She laid down, as she rose to greet Mr. O'Hara, the current *Godey's Lady's Book*, and then she walked, with little steps, her crinolines billowing gracefully, along the porch to meet her approaching cavalier.

Mr. O'Hara bowed from the waist, his beaver hat held smartly in his left hand; the fingers of his right extended fanlike on his breast.

The lovely lady curtsied discreetly.

In this porticoed house Mr. O'Hara knew himself to be on a footing of delightful intimacy. Here were good friends. He followed the lady along the porch into the shade of a thick honeysuckle vine, now gemmed with noon's quota of belated hummingbirds darting like jeweled bees through the vine laden yet with summer's sweetness. The two seated themselves a little ceremoniously side by side and looked long and ardently into each other's eyes. Mr. O'Hara broke the silence. He spoke very softly.

"You had my letter, Edith?"

"Yes." The lovely lady's eyes sought the ground. Her little foot tapped. A wave of lovely color began to suffuse her face.

Mr. O'Hara took her slender hand in his. She left it there.

He sighed deeply. This was a sign.

"Then you—you will, dear?"

Mr. O'Hara liked her answer better than if it had been in words. She merely inclined her head upon the ruffle of his cambric shirt—as fine a shirt, be it known, as any Lawyer Burnham Pease, the dandy of Middletown, could boast.

Mr. O'Hara placed his good right arm very tenderly about her very slim waist, and this movement causing her head to turn very slightly toward him, he leaned forward respectfully, almost as if there were something sacramental about what he was doing, and kissed her on the lips.

Then very gently, it seemed to him as he dreamed, he released her, released his affianced bride, for such now was the lovely lady by virtue of her tacit acceptance of his written proposal for her hand, and rising, they proceeded into the house. There followed midday dinner, to which feast Mr. O'Hara, it seemed, had been duly invited beforehand, and Edith's father took Mr. O'Hara by the hand and shook it approvingly; and Edith's mother had fetched from a cool cupboard a slim bottle of cowslip wine; and everything was glorious and delightful and wholly satisfying in that most satisfactory of imaginable dreams.

Mr. O'Hara stayed quite a long time after dinner, too, it seemed to him. He started homeward about 4 o'clock. He rode, as it were, on air, and gentle Sallie paced charmingly in a way she had at particular times, and so did not disturb his thoughts.

But as they were emerging from the last of the dwellings along the Durham village street, just as they were about to enter upon that stretch of their journey which was bounded by the plantations before they should plunge abruptly into the cool greenery of woods, Sallie, ambling quietly,

struck her hoof against a rounded pebble and stumbled, and young Mr. James O'Hara, sharply awaking at the shock, found himself sitting bolt-upright in his own bed.

It was like a sudden emergence into a strange world. The details of his familiar surroundings seemed very dim to him as he rubbed his eyes and looked about in the pale moonlight coldly flooding the room, and they took a long time to assume their proper place in his waking understanding. For there was a breath of honeysuckle somewhere, and a great and abiding happiness suffused his whole being.

Then, as facts, in the shape of the highboy across the room and the stark bedposts, replaced gradually the shimmering glory of that ride to Durham Village, and he passed the point where he had reluctantly to admit to himself that *this* was reality, that other only a dream, the young man was puzzled to find how largely bewilderment and annoyance bulked in his thoughts.

He rose out of bed, much troubled, and lit first a candle and then a cigar. He pulled on a dressing gown and slippers, sat down in a chair, and tried to think.

It seemed even then curious to him, but the incidents of that dream were all clear-cut, like cameos. They did not fade out in his mind as the material of which dreams are made fades commonly. They were all precisely as if it had been a real happening just passed through and not a dream at all.

Another circumstance puzzled him exceedingly. The dream had begun in the midst of a fairly long and very intimate acquaintance with this family in Durham. Their name was Foote. That he knew, but he was certain that the name had not once been mentioned during the course of his imaginary visit. He knew, too, exactly what had been in that letter about which he had asked her on his arrival. He put himself back (it was quite easy) into the atmosphere of the dream, and so musing he could even remember writing the letter; more dimly, previous visits, many of these.

But thinking now of this remarkable occurrence with a cool draft on his bare ankles to remind him that he was awake here in his room, he knew that it was only a fabric woven of moonshine, very lovely, very beautiful moonshine! He was not engaged to be married. He had not drunk three slender glasses of cowslip wine. He had never been within three miles of Durham in his life. Of course there had been no letter, no previous visits. There were no such people as the Footes. Edith did not exist!

His Edith! She would always, that he knew more clearly than anything else, have his heart—his heart held delicately between her slender hands . . . the figment of his imagination, a girl of gossamer.

Young Mr. James O'Hara, practical land-surveyor, took his puzzled head between his two hands and groaned. Then, realizing that this was moon-madness, he gathered as best he could his scattered wits, and viciously hurling the blackened corpse of his cigar into the grate, he blew out the candle and tumbled wearily back into bed.

There were no psychanalysts in 1842 to reassure people about their dreams. That the dream, as these allege, is always the expression of the wish, was a doctrine which Mr. O'Hara had never heard. And even if he had heard of it, he was possessed of too much Celtic common-sense to take comfort in anything of the kind. For the first time in his life he discovered himself, who should be immersed in the intricacies of costs, and parabolas, and tangents, and bridge-building, caught instead in the chain of love,—love for a phantom! It was sheerly maddening. Had ever blameless young man been so afflicted?

Seeking antidote, Mr. O'Hara plunged with driven energy into his work, but even this eminently sensible course did him no good. He called himself names. He even swore at himself. The alternatives of tavern whisky and suicide did, it must be admitted, cross his mind, so hard was he hit with this deadly weapon forged of love and moonlight and the smell of a honeysuckle vine.

For three bitter weeks he found no respite. He bore his trouble grimly, with teeth set, as his ancestors had fought their battles. But he lost weight, and a few faint lines began to appear in his face.

THEN one morning, late in October, when the leaves had all turned and were making a glory of the woods, one blessed morning, he woke up free. The terrible incubus of that despairing grief had lifted itself from him, and he rose out of sleep and out of his bed with a song on his lips. Gone were his pain and care; his obsession had left him.

As he dressed he remembered it for the first time, and the remembrance brought a twinge, but it was a twinge merely of remembrance. There was none of the almost physical agony which had accompanied his every waking moment those three weeks gone.

He descended to breakfast with a tune lilting on his lips, and so grateful was he to the unknown power that had freed him and given him instead this unaccountable gayety, that he did not even try to fathom it or to analyze what had happened to him.

There was biscuit and honey for breakfast, and bacon, and crisply fried thin slices of fresh calves' liver! It was the bacon and liver which reminded him of something vaguely joyful with which it was somehow associated.

Suddenly he remembered. There had been biscuit and honey, and calves' liver and bacon, for breakfast here in this room on the morning of that dream, when he had sat cogitating about the second-best pair of nankeen trousers. Suddenly he paused. He was listening to hear if Abel would be muttering, as he had *that* morning, behind the kitchen door. He heard it, and little cold chills ran up and down his back.

Here were three separate and distinct indications: the unaccountable gayety of his rising, which was precisely the way he had felt (did he not remember every tiny incident and emotion of that dream?) on *that* morning. Second, the breakfast. It was precisely what Judy had sent in then. Third, Abel's grumbling.

He called Abel and enquired what had disturbed him. It was Judy's nagging. Judy, said Abel, was getting worse and worse all the time. Some day . . . Well, she'd see!

"There's a half-twist of tobacco for you," said Mr. O'Hara. Abel grinned broadly, his troubles already forgotten.

Then, a good-sized chill taking possession of his back: "Saddle Sallie. Give her an extra-special rub with a handful of clean straw. Have her at the front door at 11."

Abel departed, his grin still evident.

Mr. O'Hara rose and got out the half-twist of tobacco. He mounted slowly to his room. He sat down in a chair and tried to think. Running through his head and not to be ignored was the thought of the ride he was going to take that morning. He would tempt fortune. He would go a-larking in quest of his will-o'-the-wisp. He would follow, as far as it led him, the road of the dream. The first few rods of it were plain, anyhow. It simply followed High Street to the corner, and turned up Washington. After he had got that far, he would see! He needed a day off from his work anyhow. That was

days and days ahead of the schedule. He earned his big salary, did Mr. James O'Hara.

Humming a tune, he started in with a leather-backed clothes brush on that second-best pair of nankeen trousers. . . .

When he had got some distance up Washington Street, farther than he had ever been before in that direction, the chills took possession of him a third time that morning. For here was a turning, and Sallie took it almost without pressure on the bridle-rein. It was the first of the turns of his dream-road.

He rode on. He noted rabbits scurrying across the road, the purple grackles strutting in the cornfields; even an occasional ruffed grouse drumming abruptly caused gentle Sallie to prick up her ears anxiously. From time to time that little creeping chill would run up and down his spine and he would have to look about him hard at this object or that, or stoop forward to pat Sallie's curving sorrel neck to reassure himself that this time he was awake.

He passed slow-footed negroes clearing the very last gleanings from the cornfields. Slowly he rode on through the plantations, out of the cool woods, past the shanties at the village's edge, then on through the rows of increasingly comely dwelling houses. He urged Sallie gently over to the road's side, where the impalpable dust lay less thick than in the middle.

When at last Sallie, again almost without urging, turned in before a dignified, white, porticoed house, well back from the hot road, and with white Grecian pillars before its broad veranda, he did not dare to look at it squarely, and he was stiff and trembling like a leaf when, by the force of sheer will-power, he dismounted, and began with fumbling, shaking fingers to tie Sallie to the ornamental iron horse-post with a horse's head atop, which stood before the picket gate. Sallie nuzzled his hand with her soft lips as if she understood dimly what ailed her master.

Then, leaving Sallie, and walking almost drunkenly, every nerve in his body jangling, he forced himself to the gate and pushed it open. It swung shut behind him, impelled by the weight of an iron melon hung in the middle of a chain. The gate shut with a sharp snick. That brought him up and served to pull him together a little. He was actually here! The chills seemed to recede a little. He held up his head as an O'Hara should at all times, and stepped almost jauntily along a flagged path, the stones well apart, the grass between neatly trimmed.

Almost before he knew it, he was close to the house. He looked closely at the porch. He saw a lady, her face like chalk, rise unsteadily from a chair at the far end. He could not see her face clearly, for her outline was somewhat obscured by a thick honeysuckle vine which grew all over that end of the porch. She was laying down something; something about the size and appearance of a magazine. Summery light muslin billowed gracefully about her as she leaned for support against the nearest fluted pillar.

THE lady turned terrified eyes in Mr. O'Hara's direction, and his heart stopped beating, and then, very slowly, he thought, resumed.

He snatched off his beaver, and his forehead suddenly felt cold despite the sweat which streamed down his face and into his eyes. He clicked his heels together and bowed, his hat in his left hand, his right trembling against his breast, the fingers, fan-shaped, beating like castanets against the full ruffle of his fine cambric shirt.

Trembling again now, as if with an ague, his face set, the breath hissing through his dry lips and between his set teeth, he mounted the steps. The

lady still leaned against her column, her face deathlike in its stricken pallor. Stiffly Mr. O'Hara walked the length of the veranda, reached out, and took her hand in his trembling fingers. It felt like ice, and commiseratingly he closed his strong hand about it. The lady made no effort to withdraw it.

Twice he tried to speak, but the words caught in his dry throat. Then, grimly, licking his lips to moisten them, he managed to croak: "Edith!"

He felt that he had shouted, but only the faintest whisper emerged upon the quiet warm air.

The lady's light grasp tightened convulsively on Mr. O'Hara's hand.

"James!" she breathed, and with a great effort raised her head and looked into his eyes.

Mr. O'Hara saw the terror in hers dissolve, to be replaced by another look which he never forgot. She never told him, then or later, what she thought she saw in his.

Mr. O'Hara, delicately, respectfully, almost apologetically, placed his arm supportingly about the lady's slender waist.

"I—I dreamed of you," he muttered.

"And I—of you." The words were just audible.

The lady's eyes seemed to Mr. O'Hara to grow very dark and deep and tender.

"Three weeks ago," said she.

"Three weeks ago," repeated Mr. O'Hara.

"On Wednesday night."

"On Wednesday night."

In a muse, Mr. O'Hara gently disengaged his arm, and the lady sank into a seat. He seated himself beside her, and in a voice which, as he proceeded, gradually assumed its ordinary inflections, told her of his dream, to the accompaniment of many little nods of comprehension and corroboration, wondering looks, and quick, comprehending glances. Their restraint was past when he had finished.

"I watched you down the road out of sight," she said, "that afternoon."

Her voice trailed out to nothingness. She turned and looked, after a little interval of silence, again, searchingly, into his eyes.

"It is a wonderful thing," she said, "a great marvel that we have seen,—together."

The faint, incessant drone of many humming-birds invaded the dreamy quiet of the veranda. It had been a very dry, hot summer, a lingering summer, that summer of 1842. There were still a great many humming-birds, and the warm fragrance of the honeysuckle poured itself out fervidly.

THROUGH the quiet of the warm noon there came the sound of footsteps from the hallway, and Mr. O'Hara and the lovely lady stood up as Mrs. Foote came out upon the veranda.

Mr. O'Hara bowed again from the waist, the fingers of his right hand resting gallantly, fanlike, upon his broad chest, his hat held smartly.

"This is Mr. James O'Hara, from Middletown, mother," said Miss Foote.

Hospitality beamed from Mrs. Foote's kind face. This was a very personable young gentleman who had ridden over from Middletown to pay a call upon her daughter.

"Dinner is just ready, Mr. O'Hara," said Mrs. Foote. "Sam will take your horse."

She turned into the house to see about the extra place at table.

"John, John," they heard her calling. "John, get a bottle of that cowslip wine out of the cupboard next the milkroom, will you, dear?"

Another Horror Tale of Haiti

FIDEL BASSIN

By W. J. STAMPER

Author of "Lips of the Dead"

"IT CANNOT be done. It would be the most dastardly deed in the annals of Haiti. Send all prisoners to Port au Prince with the utmost celerity. The general orders. The general be damned!"

Thus spoke Captain Vilnord of the Haitian army as he finished reading the latest dispatch from headquarters. He was the most gentle and by far the most humane officer yet sent to Hinche to combat the ravages of the Cacos, the small banditry that continually terrorized the interior. Although he realized that many a brave comrade had lost his head for words not half so strong as those he had just uttered, he did not care, for he had almost reached the breaking point. For months he had observed the rottenness and cruelty with which the government at the capital dealt with the ignorant and half clothed peasantry of the Department of the North. His considerate nature revolted at the execution of the despicable commands of General La Falais, the favorite general of the administration at Port au Prince. Hardly a day came but brought an order directing the imprisonment of some citizen, the ravage of some section with fire and sword, the wanton slaughtering of cattle or the burning of peaceful homes. He was a servant of the people and he had obeyed orders; but this last was too much.

"Any news of my captaincy?" inquired the rotund negro lieutenant, Fidel Bassin, as his chief finished the dispatch.

For answer Vilnord crumpled the message in his hand, threw it in the face of his subordinate and strode angrily out of the office. He went straight to the prison and entered without even returning the salute of the sentinel on duty.

Here was a sight that would turn the most hardened beast to tears. He had viewed that noisome scene every day for weeks, powerless to aid or ameliorate the terrible suffering. No food, no clothing, no medicine had arrived from Port au Prince, despite his urgent and repeated appeals. As he passed through the gloomy portal, a purpose, a firm resolve was taking root in his bosom, and another sight of the cowering victims would steel him and launch him upon the hazardous course he had seen opening for months.

The prison was a long, low adobe structure with three small grated windows but a foot from the roof. These furnished little ventilation, for the heat was stifling and the foul odors sickened him. Two hundred helpless men and women were crammed into this pesthouse of vermin and disease, and all under the pretext of their being friendly to the Cacos. Old men lay writhing on the floor with dirty rags bound tightly about their shriveled black skulls, and as Vilnord passed they held up their skinny arms and pleaded for food. Withered old women sat hunched against the walls and rocked back and forth like maniacs. The younger men who yet had strength to stand,

paced restlessly up and down with sullen and haggard faces. From every dusky corner shone eyes staring with horror. Ineffable despair overhung them all.

VILNORD stooped over an emaciated old man, who seemed striving to speak through his swollen lips, and asked:

"What is it, papa?"

"It is the dread scourge, *Capitaine,*" he rasped, "the black dysentery; and I must have medicine or I go like my poor brother, Oreste."

He pointed to a mass of rags beside him.

Without fear of the dread disease whose vicious odor pervaded the whole room, Vilnord gently lifted the remains of a filthy shirt under which Oreste had crept to die.

No man who has never looked upon a victim of tropical dysentery after life has fled can imagine the deadly horror of the thing. The lips were so charred with the accompanying fever that they had turned inside out, and from the corners of the gaping mouth there oozed a thick and greenish fluid. The skin was drawn tightly over the bony cheeks, and the eyes had entirely disappeared, leaving but dark and ghastly holes. He had been dead for hours. With a scream like a wounded animal, Vilnord rushed from the charnel-house and to his office, where Fidel was still waiting.

He opened the drawer of his desk, pulled out a parchment neatly bound with ribbon, and to the amazement of his subordinate tore it in pieces. It was his commission in the army, just such a paper as Fidel had desired for many years.

"Fidel, I am through," he roared. "I will stand this wanton murder no longer. Do as you like about those orders, for you are in command. I leave for Pignon tonight to join Benoit, the Caco chief."

"But, *Capitaine,*" remonstrated Fidel, "you must not do such a thing. La Falais will send all his regiments to seek you out. He will camp in Hinche for ten years or capture you."

"I defy La Falais and his black murderers! Let him camp in Hinche for ten years. I will stay in the deep mountains of Baie Terrible for ten years. With Benoit I will fight to the death."

With these words Vilnord strode to the door, Krag-Jorgensen in hand, and mounted his waiting horse.

Fidel followed him out, and as he was adjusting his saddle bags, inquired, "Would La Falais promote me if I failed to carry out those orders? Would he not stand me up before a firing squad?"

"You may pursue the same course which I have chosen, the only honorable course," answered Vilnord.

"But I am due for promotion."

Vilnord tore the captain's insignia from his collar and hurled them into the dust.

"You will never be a captain. *Au revoir,*" he cried back to Fidel as he fled toward the bald mountains of Pignon.

A BLAZING sun beat down upon the grief-stricken village of Hinche. There was bustle and commotion outside the prison. Fidel was preparing to execute the orders of his superior. There in the dusty road was forming as sorry and pitiable a cavalcade as ever formed under the skies of Africa in the darkest days of slavery.

Men and women filed out the door between two rows of sentinels whose bayonets flashed and sparkled in the sunlight. There were curses and heavy blows as some reeling prisoner staggered toward his place in line. The prisoners formed in two lines facing each other. Handcuffs were brought out and fastened above the elbows, for their hands and wrists were so bony that the cuffs would slip

over. Two prisoners were thus bound together with each set, one link above the elbow of each. A long rope, extending the full length of the line, was securely lashed to each pair of handcuffs so that no two prisoners could escape without dragging the whole line. Many were so weak with hunger and disease that they could not stand without great difficulty. None of them had shoes, and they must walk over many miles of sharp stones and thorns before arriving at Port au Prince. The trip would require many days, and no food was taken except that which was carried in the pouches of the sentries who were to act as guards.

Suddenly there arose a hoarse and mournful cry from the assembled relatives, as two soldiers emerged from the barracks, each with a pick and shovel. Fidel knew that most of the prisoners would never see the gates of Port au Prince, and he had made provision.

"Corporal," he said as he passed down the line inspecting each handcuff, "you will bury them where they fall. If they tire out, do not leave them by the roadside."

Weeping friends and relatives surged up to the points of the bayonets begging that they might be allowed to give bread and bananas to the prisoners, for they well knew there was no food between Hinche and the capital except a few sparse fields of wild sugarcane.

"Back, vermin! Forward, march!" commanded the corporal.

His voice could scarcely be heard for the screams and moans of the relatives as they shrieked:

"Good-bye, papa! Good-bye, brother!"

Down the yellow banks of the Guyamouc wound the cavalcade, into the clear waters many of them would never see again.

Hinche mourned that day, and when the shades of night descended upon the plains there was nought to be heard save the measured beat of the tom-tom and the eery bray of the burros.

SLEEK, well-fed Fidel sat calmly smoking with his feet propped up on the very desk vacated by his chief the day before and mused upon the prospect of his captaincy, which he felt confident would be forthcoming. He had carried out the orders of La Falais and he knew that crafty general would not be slow to reward him when news of the desertion of Vilnord reached the capital. He muttered half aloud: "A captain within a month. Not so bad for a man of thirty."

But his black face twisted with a frown as he recalled the solemn, almost prophetic words of Vilnord: "You will never be a captain."

There came a voice from the darkness outside.

"May I enter, *Capitaine?*"

He liked the title, "Captain." It sounded so appropriate.

"Come in," he commanded.

It was the aged and withered old magistrate of Hinche, who had seen his people maltreated for years and who, no doubt, would have joined the Cacos long before had his age permitted.

"I have come to make a request of you in the name of the citizens," he said, and there was a strange light in his eyes.

"In the name of the citizens!" Fidel repeated sneeringly, and added: "Anything you ask in that august name, no man could refuse. What is it?"

"We beg that you release the remaining prisoners, those who are unable to walk because of hunger and disease, and allow them to return to their homes where they can be cared for. They are dying like hogs in that pesthouse. Will you let them out?"

"Never," was the firm reply. "I

will bury every festering Caco-breeder back of the prison with the rest of his kind."

The magistrate folded his arms and with shrill but steady voice cried out: "La Falais, and you too, Fidel, shall render an account before history for this foul action, this heartless torture, this wanton murder of your own people. We, who are left, have arms, and we shall oppose you to the last drop. This very night has settled upon the fresh graves of our best people. Along the trail to Ennery and Maissade they have died, and over the graves your vicious troopers have put up forked sticks and placed on them a skirt, a shoe or a hat in derision of the dead. To what purpose did the immortal Dessalines and Pétion fight and wrest our liberty from the foreigner when it is snatched from us by our own bloody government?"

"Be careful of your words, old man," replied Fidel. "I have but to command and my soldiers will shoot down every living thing and lay this Caco nest in ashes."

"I have been very busy today, *mon capitaine*. Your soldiers at this very moment have scattered among the bereaved families of those who lie dead by your hand. You have no troops—they have become the troops of Haiti."

With a curse Fidel snatched his pistol from the holster. But before he could use it, a half dozen burly blacks leapt from the darkness outside where they had been waiting, and bore him to the floor. His hands were bound behind his back, and two of his own soldiers stood over him with drawn revolvers.

"I'll have the last man of you court-martialed and shot!" he stormed. "Release me immediately."

"Small fear of that," answered the soldier. "We go to join Benoit, the Caco chief, when we have finished with you."

The magistrate walked to the door and spoke a few whispered words to one of the blacks, who hurried away into the darkness.

EVERY shack sent forth its avenger. Torches flared up, and soon the house was surrounded by a writhing, howling mob, eager for the blood of the man who had sent their loved ones to die on the blistering plains of Maissade, and all because he wanted to be a captain. The soldiers had cast away their uniforms, but their glittering bayonets could be seen flashing in the red torchlight. Wild screams rent the night as the brutishness of the mob-will gained ascendency.

"Let us skin him alive and cover our tom-toms with his hide!" shrieked an old hag as she squirmed through the crowd.

"Let us burn him or bury him alive!" yelled another.

By what magic the old magistrate gained control of that wild multitude, who may say? Standing in the doorway facing the mob, he lifted his withered hand and began: "Countrymen, for ten years I have meted out justice among you. Have I not always done the proper thing?"

"Always," they answered with one voice.

"Then," he continued, "will you not trust me in this hour when the future of Hinche hangs in the balance?"

"Leave it to the magistrate!" someone yelled, and the whole mass took up the cry.

"Norde, do you and Pilar bring along the prisoner. Follow me."

The two blacks designated seized Fidel roughly, lifted him to his feet and, preceded by the magistrate, hurried him across the road toward the prison. The mob followed, and the pale light of the torches shone on horrible faces, twisting with anger and deep hatred.

What could the magistrate have in mind? He knew the right thing, the course that would best satisfy the mob.

The procession moved up to the prison door, and as the vile and sickening odors struck Fidel in the face, he drew back with a shudder, his eyes wild and rolling with terror. One torch was thrust inside the door, and its red light threw fantastic shadows over the yellow walls. All the prisoners had been removed, and there was nothing in sight save a mass of rags in a corner at the far end.

"Yonder," said the magistrate, "is Mamon. He died last night. But before we leave you, you must see the face of your bedfellow." As the mob grasped the intent of the speaker, loud cheers filled the night: "Leave it to the magistrate! He will do the right thing."

Fidel shivered with fear, not so much the fear of the dead as of the terrible malady which had burned out the life.

Norde pushed the shaking Fidel through the door, and the mob, forgetting the dread disease in their desire to see him suffer, followed him up to the pile of rags.

"Now," said the magistrate, when Fidel's hands were loosed, "uncover the face of your victim."

With trembling fingers Fidel lifted a filthy rag from the face of the corpse. Did human ever look on sight so horrible? The eyes were gone, sunken back into their sockets, leaving but dark and ghastly holes. The tongue was lolling out, black and parched, furrowed as if it had been hacked. Out of the corners of the gaping mouth there oozed a thick and greenish fluid.

The skin was drawn tightly over the cheeks, and the bones had cut through. There was a sparse and needlelike growth of beard standing up straight on the pointed and bony chin.

Fidel dropped the rag and screamed with terror. Norde picked it up, and, with the aid of Pilar, smothered his screams by wrapping it around his head. He hushed presently and when, at length, the rag was removed, the magistrate commanded: "Uncover that!" and he pointed to the stomach of the corpse. Fidel obeyed.

The stomach was black and flabby like a tire, and the skin had pulled loose from the supporting ribs.

"Here, *mon capitaine,*" said the magistrate, "you will live with this dead man until the black dysentery has claimed you."

With a wild shriek Fidel fell fainting across the festering body of Mamon.

The magistrate barked out his commands quickly and sharply.

"Norde, bind him fast where he lies!"

In a moment Fidel was lashed to the fast decomposing body, his hair tied to that of the corpse; and cheek to cheek they left him with the dead.

IT WAS high noon when a strange cavalcade headed toward Pignon, the lair of the Cacos. The old magistrate was leading. Men, women and children carried their few belongings on their heads. Hinche was deserted.

At the same time there entered Hinche by another trail two horsemen, who, after stopping at the office of Fidel, moved on to the prison. They were Vilnord and Benoit, the Caco chief. The prison door was ajar.

They entered, and what they saw was this—*the dead, cheek to cheek,* slowly sinking into each other.

Outside, Vilnord whispered to his companion as they mounted their horses: "I told him he would never be a captain"; and they rode away toward the bald mountains of Pignon.

NOTE—Another tale of the Black Republic by W. J. Stamper, author of "Fidel Bassin," will appear next month. It is called "The Vulture of Pignon."

The Stranger *from* Kurdistan

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

Author of "The Rajah's Gift"

"YOU claim that demonaltry went out of existence at the end of the Middle Ages, that devil-worship is extinct? . . . No, I do not speak of the Yezidis of Kurdistan, who claim that the Evil One is as worthy of worship as God, since, by virtue of the duality of all things, good could not exist without its antithesis, evil; I speak rather of a devil-worship that exists today, in this twentieth century, in civilized, Christian Europe; secret, hidden, yet nevertheless quite real; a worship based upon a sacrilegious perversion of the ritual of the church. . . How do I know? That is aside from the question; suffice it to say that I know that which I know."

SO HIGH was the tower of Semaxii that it seemed to caress the very stars; so deep-seated were its foundations that there was more of its great bulk beneath the ground than there was above. Bathed in moonlight was its crest; swathed in sevenfold veils of darkness was its ponderous base. Old as the pyramids was this great pile of granite which took its name from the ruined city, of equal antiquity, sprawled at its base.

A dark form approached, advancing swiftly through the gloom-drenched ruins, a darkness among the shadows, a phantom that moved with sinister certitude.

Suddenly the shadow halted, and in its immobility became a part of the surrounding darkness. Other and lesser forms passed, slinking silently to the cavernous entrance of Semaxii, there vanishing in its obscure depths. And all were unaware of the form that had regarded them from its vantage point.

A cloud parted. A ray of moonlight fought its way through the Cimmerian shadows, dissolving all save one, the darkest; and this darkest one it revealed as the tall form of a man wrapped in a black cape, and wearing a high silk hat.

Another rift in the clouds; more light, which now disclosed the features as well as the form of the shadowy stranger; haughty features with a nose like the beak of a bird of prey; the cold, pitiless eye of an Aztec idol; thin lips drooping in the shadow of a cynical smile; a man relentless in victory and magnificent in defeat.

"The fools have all assembled to pay tribute to their folly; seventy-seven of them who will tonight adore their lord and master . . . and with what rites? . . . It is long since I have witnessed. . ."

He paused in his reflections to count the strokes of a bell whose sound crept softly across the wastelands.

"Little of my last night remains; however, let me waste it well."

So saying, he gathered his cape about him, and swiftly strode to the entrance of the tower.

"Halt!" snapped a voice from the gateway.

The ray of an electric torch bit the darkness and fell full upon the stranger's face.

"Halt, and give the sign."

"Who am I to give, or you to receive?" answered the stranger, as if intoning an incantation or reciting a fixed formula.

"Pass on."

And thus the stranger passed the outer guard of the shrine of demonaltry, the holy of holies where Satan received the homage of his vassals. Past the outer guard was the stranger, but far from the sanctuary wherein the Black Mass was celebrated, wherein the Lord of the World was worshipt with blasphemous rites.

A thousand steps of icy granite, winding in endless succession like the coils of a vast earthworm, led to the foundations of the tower. And at intervals, sheeted and hooded warders halted the stranger and demanded sign and password; and each in turn, as he received a sign, shrank and dropped his gaze before the hard, inscrutable eye of the stranger.

Down, down to the very basements of the earth; and then he found himself before a door guarded by two masked figures garbed in vermilion. Again there was an exchange of signs, after which the two vermilion figures bowed low as the door opened to admit him to the vaulted sanctuary where the Devil was that night to be invoked.

The stranger doffed his high hat, then, after a courtly bow to the assemblage, strode up the aisle and seated himself on one of the brazen stools that were placed, row after row, like the pews of a chapel. Once seated, he gazed about him, taking stock of his surroundings.

The black altar before him, with its crucifix bearing a hideously caricatured Christ, received but a passing glance; nor was any more attention accorded to the walls and vaulted ceiling whose grotesquely obscene carvings leered at him through the acrid, smoke-laden air like the distorted fancies of a perverted brain. Nor yet, apparently, did he note the acolyte who was trimming the black candles at the altar, nor did he seem to wonder that the floor beneath his feet was sprinkled with powdered saffron. It was the company itself that he studied, observing with interest the old roués and young sybarites, male and female, the seventy-seven who had assembled to adore Satan, their lord and master.

In the main, the seventy-seven were persons of wealth and distinction, who, having tried and found wanting every field of human endeavor and achievement, had sought thrills in the foulness and degradation of the medieval rites of devil-worship; rakes whose jaded appetites sought satiation in the orgies that followed the celebration of the Black Mass; atheists who, deeming passive atheism an inadequate form of rebellion, found expression in a ritual whose sacrilege satisfied their iconoclastic desires.

Attendants bearing trays made their way among the seventy-seven, offering them glasses of wine and small amber-colored pastils. These last the worshipers either swallowed or else dissolved in their wine and drank.

THE stranger turned to the initiate who occupied the stool at his side.

"Tell me, brother, the nature of the rites to be celebrated here tonight."

The initiate eyed him narrowly as he sipped his wine.

"What do you mean?"

"Why," began the stranger blandly, "I am a foreigner, and I fancied that the ritual here may be different than it is in my native land. I must confess," he continued, "that I am puzzled to see an altar and a crucifix in this shrine devoted to the worship of the Evil One."

The initiate stared at him in amazement.

"It must be a curious rite that you witnessed. Do you not know that we have a priest who celebrates the mass, and then. . ."

"A priest?" interrupted the stranger. "The mass? Why. . ."

"Surely; if not a priest, if not a mass, how could the arch-enemy become incarnate in the bread which we, the worshipers of Satan, defile and pollute as a tribute to our lord and master? Surely you must be a foreigner from some heathen land not to know that only an ordained priest of the church can cause the miracle of transubstantiation to take place. But tell me, who are you?"

"You would be amazed," replied the stranger, smiling enigmatically, "if you knew who I am."

Then, before the initiate could continue his queries, a gong sounded, thinly, rather as the hiss of a serpent than as the clang of bronze; a panel of the vault opened, admitting the vermilion-robed, misshapen bulk of the priest. Following him were nine acolytes, likewise robed in vermilion, and bearing censers fuming with an overpoweringly heavy incense. As they marched slowly down the aisle, they raised their voices in a shrill chant. The seventy-seven sank to their knees, heads bowed.

The high priest halted before the altar, bowed solemnly, then, with the customary gestures and phrases, went through the ritual of the mass, the kneeling acolytes making the responses in Latin. He then descended to the bottom step of the altar and began his invocation of Satan.

"Oriflamme of Iniquity, thou who guidest our steps and givest us strength to endure and courage to resist, receive our petitions and accept our praise; Lord of the World, hear the prayers of thy servants; Father of Pride, defend us against the hypocrisies of the favorites of God! Master, thy faithful servants implore thee to bless their iniquities which destroy soul and conscience alike; power, glory and riches they beg of thee, King of the Disinherited, Son who battles with the inexorable Father: all this we ask of thee, and more, Master of Deceptions, Rewarder of Crime, Lord of Luxurious Vice and Monumental Sin, Satan, thee whom we adore, just and logical god!"

The high priest rose, faced the altar and crucifix bearing its life-sized mockery of a caricatured Christ, and in shrill, malignant accents cried out his blasphemies: "And thou, thou in my office as priest I compel to descend into this host, to become incarnate in this bread, Jesus, filcher of homage, thief of affection! Harken! From the day that the virgin gave thee birth thou hast failed in thy promises; the ages have wept in awaiting thee, mute and fugitive god! Thou wert to redeem mankind, and thou hast failed; thou wert to appear in glory, and thou liest asleep; thou who wert to intercede for us with the Father, hast failed in thy mission, lest thy eternal slumber be disturbed! Thou hast forgotten the poor to whom thou hast preached! Thou who hast dared punish by virtue of unheard-of laws, we would hammer upon thy nails, bear down upon thy crown of thorns, draw blood anew from thy dry wounds! And this we can do, and this we *will* do, in violating the repose of thy body, profaner of magnificent vice, accursed Nazarene, idle king, sluggish god!"

"Amen," came the hoarse response of the seventy-seven through the stifling, incense-laden air.

The priest, having once more ascended the altar steps, turned and with his left hand blessed the worshipers of Satan. Then, facing the Crucified One, in a solemn but mocking tone he pronounced, "*Hoc est enim corpus meum.*"

At these words the seventy-seven, crazed as much by the drugged wine and amber-hued pastils as by the sacrilegious madness of the ceremony, groveled upon the saffron-sprinkled floor, howling and moaning, overcome by a demoniac frenzy. The priest seized the consecrated bread, spat up-

on it, subjected it to unmentionable indignities, tore it to pieces which he offered to the worshipers of Satan, who crept forward to receive this mockery of a communion.

THE first of that mad group of devil-worshipers rose to his knees and was about to receive his portion when there came a startling interruption.

"Fools, cease this mockery!"

It was the stranger's voice, a voice whose arrogant note of command, ringing through that vaulted chapel like the clear, cold peal of destruction, silenced the frenzied devotees, so that not a breath was audible. The acolytes stood transfixed at the altar. The high priest alone retained command of himself; but even he was momentarily abashed, shrinking before the flaming, fierce eye of the stranger.

Yet the priest quickly recovered himself.

"Who are you," he snarled, "to interrupt the sacrifice?"

The seventy-seven, though still speechless, had recovered from the complete paralysis that their faculties had suffered. They saw the stranger confronting the high priest on the altar steps; they heard his voice, in reply, rich, sonorous, majestič:

"You, the high priest of Satan, and ask me who I am? I am Ahriman, whom the Persians feared; I am Malik Taus, the white peacock whom men worship in far-off Kurdistan; I am Lucifer, the morning star; I am that Satan whom you invoked. Behold, I have returned in mortal form to meet and defy my adversary."

He pointed to the crucifix, then continued, "And a worthy adversary he is. Nor think that yonder simulacrum is the Christ I have sworn to overthrow. Fools! Besotted beasts, think you that it is serving me to deride a foe who has held me at bay these countless ages? Think you to serve me by this mummery? This very mass which you have celebrated, though in derision and in defiance of him, acknowledges his divinity; and though in mockery, you have nevertheless accepted him in taking this bread as his body. Is this serving me, your lord and master?"

"Impostor!" shrieked the high priest, his face distorted with rage; "impostor, you claim to be Satan?"

That high-pitched scream stirred the seventy-seven from their inertia, aroused them again to their frenzy. Gibbering and howling, they leapt to their feet and closed in on the stranger.

But at that instant a cloak of elemental fire, the red, blinding flame of a thousand suns, enshrouded Satan's form, and from it rang that same clear, cold voice, "Fools! Madmen! I disown and utterly deny you!"

ONCE again in the ruins at the foot of the Tower of Semaxii was the dark stranger, Satan as he had revealed himself to his followers. He seemed to be alone, yet he was speaking, as if with someone facing him.

"Nazarene," he said, "on that day wherein I challenged you to meet me with weapons and on ground of your own choosing to do battle for the empery of the world, I was foolish and knew not whereof I spoke."

He paused, lowered his eyes for a moment, as if to rest them from the strain of gazing at an awful and intolerable radiance, then continued: "You they crucified; me they would have torn in pieces, their lord and master; both of us they have denied. I wonder whose folly is the greater, yours in seeking to redeem mankind, or mine in striving to make it my own."

And with these words Satan turned, his haughty head bowed, and turning, disappeared among the ruins.

HURLED INTO THE INFINITE

A Two-Part Story

by J. Schlossel

Author of "Invaders From Outside"

The Story So Far

Ned Spencer, whose fiancee, Grace Thomas, has been abducted by the supreme council of the weird Society of Man, finds her at the moment when she and one of the council members are being shot out into space by force of multiple will power, to inhabit another planet. He fights on the altar with No. 50 (the abductor of Grace), and the multiple will power of the council sends him through space along with Grace and No. 50. He reaches a strange world, where gravitation is slight, and walking is a succession of great leaps. After a search of several hours through an eery forest, he comes upon a group of hairy men, the inhabitants of this strange world. They are seated around a fire chanting, and in the midst of them is Grace.

WITH a hoarse shout I leapt forward. The next leap brought me within the rays of the yellow flames. I seemed to drop straight down upon them from the air above. The ax in my hands I was swinging in a circle around my head. Again I shouted wildly—a shout with no meaning.

At my first shout the whole swaying mass faced me. Their eyes caught me dropping down from my first leap. Again I leapt into the air toward the altar, but higher. The leap brought me to the edge of the swaying mass. On the faces of the men was a look of consternation. They did not attempt to bar my way; instead, they drew aside and opened up a broad lane. Those near me pressed back, apparently afraid to be touched by me.

I must have appeared to them as a fiend come to destroy them. As I passed down the lane they shuddered. Fear was plainly written on their features.

From the opposite side of the milling mass another figure plunged toward the platform and Grace. I was near enough now to see that his face was battered, caked with dried blood; and mine was no doubt the same. In his hand he held a club about six feet long. From his shoulders streamed a torn black cloak.

The man leaping from the other side of the platform was No. 50! He was making his way as swiftly toward the platform as I was. A lane had also been opened up in the milling mass of those menlike creatures for him. Another bound would take us both to the platform. My feet touched the floor of the platform; an instant later No. 50 landed.

"Ned!" came from Grace in a choked whisper.

I had no time to reply. No. 50 made a mad sweep at me with his long club. I dodged, not an instant too soon, and chopped at him with the ax. No. 50 ducked the blow. We circled each other once, twice. No. 50's eyes were gleaming. Their hypnotic

strength bored through me, for his will power was terrific; but my eyes in turn flared with a cold hate. My sole desire was to chop up in little bits the one who had caused all my sufferings.

Viciously I aimed the ax at him. He leapt over my head and aimed his club at me while he was still in the air. It struck me a glancing blow on my shoulder which I hardly more than felt.

"Behind you! Look out, Ned!" Grace cried in warning.

I leapt aside and turned with my ax held in front of me. No. 50 aimed at me and missed, thanks to the warning. I sent him asprawl with a shove in the side. Whirling my ax over my head I leapt in to finish him before he could regain his feet.

As my ax came down he shoved himself aside, and the ax struck the floor of the platform. I tried to pull the ax out. No. 50 aimed his club at me. I tried to dodge and still keep my hands on the ax. I gave a final tug; the ax came away in my hand, and I turned. . . . A million points of fire leapt in front of my eyes; then a thick darkness crept up and enveloped me.

I CAME back slowly to consciousness. I seemed to float for a long time between wakefulness and sleep. A dull throbbing pain at last brought me back to my senses. I opened my eyes slowly, wondering where I was. Then it came back to me—the fight—Grace—No. 50. . . .

There was no sound around me except a steady low rustling. I stood up on the platform and stared wildly about me. The fire had died down to a heap of smoldering embers. There was no one near the platform, the clearing was deserted. Grace was gone.

"Grace! Grace!" I cried loudly, but only the echoes answered me, seeming to mock my anguish.

The embers cast an unearthly light over the clearing. Awful shadows played near the limits of the circle of red, fitful light. An audible rustling of moving things made the solitude dreadful.

Alone, alone with the dying fire, in the midst of unknown terrors on a strange world! I choked back a cry of fear. Slowly I left the platform and moved nearer toward the protecting glow of fire. In those red, dying embers I sensed a protection against the beasts that lurked beyond in the dark forest. They were drawing nearer as the fire died down.

I threw fresh logs upon the fire, and soon it was blazing merrily again, driving back the shadows and the things that prowled beyond the shadows against the girdle of frond-like trees.

The odor of burning meat came from the fire. I searched and found some scraps of food. I ate them ravenously, for they were the first morsels that had passed my lips since I had been hurled to this world by the multiple will power of the supreme council. I made a good meal, and felt better.

After I had heaped upon the fire all the wood I could find in the clearing, I went back to the platform and lay down. The night was warm. From the trees all about me a heavy mist was rising. The ache in my head was now a dull, painful throb. After gorging myself with the scraps of meat I became very sleepy. I rolled over on my side and slept.

When I awoke it was daylight. I stood up on the platform, stretched myself, and looked around. No sound came from the encircling forest. Where the fire had been there was nothing but a heap of whitened ashes and a few charred sticks. The fire reminded me of food and the fact that I was hungry again.

With a leap I was off the platform and near the ashes of the fire. I

gathered the remaining scraps of half-burnt meat. I ate some, and put the rest in my pocket. Then I circled the edge of the clearing to see which way the menlike creatures had gone; for with them, I realized, must have gone Grace and No. 50.

Trails led from the clearing in four directions, packed hard by the countless tread of paws and naked feet going each way. To one versed in woodcraft it would have been a simple matter to tell which way those who had crowded around the platform last night had gone, but I, born and brought up in the city, could not. I got down on my hands and knees and examined each trail with the utmost care, but with no success.

The sun was high in the heavens when at last I gave up in despair my attempts to read the signs on the hardpacked trails. Thoroughly disheartened, I moved back toward the platform. Suddenly I saw something that made my heart race with joy. Scrawled with a piece of charred wood was an arrow pointing to one of the trails leading from the clearing, and my name, "Ned."

The meaning of the message was vividly clear. Grace had managed to scrawl the message to me. She was alive and telling me to follow. It also told me she was still safe.

With a long leap I headed for the trail. At the edge of the clearing I paused and tapped the holster under my armpit to assure myself that the automatic was still there; then I sped down the trail as fast as the weak gravitation of this world would allow. My tremendous speed, in comparison with the speed that I could make on earth with the same amount of energy, was like rushing down a steep hill.

ON AND ON I went, hour in and hour out. I felt no fatigue, and I passed no creature of formidable size. On I sped, on and on.

There was a sudden crunch on the trail ahead of me. I heard the crashing of a body running in my direction. I leapt aside and waited. The thing that was coming down the trail made no effort to keep silent. From still farther off I heard other creatures in pursuit of the first.

With an easy leap I jumpt into the branches of a frondlike tree above me. I drew my automatic and waited.

A hairy man came tearing down the trail. He looked less intelligent than those that had crowded around the platform the night before. The creature, near-man, seemed on a lower scale of evolution than the first men I had seen last night. Blood was flowing sluggishly from a cut in his chest and another in his arm. Every instant he turned and cast a glance over his shoulder in mortal terror.

When he neared the tree in which I was hidden, he dropped to a shambling walk, and swayed from side to side. I saw that he would drop any instant. I kept my eyes glued upon him as he drew nearer. I wondered if the creatures who pursued him were like the terrors that had so nearly taken my life as I awoke on the beach the day before.

There came a sudden whiz, and a spear crashed into the trunk of the tree, missing the man by a few inches. I looked and saw that his pursuers were the intelligent menlike creatures who had crowded around the platform last night. The near-man, as I distinguished him from the more intelligent-looking menlike creatures, was just staggering drunkenly under the tree when an impulse came over me to offer him protection. I gave a low whistle. A look of hope spread over his features as he looked up, but when he saw me his face went ghastly, he turned completely around to run back in the opposite direction and saw his pursuers almost on top of him. He sank to the ground, shuddering.

The pursuers came up to where the near-man lay. One of them raised his spear to bury it in the body of the creature on the ground.

I leapt from the branch. The men turned at the sound. Their jaws dropped; their eyes bulged. I held my automatic pointed at them. They understood the menace in that tiny piece of metal, even though they did not know what it was.

After bowing low, the one with the spear started talking to me, reinforcing his words with many gestures with his hands, his head, the rolling of his eyes. After he had finished he looked at me as if waiting for my consent to thrust the near-man through with his spear.

The near-man lay on the ground and looked up at me piteously. His eyes were wide and appealing, like the eyes of a collie. It was easy now to see the difference in intelligence between the one on the ground and the one who held the spear. There was about the same difference as existed between the members of the supreme council (the acme of human intelligence on earth) and the native aborigines of Australia, about the lowest. The near-man was not repulsive; he seemed like a big, harmless dog.

I shook my head when the man with the spear drew back his arm to force his spear into the body of the near-man. The one with the spear appeared greatly surprized at my refusal to give him permission to slay the creature. He gesticulated wildly. The other that was with him started to speak to me; his voice was low and guttural. Going over to the creature on the ground, he took his hand and made a motion as if hurling a spear at me. He pointed at me and then at his chest. I think he was trying to convey the idea that the creature on the ground had thrown a spear at his chest.

The one with the spear pointed up above him and made a motion as if he were flying, coming down from the region above, and pointed at me inquiringly. I nodded. I pointed to myself and then up to the heavens. I wondered how he knew that I had come from another world.

He went over again and prepared to drive his spear home in the near-man's body.

"No!" I shouted, and shook my head to reinforce my command.

The one with the spear looked at me and then went over to the near-man who still lay upon the ground and began to accuse him of something. He prodded the near-man with his spear until he sullenly admitted that whatever the one with the spear was accusing him of was true.

The one with the spear looked at me again for permission to slay him. I still shook my head. The man was plainly angry at my refusal. He pointed with his spear up to the sun and then to the near-man on the ground. He shook his spear at him. His acting told me that someone who he considered had the authority from the sun had commanded him to slay the creature on the ground.

At that I shook my head more vigorously than ever. The man with the spear turned to his companion and said something in their thick, guttural tongue. The one without the spear came hesitatingly toward me while the other went over to the near-man on the ground. When he was directly over the creature he began to drive his spear down. My automatic spoke, and the spear was torn from his hand by the force of the bullet.

Both of them stared at me, their eyes growing wider and wider. Their knees gave way and they crumpled on the hardpacked trail. Their bodies quivered like jelly.

"Get up," I said.

Both of them looked up. I touched the shaggy shoulder of the near-man

and motioned him to rise. When he was on his feet I signed to him with a sweep of my arm that he should go where he wished.

The two who had pursued him made no more protests. They were looking at me in an awed manner. By signs I let them know that I wanted them to lead the way back where they had come from. They started off at an easy lope, and I followed them. Hearing a puffing sound behind me, I glanced around and saw the near-man following me.

I stopped until he came up with me and then again I ordered him to go. I did not know whether I could protect him amongst the rest of those men that I was headed for. Into his eyes there came a look like that of a dog to whom one does a good turn and then orders him off when he attempts to follow.

The two menlike creatures were almost out of sight down the trail. I sped after them with incredibly long leaps, and caught up within a few minutes.

THE trail wound over a rocky spot where there were no trees. We were about half way across that rocky part of the trail when a huge four-winged bird began hurtling down toward us. The two in front looked up and saw the four-winged peril dropping down.

The danger held me numb, for it seemed like certain death for the three of us. We could never reach the trees in time. There was no wild, unearthly cry of that one-legged creature who had hopped on to the beach and then into the water to scare it away this time, as there had been the day before. I watched it drop down until it was almost on top of us.

My two companions waited until it was very near and then began to shout and wave their arms. The huge winged creature turned at the first sound and began mounting at terrific speed. It continued rising until it was out of sight.

The two seemed in no way put out by the incident. They acted as if it were a common occurrence.

I realized that the four-winged terror was an arrant coward and that a child could have driven it away provided it shouted loud enough. It had nearly had me because I was unfamiliar with its peculiarities. I understood nothing about this unknown world, except that it must be smaller than the earth because I could move faster and leap higher. Things that seemed dangerous might be harmless.

I hoped that my two companions belonged to the same tribe or people as those who had been clustered around the platform the night before, for then Grace might be among them. The only way to find out was to go with them. If they did not tell me willingly I could play upon their superstition.

We moved swiftly along the trail. The country began to change. Trees became less numerous, and we were leaving the region of the forest. The country ahead was a level treeless region. The path became more and more defined, and soon had the appearance of a well-packed earthen road.

We passed a hut, the first habitation of man that I had seen on this world. It was built out of flat rocks without any mortar, in the shape of a beehive. A little farther we passed another hut, and then others.

Lying in front of many of the huts were bodies of creatures that closely resembled that near-man whom I had saved from death. Most of them had spears in their hands. They had probably died before they could lift their hands in self-defense.

To me it seemed that I was traveling deeper and deeper into the near-man's country. Those two in front of me, I judged, must be intelligent enough to construct far more intricate

buildings than those beehive huts. I suspected that those who had been clustered about the platform the night before were some kind of raiding party. The dead near-men around the huts pointed to that conclusion.

About a mile before me appeared a collection of those beehive huts. The two in front of me were drawing slowly ahead. They were still plainly in sight when they entered that village of huts.

I had let them get ahead purposely so that they could tell what had happened on the trail. By that way I would be sure that there would be no attempt at ambushing me. They would not, I knew, attempt to make war against one who wielded thunder and lightning from a small metal thing I held in the hand.

There were many of their own kind in that hut-village. I saw some of them question the two as they drew near. I watched them reply, turn around and point in my direction. They gesticulated wildly, and went through the pantomime of stabbing something on the ground with their spear, and showing how the spear was torn from out of their hands. At that they clapped their hands over their eyes and shuddered.

Not pausing an instant, but boldly going ahead, I passed into the village and ordered the two who had led the way to guide me. Looking important, they led the way down a sort of street to the largest hut in the village. They paused in front of it and pointed within.

A crowd collected behind me and followed at a respectful distance. The gallery that I had collected were looking at me with a sort of awe.

AT THE entrance to the large hut I paused and peered in. I stared as hard as I could but could make out nothing, for the interior was in semi-darkness. My eyes were used to the bright sunshine of the open.

"Who is there?" I called aloud.

I heard a gasp and then a choked sob. Someone was moving swiftly over the floor, and the next instant a lithe, dark-robed figure flung itself at me. I drew back instinctively, my arms going up to protect my face.

"Ned!" the figure was whispering before I could catch a good glimpse of what had flung itself upon me. "I knew you would come soon. I never gave up hope, not even when he tried to hypnotize me into the belief that you were dead."

"Grace!" I cried.

My arms went around her tightly, I could say no more, because a lump was rising in my throat.

From the inside of the hut came a low moan. I looked at Grace questioningly.

"It's he," she said. "He is dying. He saved my life this morning and received the spear that was thrown at me in his own breast by leaping in front of me. The gaping wound would have killed him long ago, but he is remaining alive by the tremendous power of his will. He is trying to gain communication with the supreme council of the Society of Man to draw him back to Earth so that he may get proper treatment of the wound. So far he has not succeeded. He is sinking rapidly. It was noble of him to leap in front of me to certain death."

There came another low moan from the interior and Grace turned and went swiftly in. I followed her. My feelings were changing toward No. 50.

After a few minutes my eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness of the hut and I made out a covered form on a thick pile of leaves in one corner. It was No. 50, but I could hardly recognize him. His face was knotted with pain, and thick beads of sweat pearled on his face. A pile of rags on his chest, serving as bandages, was dark red. Blood slowly oozed

from the rags and discolored the leaves on which he lay.

Grace sat beside him on the thick pile of leaves and wiped the sweat from his face. His features were twitching, but under the soothing touch of Grace's hands he gradually quieted. The pain-knotted muscles of his face were relaxing, his face was coming back to normal. I, watching him intently, thought that he had dropped off to sleep or that the pain had died down.

GRACE was going to come over to me, when his arm darted out and gripped her hand and he said implor-ingly: "I wish to say something to you. Don't leave me now, Grace. I am going soon."

Grace sank back upon the pile of leaves and again soothed his brow with her hands.

"I won't leave you, Karl." There was infinite pity in her voice.

"You will forgive me, then, Grace?" No. 50 asked, and looked up pleadingly into her face.

"Yes," she replied after a mo-ment's pause, so quietly that I could hardly hear her. "Now that Ned is here safe and sound, I will hold no ill-will against you. You have my for-giveness freely."

"You don't hate me then? You know that I have always loved you, but the Society of Man had its first claim upon my time and upon me. I had to leave you because the supreme council called me to help in its experi-ments. When the success of our work was in sight I volunteered to go, but I stipulated that I should choose the one who was to accompany me. I wanted you, Grace, and I went at once to the city to find you. On account of the quarrel that I had with your father I could not go to your home and honorably ask your hand. I was sure that you loved me, but absence in my case did not make the heart grow fonder. I did not know then that you were soon to be married to Ned Spencer. I lay in wait for you near your home. I saw you getting off the street car with your hands full of bundles. You remember, don't you? And I hurried over to you. But you did not seem glad to see me. I asked why, and you told me of your approaching marriage.

"That piece of news drove me mad. I wanted you then more than I ever wanted anything, even more than I first wanted the promotion that would win me the coveted membership in the supreme council. A wild idea came to me. I thought that if I had you with me for a couple of days and you realized the power that I had in the Society of Man your feelings to-ward me would undergo a change.

"During my experiments with the other members of the supreme council I learnt many things about the mind and hypnotism, and so it was easy for me to apply my knowledge in hyp-notizing you and making you come to me. I took you to the house of a lesser member in the Society of Man. Through the power of my mind I made you agree to go through a form of marriage with me, but such a hue and cry was raised over your disap-pearance that it was not safe, and I had to give up the idea. I waited for a week and then brought you to the house where the members of the su-preme council were experimenting with the mysteries of the mind.

"Months went by, still you did not change toward me. You began hating me more and more. But I would not give you up. I wanted you even as you were. I thought that here on this world you would forget him.

"But as we were being sent into the infinite by the combined will power of the forty-nine members of the supreme council someone leapt to the top of the sacred altar of the So-ciety of Man and grappled with me. He threw me off the altar and you alone went out into the infinite. We

fought and both were hurled into the void after you by the power of mind of the supreme council. It was indeed fortunate for you that you should awake on the top of the platform where the men of this world were holding a ceremony to appease their varied gods for the slave-raiding expedition that they were on. If you had awaked in the forest you might not have survived.

"All day I searched frantically for you. I thought I should never find you. Twice I tried to gain communication with the members of the supreme council to lead me to you. As I was about to give up in despair and find a place to spend the night I happened to catch sight of the fire that the men of this world had kindled to roast their evening meal, and I came to the spot where you were.

"But again that man who had fought with me on the top of the sacred altar appeared and again we had to fight. In his hands he held the ax that he had wrested away from me in our previous struggle. I tried to bring my will to bear upon him, but his mind would not submit to my will. His fixity of purpose and his ferocity made it impossible for my mind to gain ascendancy over his. With the ax in his hands it seemed like certain death for me. I did not attempt to draw back. I wondered what he was to you to follow you so persistently over two worlds. When you called that warning to him I knew.

"I did not deem him a mean antagonist. A man who follows another across two worlds is to be taken seriously. I realized that he would never give up. How he managed to find that house where the supreme council gathers is more than I can say. He must have sought for you every instant since you first disappeared. I did not believe that it was possible for one to enter the chamber once the supreme council willed otherwise, and yet he broke through and fought in the very black room itself, the chamber which no outsider could enter without the consent of the supreme council. His fixity of purpose must have been terrific, or, perhaps, the power of the forty-nine dropped correspondingly as they willed for those on the altar to be sent to another world.

"I dodged a vicious blow that he had aimed at me, and his ax sank into the floor of the platform. Before he could draw it out I gave him a heavy blow upon his head and knocked him unconscious.

"An instant later, after you had dropped upon the floor of the platform and scribbled something there with a piece of charred wood, I hypnotized you into the belief that he was dead.

"I read the thoughts of the headman of those who were massed wide-eyed around the platform. I learnt that they were going on a slave-raiding expedition. I was able to converse with him without the vehicle of words, for his thoughts were clear to my searching mind, and with my will I was able to implant my thoughts into his mind.

"After I was sure of my power over him I ordered him to kill Ned. I did not take into consideration the fact that they considered us earthlings as some sort of gods. They were even afraid to go near him when he lay there unconscious. We were more than mortal to them; for had they not seen you, Grace, materialize from out of nothing right in front of their eyes on the platform? But it was too late to turn back, for those around me were already engaging with those whom they meant to enslave."

"Thank God there wasn't any time to turn back to put your fiendish plans into execution!" Grace cried, but No. 50 did not seem to hear, for

he continued as if there had been no interruption.

"When that half-beast threw his spear and it flew at you, I could not help but jump in front of it to shield you. What did it matter that I should receive it in my breast—didn't I love you more than life itself? I did it without thinking. Now I have to give you up. I am remaining alive only by the power of my will, and even my will is ebbing fast.

"I have tried to gain communication again with the members of the supreme council to draw me back to earth, but they do not reply. My mind, bridging the tremendous gap, has learnt that they have not yet wakened from their self-induced hypnotic sleep. They cannot waken because they did not first command themselves to return to consciousness when those on the altar had reached this world. They have achieved their purpose, the first principle of the Society of Man, but they are doomed, doomed as I am, because they have plunged into a power with which they were unfamiliar. They cannot awake and must remain in the state of that unnatural self-induced hypnotic slumber until Doomsday, unless their bodies are destroyed and their will freed."

No. 50 choked, and a bloody froth appeared on his lips. His face grew very red and then the blood drained away. His whole form stiffened and then relaxed. His eyes glazed. I thought that he was dead, and with him dead, Grace and I would never be able to see earth again. I did not know how desperately his tremendous will was struggling to regain control of his dying body. Life came back into his eyes.

He continued: "Their will has formed a link with this world, but it is a one-way path. As long as they exist and the altar exists, whatever is placed upon the altar will be sent to this world. To go back to earth a stronger propelling will must be used to overcome the steady push of the forty-nine members of the supreme council toward this world.

"Nothing can awaken the supreme council, and with the supreme council as good as nonexistent, the whole Society of Man is doomed. The society will disintegrate; for it is only the power of the supreme council that has held the Society of Man together so long and in such a compact secret organization."

I fidgeted and moved nearer to Grace. No. 50 gazed up at me and gave me a look such as I could not fathom. I was sure that there was no trace of hate or envy in it.

The hand that held Grace's hand tightened convulsively. The look in his eyes told of a valiant spirit suffering, suffering. I knew that he was being paid in full for the sufferings that he brought to us by a Power that was greater by far than the puny will power of the doomed forty-nine members of the supreme council—a Power that brought man to each world at the proper time and saw that man did not die out, a Power that had been doing that since the beginning of time.

A pleasanter light came into the eyes of No. 50. A smile broke out over his face. He whispered words, almost inaudible, of endearment to Grace, who smoothed his brow. She was thinking of the sacrifice that he had made for her, not of all that he had brought her to. His only crime was, to her mind, that he loved her.

"Grace," he said aloud, "I was just thinking of what might have been if you had loved me. It was only a dream, a dream that I wish to take with me into the Great Beyond. You —you will see that I am given a proper burial? Grace, you will, won't you?"

"Yes, of course, Karl."

"You will forgive me? You will try to think of me sometimes?"

"I'll never forget what you have done. I will always think good of you. My forgiveness is yours."

No. 50 remained quiet for some time. I turned to Grace and asked in a whisper:

"Did you know him before he kidnaped you? Who is he, Grace?"

"He is Karl—Karl Hademan, Ned."

"Karl Hademan?" I gasped. "You don't mean that he is the same Hademan you used to know before I met you, do you, Grace?"

Hademan, or No. 50, looked up at me and nodded his head once or twice. A faint smile broke out on his lips.

"Yes, I knew her long before you," he said. "But now I have to leave her to you. I cannot fight against fate."

No. 50 suddenly closed his eyes. His lips twitched, then he began to mutter something swiftly in a foreign tongue. I caught the English words: "Fellow members of the supreme council." He finished and said slowly to me, as if each word caused him untold agony:

"Yes, my friend, as you reasoned it from your side, I deserved all that I have received and more. Now I wish that I could make amends for what I have done to you two."

"If you are in earnest," I said, "tell us how we can go back to earth?"

He shook his head sadly. "Impossible. It is quite impossible for you two to go back unless you know the secret of combining many wills to form a powerful propelling force."

"And if I do, what then?"

He shot a surprized look at me. "You do?"

I nodded. "I was watching and heard it all," I said.

"If you know, then all you will have to do is to get together enough of the best intelligence of the people of this world and train them to induce self-hypnotism. When you are ready to try to experiment don't forget to order them to awake the minute you have reached your destination; otherwise their fate will be the same as that of the forty-nine members of the supreme council. I wish you luck."

Bloody froth again appeared on his lips. His will power seemed weakened. His body could not support his will longer.

"I cannot make any more amends," he cried. "I am going on a far greater journey than you will attempt. Forgive me, both of you! Please! Please!"

I knelt beside him. He didn't seem much older than I.

"I bear you no ill-will," I said, gripping his hand in mine.

His body stiffened and then grew limp. His eyes glazed. A tranquil look spread over his face.

We buried him outside of the hut and erected a large flat stone over his grave. Grace chipped the words, "One who gave his life for a friend," on the flat surface before she left that grave.

We went back with that raiding expedition to their own country. They treated us as if we were more than mere mortals. I fostered that belief; for only through their aid would we ever be able to go back to earth.

MANY months passed before we knew their language. I showed them how to work metals, and built the first steam engine for them to do their work. Their attitude grew more and more submissive to me.

One day a slave was brought into the large village where Grace and I were staying. When he saw me he threw himself upon the ground and began to cry for protection. The tongue of the near-man was almost identical with the language of the men with whom we were living. He recognized me and called me some flowery name that his mind conjured up. I went over to him and asked

his name. He grinned from ear to ear. He drew some air into his chest and pounded it. From his lips there broke forth a sound that was half way between a cough and a grunt.

"Gruh," he said, and again pounded his chest. "Me, Gruh, chief of the village they enslave."

Gruh became my personal slave. He would not take no for an answer, but pleaded until I gave in. He seemed to think that because I had saved his life I should take a sort of proprietary interest in him. He followed me wherever I went.

I gathered together nearly five hundred of the most intellectual men of that world and showed them what I wanted them to do. Many weary months passed before there was the least sign of success. I did not keep track of time. At last I had them trained to the point where I was sure of their success.

In a very large building I gathered them together and was ready to attempt the return to earth with the aid of their wills. I would not give up hope if there was the least sign of a chance. They were ready and I gave them their last instruction. I also commanded them to forget all about it and awake as soon as we were safely upon earth.

Just before I was ready to clamber upon a small bench in the center of the building where were gathered the five hundred who were to send us back to Earth, Gruh, who had been hovering near, realized what all those preparations were for. He gave a loud cry and shambled over to where I was standing near Grace. He begged that I should allow him to accompany us, until at last Grace gave her permission.

It took a whole day before the first one had induced self-hypnotism. The second took only half a day, and the third took a quarter, the fourth an eighth, and so on, each time less and less as their multiplying will became stronger.

"Do you think that they will be able to send us back, Ned?" Grace asked wearily at last.

"I hope so," I replied.

The last of the five hundred had dropped into the state of self-induced hypnotism. Minutes more passed. I was just beginning to think that they had failed when I glanced down and saw a haziness enveloping the three of us. Grace held on to me, and I clutched her tightly. We began to whirl around and around in the vortex of power they were producing.

We left the surface of that world with a rush. I looked at the hazy outlines of Gruh with a smile. Over his features there was a look of fear that was well-nigh incredible. He saw me smiling at him and an answering wan smile appeared on his face.

The power of the members of the supreme council could be easily felt. It was pushing against the power of the five hundred that were propelling us back to earth, but the five hundred were stronger. The resistance of the forty-nine members of the supreme council was like an outgoing tide against an incoming power boat. We were buffeted back and forth, still we gained upon the power that was pushing us away from earth, and at last we were again on the altar in the black room of the Society of Man.

I fell off the altar and came to my senses just as I saw Grace once more become hazy. I hastily drew her off the altar. I saw the form of Gruh, who had accompanied us, dissolve again and hurtle into the infinite. He was propelled by the power of the forty-nine members of the supreme council. If I had not fallen off the altar and come back to my senses, Grace and I might have been propelled back and forth across the void between the two worlds until the crack of doom. Such may have been

the fate of Gruh, for we never saw him again.

THE black room was just as I had left it. The members of the supreme council were sprawled out in their chairs in exactly the same way as when No. 50 and I had fought upon the altar. Over them all there was spread a thick layer of fine dust.

I went from one to the other in an effort to awaken them. They seemed lifeless and I gave up the attempt.

The cellar window through which I had entered was overgrown with weeds, so that it was impossible to get out that way. I hunted for the secret door in the cellar, and I found it after searching for nearly half an hour. I pulled and tugged for many minutes before it opened wide enough to admit our bodies.

I looked down the passage and saw a patch of daylight at the far end. We moved warily down the underground passage. At the far end there was a ladder. I reached it first and peered up. Daylight showed through. Grace was a little behind me with the lantern. I ran up the ladder and at the top I saw that the secret entrance was through the hollowed center of the large tree that stood near the square house. The house, even more decayed and deserted-looking than before, was plainly visible from the tree.

I called Grace to come up. She climbed up after me. Just as she was crawling out she let slip the lantern that she had brought up with her. It dropped, and a moment later a sheet of flame burst on the floor of the tunnel.

Grace, badly frightened, grasped my neck and I drew her out of the center of the tree. We began to hurry away. The air was very warm, like that of middle summer. Winter had been coming when I first entered that house.

A kindly driver gave us a lift to the small city near by. We at once sent telegrams asking our folks to telegraph us two tickets for home. On my telegram I jubilantly wrote that I had found Grace.

As we were drawing out of that small city I read in a paper that a fire of unknown origin had destroyed a large abandoned house just outside the city limits. It described the house in detail. It was the house of the black room.

I showed the paper to Grace, and we remembered the fallen lantern, the passageway of dry wood, the draft of air that blew through the tunnel to the cellar.

MR. THOMAS lost six years or more when he saw Grace again. He demanded to know of my experiences. But when I told him of the supreme council, No. 50, the other world, the five hundred that had sent us back, he looked at me as if the hardships that I had undergone had turned my mind. When Grace added her voice to mine and said that it was true, still he would not believe it. At last he was convinced that we, at least, believed that it was true, and advised us not to tell it to anyone, for he warned us that no one would believe us.

He was right. When we told our stories to our friends they looked at us as if they thought we were fit candidates for the insane asylum. But Grace and I did not greatly care as long as we had each other. Our long-delayed wedding was celebrated the week after we reached home.

Sometimes when Grace is silent, I know what she is thinking of; and I, too, think of that other world. Often I wonder if the forty-nine members of the supreme council escaped the fire—if the fire brought them out of their sleep. I never learned whether any bodies were found in the ruins of that seemingly abandoned house.

[THE END.]

SPEAR *and* FANG

A Tale of the Cavemen

By ROBERT E. HOWARD

A-ÆA crouched close to the cave mouth, watching Ga-nor with wondering eyes. Ga-nor's occupation interested her, as well as Ga-nor himself. As for Ga-nor, he was too occupied with his work to notice her. A torch stuck in a niche in the cave wall dimly illuminated the roomy cavern, and by its light Ga-nor was laboriously tracing figures on the wall. With a piece of flint he scratched the outline and then with a twig dipped in ocher paint completed the figure. The result was crude, but gave evidenco of real artistic genius, struggling for expression.

It was a mammoth that he sought to depict, and little A-æa's eyes widened with wonder and admiration. Wonderful! What though the beast lacked a leg and had no tail? It was tribesmen, just struggling out of utter barbarism, who were the critics, and to them Ga-nor was a past master.

However, it was not to watch the reproduction of a mammoth thatA-æa hid among the scanty bushes by Ga-nor's cave. The admiration for the painting was as nothing beside the look of positive adoration with which she favored the artist. Indeed, Ga-nor was not unpleasing to the eye. Tall he was, towering well over six feet, leanly built, with mighty shoulders and narrow hips, the build of a fighting man. Both his hands and his feet were long and slim; and his features, thrown into bold profile by the flickering torch-light, were intelligent, with a high, broad forehead, topped by a mane of sandy hair.

A-æa herself was very easy to look upon. Her hair, as well as her eyes, was black and fell about her slim shoulders in a rippling wave. No ocher tattooing tinted her cheek, for she was still unmated.

Both the girl and the youth were perfect specimens of the great Cro-Magnon race which came from no man knows where and announced and enforced their supremacy over beast and beast-man.

A-æa glanced about nervously. All ideas to the contrary, customs and taboos are much more narrow and vigorously enforced among savage peoples.

The more primitive a race, the more intolerant their customs. Vice and licentiousness may be the rule, but the appearance of vice is shunned and contemned. So if A-æa had been discovered, hiding near the cave of an unattached young man, denunciation as a shameless woman would have been her lot, and doubtless a public whipping.

To be proper, A-æa should have played the modest, demure maiden, perhaps skilfully arousing the young artist's interest without seeming to do so. Then, if the youth was pleased, would have followed public wooing by means of crude love-songs and music from reed pipes. Then barter with her parents and then—marriage. Or no wooing at all, if the lover was wealthy.

But little A-æa was herself a mark of progress. Covert glances had failed to attract the attention of the young man who seemed engrossed with his artistry, so she had taken to the unconventional way of spying upon him,

in hopes of finding some way to win him.

Ga-nor turned from his completed work, stretched and glanced toward the cave mouth. Like a frightened rabbit, little A-æa ducked and darted away.

When Ga-nor emerged from the cave, he was puzzled by the sight of a small, slender footprint in the soft loam outside the cave.

A-æa walked primly toward her own cave, which was, with most of the others, at some distance from Ga-nor's cave. As she did so, she noticed a group of warriors talking excitedly in front of the chief's cave.

A mere girl might not intrude upon the councils of men, but such was A-æa's curiosity, that she dared a scolding by slipping nearer. She heard the words "footprint" and "gur-na" (man-ape).

The footprints of a gur-na had been found in the forest, not far from the caves.

"Gur-na" was a word of hatred and horror to the people of the caves, for the creatures whom the tribesmen called "gur-na", or man-apes, were the hairy monsters of another age, the brutish men of the Neandertal. More feared than mammoth or tiger, they had ruled the forests until the Cro-Magnon men had come and waged savage warfare against them. Of mighty power and little mind, savage, bestial and cannibalistic, they inspired the tribesmen with loathing and horror—a horror transmitted through the ages in tales of ogres and goblins, of werewolves and beast-men.

They were fewer and more cunning, then. No longer they rushed roaring to battle, but cunning and frightful, they slunk about the forests, the terror of all beasts, brooding in their brutish minds with hatred for the men who had driven them from the best hunting grounds.

And ever the Cro-Magnon men trailed them down and slaughtered them, until sullenly they had withdrawn far into the deep forests. But the fear of them remained with the tribesmen, and no woman went into the jungle alone.

Sometimes children went, and sometimes they returned not; and searchers found but signs of a ghastly feast, with tracks that were not the tracks of beasts, nor yet the tracks of men.

And so a hunting party would go forth and hunt the monster down. Sometimes it gave battle and was slain, and sometimes it fled before them and escaped into the depths of the forest, where they dared not follow. Once a hunting party, reckless with the chase, had pursued a fleeing gur-na into the deep forest and there, in a deep ravine, where overhanging limbs shut out the sunlight, numbers of the Neandertalers had come upon them.

So no more entered the forests.

A-ÆA turned away, with a glance at the forest. Somewhere in its depths lurked the beast-man, piggish eyes glinting crafty hate, malevolent, frightful.

Someone stepped across her path. It was Ka-nanu, the son of a councilor of the chief.

She drew away with a shrug of her shoulders. She did not like Ka-nanu and she was afraid of him. He wooed her with a mocking air, as if he did it merely for amusement and would take her whenever he wished, anyway. He seized her by the wrist.

"Turn not away, fair maiden," said he. "It is your slave, Ka-nanu."

"Let me go," she answered. "I must go to the spring for water."

"Then I will go with you, moon of delight, so that no beast may harm you."

And accompany her he did, in spite of her protests.

"There is a gur-na abroad," he told her sternly. "It is lawful for a man to accompany even an unmated

maiden, for protection. And I am Ka-nanu," he added, in a different tone; "do not resist me too far, or I will teach you obedience."

A-æa knew somewhat of the man's ruthless nature. Many of the tribal girls looked with favor on Ka-nanu, for he was bigger and taller even than Ga-nor, and more handsome in a reckless, cruel way. But A-æa loved Ga-nor and she was afraid of Ka-nanu. Her very fear of him kept her from resisting his approaches too much. Ga-nor was known to be gentle with women, if careless of them, while Ka-nanu, thereby showing himself to be another mark of progress, was proud of his success with women and used his power over them in no gentle fashion.

A-æa found Ka-nanu was to be feared more than a beast, for at the spring just out of sight of the caves, he seized her in his arms.

"A-æa," he whispered, "my little antelope, I have you at last. You shall not escape me."

In vain she struggled and pleaded with him. Lifting her in his mighty arms he strode away into the forest.

Frantically she strove to escape, to dissuade him.

"I am not powerful enough to resist you," she said, "but I will accuse you before the tribe."

"You will never accuse me, little antelope," he said, and she read another, even more sinister intention in his cruel countenance.

On and on into the forest he carried her, and in the midst of a glade he paused, his hunter's instinct alert.

From the trees in front of them dropped a hideous monster, a hairy, misshapen, frightful thing.

A-æa's scream re-echoed through the forest, as the thing approached. Ka-nanu, white-lipped and horrified, dropped A-æa to the ground and told her to run. Then, drawing knife and ax, he advanced.

The Neandertal man plunged forward on short, gnarled legs. He was covered with hair and his features were more hideous than an ape's because of the grotesque quality of the man in them. Flat, flaring nostrils, retreating chin, fangs, no forehead whatever, great, immensely long arms dangling from sloping, incredible shoulders, the monster seemed like the devil himself to the terrified girl. His apelike head came scarcely to Ka-nanu's shoulders, yet he must have outweighed the warrior by nearly a hundred pounds.

On he came like a charging buffalo, and Ka-nanu met him squarely and boldly. With flint ax and obsidian dagger he thrust and smote, but the ax was brushed aside like a toy and the arm that held the knife snapped like a stick in the misshapen hand of the Neandertaler. The girl saw the councilor's son wrenched from the ground and swung into the air, saw him hurled clear across the glade, saw the monster leap after him and rend him limb from limb.

Then the Neandertaler turned his attention to her. A new expression came into his hideous eyes as he lumbered toward her, his great hairy hands horridly smeared with blood, reaching toward her.

Unable to flee, she lay dizzy with horror and fear. And the monster dragged her to him, leering into her eyes. He swung her over his shoulder and waddled away through the trees; and the girl, half-fainting, knew that he was taking her to his lair, where no man would dare come to rescue her.

GA-NOR came down to the spring to drink. Idly he noticed the faint footprints of a couple who had come before him. Idly he noticed that they had not returned.

Each footprint has its individual characteristic. That of the man he knew to be Ka-nanu. The other track

was the same as that in front of his cave. He wondered, idly as Ga-nor was wont to do all things except the painting of pictures.

Then, at the spring, he noticed that the footprints of the girl ceased, but that the man's turned toward the jungle and were more deeply imprinted than before. Therefore Kanamu was carrying the girl.

Ga-nor was no fool. He knew that a man carries a girl into the forest for no good purpose. If she had been willing to go, she would not have been carried.

Now Ga-nor (another mark of progress) was inclined to meddle in things not pertaining to him. Perhaps another man would have shrugged his shoulders and gone his way, reflecting that it would not be well to interfere with a son of a councilor. But Ga-nor had few interests, and once his interest was roused he was inclined to see a thing through. Moreover, though not renowned as a fighter, he feared no man.

Therefore, he loosened ax and dagger in his belt, shifted his grip on his spear, and took up the trail.

ON AND ON, deeper and deeper into the forest, the Neandertaler carried little A-æa.

The forest was silent and evil, no birds, no insects broke the stillness. Through the overhanging trees no sunlight filtered. On padded feet that made no noise the Neandertaler hurried on.

Beasts slunk out of his path. Once a great python came slithering through the jungle and the Neandertaler took to the trees with surprizing speed for one of his gigantic bulk. He was not at home in the trees, however, not even as much as A-æa would have been.

Once or twice the girl glimpsed another such monster as her captor. Evidently they had gone far beyond the vaguely defined boundaries of her race. The other Neandertal men avoided them. It was evident that they lived as do beasts, uniting only against some common enemy and not often then. Therein had lain the reason for the success of the Cro-Magnards' warfare against them.

Into a ravine he carried the girl, and into a cave, small and vaguely illumined by the light from without. He threw her roughly to the floor of the cave, where she lay, too terrified to rise.

The monster watched her, like some demon of the forest. He did not even jabber at her, as an ape would have done. The Neandertalers had no form of speech whatever.

He offered her meat of some kind—uncooked, of course. Her mind reeling with horror, she saw that it was the arm of a Cro-Magnard child. When he saw she would not eat, he devoured it himself, tearing the flesh with great fangs.

He took her between his great hands, bruising her soft flesh. He ran rough fingers through her hair, and when he saw that he hurt her he seemed filled with a fiendish glee. He tore out handfuls of her hair, seeming to enjoy devilishly the torturing of his fair captive. A-æa set her teeth and would not scream as she had done at first, and presently he desisted.

The leopard-skin garment she wore seemed to enrage him. The leopard was his hereditary foe. He plucked it from her and tore it to pieces.

And meanwhile Ga-nor was hurrying through the forest. He was racing now, and his face was a devil's mask, for he had come upon the bloody glade and had found the monster's tracks leading away from it.

And in the cave in the ravine the Neandertaler reached for A-æa.

She sprang back and he plunged toward her. He had her in a corner but she slipped under his arm and

sprang away. He was still between her and the outside of the cave.

Unless she could get past him, he would corner her and seize her. So she pretended to spring to one side. The Neandertaler lumbered in that direction, and quick as a cat she sprang the other way and darted past him, out into the ravine.

With a bellow he charged after her. A stone rolled beneath her foot, flinging her headlong; before she could rise his hand seized her shoulder. As he dragged her into the cave, she screamed, wildly, frenziedly, with no hope of rescue, just the scream of a woman in the grasp of a beast.

Ga-nor heard that scream as he bounded down into the ravine. He approached the cave swiftly but cautiously. As he looked in, he saw red rage. In the vague light of the cave, the great Neandertaler stood, his piggish eyes on his foe, hideous, hairy, blood-smeared, while at his feet, her soft white body contrasting with the shaggy monster, her long hair gripped in his blood-stained hand, lay A-æa.

The Neandertaler bellowed, dropped his captive and charged. And Ga-nor met him, not matching brute strength with his lesser might, but leaping back and out of the cave. His spear leaped and the monster bellowed as it tore through his arm. Leaping back again, the warrior jerked his spear and crouched. Again the Neandertaler rushed, and again the warrior leaped away and thrust, this time for the great hairy chest. And so they battled, speed and intelligence against brute strength and savagery.

Once the great, lashing arm of the monster caught Ga-nor upon the shoulder and hurled him a dozen feet away, rendering that arm nearly useless for a time. The Neandertaler bounded after him, but Ga-nor flung himself to one side and leaped to his feet. Again and again his spear drew blood, but it seemed only to enrage the monster.

Then before the warrior knew it, the wall of the ravine was at his back and he heard A-æa shriek as the monster rushed in. The spear was torn from his hand and he was in the grasp of his foe. The great arms encircled his neck and shoulders, the great fangs sought his throat. He thrust his elbow under the retreating chin of his antagonist, and with his free hand struck the hideous face again and again; blows that would have felled an ordinary man but which the Neandertal beast did not even notice.

Ga-nor felt consciousness going from him. The terrific arms were crushing him, threatening to break his neck. Over the shoulder of his foe he saw the girl approaching with a great stone, and he tried to motion her back.

With a great effort he reached down over the monster's arm and found his ax. But so close were they clinched together that he could not draw it. The Neandertal man set himself to break his foe to pieces as one breaks a stick. But Ga-nor's elbow was thrust under his chin, and the more the Neandertal man tugged, the deeper drove the elbow into his hairy throat. Presently he realized that fact and flung Ga-nor away from him. As he did so, the warrior drew his ax, and striking with the fury of desperation, clove the monster's head.

For a minute Ga-nor stood reeling above his foe, then he felt a soft form within his arms and saw a pretty face, close to his.

"Ga-nor!" A-æa whispered, and Ga-nor gathered the girl in his arms.

"What I have fought for I will keep," said he.

And so it was that the girl who went forth into the forest in the arms of an abductor came back in the arms of a lover and a mate.

No. 1. The Three Low Masses*

A Ghost-Tale of Old Provence

By ALPHONSE DAUDET

Translated by Farnsworth Wright

"TWO stuffed turkeys, Garrigou?"

"Yes, Reverend, two magnificent turkeys stuffed with truffles. And I ought to know, too, for I helped stuff them myself. One would think their skins would crack while they were roasting, they are stretched so tight."

"Jesus and Mary! I who love truffles so much! . . . Quick, Garrigou, give me my surplice. . . And besides the turkeys, what else did you see in the kitchens?"

"Oh, all sorts of good things! Ever since noon we have been plucking pheasants, hoopooes, hazel-hens and heath-cocks. The feathers filled the air. And then from the pond they brought eels, goldfish, trout, and—"

"How big were the trout, Garrigou?"

"So big, Reverend! Enormous!"

"Oh, good Lord! I can fairly see them. . . Did you put the wine in the vases?"

"Yes, Reverend, I put the wine in the vases. But heavens! it's nothing like the wine you will have later, when you come from the midnight mass. Oh, if you could only see the dining hall, all the decanters blazing with wines of all colors! And the silverware, the chased centerpieces, the flowers, the candelabra! Never was there seen such a Christmas supper! The marquis has invited all the lords of the neighboring estates. There will be at least forty of you at the table, without counting the bailiff or the notary. Ah! you are fortunate in being one of them, Reverend! Only from sniffing those wonderful turkeys, the odor of truffles follows me everywhere. Mmmm!"

"Come, come, my boy! Heaven preserve us from the sin of gluttony, above all on this night of the Nativity! . . . Hurry off, now, and light the tapers and ring the first call for mass, for it will soon be midnight and we mustn't be late."

THIS conversation took place one Christmas night in the year of grace sixteen hundred and something, between the Reverend Dom Balaguère, former prior of the Barnabites and present chaplain of the Sires of Trinquelage, and his little clerk Garrigou—or at least him whom he believed to be the little clerk Garrigou, for let me tell you that the devil, that evening, had assumed the round face and uncertain features of the young sacristan, the better to lead the reverend father into temptation and make him commit the frightful sin of gluttony. So while the so-called Garrigou (hm! hm!) rang out the chimes from the seigniorial chapel, the reverend father slipped on his chasuble

* *From "Lettres de Mon Moulin", by Alphonse Daudet.*

in the little vestry of the castle, and, his imagination already excited by Garrigou's gastronomical descriptions, he kept muttering to himself as he got into his vestments:

"Roast turkeys . . . goldfish . . . trout, so big!"

Outside, the night wind blew and spread abroad the music of the bells. Lights began to appear in the darkness on the sides of Mount Ventoux, on whose summit the old towers of Trinquelage upreared their heads. The neighboring farmers and their families were on their way to the castle to hear midnight mass. They climbed the mountain singing gayly, in groups of five or six, the father leading the way with his lantern, the women following, wrapped in great dark coats, under which the children snuggled to keep warm. In spite of the cold and the late hour of the night, all these good people walked along merrily, cheered by the thought that on coming from the mass they would find, as usual, a great supper awaiting them down-stairs in the castle kitchen. From time to time, on the rough ascent, the carriage of some lord, preceded by torch-bearers, showed its glimmering windowpanes in the moonlight; or a mule trotted along shaking its bells; or again, by the gleam of the great lanterns wrapped in mist, the farmers recognized their bailiff and hailed him as he passed:

"Good evening, good evening, Master Arnoton!"

"Good evening, good evening, my children!"

The night was clear; the stars seemed brightened by the frost; the northeast wind was nipping; and a fine sleet powdered all these cloaks without wetting them, preserving faithfully the tradition of a Christmas white with snow. On the very crest of the mountain the castle appeared as the goal, with its huge mass of towers and gables, the chapel steeple rising straight into the blue-black sky, and a crowd of little lights moving rapidly hither and thither, winking at all the windows, and looking, against the intense black of that lordly pile, like the little sparks that run through the ashes of burnt paper.

After passing the drawbridge and the postern, in order to get to the chapel one had to cross the first court, full of coaches, footmen and sedan-chairs silhouetted against the flare of the torches and the glare from the kitchens. One could hear the creaking of the turning spits, the clatter of pots, the tinkling of glassware and silver, as they were laid out for the banquet; and above it all floated a warm vapor smelling of roasted meats and the pungent herbs of elaborate sauces, which made the farmers, as well as the chaplain, the bailiff, and everybody say:

"What a wonderful midnight supper we are going to have after the mass!"

2

DING-A-LING-LING! Ding-a-ling-ling! The midnight mass has begun. In the chapel of the castle, which is a miniature cathedral with its intercrossed arches and oaken wainscoting up to the ceiling, all the tapestries are hung, all the tapers lighted. What a crowd of people! And what sumptuous costumes! Here, in one of the carven stalls that surround the choir, is the Sire of Trinquelage, clad in salmon-colored silk; and around him all the noble lords, his guests. Opposite them, on velvet fall-stools, kneel the old dowager marchioness, in a gown of flame-colored brocade, and the young lady of Trinquelage, wearing on her head a great tower of lace puffed and quilled according to the latest fashion of the French court. Farther down the aisle, all dressed in black, with vast pointed wigs and clean-shaven chins, sit Thomas Arno-

ton the bailiff and Master Ambroy the notary, two somber spots among these gaudy silks and figured damasks. Then come the fat majordomos, the pages, the outriders, the stewards, and Dame Barbe, with all her keys dangling at her side on a great key-ring of fine silver. On the benches in the rear is the lower service—the butlers and maids, the farmers and their families; and last of all, back by the doors, which they half open and discreetly close again, come the cooks to take a little nip of the mass between two sauces, and bring an odor of the Christmas supper into the be-decked church, which is warm with the light of so many tapers.

Can it be the sight of these little white caps that diverts the reverend father's attention? Is it not rather Garrigou's bell?—that fiendish little bell that tinkles away at the foot of the altar with such infernal haste and seems to say all the time:

"Hurry up! Hurry up! The sooner we've finished, the sooner we shall be at supper."

The fact is that every time this devilish little bell peals out, the chaplain forgets his mass, and his mind wanders to the Christmas supper. Visions rise before him of the cooks running busily hither and thither, the ovens glowing like furnaces, warm vapors rising from under half-lifted lids, and through these vapors two magnificent turkeys, stuffed, crammed, mottled with truffles . . . Or then again, he sees long files of little pages carrying great dishes wrapped in their tempting fumes, and he is about to enter the dining hall with them for the feast. What ecstasy! Here stands the immense table, laden and dazzling, with peacocks dressed in their feathers, pheasants spreading their bronzed wings, ruby-colored flagons, pyramids of luscious fruit amid the green foliage, and those wonderful fish that Garrigou spoke of (Garrigou, forsooth!) reclining on a bed of fennel, their pearly scales looking as if they were just from the pond, and a bunch of pungent herbs in their monsterlike nostrils. So vivid is the vision of these marvels that Dom Balaguère actually fancies all these glorious dishes are being served before him, on the very embroideries of the altar-cloth, and two or three times, instead of *Dominus vobiscum* he catches himself saying the *Benedicite*. But except for these slight mistakes the worthy man rattled off the service conscientiously, without skipping a line or omitting a genuflection; and all went well to the end of the first mass. For you must know that on Christmas the same officiating priest is obliged to say three masses consecutively.

"And that's one!" said the chaplain to himself with a sigh of relief; then, without losing a second, he motioned to his clerk, or him whom he believed to be his clerk, and—

Ding-a-ling-ling! Ding-a-ling-ling!

The second mass has begun, and with it Dom Balaguère's sin.

"Quick, quick! let us hurry!" says Garrigou's bell in its shrill, devilish voice, and this time the unfortunate priest, possessed by the demon of gluttony, pounces upon the missal and devours its pages with the avidity of his over-excited appetite. He kneels and rises frantically, barely sketches the sign of the cross and the genuflections, and shortens all his gestures in order to get through sooner. He scarcely extends his arms at the Gospel, or strikes his breast at the *Confiteor*. Between him and the clerk it is hard to tell who mumbles the faster. Verses and responses leap out and jostle each other. The words, half uttered between their teeth—for it would take too long to open their lips every time,—die out into unintelligible murmurs.

"Oremus . . . ps . . . ps . . ."

"Mea culpa . . . pa . . . pa . . ."

Like hurried vintagers crushing the grapes in the vats, they both splashed about in the Latin of the service, spattering it in every direction.

"*Dom . . . scum!*" says Balaguère.

". . . *Stutuo!*" replies Garrigou; and all the time the accurst little bell jingles in their ears like the sleigh-bells that are put on stage-horses to make them gallop faster. You may well believe that at such speed a low mass is soon hurried out of the way.

"And that's two," says the chaplain, all out of breath; then, red in the face, perspiring freely, without taking time to breathe he goes tumbling down the altar steps and—

Ding-a-ling-ling! Ding-a-ling-ling!

The third mass has begun. There are only a few steps between him and the dining hall; but alas! as the time approaches, the unfortunate Dom Balaguère's fever of impatience and greediness grows. His imagination waxes more vivid; the fish, the roasted turkeys, are there before him . . . he touches them . . . he—good heavens!—he breathes the perfume of the wines and the savory fumes of the dishes, and the infernal little bell calls out frantically to him:

"Hurry, hurry! Faster, faster!"

But how on earth can he go faster? —his lips barely move; he no longer pronounces his words—unless, forsooth, he chooses to cheat the good Lord and swindle him out of His mass. And that is just what he does, the wretched man! Yielding to temptation after temptation, he begins by skipping one verse, then two; then he finds the Epistle too long, so he leaves it unfinished; he skims over the Gospel; passes the *Credo* without entering: jumps the *Pater*; salutes the preface from afar; and by leaps and bounds he plunges into eternal damnation, followed by that infamous Garrigou *(Vade retro, Satanas!)*, who seconds him with marvelous sympathy, holds up his chasuble, turns the pages two at a time, jostles the lecturn, upsets the vases, and constantly rings the little bell faster and louder.

It would be impossible to describe the bewildered expression of the congregation. Compelled to follow, mimicking the priest, through this mass of which they cannot make out a single word, some get up while others kneel, some sit while others stand; and all the phases of this singular service are jumbled together along the benches in a confusion of varied postures. The Christmas star on its celestial road, journeying toward the little manger yonder, grows pale at seeing such a frightful confusion.

"The abbé reads too fast; one can't follow him," murmurs the old dowager marchioness, her voluminous head-dress shaking wildly. Master Arnoton, with his great steel spectacles on his nose, hunts desperately in his prayerbook to find where on earth is the place. But at heart, all these good people, whose minds are equally bent upon the Christmas supper, are not at all disturbed at the idea of following mass at such breakneck speed; and when Dom Balaguère, his face shining, faces them and cries out in a thundering voice, "*Ite, missa est,*" the congregation answers with a "*Deo gratias*" so joyous, so enthusiastic, that one might believe they were already at the table for the first toast of the Christmas supper.

3

Five minutes later, the assembled lords, with the chaplain in their midst, had taken their seats in the great hall. The castle, brilliantly illumined from top to bottom, echoed with songs and laughter; and the venerable Dom Balaguère planted his fork in a capon's wing, drowning the remorse for his sin in floods of old wine and the savory juice of meats.

He ate and drank so heartily, this poor holy man, that he died in the night of a terrible attack of indigestion, without even having time to repent. By morning he reached heaven, his head still swimming from the odors of the supper; and I leave you to imagine how he was received.

"Get thee gone from my sight, thou wretched Christian!" said the Sovereign Judge, the Master of us all. "Thy sin is great enough to wipe out the virtues of a lifetime! Ah, thou hast stolen from me a midnight mass! Very well, then: thou shalt pay me three hundred masses in its place, and thou shalt not enter into paradise until three hundred Christmas masses have been celebrated in thine own chapel, in the presence of all those who sinned with thee and through thee."

And this is the true legend of Dom Balaguère, as it is told in the land of the olive-tree. The castle of Trinquelage has long ceased to exist; but the chapel stands erect on the crest of Mount Ventoux, in a clump of evergreen oaks. The wind sways its unhinged door, the grass grows over the threshold; there are nests in the angles of the altar and on the sills of the high ogive windows, whose jeweled panes have long ago disappeared. Still, it seems that every year, on Christmas night, a supernatural light wanders among the ruins; and the peasants, on their way to midnight mass and the Christmas supper, see this specter of a chapel lighted by invisible tapers which burn in the open air, even in the wind and under the snow. You may laugh if you will, but a vine-dresser of the district, named Garrigue, no doubt a descendant of Garrigou, has told me that on one particular Christma night, being somewhat in liquor, he lost his way on the mountain sc ewhere near Trinquelage, and this what he saw. . . . Until 11 o'clock, nothing. Everything was silent and dark. Suddenly, toward midnight, the chimes rang out from the old steeple—old, old chimes that seemed to be ringing ten leagues away. Soon lights began to tremble along the road that climbs to the castle, and vague shadows moved about. Under the portal of the chapel there were faint footsteps, and muffled voices:

"Good evening, Master Arnoton!"

"Good evening, good evening, my children!"

When they had all gone in, the vine-dresser, who was very brave, softly approached, and, looking through the broken door, beheld a singular spectacle. All those shadows that he had seen pass were now seated around the choir in the ruined nave, just as if the old benches were still there. There were fine ladies in brocades and lace head-dresses, gayly bedecked lords, peasants in flowered coats like those our grandfathers wore; all of them old, dusty, faded, weary. Every now and then some night-bird, a habitual lodger in the chapel, awakened by all these lights, would flutter about the tapers, of which the flame rose erect and vague as if it were burning behind a strip of gauze. And what amused Garrigue most was a certain gentleman with great steel spectacles, who constantly shook his huge black wig, on which perched one of those birds, its claws entangled and its wings beating wildly.

A little old man with a childlike figure knelt in the center of the choir and frantically shook a tiny bell that had lost its clapper and its voice, while a priest clad in vestments of old gold moved hither and thither before the altar repeating orisons of which not a single syllable could be heard.

Without doubt, this was Dom Balaguère in the act of saying his third low mass.

The END *of the* HORROR

No. 5

Author of "The Phantom Farmhouse," "Out of the Long Ago," etc.

IN THE village church of Salem, Massachusetts, one summer afternoon in the year 1692, Mary Easty, wife of Isaac Easty, of Salem Village, stood to receive sentence of death by hanging.

"Mary Easty," said Chief Justice Stoughton, "you have been tried by a jury of your peers and found guilty of the horrible and detestable crime of witchcraft. Mary Easty, have you anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?"

The prisoner regarded her judges calmly. She was a fragile woman, about fifty-eight years of age, borne down by years of heart-breaking toil, by long imprisonment and the fear of death which had been with her since the day the marshal took her in custody. She had borne seven children to Massachusetts—sons and daughters whose descendants would one day sustain the rights of Englishmen by taking up arms against England's German king; she had always endeavored to live in love and charity with her neighbors; now she stood convicted of the most terrible crime known to the law, a crime worse than treason itself. She curtsied to the court, as a well-behaved woman should to her betters.

"Your honors," said she, "I humbly petition you, not for my own life, for I know I must die, and my appointed time is set; but, if it be possible, let no more innocent blood be shed."

Mary Easty was the sister of Rebecca Nurse, already convicted of witchcraft, and, like her sister, she had been found guilty on the testimony of Ann Putnam and Abigail Williams, both children in their teens, who declared on oath that her shade had come to them in the night and "sorely afflicted" them.

On September 22 Mary Easty and seven other unfortunates, all condemned on the testimony of the "afflicted children," were conveyed to Gallows Hill and hanged by the neck until dead.

The Reverend Mr. Noyes, duly ordained clergyman and friend and confidant of Samuel Parris, pastor of Salem Village Church, looked at the bodies swinging from the gallows and

piously remarked, "How sad it is to see eight firebrands of hell hanging there."

It was the last time the reverend gentleman's churchly eyes were to be saddened by such a spectacle.

ENCOURAGED by their minister, the Reverend Samuel Parris, the group of girls had sworn away life after life during the long summer of 1692. No one, no matter how good his reputation, was safe if once these irresponsible children "cried out" against him. Giles and Martha Corey, well-to-do and respectable farmers, had been put to death on their testimony; Rebecca Nurse, dearly loved for her piety and goodness, had died a felon's death; even George Burroughs, an ordained minister of the Gospel, widely loved and wholesomely respected, had not been safe against their malice.

And once a person stood accused by these pitiless little wretches, his doom was sealed. No alibi could be pleaded, for the essence of the case in almost every instance was that the accused had "appeared unto" and "grievously afflicted" one or more of the accusing children when he (the accused) was well known to be somewhere else.

Absurd? Of course it is, by any process of modern reasoning; but the whole belief in witchcraft was based on a wholehearted acceptance of the existence of a personal devil. The fiend bought the souls of such as would acknowledge themselves his servants, and, as purchase price, gave them an attendant imp, or familiar. When Satan's servant wished to plague some godly soul, all she had to do was summon her familiar and bid it assume an exact likeness of herself; then, while the familiar, in the witch's shape, carried on her regular vocations, the witch bestrode her broomstick and hied away on her diabolical errand.

Granting the truth of these premises, it will at once be seen that the most ironclad alibi proved by the accused served only to strengthen the case against her.

Salem and its environs had been thoroughly combed by the "afflicted children" in their accusations. Beginning with Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn, two friendless old women, they had gradually worked up the social scale in search of victims till at last a clergyman's life had paid the price of their perjury. Their power was absolute. On all sides they were flattered and deferred to as if they had been royalty, for their unsupported accusation was enough to seal the doom of anyone they chose to cry out against.

Martha Corey, it was generally understood, had been cried out against because she had declared the "afflicted" were more in need of a sound thrashing than any other treatment.

But, like a well written stage play, the tragedy which marred New England's Colonial history came to an abrupt end at the very height of its horror. Increase Mather, president of Harvard College and father of Cotton Mather, had all along entertained grave doubts of the competence of the "specter evidence" upon which so many persons had been condemned. He ventured to voice these misgivings in a public address—and the afflicted children cried out against him!

Now, it was one thing for the humble pastor of a village church to be accused by these children of farmers and tradespeople; but quite another for the foremost divine and philosopher of a community which even then was the intellectual center of America to be made the target of their malice.

Even so, their accusation might have proved embarrassing to Dr. Mather if their overweening pride in their powers of destruction had not led them to shoot at the highest mark available in the colony.

MAY 14, 1692, William Phips had returned from London to Massachusetts with the king's commission as royal governor of the colony and an order of knighthood. He was an energetic, hardheaded Yankee, born of obscure parents at Monsweag, Maine, apprenticed to a shipwright as a lad, and successful as only those of marked ability can be. From journeyman shipwright he had graduated to command of a small merchant vessel, later held a command in the Royal Navy, still later amassed a considerable fortune for himself and turned in a handsome profit to the crown by salvaging treasure from Spanish galleons sunk in battle with the buccaneers of the Caribbean.

Sir William had acquired considerable polish in his upward climb, but his wife, whom he had married during his days as journeyman laborer, retained the plain thought and plainer speech of her early station in life.

When news of the witch trials came to Boston, especially when the affecting scene attending the execution of the Reverend George Burroughs was related to her, she expressed her sentiments in no uncertain terms. Her remarks concerning the "afflicted children" had a Shakespearian, if not a Chauceriau, directness.

This blow to the children's dignity was not to be tolerated. They, who had held absolute power of life and death in their immature hands for upward of a year, whose lightest word spelled unescapable doom, were not to be spoken of thus, not by the royal governor's wife herself.

One and all the "afflicted children" became "afflicted" as never before. The fainting fits and wild cries and writhing convulsions they had displayed while being "afflicted" by other witches were as nothing to those they now exhibited almost constantly. And each seizure was accompanied by the most heartrending prayers for help, help from the wicked Lady Phips, who thus sorely beset them. The sight of their sufferings would have wrung tears from a heart of stone, the sound of their tortured cries sent cold chills down the spines of every dweller in Salem Village. Surely, some servant of Satan more powerful than all the rest combined, had taken them in her wicked power. The town was in an uproar.

Sir William Phips was a product of his times; though possessing more than ordinary energy and ability, he suffered the timidity which went with the gross superstition of his day. But he had been married long enough to learn that a determined wife, like a force of nature, is not to be argued with. There is no record of the words Lady Phips used to convince her lord and master, but there is a very definite record that he was convinced.

An order from the royal governor of Massachusetts dissolved the special court which had tried and hanged nineteen innocent persons in ten months and put another to death by the most barbarous means ever employed by white men in America.

A second order, following hard upon the first, opened the jails where nearly two hundred hapless wretches awaited the hangman, and witchcraft trials, with all their horrors, disappeared from Massachusetts forthwith. Only the grisly memory of them lingered like the memory of a frightful dream when the night is done.

YEARS later Ann Putnam made public confession that the accusations she had brought against the "witches" were false in every detail. She asserted she had been "deluded by Satan" to perjure herself and swear away the lives of her neighbors. And so great was the belief in the powers of the devil that the congrega-

tion of Salem church accepted her excuse and forgave her, in word, if not in deed. She died of tuberculosis while still a young woman, unmarried and unloved, but apparently not regarded with any special hatred by the relatives of those her lying testimony had sent to death.

There appears no record of similar confessions by the other "afflicted children". Perhaps their moral courage was not so great as that which led the Putnam girl to acknowledge her fault, even though she placed the greater part of the blame upon the devil.

It would be pleasing to record that the Reverend Samuel Parris, whose desire to retain his pastorate began the terrible persecutions, suffered a fate befitting his crime. It does not appear that he did.

In 1696 he was ousted from the pulpit of Salem Village Church on petition of several members of the congregation, among them John Tarbell and Samuel Nurse, both of whom had been bereaved through the judicial murders in which Mr. Parris had assisted four years before. But he left the parish with a handsome cash settlement, and continued in the ministry for several more years, always quarreling with his congregations and always getting the better of the controversies.

NOTE.—Number 6 of this series, "Maria Schweidler," is a thrilling true tale of witchcraft from Germany, in the time of the Thirty Years War. It will appear in WEIRD TALES *next month.*

In WEIRD TALES Next Month—

The Oldest Story in the World

By MURRAY LEINSTER

A gripping tale of the punishment meted out to a white man by an Oriental raja; a tale of Asiatic intrigue, and great red rubies; a tale of thrills and surprizes; such is this newest story from the pen of Murray Leinster

On sale at all news stands July first

A Strange Psychological Story of the Power of the Human Mind

The Dream of Death

By ELWOOD F. PIERCE

THE queer figure of a man sat deep in the chair in full repose. His eyes, usually sharp, were now listless and just a little sleepy as he watched the crackling fire. He felt a chilly draft at his back, and immediately there was the click of a door closing softly, after which feet shuffled across the floor. Unconsciously Anderson Brenton, psychologist, sucked at his empty pipe. The intruder moved to the log fire, holding his shaking hands to the blaze, and shiveringly seated himself on a stool Professor Brenton had been using as a foot-rest.

The man who thus for a moment had startled Brenton was the half-witted brother of his landlady. Two nights before, the little psychologist had rented the room on the third floor front, and as he bargained with Mrs. Thompson he noticed the actions of the demented one. The landlady had said her brother was harmless, and Brenton did not give him thought.

"What are you doing here?" the lodger asked sharply, now that the brief sensation of fright had passed. "I thought it was understood that I was not to be disturbed. What do you want?"

The psychologist's brows were shaggy, and so was his beard. He was a shaggy person, and being small, impressed one as a weakling physically. But his eyes were penetrating, combative, and he eyed his visitor fiercely. There was something utterly repulsive about the man who trembled in front of the fire.

"Cold," the half-wit murmured. He shivered and turned anew to the blaze. "Cold!" His body was shaking.

Professor Brenton, contributor to the cause of science, might have found it hard to explain why he was occupying the third floor front room. Perhaps it was because once in a while he liked to get away from Daly College and to pursue certain of his studies uninterrupted. The room on the third floor had been advertised for rent and he had taken it—that was all. Almost immediately he recognized in Gus Acre an interesting subject, but until the moment the old man shuffled into his room and complained of the cold it had not occurred to the psychologist to attempt a mental investigation. But this was the beginning.

Brenton noted the apparent harmlessness of the man and was interested. Then, casting into the half-wit's mind with questions that served as primary experiments, he became fascinated. Later, his tests were tedious and delicate and afforded him an opportunity of determining the worth of certain theories he recently had developed, theories which were disputed by his scientific associates. Perhaps from a humane standpoint Brenton was a bit cruel, but his examinations at least were in the spirit of the botanist who studies a rare flower.

The psychologist learned that the man's intellect, unable to hold anything of itself, was keenly awake to the workings of the minds of others.

He found that virtually without effort he could transfer his thoughts to the witless creature and the man would respond in a manner all but normal and as if the thought were his own. But no thought was retained. Gus Acre's mind reached out and fed on the intelligence of others, but the moment the thought had been transformed into action, he again became an imbecile, with blankness of mind equal to that of a cleanly wiped slate.

Of one thing Professor Brenton was certain: this was not hypnotism. Nor did his power over the half-wit have any relation to hypnotism.

For many nights Acre was subjected to examination and new tests. Brenton dug deep and without mercy, in the hope that he might unearth the reason for the hidden phenomena.

At first there was no explanation. But he found out much during his hours of research, and finally came to the most important discovery of all.

IT WAS a cold night in December, and Professor Brenton was seated in his easy chair. That was two weeks after Gus Acre first appeared in his room. Suddenly Brenton perceived that his fire was out, all that remained in the grate being some dying embers. Grumbling, he arose and slipped on his great coat, reflecting, almost unconsciously: *"I wish Gus Acre would bring up some wood!"*

Shivering, he resumed his reading. A few minutes later there was a scraping outside his door and Acre entered with an armload of fuel. He dropped the sticks by the fireplace and stared vacantly at the little professor. There was the usual look of dumb terror, after which his eyes grew listless and he seemed to wonder at his surroundings.

"Who told you to bring up the wood?" Brenton asked.

Acre mumbled, rolled his eyes and left the room without attempting reply. Apparently he did not understand the question. Brenton listened to the man's retreating steps, shrugged his shoulders, and kneeling, built a new fire. He was disturbed by this new and uncanny power, but it opened a curiously marvelous field for him. He might, after all, be able to prove his theory that the mind is never a free agent.

An hour later, still deep in thought, he turned to his window overlooking a plot of ground that in summer was a rose garden. Now there was snow on the ground, the bushes that abounded being slightly tinctured with white. The professor noticed a shifty figure emerge from the shadow of the house and move aimlessly among the sleeping bushes with their ghostly shrouds. It was Gus Acre—poor, hopeless, demented Gus Acre.

Curious to give his power farther trial, the psychologist permitted himself to wish for the presence of Gus Acre in the room with him. Almost instantly the figure below straightened and a startled face was raised to the window before which Brenton stood. Then the man went indoors.

He did not move hastily, but in his slow shuffling manner, as if he had finished his walk in the garden and was returning to the house under a natural impulse. Brenton still stood at the window marveling. Then the door opened, and he knew what that meant. The imbecile would do whatever the professor willed that he should do. Without the practise of hypnotism the psychologist was able to unite his mind with the mind of Gus Acre and control his actions. All that was necessary to bring this about was the barest thought.

"Why don't you knock when you come in?" Brenton demanded.

Acre did not reply but shuffled his weight from one foot to the other, then turned and left the room. But the professor had done no more than wish for his presence, and any desire that he may have had for the man to

remain was only negative in value. The reaction of Gus Acre was merely positive, and very naturally so.

After that Brenton was to experience a sensation of fear. He wanted to halt the experiments, and indeed did make an attempt to do so, but found, just as he had feared, that he rapidly was coming under the influence of a mind that, one almost could say, did not exist. Yet it weakened him, sapped his energy day by day, did this mental intercourse with a vacant brain. There even were times when Brenton found it difficult to breathe. And thinking was not always easy.

He began, when it was too late, to realize that he was to be penalized for his unnatural experiments. The little professor was suffering from "nerves". Perhaps it was old age creeping on, he told himself, casting about for an excuse.

Could it be that the imbecile was making demands upon him—eating into his brain? And then there was his vitality, now at ebb. His capacity for work had decreased, and it was difficult for him to concentrate even on his reading.

"It's time I was ending this vacation," Brenton decided. "I must get back to the old routine. Enough of this foolishness."

But he could not leave. Very rapidly indeed his own mind and the mind of Gus Acre were merging, and his own mind slowly was being sucked away.

All but helpless, Brenton began to be concerned for his own sanity.

At last he came to fear Acre, to dread the sight of him, and yet a dozen times a day he found it necessary to call the imbecile to his room, much to the discomfort of the landlady, who was unable to understand anything that would suggest a friendship between the queer little scientist in the front room on the third floor and her witless brother. It wasn't reasonable, she interpreted.

THE end came at last. Brenton, suddenly aroused, sat up in the old-fashioned bed that formed no mean part of the furnishings of the room. His body was clammy and he was gripped by a fear of the unknown. Brenton, a brave man as shown by his experiments covering many years, seemed to sense that mighty fingers were at his throat.

He had been dreaming. And what a dream!

He had seen Gus Acre creeping up the stairs, a long kitchen knife in his hand. The half-witted creature had stood over him, and then—

It had been at this point that the psychologist awoke—just as the knife was descending.

A few minutes later he was calmer and did succeed, to a degree, in putting aside his fears. He pulled the covers over his shoulders, for it was cold and the log fire was now only so much ashes.

Footsteps outside his room. Boards creaking. A hand fumbling at the door. The door swinging open. A shaft of moonlight penetrating the room and falling upon the figure that crouched in the doorway just as it had been seen to do in the dream a few minutes before

Brenton screamed.

The thought whirled through his mind that he was helpless. The action of his dream was such that the witless man would carry it out. He was trembling, too, and his eyes burned into his head like torches that flamed in white heat.

The figure crossed the floor, still crouching. There was the glitter of the long kitchen knife.

Brenton's effort to gain control of the mind of Gus Acre was futile. He knew what he must do to save himself, but the mental effort that would control the man was impossible of ac-

complishment. He struggled like one seeking to arouse himself from a nightmare.

The figure crept upon him, slowly and with a great show of stealth. The scientist could hear the man's short breathing, see the very gleam of his eyes as the moonbeams shot into his face. The boards of the floor creaked and creaked, and the sound was not like anything Brenton had ever heard before. It made him think of a bat beating its wings against the walls of a tomb.

A single thought, a moment of mental action, would change the course of the half-wit's movements. But the psychologist knew that his mind had been sucked dry and that the man creeping upon him was the one who now held the scepter of power.

Anderson Brenton was as one paralyzed. And he could only watch Gus Acre approach with the long knife in his hand, the moonbeams falling upon his purple face. Just as in the dream.

One last scream!

THE next morning the witless man was found by his sister, asleep on the floor of the front room on the third floor. There was a kitchen knife in his hand, a long knife stained with blood.

And Brenton, who had not been able to will that Gus Acre should not carry out his unfortunate dream, was dead.

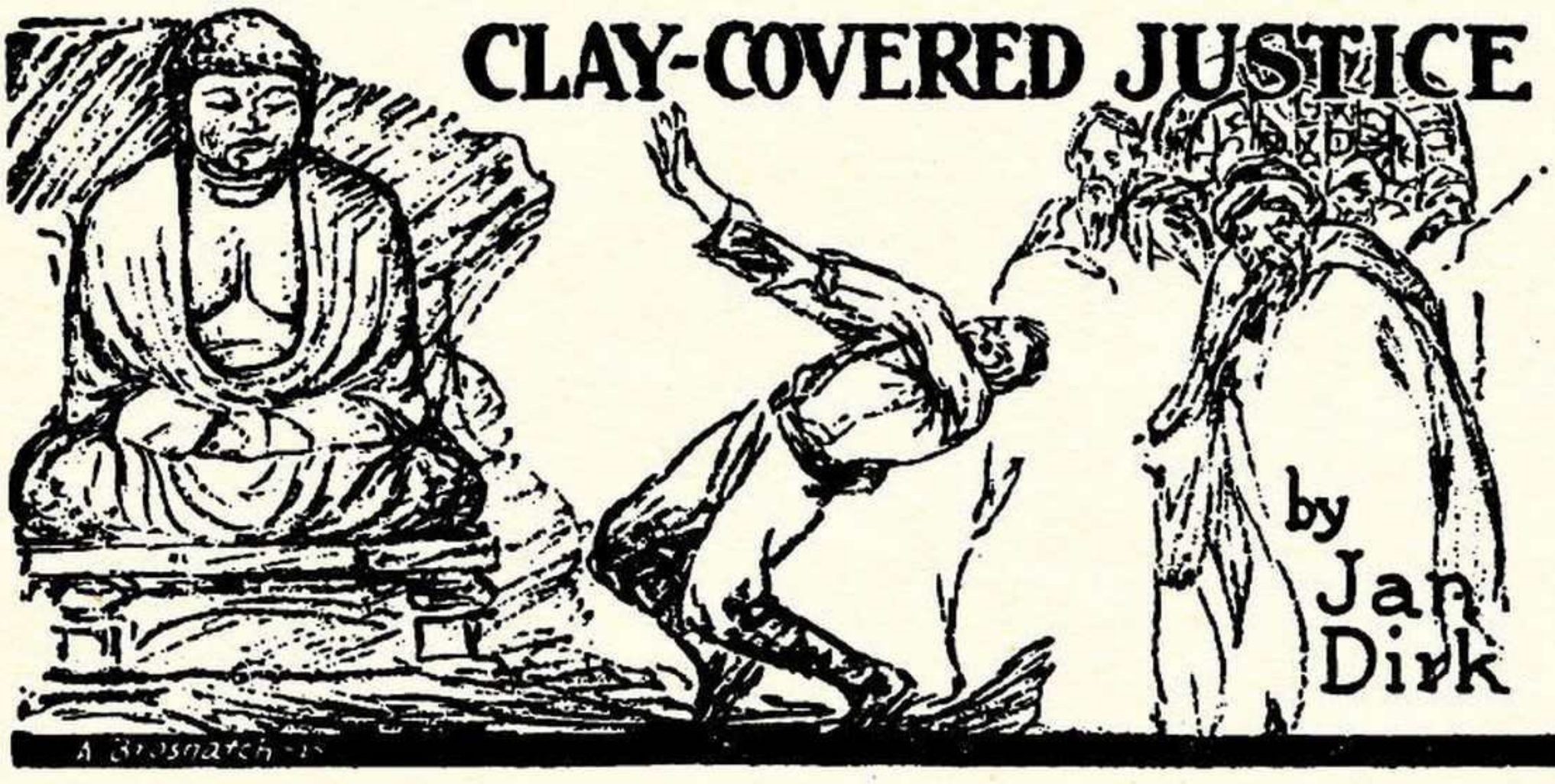
THE CONQUEROR

By ADRIAN PORDELORRAR

Dark, even in the sunset's crimson glare,
  There grows, unknown, an ancient forest grove;—
A voice of myst'ry murmurs in its air
  Where Night for centuries has whispered love!
Dim mirrored in a crystal pool, found there,
  Lie strange, forgotten worlds, and things, whereof
One dares not dream. Dark eyes, through matted hair,
  Laugh from its depths, to mock at Life above.

Soft words, from unseen lips, make known their thought—
  The uselessness of lab'ring through the years,
While worlds and men and kingdoms they have wrought,
  Their efforts, and their loves, and secret fears,
Crumble before the sweep of Time, as nought,
  Despite their anguish, and unnoticed tears!

CLAY-COVERED JUSTICE



Author of "Radio V-Rays"

BRAITHWAITE, stiff, very English, very conscious that it was he who upheld the law of dear old England in this forsaken Indian hole, sat at his desk in his snug official bungalow. On the other side of the window the tropical rain poured down in sheets from a purple night sky, but it was warm nevertheless in the bungalow—so warm, in fact, that the perspiration was running down Braithwaite's correct, imperturbable British face and making him feel deucedly uncomfortable. His white ducks and pipe-clayed sunhelmet glistened super-white under the glare of a brilliant carbide lamp which hung from the ceiling, swaying gently. His face looked white, too—it *was* white, and his high white forehead was deeply furrowed with care. Braithwaite was worried. Rather!

As a servant of His Majesty, Braithwaite regarded himself as a sort of underfather to those of His Majesty's subjects that happened to come within his jurisdiction. It was up to him to see that these subjects, even if they were for the most part a mongrel lot, were properly cajoled, rewarded, punished. At present he was thinking of punishment: the punishment that he would like to inflict upon the white man Orthcutt, who could raise, and was raising, more rumpus than all the little brown men of India could raise together. Punishment, indeed!

"Bull" Orthcutt, such natives as spoke English called him, because of his bellowing voice and massive physique; the others had some devilish jargon which Braithwaite supposed meant the same thing. For the past four years Orthcutt had terrorized the jungle and hill districts for miles about Braithwaite's humble little "official" village—terrorized them consistently and efficiently. He had robbed, blackmailed, kidnaped, burnt and destroyed, for the mere pleasure he derived from so doing. Not that the man was not wicked—he was positively vicious. Of that Braithwaite was absolutely certain. A half dozen poor little farms had gone up in smoke, and Braithwaite strongly suspected that Orthcutt's had been the hand that applied the torch. Two old people and a young man had been found murdered, and since the police had been unable to find trace of any feuds or affairs of honor, which would have accounted for the three deaths—and the police had tried hard—it seemed that these crimes also could be laid rightfully at

Orthcutt's door. And Braithwaite was strongly disposed to lay them there. Strongly disposed, but he realized only too well that proof and conviction were another matter entirely. What was more, Orthcutt was clever; unless the man accidentally slipped up in his plans Braithwaite had very little chance of ever seeing him behind the bars. And he knew it!

So Braithwaite sat and worried and thought of his predecessor, who had gone home a broken man. He sighed, leaned back to examine the face of his watch, saw that it lacked an hour till midnight, and called his head boy. The boy came running, was before him so much sooner than he had expected that any other man but Braithwaite would have started violently from surprize.

"Tomorrow we ride out," Braithwaite told the alert-looking young native, calmly and curtly. "I go to try to get a case on a bad man. We may be gone several weeks."

"Yes, sahib?"

"That will be all, boy."

"Yes, sahib."

The lithe brown lad left the room, his sensitive feelings hurt by the rebuff. He later told the cook that some of these Englishmen were insufferably sure of themselves and a bit snobbish. All he had wanted to know was a few more details so that he might make ample preparation.

ABOUT the same time Braithwaite made his decision the renegade Orthcutt was returning home through the dripping jungle. He entered his hut and threw himself down, rain-soaked clothing and all, upon the filthy pallet of jungle grasses which served him for a bed. After a minute he remembered something, and got up and washed the stains from the blade of his long, razor-sharp knife, which he drew from a leather sheath inside his shirt. Regarding the blade for an instant, pensively, he tested the edge first on the ball of his thumb, next on the week-old stubble which covered his vacuous face.

Thinking of where the keen blade had been, within the hour, Bull Orthcutt threw himself down a second time and went to sleep as peacefully as a child. Neither morals nor conscience had he.

IT WAS the next morning, not long after sun-up, that the aged potter Bey discovered the dead body of his daughter, who had been as beautiful as a new-born creamy rosebud, and the comfort of his age. Now, Bey was both a Buddhist and a fatalist; what God had planned would come to pass, and that was sufficient. It was karma. But the calm way in which he took the death of the lovely girl, regarding it as an act of fate, did not prevent him from reasoning that the bad white man Orthcutt had very probably had something to do with it, nor from vowing a terrible revenge. Old Bey was sure that it was Orthcutt, because he knew well that his daughter had refused certain demands which the renegade had had the temerity to make. She was—had been—a good girl, his daughter. Fatalist or no, Bey wept a little, and vowed to bury the body in secret, telling no one of the girl's death.

Bey had read or heard a tale once, of a Brahmin who had been robbed of his gold and had reason to suspect a certain man whom he knew. The Brahmin cleverly told no one of the theft, not even the man he suspected. Years later the man asked casually if his friend the Brahmin had ever recovered that money which had been stolen from him years before, and arrest and conviction had followed promptly. On as slim a thing as this Bey based his hopes. He picked up the slim body of the dead girl and took it indoors, laying it gently on the couch till he should finish the work

which was before him, a ten-foot statue of Buddha in repose, which he was making of the best gray river-clay for young Jamal.

Jamal had ordered that the Buddha be completed in time for the new hall of justice he was building in the center of the diminutive hill settlement in which he and Bey lived. Jamal was young, wise, and handsome. He was tall and straight as a reed, with flashing black eyes and the whitest of teeth, and his turbans were always clean and snowy. Jamal was a born leader, and as such he was recognized by the men of the village. They had practically made a king of him, and Bey was sure that his fellow hill-men would never regret their choice.

So far Jamal had dispensed justice wisely and well, though it was true that his methods were occasionally very novel. The new hall of justice which was to contain Bey's large statue of Buddha was a novelty, too —a utilitarian novelty. Jamal was, as has been said before, very wise. He knew that so long as he could supply new things that were both useful and novel, few of his childlike people would rise to say he was not the best leader they had ever had. Jamal, like all good kings, knew the people with whom he was dealing. And Bey the potter knew and respected Jamal, both for this and other reasons.

So Bey put from him as much as possible (for he was an old man) thoughts of Orthcutt and the girl, and turned to the slippery gray clay which he knew so well, and the reed framework on which he was building the statue of Buddha in repose. As he worked an occasional tear fell into the wet clay, for he was indeed an old man. Perhaps that explains the queer, fantastic, pitiful idea that entered his tired old gray head. Perhaps it was karma. Who knows?

Braithwaite and his men beat about the stinking jungle for the best part of three weeks without finding a trace of Bull Orthcutt or anyone with sand enough (as Braithwaite angrily put it) to lay a formal charge against him. In a rage at his own helplessness and at the sheeplike people who preferred to suffer from the depredations of the man rather than face him in court and risk his possible later revenge, the Englishman came finally to the hill village over which presided Jamal, the young, handsome, and wise.

But two days before him had come Bull Orthcutt, bloody and cursing. He had been quite efficiently manhandled and then trussed up like a fowl by the half dozen or so of Jamal's men, who had stormed his hut, which he had thought perfectly concealed, and which Braithwaite's men had never been able to find. Jamal had taken the man not because he thought with Bey that he had killed Bey's daughter, for he knew as little about that as did Braithwaite, but simply because he thought that Orthcutt had been causing too much misery among the brown people, and deemed it time that he be brought to judgment. Jamal was also a Buddhist and a fatalist, but he held the more occidental view of sometimes making of himself an instrument of fate.

Braithwaite entered the village and proceeded immediately to the hall of justice, because it was the largest and cleanest building in sight, and anything clean appealed to him after the filth of the jungle.

Jamal recognized him immediately, but gave no sign. "What do you wish, American?" he inquired.

"I am not an American; I am an Englishman," snapped Braithwaite, stiffening in spite of his fatigue. His immaculate ducks and polished riding boots had long since become ragged and vilely colorless—mere vestiges of

their former selves. He continued, wearily, "I have been told at other villages that the renegade called Bull Orthcutt might be found near here. Can you give me any help?"

He did not ask the concluding question at all meekly, but as an Englishman should address a heathen nigger, b'Gad. For was he not an officially appointed upholder of the law, and a helper to the king, b'Gad?

Jamal grinned, slowly and irritatingly. This was not like most Englishmen he had known; it might prove interesting. "Yes," he said, "the man Orthcutt is here—very close to you!"

Braithwaite started, looked over his shoulder, and leapt forward—a trifle too late. Two healthy sons of India, coming up silently from behind him, seized his arms and legs and had him bound before he quite realized, in the usual galvanic British style, what it was all about. Then: "Ho!" he roared. "So you're in it hand and glove with him, are you, you blighter?" Not waiting for an answer, he added, "You'll hear from this, man. You have deliberately detained me, so that you might warn an offender and keep me from bringing him to justice. Ho!" How he had planned to do this he did not make clear, seeing that he had absolutely no charge against the man and could not have kept him in jail five minutes. But then, Braithwaite was a very capable man. Or else he would not have received his appointment.

"Quite the reverse from what you say, is true," said Jamal, in his too perfect English, which smacked strangely of that Oxford which Braithwaite had never graced with his presence as an undergraduate. "I intend to administer justice to Bull Orthcutt promptly. I have rendered you helpless simply because, as a white man, you might be tempted to go to the aid of a fellow member of your race."

Braithwaite wondered if it was possible that the blighter smiled ironically.

"You might think my methods of judging a trifle obsolete," continued Jamal, respectfully, "even—er—senseless; so I have seen that you be rendered incapable of hindering me."

"Senseless!" spat out Braithwaite, who was very, very angry. "Probably so! About as senseless as—as that fat, stupid-looking thing over there."

He pointed at the newly completed statue of Buddha, which sat next to the bench where Jamal later planned to sit and deliver judgment. The Buddha was pointing, too. Old Bey had molded one arm so that a tapered forefinger stood out stiffly from the folded right hand and pointed straight ahead, accusingly, to the exact point upon which the clay eyes seemed to be focusing. Braithwaite saw, and shivered a trifle.

"Any man who calls Buddha senseless," remarked Jamal patiently, "is a fool. Christ, Buddha, Confucius—perhaps even Mohammed, were teachers given us so that truth, which is understanding, might not perish from this plane—from this earth, rather. The statue was finished for me only this morning by an aged craftsman named Bey, who is such a good friend of mine that he recently offered me the hand of his daughter in marriage, although that does not interest you, of course."

"On the contrary," said Braithwaite, a bit sarcastically, it must be confessed, for he was still angry, "it jolly well does. Where is the young lady now?"

A vestige of a frown crept across Jamal's dark face.

"The girl has been away," he said. "I have not seen her since she was about ten years old, but old Bey told me that she would be home soon. That was only a few days ago. When I asked after her health this morning,

thinking that he might have heard from her again, he told me that she had sent a messenger to say that she would be unable to come home for at least another year. I cannot understand it—."

Jamal had been talking to himself, forgetting all about the Englishman. He recalled himself with a start, and spoke sharply to Braithwaite.

"We might as well start now as later, I suppose. Sit where you are and remain quiet, and you will see the justice of Jamal, king of this hill village. You need not expect aid from your servant, either," he added. "He is weak because you did not allow him to bring along adequate supply-stuffs, and he has been tied up at his own request, anyway."

This was not at all like Jamal, but the provocation was great.

JAMAL struck twice a deep-noted bronze gong, and the two giant fellows who had bound Braithwaite appeared.

"Bring the prisoner," he ordered.

They spun on their heels and returned presently with the cursing degenerate between them. A crowd of almost naked natives, aware of what was going on, crowded through the door after them and filled the newly erected hall of justice, delighted that it was to be used so soon, grinning amusedly at the two white men, neither of whom at present was any too white. Their jabber made a bedlam of the place until Jamal struck once more on the gong; then all became so still that Braithwaite could hear his own breathing.

"Today we dispense justice," announced Jamal, speaking slowly and distinctly, first in his native tongue, then in English. "What this man is accused of matters not—what we are interested in is that he is suspected of committing crimes that merit death for their reward. My method of judging whether or not Bull Orthcutt is guilty of these crimes and should therefore be punished with death is one which has been used often by our forefathers in ages long past. On the hand of Buddha, great friend of truth and justice, I shall place a vessel containing wine. This wine"—Jamal was speaking directly to Orthcutt, now—"has the miraculous power of being able to tell whether or not a man is innocent. If such is the case, it will not harm him. *But if a man is guilty this wine will kill him!*"

"Wait!" shouted Braithwaite. "That is not justice, man. You know that he is ignorant, and therefore probably superstitious. You are playing upon that superstition."

"Not so," said Jamal. "You are an educated man." He smiled slightly. "If you were in the culprit's place the wine would decide *your* innocence or guilt, just the same. Do not presume that this is the first time I have seen this method used, American!"

"I'm English," roared Braithwaite. "I told you that once, dammit! And I protest, dammit! This prisoner should be tried where there is real justice—in a British court of l—"

"Cease!"

The word shot from Jamal's lips like the crack of a whip.

"Hold your tongue!"

It was a command. Braithwaite dropped his eyes from the burning ones which peered into his, and his mouth, which had been hanging open, slowly closed.

Jamal reached behind the Buddha and brought forth a canister of some red fluid which splashed and sparkled brilliantly in the rays of sunlight that entered through a large hole in the roof. He placed it upon the clay hand of the Buddha.

Orthcutt's wrists had been unbound, but his feet were restrained by loose hobbles. At Jamal's command,

"Drink!" he shuffled forward like one in a trance. Glancing apprehensively at the wine, he raised the canister to his lips. Once, and once only, he screamed, when he saw that the extended forefinger on the hand of the Buddha was pointing directly at him. Then he fell dead to the ground, his features and limbs twitching and jerking for some minutes after life had become extinct.

"My people," Jamal said, "the man was guilty. Remember what has happened in your presence to a guilty man."

Braithwaite and his man left for the official bungalow in the official village as soon as their bonds were cut and a little food had been supplied them. The servant paused for a moment to whisper to Jamal knowingly, "He will not have me punished. In his report to those across the ocean he will say that the 'matter of the man Orthcutt has been successfully taken care of.' He will not bother to add any of the details. *Aie-ee!*"

"Yes," answered Jamal, smiling a trifle wearily. "I know."

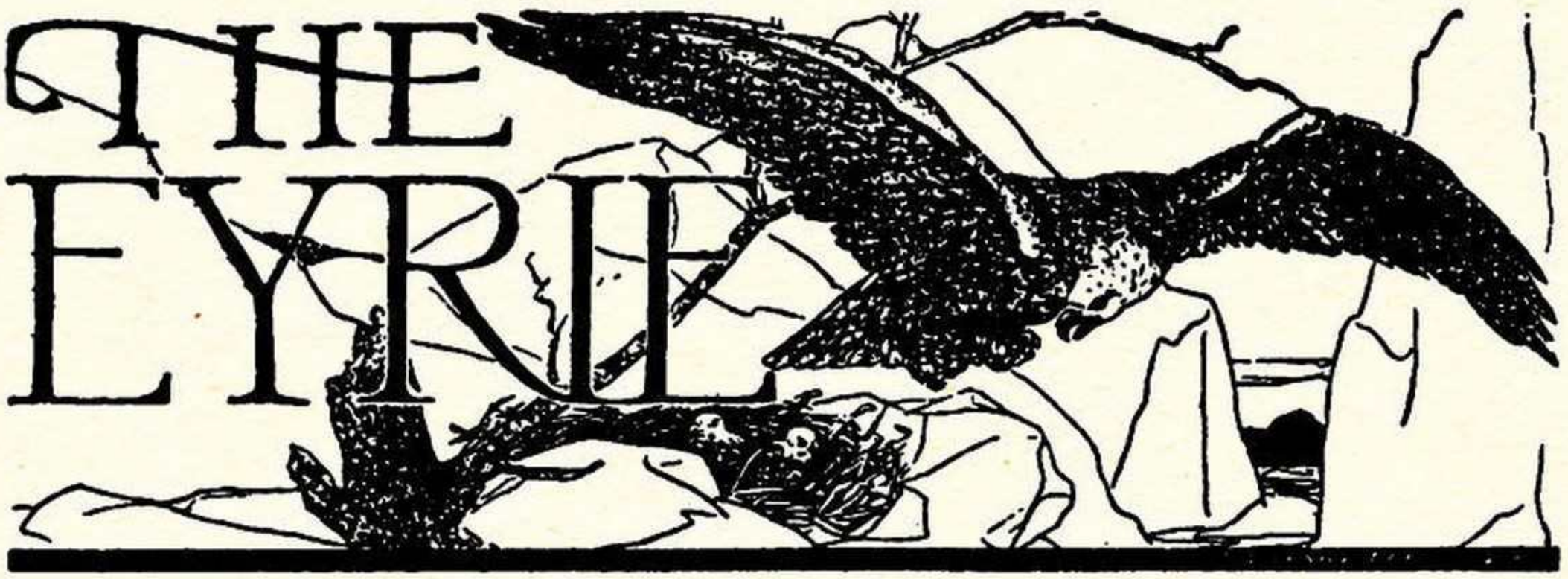
JAMAL smiled again that evening when he discovered an extremely poisonous little viper dead in the wine, where old Bey had surreptitiously placed it. He smiled a bit sadly, and pondered upon the many ways which fate has of punishing the wicked.

"If the poison had not killed him," he told Oca-Oca, his tiny pet monkey, "his own guilty conscience would have. Thoughts are things! I made him think that the wine *would* kill him because he *was* guilty, and his own mind slaughtered his guilty body. But then, I could have hypnotized him and made the same thing happen. And if everything else had failed, he would have eventually fallen into the hands of the English, and their laws would have punished him, finally. It would not have been so painful as the way Jamal, king of this hill tribe, did it, however, and it would have taken months and months of what they call red tape."

"Thr-r-r! Ak-a-eee-e!" said Oca-Oca.

BUT by far the oddest thing about the entire case was something which only tottering old Bey knew. For Bey had molded the soft, fragrant body of his beautiful daughter inside the hollow statue of Buddha in repose. And inside the long clay arm of him who was a friend of truth and justice, was the arm of the beautiful girl. And inside the accusing finger which had pointed straight at him, was the slim, dead finger of the girl whom he had killed.

Perhaps she smiled, quietly and sadly, too, as was the habit of Jamal, young, wise, and handsome, whom some day she would have married.



GREYE LA SPINA'S werewolf serial, *Invaders From the Dark*, seems to have scored a ten-strike with the readers of WEIRD TALES, to judge by the letters that have poured in to The Eyrie (and the last installment has not yet reached the stands as these lines are written). "I think *Invaders From the Dark* is one of the most thrilling stories I have ever read," writes "A Constant Reader" from Washington, D. C.; "I can hardly wait until the June issue is out to read the next part." C. C. Sandison, of Denver, writes: "*Invaders From the Dark* is wonderful. As a story of the supernatural it is even better than *Dracula*—though no werewolf story will ever overshadow *The Phantom Farmhouse* in my estimation: that's the only one I ever read where the *loup garou* had human qualities—likable ones." Writes Miss Irene Taylor, of Birmingham, Alabama: "Is Greye La Spina a man or a woman? Never in my life have I read a story to equal *Invaders From the Dark*. It is a wonderful story. The horror of it, with a mystery that grips the very heart strings, makes it a story unusually worth reading. Please give us more stories by Greye La Spina, who is a most wonderful person."

As to the question asked by Miss Taylor—whether Greye La Spina is a man or a woman—we don't know whether the author will object or not, but we are going to "spill the beans." Greye La Spina is a woman. If you ask the editors of the various magazines whether a woman can write a thrilling tale of adventure and red-blooded action, they will tell you that some of the strongest "he-man" stories are written by women, under various male pen names. But Greye La Spina does not hide under a pen name; it so happens that Greye La Spina is her name in real life, as well as in the magazines for which she writes.

Since her werewolf serial has elicited such enthusiastic comment from you, the readers, we are going to start another three-part serial by Greye La Spina in the September number. This is a tale of devil-worship, called *The Gargoyle*, and it contains thrills a-plenty. Like *Invaders From the Dark*, it has a present-day American setting, and does not rely for its fascination upon far-off practises and strange customs of other lands and centuries.

Also, since Nictzin Dyalhis' unusual tale, *When the Green Star Waned*, in the April issue, has received more votes for favorite story than any other story WEIRD TALES has yet printed, we are going to publish a complete novelette by the same author—a tale that packs about as many thrills to the page as can well be put there. It is called *The Eternal Conflict*, and our manuscript readers were held fascinated in the grip of this writer's imagina-

tive power, as stars and suns flashed through the story, and the man from Earth was caught in the titanic whirl of contending forces from the opposite corners of the universe. This powerful story will be published soon.

Frederic Raynbird, of Bulwark, Alberta, thinks *Whispering Tunnels*, by Stephen Bagby, is the best story WEIRD TALES has ever printed. This story appeared in the February issue. Writes Mr. Raynbird: "The truly weirdest tale, which has been most worthy of WEIRD TALES up to the present, was *Whispering Tunnels*. That tale was so much above the average for weirdness, that I consider it worth all the others put together, exceptionally good though the others were."

Harold Weight, of Pasadena, California, rushes to Stephen Bagby's defense in refuting a criticism made by a reader. "In the May Eyrie," he writes, "I noticed a criticism of *Whispering Tunnels*. The criticism, I believe, was that Mr. Bagby called the telegram yellow when it should have been blue. This spoiled the story for the critic, probably because the critic was reading it only to find errors instead of for the story. I think that story one of the best published since I started reading the magazine two years ago. I for one (and I think many WEIRD TALES readers will agree with me) was more interested in what the telegram contained than its color. At least I would not allow the color of a piece of paper to spoil such a fine story."

"I am sure that no one could be more enthusiastic over WEIRD TALES than I am," writes Thayer Burbank, of St. Louis, "and I heartily agree with Mr. Wender in the March issue in wanting the 'real scary kind'. Give us more stories of the occult, devil-worship, and more stories like *The Iron Lady in the Crypt*."

R. G. Macready, of Durant, Oklahoma, writes: "The May issue of WEIRD TALES is—well, I know of no adjective that can adequately describe it. I was held spellbound by *Under the N-Ray*, and it seems to me that F. B. Long's story is the *multum in parvo* of horror."

G. Winford Cunningham, of Garber, Missouri, writes: "Just one thing I've got to say about the magazine: it's too absorbing. Just can't quit it till every story is read, re-read, and then again. Come on with WEIRD TALES, and keep 'em 'weird'. I read every number, but have not horned in yet in the voting. I vote for *Little Island* in the April issue; it's a new brand, but a thoroughbred story."

And here's an enthusiastic boost from Stanleigh Miller, of Saginaw, Michigan: "Boy, I can sit down in my favorite chair in the library, chase the wife and kids away and become so engrossed in WEIRD TALES that I have to put one of the wife's imported Dryden vases on my head to hold my hair down. Then someone has the gigantic, the colossal, the stupendous nerve to ask you to desist from horror stories. Arrrrgh! Let me at him; I'll tear his windpipe out and play 'taps' on it. When a man's hair stands up straight, and his face feels drawn and has gooseflesh all over it, and his tongue feels like the morning after the night before, and his eyes feel kind of cold and seem to bulge out, and his spine twitches like a horse shaking off flies, and the sound of the wife kissing the kid good-night sounds like the charge of the Light Brigade, boy! *That guy's enjoying the story!* And that's me all over. Mr. Editor, please don't pay any attention to those calamity howlers. And please tell the rest of the fellows that like the stories to send a word in saying the same."

And R. Wülfric-Smith, of New York City, writes: "With regard to the foolish question as to whether or not you should keep WEIRD TALES weird

—please pay no attention whatever to a few killjoys who would have you publish the same sentimental trash as most of the other magazines. WEIRD TALES is the only magazine of its kind. It is unique; let's keep it that way."

Napoleon Shahka Vhan writes from Jamestown, New York: "My favorite story in the March issue was *The Composite Brain.* I am myself a scientist, although only twelve years of age, and I fairly went wild over it. I like scientific stories, and yet full of thrills and chills such as *The Composite Brain.*"

James Godfrey Osgood, Jr., writing from Fitchburg, Massachusetts, after dissecting the stories of H. P. Lovecraft and C. M. Eddy, Jr., whose styles, in his opinion, are marked by an undue straining for effect, says: "I do not think you have overstated the case one bit when you say that *When the Green Star Waned,* by Nictzin Dyalhis, is one of the most remarkable stories of its kind which have yet appeared. Indeed, of its peculiar genre it is the best, I have no doubt, and, needless to say, is my choice for the best story in the April number. But *The Lure of Atlantis, The Wind That Tramps the World, The Soul-Catching Cord, The Dark Interval* and *Back to Dust* were also especially good. Don't lessen the value of the magazine in the eyes of a 'ghost-gutted' multitude by any anomaly from the standard that has made WEIRD TALES what it is today in the eyes of a hundred or more thousand people. And don't forget, by the way, that when a passer-by out of curiosity purchases for the first time a copy of WEIRD TALES and carries it home with him, he does so for the simple and sole reason that he expects to find in its pages, not love stories, not adventure stories, not detective stories, nor anything else, in short, but weird tales. If he wants love stories, he knows where to look for them. If, therefore, he chooses WEIRD TALES, it must be for no other reason than what the title signifies, and with the word 'weird' there is associated in his mind horror, tragedy, mystery, death, fear, etc., but nothing sick or nauseating."

Peter Donohue, of New York City, writes as follows: "Although I have been a constant reader of your extraordinary magazine, I have never yet enjoyed any number as I have the April. It would seem that the publication improves with age. However, you ask your readers to tell which story they consider most interesting. To my way of thinking, the best story, or at least one of the best, that you have ever published is *The Wind That Tramps the World,* by Frank Owen. It is a delightfully whimsical tale, and, aside from its weird atmosphere, it is one of the quaintest stories that it has ever been my privilege to read. Then, too, it is just as weird as any of the more gruesome stories, but lacks only the hair-raising horrible details of these. Even without these details the tale holds charm enough and sweetness enough to make it a favorite of all. *Invaders From the Dark* promises to be most interesting—so much so, indeed, that I can scarcely wait for the next issue of WEIRD TALES. And please leave us some horror tales, despite what some people say. Give us more stories like *The Hermit of Ghost Mountain.*"

And now let us call your attention to the series of "Weird Story Reprints," which begins in this issue. We intend to leave the selection to you, the readers, and will follow your advice as far as possible. What masterpieces of weird fiction do you want to see in our magazine?

Also, let us know what is your favorite story in this issue. Address your letters to The Eyrie, WEIRD TALES, 408 Holliday Building, Indianapolis, Indiana. Your votes show that the favorite complete story in the May issue was *Under the N-Ray,* by Will Smith and R. J. Robbins.

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The Death Cure

(Continued from page 36)

doctor was listening to the pulseless heart through a stethoscope, and when he rose to his feet again there was a look of fiendish exultation on his yellowed face.

"He's dead, but I must make a few tests to be sure. We can't afford to make mistakes, now." The doctor seemed to be talking to himself, rather than to Broadway. "After he has been dead twenty or thirty minutes—I think, but I'm not positive—I think I can bring him back to life. But I must not wait until rigor mortis has set in or until his blood coagulates; that was a mistake I made at the Bellevue Hospital morgue, two months ago."

The terrible paralysis had now reached Broadway's thighs. He could not stir, had all the demons under the sea been tugging at his helpless body.

"We shall now try the Balfour test to find whether or not the heart is still active," said Dr. La Forne.

He brought out a long, white-headed pin, and thrust it into the tissues directly over the heart, for a length of about a quarter of an inch. Broadway could see the white head of it move rhythmically with the beat of the heart. Then the Spotter was not yet dead? For a few seconds it moved, then its movements became slower and slower. Then a shadow seemed to flit across the tense face—the jaw dropped suddenly, with an accompanying rattle from the stiffening throat—and the pin stopped moving. Broadway saw the doctor kneel and place a mirror at the lips of the dead man.

"His respiration, too, is nil," murmured the scientist. "I'll now try the final test—Monteverde's sign."

He injected a solution from a

small bottle directly into one of the veins of the lifeless form.

"No reaction from a solution of ammonia," he said. "The man is dead."

Broadway, stricken with a wild horror at the ghastly spectacle, tried to gain control of his limbs. God! They, too, were dead, and he could feel a numbness creeping—creeping —. He cried out in terror.

"Kindly refrain from disturbing me," smiled the doctor. "A distraction, now, would cause evil results—both to you and to your friend. At present he is dead, but with good luck I can bring him back across the divide."

Broadway looked down at the livid face, on which startled amazement of the tomb had been frozen, and wondered whether Tim's soul was in heaven or hell. The doctor was busy with test tubes and chemicals, and was pouring a serum from a large ampoule into a great glass syringe. Hysterically, Broadway cursed him through his set teeth, but he was powerless, he could only watch the gruesome scene as it grew more ghastly beneath those skilled fingers.

THE dead man's face had turned a bluish, cadaverous hue, and a swollen tongue protruded from the blackened lips. The doctor was now

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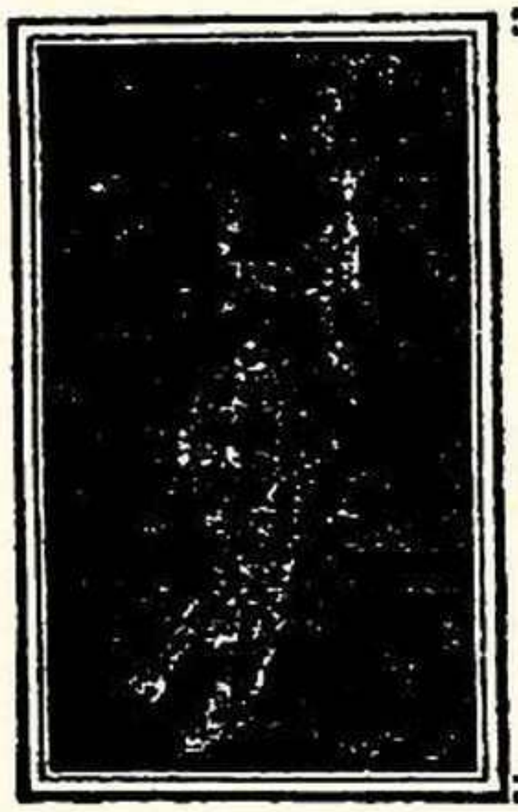

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holding the naked arm of the corpse, and was preparing to inject the serum. He leered at Broadway.

"Don't be impatient," he smiled. "Your turn will soon come."

Broadway shook off the mist that seemed to be creeping about his brain, and watched the terrible proceedings. He could not move hand or foot now, and his head seemed to be clasped in a grasp of steel, compelling him to look. He could not tear his gaze from the hideous figure on the floor.

The doctor, with a razor-edged knife, had sliced neatly into the dead man's forearm. With a sponge he absorbed most of the blood that oozed slowly from the wound, and with his other hand he tied some bluish cords that were exposed to view. Veins! Broadway tried to scream, but the breath rattled futilely in his throat. The doctor held an artery, now, in a clamp, and was fastening the rubber tubing that led to the syringe on the dripping end. The horrified youth tried to close his eyes but they remained wide and staring. How would it end?

He watched the livid death mask on the floor, while the scientist pushed the piston of the syringe. Could he force the serum through the entire length of the blood vessel?

What was that? The sound seemingly came from the corpse, and in a moment it was repeated. A death rattle from a body dead for half an hour! And as he looked, he saw a red flush suffuse the pallid face. Then—oh, God!—the tongue vibrated again and the lips writhed back from the line of teeth. The glazing eyes seemed to burn with a greenish light. The doctor was watching the effects of the serum with a triumphant smile. His scheme was working—it was a success.

The face of the corpse twitched spasmodically, and something in its intensity of expression made the hair

on Broadway's head crinkle with horror. The tomb had been cheated —the dead man lived! The Spotter's arms were moving convulsively, and with the movement the tubing was wrenched from the wound in his forearm. His heart had resumed beating, for a spurt of blood splashed out against the doctor's chemicals and test-tubes.

Quickly, the physician knelt to tie the artery, but he was too late. The Spotter had risen to his feet and was reeling drunkenly toward the table. His eyes, still glassy from death, were wild and staring. Then he spoke—and what a voice! Broadway gasped at the sound. It resembled the twang of a violin string, suddenly plucked by a metallic hand. The Spotter was speaking—through that wide-open mouth, through which the discolored tongue still protruded —and his voice was the echo of the grave! The doctor stood as if petrified.

"Fool!" shrieked the resurrected man. "Why did you bring me back? "Do you not know that I am dead? Yes, damn you, still dead—my soul is dead—and my body is here!"

His voice rose to a high pitch, and he laughed like a maniac. He shook a finger at the doctor and blood flew in a crimson stream about the room.

"*You did it!*" he fairly screamed. "Don't you know I've got to go back—there!"

In vain the scientist turned to evade the mad rush. He felt himself seized by powerful, terrible, iron hands. He was whirled aloft as if he had been a child. For a moment he felt a cold breath on his neck. Then crash!

The body of the physician shot through the window, glass, screen and all. There was a dull impact as it hit the pavement below, and

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silence. Dr. La Forne's experiment was at an end.

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The Werewolf of Ponkert

(Continued from page 30)

turies. Also it is said that this book has never been out of the possession of the Hungarian's descendants. Therefore, observing that I now possess the book, which was given to me by my father, as it was to him by his parent, I assume that in my veins courses the diluted strain of the werewolf."

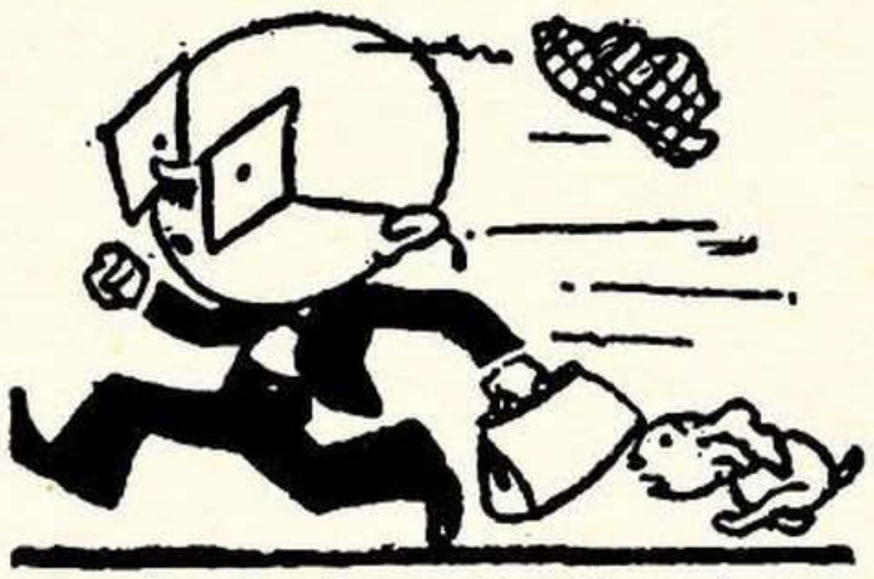
"This may all be true," I said. "Surely in the weeks of his imprisonment he must have been informed that his little girl had not been devoured; yet he speaks consistently through the tale, as if he knew nothing about the rescue."

"Ah," he replied, "that puzzled me also when I first heard of this. But it is my sincere belief that this information was kept purposely from him to add mental torture to his physical punishment. Why should they trouble themselves to ease the spirit of a man that was responsible for so many crimes?" And such a cruel glitter lit his eyes, that I had nothing more to say.

After I had left I congratulated myself upon being so fortunate as to exist in the prosaic Twentieth Century, and not in the superstition-ridden ones which we have just barely left. For even superstitions must have a beginning, and who knows how much truth may lie, after all, in this weird tale?

I never went back to the inn after that. I often meant to, but other business was more important, and procrastination finally made the journey useless.

Pierre is dead now, leaving no relatives or friends but myself. I now possess the book and it lies before me, as I write the story it contains for the world to read, and to laugh at in scorn.



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