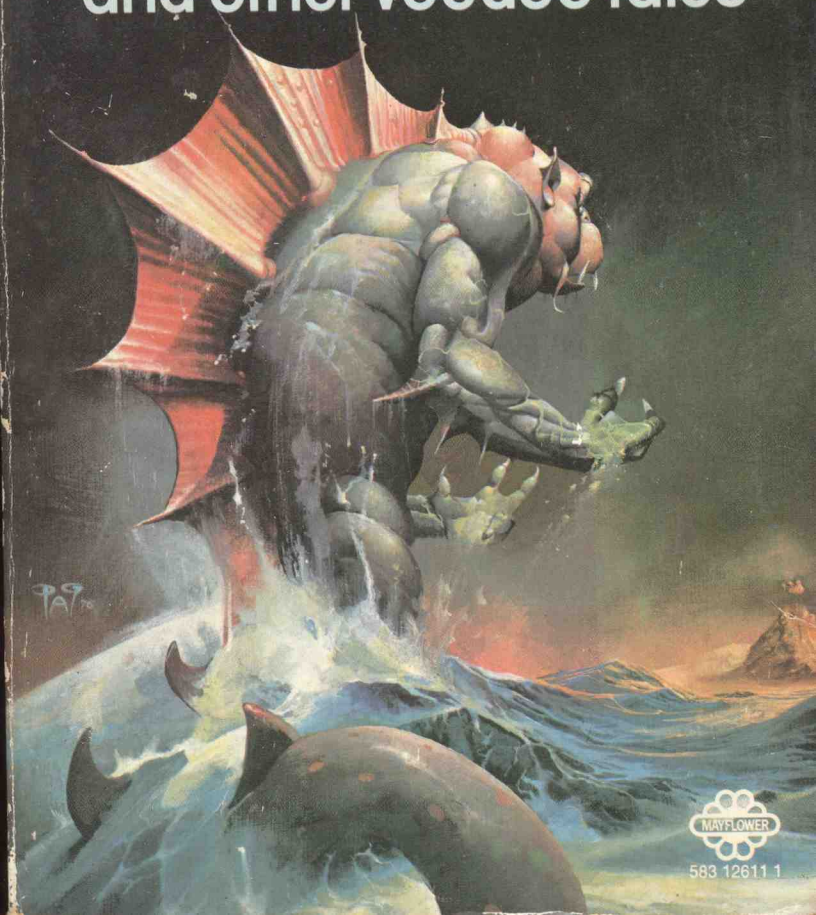


Henry S. Whitehead

# THE BLACK BEAST

and other voodoo tales



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HENRY S. WHITEHEAD was born in New Jersey in 1882. In 1904 he graduated from Harvard in the same class as future president Franklin Roosevelt. After a brief but successful career as a journalist Whitehead went to the Berkeley Divinity School in Connecticut and was ordained deacon in 1912. Then followed several church appointments before he left the United States in 1921 to serve as Acting Archdeacon in the Virgin Islands. Whitehead was an avid collector of local beliefs and superstitions and the sights and sounds of the West Indies fired his prodigious imagination. The result was a collection of thrilling and macabre voodoo stories which won him many admirers – among them H. P. Lovecraft, with whom he developed a firm friendship.

**Also by Henry S. Whitehead  
in Mayflower Books**

**JUMBEE AND OTHER VOODOO TALES**

# The Black Beast and Other Voodoo Tales

Henry S. Whitehead

Mayflower

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## THE BLACK BEAST

Diagonally across the Sunday Market in Christiansted, on the island of Santa Cruz, from the house known as Old Moore's, which I occupied one season – that is to say, along the southern side of the ancient marketplace of the old city, built upon the abandoned site of the yet older French town of Bassin – there stands, in faded, austere grandeur, another and much larger old house known as Gannett's. For close to half a century Gannett House stood vacant and idle, its solid masonry front along the marketplace presenting a forlorn and aloof appearance, with its rows of closely shuttered windows, its stones darkened and discolored, its whole appearance stern and forbidding.

During that fifty years or so in which it had stood shut up and frowning blankly at the mass of humanity which passed its massive bulk and its forbidding closed doors, there had been made, by various persons, efforts enough to have it opened. Such a house, one of the largest private dwellings in the West Indies, and one of the handsomest, closed up like this, and out of use, as it transpired upon serious inquiry, merely because such was the will of its arbitrary and rather mysterious absentee proprietor whom the island had not seen for a middle-aged man's lifetime, could hardly fail to appeal to prospective renters.

I know, because he has told me so, that the Rev. Fr. Richardson, of the English Church, tried to engage it as a convent for his sisters in 1926. I tried to get a season's lease on it myself, in the year when, failing to do so, I took Old Moore's instead – a house of strange shadows and generous rooms and enormous, high doorways through which, times innumerable, Old Moore himself, bearing, if report were believable, a strange burden of mental apprehension, had slunk

in bygone years, in shuddering, dreadful anticipation . . .

Inquiry at the Government offices had elicited the fact that old Lawyer Malling, a survival of the Danish régime, who lived in Christiansted and was invaluable to our Government officials when it came to disentangling antique Danish records, was in charge of Gannett's. Herr Malling, interviewed in turn, was courteous but firm. The house could not be rented under any considerations; such were his instructions – permanent instructions, filed among his records. No, it was impossible, out of the question. I recalled some dim hints I had received of an old scandal.

Over a glass of excellent sherry which hospitable Herr Malling provided, I asked various questions. The answers to these indicated that the surviving Gannetts were utterly obdurate in the matter. They had no intention of returning. Repairs – the house was built like a fortress – had not, so far, been required. They had assigned no reason for their determination to keep their Christiansted property closed? No – and Herr Malling had no option in the matter. No, he had written before, twice; once in behalf of the rector of the English Church, just recently; also, ten, eleven years ago when a professor from Berlin, sojourning in the islands, had conceived the idea of a tropical school for tutoring purposes and had cast a thickly bespectacled eye on the old mansion. No, it was impossible.

'Well, *skaal*, Herr Canevin! Come now – another, of course! A man can not travel on one leg, you know; that is one of our sayings.'

But three years after this interview with Herr Malling, the old house was opened at last. The very last remaining Gannett, it appeared, had gone to his reward, from Edinburgh, and the title had passed to younger heirs who had had no personal connection, no previous residence in the West Indies.

Herr Malling's new instructions, transmitted through an Aberdeen solicitor, were to rent the property to the best advantage, to entertain offers for its disposal in fee simple,



and to estimate possible repairs and submit this estimate to Aberdeen. I learned this some time after the instructions had been transmitted. Herr Malling was not one to broadcast the private and confidential business of his clients. I learned thereof from Mrs. Ashton Garde, over tea and small cakes in the vast, magnificent drawing room of Gannett's, a swept and garnished Gannett's which she had taken for the season and whose eighteenth-century mahogany she had augmented and lightened with various furniture of her own in the process which had transformed the old fortress-like abode into one of the most attractive residences I have ever been privileged to visit.

Mrs. Garde, an American, and a widow, was in the late forties, a very charming and delightful woman of the world, an accomplished hostess, incidentally a person of substantial means, and the mother of three children. Of these, a married daughter lived in Florida and did not visit the Gardes during their winter in Santa Cruz. The other children, Edward, just out of Harvard, and Lucretia, twenty-four, were with their mother. Both of them, though diversely – Edward, an athlete, had no particular conversation – had inherited the maternal charm as well as the very striking good looks of their late father whose portrait – a splendid Sargent – hung over one of the two massive marble mantelpieces which stood at either end of the great drawing room.

It was quite near the end where the portrait hung, low because the mantelshelf, lacking a fireplace under it, stood two feet higher than an ordinary mantelshelf, balancing a ceiling fifteen feet in height, that we sat upon my first visit to the Gardes, and I noticed that Mrs. Garde, whose tea table was centered on the mantelpiece, as it were, and who sat facing me across the room's width, glanced up, presumably at the portrait, several times.

I am of an analytical mentality, even in small matters. I guessed that she was trying out the recent hanging of this very magnificent portrait 'with her eye', as people do until they have become accustomed to new placements and the

environmental aspects of a new or temporary home and, my attention thus drawn to it, I made some comment upon the portrait, and rose to examine it more closely. It repaid scrutiny.

But Mrs. Garde, as though with a slight note of deprecation, turned the conversation away from the portrait, a fact which I noticed in passing, and which was emphasized, as I thought of it later, by her sidelong glances, upward and to her right, in the intervals of pouring tea for a considerable group of company, which kept going up there again and again. I gave to these facts no particular interpretation. There was no reason for analysis. But I noted them nevertheless.

I saw considerable of the Gardes, for the next few weeks, and then, because I had planned some time before to go down the islands as far as Martinique when the *Margaret* of the Bull-Insular Line which plies among the upper islands should go there for several days' sojourn in drydock, I did not see them at all for more than two weeks during which I was renewing my acquaintance with Martinique French in the interesting capital town of Fort de France.

I ran in to call on the Gardes shortly after my arrival on Santa Cruz at the conclusion of this trip, and found Mrs. Garde alone. Edward and Lucretia were playing tennis and later dining with the Covingtons at Hermon Hill Estate House.

I was immediately struck with the change which had taken place in Mrs. Garde. It was as though some process of infinite weariness had laid its hold upon her. She looked shrunken, almost fragile. Her eyes, of that dark, brilliant type which accompanies a bistre complexion, appeared enormous, and as she looked at me, her glances alternating with the many which she kept casting up there in the direction of her husband's portrait, I could not escape the conviction that her expression bore now that aspect which I can only describe by the somewhat trite term 'haunted'.

I was, sharply, immediately, surprised; greatly intrigued by this phenomenon. It was one of those obvious things

which strike one directly without palliation, like a blow in the face unexpectedly delivered; an unmistakable change, hinting, somehow, of tragedy. It made me instantaneously uneasy, moved me profoundly, for I had liked Mrs. Garde very much indeed, and had anticipated a very delightful acquaintance with this family which centered about its head. I noticed her hand quite definitely trembling as she handed me my cup of tea, and she took one of those sidelong glances, up and to the right, in the very midst of that hospitable motion.

I drank half my tea in a mutual silence, and then, looking at Mrs. Garde, I surprised her in the middle of another glance. She was just withdrawing her eyes. She caught my eyes, and, perhaps, something of the solicitude which I was feeling strongly at the moment, and her somberly pallid face flushed slightly. She looked down, busied herself with the paraphernalia of her circular tea tray. I spoke then.

'Haven't you been entirely well, Mrs. Garde? It seemed to me that, perhaps, you were not looking altogether robust, if you don't mind my mentioning it.' I tried to make my tone sufficiently jocular to carry off my really solicitous inquiry lightly; to leave room for some rejoinder in somewhat the same vein.

She turned tragic eyes upon me. There was no smile on her drawn face. The unexpected quality of her reply brought me up standing.

'Mr. Canevin - help me!' she said simply, looking straight into my eyes.

I was around the tea table in two seconds, held her shaking hands, which were as cold as lumps of ice, in mine. I held them and looked down at Mrs. Garde. 'With all my heart,' I said. 'Tell me, please, when you can, now or later, Mrs. Garde, what it is.'

She expressed her thanks for this reassurance with a nod, withdrew her hands, sat back in her rattan chair and closed her eyes. I thought she was going to faint and, sensing this, perhaps, she opened her eyes and said:

'I'm quite all right, Mr. Canevin – that is, so far as the immediate present is concerned. Will you not sit down, finish your tea? Let me freshen your cup.'

Somewhat relieved, I resumed my own chair and, over a second cup of tea, looked at my hostess. She had made a distinct effort to pull herself together. We sat for some minutes in silence. Then, I refusing more tea, she rang, and the butler came in and removed the tray and placed cigarets on the table between us. It was only after the servant had gone and closed the drawing room door behind himself that she leaned forward impulsively, and began to tell me what had occurred.

Despite her obvious agitation and the state of her nerves which I have attempted to indicate, Mrs. Garde went straight to the point without any beating about the bush. Even as she spoke it occurred to me from the form of her phraseology that she had been planning how, precisely, to express herself. She did so now very concisely and clearly.

'Mr. Canevin,' she began, 'I have no doubt that you have noticed my glancing up at the wall space above this mantel. It has grown, one would say, to be a nervous habit with me. You have observed it, have you not?'

I said that I had and had supposed that the glances had been directed toward her husband's portrait.

'No,' resumed Mrs. Garde, looking at me fixedly as though to keep her eyes off the place over the mantelshelf, 'it is not at the picture, Mr. Canevin. It is at a place directly above it – about three feet above its top edge to be precise.'

She paused at this point, and I could not help looking toward the point she had indicated. As I did so, I caught sight of her long and rather beautiful hands. They were clamped against the edge of the low table, as though she was holding on to that as if to something solid and material – an anchor for her nerves – and I observed that the knuckles were white with the pressure she was exerting.

I saw nothing but a wide space of empty, gray sanded wall which ran up cleanly to the high ceiling and out on

both sides of the portrait, a clear space, artistically left vacant, one would surmise, by whoever had possessed the good sense to leave the Sargent alone with its wide blank background of gray wall space.

I looked back at Mrs. Garde and found her gaze fixed determinedly on my face. It was as though she held it there, by a sheer effort of the will, forcing herself not to look up at the wall.

I nodded at her reassuringly.

'Please continue, if you will, Mrs. Garde,' I said, and leaned back in my chair and lighted a cigaret from the silver box on the table between us.

Mrs. Garde relaxed and leaned back in her lounge chair, but continued looking straight at me. When she resumed what she was saying she spoke slowly, with a certain conscious effort at deliberation. My instinct apprised me that she was forcing herself to this course; that if she did not concentrate in some such fashion she would let go and scream aloud.

'Perhaps you are familiar with Du Maurier's book, *The Martian*, Mr. Canevin,' and, as I nodded assent, she continued, 'You will remember when Josselin's eye began to fail him, he was puzzled and dreadfully worried by discovering a blind spot in his sound eye – it was emphasized by the failure of the other one, and he was vastly distressed – thought he was going stone blind, until the little Continental oculist reassured him, explained the *punctum caecum* – the blind spot which is in the direct line of vision with the optic nerve itself. Do you recall the incident?'

'Perfectly,' said I, and nodded again reassuringly.

'Well, I remember testing my own blind spots after reading that when I was quite a young girl,' resumed Mrs. Garde. 'I daresay a great many people tried the experiment. There is, of course, a line of vision *outside* each blind spot, to the left of the left eye's ordinary focus and, correspondingly, to the right of that of the other eye. In addition to this variation of ordinary vision, as I have ascertained, there is

another condition, especially evident in the sight of the middle-aged. That is that the direct line of ordinary vision becomes, as it were, "worn," and the vision itself, in the case of a person especially who has used his or her eyes a great deal – over embroidery, or reading, or some professional work which requires concentrated looking, I mean – is somewhat less acute than when the eyes are used at an unaccustomed angle.'

She paused, looked at me as though to ascertain whether or not I had been following the speech. Once more I nodded. I had listened carefully to every word. Mrs. Garde, resuming, now became acutely specific.

'As soon as we had arrived here, Mr. Canevin, the very first thing that I had to attend to was the suitable hanging of this portrait of Mr. Garde.' She did not look toward it, but indicated the portrait with a gesture of her hand in its direction.

'I looked over that section of the wall space to ascertain the most advantageous point from which to hang it. I found the place that seemed to me suitable and had the butler drive in a nail in the place I indicated. The picture was then hung and is still in the place I selected.

'This process had required considerable looking, on my part, at the blank wall. It was not, really, until the portrait was actually hung that I realized – that it occurred to me – that something – something, Mr. Canevin, which had gradually become clearer, better defined I mean, was there – above the picture – something which, within that outside angle of vision, outside the blind spot of my right eye as I sat there and looked up and to the right, became more evident every time I looked up at the wall. Of course, I looked at the picture many times, to make quite sure I had it in the right spot on the wall. In doing so the outside vision, the portion of the eye which was not worn and more or less dimmed from general usage, took in the place I have indicated. It is, as I have mentioned, about three feet above the top of Mr. Garde's portrait.

'Mr. Canevin, the thing has grown – *grown!*'

Suddenly Mrs. Garde broke down, buried her face in trembling hands, leaning forward upon the table like a child hiding its eyes in a game, and her slim body shook with uncontrollable, dry sobs.

This time, I perceived, the best thing for me to do was to sit quietly and wait until the poor, overwrought lady had exhausted her hysterical seizure. I waited, therefore, in perfect silence, trying, mentally, to give my hostess, as well as I could, the assurance of my complete sympathy and my desire and willingness to help her in all possible ways.

Gradually, as I had anticipated, the spasm of weeping worked itself out, minimized itself and finally passed. Mrs. Garde raised her head, composed herself, again looked at me, this time with a markedly greater degree of calmness and self-possession. The gust of hysteria, although it had shaken her, had, in its ordinary effect, done her good. She even smiled at me a little wanly.

'I fear that you will think me very weak, Mr. Canevin,' she said finally.

I smiled quietly.

'When it is possible, it would be of assistance if I could know of this matter as exactly 'as possible,' I said. 'Try, please, to tell me just what it is that you see on the wall, Mrs. Garde.'

Mrs. Garde nodded, spent a little while composing herself. She even used her vanity box, a trifling gold affair with the inevitable mirror. After this she was able to smile herself. Then, suddenly quite serious again, she said simply:

'It is the head and part of the body – the upper, forward part, to be precise, Mr. Canevin – of what seems to be a young bull. At first only the head; then, gradually, the shoulders and neck. It seems quite utterly grotesque, absurd, does it not?

'But, Mr. Canevin, extraordinary as that must seem to you, it is—' she looked down at her twitching hands, then, with a visible effort, back at me, her face now suddenly ghastly under the fresh make-up which she had so recently

applied to it. 'Mr Canevin, that is not the terrifying part of it. That, indeed, might, perhaps, be construed as some kind of optical illusion, or something of the sort. It is—' again she hesitated, looked down; then, with a greater effort than before back at me— 'it is the — expression — of the face, Mr. Canevin! It is, I assure you, quite *human*, terrifying, reproachful! And, Mr. Canevin, there is blood, a thick single stream of blood, which runs down from the center of the forehead, over the creature's poor nose! It is — somehow, pathetic, Mr. Canevin. It is a very frightful experience to have. It has utterly ruined my peace of mind. That is all there is to it, Mr. Canevin — the head and neck and shoulders of a young bull, with that blood running down from its forehead, and that expression . . .'

At once, upon hearing this salient particularization of Mrs. Garde's extraordinary optical experience, that analytical faculty of mine began forthwith to run riot. There were points of contact with previous knowledge of the spectral beliefs of the blacks and similar phenomena of our West Indies in that picture, affairs wherein I am not wholly without experience. The bull, as at once it occurred to me, is the principal sacrificial animal of the main voodoo cults, up and down the islands, where the old African gods of 'Guinea' prevail.

But a bull, with such an expression on its face as my hostess had briefly described, with blood running down its nose, up there on the wall space above the high mantelshelf in Gannett House — this was, truly, a puzzler! I shifted, I remember, forward in my chair, raised a hand to command Mrs. Garde's attention. I had thought of something.

'Tell me, if you please, Mrs. Garde,' said I. 'Is the appearance which you have described close against the wall, or — otherwise?'

'It is well out from the wall itself,' replied Mrs. Garde, striving to express herself with precision. 'It seems, I should say, to be several feet away from the wall proper, toward us, of course — not as though *behind* the wall, I mean — and, I



omitted to say, Mr. Canevin, that when I look at it for any considerable length of time, the head and shoulders seem to sag forward and downward. It is, I should say, as though the animal were just freshly hurt, were beginning to sink down to its death.'

'Thank you,' said I. 'It must have been a considerable ordeal to tell me about it so clearly and exactly. However, it is very simple psychology to understand that the process has done you good. You have shared your strange experience with some one else. That, of course, is a step in the right direction. Now, Mrs. Garde, will you permit me to "prescribe" for you?'

'Most assuredly, Mr. Canevin,' returned Mrs. Garde. 'I am, frankly, in such a state over this dreadful thing, that I am prepared to do anything to secure some relief from it. I have not, of course, mentioned it to my children. I have not said a word to anybody but you. It is not the sort of thing one can discuss - with anybody and everybody.'

I bowed across the table at this implied compliment, this expression of confidence in me, after all, the most casual of Mrs. Garde's acquaintances.

'I suggest,' said I, 'that the entire Garde family take an excursion down the islands, like the one from which I have just returned. The *Samaria*, of the Cunard Line, will be at St. Thomas on Thursday. Today is Monday. It would be quite a simple matter to make your reservations by wireless, or even by cable to St. Thomas. Go away for two or three weeks; come back when you are ready. And leave me the key of Gannett House, Mrs. Garde.'

My hostess nodded. She had listened avidly to this suggestion.

'I will do so, Mr. Canevin. I think there will be no argument from Edward and Lucretia. They were, as a matter of fact, envying you your visit to Martinique.'

'Good,' said I encouragingly. 'We may call that settled then. I might add that the *Grebe* is going back to St. Thomas tomorrow morning. It would be an excellent idea for you to

go along, I will telephone the dispatching secretary at once for the permission, and consult Dr. Pelletier who is chief municipal physician there. He has a broad mind and a large experience of affairs such as this.'

Again Mrs. Garde nodded acquiescently. She had reached, it was obvious, the place where she would carry out any intelligent suggestion to the end of terminating that optical horror of hers.

The Garde family left on board the little Government transport, which runs between our Virgin Islands and from them to and from Porto Rico, at eight o'clock the following morning. I saw them off at the Christiansted wharf, and the following afternoon a wireless from St. Thomas apprised me that Dr. Pelletier had proved very helpful, and that reservations for a three weeks' cruise about the islands had been secured for all three of them on board the Cunarder.

I breathed easily, for the first time. I had assumed a fairly considerable responsibility in my advice. I was now, for some three weeks, lord of the manor at Gannett House. I arranged, through Mrs. Garde's butler, a white man whom she had brought with her, to give the house servants a day's vacation for a picnic – a common form of pleasure seeking among West Indian blacks – and requested him, quoting Mrs. Garde's desire – she had given me *carte blanche* in the entire affair – to take the same day off himself, or even two days. He could, I pointed out, go over to St. Thomas on the next trip of the *Grebe* and come back the following day. There would be much to see in St. Thomas with its fine shops.

The butler made this arrangement without any demur, and I called on Fr. Richardson, rector of the English Church. Fr. Richardson, to whom I told the whole story, did no more than nod his wise West Indian head. He had spent a priestly lifetime combating the 'stupidness' of the blacks. He knew precisely what to do, without any further suggestions from me.

On the day when the servants were all away from Gannett House, Fr. Richardson came with his black bag and

exorcized the house from top to bottom, repeating his formulas and casting his holy water in room after room of the great old mansion. Then, gravely accepting the twenty-franc note which I handed him for his poor, and blessing me, the good and austere priest departed, his services just rendered being to him, I daresay, the nearest routine of a day's work.

I breathed easier now. God, as even the inveterate voodooists of Snake-ridden Haiti admit in their holy week practises – when every altar of the Snake is stripped of its vile symbols, these laid face downward on the floors, covered with rushes, and the crucifix placed on the altars – God is infinitely more powerful than even the mighty Snake of Guinea with his attendant demigods! I believe in being on the safe side.

After this, I merely waited until Mrs. Garde's return. Every few days I ran in and spoke with Robertson the butler. Otherwise I left the healing air of the sea to do its work of restoration on Mrs. Garde, confident that after her return, refreshed by the change, there would be no recurrence of her horror.

The thing was a problem, and a knotty one, from my viewpoint. I should not rest, I was fully aware, until, by hook or crook, I had satisfied myself about the background for the strange appearance which that lady had recounted to me across her tea table. In the course of the cogitations, wherein I exhausted my own fund of West Indian occult lore, I remembered old Lawyer Malling. There was a possible holder of clues! I have briefly alluded to what I might call a vague penumbra of some ancient scandal hanging about Gannett's. If there existed any real background for this, and anybody now alive knew the facts, it would be Herr Malling. He had passed his eightieth birthday. He had been personally acquainted, in his young manhood, with Angus Gannett, the last of that family to reside here. He had had charge of the property for a lifetime.

To old Malling's, therefore, after due cogitation as to how I should present such a matter to the conservative ancient, I betook myself.

Herr Malling received me with that Old World courtesy which makes a formal occasion out of the most commonplace visit. He produced his excellent sherry. He even used the formula—

'To what, Mr. Canevin, am I indebted for the honor of this most welcome visit?' Only he said 'dis' for 'this,' being a Danish West Indian.

After chatting of various local matters which were engaging the attention of the island at the moment, I delicately broached the subject upon which I had come.

I will attempt no full account of the fencing which led up to the main aspect of that conversation. Likewise the rather long impasse which promptly built itself up between this conservative old solicitor and myself. I could see, clearly enough, his viewpoint. This cautious questioning of mine had to do with the sacred affairs of an old client. Policy dictated silence; courteous silence; silence surrounded and softened by various politic remarks of a palliative nature; silence, nevertheless, as definite as the solitudes of Quintana Roo in the midst of the Yucatan jungles.

But there was a key word. I had saved it up, probably subconsciously, possibly by design; a design based on instinct. I had mentioned no particulars of Mrs. Garde's actual account; that is, I had said nothing of the nature and quality of that which had been distressing her. At last, baffled at all points by the old gentleman's crusted conservatism, I sprung my possible bombshell. It worked!

It was that word 'bull' which formed the key. When I had reached that far in my account of what Mrs. Garde had seen over the mantelshelf in Gannett House, and brought out that word, I thought, for an instant, that the old gentleman who had gone quite white, with blue about his ancient lips, was going to faint.

He did not faint, however. With something almost like haste he poured himself out a glass of his good sherry, drank it with an almost steady hand, set down the glass, turned to me and remarked—

'Wait!'

I waited while the old fellow potted out of his own hall, and listened to the *pat-pat-pat* of his carpet slippers as he went in search of something. He came back, looking quite as I had always seen him, his cheeks their usual apple red, the benign smile of a blameless old age again triumphant on his old lips. He set down an old fashioned cardboard filing case on the mahogany table beside the sherry decanter, looked over to me, nodded wisely and proceeded to open the filing case.

From this he took a thing somewhat like a large, old fashioned gentleman's wallet, which proved to be the binding placed by old school lawyers about particular documents, and unfolding this, and glancing at the heading of its contents, and once again nodding, this time to himself, Herr Malling handed the document, with a courteous bow, to me.

I took it, and listened to what the old gentleman was saying, while I examined it superficially. It consisted of many sheets of old fashioned, ruled foolscap, the kind of paper I have seen used for very old plantation accounts. I held it in my hand expectantly while Herr Malling talked.

'Mr. Canevin,' he was saying, 'I giff you dis, my friend, because it contain de explanation of what haff puzzled you – naturally. It iss de account off precisely what hov happen in Gannett's, de Autumn of de year 1876, when Herr Angus Gannett, de late owner, haff jus' retorn from de United States where he haff been wisiting his relatives an' attending de Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia.

'I t'ink you foind, sir, dis document, dis personal account, explain all t'ings now impossible to – er – grasp! I feel free to giff it to you to – er – peruse, because de writer iss dead. I am bound, as you will observe – er – upon perusal, solely by the tenure off life in de testator – er – de narrator, I should say. Dis iss not a will; it iss merely a statement. You will, I imagine, sir, find dis of some interest. I did!'

With a bow to Herr Malling for his great courtesy, I proceeded to read.

## II

Gannett House, Christiansted, D. W. I.  
October 25th, 1876

My very good friend and brother, Rudolf Malling:

This will serve as instructions for you in the affair of the conduct of my property, the town residence on the south side of the Sunday Market which I herewith, for purposes of custodial administration, place in your care. It is my purpose, on the twenty-ninth of this month, to take ship for England, thence direct to the City of Edinburgh; where my permanent address is to be No. 19, MacKinstrie's Lane, off Clarges Street, Edinburgh, Scotland. To this address all communications of every kind and sort whatsoever are to be addressed, both personal and concerning the property if need therefor should arise.

I direct and instruct that the house shall be closed permanently upon my departure, and so maintained permanently, the same being in your charge, and the statement of your outlay for this purpose of closing the house fast remitted to me at Edinburgh.

An explanation is due you, as I clearly perceive, for this apparently abrupt decision. I will proceed to make it herewith.

To do so I bind you to complete secrecy during the term of my natural life on the basis as of \*\*\*\*\*s'p – which, as a Bro. Freemason you will recognize, of course, even though thus informally given you, and keep my confidence as hereinafter follows strict and close as of the Craft.

I will begin, then, by reminding you of what you already know, to wit, that after the death of my mother, Jane Alicia MacMurtrie Gannett, my father, the late Fergus Gannett, Esq., caused me as well as his kinfolk in Scotland a vast and deep grief by resorting to that which has been the curse of numerous Caucasian gentlefolk as well as of many of the baser sort throughout the length and breadth of the West

India Islands. In short, my father entered upon a liaison with one Angelica Kofoed, a mulattress attached to our household and who had been the personal attendant of my late mother. This occurred in the year 1857.

As is also well known to you, a son was born of this union; and also my father, who, according to the law of the Danish West Indies, could have discharged his legal obligation by the payment of the sum of four hundred dollars to the mother, chose, instead, in the infatuation of which he appeared possessed, to acknowledge this son and, by due process of our legal code, to legitimize him.

I was a little past my tenth birthday when the child later known as Otto Andreas Gannett was born, here in our old home where I write this. Thereafter my father ceased all relationship with the woman Angelica Kofoed, pensioned her and, shortly after her child was weaned, caused her, the pension being continued and assured her for the term of her natural life, to emigrate to the Island of St. Vincent, of which place she was a native.

My legal half-brother, Otto Andreas Gannett, was retained, with a nurse, in our residence, and grew to young manhood under our roof as a member of the family. I may say here that it is more possible that I should have been able to overcome my loathing and repugnance toward my half-brother had it not been that his character, as he developed from childhood into boyhood and from boyhood into youth, was such as definitely to preclude such an attitude.

I will be explicit to the extent of saying plainly that Otto Andreas 'took after' the Negro side of his blood heritage, although his mother was but an octoroon, no more than slightly 'scorched of the blood', and appearing, like my half-brother, to be a Caucasian. I would not be misunderstood in this. I am very well aware that many of our worthiest citizens here in the West India Islands are of this mixed blood. It is a vexed and somewhat delicate question at best, at least here in our islands. Suffice it to say that the worst Negro characteristics came out as Otto Andreas grew into young

manhood. He bears today and doubtless will continue long to bear, an evil reputation, even among the blacks of this island; a reputation for wicked and lecherous inclination, a bad choice of low companions, a self-centered and egotistical demeanor and, worst of all, an incurable inclination toward the wicked and stupid practises of the blacks, with whom, to the shame of our house, he had consorted much before his death in the Autumn of this year, 1876. I refer to what is known as *obeah*.

It is especially in this last mentioned particular that I found it impossible to countenance him. Fortunately my father departed this life five years ago, before this dreadful inclination toward the powers of the Evil One had sufficiently made themselves manifest in Otto Andreas to draw thereto my father's failing attention. I thank my God for that He was pleased to take my father away before he had that cross to bear.

I will not particularize further than to say that the cumulation of these bad attributes in my half-brother formed the determining cause for my departure for the United States, May second, in this year, 1876. As you are aware, I left Otto Andreas here, with strict adjurations as to his conduct and, thinking to escape from continuous contact with him, which had grown unbearably hateful to me, went to New York, thence to the city of Philadelphia where I attended the Centennial Exposition in the hope of somewhat distracting my mind and, later, before returning toward the beginning of October, visited various of our kinfolk in the States of Maryland and Virginia.

I arrived on this island, sailing from New York via Porto Rico, on the nineteenth of October, landing at West-End and remaining overnight at the residence of our friend, Herr Mulgrav, the Judge of the Frederiksted Reconciling Court, and, through the courtesy of the Reverend Dr. Dubois of the West-End English Church, who very considerably loaned me his carriage and horses, drove the seventeen miles to Christiansted the following morning.



I arrived just before breakfast time, about a quarter before one o'clock P.M.

I will be explicit to inform you, my good friend and brother, that I had not been so futile minded as to anticipate that my long absence in America would have anything like a corrective effect upon my half-brother. Indeed I was not far from anticipating that I should have to face newascalities, new stupidnesses upon his part, perpetrated in my absence from home. I anticipated, indeed, that my homecoming would be anything but a pleasant experience, for of such presage I had, in truth, ample background on which to base such an opinion. I arrived at my house, therefore, in anything but a cheerful frame of mind. I had gone away to secure some respite. I came home to meet I knew not what.

No man in his senses – I say it deliberately, for the purpose of warning you, my friend, as you proceed to read what I am about to write – however, could have anticipated what I did meet! I had, indeed, something like a warning of untowardness at home, on my way across the island from Frederiksted. You know how our island blacks show plainly on their faces what their inmost thoughts are, in some instances; how inscrutable they can be in other affairs. As I passed black people on the road, or in the estate fields, I observed nothing on the faces of those who recognized me save a certain commiseration. Murmurs came to my ears, indeed, from their mouths, as one or another murmured—

'Poor young marster!' Or such remarks as 'Ooh, Gahd, him comin' to trouble an' calamity!'

This, of course, was the opposite of reassuring; yet I was not surprised. I had, you will remember, anticipated trouble, with Otto Andreas as its cause and root.

I will not dissemble that I expected something, as I have remarked, untoward.

I entered a strangely silent house – the first thing that came to me was a most outrageous smell! You are surprised, doubtless, at such a statement. I record the facts. My nostrils were instantaneously assailed, so soon as I had myself

opened the door and stepped within, leaving Dr. Dubois' coachman, Jens, to bring in my hand luggage, with a foul odor comparable to nothing less wretched than a cattle pen!

I say to you that it fairly took me by the throat. I called to the servants as soon as I was within, leaving the door open behind me to facilitate Jens with my bags, and to let out some of that vile stench. I called Herman, the butler, and Josephine and Marianna, maids in the household. I even called out to Amaranth Niles, the cook. At the sound of my voice – the servants had not known of my arrival the night before – Herman and Marianna came running, their faces blank and stupid, in the fashion well known to you when our blacks have something to conceal.

I ordered them to take my bags to my bedroom, turned to give Jens the coachman a gratuity for his trouble, and turned back again to find Josephine staring at me through a doorway. The other two had disappeared by this time with my hand luggage. The rest, the trunks and so forth, heavier articles, were to be sent over from Frederiksted that afternoon by a carter.

'What is this frightful smell, Josephine?' I inquired. 'The whole house is like a cattle pen, my girl. What has happened? Come now, tell me!'

The black girl stood in the doorway, her face quite inscrutable, and wrung her two hands together.

'Ooh, Gahd, sar, me cahn't say,' she replied with that peculiarly irritating false stupidity which they can assume at will.

I said nothing, I did not wish to inaugurate my homecoming with any fault finding. Besides, the horrible smell might very well not be this girl's fault. I stepped to the left along the inner gallery and into the hall\* through the entrance door, which was shut. I opened it, and stepped in, I say.

My dear friend Malling, prepare yourself. You will be – well – surprised, to put the matter conservatively.

There, in the center of the hall, its neck turned about so as

\* A West Indian drawing room is commonly called the hall.

to look toward whoever had just opened the door from the inner gallery, in this case, myself – stood a young, coal black bullock!

Beside it, on the floor in the middle of the Bokhara rug which my grandfather had brought with him from his voyage to Turkestan in the year 1837, there was a crate, half filled with fresh grass and carrots; and nearby, and also on the rug, stood a large bucket of water. Wisps of the grass hung from the bullock's mouth as it stared at me for all the world as though to remark, 'Who is this who intrudes, forsooth, upon my privacy here!'

Malling, I let myself go then. This – a bullock in my hall, in my town house! – this was too much! I rushed back into the gallery crying out for the servants, for Herman and Josephine and Marianna. They came, looking down at me, fearfully, over the balusters of the stairway, their faces gray with fear. I cursed them roundly, as you may well imagine. I conceive that even the godly Dr. Dubois himself would at least feel the desire so to express himself were he to return to his rectory and find a bullock stabled in his choicest room!

But all my words elicited nothing save that look of blank stupidity to which I have already referred; and when, in the midst of my diatribe, old Amaranth Niles, the cook, came hastening upon the scene from her kitchen, a long spoon in her fat old hand, she, who had been with us since my birth twenty-eight years before, likewise went stupid.

Suddenly I ceased reviling them for ingrates, for fools, for rascallions, for gallows birds. It occurred to me, very shortly, that this rascality was none, could be none, of theirs, poor creatures. It was the latest devilment of my half-brother Otto Andreas. I saw it clearly. I collected myself. I addressed poor Herman in a milder tone.

'Come Herman, get this beast out of the house immediately!' I pointed toward the now open door into the hall.

But Herman, despite this definite command of mine, never stirred. His face became an ashen hue and he looked at me imploringly. Then, slowly, his hands raised up above his

head as he stood there on the stairway looking fearfully over the baluster, he cried out, tremblingly:

'I cyan't, sar, 'fore the good God an' help me de Lord – I cyan't dislodge de animal!'

I looked back at Herman with a certain degree of calmness. I addressed the man.

'Where is Mr. Otto Andreas?' I inquired.

At this simple query both maids on the stairs began to weep aloud, and old Amaranth Niles, the cook, who had been staring, pop-eyed and silent through the doorway, turned with an unexpected agility and fled back to her kitchen. Herman, if possible, became a full shade paler. Unsteadily the man forced himself to come down the stairs, holding rigidly to the baluster. He turned and stepped toward me, his face gray and working and the beads of sweat standing thickly and heavily on his forehead. He dropped upon his knees before me there on the gallery floor and, his hands held up above his head, cried out:

'Him dead, sar, from day before yestiddy, sar – it de troof, me marster!'

I will confess to you, Malling, that the gallery reeled about me at this wholly unexpected news. Nobody had told me the night before. Just possibly my hosts had not been aware of it. Another question presented itself to my tottering mind, a question the answer to which would clear up that matter of not being told.

'What time did he die, Herman?' I managed to articulate. I was holding on to the baluster myself now.

'Late, sar,' returned Herman, still on his knees, and swaying backward and forward. 'P'rops two hour after midnight, sar. Him bury de nex' day, sar, dat am to say 'twas yestiddy afternoon, two o'clock, me marster. De body ain' keep good, sar, an' 'sides, all we ain' made sensible of your arrival, sar.'

So that was why the Mulgravs had not told me. They simply had not known of my half-brother's death, would not know until today in the ordinary course of events, at that distance from Christiansted.

My first reaction, I will admit, was one of profound relief.

Otto Andreas would never – I confess to have thought – trouble me again; would not, indeed, again trouble any one with his shortcomings, his arrogance, his manifold evil habits, his villainies. I was premature . . .

Then, almost mechanically, I suppose, my mind turned to that shambles in my hall, that barnyard beast stabled there, the priceless rug sodden with its filth. I turned to Herman and spoke.

'Get up, Herman! Stand up, man! There is no occasion for you to act in this fashion. I was, naturally, very much annoyed at the animal being in the hall. I am, in fact, still vexed about it. Tell me—' as the man rose to his feet and stood trembling before me – 'who placed it there, and why has it not been removed?'

At this Herman visibly shook from head to foot, and again his dark visage, which had been somewhat restored to its wonted coloration, turned gray with fright. I sensed somehow that he was less frightened at me than at something else. I am, of course, accustomed to the peculiarities of our Negroes. I spoke to him again, very gently, voicing my previous idea which had stayed my first great anger.

'Did Mr. Otto Andreas place the animal there?'

Herman, apparently not trusting himself to speak, nodded his head at me.

'Come now, man, get it out quickly!' I commanded.

Again, to my profound annoyance, Herman fell on his knees before me, mumbled abjectly his statement of inability to carry out my orders.

I struggled with myself to be patient. I had been, I conceived, rather sorely tried. I took Herman by the shoulder, drew him to his feet, walked him, unresisting, along the gallery and into my office. I closed the door behind us and sat down at my work table where I do my accounts and write – where I am now writing this to you. Herman, I perceived, was still trembling. There was something in this which I was – so far – unable to fathom.

'Go and bring me some rum and two tumblers, Herman,' I ordered, still forcing myself to speak gently, calmly. Herman left the room in silence. I sat there waiting for him to come back, intensely puzzled. The bullock, it seemed to me, could wait. By the indications it had been there for a full day or more. The odor was, even here with the door closed, almost unbearable.

Herman returned and set down the rum and the tumblers. I poured out a stiff tot and a smaller one for myself. I drank off my rum and then handed the other tumbler to Herman.

'Drink this, Herman,' I ordered him, 'and then sit down there. I wish to speak with you very seriously.'

Herman gulped the rum, his eyes rolling and, when I had repeated my command, seated himself uneasily on the extreme edge of the chair I had indicated. I looked at him. Fetching and drinking the rum had somewhat helped his agitation. He was no longer visibly trembling.

'Listen to me, now, man,' said I. 'I beg you to tell me, plainly and without equivocation, why is it that you have not taken that bullock out of the hall. That I must know. Come now, tell me, man!'

Once again Herman literally threw himself at my feet and groveled there. He murmured—

'I is beg yo' to believe, me marster, dat I can not do, sar.'

This was too much. I threw my restraint to the winds, caught the black rascal by the neck, hauled him to his feet, shook him soundly, slapped him on both sides of the face. He was unresistant, quite limp in my grasp, poor old fellow.

'You will tell me,' I threatened him, 'or, by Caesar, I'll break every bone in your damned worthless black body! Come now, at once and no more of this intolerable stupidity!'

Herman stiffened. He leaned forward, whispered, tremblingly, in my ear. He did not dare, it seemed, to mention the name he had on his tongue aloud. He told me that Pap' Joseph, their devilish black *papaloi*, as they name him, their witch-doctor, had been the cause of the bullock's remaining

in the hall. Furthermore, now that he was started on his confession, he told me that my half-brother had had that filthy wretch staying in the house – can you imagine it, Malling? – for several days before his sudden death; that the two had made elaborate arrangements, there in the hall, for some filthy *obeah* which they were planning between them; that the bullock had been introduced three days ago; other detail which would be here superfluous, and, finally, that, as nearly as he – not a witness of whatever necromancy or sorcery they were working among them – there had been various other blacks on the scene in my hall besides those two – could estimate the matter, Otto Andreas had died, very suddenly and unexpectedly, *in the midst of their incantations*, and that Pap' Joseph himself had given him, Herman, the strictest orders not to remove the bullock from the hall upon any pretext whatsoever until he, Pap' Joseph, should come to take the animal away in person. It was to be watered, fed – hence the bucket and the trough of green food – but not otherwise to be interfered with in any manner whatsoever.

That, of course, explained much; but knowing why poor old Herman had balked at answering my previous questions did not help the affair very greatly. The disgusting creature was still, as it were, pastured in my hall. It was inexplicable – why the witch-doctor had issued such ridiculous orders; I mean to say, because to understand that, one would have to be familiar with the inner workings of their incantations and similar stupidity. However, I saw clearly that Herman could not, being under such pressure of fear – they all dread this Joseph like pestilence or the Evil Fiend himself – do anything by way of removing the animal. I sent him out, and stepped along the gallery and again into the hall.

Here, for the first time, I perceived what my complete stultification upon seeing that bullock calmly occupying my hall on my first visit had prevented my noticing before. At the east end of the hall, a large, strong platform of boards, approached from the side by a ramp or inclined plane, had been solidly built against the wall, at the same height as the

marble mantelshelf. Indeed, the platform, which was about twelve feet square, was an extension into the room of the mantelshelf itself. I knew, and you know, of course, what that had involved. The platform was a 'high' altar of voodoo. Some very elaborate rites of the higher manifestations of their horrible practises had been planned here. I was dry mouthed with pure indignation. The son of my father, Fergus Gannett, even by a person of color, lending himself to that, taking willing part in such atrocious villainy!

I saw that I should have to secure a rope to remove the bullock, which was entirely free, and now standing looking out of one of the windows without so much as a halter on its head. I walked out of the room, closing the door behind me, and as I was about to call Herman to fetch me a rope it occurred to me that I would do well to procure some help. I could not, you see, lead such an animal out of my house on to the public road. It would be a most ridiculous sight and would mark me for years as a subject for derisive conversation among the blacks of the town, indeed of the entire island. I called to Herman, therefore, but when he came in answer to this summons I demanded, not a rope, but the carriage and, when that appeared ten minutes later, I ordered Herman to drive me out to Macartney House.

Yes, I had made up my mind, even to the extent of taking Macartney some way into my confidence, that I would do wisely to have him along. For one thing, he has many cattle. Macartney handing over a bullock – it could be led out through a back passage and into the house yard – to one of his farm laborers would not excite any comment at all in the town.

I thought better and better of this decision during the ten minute drive to Macartney's, and when I arrived I found him at home and Cornelis Hansen, his son-in-law, who married Honoria, with him.

I explained no more to these gentlemen than that my eccentric late half-brother had seen fit to leave an animal in



the hall shortly before his death, and that I begged their aid and countenance in getting rid of the beast, and they both came back with me.

It was close upon three o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived, Macartney having brought one of his cattlemen who sat beside Herman on the box, and, taking this fellow with us, equipped with a rope and bull halter, we entered the house and walked along the inner gallery and into the hall.

Here, then, my dear Malling, I am constrained to set down the oddest happening! The bullock, which was a young one, only half grown, was not, as it turned out, the docile, placid creature one might very well have expected.

To put the matter briefly, so soon as the creature saw us enter, and had, apparently, observed the cattleman with his halter and rope, it began to act as though it were positively possessed! It raged about the room, upsetting what furniture was there, breaking some articles, overturning others, the cattleman in hot pursuit; Macartney, Mr. Hansen and I doing our best to hem it in and head it off. Finally it took refuge, of all imaginable places, upon the board platform! Yes, it ran up the ramp and stood, at bay, its muzzle positively frothing, its nostrils distended, and a look of the most extraordinary emotion upon its heavy animal face that any one could – or could not – possibly imagine.

As it stood there, and the three of us and the cattleman stood looking up at it, Macartney burst out with—

'Faith, Mr. Gannett, sir, it has every appearance of humanity in its confounded eyes – the beast!'

I looked at it and felt that Macartney might almost be right! The animal had most pronouncedly upon its facial expression every indication of unwillingness to be removed from my hall! The thing was entirely ridiculous, save only that its rushing about was going to cost me a pretty penny for the joiner's work which must be done upon my broken furniture.

Macartney ordered his Negro to mount the ramp and

place the halter upon the now apparently cornered beast, and he attempted to do so. He had got nearly to the top when the beast unexpectedly lowered its head and hurled the unfortunate man to the floor, breaking one of his arms between the shoulder and elbow.

At this, once more that day, I lost patience entirely. This stupidity, it seemed to me, had gone far enough. Was my half-brother and his witless knavery to follow and distress and annoy me even from beyond his grave? I decided that I would end the affair there and then.

'Attend to your poor fellow, here, Macartney,' said I, 'and I will return directly. You might take him out and Herman will drive him to the municipal hospital.'

I left the room, walked along the inner gallery to my office, and took my pistol from the drawer of the table where I always keep it.

I came back to the hall, passing Macartney and Hansen as they carried the poor devil with his broken arm, moaning quite piteously, out to the carriage in the roadway below.

The pistol in my hand, I approached the platform. On it the bullock was still standing. It had made no effort to descend. I walked straight down the room and stood before the platform, raised the pistol, and took careful aim at the middle of the animal's forehead. It was only just as I pressed my index finger firmly around the trigger that I caught the expression in its eyes. Then I understood fully what Macartney had meant by his remark that it looked almost 'human'! If I had had time, I confess to you, Malling, I would, even then, and after all that provocation and vexatiousness, have stayed my hand. But it was too late.

The bullet struck squarely in the middle of the beast's forehead and, as it swayed on its stricken legs, a great gout of red blood ran down its soft nose and dripped upon the boards of the platform. Then, quite suddenly, its four legs gave out from under it, and it fell with a round thud on the boards, shaking the solid platform with its considerable

weight, and lay still, its head projecting over the edge of the platform.

I left it lying there, the blood running over the edge and dripping on the mahogany flooring of the hall underneath and, as I left the room in the definite certainty that I was finished with this annoyance, all but having the furniture repaired and the stinking shambles cleaned and aired, I carried with me the most extraordinary impression which suddenly grew up in my mind – the most distressful matter imaginable – a feeling which, however illogical the affair may appear to you, I feel certain I shall carry with me to the grave – *the feeling that I had gravely interfered, in some truly mysterious and inexplicable fashion, with my half-brother Otto Andreas's last wishes!*

Macartney and his son-in-law were returning along the inner gallery from depositing the man in my carriage, and I took them into the dining room for some refreshment, laying the pistol on the table.

'So you shot the beast, eh?' remarked Macartney.

'Aye,' I returned, 'and that ends that phase of the trouble, Macartney. The wine and rum are here on the sideboard; be pleased to take your glasses, gentlemen – only, there is another side to all this on which I wish to consult you both.'

We drank a tot of rum and then, the decanter and glasses on the table beside the pistol, we drew up our chairs and I opened to these gentlemen the affair, in confidence – both, as you know, are, like ourselves, members of the Harmonic Lodge in St. Thomas, first placing them formally on the \*\*\*\*\*s'p – of my late half-brother and his bringing the witch-doctor into my house for their infernal deviltry, whatever it may have been.

Both, as soon as I had made this affair clear, were of one mind with me. This, in truth, was a matter for swift and very definite action. We must take into our joint confidence the Policemaster – our brother Freemason, fortunately – Knudsen.

We wasted no time, once we had come to that conclusion.

I excused myself, leaving these gentlemen to their glasses and the decanter and, taking the pistol, which I returned to its drawer, entered my office and wrote a brief note to Policemaster Knudsen and dispatched Marianna with it to the Christiansfort.

Knudsen arrived in response to this summons just at four, and we sat down to a dish of tea in the dining room to discuss the matter. Knudsen agreed with us fully. He would send out a pair of his *gendarmes* at once, apprehend Pap' Joseph, lodge him in the fort safely, and bring him here to the scene of this last crime of his at nine o'clock that evening. Macartney and Hansen promised to be here at that hour, and Herman, who had returned from the hospital, drove them back to Macartney House.

Knudsen and his prisoner – handcuffed fast between two *gendarmes* who sat with him in the lower gallery on three adjacent chairs from eight forty-five until the punctual arrival of Macartney and Hansen on the stroke of nine – were the first to arrive. Knudsen and I sat together in my office waiting for the other two men in the interim. Knudsen had a glass or two of rum, but I excused myself from joining him in this refreshment.

Upon the arrival of Macartney and his son-in-law Cornelis Hansen, we dismissed the *gendarmes*, Knudsen instructing them to wait at the farther end of the inner gallery, and took the prisoner into the office where he was provided with a chair. We sat around and looked at him.

This man, rather small and very black, was decently clothed and, except for an extremely villainous expression about the eyes, looked commonplace enough. Yet a mere word of direction from him into the ear of my butler had caused that faithful old servitor of our family for more than thirty years utterly to refuse to obey my orders and dispose of the filthy beast stabled in my hall!

I had sent all the servants home, not even retaining Herman. We had thus the entire house to ourselves. Knudsen

nodded to me as soon as we had bestowed ourselves, and I addressed the witch-doctor.

'Joseph,' said I, 'we know that you were here in this house with Mr. Otto Andreas, and that you used my hall for some of your incantations. This, of course, places you outside the law on several counts. The code forbids the practice of *obeah* in the Danish West Indies, and you were, plainly, breaking that law. Also, since you have been doing so here in my house, I am concerned in the matter. I have talked the affair over with these gentlemen and, I will be frank with you, there is some of it which we fail to understand; in particular why I discovered a beast stabled in my residence which, as I understand it, is some of your doings. We have brought you here, therefore, to hear your story. If you will reply clearly and fully to what we desire to ask you, Herr Knudsen assures me that you will not be thrown into gaol in the fort, nor prosecuted. If you refuse, then the law shall take its course in this case.

'I ask you, therefore, to explain to us, fully, what this animal was doing in my hall; also what part Mr. Otto Andreas had in the affair. Those are the two matters on which we desire to have the fullest information.'

Malling, this black fellow simply refused to speak. Nothing, not a word, not a syllable, could we get out of him. Macartney tried him, Mr. Hansen spoke to him; finally Knudsen, who had waited without saying anything, put in his word.

'If you refuse to reply to the two questions,' said he, 'I shall take steps to make you speak.'

That was all. It occupied, in all, more than half an hour. At any rate, my watch showed it nearly a quarter before ten when we paused, and Macartney and Hansen and I looked at each other, baffled; apparently we could get no satisfaction out of this wretch. Then, in the pause which had ensued, Knudsen, the policeman, addressed me:

'Have I your permission to send my men into your kitchen?' he asked in his curt manner. I bowed. 'Anything

you desire, Herr Knudsen,' I replied, and Knudsen rose and walked out into the inner gallery, and through the half open door of the office we could hear him saying something to his *gendarmes*. Then he returned and sat, silently, looking at the black fellow who now, for the first time, appeared somewhat moved. He showed this only by a slight and characteristic rolling of his eyeballs. Otherwise he gave no more sign of communicativeness than he had vouchsafed previously.

We sat thus, waiting, until a few minutes after ten o'clock, Knudsen and the black fellow quite silent, the others of us conversing slightly among ourselves. Then, at eight minutes past ten, one of the *gendarmes* knocked at the door and handed in to Knudsen, who had arisen to open to this summons, a burning charcoal pot and the bayonets from the two men's rifles which had been detached, doubtless by their officer's command. I sensed, at this, something extremely unpleasant. I knew Knudsen's well earned reputation for downrightness. He is, as you are aware, one of those ex-non-commissioned officers of the Danish army who, as a professional handler of men, takes no stupidity from criminals or others with whom his profession causes him to deal.

He set the charcoal pot on the middle of the floor of my office, thrust the two bayonets, points inward, directly within the bed of glowing coals and, turning to the man who had waited at the door, commanded:

'Bring Larsen here, Krafft, and bind this fellow with his hands behind him and his feet trussed together.'

The policeman spoke in Danish which, I suppose, the black fellow did not understand. Yet I could perceive him wince at the words, which plainly had to do with his subsequent treatment, and his dark face took on that grayish shade which is a Negro's paling.

Almost at once the two *gendarmes* were at the door again. The fellow addressed as Krafft saluted and said—

'We have no rope, Herr Commandant.'

I remembered at that the bull handler's rope which Macartney's man, when carried out for his trip to the hospital, had left behind him. I recalled it as it lay on the floor near that horrid platform, as I had myself left the room after the destruction of the animal. No one had been in the hall since that time, some seven hours ago.

'Pardon, Herr Knudsen,' said I, rising. 'If you will send one of these men with me, I will provide him with a rope.'

Knudsen spoke to Krafft, who saluted once more and, stepping aside for me to pass out into the inner gallery, followed me a pace behind while I walked along it toward the doorway leading into the hall.

Malling, my friend, I hesitate to go on; yet, go on I must if I am to make it clear to you, after this long rigmarole which I have already, by nearly a whole day's steady composition, succeeded in setting out for your perusal and understanding. I will try to set it down, the dreadful thing, the incredible horror which blasted my sight and will invade my suffering mind until death closes my eyes for the last time on this earth; my real and sufficient reason for leaving this island where I have lived all my life, which I love as my native land, where all my friends live.

Attend, then, friend Malling, to what I must, perforce, set out on this paper, if you are to understand.

I reached the door, throwing it open, which let out upon us more of that wretched odor which was, of course, all through the house despite opened windows. Lighting a match, I set alight the nearest lamp, a standing, brass mounted affair, which stands quite near the doorway beside my mother's Broadwood pianoforte.

By this light we proceeded, the *gendarme* Krafft and I, along the room toward the other end where the platform still stood, where the carcass of the animal hung, its head over the edge, awaiting the very early morning when old Herman, according to my orders, was, with the assistance of two laborers he was to secure, to remove it and set about the cleaning of the room immediately afterward.

Two-thirds of the way along the room I paused and, pointing in the general direction to where it lay, on the mahogany floor, told Krafft that he would find the rope somewhere near the place I indicated. I caught his silent salute with the corner of my eye as I paused to light another standing lamp, since the light from the first, dimmed by its large ornamental shade, left us, at this point, in semi-darkness and the mantelpiece and platform above it in thick darkness. I had just turned down the circular wick of this second lamp when I heard Krafft's scream and, dropping the box of matches I held upon the floor, wheeled just in time to see him, his hands above his head in a gesture of abandoned horror, sink limply to the floor not five paces from the front of that platform.

I peered toward him, my eyes for the instant slightly dazzled from having been close to the flame of the newly lighted lamp, and then, Malling – then, my friend, I saw *what he had seen*; what had set this tough grained man handler of a policeman to screaming like a frightened woman, and himself hurtling to the floor in an uncontrollable spasm of stark, unmitigated terror. And as I saw, and felt the room go around, and envisaged the conviction that this was the end of life – as I myself sank, helpless with the fearsome horror of that eldritch uncanniness, toward the floor, the light fading from my consciousness in the onset of a merciful oblivion, I heard behind me, the agitated voices of Knudsen and Macartney and young Mr. Hansen as they, summoned by Krafft's scream, crowded into the hall through the doorway. I had seen, dimly in that not too good illumination from the two standing oil lamps, not the head of the bullock I had destroyed, but – *the head and shoulders of my half-brother Otto Andreas: a great blackened hole in his forehead; and the blood dried on his inverted face*; as he hung, stark now, and ghastly lifeless from over the edge of the voodoo platform . . .

I awakened in my office surrounded by my acquaintances, a drizzle of cold water upon my face and neck, and



the taste of brandy in my mouth puckering my lips. I was on my back on the floor and, looking up, I perceived that the *gendarme*, Larsen, stood over the still seated black fellow, his pistol held near the back of the man's head. As I sat up, assisted by young Mr. Hansen, Knudsen turned away from the group and, taking a now glowing bayonet out of the charcoal pot with his gloved hand, curtly ordered Larsen to turn the Negro out of his chair and stretch him, bound as I perceived, according to orders, upon the floor.

The anticipation sickened me slightly, and I closed my eyes; but I had determined not to interfere with Knudsen, who knew his own methods and was, after all, here upon my own request to force from this villain the confession which should clear up the mysteries we had vainly propounded to him.

I was soon in my chair, pretty well restored by the vigorous measures which had been taken with me, and able to hear what Knudsen was saying to the supine prisoner. I saw, too, the pale and stricken face of Krafft, just outside the doorway. He too, it appeared, had recovered.

I will abbreviate a very ugly matter, an affair which sickened me to the heart; which was, nevertheless, necessary as procedure if we were to secure the information we desired.

In short, the black fellow, even in his present distressful condition, refused, point blank, to reveal what we had inquired of him, and Knudsen, with his own hand, tore open his shirt and applied the cherry-red bayonet to his skin. A horrid smell of scorched flesh made itself apparent at once, and I closed my eyes, sick at the dreadful sight. The Negro screamed with the unbearable pain, but thereafter clamped his thick lips and shook his head against Knudsen's repeated orders to answer the questions.

Then Knudsen put the bayonet back, thrusting it well into the glowing charcoal, and took out the other one. He stood with it in his hand above the Negro. He addressed him, in his usual curt, cold and hard tones:

'My man, I warn you seriously. I make you sensible that

you will not leave this house alive. I shall go over your entire body, with these, unless you reply to the questions you have been asked.'

With the conclusion of this warning speech, he abruptly pressed the flat of the bayonet across the Negro's abdomen, and after an anguished howl of pain, Pap' Joseph capitulated. He nodded his head and writhed out of twisted lips his consent.

He was at once lifted back into the chair by the two *gendarmes*, and then, gasping, his eyes rolling in a mental anguish plainly greater than that of his grievous bodily hurts, he told us . . .

It appears that there are two 'supreme offerings' in the dreadful worship of these voodooists; one the affair of a human sacrifice which they name 'the goat without horns', and which, according to our informant, was never put into practice in these islands; and the second, their ceremony which they call the 'baptism'. This last, it was, which had been perpetrated in my house! And – one could hardly guess it, even at this stage of this narrative of mine for your private eye, friend Malling – *it was Otto Andreas who was the candidate!*

I should, perhaps, have mentioned that his body, supposedly buried a day and a half before, and which had, to my distraction and that of the man Krafft, been seen hanging over the edge of the sacrificial platform, had been taken down and now lay, decently disposed by Knudsen and Larsen along four chairs in the hall during the short period when Macartney and Hansen had been engaged in reviving me and bringing me back to my office. Earth and splinters of pitch pine were upon the body.

The culmination of that foul rite which they impiously call the baptism is the sacrifice of an animal; sometimes a goat, sometimes a young bull. In this case the bull had been selected.

Before the knife is drawn across the throat of the animal, however, the candidate for the baptism, on hands and knees,

and stripped naked as the hour he was born, must 'confront' the goat or the bull. Yes, Malling, as I gathered it from those twisted, pain galled lips of that black fiend, the two, the candidate and the sacrificial animal, gaze for a long period into each other's eyes; the belief being that in this way the two, for the time being, exchange, as it were, their personalities! It seems incredible that it should be believed, yet such is what he assured us of.

In the ordinary course, the officiating priest having determined that this alleged exchange of personalities had indeed taken place, the animal is abruptly killed, its throat being cut across with a sharpened machete or cane-bill. At this, the personality of the human being retransfers itself to its proper abode; yet some modicum of it is supposed to remain in the animal, and this on the animal's death, passes out of it and into the custody of the thing they name the Guinea Snake, which is the ultimate object of their nefarious devotions, as a sacrifice, given up by the candidate thereto.

Such, as it was explained to us, is the underlying principle of a voodooist's baptism.

That is how it would have occurred in the case of Otto Andreas, if there had not been a kind of unexpected hitch. Naturally, one would gather, the nervous and mental strain upon such a candidate would be an extremely severe one. In the case of my half-brother it proved too severe.

Otto Andreas had dropped dead, doubtless from heart failure induced by the strain of it all, there on the platform, just at the very moment before Pap' Joseph himself, as he assured us, who was officiating at the baptism, was to slaughter the bull.

The personalities, as the voodooists believed, were at that moment entirely interchanged. In other words, lacking the release and relocation of these, which would have come at the knife stroke across the bullock's throat, the 'soul' of the sacrificial animal died at the moment of Otto Andreas' unexpected death, and – *the soul of Otto Andreas remained in the bullock.*

'An' so, sar,' finished Pap' Joseph, with a devilish leer in his eyes, and addressing me, 'yo' is destroy the life of yo' bruddah, sar, when yo' is so hasty as to shoot de bull!'

The witch-doctor, it transpired from a portion of this account, had given old Herman the orders – not knowing of my imminent return home – to keep the bullock in the hall, because he was 'making magic' to get the 'souls' exchanged back again! It had, of course, been necessary to bury Otto Andreas' body. But we were assured, if the bullock had been left alone, it would, by now, have been changed back into Otto Andreas, a process which, the witch-doctor gravely assured us, required not only a great skill in magicking like his own, but considerable time!

There was only one thing to be done that night. Pap' Joseph was sent back to the Christiansfort, with instructions that he was to be liberated the following morning at six o'clock. Then the four of us, having placed a blanket about the body of Otto Andreas, carried it among us to the cemetery. Arrived there, with the two spades we had fetched along, Hansen and Knudsen set to work to dig up the coffin. It was moonlight and, of course, at that hour of the night no one was in or even near the cemetery.

The earth, even for a newly made grave, was unusually loose, it seemed to all of us. A spade struck wood, about four feet down. Macartney spelled his son-in-law. I offered to do the same for Knudsen, but he refused. Within a minute he said in a puzzled tone—

'What is this!'

He squatted down in the grave and with his gloved hands threw up a mass of soft earth about something he had discovered.

Malling, they had disinterred a smashed coffin, a coffin burst out of semblance to the narrow box which is designed to be the last housing place of a human form. And no wonder it had been burst asunder, from the monstrous thing which came partially to light. We did not wholly uncover

what he had discovered down there under the surface of the holy ground. There was no need, Malling.

It had been the stiff, unyielding, bony limb of a four-legged horned animal, from which Knudsen had thrown up the loose earth. A bullock was buried there, where some thirty-six hours previously men had interred the body of my late half-brother Otto Andreas Gannett. Pap' Joseph, it appeared, under that direful compulsion to which he had so reluctantly yielded, had told us the truth.

We hastily enlarged the grave sufficiently to receive the body we had brought with us and, leaving a higher mound than had met us on our arrival, though beaten down with the flats of the spades, we came back swiftly and in silence to my house and there, as brother Freemasons, swore that, save for this information to you, our fellow brother Freemason, which I specified as an exception, we would none of us – and the others during the term of my life – reveal anything of what we had heard to any man. Knudsen answered for his *gendarmes* and from the reputation he bears as a disciplinarian, I have little fear that either of them will ever mention what part of it all they were privileged to witness.

This will serve, then, my friend, to account to you for why I am leaving Santa Cruz and going to Scotland whence our family came here four generations ago, when these islands were for the first time opened to the settlement of planters other than natives of Denmark through the generosity of the Danish government. I can not stay in this cursed house where such things as confound man's understanding have taken place; and so I place my property in your kind and efficient hands, my friend Malling, in the belief that I have made my reasons for such a decision clear.

I am taking with me to Scotland my faithful old servant Herman. I would not leave him here to endure the tender mercies of that pestiferous scoundrel Pap' Joseph, whose orders, out of faithfulness to me, he broke. One cannot tell

what would happen to the poor old fellow if I were so inconsiderate.

I remain, yours most faithfully and to command,

ANGUS GANNETT

P.S. Knudsen, of course, insists that some blacks, followers of Pap' Joseph, merely exchanged the bodies of the bullock and my half-brother, during the interval, after my shooting of the beast, in which my hall remained unvisited by any of my household.

—A. G.

### III

I finished the account and handed it back to Herr Malling. I thanked him for his extraordinary courtesy in allowing me to read it. And then I walked straight to Gannett House to look once more at that hall where all this mysterious succession of strange affairs had taken place. I sat down, after Robertson had let me in, in the place usually occupied by Mrs. Garde, and Robertson brought me a solitary tea on the great circular tray.

I could not forbear glancing up toward the place once occupied by that board platform where a voodoo baptism had all but taken place; a strange rite interrupted just before its culmination by the collapse of long dead and gone Otto Andreas, with his unquenchable desire for the fellowship of the Snake! There are strange matters in our West Indies. Well, God was, always had been, always will be, stronger than the Snake. There would be, I felt well assured, no recurrence of that strange vision which had projected itself after all these years, of that bullock's 'almost human' eyes, reproachful, pathetic, as Mrs. Garde had said, looking down at the grim Scot with his steady hand leveling his great horse pistol at the point between those eyes.

Mrs. Garde returned to her hired house infinitely refreshed

by her sea voyage, her mind occupied with other affairs than the horror of the wall near the portrait of her late husband.

There was, as I had anticipated, no recurrence of the phenomenon.

Naturally, Mrs. Garde was solicitous to inquire what I had done to remove the appearance which had done so much to destroy her comfort and happiness, but I was loath to explain the matter to her, and managed never to do so. Perhaps her splendid gentility sensed that I did not wish to offer her explanations. Mrs. Garde was a Boston Unitarian, and Boston Unitarians are apt to take things on an intellectual basis. Such are not likely to be sympathetically familiar with such other-worldly affairs as the exorcism of a house, routine affair as it had been to good Fr. Richardson.

Besides, I have no doubt, Mrs. Garde was so pleased at the non-recurrence of the old annoyance, that she probably attributed it to something popularly called 'eye strain'. There was nothing to remind her of that bloody-faced, pathetic-eyed bullock, drooping to its final fall. Otto Andreas Gannett was not even a memory in Christiansted. We had many delightful tea parties, and several evening dances, in that magnificent hall of Gannett House that winter in Christiansted.

## SEVEN TURNS IN A HANGMAN'S ROPE

I first became acutely aware of the dreadful tragedy of Saul Macartney one sunny morning early in the month of November of the year 1927. On that occasion, instead of walking across the hall from my bathroom after shaving and the early morning shower, I turned to the left upon emerging and, in my bathrobe and slippers, went along the upstairs hallway to my workroom on the northwest corner of the house into which I had just moved, in the west coast town of Frederiksted on the island of Santa Cruz.

This pleasant room gave a view through its several windows directly down from the hill on which the house was located, across the pretty town with its red roofs and varicolored houses, directly upon the indigo Caribbean. This workroom of mine had a north light from its two windows on that side and, as I used it only during the mornings, I thus escaped the terrific sun drenching to which, in the absence of any shade without, the room was subjected during the long West Indian afternoon.

The occasion for going in there was my desire to see, in the clear morning light, what that ancient oil painting looked like; the canvas which, without its frame, I had tacked up on the south wall the evening before.

This trophy, along with various other items of household flotsam and jetsam, had been taken the previous afternoon, which was a day after my arrival on the island, out of a kind of lumber room wherein the owners of the house had plainly been storing for the best part of a century the kinds of things which accumulate in a family. Of the considerable amount of material which my houseman, Stephen Penn, had taken out and stacked and piled in the upper hallway, there happened to be nothing of interest except this good sized



painting – which was about three feet by five in size. Stephen had paused to examine it curiously and it was this which drew my attention to it.

Under my first cursory examination, which was little more than a glance, I had supposed the thing to be one of those ubiquitous Victorian horrors of reproduction which fifty years ago might have been observed on the walls of most middle class front parlors, and which were known as chromos. But later that evening, on picking it up and looking at it under the electric light, I found that it was honest paint, and I examined it more closely and with a constantly increasing interest.

The painting was obviously the work of a fairly clever amateur. The frame of very old and dry wood had been riddled through and through by wood-worms; it literally fell apart in my hands. I left it there on the floor for Stephen to brush up the next morning and took the canvas into my bedroom where there was a better light. The accumulations of many years' dust and grime had served to obscure its once crudely bright coloration. I carried it into my bathroom, made a lather of soap and warm water, and gave it a careful and much needed cleansing, after which the scene delineated before me assumed a surprising freshness and clarity.

After I had dried it off with a hand towel, using great care lest I crack the ancient pigment, I went over it with an oiled cloth. This process really brought it out, and although the canvas was something more than a century old, the long obscured and numerous figures with which it had been almost completely covered seemed once more as bright and clear – and quite as crude – as upon the long distant day when that rather clever amateur artist had laid down his (or perhaps her) brush after putting on the very last dab of vermilion paint.

The subject of the old painting, as I recognized quite soon, was an almost forgotten incident in the history of the old Danish West Indies. It had, quite obviously, been done from the viewpoint of a person on board a ship. Before me, as the

setting of the scene, was the well known harbor of St. Thomas with its dull red fort at my right – looking exactly as it does today. At the left hand margin were the edges of various public buildings which have long since been replaced. In the midst, and occupying nearly the entire spread of the canvas, with Government Hill and its fine houses sketched in for background, was shown the execution of Fawcett, the pirate, with his two lieutenants; an occasion which had constituted a general holiday for the citizens of St. Thomas, and which had taken place, as I happened to be aware, on the eleventh of September, 1825. If the picture had been painted at that time, and it seemed apparent that such was the case, the canvas would be just one hundred and two years old.

My interest now thoroughly aroused, I bent over it and examined it with close attention. Then I went into my work-room and brought back my large magnifying glass.

My somewhat clever amateur artist had left nothing to the imagination. The picture contained no less than two hundred and three human figures. Of these only those in the remoter backgrounds were sketched in roughly in the modern manner. The actual majority were very carefully depicted with a laborious infinitude of detail; and I suspected then, and since have found every reason to believe, that many, if not most of them, were portraits! There before my eyes were portly Danish worthies of a century ago, with their ladyfolk, all of whom had come out to see Captain Fawcett die. There were the officers of the garrison. There were the *gendarmes* of the period, in their stiff looking uniforms after the manner of Frederick the Great.

There were Negroes, some with large gold rings hanging from one ear; Negresses in their bebusled gingham dresses and bare feet, their foulards or varicolored head handkerchiefs topped by the broad brimmed plaited straw hats which are still to be seen along modern St. Thomas's concrete drives and sidewalks. There was the executioner, a huge, burly, fierce looking black man; with the policeman

standing beside and a little behind him, gorgeous in his glistening white drill uniform with its gilt decorations. The two stood on the central and largest of the three scaffolds.

The executioner was naked to the waist and had his woolly head bound up in a tight fitting scarlet kerchief. He had only that moment sprung the drop, and there at the end of the manila rope (upon which the artist had carefully painted in the seven turns of the traditional hangman's knot placed precisely under the left ear of the miscreant now receiving the just reward of his innumerable villainies) hung Captain Fawcett himself, the gruesome central figure of this holiday pageant – wearing top boots and a fine plum colored laced coat.

On either side, and from the ropes of the two smaller gibbets, dangled those two lesser miscreants, Fawcett's mates. Obviously their several executions, like the preliminary bouts of a modern boxing program, had preceded the main event of the day.

The three gibbets had been erected well to the left of the central space which I have described. The main bulk of the spectators was consequently to the right as one looked at the picture, on the fort side.

After more than a fascinating hour with my magnifying glass, it being then eleven o'clock and time to turn in, I carried the brittle old canvas into my workroom and by the rather dim light of a shaded reading lamp fastened it carefully at a convenient height against the south wall with thumbtacks. The last tack went through the arm of the hanging man nearest the picture's extreme left hand margin. After accomplishing this I went to bed.

The next morning, as I have mentioned, being curious to see how the thing looked in a suitable light, I walked into the workroom and looked at it.

I received a devastating shock.

My eye settled after a moment or two upon that dangling mate whose body hung from its rope near the extreme left hand margin of the picture. I found it difficult to believe

my eyes. In this clear morning light the expression of the fellow's face had changed startlingly from what I remembered after looking at it closely through my magnifying glass. Last night it had been merely the face of a man just hanged; I had noted it particularly because, of all the more prominent figures, that face had been most obviously an attempt at exact portraiture.

Now it wore a new and unmistakable expression of acute agony.

And down the dangling arm, from the point which that last thumbtack had incontinently transfixed, there ran, and dripped off the fellow's fingers, a stream of bright, fresh red blood. . . .

## II

Between the time when the clipper schooner, which had easily overhauled the Macartney trading vessel *Hope* – coming north across the Caribbean and heavily laden with sacked coffee from Barranquilla – had sent a challenging shot from its swivel-gun across the *Hope's* bows, and his accomplishing the maneuver of coming about in obedience to that unmistakable summons, Captain Saul Macartney had definitely decided what policy he should follow.

He had made numerous voyages in the *Hope* among the bustling trade ports of the Caribbean and to and from his own home port of St. Thomas, and never before, by the Grace of God and the Macartney luck, had any freetrader called up on him to stand and deliver on the high seas. But, like all seafaring men of Captain Macartney's generation, plying their trade in those latitudes in the early 1820's, he was well aware of what was now in store for him, his father's ship and the members of his crew. The *Hope* would be looted; then probably scuttled, in accordance with the freetraders' well nigh universal policy of destroying every scrap of evidence against them. As for himself and his men, they would be confronted with the formula—

'Join, or go over the side!'

A pirate's recruit was a pirate, at once involved in a status which was without the law. His evidence, even if he were attempting the dangerous double game of merely pretending to join his captor, was worthless.

There was no possible ray of hope, direct resistance being plainly out of the question. This might be one of the better established freebooters, a piratical captain and following whose notoriety was already so widespread, who was already so well known, that he would not take the trouble to destroy the *Hope*; or, beyond the usual offer made to all volunteers for a piratical crew – constantly in need of such replacements – to put the captured vessel, officers and crew through the mill; once they were satisfied that there was nothing aboard this latest prize to repay them for the trouble and risk of capture and destruction.

The *Hope*, laden almost to her gunwales with sacked coffee, would provide lean pickings for a freetrader, despite the value of her bulk cargo in a legitimate port of trade like Savannah or Norfolk. There were cases, known to Captain Macartney, where a piratical outfit under the command of some notable such as Edward Thatch – often called Teach, or Blackbeard – or England, or Fawcett, or Jacob Brenner, had merely sheered off and sailed away in search of more desirable game as soon as it was plain that the loot was neither easily portable nor of the type of value represented by bullion, silks, or the strong box of some inter-island trading supercargo.

It was plain enough to Captain Saul Macartney, whose vessel had been stopped here about a day's sail south-south-west of his home port of St. Thomas, capital of the Danish West Indies, and whose cargo was intended for delivery to several ship's brokerage houses in that clearing house port for the vast West Indian shipping trade, that this marauder of the high seas could do nothing with his coffee. These ideas were prominent in his mind in the interval between his shouted orders and the subsequent period during which the

*Hope*, her way slacking rapidly, hung in the wind, her jibs, booms and loose rigging slapping angrily while the many boats from the freetrading vessel were slung outboard in a very brisk and workmanlike manner and dropped one after the other into the water alongside until every one – seven in all – had been launched.

These boats were so heavily manned as to leave them very low in the water. Now the oars moved with an almost delicate precision as though the rowers feared some mis-chance even in that placid sea. The *Hope's* officers and crew – all of the latter Negroes – crowded along their vessel's starboard rail, the mates quiet and collected as men taking their cue from their superior officer; the crew goggle-eyed, chattering in low tones among themselves in groups and knots, motivated by the sudden looming terror which showed in a gray tinge upon their black skins.

Then, in a strident whisper from the first mate, a shrewd and experienced bucko, hailing originally from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, wise in the ways of these tropical latitudes from twenty years' continuous seafaring:

'God! It's Fawcett himself!'

Slowly, deliberately, as though entirely disdainful of any possible resistance, the seven boats drew toward the doomed *Hope*. The two foremost edged in close alongside her starboard quarter and threw small grapples handily from bow and stern and so hung in under the *Hope's* lee.

Captain Saul Macartney, cupping his hands, addressed over the heads of the intervening six boatloads the man seated in the sternsheets of the outermost boat:

'Cargo of sacked Brazil coffee, Captain, and nothing else to make it worth your while to come aboard me – if you'll take my word for it. That's the facts, sir, so help me God!'

In silence from all hands in the boats and without any immediate reply from Fawcett, this piece of information was received. Captain Fawcett sat there at the sternsheets of his longboat, erect, silent, presumably pondering what Captain Saul Macartney had told him. He sat there calm and

unruffled, a fine gold laced tricorn hat on his head, which, together with the elegance of his wine colored English broadcloth coat, threw into sharp relief his brutal, unshaven face with its sinister, shining white scar – the result of an old cutlass wound – which ran diagonally from the upper corner of his left ear forward down the cheek, across both lips, clear to the edge of his prominent chin.

Fawcett, the pirate, ended his reflective interval. He raised his head, rubbed a soiled hand through his beard's stubble and spat outboard.

'Any ship's biscuit left aboard ye?' he inquired, turning his eye along the *Hope's* freeboard and thence contemplatively about her masts and rigging. 'We're short.'

'I have plenty, Captain. Will it answer if I have it passed over the side to ye?'

The two vessels and the seven heavily laden boats lay tossing silently in the gentle swell. Not a sound broke the tension while Captain Fawcett appeared to deliberate.

Then a second time he spat over the side of his longboat and rubbed his black stubbly chin with his hand, reflectively. Then he looked across his boats directly at Captain Saul Macartney. The ghost of a sour grin broke momentarily the grim straight line of his maimed and cruel mouth.

'I'll be comin' aboard ye, Captain,' he said very slowly, 'if ye have no objection to make.'

A bellow of laughter at this sally of their captain's rose from the huddled pirate crew in the boats and broke the mounting tension. A Negro at the *Hope's* rail cackled hysterically, and a chorus of gibes at this arose from the motley crews of the boats grappled alongside.

In the silence which followed Captain Fawcett muttered a curt, monosyllabic order. The other five boats closed in with haste, two of them passing around the *Hope's* stern and another around her bow. It was only a matter of a few seconds before the entire seven hung along the *Hope's* sides like feasting wolves upon the flanks of a stricken deer. Then

at a second brief order their crews came over the rails quietly and in good order, Fawcett himself arriving last upon the *Hope's* deck. No resistance of any kind was offered. Captain Macartney had had the word passed quietly on that score while the pirates' boats were being slung into the water.

After the bustling scramble involved in nearly a hundred men climbing over the *Hope's* rail from the seven boats and which was, despite the excellent order maintained, a maneuver involving considerable noisy activity, another and even a more ominous silence settled down upon the beleaguered *Hope*.

Supported by his two mates, one of whom was a small, neat, carefully dressed fellow, and the other an enormous German who sported a cavalry-man's moustache and walked truculently, Captain Fawcett proceeded directly aft, where he turned and faced forward, a mate on either side of him, and leaned against the superstructure of Captain Macartney's cabin.

Macartney's mates, taking pattern from this procedure, walked over from the rail and flanked him where he stood just aft of the *Hope's* foremast. The rest of the freebooters, having apparently been left free by their officers to do as they pleased for the time being, strolled about the deck looking over the vessel's superficial equipment, and then gathered in little knots and groups about the eleven Negro members of the *Hope's* crew.

Through this intermingling the comparative silence which had followed their coming aboard began to be dissipated with raillery, various low voiced sallies of crude wit at the Negroes' expense, and an occasional burst of nervous or raucous laughter. All this, however, was carried on, as Captain Macartney took it in, in what was to him an unexpectedly restrained and quiet manner, utterly at variance with the reputed conduct of such a group of abandoned villains at sea, and to him, at least, convincing evidence that something sinister was in the wind.



This expectation had its fulfilment at a harsh blast from the whistle which, at Fawcett's nod, the huge German mate had taken from his pocket and blown.

Instantly the pirates closed in and seized those members of the *Hope's* Negro crew who stood nearest them; several, sometimes five or six, men crowding in to overpower each individual. Five or six of the pirates who had been as though without purpose near the forward hatchway which led below decks began forthwith to knock out the wedges. The *Hope's* Negroes, with a unanimity which bespoke the excellent discipline and strategy which Fawcett was generally understood to maintain, were hustled forward and thrust into the forecabin; the hatch of which, as soon as they were all inside, was forthwith closed tight and at once nailed fast by the undersized little Englishman who was Fawcett's ship's carpenter.

None of the *Hope's* crew had been armed. None seemed to Captain Macartney to have been even slightly injured in the course of this rough and effective handling. Captain Macartney surmised, and rightly, that the pirates' intention was to preserve them alive either for ultimate sale into slavery, which was of course then extant throughout the West India Islands, or, perhaps, to convey them as shore servants to Fawcett's settlement which, it was generally believed, was well in the interior of the island of Andros in the Bahama group, where a network of interlacing creeks, rendering anything like pursuit and capture well nigh out of the question, had made this private fastness a stronghold.

But Captain Macartney had little time to waste thinking over the fate of his crew. With perhaps a shade less of the roughness with which the Negroes had been seized he and his mates were almost simultaneously surrounded and marched aft to face their captors. It seemed plain that the usual choice was to be given only to the three of them.

Fawcett did not hesitate this time. He looked at the three men standing before him, lowered his head, relaxed his burly figure and barked out—

'Ye'll join me or go over the side.'

He pointed a dirty finger almost directly into the face of the older mate, who stood at his captain's right hand.

'You first,' he barked again. 'Name yer ch'ice, and name it now.'

The hard bitten New Hampshire Yankee stood true to the traditions of an honest sailorman.

'To hell with ye, ye damned scalawag,' he drawled, and spat on the deck between Captain Fawcett's feet.

There could be but one reply on the part of a man of Fawcett's heady character to such an insult as this. With a speed that baffled the eye the great pistol which hung from the right side of his belt beneath the flap of his fine broad-cloth coat was snatched free, and to the accompaniment of its tearing roar, its huge ounce ball smote through the luckless Yankee's forehead. As the acrid cloud of smoke from this detonation blew away Captain Macartney observed the huge German mate lifting the limp body which, as though it had been that of a child, he carried in great strides to the nearer rail and heaved overboard.

Fawcett pointed with his smoking weapon at Macartney's other mate, a small built fellow, originally a British subject from the Island of Antigua. The mate merely nodded comprehendingly. Then—

'The same as Elias Perkins told ye, ye blasted swab, and may ye rot deep in hell.'

But Fawcett's surly humor appeared to have evaporated, to have discharged itself in the pistoling of the other man whose scattered brains had left an ugly smear on the *Hope's* clean deck. He merely laughed and, with a comprehensive motion of his left hand, addressed the larger of his mates, who had resumed his position at his left.

'Take him, Franz,' he ordered.

The huge mate launched himself upon the Antiguan like a ravening beast. With lightning-like rapidity his enormous left arm coiled crushingly about the doomed man's neck. Simultaneously, his open right hand against his victim's fore-

head, he pushed mightily. The little Antiguan's spine yielded with an audible crack and his limp body slithered loosely to the deck. Then with a sweeping, contemptuous motion the huge mate grasped the limp form in one hand, lifting it by the front of the waistcoat and, whirling about, hurled it with a mighty pitch far outboard.

The German mate had not yet resumed his place beside Fawcett when Captain Saul Macartney addressed the pirate leader.

'I'm joining you, Captain,' he said quietly.

And while the surprised Fawcett stared at him the newly enlisted freebooter, who had been Captain Saul Macartney of the schooner *Hope*, with a motion which did not suffer by comparison with Fawcett's for its swiftness, had produced a long dirk, taken the two lightning strides necessary for an effective stroke, and had plunged his weapon with a mighty upward thrust from under the ribs through the German mate's heart.

Withdrawing it instantly, he stooped over the sprawled body and wiped the dirk's blade in a nonchalant and leisurely manner on the dead ruffian's fine cambric shirt frill. As he proceeded to this task he turned his head upward and slightly to the left and looked squarely in the eye the stultified pirate captain who stood motionless and staring in his surprise at this totally unexpected feat of his newest recruit. From his crouching position Saul Macartney spoke, quietly and without emphasis—

'Ye see, sir, I disliked this larrikin from the minute I clapped eyes on him and I'll call your attention to the fact that I'm a sound navigator, and—' Saul Macartney smiled and showed his handsome teeth— 'I'll ask your notice preliminary to my acting with you aft that it might equally well have been yourself that I scragged, and perhaps that'll serve to teach ye the manner of man that you're now taking on as an active lieutenant!'

Then Saul Macartney, his bantering smile gone now, his Macartney mouth set in a grim line, his cleansed dirk held

ready in his sound right hand, stood menacingly before Captain Fawcett, their breasts almost touching, and in a quarter-deck voice inquired:

'And will ye be taking it or leaving it, Captain Fawcett?'

### III

It was more than two months later when the *Hope*, her hull now painted a shining black, her topmasts lengthened all round by six feet, her spread of canvas vastly increased, eight carronade ports newly cut along her sides, and renamed the *Swallow*, entered the harbor of St. Thomas, dropped her anchor and sent over her side a narrow long-boat.

Into this boat, immediately after its crew of six oarsmen had settled down upon their thwarts and laid their six long sweeps out upon the harbor water, interested onlookers observed two officers descend over the *Swallow's* side, where they occupied the sternsheets together. As the boat, rowed man-o'-war style, rapidly approached the wharves it was observed by those on shore that the two men seated astern were rather more than handsomely dressed.

The shorter and heavier man wore a fine sprigged long coat of English broadcloth with lapels, and a laced tricorne hat. His companion, whose appearance had about it something vaguely familiar, was arrayed in an equally rich and very well tailored, though somewhat plainer, coat of a medium blue which set off his handsome figure admirably. This person wore no hat at all, nor any shade for his head against the glare of the eleven o'clock sun save a heavy crop of carefully arranged and naturally curly hair as black as a crow's wing.

So interesting, indeed, to the loungers along the wharves had been the entrance of this previously unknown vessel into the harbor and the subsequent coming ashore of these two fine gentlemen, that a considerable knot of sightseers

was already assembled on the particular jetty toward which the longboat, smartly rowed, came steadily closer and closer. The hatless gentleman, who was by far the taller and handsomer of the two, appeared to be steering, the taut tiller ropes held firmly in his large and very shapely hands.

It was the Herr Rudolph Bernn, who had observed the crowd collecting on the jetty through the open windows of his airy shipping office close at hand, and who had clapped on his pith sun helmet and hastened to join the group, who was the first to recognize this taller officer.

'Gude Gott! If id iss nod der Herr Captain Saul Macartney. Gude Gott, how dey will be rejoiced – Oldt Macartney andt de Miss Camilla!'

Within five minutes the rapidly approaching longboat had been laid aside the pier head in navy style. Without any delay the two gentlemen, whose advent had so greatly interested the St. Thomas harbor watchers, stepped ashore with an air and mounted the jetty steps side by side. At once Saul Macartney, whose fine clothes so well became him, forged ahead of his well dressed, shaved and curled companion. He wore the dazzling smile which revealed his magnificent teeth and which had served to disarm every woman upon whom it had been consciously turned since his eighth year or thereabouts.

Like a conquering hero this handsome young man – who had taken clearance from the South American port of Baranquilla nearly three months before and subsequently disappeared into thin air along with his vessel and all hands off the face of the waters – now stepped jauntily across the jetty toward the welcoming group whose numbers were, now that the news of his homecoming was beginning to trickle through the town, constantly increasing. He was instantaneously surrounded by these welcoming acquaintances who sought each to outdo his neighbor in the enthusiastic fervency of his congratulatory greetings.

During this demonstration the redoubtable and notorious Captain Fawcett stood quietly looking on through its milling

course, a sardonic smile faintly relieving the crass repulsiveness of his maimed countenance. The pirate had been 'shaved to the blood' that morning; dressed for the occasion with the greatest care. His carefully arranged locks were redolent of the oil of Bergamot, filched a week before out of the accessories of a lady passenger taken from the luckless vessel on which she had been coming out to the West Indies to join her planter husband. This lady had, after certain passing attentions from Saul Macartney, gone over the *Swallow's* side in plain sight of the volcanic cone of Nevis, the island of her destination.

That Macartney had brought Captain Fawcett ashore with him here in St. Thomas was a piece of judgement so lamentably bad as to need no comment of any kind. His doing so initiated that swift course of events which brought down upon his handsome head that ruinous doom which stands, probably, as unique among the annals of retribution; that devastating doom which, for its horror and its strangeness, transcends and surpasses, in all human probability, even the direst fate, which, in this old world's long history, may have overtaken any other of the sons of men.

But the sheer effrontery of that act was utterly characteristic of Saul Macartney.

In the course of the long, painstaking, and probably exhaustive research which I, Gerald Canevin, set in motion in order to secure the whole range of facts forming the basis of this narrative – an investigation which has extended through more than three years and has taken me down some very curious by-paths of antique West Indian history as well as into contact with various strange characters and around a few very alluring corners of research – one aspect of the whole affair stands out in my mind most prominently. This is the fact that – as those many who nowadays increasingly rely for guidance upon the once discredited but now reviving science of astrology would phrase it – Saul Macartney was in all ways 'a typical Sagittarian!'

One of the more readily accessible facts which I looked up

out of ancient, musty records in the course of this strange affair was the date of his birth. He had been born in the city of St. Thomas on the twenty-eighth of November, in the year 1795. He was thus twenty-nine – in his thirtieth year and the full vigor of his manhood – at the time when Captain Fawcett had captured the *Hope* and, having lightened that vessel by emptying her hold of her cargo which he consigned to the sea, and having scuttled his own disabled vessel, had sailed for his home base among the Andros creeks.

From there a month later the transformed *Swallow* had emerged to maraud upon the Spanish Main. He was not yet out of his twenties when he had chosen to tempt fate by coming ashore with Fawcett in St. Thomas. He was still short of thirty when a certain fateful day dawned in the month of September, 1825.

True to this hypothetical horoscope of his and to every sidereal circumstance accompanying it, Saul Macartney was an entirely self-centered person. With him the 'main chance' had always been paramount. It was this addiction to the main chance which had caused him to join Fawcett. A similar motive had actuated him in the notable coup which had at once, because of its sheer directness and the courage involved in it, established him in the high esteem of the pirate captain. There had been no sentiment in his killing of the gigantic mate, Franz. He was not thinking of avenging his own faithful lieutenant whom that hulking beast had slain with his bare hands before his eyes a moment before he had knifed the murderer.

His calculating sense of self-interest had been the sole motive behind that act. He could quite as easily have destroyed Fawcett himself, as he characteristically pointed out to that ruffian. He would have done so with equal ruthlessness save for his knowledge of the fact that he would have been overwhelmed immediately thereafter by Fawcett's underlings.

There is very little question but what he would have

before very long succeeded to the command of the *Swallow* and the control of the considerable commerce in the slave trade and other similar illegitimate sources of revenue which went with the command of this piratical enterprise. He had already inaugurated the replacement of Captain Fawcett by himself in the esteem of that freebooter's numerous following well before the refurbished *Swallow* had sailed proudly out upon her current voyage. His unquestionable courage and enormous gift of personality had already been for some time combining actively to impress the pirate crew. Among them he was already a dominating figure.

Since well before he had attained manly maturity he had been irresistible to women. He was a natural fighter who loved conflict for its own sake. His skill with weapons was well nigh phenomenal. In the prosecution of every affair which concerned his own benefit, he had always habituated himself to going straight to the mark. He was, in short, as it might be expressed, both with respect to women and the securing of his own advantage in general affairs, thoroughly spoiled by an unbroken course of getting precisely what he wanted.

This steady impact of continuous success and the sustained parallel effect of unceasing feminine adulation had entrenched in his character the fatal conviction that he could do as he pleased in every imaginable set of conditions.

The first reversal suffered in this unbroken course of selfish domination inaugurated itself not very long after he had stepped ashore with Captain Fawcett beside him. After ten minutes or so, Macartney gradually got himself free from the crowd of friends congratulating him there on the jetty.

Stimulated as he always was by such adulation, highly animated, his Irish blue eyes flashing, his smile unabated, his selfish heart full to repletion of his accustomed self-confidence, he disentangled himself from the still increasing crowd and, with several bows and various wavings of his



left hand as he backed away from them, he rejoined Fawcett, linked his right arm through the crook of the pirate captain's left elbow and proceeded to conduct him into the town. Those fellows on the wharf were small fry! He would, as he smilingly mentioned in Fawcett's ear, prefer to introduce the captain at once into a gathering place where he would meet a group of gentlemen of greater importance.

They walked up into the town and turned to the left through the bustling traffic of its chief thoroughfare and, proceeding to the westward for a couple of hundred feet or so, turned in through a wide arched doorway above which, on its bracket, perched guardian-like a small gilded rooster. This was *Le Coq d'Or*, rendezvous of the more prosperous merchants of the flourishing city of St. Thomas.

A considerable number of these prosperous worthies were already assembled at the time of their arrival in *Le Coq d'Or*. Several Negroes under the direction of the steward of this club-like clearing house were already bringing in and placing on the huge polished mahogany table the planter's punch, swizzles of brandy or rum, and sangaree such as always accompanied this late-morning assembly. It lacked only a minute or two of eleven, and the stroke of that hour was sacred at *Le Coq d'Or* and similar foregathering places as the swizzle hour. No less a personage than M. Daniell, some years before a refugee from the Haitian revolution and now a merchant prince here in the Danish colonial capital, was already twirling a carved swizzle stick in the fragrant iced interior of an enormous silver jug.

But this hospitable activity, as well as the innumerable conversations current about that board, ceased abruptly when these city burghers had recognized the tall, handsome gentleman in blue broadcloth who had just stepped in among them. It was, indeed, practically a repetition of what had occurred on the jetty, save that here the corporate and individual greetings were, if anything, more intimate and more vociferous.

Here were the natural associates, the intimates, the social

equals of the Macartneys themselves – a well-to-do clan of proud, self-respecting personages deriving from the class of Irish Protestant high gentry which had come into these islands three generations before upon the invitation of the Danish Colonial Government.

Among those who rose out of their chairs to surround Saul Macartney with hilarious greetings was Denis Macartney, his father. He had suspected that the Old Man would be there. The two clasped each other in a long and affectionate embrace, Denis Macartney agitated and tearful, his son smiling with an unforced whimsicality throughout the intensive contact of this reunion. At last the Old Man, his tears of happiness still flowing, held off and gazed fondly at his handsome, strapping son, a pair of still trembling hands upon the shoulders of the beautiful new broadcloth coat.

'An' where, in God's own name, have ye been hidin' yourself away, me boy?' he asked solicitously.

The others grouped about, and now fallen silent, hovered about the edge of this demonstration, the universal West Indian courtesy only restraining their common enthusiasm to clasp the Macartney prodigal by his bronzed and shapely hands, to thump his back, to place kindly arms about his broad shoulders, later to thrust brimming goblets of cut crystal upon him that they might drink his health and generously toast his safe and unexpected return.

'I'll tell ye all about that later, sir,' said Saul Macartney, his dazzling smile lighting up his bronzed face. 'Ye'll understand, sir, my anxiety to see Camilla; though, of course, I looked in upon ye first off.'

And thereupon, in his sustained bravado, in the buoyancy of his fatal conviction that he, Saul Macartney, could get away with anything whatever he might choose to do, and taking full advantage of the disconcerting effect of his announcement that he must run off, he turned to Captain Fawcett, who had been standing close behind him and, an arm about the captain's shoulders, presented him formally to his father, to M. Daniell and, with a comprehensive wave of his

disengaged arm, to the company at large; and, forthwith, well before the inevitable effect of this act could record itself upon the corporate mind of such a group, Saul Macartney had whirled about, reached the arched doorway almost at a run, and disappeared in the blinding glare, on his way to call upon his cousin Camilla.

The group of gentlemen assembled in *Le Coq d'Or* that morning, intensely preoccupied as they had been with the unexpected restoration to their midst of the missing mariner, Macartney, had barely observed the person who had accompanied him. They were now rather abruptly left facing their new guest, and their immediate reaction after Macartney's hasty departure was to stage a greeting for this very evil looking but highly dandified fellow whom they found in their midst. To this they proceeded forthwith, actuated primarily by the unfailing and highly developed courtesy which has always been the outstanding characteristic of the Lesser Antilles.

There was not a man present who had not winced at the name which Saul Macartney had so clearly pronounced in the course of his threefold introduction of Captain Fawcett. For this name, as that of one of the principal maritime scourges of the day, was indeed very familiar to these men, attuned as they were to seafaring matters. Several of them, in fact, vessel owners, had actually been sufferers at the hands of this man who now sat among them.

Courtesy, however – and to a guest in this central sanctum – came first. Despite their initial suspicion, by no single overt act, nor by so much as a single glance, did any member of that polished company allow it to be suspected that he had at least given harborage to the idea that Saul Macartney had brought Fawcett the pirate here to *Le Coq d'Or* and left him among them as a guest.

Besides, doubtless, it occurred to each and every one of these excellent gentlemen, apart from the impossibility of such a situation being precipitated by any one named Macartney – which was an additional loophole for them – the

name of Fawcett was by no means an uncommon one; there might well be half a dozen Fawcetts on Lloyd's List who were or had been commanders of ships. It was, of course, possible that this over-dressed, tough looking sea hawk had fooled the usually astute Saul.

As for Fawcett himself, the wolf among these domestic cattle, he was enjoying the situation vastly. The man was intelligent and shrewd, still capable of drawing about him the remnants of a genteel deportment; and, as the details of his projected coming ashore here had been quite fully discussed with Saul Macartney, he had anticipated and was quite well prepared to meet the reaction released at the first mention of that hated and dreaded name of his, and which he now plainly sensed all about him. There was probably even a touch of pride over what his nefarious reputation could evoke in a group like this to nerve him for the curious ordeal which had now begun for him.

It was, of course, his policy to play quietly a conservative – an almost negative – role. He busied now his always alert mind with this, returning courtesy for courtesy as his hosts toasted him formally, assured him of their welcome, exchanged with him those general remarks which precede any real breaking of the ice between an established group and some unknown and untried newcomer.

It was Old Macartney who gave him his chief stimulation by inquiring:

'An' what of me dear son, Captain? Ye will have been in his company for some time, it may be. It would be more than gracious of ye to relate to us – if so be ye're aware of it, perchance – what occurred to him on that last voyage of his from Sout' America.'

At this really unexpected query the entire room fell silent. Every gentleman present restrained his own speech as though a signal had been given. Only the Negro servants, intent upon their duties, continued to speak to each other under their breaths and to move soft-footedly about the room.

Captain Fawcett recognized at once that Mr. Denis Macartney's question contained no challenge. He had even anticipated it, with a thin yarn of shipwreck, which he and Saul had concocted together. In a sudden access of whimsical bravado he abandoned this cooked-up tale. He would give them a story. . . .

He turned with an elaborate show of courtesy to Old Macartney. He set down his half emptied goblet, paused, wiped his maimed mouth with a fine cambric handkerchief and set himself, in the breathless silence all about him, to reply.

'The freetraders took him, sir,' said Captain Fawcett. Then he nodded twice, deprecatingly; next he waved a hand, took up his goblet again, drank off its remaining contents in the sustained, pregnant silence, and again turned to Saul's father.

Settling himself somewhat more comfortably in his chair, he then proceeded to relate, with precise circumstantial detail, exactly what had actually taken place, only substituting for himself as the captor the name of the dreaded Jacob Brenner, who, like himself, had a place of refuge among the Andros creeks, and whom Captain Fawcett regarded with profound and bitter detestation as his principal rival.

He told his story through in the atmosphere of intense interest all about him. He made Captain Saul Macartney pretend to join the cutthroat Brenner and, the wish greatly father to the thought, brought his long yarn to a successful conclusion with the doughty Saul staging a desperate hand-to-hand encounter with his captor after going ashore with him on Andros Island, together with a really artistic sketching-in of his escape from the pirate settlement in a dinghy through the intricacies of the mosquito infested creeks; and his ultimate harborage – 'well nigh by chance, or a trace of what he names "the Macartney luck," sir', – with himself.

'I've a very pleasant little spot there on Andros,' added Captain Fawcett.

Then, satisfying another accession of his whimsicality:

'I'm certain any of you would be pleased with it, gentlemen. It's been good – very good and pleasurable, I do assure you – to have had Captain Macartney with me.'

And Fawcett, the pirate, whose own longboat had fetched him ashore here from that very vessel whose capture by freetraders on the high seas he had just been so graphically recounting, with a concluding short bow and a flourish of the left hand, took up his recently replenished crystal goblet and, again facing the senior Macartney, toasted him roundly on this, the glad occasion of his seafaring son's prosperous return.

Saul Macartney walked rapidly across the crowded main thoroughfare so as to avoid being recognized and stopped. He turned up a precipitous, winding and abruptly cornered street of varying width, and, following it between the many closely walled residences among which it wound, mounted at a rapid stride to a point two-thirds of the way up the hill. Here he paused to readjust his clothes and finally to wipe the sweat induced by his pace from his bronzed face with another fine cambric handkerchief like that being used by his colleague about this time down there at Le Coq d'Or. The two of them had divided evenly four dozen of these handkerchiefs not long before from the effects of a dandified French supercargo now feeding the fishes.

It was a very sultry day in the middle of the month of May, in that Spring period when the *rata* drums of the Negroes may be heard booming nightly from the wooded hills in the interior of the islands; when the annual shift in the direction of the trade wind between the points east and west of north seems to hang a curtain of sultriness over St. Thomas on its three hillsides. It was one of those days when the burros' tongues hang out of dry mouths as they proceed along dusty roads; when centipedes leave their native dust and boldly cross the floors of houses; when ownerless dogs

slink along the inner edges of the baking, narrow sidewalks in the slits of house shade away from the sun.

Saul Macartney had paused near the entrance to the spacious mansion of his uncle, Thomas Lanigan Macartney, which stood behind a stately grille of wrought iron eleven feet high, in its own grounds, and was approached through a wide gateway above which the cut stone arch supported a plaque on which had been carved the Macartney arms. Through this imposing entrance, his face now comfortably dry and his fine broadcloth coat readjusted to his entire satisfaction, Saul Macartney now entered and proceeded along the broad, shell strewn path with its two borders of cemented pink conch shells toward the mansion.

Through the accident of being his father's first born son and the rigid application of the principle of primogeniture which had always prevailed among the Macartney clan in the matter of inheritances, old T. L. Macartney possessed the bulk of the solid Macartney family fortune. He had married the only daughter of a retired Danish general who had been governor of the colony. Dying in office, the general had left behind him the memory of a sound administration and another substantial fortune which found its way through that connection into the Macartney coffers.

The only reason why Saul Macartney had not led his heavenly endowed cousin, Camilla, to the altar long before, was merely because he knew he could marry her any time. Camilla's lips had parted and her blue eyes become mysterious, soft and melting, at every sight of him since about the time she was eight and he ten. As for Saul Macartney, he could not remember the time when it had not been his settled intention to marry his cousin Camilla when he got ready. He was as sure of her as of the rising and setting of the sun; as that failure was a word without meaning to him; as that the Santa Cruz rum was and always would be the natural drink of gentlemen and sailors.

Jens Sorensen, the black butler, who had witnessed his

arrival, had the door open with a flourish when Saul was halfway between the gate and the gallery. His bow as this favored guest entered the house was profound enough to strain the seams of his green broadcloth livery coat.

But black Jens received no reward for his assiduousness from the returned prodigal, beyond a nod. This was not like Saul in the least, but black Jens understood perfectly why Captain Macartney had not quizzed him, paused to slap mightily his broad back under his green coat, or to tweak the lobe of his right ear ornamented with its heavy ring of virgin gold, all of which attentions black Jens could ordinarily expect from this fine gentleman of his family's close kinfolk. There had been no time for such persiflage.

For, hardly had black Jens' huge, soft right hand begun the motion of closing the great door, when Camilla Macartney, apprised by some subtlety of 'the grapevine route' of her cousin's arrival, appeared on the threshold of the mansion's great drawing room, her lips parted, her eyes suffused with an inescapable emotion. Only momentarily she paused there. Then she was running toward him across the polished mahogany flooring of the wide hallway, and had melted into the firm clasp of Saul Macartney's brawny arms. Raising her head, she looked up into his face adoringly and Saul, responding, bent and kissed her long and tenderly. No sound save that occasioned by the soft footed retirement of black Jens to his pantry broke the cool silence of the dignified hall. Then at last in a voice from Camilla Macartney that was little above a whisper:

'Saul - Saul, my darling! I am so glad, so glad! You will tell me all that transpired - later, Saul, my dear. Oh, it has been a dreadful time for me.'

Withdrawing herself very gently from his embrace, she turned and, before the great Copenhagen mirror against the hallway's south wall, made a small readjustment in her coiffure - her hair was of the purest, clearest Scandinavian gold, of a spun silk fineness. Beckoning her lover to follow, she then led the way into the mansion's drawing room.



As they entered, Camilla a step in advance of Macartney, there arose from a mahogany and rose-satin davenport the thickset figure of a handsome young man of about twenty-four, arrayed in the scarlet coat of His Britannic Majesty's line regiments of infantry. This was Captain the Honorable William McMillin, who, as a freshly commissioned coronet-of-horse, had actually fought under Wellington at Waterloo ten years before. Recently he had attained his captaincy, and sold out to undertake here in the Danish West Indies the resident management of a group of Santa Cruzian sugar estates, the property of his Scottish kinsfolk, the Comyns.

These two personable captains, one so-called because of his courtesy title, and the other with that honorable seafaring title really forfeited, were duly presented to each other by Camilla Macartney; and thereby was consummated another long stride forward in the rapid march of Saul Macartney's hovering doom.

The Scottish officer, sensing Saul's claim upon that household, retired ere long with precisely the correct degree of formality.

As soon as he was safely out of earshot Camilla Macartney rose and, seizing a small hassock, placed it near her cousin's feet. Seating herself on this, she looked up adoringly into his face and, her whole soul in her eyes, begged him to tell her what had happened since the day when he had cleared the *Hope* from Barranquilla.

Again Saul Macartney rushed forward upon his fate.

He told her, with circumstantial detail, the cooked-up story of shipwreck, including a touching piece of invention about three days and nights in the *Hope's* boats and his timely rescue by his new friend, Fawcett, master of the *Swallow* – a very charitable gentleman, proprietor of a kind of trading station on Andros in the Bahamas. Captain Fawcett, who had considerably brought the prodigal back to St. Thomas, was at the moment being entertained in *Le Coq d'Or*.

Camilla Macartney's eyes grew wide at the name of Saul's rescuer. The first intimation of her subsequent change of attitude began with her exclamation:

'Saul! Not – not Captain Fawcett, the pirate! Not that dreadful man! I had always understood that *his* lying-up place was on the Island of Andros, among the creeks!'

Saul Macartney lied easily, reassuringly. He turned upon his cousin – anxious, now, as he could see, and troubled – the full battery of his engaging personality. He showed those beautiful teeth of his in a smile that would have melted the heart of a Galatea.

Camilla dropped the subject, entered upon a long explication of her happiness, her delight at having him back. He must remain for breakfast. Was his friend and benefactor, Captain Fawcett, suitably housed? He might, of course, stay here – her father would be so delighted at having him . . .

It was as though she were attempting, subconsciously, to annihilate her first faint doubt of her cousin Saul, in this enthusiasm for his rescuer. She rose and ran across the room, and jerked violently upon the ornamental bell rope. In almost immediate response to her ring black Jens entered the room softly, bowed before his mistress with a suggestion of prostrating himself.

'A place for Captain Macartney at the breakfast table. Champagne; two bottles – no, four – of the 1801 Chablis – Is Miranda well along with the shell-crustadas?'

Again Camilla Macartney was reassured. All these commands would be precisely carried out.

Thereafter for a space, indeed, until the noon breakfast was announced, conversation languished between the cousins. For the first time in his life, had Saul Macartney been to the slightest degree critically observant, he would have detected in Camilla's bearing a vague hint that her mind toward him was not wholly at rest; but of this he noticed nothing. As always, and especially now under the stimulation of this curious game of bravado he and Fawcett

were playing here in St. Thomas, no warning, no sort of premonition, had penetrated the thick veneer of his selfishness, his fatuous conviction that any undertaking of his must necessarily proceed to a successful outcome.

He sat there thinking of how well he had managed things; of the chances of the *Swallow's* next venture on the Main; of the ripe physical beauty of Camilla; of various women here in the town.

And Camilla Macartney, beautiful, strangely composed, exquisitely dressed, as always, sat straight upright across from him, and looked steadily at her cousin, Saul Macartney. It was as though she envisaged vaguely how he was to transform her love into black hatred. A thin shadow of pain lay across her own Irish-blue eyes.

Captain the Honorable William McMillin, like many other personable young gentlemen before him, had been very deeply impressed with the quality of Camilla Macartney. But it was not only that West Indian gentlewoman's social graces and cool blond beauty that were responsible for this favorable impression. The young captain, a thoroughly hard headed Scot with very much more behind his handsome forehead than the necessary knowledge of military tactics possessed by the ordinary line regiment officer, had been even more deeply impressed by other qualities obviously possessed by his West Indian hostess. Among these was her intellect; unusual, he thought, in a colonial lady not yet quite twenty-eight. Nothing like Miss Macartney's control of the many servants of the household had ever seemed possible to the captain.

From black Jens, the butler, to the third scullery maid, all of them, as they came severally under the notice of this guest, appeared to accord her a reverence hardly distinguishable from acts of worship. In going about the town with her, either walking for early evening exercise or in her father's barouche to make or return formal calls, the trained and observant eye of the young Scotsman had not failed to

notice her effect upon the swarming Negro population of the town.

Obeisances from these marked her passage among them. The gay stridency of their street conversations lulled itself and was still at her passing.

Doffed hats, bows, veritable obeisances in rows and by companies swayed these street loiterers as her moving about among them left them hushed and worshipful in her wake.

Captain McMillin noted the very general respectful attitude of these blacks toward their white overlords, but, his eyes told him plainly, they appeared to regard Camilla Macartney as a kind of divinity.

In the reasonable desire to satisfy his mounting curiosity Captain McMillin had broached the matter to his hostess. A canny Scot, he had approached this matter indirectly. His initial questions had had to do with native manners and customs, always a safe general topic in a colony.

Camilla's direct answers had at once surprised him with their clarity and the exactitude of their information. It was unusual and – as the subject broadened out between them and Camilla told him more and more about the Negroes, their beliefs, their manner of life, their customs and practises – it began to be plain to Captain McMillin that it was more than unusual; if some one entitled to do so had asked him his opinion on Camilla Macartney's grasp of this rather esoteric subject, and the captain had answered freely and frankly, he would have been obliged to admit that it seemed to him uncanny.

For behind those social graces of hers which made Camilla Macartney a notable figure in the polite society of this Danish Colonial capital, apart from the distinction of her family connection, her commanding position as the richest heiress in the colony, her acknowledged intellectual attainments, and the distinguished beauty of face and form which lent a pervading graciousness to her every act, Camilla Macartney was almost wholly occupied by two consuming interests.

Of these, the first, generally known by every man, woman and child in St. Thomas, was her preoccupation with her cousin, Saul Macartney. The other, unsuspected by any white person in or out of Camilla Macartney's wide acquaintance, was her knowledge of the magic of the Negroes.

The subject had been virtually an obsession with her since childhood. Upon it she had centered her attention, concentrated her fine mind and using every possible opportunity which her independent position and the enormous amount of material at hand afforded, had mastered it in theory and practise throughout its almost innumerable ramifications.

There was, first, the *obeah*. This, deriving originally from the Ashantee slaves, had come into the West Indies through the gate of Jamaica. It was a combined system of magical formulas and the use of drugs. Through it a skillful practitioner could obtain extraordinary results. It involved a very complete *materia medica*, and a background setting for the usage and practise thereof, which reached back through uncounted centuries into rituals that were the very heart of primitive savagery.

The much more greatly extended affair called Voodoo, an extraordinarily complex fabric of 'black', 'white', and revelatory occultism, had made its way through the islands chiefly through the Haitian doorway from its proximate source, Dahomey, whence the early French colonists of Hispaniola had brought their original quotas of black slaves.

Voodoo, an infinitely broader and more stratified system than the medicinal *obeah*, involved much that appeared to the average white person mere superficial Negro 'stupidness'. But in its deeper and more basic aspects it included many very terrible things, which Camilla Macartney had encountered, succeeded in understanding, and appropriated into this terrific fund of black learning which was hers as this fell subject took her through the dim backgrounds of its origin to the unspeakable snake worship of Africa's blackest and deadliest interior.

The considerable Negro population of the island, from the most fanatical *Hougan* presiding in the high hills over the dire periodic rites of the 'baptism' and the slaughter of goats and bullocks and willingly offered human victims whose blood, mingled with red rum, made that unholy communion out of which grew the unnameable orgies of the deep interior heights, down to the lowliest piccaninny gathering fruits or stealing yams for the sustenance of his emaciated body – every one of these blacks was aware of this singular preoccupation; acknowledged the supremacy of this extraordinarily gifted white lady; paid her reverence; feared her acknowledged powers; would as soon have lopped off a foot as to cross her lightest wish.

Captain the Honorable William McMillin made up his mind that her grasp of these matters was extraordinary. His questionings and Camilla's informative replies had barely touched upon the edge of what she knew.

And the former captain, her cousin, Saul Macartney, did not know that his heiress cousin cherished any interest except that which she had always demonstrated so plainly in his own direction.

Going in to breakfast, Saul Macartney was nearly knocked off his feet by the physical impact of his uncle's greeting. Camilla's father had been spending the morning overlooking a property of his east of the town, in the direction of Smith's Bay. He had thus missed meeting Saul at Le Coq d'Or, but had learned of his nephew's arrival on his way home. The town, indeed, was agog with it.

So sustained was his enthusiasm, the more especially after imbibing his share of the unusually large provision of wine for a midday meal which his daughter's desire to honor the occasion had provided, that he monopolized most of his nephew's attention throughout breakfast and later in the drawing room after the conclusion of that meal. It was perhaps because of this joviality on his uncle's part that Saul Macartney failed to observe the totally new expression which had rested like a very small cloud on Camilla Mac-

artney's face ever since a short time before going into the dining room.

His uncle even insisted upon sending the prodigal home in the English barouche, and in this elegant equipage – with its sleek, Danish coach horses and the liveried Negroes on its box with cockades at the sides of their glistening silk toppers – he made the brief journey down one hill, a short distance through the town, and up another one to his father's house.

Here, it being well after two o'clock in the afternoon, and siesta hour, he found Fawcett, whom the Old Man had taken under his hospitable wing. The two had no private conversation together. Both were in high spirits and these Old Macartney fostered with his cordials, his French brandy and a carafe of very ancient rum. The three men sat together over their liquor during the siesta hour, and during the session Old Macartney did most of the talking. He did not once refer to his son's capture by Brenner, the freebooter.

He confined himself in his desire to be entertaining to his son's benefactor, Captain Fawcett, to a joyous succession of merry tales and ripe, antique quips. Saul Macartney had therefore no reason to suspect, nor did it happen to occur to Fawcett to inform him, that the latter's account of Macartney's adventures since the time he had last been heard from until the present was in any wise different from the tale of shipwreck upon which they had agreed and which Macartney had told out in full to his cousin, Camilla.

The three had not finished their jovial session before various strange matters affecting them very nearly, odd rumors, now being discussed avidly in various offices, residences, and gathering places about St. Thomas, were gathering headway, taking on various characteristic exaggerations and, indeed, running like wildfire through the town.

In a place like St. Thomas, crossroads and clearing house of the vast West Indian trade which came and went through that port and whose prosperity was dependent almost wholly upon shipping, even the town's riff-raff was accustomed to think and express itself in terms of ships.

It was an unimportant, loquacious Negro youth who started the ball a-rolling. This fellow, a professional diver, came up to one of the wharves in his slab-sided, home-made rowboat where he lounged aft, submitting to the propulsion of his coal-black younger brother, a scrawny lad of twelve. This wharf rat had had himself rowed out to the vessel from which the two notables he had observed had come ashore that morning. It was from the lips of this black ne'er-do-well that various other wharfside loiterers learned that the beautiful clipper vessel lying out there at anchor was provided with eight carronade ports.

Out of the idle curiosity thus initially aroused there proceeded various other harbor excursions in small boats. The black diver had somehow managed to miss the stanchion of the 'long tom' which Fawcett, in an interval of prudence, had had dismounted the night before. The fact that the *Swallow* carried such an armament, however, very soon trickled ashore.

This nucleus of interesting information was soon followed up and almost eclipsed in interest by the various discussions and arguments which were soon running rife among the shipping interests of the town over the extraordinary numbers of the *Swallow's* crew.

A round dozen, together with the usual pair of mates to supplement the captain, as all these experts on ships were well aware, would ordinarily suffice for a vessel of this tonnage. Accounts and the terms of the various arguments varied between estimates ranging from seventy-five to a hundred men on board the *Swallow*.

A side issue within this category was also warmly discussed. Crews of vessels with home ports in the islands were commonly Negro crews. This unprecedented gathering of men was a white group. Only two – certain of the debaters held out firmly that they had observed three – Negroes were to be perceived aboard the *Swallow*, and one of these, a gigantic brown man who wore nothing but earrings and a pair of faded dungaree trousers, was plainly the cook in



charge of the *Swallow's* galley, and the other, or others, were this fellow's assistants.

But the town got its real fillip from the quite definite statement of a small-fry worthy, one Jeems Pelman, who really gave them something to wrangle about when he came ashore after a visit of scrutiny and stated flatly that this rakish, shining, black hulled clipper was none other vessel than the Macartneys' *Hope*, upon both hull and rigging of which he had worked steadily for three months in his own shipyard when the *Hope* was built during the winter of 1819.

All these items of easily authenticated information bulked together and indicated to the comparatively unsophisticated, as well as to the wiseacres, only one possible conclusion. This was that the Macartney vessel, in command of which Captain Saul Macartney was known to have cleared from a South American port three months earlier, had in some as yet unexplained fashion been changed over into a free-trading ship and that the harsh featured seadog in his fine clothes who had accompanied Captain Macartney ashore that morning could very well be none other than its commander.

A certain lapse of time is ordinarily requisite for the loquacious stage of drunkenness to overtake the average hard headed seafaring man. The crew of Fawcett's longboat, after three weeks' continuous duty at sea, had bestowed the boat safely, engaged the services of an elderly Negro to watch it in their absence, and drifted into the low rum shop nearest their landing place; and there not long after their arrival Fawcett's boatswain, a Dutch island bruiser, had been recognized by several former acquaintances as a sailorman who had gone out of the harbor of St. Eustasia in a small trading schooner which had disappeared off the face of the wide Caribbean three years previously.

The rum-induced garrulity of this gentleman, as the report of it went forth and flared through the town, corroborated the as yet tentative conclusion that a fully manned pirate ship lay for the time being at anchor in the peaceful harbor

of St. Thomas; and that its master, whose identity as a certain Captain Fawcett had spread downward through the social strata from Le Coq d'Or itself, was here ashore, hobnobbing with the town's high gentry, and actually a guest of the Macartneys.

By three o'clock in the afternoon the town was seething with the news. There had been no such choice morsel to roll on the tongue since Henry Morgan had sacked the city of Panama.

The first corroboration of that vague, distressing, but as yet unformed suspicion which had lodged itself in Camilla Macartney's mind came to her through Jens Sorensen, the butler. The 'grapevine route', so-called – that curious door-to-door and mouth-to-ear method of communication among the Negroes of the community – is very rapid as well as very mysterious. Black Jens had heard this devastating story relayed up to him from the lowest black riff-raff of the town's waterfront a matter of minutes after the name of their guest, seeping downward from Le Coq d'Or, had met, mingled with, and crowned the damnatory group of successive details from the wharves.

To any one familiar with the effect of Voodoo upon the Negro mentality there would be nothing surprising in the fact that black Jens proceeded straight to his mistress to whisper the story without any delay. For fear is the dominant note of the Voodooist. The St. Thomas Negroes were actuated in their attitude toward Camilla Macartney by something infinitely deeper than that superficial respect which Captain McMillin had noted. They feared her and her proven powers as they feared the dread demigod Damballa, tutelary manifestation of the unnamed Guinea-Snake himself.

For it was not as one who only inquires and studies that Camilla Macartney commanded awe and reverence from the St. Thomas Negroes. She had *practised* this extraordinary art and it was her results as something quite tangible,

definite and unmistakable which formed the background of that vast respect, and which had brought black Jens cringing and trembling into her presence on this particular occasion.

And black Jens had not failed to include in his report the drunken sailorman's leering account of that captive lady's treatment by Saul Macartney – how an innocent young wife, off Nevis, had been outrageously forced into Saul's cabin, and when he had tired of her, how he had sent her back to the deck to go across the plank of death.

What desolation penetrated deep and lodged itself there in Camilla Macartney's soul can hardly be guessed at. From that moment she was convinced of the deep infamy of that entrancing lover-cousin of hers whom she had adored with her whole heart since the remoteness of her early childhood.

But, however poignantly indescribable, however extremely devastating, may have been her private feelings, it is certain that she did not retire as the typical gentlewoman of the period would have done to eat out her heart in solitary desolation.

Within ten minutes, on the contrary, in response to her immediately issued orders, the English barouche with its sleek Danish horses, its cockaded servants on the box, was carrying her down the hill, rapidly along through the town, and then the heavy coach horses were sweating up the other hill toward her uncle's house. If the seed of hatred, planted by Saul's duplicity, were already sprouting, nevertheless she would warn him. She dreaded meeting him.

Saul Macartney, summoned away from the somewhat drowsy end of that afternoon's convivial session with Fawcett and the Old Man, found his cousin awaiting him near the drawing room door. She was standing, and her appearance was calm and collected. She addressed him directly, without preamble:

'Saul, it is known in the town. I came to warn you. It is running about the streets that this Captain Fawcett of yours is the pirate. One of his men has been recognized. He talked

in one of the rum shops. They say that this ship is the *Hope*, altered into a different appearance. I advise you to go, Saul – go at once, while it is safe!’

Saul Macartney turned his old disarming smile upon his cousin. He could feel the liquor he had drunk warming him, but his hard Irish head was reasonably clear. He was not befuddled. He stepped toward her as though impulsively, his bronzed face flushed from his recent potations, his arms extended and spread in a carefree gesture as though he were about to take her in his embrace.

‘Camilla, *allana*, ye should not sadden your sweet face over the likes of me. I know well what I’m about, me darling. And as for Fawcett – well, as ye’re aware of his identity, ye’ll know that he can care for himself. Very suitably, very suitably indeed.’

He had advanced very close upon her now, but she stood unmoving, the serious expression of her face not changed. She only held up a hand in a slight gesture against him, as though to warn him to pause and think. Again Saul Macartney stepped lightly toward his doom.

‘And may I not be having a kiss, Camilla?’ His smiling face was unperturbed, his self-confidence unimpaired even now. Then, fatally, he added, ‘And now that ye’re here, *acushla*, why should ye not have me present my friend, the captain? ’Twas he, ye’ll remember, that brought me back to ye. I could be fetching him within the moment.’

But Camilla Macartney merely looked at him with a level gaze.

‘I am going now,’ she said, ignoring his suggestion and the crass insult to her gentility involved in it, and which beneath her calm exterior had outraged her and seared her very soul. The seed was growing apace. ‘I have warned you, Saul.’

She turned and walked out of the room and out of the house; then across the tiled gallery and down the black marble steps, and out to her carriage.

Saul Macartney hastened back to his father and Fawcett. Despite his incurable bravado, motivated as always by his

deep seated selfishness, he had simply accepted the warning just given him at its face value. He addressed his drowsing father after a swift, meaningful glance at Fawcett:

'We shall be needing the carriage, sir, if so be it's agreeable to ye. We must be getting back on board, it appears, and I'll be hoping to look in on ye again in the morning, sir.'

And without waiting for any permission, and ignoring his father's liquor muffled protests against this abrupt departure, Saul Macartney rang the bell, ordered the family carriage to be waiting in the shortest possible time, and pressed a rix-dollar into the Negro butler's hand as an incentive to hasten the process.

Within a quarter of an hour, after hasty farewells to the tearful and now well befuddled Old Man, these two precious scoundrels were well on their way through the town toward the jetty where they had landed, and where, upon arrival, they collected their boat's crew out of the rum shop with vigorous revilings and not a few hearty clouts, and were shortly speeding across the turquoise and indigo waters of St. Thomas harbor toward the anchored *Swallow*.

Inside half an hour from their going up over her side and the hoisting of the longboat, the *Swallow*, without reference to the harbormaster, clearance, or any other formality, was picking her lordly way daintily out past Colwell's Battery at the harbor mouth, and was soon lost to the sight of all curious watchers in the welcoming swell of the Caribbean.

This extraordinary visit of the supposedly long drowned Captain Macartney to his native town, and the circumstances accompanying it, was a nine-days' wonder in St. Thomas. The widespread discussion it provoked died down after awhile, it being supplanted in current interest by the many occurrences in so busy a port-of-call. It was not, of course, forgotten, although it dropped out of mind as a subject for acute debate.

Such opinion as remained after the arguments had been abandoned was divided opinion. Could the vessel possibly have been the Macartneys' *Hope*? Was this Captain Fawcett

who had brought Saul Macartney ashore Captain Fawcett, the pirate? Had Captain Saul Macartney really thrown in his lot with freetraders, or was such a course unthinkable on his part?

The yarn which Captain Fawcett had spun in *Le Coq d'Or* seemed the reasonable explanation – if it were true. In the face of the fact that no other counter-explanation had been definitely put forward by anybody, this version was tacitly accepted by St. Thomas society; but with the proviso, very generally made and very widely held, that this fellow must have been *the* Captain Fawcett after all. Saul Macartney had either been fooled by him, or else Saul's natural gratitude had served to cover, in his estimation of the fellow, any observed shortcomings on the part of this rescuer and friend-in-need.

Camilla Macartney made no allusion whatever, even within the family circle, to the story Saul had told *her*. She was not, of course, called upon to express any opinion outside. She was quite well aware that both versions were falsehoods.

She faced bravely, though with a sorely empty and broken heart, all her manifold social obligations in the town. Indeed, somewhat to distract her tortured mind, wherein that seed of hate was by now growing into a lusty plant, the heiress of the Macartney fortune engaged herself rather more fully than usual that summer season in the various current activities. She forced herself to a greater pre-occupation than ever in her attention to her occult pursuits. She even took up afresh the oil painting, long ago abandoned by her, which had been one of her early 'accomplishments'.

It was during this period – a very dreadful one for her, succeeding as it did, abruptly upon her momentary happiness at her cousin Saul's restoration to the land of the living which had dissipated her acute and sustained grief over his presumptive loss at sea in the *Hope* – that she undertook, with what obscure premonitory motive derived from curious skill in the strange and terrible arts of the black

people can only be darkly surmised – another and very definite task.

This was the painting of a panoramic view of the town as seen from the harbor. At this she toiled day after day from the awninged afterdeck of one of the smaller Macartney packet vessels. This boat had been anchored to serve her purpose at the point of vantage she had selected. She worked at her panorama in the clear, pure light of many early summer mornings. Before her on the rather large canvas she had chosen for this purpose there gradually grew into objectivity the wharves, the public buildings, the fort, the three hills with their red roofed mansions, set amid decorative trees. Her almost incredible industry was, really, a symptom of the strange obsession now beginning to invade her reason. Camilla Macartney had suffered a definite mental lesion.

The scrupulous courtesy of the St. Thomians, that graceful mantle of manners which has never been allowed to wear thin, was unobtrusively interposed between the respected Macartneys and the dreadful scandal which had reached out and touched their impeccable family garment of respectability. By no word spoken, by no overt act, by not so much as a breath were they reminded of Captain Macartney's recent visit ashore or his hasty and irregular departure. Captain McMillin, therefore, as a guest of Camilla's father, heard nothing of it. He sensed, however, a certain indefinite undercurrent of family trouble and, yielding to this sure instinct, ended his visit with all the niceties of high breeding and departed for Santa Cruz.

Just before he left, on the morning after the farewell dinner which had been given as a final gesture in his honor, the captain managed to convey to Camilla the measure of his appreciation. He placed, as it were, his sword at her disposal! It was very nicely made – that gesture of gallantry. It was not to be mistaken for the preliminary to a possible later offer of marriage. It was anything but braggadocio. And it was somehow entirely appropriate to the situation. The handsome, upstanding captain left with his hostess pre-

cisely the impression he intended; that is, he left her the feeling that he was an adequate person to depend upon in a pinch, and that she had been invited to depend upon him should the pinch come.

A third of the way up one of the low mountains northward and behind the three gentle hills on the southern slopes of which the ancient city of St. Thomas is built, there stood – and still stands – a small stone gentry residence originally built in the middle of the eighteenth century by an exiled French family which had taken refuge in this kindly Danish colony and played at raising vanilla up there on their airy little estate overlooking the town and the sea.

This place was still known by its original name of Ma Folie – a title early bestowed upon it by Mme. la Marquise, who had looked up at it through a window in her temporary apartment in the Hotel du Commerce, in the town, while the roofing was being placed upon her new house, there and then assuring herself that only perched upon the back of one of those diminutive burros which cluttered up the town streets could any one like herself possibly manage the ascent to such a site.

Ma Folie was now one of the many Macartney properties. It belonged to Camilla, having come to her as a portion of her maternal inheritance, and upon it she had reestablished the vanilla planting, helped out by several freshly cleared acres in cocoa. No donkey was required nowadays to convey a lady up the tortuous, steep, little trail from the town to Ma Folie. A carriage road led past its unpretentious square entrance posts of whitewashed, cemented stone, and when Camilla Macartney visited her hillside estate the English barouche carried her there, the long climb causing the heavy coach horses to sweat mightily and helping, as the coal-black coachman said, to keep them in condition.

It was up here that she had long ago established what might be called her laboratory. It was at Ma Folie, whose village housed only Negroes selected by herself as her tenant-laborers, that she had, in the course of years, brought



the practice of the 'strange art' to its perfection. She had for some time now confined her practise to meeting what might be called charitable demands upon her.

Talismans to protect; amulets to attract or repel; potent ouangas – only such modest products of the fine art of Voodoo as these went out from that occult workshop of hers at Ma Folie – went out into the eager, outstretched hands of the afflicted whose manifold plights had engaged Camilla Macartney's sympathy; to the relief of those abject ones who called upon her, in fear and trembling, as their last resort against who knows what obscure devilish attacks, what outrageous charmings, wrought by that inimical ruthlessness of one Negro to another which Caucasians hardly suspect.

No vanilla pod, no single cocoa bean, had been stolen from Ma Folie estate since Camilla Macartney had planted it afresh nine years before . . .

It was at about ten o'clock in the morning of a day near the middle of August that a kind of tremor of emotion ran through the town of St. Thomas, a matter of minutes after a report of the official watcher and the many other persons in the town and along the wharves whose sustained interest in shipping matters caused their eyes to turn ever and anon toward the wide harbor mouth. The *Swallow*, which three months before had literally run away, ignoring all the niceties of a ship's departure from any port and even the official leavetaking, was coming in brazenly, liting daintily along under the stiff trade, her decks visibly swarming with the many members of her efficient and numerous crew.

She came up into the wind like a little man-o'-war, jauntily, her sails coming down simultaneously with a precision to warm the hearts of those ship-wise watchers, her rigging slatting with reports like musket shots, the furling and stowing of canvas a truly marvelous demonstration of the efficiency which now reigned aft.

These details of rapid fire seamanship, swiftly as they were being handled, were as yet incomplete when the long-

boat went straight down from its davits into the water and Saul Macartney followed his boat's crew over the side and picked up his tiller ropes.

The *Swallow's* anchorage this time was closer in, and it seemed no time at all to the thronging, gaping watchers on the jetty before he sprang ashore and was up the steps. There was no rum shop for the boat's crew this time. Without their officer's even looking back at them over his shoulder the oarsmen pushed off, turned about and rowed back to the *Swallow*.

Saul Macartney was, if possible, even more debonair than ever. His self-confident smile adorned his even more heavily bronzed face. He was hatless, as usual, and his handsome figure was mightily set off by a gaily sprigged waistcoat and a ruffled shirt of fine cambric which showed between the silver braided lapels of the maroon colored coat of French cloth with a deep velvet collar, the pantaloons of which, matching the coat's cloth, were strapped under a pair of low boots of very shining black leather.

The throng on the jetty was plainly in a different mood as compared to the vociferous, welcoming mob of three months before. They stayed close together in a little phalanx this time and from them came fewer welcoming smiles.

Plainly sensing this, Saul Macartney bestowed on this riff-raff of the wharves no more than a passing glance of smiling raillery. He passed them and entered the town with rapid, purposeful strides as though intent on some very definite business and, utterly ignoring the hum of released though muted conversation which rose behind him as though from an aroused swarm of bees, entered the main thoroughfare, turned sharply to his left along it, proceeded in this direction some forty feet, and turned into the small office of one Axel Petersen, a purveyor of ships' stores.

Blond, stout, genial Axel Petersen stared from his broad, comfortable desk at this entrance and allowed his lower jaw to sag. Then he rose uncertainly to his feet and his four neatly garbed mulatto clerks rose from their four respective

high stools with him and, in precise conformity with their employer's facial reaction, their four pairs of mottled-iris eyes rounded out altogether like saucers, and their four lower jaws sagged in unison.

Saul Macartney threw back his head and laughed aloud. Then, addressing Petersen:

'Axel, Axel! I couldn't've thought it of ye! 'Tis but stores I'm after, man – vast stores, the likes of which ye might be selling in the course of a week to five vessels, if so be ye had the fortune to get that many all in one week!' Then, a shade more seriously, ' 'Tis pork I want; beans, coffee in sacks, limes by the gunny sack – a hundred and one things, all of them written down to save ye trouble, ye great, feckless porker! And here – beside the list which I'm handing ye now – is the reassurance—'

And Saul Macartney, thrusting his list of ship's supplies neatly printed on a long slip of paper under the nose of the stultified Petersen, slapped down upon the desk top beside it the bulging purse which he had hauled out of the tail pocket of his beautiful, maroon colored French coat.

'There's two hundred and fifty English sovereigns there forninst ye, Axel. Ye can have it counted out or do it yourself, and if that does not suffice to cover the list, why, there's another shot in the locker behind it, ye *omadhoun* – ye fat robber of pettifogging ships' stewards!'

And before the protruding, bemused blue eyes of portly Axel Petersen Saul Macartney shook banteringly a thick sheaf of Bank of England ten pound notes. By the time he had returned these to the same capacious pocket, he was at the door, had paused, turned and, leaning for an instant nonchalantly against its jamb, remarked—

'Ye're to have the stores piled on your wharf not an instant later than two o'clock this day.' Then, the bantering smile again to the fore, and shaking a long, shapely forefinger toward the goggling dealer in ships' stores, he added, 'Ye'll observe, Axel, I'm not taking your stores by force and arms. I'm not sacking the town – this time!'

Then Saul Macartney was gone, and Axel Petersen, muttering unintelligibly as he assembled his scattered wits and those of his four clerks, the heavy purse clutched tightly by its middle in one pudgy hand, and the long list of the *Swallow's* required stores held a little unsteadily before his nearsighted blue eyes, methodically began the process of getting this enormous order assembled.

It was with a perfectly calm exterior that Camilla Macartney received her cousin Saul a quarter of an hour later. The turmoil beneath this prideful reserve might, perhaps, be guessed at; but as the art of guessing had never formed any part of Saul Macartney's mental equipment, he made no effort in that direction.

He began at once with his usual self-confident directness upon what he had come to say.

'Camilla, *acushla*, I've come to ye in haste, 'tis true, and I'm asking your indulgence for that. 'Twas gracious of ye, as always, to be here at home when I chanced to arrive.

'I'll go straight to the point, if so be ye have no objections to make, and say in plain words what I well know to have been in the hearts of the two of us this many a year. I'm askin' ye now, Camilla – I'm begging ye with my whole soul to say that ye'll drive down with me now, Camilla, to the English Church, and the two of us be married, and then sail with me for the truly magnificent home I've been establishing for ye over on Andros.'

Camilla Macartney continued to sit, outwardly unmoved, where she had received him when black Jens had shown him into the drawing room. She had not been looking at her cousin during this characteristically confident and even impulsive declaration of his. Her eyes were upon her hands which lay, lightly clasped, in her lap, and she did not raise them to reply. She did not, however, keep him waiting. She said in a perfectly level voice in which there was apparently no single trace or indication of the tearing, internal emotion which surged through her outraged heart at this last and unforgivable insult—

'I shall not become your wife, Saul – now or ever.'

Then, as he stood before her, his buoyant self-confidence for once checked, his face suddenly configured into something like the momentary grotesqueness of Axel Petersen's, she added, in that same level tone, which had about it now, however, the smallest suggestion of a rising inflection:

'Do not come to me again. Go now – at once.'

This final interview with her cousin Saul was unquestionably the element which served to crystallize into an active and sustained hatred the successive emotional crises and their consequent abnormal states of mind which the events here recorded had stirred up within this woman so terribly equipped for vengeance. The seed of hatred was now a full grown plant.

Upon a woman of Camilla Macartney's depth and emotional capacity the felonious behavior of Saul Macartney had had a very terrible, and a very deep reaching, mental effect. She had adored and worshipped him for as long as she could remember. He had torn down and riven apart and left lying about her in brutally shattered fragments the whole structure of her life. He had smashed the solid pride of her family into shreds. He had disgraced himself blatantly, deliberately, with a ruthless abandon. He had piled insult to her upon insult. He had taken her pure love for him, crushed and defiled it.

And now these irresistible blows had had the terrible effect of breaking down the serene composure of this gentlewoman. All her love for her cousin and all her pride in him were transformed into one definite, flaming and consuming purpose: She must wipe out those dreadful stains!

Arrived in the empty library, Camilla Macartney went straight to the great rosewood desk, and without any delay wrote a letter. The black footman who hurried with this missive down the hill actually passed Saul Macartney, likewise descending it. Within a very short time after its reception the captain of the little packet-vessel – upon which, anchored quite close to shore, Camilla Macartney had been

painting her nearly finished panorama of the town – had gone ashore to round up his full crew. The packet itself, with Camilla Macartney on board, sailed out of St. Thomas harbor that afternoon in plain sight of the restocked *Swallow*, whose great spread of gleaming white canvas showed gloriously under the afternoon's sun as she laid her course due southwest. The packet, laying hers to the southward, rolled and tossed at a steady eight-knot clip under the spanking trade, straight for the Island of Santa Cruz.

Captain the Honorable William McMillin was summoned from his seven o'clock dinner in his estate house up in the gentle hills of the island's north side, and only his phlegmatic Scottish temperament, working together with his aristocratic self-control, prevented *his* shapely jaw from sagging and his blue eyes from becoming saucer-like when they had recorded for him the identity of this wholly unexpected visitor. Camilla Macartney wasted none of the captain's time, nor was her arrival cause for any cooling of the excellent repast from which he had arisen to receive her.

'I have not,' said she downrightly in response to the astonished captain's initial inquiry as to whether she had dined. 'And,' she added, 'I should be glad to sit down with you at once, if that meets your convenience, sir. It is, as you may very well have surmised, a very deep and pressing matter upon which I have ventured to come to you. That, I should imagine, would best be discussed while we sit at table, and so without delay.'

Again the captain demonstrated his admirable manners. He merely bowed and led the way to the door of his dining room.

Once seated opposite Captain McMillin, Camilla Macartney again went straight to her point. The captain quite definitely forgot to eat in the amazing and immediate interest of what she proceeded to say.

'I am offering the reward of a thousand English sovereigns for the apprehension at sea and the bringing to St. Thomas for their trials of the freetrader, Fawcett, and his mates. It

may very well be no secret to you, sir, that a member of our family is one of these men. I think that any comment between us upon that subject will be a superfluity. You will take note, if you please, that it is I, a member of our family, who offer the reward I have named for his apprehension. You will understand – everything that is involved.

'Earlier this day it was proposed to me that I should sail away upon a ship without very much notice. I have come here to you, sir, on one of my father's vessels – Captain Stewart, her commander, a trusted man in our employ, has accompanied me all the way to your door. He is here now, waiting in the hired *calèche* which I secured in Frederiksted for the drive here to your house. Perhaps you will be good enough to have some food taken to him.

'I have come, Captain McMillin, in all this haste, actually to request you to do the same thing that I mentioned – you made me see, when you were our guest, that I could wholly rely upon you, sir. I am here to ask you, as a military man, to command the expedition which I am sending out. I am asking you to sail back with Captain Stewart and me for St. Thomas – tonight.'

Captain McMillin looked at Camilla Macartney across the length of his glistening mahogany dining table. He had been listening very carefully to her speech. He rang his table bell now that he was sure she was finished, and when his serving man answered this summons, ordered him to prepare a repast for the waiting ship's captain, and to send in to him his groom. Then, with a bow to his guest, and pushing back his chair and rising, he said:

'You will excuse me, Miss Macartney, I trust, for the little time I shall require to pack. It will not occupy me very long.'

## IV

The story of how the *Hyperion*, newest and swiftest of all the Macartney vessels, was outfitted and armed for the pursuit and capture of Captain Fawcett is a little epic in itself. It would include among many details extant the intensive search among the shipping resources of St. Thomas, for the swivelgun which, two days after Captain McMillin's arrival on the scene, was being securely bolted through the oak timbers of the *Hyperion's* afterdeck.

A surprisingly complete record of this extraordinary piece of activity survives among the ancient colonial archives. Perhaps the recording clerk of the period, in his Government House office, was, like every one else in St. Thomas, fascinated by the ruthless swiftness with which that job, under the impact of Camilla Macartney's eye, was pushed through to a successful conclusion in precisely forty-eight hours. Nothing like this rate of speed had ever been heard of, even in St. Thomas. The many men engaged in this herculean task at Pelman's Shipyard worked day and night continuously in three eight-hour shifts.

It is significant that these shipwrights and other skilled artisans were all Negroes. They had assembled in their scores and dozens from every quarter of the widespread town, irrespective of age or the exactions of their current employment, from the instant that the grapevine route spread through the black population of the town the summons to this task which Camilla Macartney had quietly uttered in the ear of her butler, Jens Sorensen.

The *Hyperion*, under the command of her own officers but with the understanding that Captain McMillin was in sole charge of the expedition, came up with the *Swallow* a little under four days from the hour of her sailing out of St. Thomas harbor.



Captain McMillin caught Fawcett at a vast disadvantage. The *Swallow*, very lightly manned at the moment, hung in stays, her riding sails flapping with reports like pistol shots as her graceful head was held into the wind. She lay some ten shiplengths away to the leeward of an American merchant vessel about which the *Swallow's* boats – now nine in number – were grouped, a single member of the crew in each. Fawcett and his two lieutenants, and nine-tenths of his crew of cutthroats, were ransacking their prize, whose officers, crew and passengers had been disposed of under nailed hatches. They appeared, indeed, to be so thoroughly occupied in this nefarious work as to have ignored entirely any preparations for meeting the *Hyperion's* attack – a circumstance sufficiently strange to have impressed Captain McMillin profoundly.

The *Hyperion's* officers, unable to account for this singular quiescence on the part of the pirates, attributed it to their probably failing to suspect that the *Hyperion* was anything but another trading vessel which had happened to blunder along on her course into this proximity. With a strange, quick gripping at the heart, quite new in his experience, Captain McMillin permitted himself to suspect, though for a brief instant only, that something of the strange power which he had glimpsed in his contacts with Camilla Macartney, might in some extraordinary fashion be somehow responsible for this phenomenon.

But this thought, as too utterly ridiculous for harborage in a normal man's mind, he put away from him instantler.

The strategy of the situation appeared to be simple. And Captain McMillin formulated his plan of attack accordingly, after a brief consultation with his officers.

Realizing that there could be no effective gunnery from the handful of men in charge of the *Swallow*, Captain McMillin ordered a dozen men in charge of the *Hyperion's* second mate over the side in the largest of the boats. The maneuver of dropping an already manned boat from

the davits – a risky undertaking in any event – was handled successfully, an exceptionally quiet sea contributing to the management of this piece of seamanship.

This boat's crew, all Negroes and all armed with the pistols and cutlasses which had been hastily served out to them, had no difficulty whatever in getting over the *Swallow's* side and making themselves masters of the pirate vessel. The dozen Negroes had butchered the seven members of the pirate crew left on board the *Swallow* within forty seconds of their landing upon her deck, and Mr. Matthews, the officer in charge of them, hauled down with his own hand the Jolly Roger which, true to the freetrading traditions of the Main, flaunted at the *Swallow's* main peak.

The magnificent cooperation of the fifteen Negroes constituting the *Hyperion's* deck crew made possible the next daring piece of seamanship which the *Hyperion's* captain had agreed to attempt. This was Captain McMillin's plan.

The *Hyperion* should lay alongside the American vessel, grapple to her and board – with all hands – from deck to deck. This idea, almost unheard of in modern sea warfare, had suggested itself as practicable in this instance to Captain McMillin, from his reading. Such had been the tactics of the antique Mediterranean galleys.

For the purpose of retaining the outward appearance of a simple trader, Captain McMillin had concealed the thirty-three additional members of his heavily armed crew, and these had not been brought on deck until he was almost ready to have the grapples thrown. These reserves now swarmed upon the *Hyperion's* deck in the midst of a bedlam of shouts, yells and curses, punctuated by pistol shots, from the pirate crew on board their prize.

These were taken at a vast disadvantage. Their prize vessel was immobile. They had, for what appeared to Captain McMillin some inexplicable reason, apparently failed until the very last moment to realize the *Hyperion's* intentions. Most of them were busily engaged in looting their prize. Under this process five of the *Swallow's* nine boats

had already been laden gunwale deep with the miscellaneous plunder already taken out of the American ship. Two of these laden small boats and two others of the *Swallow's* nine were crushed like eggshells as the *Hyperion* closed in and threw her grappling hooks.

Then, in a silence new and strange in Captain McMillin's previous experience in hand-to-hand fighting, his forty-eight black fighting men followed him over the rails and fell upon the pirates.

Within three minutes the American vessel's deck was a shambles. Camilla Macartney's black myrmidons, like militant fiends from some strange hell of their own, their eyeballs rolling, their white teeth flashing as they bared their lips in the ecstasy of this mission of wholesale slaughter, spread irresistibly with grunts and low mutterings and strange cries about that deck.

Not a member of the pirate crew escaped their ruthless onslaught. Hard skulls were split asunder and lopped arms strewed the deck, and tough bodies were transfixed, and the gasping wounded were trampled lifeless in the terrible energy of these black fighting men.

Then abruptly, save for a harsh sobbing sound from laboring panting lungs after their terrific exertion, a strange silence fell, and toward Captain McMillin, who stood well-nigh aghast over the utter strangeness of this unprecedented carnage which had just taken place under his eye and under his command, there came a huge, black, diffidently smiling Negro, his feet scarlet as he slouched along that moist and slippery deck, a crimson cutlass dangling loosely now from the red hand at the end of a red arm. This one, addressing the captain in a low, humble and deprecating voice, said—

'Come, now, please, me Marster — come, please sar, see de t'ree gentlemahn you is tell us to sabe alive!'

And Captain McMillin, bemused, followed this guide along that deck slushed and scarlet with the life blood of those pulped heaps which had been Captain Fawcett's pirate crew, stepped aft to where, behind the main deckhouse,

three trussed and helpless white men lay upon a cleaner section of that vessel's deck, under the baleful eye of another strapping black man with red feet and a naked red cutlass brandished in a red hand.

The *Swallow*, her own somewhat blood soiled deck now shining spotless under the mighty holystonings it had received at the hands of its prize crew of twelve under command of the *Hyperion's* second mate, the Danish flag now flying gaily from her masthead, followed the *Hyperion* into St. Thomas harbor on the second day of September, 1825. The two vessels came up to their designated anchorages smartly, and shortly thereafter, and for the last time, Saul Macartney, accompanied by his crony, Captain Fawcett, and his colleague, the other pirate mate, was rowed ashore in the familiar longboat.

But during this short and rapid trip these three gentlemen did not, for once, occupy the sternsheets. They sat forward, their hands and feet in irons, the six oarsmen between them and Mr. Matthews, the *Hyperion's* mate, who held the tiller rope, and Captain the Honorable William McMillin, who sat erect beside him.

## V

I have already recorded my first horrified reaction to the appearance of the handsome black haired piratical mate whose painted arm my innocent thumbtack had penetrated. My next reaction, rather curiously, was the pressing, insistent, sudden impulse to withdraw that tack. I did so forthwith – with trembling fingers. I here openly confess.

My third and final reaction which came to me not long afterward and when I had somewhat succeeded in pulling myself together, was once more to get out my magnifying glass and take another good look through it. After all, I told myself, I was here confronted with nothing more in the way

of material facts than a large sized, somewhat crudely done and very old oil painting.

I got the glass and reassured myself. The 'blood' was, of course – as now critically examined, magnified by sixteen diameters – merely a few spattered drops of the very same vermilion pigment which my somewhat clever amateur artist had used for the red roofs of the houses, the foulards of the Negresses and those many gloriously flaming flower blossoms.

Quite obviously these particular spatters of red paint had not been in the liquid state for more than a century. Having ascertained these facts beyond the shadow of any lingering doubt in the field of every day material fact, my one remaining bit of surviving wonderment settled itself about the minor puzzle of just why I had failed to observe these spots of ancient, dry, and brittle paint during the long and careful scrutiny to which I had subjected the picture the evening before. A curious coincidence, this – that the tiny red spots should happen to be precisely in the place where blood would be showing if it *had* flowed from my tack wound in that dangled painted arm.

I looked next, curiously, through my glass at the fellow's face. I could perceive now none of that acutely agonized expression which had accentuated my first startled horror at the sight of the blood.

And so, pretty well reassured, I went back to my bedroom and finished dressing. And thereafter, as the course of affairs proceeded, I could not get the thing out of my mind. I will pass over any attempt at describing the psychological processes involved and say here merely that by the end of a couple of weeks or so I was in that state of obsession which made it impossible for me to do my regular work, or, indeed, to think of anything else. And then, chiefly to relieve my mind of this vastly annoying preoccupation, I began upon that course of investigatory research to which I have already alluded.

When I had finished this, had gone down to the end of the

last bypath which it involved, it was well on in the year 1930. It had taken three years, and – it was worth it.

I was in St. Thomas that season and St. Thomas was still operating under the régime which had prevailed since the spring of 1917, at which time the United States had purchased the old Danish West Indies from Denmark as a war measure, during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson.

In 1930 our naval forces had not yet withdrawn from our Virgin Island Colony. The administration was still actively under the direction of his Excellency Captain Waldo Evans, U.S.N. Retired, and the heads of the major departments were still the efficient and personable gentlemen assigned to those duties by the Secretary of the Navy.

My intimate friend, Dr. Pelletier, the pride of the U.S.N. Medical Corps, was still in active charge of the Naval Hospital, and I could rely upon Dr. Pelletier, whose interest in and knowledge of the strange and *outré* beliefs, customs and practises of numerous strange corners of this partly civilized world of ours were both deep and, as it seemed to me, virtually exhaustive.

To this good friend of mine, this walking encyclopedia of strange knowledge, I took, naturally, my findings in this very strange and utterly fascinating story of old St. Thomas. We spent several long evenings together over it, and when I had imparted all the facts while my surgeon friend listened, as is his custom, for hours on end without a single interruption, we proceeded to spend many more evenings discussing it, sometimes at the hospitable doctor's bachelor dinner table and afterward far into those tropic nights of spice and balm, and sometimes at my house which is quite near the old T. L. Macartney mansion on Denmark Hill.

In the course of these many evenings I added to the account of the affair which had emerged out of my long investigation two additional phases of this matter which I have not included in my account as written out here because, in

the form which these took in my mind, they were almost wholly conjectural.

Of these, the first took its point of departure from the depiction of the rope, as shown in the painting, with which Saul Macartney had been hanged. I have mentioned the painstaking particularity with which the artist had put in the minor details of the composition. I have illustrated this by stating that the seven traditional turns of the hangman's knot were to be seen showing plainly under Captain Fawcett's left ear. The same type of knot, I may add here, was also painted in laboriously upon the noose which had done to death Fawcett's other mate.

But Saul Macartney's rope did not show such a knot. In fact, it showed virtually no knot at all. Even under the magnifying glass a knot expert would have been unable to name in any category of knots the inconspicuous slight enlargement at the place where Saul Macartney's noose was joined. Another point about this rope which might or might not have any significance, was the fact that it was of a color slightly but yet distinctly different from the hemp color of the other two. Saul Macartney's rope was of a faint greenish blue color.

Upon this rather slight basis for conjecture I hazarded the following enlargement:

That Camilla Macartney, just after the verdict of the Danish Colonial High Court had become known to her – and I ventured to express the belief that she had known it before any other white person – had said in her quiet voice to her black butler, Jens Sorensen:

'I am going to Ma Folie. Tonight, at nine o'clock precisely, Ajax Mendoza is to come to me there.'

And – this is merely my imaginative supplement, it will be remembered, based on my own knowledge of the dark ways of Vodoo – burly black Ajax Mendoza, capital executioner in the honorable employ of the Danish Colonial Administration, whose father, Jupiter Mendoza, had held that office before him, and whose grandfather, Achilles Men-

doza (whose most notable performance had been the racking of the insurrectionist leader, Black Tancredi, who had been brought back to the capital in chains after the perpetration of his many atrocities in the St. Jan Uprising of the slaves in 1733), had been the first of the line; that Ajax Mendoza, not fierce and truculent as he looked standing there beside the policeman on Captain Fawcett's gallow platform, but trembling, and cringing, had kept that appointment to which he had been summoned.

Having received his orders, he had then hastened to bring to Camilla Macartney the particular length of thin manila rope which was later to be strung from the arm of Saul Macartney's gallows and had left it with her until she returned it to him before the hour of the execution; and that he had received it back and reeved it though its pulley with even more fear and trembling and cringes at being obliged to handle this transmuted thing whose very color was a terror and a distress to him, now that it had passed through that fearsome laboratory of 'white missy who knew the Snake. . . .'

And my second conjectural hypothesis I based upon the fact which my research had revealed to me that all the members of the honorable clan of Macartney resident in St. Thomas had, with obvious propriety, kept to their closely shuttered several residences during the entire day of that public execution. That is, all of the Macartneys except the heiress of the great Macartney fortune, Camilla.

Half an hour before high noon on that public holiday the English barouche had deposited Camilla Macartney at one of the wharves a little away from the center of the town where that great throng had gathered to see the pirates hanged, and from there she had been rowed out to the small vessel which had that morning gone back to its old anchorage near the shore.

There, in her old place under the awning of the afterdeck, she had very calmly and deliberately set up her easel and placed before her the all but finished panorama upon which



she had been working, and had thereupon begun to paint, and so had continued quietly painting until the three bodies of those pirates which had been left dangling 'for the space of a whole hour', according to the sentence, 'as a salutary example', and had then ended her work and gone back to the wharf carrying carefully the now finished panorama to where the English barouche awaited her.

By conjecture, on the basis of these facts, I managed somehow to convey to Dr. Pelletier, a man whose mind is attuned to such matters, the tentative, uncertain idea – I should not dare to name it a conviction – that Camilla Macartney, by some application of that uncanny skill of hers in the arts of darkness, had, as it were, caught the life principle of her cousin, Saul Macartney, as it escaped from his splendid body there at the end of that slightly discolored and curiously knotted rope, *and fastened it down upon her canvas within the simulacrum of that little painted figure through the arm of which I had thrust a thumb tack!*

These two queer ideas of mine, which had been knocking about inside my head, strangely enough did not provoke the retort, 'Outrageous!' from Dr. Pelletier, a man of the highest scientific attainments. I had hesitated to put such thoughts into words, and I confess that I was surprised that his response in the form of a series of nods of the head did not seem to indicate the indulgence of a normal mind toward the drivplings of some imbecile.

Dr. Pelletier deferred any verbal reply to this imaginative climax of mine, placed as it was at the very end of our discussion. When he did shift his mighty bulk where it reclined in my Chinese rattan lounge chair on my airy west gallery – a sure preliminary to any remarks from him – his first words surprised me a little.

'Is there any doubt, Canevin, in your mind about the identity of this painted portrait figure of the mate with Saul Macartney himself?'

'No,' said I. 'I was able to secure two faded old ambrotypes of Saul Macartney – at least, I was given a good

look at them. There can, I think, be no question on that score.'

For the space of several minutes Pelletier remained silent. Then he slightly shifted his leonine head to look at me.

'Canevin,' said he, 'people like you and me who have *seen* this kind of thing working under our very eyes, all around us, among people like these West Indian blacks, well – we *know*.'

Then, more animatedly, and sitting up a little in his chair, the doctor said:

'On that basis, Canevin – on the pragmatic basis, if you will, and that, God knows, is scientific, based on observation – the only thing that we can do is to give this queer, devilish thing the benefit of the doubt. Our doubt, to say nothing of what the general public would think of such ideas!'

'Should you say that there is anything that can be done about it?' I inquired. 'I have the picture, you know, and you have heard the – well, the *facts* as they have come under my observation. Is there any – what shall I say? – any *responsibility* involved on the basis of those facts and any conjectural additions that you and I may choose to make?'

'That,' said Pelletier, 'is what I meant by the benefit of the doubt. Thinking about this for the moment in terms of the limitations, the incompleteness, of human knowledge and the short distance we have managed to travel along the road to civilization, I should say that there is – a responsibility.'

'What shall I do – if anything?' said I, a little taken aback at this downrightness.

Again Dr. Pelletier looked at me for a long moment, and nodded his head several times. Then:

'Burn the thing, Canevin. Fire – the solvent. Do you comprehend me? Have I said enough?'

I thought over this through the space of several silent minutes. Then, a trifle hesitantly because I was not at all sure that I had grasped the implications which lay below this very simple suggestion—

'You mean—?'

'That if there is anything in it, Canevin – that benefit of the doubt again, you see – if, to put such an outrageous hypothesis into a sane phrase, the life, the soul, the personality remains unreleased, and that because of Camilla Macartney's use of a pragmatic "magical" skill such as is operative today over there in the hills of Haiti; to name only one focus of this particular *cultus* – well, then . . .'

This time it was I who nodded; slowly, several times. After that I sat quietly in my chair for long minutes in the little silence which lay between us. We had said, it seemed to me, everything that was to be said. I – we – had gone as far as human limitations permitted in the long investigation of this strange affair. Then I summoned my houseman, Stephen Penn.

'Stephen,' said I, 'go and find out if the charcoal pots in the kitchen have burned out since breakfast. I imagine that about this time there would be a little charcoal left to burn out in each of them. If so, put all the charcoal into one pot and bring it out here on the gallery. If not, fix me a new charcoal fire in the largest pot. Fill it about half full.'

'Yes, sar,' said Stephen, and departed on this errand.

Within three minutes the excellent Stephen was back. He set down on the tile floor beside my chair the largest of my four kitchen charcoal pots. It was half full of brightly glowing embers. I sent him away before I went into the house to fetch the painting. It is a curious fact that this faithful servitor of mine, a *zambo* or medium brown Negro, and a native of St. Thomas, had manifested an increasing aversion to anything like contact with or even sight of the old picture, an aversion dating from that afternoon when he had discovered it, three years before, in the lumber room of my Santa Cruzian hired residence.

Then I brought it out and laid it flat, after clearing a place for it, on the large plain table which stands against the wall of the house on my gallery. Pelletier came over and stood beside me, and in silence we looked long and searchingly at Camilla Macartney's panorama for the last time.

Then, with the sharp, small blade of my pocketknife, I cut it cleanly through again and again until it was in seven or eight strips. A little of the brittle old paint cracked and flaked off in this process. Having piled the strips one on top of another, I picked up the topmost of the three or four spread newspapers which I had placed under the canvas to save the table top from my knife point, and these flakes and chips I poured first off the newspaper's edge upon the glowing embers. These bits of dry, ancient pigment hissed, flared up, and then quickly melted away. Then I burned the strips very carefully until all but one were consumed.

This, perhaps because of some latent dramatic instinct whose existence until that moment I had never really suspected, was the one containing the figure of Saul Macartney. I paused, the strip in my hand, and looked at Pelletier. His face was inscrutable. He nodded his head at me, however, as though to encourage me to proceed and finish my task.

With perhaps a trifle of extra care I inserted the end of this last strip into the charcoal pot.

It caught fire and began to burn through precisely as its predecessors had caught and burned, and finally disintegrated into a light grayish ash. Then a very strange thing happened—

There was no slightest breath of air moving in that sheltered corner of the gallery. The entire solid bulk of the house sheltered it from the steady northeast trade — now at three in the afternoon at its lowest daily ebb, a mere wavering, tenuous pulsing.

And yet, at the precise instant when the solid material of that last strip had been transmuted by the power of the fire into the whitish, wavering ghost of material objects which we name ash — from the very center of the still brightly glowing charcoal embers there arose a thin, delicate wisp of greenish blue smoke which spiraled before our eyes under the impact of some obscure pulsation in the quiet air about us, then stiffened, as yet unbroken, into a taut vertical line, the upper end of which abruptly turned, curving down upon

itself, completing the representation of the hangman's noose; and then, instantly, this contour wavered and broke and ceased to be, and all that remained there before our fascinated eyes was a kitchen charcoal pot containing a now rapidly dulling mass of rose colored embers.

## MRS. LORRIQUER

The late Ronald Firbank, British author, apostle of the light touch in literary treatment, put grass skirts upon the three lady heroines of his West Indian book, *Prancing Nigger*, as all persons who have perused that delicate romance of an unnamed West Indian island will doubtless remember. In so dressing Mrs. Mouth, and her two attractive daughters, Mr. Firbank was only twelve thousand miles out of the way, although that is not bad for anybody who writes about the West Indies – almost conservative, in fact. I, Gerald Canevin, have more than once reassured timid female inquirers, who had heard of our climate, but who were apprehensive of living among ‘those savages and cannibals!’

I have always suspected that Mr. Firbank, to go back for a moment to that gentleman before dismissing him and his book, got his light-touch information about the West Indies from a winter tour aboard one of the great trans-Atlantic liners which, winters, are used for such purposes in the Mediterranean and Caribbean, and which, in St. Thomas, discharge their hundreds of ‘personally conducted’ tourists in swarms upon our innocent, narrow sidewalks, transforming the quiet, Old World town into a seething, hectic market-place for several hours every two weeks or so during a winter’s season there.

For, truth being stranger by far than any fiction, there *are* grass skirts – on such occasions – on St. Thomas’ streets; piles and stacks of them, for sale to tourists who buy them avidly. I know of no more engaging sight in this world than a two hundred and fifty pound tourist-lady, her husband in the offing, his hand in his money-pocket, chaffering with one of our Cha-Cha women with her drab, flat face and tight-

pulled, straight hair knotted at the back, for a grass skirt!

It appears that, some years back, a certain iron-visaged spinster, in the employ of a social service agency, 'took up' the Cha-Cha women, seeking to brighten their lot, and, realizing that a certain native raffia grass had commercial possibilities, taught them to make Polynesian grass skirts of it. Thereafter and ever since there has been a vast plague of these things about the streets of St. Thomas whenever a tourist vessel comes into our harbor under the skilled pilotage of Captain Simmons or Captain Caroc, our pilots.

I open this strange tale of Mrs. Lorriquer in this offhand fashion because my first sight of that compact, gray-haired little American gentlewoman was when I passed her, in the very heart and midst of one of these tourist invasions, rather indignantly trying to get rid of an insistent vendor who seemed possessed to drape her five feet two, and one hundred and sixty pounds, in a five-colored grass skirt, and who would not be appeased and desist. As I was about to pass I overheard Mrs. Lorriquer say, with both indignation and finality:

'But, I'm not a tourist – I live here!'

That effectually settled the grass-skirt seller, who turned her attention to the tourists forthwith.

I had paused, almost unconsciously, and found myself face to face with Mrs. Lorriquer, whom I had not seen before. She smiled at me and I smiled back.

'Will you allow another permanent resident to rescue you from this *mêlée*?' I inquired, removing my hat.

'It is rather like a Continental *mardi gras*, isn't it?' said Mrs. Lorriquer, taking my arm.

'Where are you staying?' I inquired. 'Are you at the Grand Hotel?'

'No,' said Mrs. Lorriquer. 'We have a house, the *Criqué* place, half-way up Denmark Hill. We came down the day before yesterday, on the *Nova Scotia*, and we expect to be here all winter.'

'I am Gerald Canevin,' said I, 'and I happen to be your very near neighbor. Probably we shall see a good deal of each other. If I can be of any assistance—'

'You have, already, Mr. Canevin,' said Mrs. Lorriquer, whimsically.

I supposed at once she referred to my 'rescue' of her from the tourist mob, but, it seemed, she had something quite different in her mind.

'It was because of some things of yours we had read,' she went on, 'that Colonel Lorriquer and I – and my widowed daughter, Mrs. Preston – decided to spend the winter here,' she finished.

'Indeed!' said I. 'Then, perhaps you will allow me to continue the responsibility. When would it meet your convenience for me to call and meet the Colonel and Mrs. Preston?'

'Come any time,' said Mrs. Lorriquer, 'come to dinner, of course. We are living very informally.'

We had reached the post-office, opposite the Grand Hotel, and here, doubtless according to instructions, stood Mrs. Lorriquer's car. I handed her in, and the kindly-faced, short, stout, little sixty-year-old lady was whirled away around the corner of the hotel toward one of the side roads which mount the precipitous sides of St. Thomas' best residential district.

I called the following afternoon, and thus inaugurated what proved to be a very pleasant acquaintanceship.

Colonel Lorriquer, a retired army engineer, was a man of seventy, extraordinarily well preserved, genial, a ripened citizen of the world. He had, it transpired on acquaintance, had a hand in many pieces of engineering, in various parts of the known world, and had spent several years on that vast American enterprise, the construction of the Panama Canal. Mrs. Preston, whose aviator husband had met his death a few months previously in the exercise of his hazardous profession, turned out to be a very charming person, still stunned and over-burdened with the grief of her be-



reavement, and with two tiny children. I gathered that it was largely upon her account that the Colonel and Mrs. Lorriquer had come to St. Thomas that winter. Being a West Indian enthusiast, it seemed to me that the family had used excellent judgment. There could be no better place for them under those circumstances. There is that in the charm and perfect climate of the Northern Lesser Antilles which heals the wounds of the heart, even though, as they say, when one stays too long there is Lethe.

We settled down in short order to a more or less intimate acquaintanceship. The Lorriquers, and Mrs. Preston, were so to speak, 'my sort of people'. Many mutual acquaintances developed as we became better acquainted. We found much in common.

I have set down all this preliminary portion of this story thus in detail, because I have wished to emphasize, if possible, the fact that never, in all my experience with the bizarre which this human scene offers to the open-minded observer, has it occurred to me to find any greater contrast than that which existed between Mrs. Lorriquer, short, stout, matter-of-fact, kindly little lady that she was, and the quite utterly incredible thing which – but I must not, I simply must not, in this case, allow myself to get ahead of my story. God knows it is strange enough not to need any 'literary devices' to make it seem stranger.

The Lorriquers spent a good deal of the time which, under the circumstances, hung upon their hands, in card-playing. All three members of the family were expert Auction and Contract players. Naturally, being quite close at hand, I became a fourth and many evenings not otherwise occupied were spent, sometimes at my house, sometimes at theirs, about the card-table.

The Colonel and I played together, against the two ladies, and this arrangement was very rarely varied. Occasionally Mrs. Squire, a middle-aged woman who had known the Lorriquers at home in the States, and who had an apartment at the Grand Hotel for the winter, joined us, and then, usually,

Mrs. Preston gave up her place and Mrs. Squire and I paired against the Colonel and his wife.

Even after the lapse of several years, I confess that I find myself as I write, hesitant, reluctant somehow, to set down the beginning of the strange discrepancy which first indicated what was to come to light in our innocent social relationship that winter. I think I can best do so, best open up this incredible thing, by recording a conversation between me and Mrs. Squire as we walked, one moonlit midnight, slowly down the hill toward the Grand Hotel.

We had finished an evening at the Lorriquers', and Mrs. Lorriquer had been especially, a little more than ordinarily, rude over the cards. Somehow, I can not say how it occurred, we discussed this strange anomaly in our hostess, usually the most kindly, simple, hospitable soul imaginable.

'She only does it when she plays cards,' remarked Mrs. Squire. 'Otherwise, as you have said, Mr. Canevin, she is the very soul of kindness, of generosity. I have never been able to understand, and I have known the Lorriquers for more than ten years – how a woman of her character and knowledge of the world can act as she does over the card-table. It would be quite unbearable, quite utterly absurd – would it not – if one didn't know how very sweet and dear she really is.'

It was, truly, a puzzle. It had developed very soon after we had started in at our Bridge games together. The plain fact, to set it down straight, was that Mrs. Lorriquer, *at the card-table*, was a most pernicious old termagant! A more complete diversity between her as she sat, frowning over her cards; exacting every last penalty; enforcing abstruse rules against her opponents while taking advantage of breaking them all herself *ad libitum*; arguing, most inanely and even offensively, over scores and value of points and penalties – all her actions and conduct at the card-table; with her general placidity, kindness, and effusive good-nature under all other circumstances – a more complete diversity, I say, could never be imagined.

It has always been one of my negative principles that annoyance over the details or over the outcome of any game of chance or skill should never be expressed. That sort of thing has always seemed to me absurd; indeed, inexcusable. Yet, I testify, I have, and increasingly as our acquaintance progressed, been so worked up over the cards when playing with the Lorriquer family, as to have to put the brakes down tight upon some expression of annoyance which I should later have regretted. Indeed, I will go farther, and own up to the fact that I have been badgered into entering into arguments with Mrs. Lorriquer at the table, when she would make some utterly outrageous claim, and then argue – the only word for it is *offensively* – against the massed testimony of her opponents and her partner for the evening. More than once, Mrs. Preston, under the stress of such an exhibition of temper and unreasonableness on her mother's part, has risen from the table, making some excuse, only to return a few minutes later. I believe that on all such occasions, Mrs. Preston took this means of allowing her annoyance to evaporate rather than express herself to her mother in the presence of a guest.

To say that it was annoyance is to put it very mildly indeed. It was embarrassing, too, to the very last degree. The subjects upon which Mrs. Lorriquer would 'go up in the air', as Mrs. Squire once modernly expressed it, were always trivial; always unreasonable. Mrs. Lorriquer, although a finished player in all respects, was, I think, always, as a matter of fact, in the wrong. She would question the amount of a score, for example, and, upon being shown the printed penalties for such score on the cover-page of the score pad, or from one of the standard books on the game, would shift over to a questioning of the score itself. The tricks, left on the table, would be counted out to her, before her eyes, by Colonel Lorriquer. Half-way through such an ocular demonstration, Mrs. Lorriquer would interrupt her husband with some kind of diatribe, worthy of the mind of a person quite utterly ignorant of the game of Contract and of decent

manners. She insisted upon keeping all scores herself, but unless this process were very carefully watched and checked, she would, perhaps half the time, cheat in favor of her own side.

It was, really, outrageous. Time and time again, I have gone home from the Lorriquers', after such an evening as I have indicated, utterly resolved never to play there again, or to refuse, as courteously as might be possible, to meet Mrs. Lorriquer over a card-table. Then, the next day, perhaps, the other Mrs. Lorriquer, charming, kindly, sweet-natured, gentle and hospitable, would be in such overwhelming, disarming evidence, that my overnight resolution would be dissipated into thin air, and I would accuse myself of becoming middle-aged, querulous!

But this unaccountable diversity between the Mrs. Lorriquer of ordinary affairs and the Mrs. Lorriquer of the card-table, outstanding, conspicuous, absurd indeed, as it was, was really as nothing when compared to Mrs. Lorriquer's luck at the cards.

I have never seen anything like it; never heard, save in old-fashioned fictional tales of the person who sold his soul to Satan for invincibility at cards, of anything which could compare to it. It is true that Mrs. Lorriquer sometimes lost – a single game, or perhaps even a rubber. But in the long run, Mrs. Lorriquer, even on the lowest possible basis for expressing what I mean, did not need to cheat, still less to argue over points or scores. She won, steadily, inevitably, monotonously, like the steady propulsive motions of some soulless machine at its mechanical work. It was virtually impossible to beat her.

We did not play for stakes. If we had, a goodly portion of my income would have diverted that winter to the Lorriquer coffers. Save for the fact that as it was the Colonel who played partners with me, it would have been Mrs. Lorriquer, rather than the Lorriquer family, who would have netted all the proceeds!

In bidding, and, indeed, in the actual playing of a hand,

she seemed to follow no system beyond abject reliance on her 'luck'. I have, not once, but many, many times, known her, for example, to bid two no-trump originally, on a hand perhaps containing two 'singletons', only to have her partner 'go to three' with a hand containing every card which she needed for the dummy. I will not specify, beyond this, any technical illustrations of how her extraordinary 'luck' manifested itself. Suffice it to say that Bridge is, largely, a mathematical matter, varied, in the case of four thoroughly trained players, by what is known as the 'distribution' of the cards. It is this unknown element of 'distribution' which keeps the game, in the hands of a table of experts, a 'game of chance' and not merely a mathematical certainty gaged by skillful, back-and-forth, informative bidding. To put the whole matter of Mrs. Lorriquer's 'luck' into a nutshell, it was this element of 'distribution' of the cards which favored her, in and out of season; caused her to win with a continuous regularity; never seeming to cause her to be pleased at her success and so lend to an evening at cards with her at the table that rather unsatisfactory geniality which even a child shows when it 'gets the breaks' at a game.

No; Mrs. Lorriquer was, while engaged in playing Bridge, a harriidan, a disagreeable old vixen; a 'pill' as, I believe, I once heard the outraged Mrs. Squire mutter desperately, under her breath!

Perhaps it would be an exaggeration to allege that as against the Colonel and me, playing as partners for many evenings, the 'distribution' of the cards was adverse with absolute uniformity. I should hesitate to say that, positively, although my recollection is that such was the case. But, in the ordinary run of affairs, once in a while one of us would get a commanding hand, and, immune from the possibility of the 'distribution' affecting success, would play it out to a winning score for the time being. It was after one such hand – I played it, the Colonel's hand as dummy – that I succeeded in making my bid: four hearts, to a game. I remember that I had nine hearts in my hand, together with the ace,

king of clubs, and the 'stoppers' on one other suit, and finishing with something 'above the line' besides 'making game' in one hand, that my first intimation of a strange element in Mrs. Lorriquer's attitude to the game made itself apparent. Hitherto – it was, perhaps, a matter of a month or six weeks of the acquaintance between us – it had been a combination of luck and what I can only call bad manners; the variety of luck which I have attempted to indicate and the 'bad manners' strictly limited to such times as we sat around the square table in the center of the Lorriquers' breezy hall.

The indication to which I have referred was merely an exclamation from my right, where Mrs. Lorriquer sat, as usual, in her accustomed place.

'*Sapristi!*' boomed Mrs. Lorriquer, in a deep, resonant, man-like voice.

I looked up from my successful hand and smiled at her. I had, of course, imagined that she was joking – to use an antique, rather meaningless, old-French oath, in that voice. Her own voice, even when scolding over the card-table, was a light, essentially feminine voice. If she had been a singer, she would have been a thin, high soprano.

To my surprise, Mrs. Lorriquer was not wearing her whimsical expression. At once, too, she entered into an acrimonious dispute with the Colonel over the scoring of our game-going hand, as usual, insisting on something quite ridiculous, the old Colonel arguing with her patiently.

I glanced at Mrs. Preston to see what she might have made of her mother's exclamation in that strange, unaccustomed, incongruous voice. She was looking down at the table, on which her hands rested, a pensive and somewhat puzzled expression puckering her white forehead. So far as I could guess from her expression she, too, had been surprised at what she had heard. Apparently, I imagined, such a peculiar manifestation of annoyance on Mrs. Lorriquer's part was as new to her daughter as it was to me, still a comparative stranger in that family's acquaintance.

We resumed play, and, perhaps an hour or more later, it

happened that we won another rather notable hand, a little slam, carefully bid up, in no-trump, the Colonel playing the hand. About half-way through, when it was apparent that we were practically sure of our six over-tricks, I noticed, being, of course, unoccupied, that Mrs. Lorriquer, at my right, was muttering to herself, in a peculiarly ill-natured, querulous way she had under such circumstances, and, my mind stimulated by the remembrance of her use of the old-French oath, I listened very carefully and discovered that she was muttering in French. The most of it I lost, but the gist of it was, directed toward her husband, a running diatribe of the most personal and even venomous kind imaginable.

Spanish, as I was aware, Mrs. Lorriquer knew. She had lived in the Canal Zone for a number of years, and elsewhere where the Colonel's professional engagements as an engineer had taken them, but, to my knowledge, my hostess was unacquainted with colloquial French. The mutterings were distinctively colloquial. She had, among other things, called her husband in those mutterings 'the accursed child of a misbegotten frog', which is, however inelegant on the lips of a cultivated elderly gentlewoman, at least indicative of an intimate knowledge of the language of the Frankish peoples! No one else sensed it – the foreign tongue, I mean – doubtless because both other players were fully occupied, the Colonel in making our little slam, Mrs. Preston in doing what she could to prevent him, and besides, such mutterings were common on Mrs. Lorriquer's part; were usual, indeed, on rare occasions when a hand at Bridge was going against her and her partner. It was the use of the French that intrigued me.

A few days later, meeting her coming down the hill, a sunny smile on her kindly, good-humored face, I addressed her, whimsically, in French. Smilingly, she disclaimed all knowledge of what I was talking about.

'I supposed you were a French scholar, somehow,' said I.

'I really don't know a word of it,' replied Mrs. Lorriquer, 'unless, perhaps, what "R.S.V.P." means, and – oh, yes! –

"*honi soit qui mal y pense!*" That's on the great seal of England, isn't it, Mr. Canevin?"

It set me to wondering, as, I imagine, it would have set anyone under just those circumstances, and I had something to puzzle over. I could not, you see, readily reconcile Mrs. Lorriquer's direct statement that she knew no French, a statement made with the utmost frankness, and to no possible end if it were untrue, with the fact that she had objugated the Colonel under her breath and with a surprising degree of fluency, as 'the accursed child of a misbegotten frog!'

It seemed, this little puzzle, insoluble! There could, it seemed to me, be no possible question as to Mrs. Lorriquer's veracity. If she said she knew no French besides the trite phrases which everybody knows, then the conclusion was inevitable; she knew no French! But – beyond question she had spoken, under her breath to be sure, but in my plain hearing, in that language and in the most familiar and colloquial manner imaginable.

There was, logically, only one possible explanation. *Mrs. Lorriquer had been speaking French without her own knowledge!*

I had to let it go at that, absurd as such a conclusion seemed to me.

But, pondering over this apparent absurdity, another point, which might have been illuminating if foresight were as satisfactory as 'hindsight', emerged in my mind. I recalled that what I have called 'the other Mrs. Lorriquer' was an especially gentle, kindly person, greatly averse to the spoiling of anybody's good time! The normal Mrs. Lorriquer was, really, almost softly apologetic. The least little matter wherein anything which could possibly be attributed to her had gone wrong would always be the subject of an explanation, an apology. If the palm salad at one of her lunches or dinners did not seem to her to be quite perfect, there would be deprecatory remarks. If the limes from which a little juice was to be squeezed out upon the halved papayas



at her table happened not to be of the highest quality, the very greenest of green limes that is, Mrs. Lorriquer would lament the absence of absolutely perfect limes that morning when she had gone in person to procure them from the market-place. In other words, Mrs. Lorriquer carried almost to the last extreme her veritable passion for making her guests enjoy themselves, for seeing to it that everybody about her was happy and comfortable and provided with the best of everything.

But – it occurred to me that she never apologized afterward for any of her exhibitions at the card-table.

By an easy analogy, the conclusion – if correct – was inevitable. Mrs. Lorriquer, apparently, did not at all realize that she was a virtually different person when she played cards.

I pondered this, too. I came to the conclusion that, queer as it seemed, this was the correct explanation of her extraordinary conduct.

But – such an ‘explanation’ did not carry one very far, that was certain. For at once it occurred to me as it would have occurred to anybody else, her husband and daughter for choice, that there must be something behind this ‘explanation’. If Mrs. Lorriquer ‘was not herself’ at such times as she was engaged in playing cards, what made her that way? I recalled, whimsically, the remark of a small child of my acquaintance whose mother had been suffering from a devastating sick-headache. Lillian’s father had remarked:

‘Don’t trouble Mother, my dear. Mother’s not herself this afternoon, you see.’

‘Well,’ countered the puzzled Lillian, ‘who is she, then, Daddy?’

It was, indeed, in this present case, quite as though Mrs. Lorriquer were somebody else, somebody quite different from ‘herself’ whenever she sat at the card-table. That was as far as I could get with my attempt at any ‘explanation’.

The ‘somebody else’, as I thought the matter through, had

three known characteristics. First, an incredibly ugly disposition. Second, the ability to speak fluently a language unknown to Mrs. Lorriquer. Third, at least as manifested on one occasion, and evidenced by no more than the booming utterance of a single word, a deep, man-like, bass voice!

I stopped there in my process of reasoning. The whole thing was too absurdly bizarre for me to waste any more time over it along that line of reasoning. As to the obvious process of consulting Colonel Lorriquer or Mrs. Preston, their daughter, on such a subject, that was, sheerly, out of the question. Interesting as the problem was to me, one simply does not do such things.

Then, quite without any warning, there came another piece of evidence. I have mentioned our St. Thomas Cha-Chas, and also that Mrs. Lorriquer was accustomed to visit the market-place in person in the interest of her table. The St. Thomas Cha-Chas form a self-sustaining, self-contained community as distinct from the rest of the life which surrounds them in their own 'village' set on the seashore to the west of the main portion of the town as oil from water. They have been there from time immemorial, the local 'poor whites', hardy fishermen, faithful workers, the women great sellers of small hand-made articles (like the famous grass skirts) and garden produce. They are inbred, from a long living in a very small community of their own, look mostly all alike, and, coming as they did many years ago from the French island of St. Bartholomew, most of them when together speak a kind of modified Norman French, a peasant dialect of their own, although all of them know and use a simplified variety of our English tongue for general purposes.

Along the streets, as well as in the public market-place, the Cha-Cha women may be seen, always separate from the Negress market-vendors, offering their needlework, their woven grass baskets and similar articles, and the varying seasonal fruits and vegetables which they cultivate in their tiny garden patches or gather from the more inaccessible

distant groves and ravines of the island – mangoes, palmets, sugar-apples, the strange-appearing cashew fruits, every variety of local eatable including trays of the most villainous-appearing peppermint candy, which, upon trial, is a truly delicious confection.

Passing the market one morning I saw Mrs. Lorriquer standing in a group of five or six Cha-Cha market women who were outvying one another in presenting the respective claims of various trays loaded with the small, red, round tomatoes in which certain Cha-Cha families specialize. One of the women, in her eagerness to attract the attention of the customer, jostled another, who retaliated upon her in her own familiar tongue. An argument among the women broke out at this, several taking sides, and in an instant Mrs. Lorriquer was the center of a tornado of vocables in Cha-Cha French.

Fearing that this would be annoying to her, I hastened across the street to the market-place, toward the group, but my interference proved not to be required. I was, perhaps, half-way across when Mrs. Lorriquer took charge of the situation herself and with an effectiveness which no one could have anticipated. In that same booming voice with which she had ejaculated '*Sapristi!*' and in fluent, positively *Apache* French, Mrs. Lorriquer suddenly put a benumbing silence upon the bickering market women, who fell back from her in an astounded silence, so sudden a silence that clear and shrill came the comment from a near-by Black woman balancing a tray loaded to the brim with avocado pears upon her kerchiefed head, listening, pop-eyed, to the altercation:

'Ooh, me Gahd!' remarked the Negress to the air about her. 'Whoite missy tahlk to they in Cha-Cha!'

It was only a matter of seconds before I was at Mrs. Lorriquer's side.

'Can I be of any assistance?' I inquired.

Mrs. Lorriquer glared at me, looking precisely as she did when engaged in one of her querulous, acrimonious

arguments at the card-table. Then her countenance changed with a startling abruptness, and she looked quite as usual.

'I was just buying some of these lovely little tomatoes,' she said.

The Cha-Cha women, stultified, huddled into a cowering knot, looked at her speechlessly, their red faces several shades paler than their accustomed brick-color. The one whose tray Mrs. Lorriquer now approached shrank back from her. I do not wonder, after the blast which this gentle-looking little American lady had but now let loose upon them all. The market seemed unusually quiet. I glanced about. Every eye was upon us. Fortunately, the market-place was almost empty of customers.

'I'll take two dozen of these,' said Mrs. Lorriquer. 'How much are they, please?'

The woman counted out the tomatoes with hands trembling, placed them carefully in a paper bag, handed them to Mrs. Lorriquer, who paid her. We stepped down to the ground from the elevated concrete floor of the market.

'They seem so subdued – the poor souls!' remarked Mrs. Lorriquer, whose goggle-eyed chauffeur, a boy as black as ebony, glanced at her out of the corner of a fearfully rolled eye as he opened the door of her car.

'Come to luncheon,' said Mrs. Lorriquer, sweetly, beaming at me, 'and help us eat these nice little tomatoes. They are delicious with mayonnaise after they are blanched and chilled.' It seemed rather an abrupt contrast, these homely words of invitation, after what I had heard her call those Cha-Cha women.

'I'll come, with pleasure,' I replied.

'One o'clock, then,' said Mrs. Lorriquer, nodding and smiling, as her Black Hans turned the car skillfully and started along the Queen's Road toward the center of town.

We did not play cards that afternoon after luncheon, because Mrs. Lorriquer and Mrs. Preston were going to an afternoon party at the residence of the Government Secretary's wife, and Colonel Lorriquer and I sat, over our

coffee, on the west gallery of the house out of reach of the blazing early-afternoon sun, and chatted.

We got upon the subject of the possibility of another isthmian canal, the one tentatively proposed across Nicaragua.

'That, as you know, Mr. Canevin, was one of the old French Company's proposals, before they settled down to approximately the present site – the one we followed out – back in the late Seventies.'

'De Lesseps,' I murmured.

'Yes,' said the Colonel, musingly, 'yes – a very complex matter it was, that French proposal. They never could, it seems, have gone through with it, as a matter of fact – the opposition at home in France, the underestimate of the gross cost of excavation, the suspicion of "crookedness" which arose – they impeached the Count de Lesseps finally, you know, degraded him, ruined the poor fellow. And then, the sanitation question, you know. If it had not been for our Gorgas and his marvelous work in that direction—'

'Tell me,' I interrupted, 'just how long were the French at work on their canal, Colonel?'

'Approximately from 1881 to 1889,' replied the Colonel, 'although the actual work of excavation, the bulk of the work, was between '85 and '89. By the way, Canevin, we lived in a rather unusual house there. Have I ever mentioned that to you?'

'Never,' said I. 'What was the unusual element about your house?'

'Only that it was believed to be haunted,' replied the Colonel; 'although, I must admit, I never – we never – met with the least evidence outside the superstitions of the people. Our neighbors all believed it to be haunted in some way. We got it for a song for that reason and it was a very pleasant place. You see, it had been fitted up, quite regardless of the cost, as a kind of public casino or gambling-house, about 1885, and it had been a resort for de Lesseps' crowd for the four years before the French Company abandoned their work. It was a huge place, with delightful galleries.

The furniture, too, was excellent. We took it as it stood, you see, and, beyond a terrific job to get it clean and habitable, it was a very excellent investment. We were there for more than three years altogether.'

An idea, vague, tenuous, grotesque enough in all truth, and, indeed, somewhat less than half formed, had leaped into my mind at the combination of a 'haunted' residence and the French work on the ill-fated de Lesseps canal project.

'Indeed!' said I. 'It certainly sounds interesting. And do you know, Colonel, who ran the old casino; who, so to speak was the proprietor – unless it was a part of the Company's scheme for keeping their men interested?'

'It was privately managed,' returned the Colonel, 'and, queerly enough, as it happens, I can show you a photograph of the former proprietor. He was a picturesque villain!' The Colonel rose and started to go inside the house from where we sat on the cool gallery. He paused at the wide doorway, his hand on the jamb.

'It was the proprietor who was supposed to haunt the house,' said he, and went inside.

My mind reeled under the stress of these clues and the attempts, almost subconscious – for, indeed, I had thought much of the possible problem presented by Mrs. Lorriquer's case; a 'case' only in my own imagination, so far; and I had constructed tentatively three or four connected theories by the time the Colonel returned, a large, stiff, cabinet photograph in his hand. He laid this on the table between us and resumed his Chinese rattan lounge-chair. I picked up the photograph.

It was the portrait, stiffly posed, the hand, senatorially, in the fold of the long, black *surtout* coat, of the sort anciently known as a Prince Albert, of a rather small, emaciated man, whose face was disfigured by the pittings of smallpox; a man with a heavy head of jet-black hair, carefully combed after a fashion named, in our United States, for General McClellan of Civil War fame, the locks brushed forward over the tops of the ears, and the parting, although this

could not be seen in the front-face photograph, extending all the way down the back to the neck. A 'croupier's' mustache, curled and waxed ferociously, ornamented the sallow, sinister features of a face notable only for its one outstanding feature, a jaw as solid and square as that of Julius Caesar. Otherwise, as far as character was concerned, the photograph showed a very unattractive person, the type of man, quite obviously, who in these modern times would inevitably have followed one of our numerous and varied 'rackets' and probably, one imagined, with that jaw to help, successfully!

'And how, if one may ask,' said I, laying the photograph down on the table again, 'did you manage to get hold of this jewel, Colonel Lorriquer?'

The old gentleman laughed. 'We found it in the back end of a bureau drawer,' said he. 'I have mentioned that we took the house over just as it was. Did you notice the cameo?'

'Yes,' I replied, picking the photograph up once more to look at the huge breast-pin which seemed too large in the picture even for the enormous 'de Joinville' scarf which wholly obliterated the shirt-front underneath.

'It is certainly a whopper!' I commented. 'It reminds me of that delightful moving picture *Cameo Kirby*, if you happened to see it some time ago, on the silent screen.'

'Quite,' agreed Colonel Lorriquer. 'That, too, turned up, and in the same ancient bureau, when we were cleaning it. It was wedged in behind the edge of the bottom-board of the middle drawer. Of course you have observed that Mrs. Lorriquer wears it?'

I had, and said so. The enormous breast-pin was the same which I had many times observed upon Mrs. Lorriquer. It seemed a favorite ornament of hers. I picked up the photograph once more.

Down in the lower right-hand corner, in now faded gilt letters of ornamental scrollwork, appeared the name of the photographer. I read: 'La Palma, Quezaltenango.'

'"Quezaltenango,"' I read aloud. 'That is in Guatemala.'

Was the "Gentleman of the house", perhaps, a Central American? It would be hard to guess at his nationality from this. He looks a citizen of the world!"

"No," replied the Colonel, "he was a Frenchman, and he had been, as it appears, living by his wits all over Central America. When the work of construction actually began under the French Company – that was in 1885 – there was a rush of persons like him toward the pickings from so large a group of men who would be looking for amusement, and this fellow came early and stayed almost throughout the four years. His name was Simon Legrand, and, from what I gathered about him, he was a very ugly customer."

"You remarked that he was connected with the alleged haunting," I ventured. "Is there, perhaps, a story in that?"

"Hardly a story, Mr. Canevin. No. It was merely that toward the end of the French Company's activities, in 1889, Legrand, who had apparently antagonized all his patrons at his casino, got into a dispute with one of them, over a game of *piquet* or *écarté* – one of those French games of some kind, perhaps even *vingt-et-un*, for all I know, or even *chemin-de-fer* – and Simon went up to his bedroom, according to the story, to secure a pistol, being, for the time, rather carelessly in that company, unarmed. His "guest" followed him upstairs and shot him as he stood in front of the bureau where he kept his weapon, from the bedroom doorway, thus ending the career of what must have been a very precious rascal. Thereafter, the French Company's affairs and that of the casino being abruptly dissolved at about the same time, the rumor arose that Legrand was haunting his old quarters. Beyond the rumor, there never seemed anything to suggest its basis in anything but the imagination of the native Panamanians. As I have mentioned, we lived in the house three years, and it was precisely like any other house, only rather cheap, which satisfied us very well!"

That, as a few cautious questions, put diplomatically, clearly showed, was all the Colonel knew about Simon Legrand and his casino. I used up all the questions I had in



mind, one after another, and, it being past three in the afternoon, and over time for the day's *siesta*, I was about to take my leave in search of forty winks and the afternoon's shower-bath, when the Colonel volunteered a singular piece of information. He had been sitting rather quietly, as though brooding, and it was this, which I attributed to the after-luncheon drowsiness germane to these latitudes, which had prompted me to go. I was, indeed, rising from my chair at the moment, when the Colonel remarked:

'One element of the old casino seemed to remain – perhaps that was the haunting!' He stopped, and I hung, poised, as it were, to catch what he might be about to say. He paused, however, and I prompted him.

'And what might that be, sir?' I asked, very quietly. The Colonel seemed to come out of his reverie.

'Eh?' he said, 'eh, what?' He looked at me rather blankly.

'You were remarking that one element of the old casino's influence seemed to remain in your Canal Zone residence,' said I.

'Ah – yes. Why, it was strange, Mr. Canevin, distinctly strange. I have often thought about it; although, of course, it was the merest coincidence, unless – perhaps – well, the idea of *suggestion* might come into play. Er – ah – er, what I had in mind was that – er – Mrs. Lorriquer you know – she began to take up card-playing there. She had never, to my knowledge, played before; had never cared for cards in the least; been brought up, in early life, to regard them as not quite the thing for a lady and all that, you see. Her mother, by the way, was Sarah Langhorne – perhaps you had not heard this, Mr. Canevin – the very well-known medium of Bellows Falls, Vermont. The old lady had quite a reputation in her day. Strictly honest, of course! Old New England stock – of the very best, sir. Strait-laced! Lord – a card in the house would have been impossible! Cards, in that family! "The Devil's Bible," Mr. Canevin. That was the moral atmosphere which surrounded my wife's formative days. But – no sooner had we begun to live in that house down there, than

she developed "card sense", somehow, and she has found it – er – her chief interest, I should say, ever since.' The old Colonel heaved a kind of mild sigh, and that was as near as I had heard to any comment on his wife's outrageous conduct at cards, which must, of course, have been a major annoyance in the old gentleman's otherwise placid existence.

I went home with much material to ponder. I had enough to work out a more or less complete 'case' now, if, indeed, there was an occult background for Mrs. Lorriquer's diverse conduct, her apparently subconscious use of colloquial French, and – that amazing deep bass voice!

Yes, all the elements seemed to be present now. The haunted house, with that scar-faced croupier as the haunter; the sudden predilection for cards emanating there; the initial probability of Mrs. Lorriquer's susceptibility to discarnate influences, to a 'control', as the spiritualists name this phenomenon – the cameo – all the rest of it; it all pointed straight to one conclusion, which, to put it conservatively, might be described as the 'influence' of the late Simon Legrand's personality upon kindly Mrs. Lorriquer who had 'absorbed' it in three years' residence in a house thoroughly impregnated by his ugly and unpleasant personality.

I let it go at that, and – it must be understood – I was only half-way in earnest at the time, in even attempting to attribute to this 'case' anything like an occult background. One gets to look for such explanations when one lives in the West Indies where the very atmosphere is charged with Magic!

But – my inferences, and whereunto these led, were, at their most extreme, mild, compared with what was, within two days, to be revealed to us all. However, I have resolved to set this tale down in order, as it happened, and again I remind myself that I must not allow myself to run ahead of the normal sequence of events. The *dénouement*, however, did not take very long to occur.

It was, indeed, no more than two days later, at the unpropitious hour of two-fifteen in the morning – I looked at my

watch on my bureau as I was throwing on a few necessary clothes – that I was aroused by a confused kind of tumult outside, and, coming into complete wakefulness, observed an ominous glow through my windows and realized that a house, quite near by, was on fire.

I leaped at once out of bed, and took a better look, with my head out the window. Yes, it was a fire, and, from appearances, the makings of a fine – and very dangerous – blaze here in the heart of the residence district where the houses, on the sharp side-hill, are built very close together.

It was a matter of moments before I was dressed, after a fashion, and outside, and running down the path to my gateway and thence around the corner to the left. The fire itself, as I now saw at a glance, was in a wooden building now used as a garage, directly on the roadway before one of the Denmark Hill's ancient and stately mansions. Already a thin crowd, of Negroes, entirely, had gathered, and I saw that I was 'elected' to take charge in the absence of any other white man, when I heard, with relief, the engine approaching. Our Fire Department, while not hampered with obsolete apparatus, is somewhat primitive. The engine rounded the corner, and just behind it, a Government Ford, the 'transportation' apportioned to Lieutenant Farnum of Uncle Sam's efficient Marines. The Lieutenant, serving as the Governor's Legal Aide, had, among his fixed duties, the charge of the Fire Department. This highly efficient young gentleman, whom I knew very well, was at once in the very heart of the situation, had the crowd back away to a reasonable distance, the fire engine strategically placed, and a double stream of chemicals playing directly upon the blazing shack.

The fire, however, had had a long start, and the little building was in a full blaze. It seemed, just then, doubtful whether or not the two streams would prove adequate to put it out. The real danger, however, under the night trade wind, which was blowing lustily, was in the spread of the fire, through flying sparks, of which there were many, and I approached Lieutenant Farnum offering cooperation.

'I'd suggest waking up the people – in that house, and that, and that one,' directed Lieutenant Farnum, denoting which houses he had in mind.

'Right!' said I, 'I'm shoving right off!' And I started down the hill to the first of the houses. On the way I was fortunate enough to meet my house-boy, Stephen Penn, an intelligent young Negro, and him I dispatched to two of the houses which stood together, to awaken the inmates if, indeed, the noise of the conflagration had not already performed that office. Then I hastened at a run to the Criqué place, occupied by the Lorriquer family, the house farthest from the blaze, yet in the direct line of the sparks and blazing slivers which the trade wind carried in a thin aerial stream straight toward it.

Our servants in West Indian communities never remain for the night on the premises. The Lorriquers would be, like all other Caucasians, alone in their house. I had, as it happened, never been upstairs in the house; did not, therefore, have any idea of its layout, nor knew which of the bedrooms were occupied by the several members of the family.

Without stopping to knock at the front entrance door, I slipped the latch of a pair of jalousies leading into the 'hall' or drawing room, an easy matter to negotiate, stepped inside across the window-sill, and, switching on the electric light in the lower entranceway, ran up the broad stone staircase to the floor above. I hoped that chance would favor me in finding the Colonel's room first, but as there was no way of telling, I rapped on the first door I came to, and, turning the handle – this was an emergency – stepped inside, leaving the door open behind me to secure such light as came from the single bulb burning in the upper hallway.

I stepped inside.

Again, pausing for an instant to record my own sensations as an integral portion of this narrative, I hesitate, but this time only because of the choices which lie before me in telling, now long afterward, with the full knowledge of

what was involved in this strange case, precisely what I saw; precisely what seemed to blast my eyesight for its very incredibleness – its ‘impossibility’.

I had, it transpired, hit upon Mrs. Lorriquer’s bedroom, and there plain before me – it was a light, clear night, and all the eight windows stood open to the starlight and what was left of a waning moon – lay Mrs. Lorriquer on the stub-posted mahogany four-poster with its tester and valance. The mosquito-net was not let down, and Mrs. Lorriquer, like most people in our climate, was covered, as she lay in her bed, only with a sheet. I could, therefore, see her quite plainly, in an excellent light.

But – that was not all that I saw.

For, beside the bed, quite close in fact, stood – Simon Legrand – facing me, the clothes, the closely buttoned *surtout*, the spreading, flaring *de joinville* scarf, fastened with the amazing brooch, the pock-marked, ill-natured face, the thick, black hair, the typical *croupier* mustache, the truculent expression, Simon Legrand, to the last detail, precisely as he appeared in the cabinet photograph of La Palma of Quezaltenango – Simon Legrand to the life.

And, between him as he stood there, glaring truculently at me, intruding upon his abominable manifestation, and the body of Mrs. Lorriquer, as I glared back at this incredible configuration, there stretched, and wavered, and seemed to flow, *toward* him and *from* the body of Mrs. Lorriquer, a whitish, tenuous stream of some milky-looking material – like a waved sheet, like a great mass of opaque soap-bubbles, like those pouring grains of attenuated *plasma* described in *Dracula*, when in the dreadful castle in Transylvania, John Harker stood confronted with the materialization of that arch-fiend’s myrmidons.

All these comparisons rushed through my mind, and, finally, the well-remembered descriptions of what takes place in the ‘materialization’ of a ‘control’ at a mediumistic *séance* when material from the medium floats toward and *into* the growing incorporation of the manifestation, build-

ing up the nonfictitious body through which the control expresses itself.

All this, I say, rushed through my mind with the speed of thought, and recorded itself so that I can easily remember the sequence of these ideas. But, confronted with this utterly unexpected affair, what I did, in actuality, was to pause, transfixed with the strangeness, and to mutter, 'My God!'

Then, shaking internally, pulling myself together by a mighty effort while the shade or manifestation or whatever it might prove to be, of the French gambler glowered at me murderously, in silence, I made a great effort, one of those efforts which a man makes under the stress of utter necessity. I addressed the figure – in French!

'Good-morning, Monsieur Legrand,' said I, trying to keep the quaver out of my voice. 'Is it too early, think you, for a little game of *écarté*?'

Just how, or why, this sentence formed itself in my mind, or, indeed, managed to get itself uttered, is to this day, a puzzle to me. It seemed just then the one appropriate, the inevitable way, to deal with the situation. Then—

In the same booming bass which had voiced Mrs. Lorriquer's '*Sapristi*', a voice startlingly in contrast with his rather diminutive figure, Simon Legrand replied:

'*Oui, Monsieur*, at your service on all occasions, day or night – you to select the game!'

'*Eh bien, donc*—' I began when there came an interruption in the form of a determined masculine voice just behind me.

'Put your hands straight up and keep them there!'

I turned, and looked straight into the mouth of Colonel Lorriquer's service revolver; behind it the old Colonel, his face stern, his steady grip on the pistol professional, uncompromising.

At once he lowered the weapon.

'What – Mr. Canevin!' he cried. 'What—'

'Look!' I cried back at him, 'look, while it lasts, Colonel!' and, grasping the old man's arm, I directed his attention to the now rapidly fading form or simulacrum of Simon

Legrand. The Colonel stared fixedly at this amazing sight.

'My God!' He repeated my own exclamation. Then – 'It's Legrand, Simon Legrand, the gambler!'

I explained, hastily, disjointedly, about the fire. I wanted the Colonel to understand, first, what I was doing in his house at half-past two in the morning. That, at the moment, seemed pressingly important to me. I had hardly begun upon this fragmentary explanation when Mrs. Preston appeared at the doorway of her mother's room.

'Why, it's Mr. Canevin!' she exclaimed. Then, proceeding, 'There's a house on fire quite near by, Father – I thought I'd best awaken you and Mother.' Then, seeing that, apart from my mumbling of explanations about the fire, both her father and I were standing, our eyes riveted to a point near her mother's bed, she fell silent, and not unnaturally, looked in the same direction. We heard her, behind us, her voice now infiltrated with a sudden alarm:

'What is it? – *what is it?* Oh, Father, I thought I saw—'

The voice trailed out into a whisper. We turned, simultaneously, thus missing the very last thin waning appearance of Simon Legrand as the stream of tenuous, wavering substance poured back from him to the silent, immobile body of Mrs. Lorriquer motionless on its great bed, and the Colonel was just in time to support his daughter as she collapsed in a dead faint.

All this happened so rapidly that it is out of the question to set it down so as to give a mental picture of the swift sequence of events.

The Colonel, despite his character and firmness, was an old man, and not physically strong. I therefore lifted Mrs. Preston and carried her to a day-bed which stood along the wall of the room and there laid her down. The Colonel rubbed her hands. I fetched water from the mahogany wash-stand such as is part of the furnishing of all these old West Indian residence bedrooms, and sprinkled a little of the cool water on her face. Within a minute or two her eyelids fluttered, and she awakened. This secondary emergency had

naturally diverted our attention from what was toward at Mrs. Lorriquer's beside. But now, leaving Mrs. Preston who was nearly herself again, we hastened over to the bed.

Mrs. Lorriquer, apparently in a very deep sleep, and breathing heavily, lay there, inert. The Colonel shook her by the shoulder; shook her again. Her head moved to one side, her eyes opened, a baleful glare in her eyes.

'*Va t'en, sâle bête!*' said a deep man-like voice from between her clenched teeth. Then, a look of recognition replacing the glare, she sat up abruptly, and, in her natural voice, addressing the Colonel whom she had but now objugated as a 'foul beast', she asked anxiously:

'Is anything the matter, dearest? Why - Mr. Canevin - I hope nothing's wrong!'

I told her about the fire.

In the meantime Mrs. Preston, somewhat shaky, but brave though puzzled over the strange happenings which she had witnessed, came to her mother's bedside. The Colonel placed an arm about his daughter, steadying her.

'Then we'd better all get dressed,' said Mrs. Lorriquer, when I had finished my brief account of the fire, and the Colonel and I and Mrs. Preston walked out of the bedroom. Mrs. Preston slipped into her own room and closed the door behind her.

'Get yourself dressed, sir,' I suggested to the old Colonel, 'and I will wait for you on the front gallery below.' He nodded, retired to his room, and I slipped downstairs and out to the gallery, where I sank into a cane chair and lit a cigarette with shaking fingers.

The Colonel joined me before the cigarette was smoked through. He went straight to the point.

'For God's sake, what is it, Canevin?' he inquired, helplessly.

I had had time to think during the consumption of that cigarette on the gallery. I had expected some such direct inquiry as this, and had my answer ready.

'There is no danger - nothing whatever to worry yourself



about just now, at any rate,' said I, with a positive finality which I was far from feeling internally. I was still shaken by what I had seen in that airy bedroom. 'The ladies will be down shortly. We can not talk before them. Besides, the fire may, possibly, be dangerous. I will tell you everything I know tomorrow morning. Come to my house at nine, if you please, sir.'

The old Colonel showed his army training at this.

'Very well, Mr. Canevin,' said he, 'at nine tomorrow, at your house.'

Lieutenant Farnum and his efficient direction proved too much for the fire. Within a half-hour or so, as we sat on the gallery, the ladies wearing shawls because of the cool breeze, my house-boy, Stephen, came to report to me that the fire was totally extinguished. We had seen none of its original glare for the past quarter of an hour. I said good-night, and the Lorriquer family retired to make up its interrupted sleep, while I walked up the hill and around the corner to my own house and turned in. The only persons among us all who had not been disturbed that eventful night were Mrs. Preston's two small children. As it would be a simple matter to take them to safety in case the fire menaced the house, we had agreed to leave them as they were, and they had slept quietly throughout all our alarms and excursions!

The old Colonel looked his full seventy years the next morning when he arrived at my house and was shown out upon the gallery by Stephen, where I awaited him. His face was strained, lined, and ghastly.

'I did not sleep at all the rest of the night, Mr. Canevin,' he confessed, 'and four or five times I went to my wife's room and looked in, but every time she was sleeping naturally. What do you make of this dreadful happening, sir? I really do not know which way to turn, I admit to you, sir.' The poor old man was in a truly pathetic state. I did what I could to reassure him.

I set out before him the whole case, as I have already set it

out, as the details came before me, throughout the course of this narrative. I went into all the details, sparing nothing, even the delicate matter of Mrs. Lorriquer's conduct over the card-table. Summing up the matter I said:

'It seems plain, from all this testimony, that Simon Legrand's haunting of his old house which you occupied for three years was more of an actuality than your residence there indicated to you. His sudden death at the hands of one of his "guests" may very well have left his personality, perhaps fortified by some unfulfilled wish, about the premises which had been his for a number of years previously. There are many recorded cases of similar nature in the annals of scientific occult investigation. Such a "shade", animated by some compelling motive to persist in its earthly existence, would "pervade" such premises already *en rapport* with his ways and customs.

'Then, for the first time, the old house was refurbished and occupied when you moved into it. Mrs. Lorriquer may be, doubtless is, I should suppose from the evidence we already have, one of those persons who is open to what seems to have happened to her. You mentioned her mother, a well-known medium of years ago. Such qualifications may well be more or less hereditary you see.

'That Legrand laid hold upon the opportunity to manifest himself *through her*, we already know. Both of us have seen him "manifested", and in a manner typical of mediumistic productions, in material form, of their "controls". In this case, the degree of "control" must be very strong, and, besides that, it has, plainly, been growing. The use of French, unconsciously, the very tone of his deep bass voice, also unconscious on her part, and - I will go farther, Colonel; there is another, and a very salient clue for us to use. You spoke of the fact that previous to your occupancy of the Legrand house in the "zone" Mrs. Lorriquer never played cards. Obviously, if the rest of my inferences are correct, this desire to play cards came direct from Legrand, who was using her for his own self-expression, having, in some

way, got himself *en rapport* with her as her "control". I would go on, then, and hazard the guess that just as her use of French is plainly subconscious, as is the use of Legrand's voice, on occasion – you will remember, I spoke to him before you came into the room last night, *and he answered me in that same deep voice* – so her actual playing of cards is an act totally unconscious on her part, or nearly so. It is a wide sweep of the imagination, but, I think, it will be substantiated after we have released her from this obsession, occupation by another personality, or whatever it proves to be.'

The word 'release' seemed to electrify the old gentleman. He jumped out of his chair, came toward me, his lined face alight with hope.

'Is there any remedy, Mr. Canevin? Can it be possible? Tell me, for God's sake, you can not understand how I am suffering – my poor wife! You have had much experience with this sort of thing; I, none whatever. It has always seemed – well, to put it bluntly, a lot of "fake" to me.'

'Yes,' said I, slowly, 'there is a remedy, Colonel – two remedies, in fact. The phenomenon with which we are confronted seems a kind of combination of mediumistic projection of the "control", and plain, old-fashioned "possession". The Bible, as you will recall, is full of such cases – the Gadarene Demoniac, for example. So, indeed, is the ecclesiastical history through the Middle Ages. Indeed, as you may be aware, the "order" of exorcist still persists in at least one of the great historic churches. One remedy, then, is exorcism. It is unusual, these days, but I am myself familiar with two cases where it has been successfully performed, in Boston, Massachusetts, within the last decade. A salient point, if we should resort to that, however, is Mrs. Lorriquer's own religion. Exorcism can not, according to the rules, be accorded to everybody. The bare minimum is that the subject should be validly baptized. Otherwise exorcism is inoperative; it does not work as we understand its mystical or spiritual processes.'

'Mrs. Lorriquer's family were all Friends - Quakers,' said the Colonel. 'She is not, to my knowledge, baptized. Her kind of Quakers do not, I believe, practise baptism.'

'Well, then,' said I, 'there is another way, and that, with your permission, Colonel, I will outline to you.'

'I am prepared to do anything, anything whatever, Mr. Canevin, to cure this horrible thing for my poor wife. The matter I leave entirely in your hands, and I will cooperate in every way, precisely as you say.'

'Well said sir!' I exclaimed, and forthwith proceeded to outline my plan to the Colonel. . . .

Perhaps there are some who would accuse me of being superstitious. As to that I do not know, and, quite frankly, I care little. However, I record that that afternoon I called on the rector of my own church in St. Thomas, the English Church, as the native people still call it, although it is no longer, now that St. Thomas is American territory, under the control of the Archbishop of the British West Indies as it was before our purchase from Denmark in 1917. I found the rector at home and proffered my request. It was for a vial of holy water. The rector and I walked across the street to the church and there in the sacristy, without comment, the good gentleman, an other-worldly soul much beloved by his congregation, provided my need. I handed him a twenty-franc note, for his poor, and took my departure, the bottle in the pocket of my white drill coat.

That evening, by arrangement with the Colonel, we gathered for an evening of cards at the Lorriquers'. I have never seen Mrs. Lorriquer more typically the termagant. She performed all her bag of tricks, such as I have recorded, and, shortly after eleven, when we had finished, Mrs. Preston's face wore a dull flush of annoyance and, when she retired, which she did immediately after we had calculated the final score, she hardly bade the rest of us goodnight.

Toward the end of the play, once more I happened to hold a commanding hand, and played it out to a successful five no-trump, bid and made. All through the process of playing

that hand, adverse to Mrs. Lorriquer and her partner, I listened carefully to a monotonous, ill-natured kind of undertone chant with which she punctuated her obvious annoyance. What she was saying was:

*'Nom de nom, de nom, de nom, de nom—'* precisely as a testy, old-fashioned, grumbling Frenchman will repeat those nearly meaningless syllables.

Mrs. Lorriquer retired not long after her daughter's departure upstairs, leaving the Colonel and me over a pair of Havana cigars.

We waited, according to our prearranged plan, downstairs there, until one o'clock in the morning.

Then the Colonel, at my request, brought from the small room which he used as an office or den, the longer of a very beautiful pair of Samurai swords, a magnificent weapon, with a blade as keen and smooth as any razor. Upon this, with a clean handkerchief, I rubbed half the contents of my holy water, not only upon the shimmering, inlaid, beautiful blade, but over the hand-grip as well.

Shortly after one, we proceeded, very softly, upstairs, and straight to the door of Mrs. Lorriquer's room, where we took up our stand outside. We listened, and within there was no sound of any kind whatever.

From time to time the Colonel, stooping, would peer in through the large keyhole, designed for an enormous, old-fashioned, complicated key. After quite a long wait, at precisely twenty minutes before two a.m. the Colonel, straightening up again after such an inspection, nodded to me. His face, which had regained some of its wonted color during the day, was a ghastly white, quite suddenly, and his hands shook as he softly turned the handle of the door, opened it, and stood aside for me to enter, which I did, he following me, and closing the door behind him. Behind us, in the upper hallway, and just beside the door-jamb, we had left a large, strong wicker basket, the kind designed to hold a family washing.

Precisely as she had lain the night before, was Mrs.

Lorriquer, on the huge four-poster. And, beside her, the stream of *plasma* flowing from her to him, stood Simon Legrand, glowering at us evilly.

I advanced straight upon him, the beautiful knightly sword of Old Japan firmly held in my right hand, and as he shrank back, stretching the *plasma* stream to an extreme tenuity – like pulled dough it seemed – I abruptly cut through this softly-flowing material directly above the body of Mrs. Lorriquer with a transverse stroke. The sword met no apparent resistance as I did so, and then, without any delay, I turned directly upon Legrand, now muttering in a deep bass snarl, and with an accurately timed swing of the weapon, sheared off his head. At this stroke, the sword met resistance, comparable, perhaps, as nearly as I can express it, to the resistance which might be offered by the neck of a snowman built by children.

The head, bloodlessly, as I had anticipated, fell to the floor, landing with only a slight, *soft* sound, rolled a few feet, and came to a pause against the baseboard of the room. The decapitated body swayed and buckled toward my right, and before it gave way completely and fell prone upon the bedroom floor, I had managed two more strokes, the first through the middle of the body, and the second a little above the knees.

Then, as these large fragments lay upon the floor, I chopped them, lightly, into smaller sections.

As I made the first stroke, that just above Mrs. Lorriquer, severing the *plasma* stream, I heard from her a long, deep sound, like a sigh. Thereafter she lay quiet. There was no motion whatever from the sundered sections of 'Simon Legrand' as these lay, quite inert, upon the floor, and, as I have indicated, no flow of blood from them. I turned to the Colonel, who stood just at my shoulder witnessing this extraordinary spectacle.

'It worked out precisely as we anticipated,' I said. 'The horrible thing is over and done with, now. It is time for the next step.'

The old Colonel nodded, and went to the door, which he opened, and through which he peered before stepping out into the hallway. Plainly we had made no noise. Mrs. Preston and her babies were asleep. The Colonel brought the clothes-basket into the room, and rather gingerly at first, we picked up the sections of what had been 'Simon Legrand'. They were surprisingly light, and, to the touch, felt somewhat like soft and pliant dough. Into the basket they went, all of them, and, carrying it between us – it seemed to weigh altogether no more than perhaps twenty pounds at the outside – we stepped softly out of the room, closing the door behind us, down the stairs, and out, through the dining room and kitchen into the walled backyard.

Here, in the corner, stood the wire apparatus wherein papers and light trash were burned daily. Into this, already half filled with various papers, the Colonel poured several quarts of kerosene from a large five-gallon container fetched from the kitchen, and upon this kindling we placed carefully the strange fragments from our clothes-basket. Then I set a match to it, and within ten minutes there remained nothing except small particles of unidentifiable trash, of the simulacrum of Simon Legrand.

We returned, softly, after putting back the kerosene and the clothes-basket where they belonged, into the house, closing the kitchen door after us. Again we mounted the stairs, and went into Mrs. Lorriquer's room. We walked over to the bed and looked at her. She seemed, somehow, shrunken, thinner than usual, less bulky, but, although there were deep unaccustomed lines showing in her relaxed face, there was, too, upon that face, the very ghost of a kindly smile.

'It is just as you said it would be, Mr. Canevin,' whispered the Colonel as we tiptoed down the stone stairway. I nodded.

'We will need an oiled rag for the sword,' said I. 'I wet it very thoroughly, you know.'

'I will attend to that,' said the Colonel, as he gripped my hand in a grasp of surprising vigor.

'Good-night, sir,' said I, and he accompanied me to the door.

The Colonel came in to see me about ten the next morning. I had only just finished a late 'tea', as the early morning meal, after the Continental fashion, is still named in the Virgin Islands. The Colonel joined me at the table and took a late cup of coffee.

'I was sitting beside her when she awakened, a little before nine,' he said, 'and as she complained of an "all-gone" feeling. I persuaded her to remain in bed, "for a couple of days"'. She was sleeping just now, very quietly and naturally, when I ran over to report.'

I called the following morning to inquire for Mrs. Lorriquer. She was still in bed, and I left a polite message of good-will.

It was a full week before she felt well enough to get up, and it was two days after that that the Lorriquers invited me to dinner once more. The bulletins, surreptitiously reported to me by the Colonel, indicated that, as we had anticipated, she was slowly gaining strength. One of the Navy physicians, called in, had prescribed a mild tonic, which she had been taking.

The shrunken appearance persisted, I observed, but this, considering Mrs. Lorriquer's characteristic stoutness, was, actually, an improvement at least in her general appearance. The lines of her face appeared somewhat accentuated as compared to how she had looked before the last 'manifestation' of the 'control'. Mrs. Preston seemed worried about her mother, but said little. She was rather unusually silent during dinner, I noticed.

I had one final test which I was anxious to apply. I waited for a complete pause in our conversation toward the end of a delightful dinner, served in Mrs. Lorriquer's best manner.

'And shall we have some Contract after dinner this evening?' I inquired, addressing Mrs. Lorriquer.



She almost blushed, looked at me deprecatingly.

'But, Mr. Canevin, you know – I know nothing of cards,' she replied.

'Why, Mother!' exclaimed Mrs. Preston from across the table, and Mrs. Lorriquer looked at her in what seemed to be evident puzzlement. Mrs. Preston did not proceed, I suspect because her father touched her foot for silence under the table. Indeed, questioned, he admitted as much to me later that evening.

The old gentleman walked out with me, and half-way up the hall when I took my departure a little before eleven, after an evening of conversation punctuated by one statement of Mrs. Lorriquer's, made with a pleasant smile through a somewhat rueful face.

'Do you know, I've actually lost eighteen pounds, Mr. Canevin, and that being laid up in bed only eight or nine days. It seems incredible, does it not? The climate, perhaps—'

'Those scales *must* have been quite off,' vouchsafed Mrs. Preston.

Going up the hill with the Colonel, I remarked:

'You still have one job on your hands, Colonel.'

'Wh – what is that, Mr. Canevin?' inquired the old gentleman, apprehensively.

'Explaining the whole thing to your daughter,' said I.

'I daresay it can be managed,' returned Colonel Lorriquer. 'I'll have a hack at that later!'

## THE PROJECTION OF ARMAND DUBOIS

Some time before my marriage, when I was living in Marlborough House, the old mansion on the hill back of the town of Frederiksted, on the West Indian island of St. Croix – that is to say, before I became a landed-proprietor, as I did later, and was still making a veritable living by the production and sale of my tales – I had a next-door neighbor by the name of Mrs. Minerva Du Chaillu. I do not know whether the late Monsieur Du Chaillu, of whom this good lady was the relict, was related or not to the famous Paul of that name, that slaughterer of wild animals in the far corners of the earth, who was, and may still be, for all I know, the greatest figure of all the big game hunters, but her husband, Monsieur Placide Du Chaillu, had been for many years a clergyman of the English Church on that strange island of St. Martin, with its two flat towns, Phillipsbourg, capital of the Dutch Side, and Maragot, capital of the French Side.

The English Church was, and still is, existent only among the Dutch residents, Maragot being without an English Church. Therefore, Mrs. Du Chaillu's acquaintance, even after many years' residence on St. Martin, was almost entirely confined to the Dutch Side, where, curiously enough, English and French, rather than Dutch, are spoken, and which, although only eight miles from the French capital, has only slight communication therewith, because of the execrable quality of the connecting roads.

This old lady, well past seventy at the time, used to sit on her gallery late afternoons, when the fervor of the afternoon sun had somewhat abated, and rock herself steadily to and fro, and fan in the same indefatigable fashion as ancient Mistress Desmond, my landlady. Occasionally I would step across and exchange the time of day with her. I had known

her for several years before she got her courage up to the point of asking me if some day I would not allow her to see some things I had written.

Such a request is always a compliment, and this I told her, to relieve her obvious embarrassment. A day or so later I took over to Mrs. Du Chaillu a selection of three or four manuscript-carbons, and a couple of magazines containing my stories, and I could see her from time to time, afternoons, reading them. I could even guess which ones she had finished and which she was currently engaged in perusing, by the expression of her kindly face as she read.

Four or five days later she sent for me, and when I had gone across to her gallery, she thanked me, very formally as a finely-bred gentlewoman of several generations of West Indian background might be expected to do, handed back the stories, and, with much hesitation, and almost blushing, intimated that she could tell me a story herself, if I cared to use it!

'Of course,' added Mrs. Du Chaillu, 'you'd have to change it about and embellish it a great deal, Mr. Canevin.'

To this I said nothing, except to urge my old friend to proceed, and this she did forthwith, hesitating at first, then, becoming intrigued by the memories of the tale, with the flair of a quite unexpected narrative gift. During the first few minutes of the then halting recital, I interrupted occasionally, for the purpose of getting this or that point clear, but as the story progressed I quieted down, and before it was finished, I was sitting, listening as though to catch pearls, for here was my simon-pure West Indian 'Jumbee' story, a gem, a perfect example, and told – you may believe me or not, sir or madam – with every possible indication of authenticity. Unless there is something hitherto unsuspected (even by his best friends, those keenest of critics) with the understanding apparatus of Gerald Canevin, that story as Mrs. Du Chaillu told it to him, had happened, just as she said it had – to her.

I will add only that I have not, to my knowledge, changed a word of it. It is not only not embellished (or 'glorified', as

the Black People would say) but it is as nearly verbatim as I can manage it; and I believe it implicitly. It fits in with much that is known scientifically and verified by occult investigators and suchlike personages; it is typically, utterly, West Indian; and Mrs. Du Chaillu would as soon vary one jot or tittle from the strict truth in this or any other matter, as to attempt to stand on her head – and that, if you knew the dear old soul as I do, with her rheumatism, and her seventy-six years, and her impeccable, lifelong respectability, is as much as to say, impossible! For the convenience of any possible readers, I will tell her story for her, as nearly as possible in her own words, without quotation marks. . . .

I had been living in Phillipsbourg about two years; perhaps slightly longer (said Mrs. Du Chaillu) when one morning I had occasion to go into my husband's study, or office. Monsieur Du Chaillu – as he was generally called, of course, even though he was a clergyman of the Church of England – was, at the moment of my arrival, opening one of the two 'strong-boxes', or old-fashioned iron safes which he had standing side by side, and in which he kept his own money and the various parish funds of which he had charge.

The occasion of my going into his office, where he received the parishioners – you know in these West Indian parishes the Black People come in streams to consult 'Gahd's An'inted' about every conceivable matter from a family row to a stolen papaya – was on account of Julie. Julie was a very good and reliable servant, a young woman whose health was not very good, and whom I was keeping in one of the spare-rooms of our house. The rectory was a large residence, just next-door to the Government House, and poor Julie did better, we thought, inside than in one of the servants' rooms in the yard. Every day I would give Julie a little brandy. She had come for her brandy a few minutes before – it was about four-thirty in the afternoon – and I discovered that I would have to get a fresh bottle. Monsieur Du Chaillu was in the office and had the key of the big sideboard, and I had stepped in to get the key from him.

As I say, he was just opening one of the safes.

I said: 'Placide, what are you doing?' It was one of those meaningless questions. I could see clearly what he was doing. He was opening his safe, the one in which he kept his own private belongings, and I need not have asked so obvious a question.

My husband straightened up, however, not annoyed, you understand, but somewhat surprised, because I never entered his office as a rule, and remarked that he was getting some money out because he had a bill to pay that afternoon.

I asked him for the key to the sideboard and came and stood beside him as he reached down into the safe, which was the kind that opened with a great heavy lid on the top, like a cigar-box, or the cover for a cistern. He reached into his pocket with his left hand after the sideboard key, his right hand full of currency, and I looked into the safe. There on top lay a paper which I took to be a kind of promissory note. I read it, hastily. I was his wife. There was, I conceived, nothing secret about it.

'What is this, Placide?' I inquired.

My husband handed me the key to the sideboard.

'What is what, my dear Minerva?' he asked.

'This note, or whatever it is. It seems as though you had loaned three hundred dollars a good while ago, and never got it back.'

'That is correct,' said my husband. 'I have never felt that I wished to push the matter.' He picked up the note with his now free left hand, in a ruminating kind of manner, and I saw there was another note underneath. I picked that one up myself, my husband making no objection to my doing so, and glanced through it. That, too, was for three hundred dollars. Both were dated between seventeen and eighteen years previously, that is, in the year 1863, although they were of different months and days, and both were signed by men at that time living in Phillipsbourg, both prosperous men; one a white gentleman-planter in a small way; the other a colored man with a not very good reputation, but

one who had prospered and was accounted well-to-do.

Well, my husband stood there with one note in his hand, and I stood beside him, holding the other. I did a rough sum in mental arithmetic. The notes were 'demand' notes, at eight per cent, simple interest, representing, the two together, six hundred dollars. Eighteen years of interest, at eight per cent added on, it seemed to me, would cause these notes to amount to a great deal more than twice six hundred dollars, something around fifteen hundred, in fact. We were far from rich!

'But, my dear Placide, you should collect these,' I cried.

'I have never wished to press them,' replied my husband.

'Allow me, if you please, to take them,' I begged him.

'Do as you wish, Minerva my dear,' replied Monsieur Du Chaillu. 'But, I beg of you, no lawsuits!'

'Very well,' said I, and, carrying the two notes, walked out of the office to get Julie her brandy, out of the sideboard in the dining room.

I will admit to you, Mr. Canevin, that I was a little put out about my dear husband's carelessness in connection with those notes. At the same time, I could not avoid seeing very clearly that the notes, if still collectible, constituted a kind of windfall, as you say in the United States – it has to do with a variety of apple, does it not? – and I decided at once to set about a kind of investigation.

As soon as I had supplied Julie with a brandy which Dr. Duchesne had prescribed for her, I sent our house-boy after Monsieur Henkes, the notary of our town of Philipsbourg. Monsieur Henkes came within the hour – he stayed for tea, I remember – and he assured me that the notes, not yet being twenty years old, were still collectible. I placed them in his hands, and paid him, in advance, as the custom is on St. Martin, and, I daresay, in Curaçao, and the other Dutch possessions, his fee of fifty dollars for collection, instructing him that it was my husband's desire that there should be no actual lawsuit.

I will shorten my story as much as possible, by telling you

that the note which had been given by the gentleman-planter was paid, in six months, in two equal installments, and, with my husband's permission, I invested the money in some shares in one of our St. Martin Salt-Ponds – salt, you know, is the chief export from St. Martin.

The other note, the one which had been given by the colored man, Armand Dubois, did not go through so easily. Here in the West Indies, as you have surely observed, our 'colored' people, as distinct from the Black laboring class, are, commonly, estimable persons, who conduct themselves like us Caucasians. Dubois, however, was exceptional. He was only about one-quarter African – a quadroon, or thereabouts. But his leanings, as sometimes happens, were to the Black side of his heredity. Many persons in Phillipsbourg regarded him as a rascal, a person of no character at all. It seems he had heard, far back, in the days when my husband accommodated his friend, the planter, of that transaction, and had come almost at once to ask for a similar accommodation. That is why the two notes were so nearly of the same date, and perhaps it accounts for the fact that the two notes were both for three hundred dollars. Negroes, and those persons of mixed blood whose Black side predominates, are not very inventive. It would be quite characteristic for such a person to ask for the same sum as had been given to the former applicant.

Dubois made a great pother about paying. Of this I heard only rumors, of course. Monsieur Henkes did not trouble us in the matter, once the collection of the notes had been placed in his hands. It was, of course, a perfectly clear case. The note had been signed by Dubois, and it had more than two years to run before it would be outlawed – 'limited' is, I believe, the legal term. So Armand Dubois paid, as he was well able to do, but, as I say, with a very bad grace. Presumably he expected never to pay. The impudence of the man!

Shortly after I had placed the notes in the hands of Monsieur Henkes for collection, Julie came to me one after-

noon, quite gray in the face, as Negroes look when they are badly frightened. On St. Martin, perhaps you know, Mr. Canevin, servants have a custom similar to what I have read about in your South. That is to say, they invariably address their mistresses as 'Miss', with the Christian name. Why, I can not say. It is their custom. Julie came to me, as I say, very frightened, very much upset – quite terrified, in fact.

She said to me: 'Miss Minerva, on no account, ma'am, mus' yo' go to de door, if yo' please, ma'am. One Armand Dubois come, ma'am, an' is even now cloimbing de step of de gol'ry. Hoide yo'self, ma'am, I beg of yo', in de name of Gahd!'

Julie's distress and state of fright, which the girl could not conceal, impressed me more than her words. I said: 'Julie, go to the door yourself. Say, please, to this Dubois, that I have nothing to say to him. For anything whatever, he must address himself to Monsieur Henkes.'

'Yes, ma'am,' replied Julie, and almost pushed me into my bedroom and shut the door smartly behind me. I stood there, and listened, as Dubois, who had now mounted the gallery steps, knocked, very truculently, it seemed to me – the creature had no manners – on the door. I could hear him ask for me, and the murmur of Julie's voice as she delivered my message. Dubois was reluctant to leave, it seemed. He stood and parleyed, but forcing his way into a house like the rectory of the English Church was beyond him, and at last he went. Several other persons, black fellows, Julie told me, had accompanied him, for what purpose I can not imagine – it was most unusual that he should come to trouble me at all – and these all walked down the street, as I could see through the slanted jalousies of my bedroom window, Dubois gesticulating and orating to his followers.

Julie told me something else, too – something which quite made my blood run cold. Armand Dubois, said Julie, had, half-concealed in his hand, as he stood talking to her, a small vial. Julie was sure it contained vitriol. I was almost afraid to venture out to the street after that, and it was a long time before I recovered from the shock of it. Vitriol – think of it,



Mr. Canevin! – if indeed that were what he had in the vial; and what else could he have had?

Of course, I did not dare tell my husband. It would have distressed that dear, kind man most atrociously; and besides, the collection of the notes was, so to speak, a venture of mine, carried out, if not exactly against his will, at least without any enthusiasm on his part. So I kept quiet, and commanded Julie to say nothing whatever about it. I was sure, too, that even a person like Armand Dubois would, in a short time, get over the condition of rage in which Monsieur Henkes' visit to him must have left him to induce him to come to me at all. That, or something similar, actually proved to be the case. I had no further annoyance from Dubois, and in the course of a few weeks, probably pressed by Monsieur Henkes, he settled the note, paying seven hundred and twenty-four dollars, to be exact, with seventeen years and eight months' interest at eight per cent.

Of course, Mr. Canevin, all that portion of the story, except, perhaps, for Armand Dubois' unpleasant visit, is merely commonplace – the mere narrative of the collection of two demand-notes. Note, though, what followed!

It was, perhaps, two months after the day when I had gone into my husband's office and discovered those notes, and about a month after Dubois had paid what he owed Monsieur Du Chaillu, that I had gone to bed, a trifle earlier, perhaps, than usual – about half-past nine, to be exact. My aunt was staying with us in the rectory at the time, and she was far from well, and I had been reading to her and fanning her, and I was somewhat tired. I fell asleep, I suppose, immediately after retiring.

I awakened, and found myself sitting bolt-upright in my bed, and the clock in the town was striking twelve. I counted the strokes. As I finished, and the bell ceased its striking, I *felt*, rather than saw – for I was looking, in an abstracted kind of fashion, straight before me, my elbows on my knees, in a sitting posture, as I have said – something at the left, just outside the mosquito-netting. There was a dim

night-light, such as I always kept, in the far corner of the room, on the edge of my bureau, and by its light the objects in the room were faintly visible through the white net.

I turned, suddenly, under the impulse of that feeling, and there, Mr. Canevin, just beside the bed, and almost pressing against the net though not quite touching it, was a face. The face was that of a mulatto, and as I looked at it, frozen, speechless, I observed that it was Armand Dubois, and that he was glaring at me, with an expression of the most horrible malignancy that could be imagined. The lips were drawn back – like an animal's, Mr. Canevin – but the most curious, and perhaps the most terrifying, aspect of the situation, was the fact that the face was on a level with the bed, that is, the chin seemed to rest against the edge of the mattress, so that, as it occurred to me, the man must be sitting on the floor, his legs placed under the bed, so as to bring his horrible leering face in that position I have described.

I tried to scream, and my voice was utterly dried up. Then, moved by what impulse I can not describe, I plunged toward the face, tore loose the netting on that side, and looked directly at it.

Mr. Canevin, there was nothing there, but, as I moved abruptly toward it, I saw a vague, dim hand and arm swing up from below, and there was the strangest sensation! It was as though, over my face and shoulders and breast, hot and stinging drops had been cast. There was, for just a passing instant, the most dreadful burning, searing sensation, and then it was gone. I half sat, half lay, a handful of the netting in my hands, where I had torn it loose from where it had been tucked under the edge of the mattress, and there was nothing there – nothing whatever; I passed my hand over my face and neck, but there was nothing; no burns – nothing.

I do not know how I managed to do it, but I climbed out of bed, and looked underneath. Mr. Canevin, there was nothing, no man, nor anything, there. I walked over and turned up the night-light, and looked all about the room.

Nothing. The jalousies were all fastened, as usual. The door was locked. There were no other means of ingress or egress.

I went back to bed, convinced that I must have been dreaming or sleepwalking, or something of the sort, although I had never walked in my sleep, and almost never dreamed or remembered any dream. I could not sleep, and it occurred to me that I would do well to get up again, put on my bathrobe, and go out to the dining room for a drink of water. The water stood, in earthenware 'gugglets', just beside a doorway that led out to a small gallery at the side of the house – which stood on the corner – in the wind, so as to keep cool. You've seen that, a good many times, even here, of course. On St. Martin we had no ice-plant in those days, nor yet, so far as I know, and everybody kept the drinking-water in gugglets and set the gugglets where the wind would blow on them and cool the water.

I took a glass from the sideboard, filled it, and drank the water. Then I opened the door just beside me, and stood looking out for a few minutes. The town was absolutely silent at that hour. There was no moon, and the streets were lighted just as they were here in Frederiksted before we had electricity, with occasional hurricane lanterns at the corners. The one on our corner was burning steadily, and except for the howling of a dog somewhere in the town, everything was absolutely quiet and peaceful, Mr. Canevin.

I went back to bed, and fell asleep immediately. At any rate I have no recollection of lying there hoping for sleep.

Then, immediately afterward, it seemed, I was awakened a second time. This time I was not sitting up when I came to my waking senses, but it did not take me very long to sit up, I can assure you! For the most extraordinary thing was happening in my bedroom.

In the exact center of the room there stood a round, mahogany table. Around and around that table, a small goat was running, from right to left – that is, as I looked toward the table, the goat was running away from me around to the right, and coming back at the left. I could hear the clatter of

its little, hard hoofs on the pitch-pine floor, occasionally muffled in the queerest way – it sounds like nothing in the telling, of course – when the goat would step on the small rug on which the table stood. I could see its great, shining eyes, like green moons, every time it came around to the left.

I watched the thing, fascinated, and a slow horror began to grow upon me. I think I swooned, for the last thing I remember is my senses leaving me, but it must have been a very light fainting fit, Mr. Canevin, for I aroused myself, and the room was absolutely silent.

I was shaking all over as though I had been having an attack of the quartan ague, but I managed once more to slip under the netting, reach for my bathrobe, and go over and turn up the night-light. I observed that the door of my bedroom was standing open, and I went through it and back to the dining room, as I had done the first time. I felt very uncomfortable, shaken and nervous, as you may well imagine, but there in the next room I knew my husband was sleeping, and my poor old aunt on the other side of the hall, and I plucked up my courage. I knew that *he* would never be afraid, of anything, man or – anything else, Mr. Canevin!

I found that I must have been more upset than I had supposed, for the door out onto the small gallery from the dining room, where I had stood the other time, was unfastened, and half open, and I realized that I had left it in that condition, and I saw clearly that the young goat had simply wandered in. Goats and dogs and other animals roamed the streets there, even pigs, much as they do here, although all the islands have police regulations, and on St. Martin these were not enforced nearly as well as they are here on St. Croix. So I laughed at myself and my fears, although I think I had a right at least to be startled by that goat dancing about my bedroom table, and I fastened the door leading outside, and came back into my bedroom, and fastened that door too, and went back to bed once more. My

last waking sensation was of that dog, or some other, howling, somewhere in the town.

Well, that was destined to be a bad night, Mr. Canevin. I remember one of my husband's sermons, Mr. Canevin, on the text: 'A Good Day.' I do not remember what portion of the Scriptures it comes from, but I remember the text, and the sermon too. Afterward, it occurred to me that that night, that 'bad night', was the direct opposite; a mere whimsy of mine, but I always think of that night as 'the bad night', somehow.

For, Mr. Canevin, that was not all. No. I had noticed the time before I returned to bed on that occasion, and it was a little past one o'clock. I had slept for an hour, you see, after the first interruption.

When I was awakened again it was five o'clock in the morning. Remember, I had, deliberately, and in a state of full wakefulness, closed and fastened both the door from that side gallery into the dining room, and the bedroom door. The jalousies had not been touched at any time, and all of them were fastened.

I awoke with the most terrible impression of evil and horror: it was as though I stood alone in the midst of a hostile world, bent upon my destruction. It was the most dreadful feeling – a feeling of complete, of unrecoverable, depression.

And there, coming through my bedroom door – *through* the door, Mr. Canevin, which remained shut and locked – was Armand Dubois. He was a tall, slim man, and he stalked in, looking taller and slimmer than ever, because he was wearing one of those old-fashioned, long, white night-shirts, which fell to his ankles. He walked, as I say, through the closed door, and straight toward me, and, Mr. Canevin, the expression on his face was the expression of one of the demons from hell.

I half sat up, utterly horrified, incapable of speech, or even of thought beyond that numbing horror, and as I sat up, Armand Dubois seemed to pause. His advance slowed

abruptly, the expression of malignant hatred seemed to become intensified, and then he slowly turned to his left, and, keeping his face turned toward me, walked, very slowly now, straight through the side wall of my bedroom, and was gone, Mr. Canevin.

Then I screamed, again and again, and Placide, my husband, bursting the door, rushed in, and over his shoulder and through the broken door I could see Julie's terrified face, and my poor old aunt, a Shetland shawl huddled about her poor shoulders, coming gropingly out of her bedroom.

That was the last I remembered then. When I came to, it was broad daylight and past seven, and Dr. Duchesne was there, holding his fingers against my wrist, counting the pulse, I suppose, and there was a strong taste of brandy in my mouth.

They made me stay in bed all through the morning, and Dr. Duchesne would not allow me to talk. I had wanted to tell Placide and him all that had happened to me through the night, but at two o'clock in the afternoon, when I was allowed to get up at last, after having eaten some broth, I had had time to think, and I never mentioned what I had heard and seen that night.

No, Mr. Canevin, my dear husband never heard it, never knew what had cast me into that condition of 'nerves'. After he died I told Dr. Duchesne, and Dr. Duchesne made no particular comment. Like all doctors, and the clergy here in the West Indies, such matters were an old story to him!

It was fortunate for us that he happened to be passing the house and came in because he saw the lights, and could hear Julie weeping hysterically. He realized that something extraordinary had happened, or was happening, in the rectory, and that he might be needed.

He was on his way home from the residence of Armand Dubois, there in the town. Dubois had been attacked by some obscure tropical fever, just before midnight, and had died at five o'clock that morning, Mr. Canevin.

Dr. Duchesne told me, later, about Dubois' case, which

interested him very much from his professional viewpoint. Dr. Duchesne said that there were still strange fevers, not only in obscure places in the world, but right here in our civilized islands – think of it! He said that he could not tell so much as the name of the fever that had taken Dubois away. But he said the most puzzling of the symptoms was, that just at midnight Dubois had fallen into a state of coma – unconsciousness, you know – which had lasted only a minute or two; quite extraordinary, the doctor said, and that a little later, soon after one o'clock, he had shut his eyes, and quieted down – he had been raving, muttering and tossing about, as fever patients do, you know, and that there had come over his face the most wicked and dreadful grimace, and that he had drummed with his fingers against his own forehead, an irregular kind of drumming, a beat, the doctor said, not unlike the scampering footfalls of some small, four-footed animal. . . .

He died, as I told you, at five, quite suddenly, and Dr. Duchesne said that just as he was going there came over his face the most horrible, the most malignant expression that he had ever seen. He said it caused him to shudder, although he knew, of course, that it was only the muscles of the man's face contracting – *rigor mortis*, it is called, I think, Mr. Canevin.

Dr. Duchesne said, too, that there was a scientific word which described the situation – that is, the possible connection between Dubois as he lay dying with that queer fever, and the appearances to me. It was not 'telepathy', Mr. Canevin, of that I am certain. I wish I could remember the word, but I fear it has escaped my poor old memory!

'Was it "projection"?' I asked Mrs. Du Chaillu.

'I think that was it, Mr. Canevin,' said Mrs. Du Chaillu, and nodded her head at me, wisely.

## THE LIPS

The *Saul Taverner*, blackbirder, Luke Martin, master, up from Cartagena, came to her anchor in the harbor of St. Thomas, capital and chief town of the Danish West Indies. A Martinique barkentine berthed to leeward of her, sent a fully manned boat ashore after the harbor-master with a request for permission to change anchorage. Luke Martin's shore boat was only a few lengths behind the Frenchman's. Martin shouted after the officer whom it landed:

'Tell Lollik I'll change places with ye, an' welcome! What ye carryin' – brandy? I'll take six cases off'n ye.'

The barkentine's mate, a French-Island mulatto, nodded over his shoulder, and noted down the order in a leather pocketbook without slackening his pace. It was no joyful experience to lie in a semi-enclosed harbor directly to leeward of a slaver, and haste was indicated despite propitiatory orders for brandy. 'Very well, Captain,' said the mate, stiffly.

Martin landed as the Martinique mate rounded a corner to the left and disappeared from view in the direction of the harbor-master's. Martin scowled after him, muttering to himself.

'Airs! Talkin' English – language of the islands; thinkin' in French, you an' your airs! An' yer gran'father came outta a blackbird ship like's not! You an' your airs!'

Reaching the corner the mate had turned, Martin glanced after him momentarily, then turned to the right, mounting a slight rise. His business ashore took him to the fort. He intended to land his cargo, or a portion of it, that night. The colony was short of field hands. With the help of troops from Martinique, French troops, and Spaniards from its



nearer neighbor, Porto Rico, it had just put down a bloody uprising on its subsidiary island of St. Jan. Many of the slaves had been killed in the joint armed reprisal of the year 1833.

Luke Martin got his permission to land his cargo, therefore, without difficulty, and, being a Yankee bucko who let no grass grow under his feet, four bells in the afternoon watch saw the hatches off and the decks of the *Saul Taverner* swarming with manacled Blacks for the ceremony of washing-down.

Huddled together, blinking in the glaring sun of a July afternoon under parallel 18, north latitude, the mass of swart humanity were soaped, with handfuls of waste out of soft-soap buckets, scrubbed with brushes on the ends of short handles, and rinsed off with other buckets. Boatloads of Negroes surrounded the ship to see the washing-down, and these were kept at a distance by a swearing third mate told off for the purpose.

By seven bells the washing-down was completed, and before sundown a row of lighters, each guarded by a pair of Danish *gendarmes* with muskets and fixed bayonets, had ranged alongside for the taking off of the hundred and seventeen Blacks who were to be landed, most of whom would be sent to replenish the laborers on the plantations of St. Jan off the other side of the island of St. Thomas.

The disembarking process began just after dark, to the light of lanterns. Great care was exercised by all concerned lest any escape by plunging overboard. A tally-clerk from shore checked off the Blacks as they went over the side into the lighters, and these, as they became filled, were rowed to the landing-stage by other slaves, bending over six great sweeps in each of the stub-bowed, heavy wooden boats.

Among the huddled black bodies of the very last batch stood a woman, very tall and thin, with a new-born child, black as a coal, at her breasts. The woman stood a little aloof from the others, farther from the low rail of the *Saul Tav-*

erner's forward deck, crooning to her infant. Behind her approached Luke Martin, impatient of his unloading, and cut at her thin ankles with his rhinoceros leather whip. The woman did not wince. Instead, she turned her head and muttered a few syllables in a low tone, in the Eboe dialect. Martin shoved her into the mass of Blacks, cursing roundly as he cut a second time at the spindling shins.

The woman turned, very quietly and softly, as he was passing behind her, let her head fall softly on Martin's shoulder and whispered into his ear. The motion was so delicate as to simulate a caress, but Martin's curse died in his throat. He howled in pain as the woman raised her head, and his whip clattered on the deck boarding while the hand which had held it went to the shoulder. The woman, deftly holding her infant, had moved in among the huddling Blacks, a dozen or more of whom intervened between her and Martin, who hopped on one foot and cursed, a vicious, continuous stream of foul epithets; then, still cursing, made his way in haste to his cabin after an antiseptic, any idea of revenge swallowed up in his superstitious dread of what might happen to him if he did not, forthwith, dress the ghastly wound just under his left ear, where the black woman had caused her firm, white and shining teeth to meet the great muscle of his neck between shoulder and jaw.

When he emerged, ten minutes later, the wound now soaked in permanganate of potash, and roughly clotted with a clean cloth, the last lighter, under the impetus of its six sweeps, was half-way ashore, and the clerk of the government, from the fort, was awaiting him, with a bag of coin and a pair of *gendarmes* to guard it. He accompanied the government clerk below, where, the *gendarmes* at the cabin door, they figured and added and counted money for the next hour, a bottle of sound rum and a pair of glasses between them.

At two bells, under a shining moon, the *Saul Taverner*, taking advantage of the evening trade wind, was running for the harbor's mouth to stand away for Norfolk, Virginia,

whence, empty, she would run up the coast for her home port of Boston, Massachusetts.

It was midnight, what with the care of his ship coming out of even the plain and safe harbor of St. Thomas, before Martin the skipper, Culebra lighthouse off the port quarter, turned in. The wound in the top of his shoulder ached dully, and he sent for Matthew Pound, his first mate, to wash it out with more permanganate and dress it suitably. It was in an awkward place – curse the black slut! – for him to manage it for himself.

Pound went white and muttered under his breath at the ugly sight of it when Martin had removed his shirt, painfully, and eased off the cloth he had roughly laid over it, a cloth now stiff and clotted with the exuding blood drying on its inner surface, from the savage wound.

Thereafter, not liking the look on his mate's face, nor that whitening which the sight of the place in his neck had brought about, Martin dispensed with assistance, and dressed the wound himself.

He slept little that first night, but this was partly for thinking of the bargain he had driven with those short-handed Danes. They had been hard up for black meat to sweat on those hillside canefields over on St. Jan. He could have disposed easily of his entire cargo, but that, unfortunately, was out of the question. He had, what with an exceptionally slow and hot voyage across the Caribbean from Cartagena, barely enough of his said cargo left to fulfill his engagement to deliver a certain number of head in Norfolk. But he would have been glad enough to rid his hold of them all – curse them! – and set his course straight for Boston. He was expecting to be married the day after his arrival. He was eager to get home, and even now the *Saul Taverner* was carrying as much sail as she could stand up under, heeling now to the unfailing trade wind of this latitude.

The wound ached and pained, none the less, and he found it well-nigh impossible to settle himself in a comparatively

comfortable position on its account. He tossed and cursed far into the warm night. Toward morning he fell into a fitful doze.

The entire side of his neck and shoulder was one huge, searing ache when he awakened and pushed himself carefully upright with both hands. He could not bend his head nor, at first, move it from side to side. Dressing was a very painful process, but he managed it. He wanted to see what the bite looked like, but, as he never shaved during a voyage, there was no glass in his cabin. He bathed the sore place gingerly with bay rum, which hurt abominably and caused him to curse afresh. Dressed at last, he made his way up on deck, past the steward who was laying breakfast in his cabin. The steward, he thought, glanced at him curiously, but he could not be sure. No wonder. He had to walk sideways, with the pain of his neck, like a crab. He ordered more sail, stuns'ls, and, these set and sheeted home, he returned to the cabin for breakfast.

Midafternoon saw him, despite the vessel's more than satisfactory speed and the progress of a long leg toward Boston and Lydia Farnham, in such a devilish temper that everyone on board the ship kept as far as possible out of his way. He took no night watches, these being divided among the three mates, and after his solitary supper, punctuated with numerous curses at a more than usually awkward steward, he went into his stateroom, removed his shirt and singlet, and thoroughly rubbed the entire aching area with coconut oil. The pain now ran down his left arm to the elbow, and penetrated to all the cords of his neck, the muscles of which throbbed and burned atrociously.

The embrocation gave him a certain amount of relief. He remembered that the woman had muttered something. It was not Eboe, that jargon of *lingua franca* which served as a medium for the few remarks necessary between slavers and their human cattle. It was some outlandish coastal or tribal dialect. He had not caught it, sensed its meaning; though there had resided in those few syllables some germ of deadly

meaning. He remembered, vaguely, the cadence of the syllables, even though their meaning had been unknown to him. Wearing, aching, depressed, he turned in, and this time, almost immediately, he fell asleep.

And in his sleep, those syllables were repeated to him, into his left ear, endlessly, over and over again, and in his sleep he knew their meaning; and when he awoke, a swaying beam of pouring moonlight coming through his porthole, at four bells after midnight, the cold sweat had made his pillow clammy wet and stood dankly in the hollows of his eyes and soaked his tangled beard.

Burning from head to foot, he rose and lit the candle in his binnacle-light, and cursed himself again for a fool for not acquiring a mirror through the day. Young Sumner, the third mate, shaved. One or two of the fo'castle hands, too. There would be mirrors on board. He must obtain one tomorrow. What was it the woman had said – those syllables? He shuddered. He could not remember. Why should he remember? Gibberish – nigger-talk! It was nothing. Merely the act of a bestial Black. They were all alike. He should have taken the living hide off the wench. To bite him! Well, painful as it was, it should be well healed before he got back to Boston, and Lydia.

Laboriously, for he was very stiff and sore all along the left side, he climbed back into his bed, after blowing out the binnacle-light. That candlewick! It was very foul. He should have wet his thumb and finger and pinched it out. It was still smoking.

Then the syllables again, endlessly – over and over, and, now that he slept, and, somehow, knew that he slept and could not carry their meaning into the next waking state, *he knew what they meant*. Asleep, drowned in sleep, he tossed from side to side of his berth-bed, and the cold sweat ran in oily trickles down into his thick beard.

He awakened in the early light of morning in a state of horrified half-realization. He could not get up, it seemed. The ache now ran all through his body, which felt as though it

had been beaten until flayed. One of the brandy bottles from the Martinique barkentine, opened the night of departure from St. Thomas, was within reach. He got it, painfully, drew the cork with his teeth, holding the bottle in his right hand, and took a long, gasping drink of the neat spirit. He could feel it run through him like liquid, golden fire. Ah! that was better. He raised the bottle again, set it back where it had been, half empty. He made a great effort to roll out of the berth, failed, sank back well-nigh helpless, his head humming and singing like a hive of angry bees.

He lay there, semi-stupefied now, vague and dreadful things working within his head, his mind, his body; things brewing, seething, there inside him, as though something had entered into him and was growing there where the focus of pain throbbed, in the great muscles of his neck on the left side.

There, an hour later, a timid steward found him, after repeated and unanswered knocks on the stateroom door. The steward had at last ventured to open the door a mere peeping-slit, and then, softly closing it behind him, and white-faced, hastened to find Pound, the first mate.

Pound, after consultation with the second mate, Sumner, accompanied the steward to the stateroom door, opening off the captain's cabin. Even there, hard bucko that he was, he hesitated. No one aboard the *Saul Taverner* approached Captain Luke Martin with a sense of ease or anything like self-assurance. Pound repeated the steward's door-opening, peeped within, and thereafter entered the cabin, shutting the door.

Martin lay on his right side, the bed-clothes pushed down to near his waist. He slept in his singlet, and the left side of his neck was uppermost. Pound looked long at the wound, his face like chalk, his hands and lips trembling. Then he softly departed, shutting the door behind him a second time, and went thoughtfully up on deck again. He sought out young Sumner and the two spoke together for several minutes. Then Sumner went below to his cabin, and, emerg-

ing on the deck, looked furtively all around him. Observing the coast clear, he drew from beneath his drill jacket something twice the size of his hand, and, again glancing about to make sure he was not observed, dropped the article overboard. It flashed in the bright morning sun as it turned about in the air before the waters received it forever. It was his small cabin shaving-mirror.

At four bells in the forenoon, Pound again descended to the captain's cabin. This time Martin's voice, a weak voice, answered his discreet knock and at its invitation he entered the stateroom. Martin now lay on his back, his left side away from the door.

'How are you feeling, sir?' asked Pound.

'Better,' murmured Martin; 'this damned thing!' He indicated the left side of his neck with a motion of his right thumb. 'I got some sleep this morning. Just woke up, just now. It's better – the worst of it over, I reckon.'

A pause fell between the men. There seemed nothing more to say. Finally, after several twitches and fidgeting, Pound mentioned several details about the ship, the surest way to enlist Martin's interest at any time. Martin replied, and Pound took his departure.

Martin had spoken the truth when he alleged he was better. He had awakened with a sense that the worst was over. The wound ached abominably still, but the unpleasantness was distinctly lessened. He got up, rather languidly, slowly pulled on his deck clothes, called for coffee through the stateroom door.

Yet, when he emerged on his deck ten minutes later, his face was drawn and haggard, and there was a look in his eyes that kept the men silent. He looked over the ship professionally, the regular six bells morning inspection, but he was preoccupied and his usual intense interest in anything concerned with his ship was this day merely perfunctory. For, nearly constantly now that the savage pain was somewhat allayed and tending to grow less as the deck exercise cleared his mind and body of their poisons, those last syl-

lables, the muttered syllables in his left ear when the Black woman's head had lain for an instant on his shoulder, those syllables which were not in Eboe, kept repeating themselves to him. It was as though they were constantly reiterated in his physical ear rather than merely mentally; vague syllables, with one word, '*I'kundu*', standing out and pounding itself deeper and deeper into his consciousness.

'Hearin' things!' he muttered to himself as he descended to his cabin on the conclusion of the routine morning inspection a half-hour before noon. He did not go up on deck again for the noon observations. He remained, sitting very quietly there in his cabin, listening to what was being whispered over and over again in his left ear, the ear above the wound in his neck muscle.

It was highly unusual for this full-blooded bucko skipper to be quiet as his cabin steward roundly noted. The explanation was, however, very far from the steward's mind. He imagined that the wound had had a devastating effect upon the captain's nerves, and so far his intuition was a right one. But beyond that the steward's crude psychology did not penetrate. He would have been skeptical, amused, scornful, had anyone suggested to him the true reason for this unaccustomed silence and quietude on the part of his employer. Captain Luke Martin, for the first time in his heady and truculent career, was frightened.

He ate little for his midday dinner, and immediately afterward retired to his stateroom. He came out again, almost at once, however, and mounted the cabin ladder to the after deck. The *Saul Taverner*, carrying a heavy load of canvas, was spanking along at a good twelve knots. Martin looked aloft, like a sound sailorman, when he emerged on deck, but his preoccupied gaze came down and seemed to young Sumner, who touched his hat to him, to look inward. Martin was addressing him.

'I want the lend of your lookin'-glass,' said he in quiet tones.

Young Sumner started, felt the blood leave his face. This



was what Pound had warned him about; why he had thrown his glass over the side.

'Sorry, sir. It ain't along with me this v'yage, sir. I had it till we lay in St. Thomas. But now it's gone. I couldn't shave this mornin', sir.' The young mate made an evidential gesture, rubbing a sun-burned hand across his day's growth of beard on a weak but not unhandsome face.

He expected a bull-like roar of annoyance from the captain. Instead Martin merely nodded absently, and walked forward. Sumner watched him interestedly, until he reached the hatch leading to the crew's quarters below decks forward. Then:

'Cripes! He'll get one from Dave Sloan!' And young Sumner ran to find Pound and tell him that the captain would probably have a looking-glass within a minute. He was very curious to know the whys and wherefores of his senior mate's unusual request about his own looking-glass. He had obeyed, but he wanted to know; for here, indeed, was something very strange. Pound had merely told him the captain mustn't see that wound in his neck, which was high enough up so that without a glass he could not manage to look at it.

'What's it like, Mr. Pound?' he ventured to inquire.

'It's wot you'd name kinder livid-like,' returned Pound, slowly. 'It's a kind of purplish. Looks like - nigger lips!'

Back in his stateroom, Martin, after closing the door leading to the cabin, started to take off his shirt. He was half-way through this operation when he was summoned on deck. He hastily readjusted the shirt, almost shame-facedly, as though discovered in some shameful act, and mounted the ladder. Pound engaged him for twenty minutes, ship matters. He gave his decisions in the same half-hearted voice which was so new to those about him, and descended again.

The bit of mirror-glass which he had borrowed from Sloan in the fo'castle was gone from his washstand. He looked, painfully, all over the cabin for it, but it was not there. Ordinarily such a thing happening would have elicited a

very tempest of raging curses. Now he sat down, almost helplessly, and stared about the stateroom with unseeing eyes. But not with unheeding ears! The voice was speaking English now, no longer gibberish syllables grouped about the one clear word, '*I'kundu*'. The voice in his left ear was compelling, tense, repetitive. 'Over the side,' it was repeating to him, and again, and yet again, 'Over the side!'

He sat there a long time. Then, at last, perhaps an hour later, his face, which there was no one by to see, now pinched, drawn and gray in the bold challenging afternoon light in the white-painted stateroom, he rose, slowly, and with almost furtive motions began to pull off his shirt.

He got it off, laid it on his berth, drew off the light singlet which he wore under it, and slowly, tentatively, with his right hand, reached for the wound in his neck. As his hand approached it, he felt cold and weak. At last his hand, fingers groping, touched the sore and tender area of the wound, felt about, found the wound itself. . . .

It was Pound who found him, two hours later, huddled in a heap on the cramped floor of the stateroom, naked to the waist, unconscious.

It was Pound, hard old Pound, who laboriously propped the captain's great bulk – for he was a heavy-set man, standing six feet in height – into his chair, pulled the singlet and then the discarded shirt over his head and then poured brandy between his bluish lips. It required half an hour of the mate's rough restoratives, brandy, chafing of the hands, slapping the limp, huge wrists, before Captain Luke Martin's eyelids fluttered and the big man gradually came awake.

But Pound found the monosyllabic answers to his few, brief questions cryptic, inappropriate. It was as though Martin were answering someone else, some other voice.

'I will,' he said, wearily, and again, 'Yes, I will!'

It was then, looking him up and down in considerable puzzlement, that the mate saw the blood on the fingers of his right hand, picked up the great, heavy hand now lying limply on the arm of the stateroom chair.

The three middle fingers had been bleeding for some time. The blood from them was now dry and clotted. Pound, picking up the hand, examining it in the light of the lowering afternoon sun, saw that these fingers had been savagely cut, or, it looked like, *sawed*. It was as though the saw-teeth that had ground and torn them had grated along their bones. It was a ghastly wound.

Pound, trembling from head to foot, fumbling about the medicine case, mixed a bowl of permanganate solution, soaked the unresisting hand, bound it up. He spoke to Martin several times, but Martin's eyes were looking at something far away, his ears deaf to his mate's words. Now and again he nodded his head acquiescently, and once more, before old Pound left him, sitting there, limply, he muttered, 'Yes, yes! - I will, I will!'

Pound visited him again just before four bells in the early evening, supper time. He was still seated, looking, somehow, shrunken, apathetic.

'Supper, Captain?' inquired Pound tentatively. Martin did not raise his eyes. His lips moved, however, and Pound bent to catch what was being said.

'Yes, yes, yes,' said Martin, 'I will, I will - yes, I will!'

'It's laid in the cabin, sir,' ventured Pound, but he got no reply, and he slipped out, closing the door behind him.

'The captain's sick, Maguire,' said Pound to the little steward. 'You might as well take down the table and all that, and then go forward as soon as you're finished.'

'Ay, ay, sir,' replied the wondering steward, and proceeded to unset the cabin table according to these orders. Pound saw him through with these duties, followed him out on deck, saw that he went forward as directed. Then he returned, softly.

He paused outside the stateroom door, listened. There was someone talking in there, someone besides the skipper - a thick voice, like one of the Negroes, but very faint; thick, guttural, but light; a voice like a young boy's or - a woman's. Pound, stupefied, listened, his ear now directly

against the door. He could not catch, through that thickness, what was being said, but it was in form, by the repeated sounds, the captain's voice alternating with the light, guttural voice, clearly a conversation, like question and answer, question and answer. The ship had no boy. Of women there were a couple of dozen, but all of them were battened below, under hatches, Black women, down in the stinking manhold. Besides, the captain – there could not be a woman in there with him. No woman, no one at all, could have got in. The stateroom had been occupied only by the captain when he had left it fifteen minutes before. He had not been out of sight of the closed door all that time. Yet – he listened the more intently, his mind now wholly intrigued by this strange riddle.

He caught the cadence of Martin's words, now, the same cadence, he knew instinctively, as that of the broken sentence he had been repeating to him in his half-dazed state while he was binding up those gashed fingers. Those fingers! He shuddered. The *Saul Taverner* was a hell-ship. None was better aware of that than he, who had largely contributed, through many voyages in her, to that sinister reputation she bore, but – this! This was something like real hell.

'Yes, yes – I will, I will, I will—' that was the swing, the tonal cadence of what Martin was saying at more or less regular intervals in there; then the guttural, light voice – the two going on alternately, one after the other, no pauses in that outlandish conversation.

Abruptly the conversation ceased. It was as though a sound-proof door had been pulled down over it. Pound straightened himself up, waited a minute, then knocked on the door.

The door was abruptly thrown open from inside, and Captain Luke Martin, his eyes glassy, unseeing, stepped out, Pound giving way before him. The captain paused in the middle of his cabin, looking about him, his eyes still bearing that 'unseeing' look. Then he made his way straight toward the companion ladder. He was going up on deck, it seemed.

His clothes hung on him now, his shirt awry, his trousers crumpled and seamed where he had lain on the floor, sat, huddled up, in the small chair where Pound had placed him.

Pound followed him up the ladder.

Once on deck, he made his way straight to the port rail, and stood, looking, still as though 'unseeingly', out over the billowing waves. It was dark now; the sub-tropic dusk had lately fallen. The ship was quiet save for the noise of her sharp bows as they cut through the middle North Atlantic swell on her twelve-knot way to Virginia.

Suddenly old Pound sprang forward, grappled with Martin. The captain had started to climb the rail – suicide, that was it, then – those voices!

The thwarting of what seemed to be his purpose aroused Martin at last. Behind him lay a middle-aged man's lifetime of command, of following his own will in all things. He was not accustomed to being thwarted, to any resistance which, aboard his own ship, always went down, died still-born, before his bull-like bellow, his truculent fists.

He grappled in turn with his mate, and a long, desperate, and withal a silent struggle began there on the deck, lighted only by the light from the captain's cabin below, the light of the great binnacle lamp of whale oil, through the sky-lights set above-decks for daytime illumination below.

In the course of that silent, deadly struggle, Pound seeking to drag the captain back from the vicinity of the rail, the captain laying about him with vicious blows, the man became rapidly disheveled. Martin had been coatless, and a great swath of his white shirt came away in the clutching grip of Pound, baring his neck and left shoulder.

Pound slackened, let go, shrank and reeled away, covering his eyes lest they be blasted from their sockets by the horror which he had seen.

For there, where the shirt had been torn away and exposed the side of Martin's neck, stood a pair of blackish-purple, perfectly formed, blubbery lips; and as he gazed, appalled, horrified, the lips had opened in a wide yawn,

exposing great shining African teeth, from between which, before he could bury his face in his hands away from this horror, a long, pink tongue had protruded and licked the lips. . . .

And when old Pound, shaking now to his very marrow, cold with the horror of this dreadful portent there on the deck warm with the pulsing breath of the trade wind, had recovered himself sufficiently to look again toward the place where the master of the *Saul Taverner* had struggled with him there against the railing, that place stood empty and no trace of Luke Martin so much as ruffled the phosphorescent surface of the *Saul Taverner's* creaming wake.

## THE FIREPLACE

When the Planter's Hotel in Jackson, Mississippi, burned to the ground in the notable fire of 1922, the loss to that section of the South could not be measured in terms of that ancient hostelry's former grandeur. The days had indeed long passed when a Virginia ham was therein stewed in no medium meaner than good white wine, and as the rambling old building was heavily insured, the owners suffered no great material loss. The real loss was the community's, in the deaths by fire of two of its prominent citizens, Lieutenant-Governor Frank Stacpoole and Mayor Cassius L. Turner. These gentlemen, just turning elderly, had been having a reunion in the hotel with two of their old associates, Judge Varney J. Baker of Memphis, Tennessee, and the Honorable Valdemar Peale, a prominent Georgian, from Atlanta. Thus, two other Southern cities had a share in the mourning, for Judge Baker and Mr. Peale both likewise perished in the flames. The fire took place just before Christmas on the twenty-third of December, and among the many sympathetic and regretful comments which ensued upon this holocaust was the many-times repeated conjecture that these gentlemen had been keeping a kind of Christmas anniversary, a fact which added no little to the general feeling of regret and horror.

On the request of these prominent gentlemen, the hotel management had cleared out and furnished a second floor room with a great fireplace, a room for long used only for storage, but for which, the late mayor and lieutenant-governor had assured them, the four old cronies cherished a certain sentiment. The fire, which gained headway despite the truly desperate efforts of the occupants of the room, had its origin in the fireplace, and it was believed that the four,

who were literally burned to cinders, had been trapped. The fire had started, it appeared, about half an hour before midnight, when everybody else in the hotel had retired. No other occupant of the house suffered from its effects, beyond a few incidental injuries sustained in the hurried departure at dead of night from the blazing old firetrap.

Some ten years before this regrettable incident ended the long and honorable career of this one-time famous hostelry, a certain Mr. James Callender, breaking a wearisome journey north at Jackson, turned into the hospitable vestibule of the Planter's, with a sigh of relief. He had been shut up for nine hours in the mephitic atmosphere of a soft-coal train. He was tired, hungry, thirsty, and begrimed with soot.

Two grinning Negro porters deposited his ample luggage, toted from the railway station in the reasonable hope of a large emolument, promised by their patron's prosperous appearance and the imminence of the festival season of Christmas. They received their reward and left Mr. Callender in the act of signing the hotel register.

'Can you let me have number twenty-eight?' he inquired of the clerk. 'That, I believe, is the room with the large fireplace, is it not? My friend, Mr. Tom Culbertson of Sweetbriar, recommended it to me in case I should be stopping here.'

Number twenty-eight was fortunately vacant, and the new guest was shortly in occupation, a great fire, at his orders, roaring up the chimney, and he himself engaged in preparing for the luxury of a hot bath.

After a leisurely dinner of the sort for which the old hotel was famous, Mr. Callender first sauntered slowly through the lobby, enjoying the first fragrant whiffs of a good cigar. Then, seeing no familiar face which gave promise of a conversation, he ascended to his room, replenished the fire, and got himself ready for a solitary evening. Soon, in pajamas, bathrobe, and comfortable slippers, he settled himself in a comfortable chair at just the right distance from the fire and



began to read a new book which he had brought with him. His dinner had been a late one, and it was about half past nine when he really settled to his book. It was Arthur Machen's *House of Souls*, and Mr. Callender soon found himself absorbed in the eery ecstasy of reading for the first time a remarkable work which transcended all his previous secondhand experiences of the occult. It had, he found, anything but a soporific effect upon him. He was reading carefully, well into the book, with all his faculties alert, when he was interrupted by a knock on the door of his room.

Mr. Callender stopped reading, marked his place, and rose to open the door. He was wondering who should summon him at such an hour. He glanced at his watch on the bureau in passing and was surprised to note that it was eleven-twenty. He had been reading for nearly two hours, steadily. He opened the door, and was surprised to find no one in the corridor. He stepped through the doorway and glanced right and then left. There were, he observed, turns in both directions at short distances from his door, and Mr. Callender, whose mind was trained in the sifting of evidence, worked out an instantaneous explanation in his mind. The occupant of a double room (so he guessed) had returned late, and, mistaking the room, had knocked to apprise his fellow occupant of his return. Seeing at once that he had knocked prematurely, on the wrong door, the person had bolted around one of the corners to avoid an awkward explanation!

Mr. Callender, smiling at this whimsical idea of his, turned back into his room and shut the door behind him.

A gentleman was sitting in the place he had vacated. Mr. Callender stopped short and stared at this intruder. The man who had appropriated his comfortable chair was a few years older than himself, it appeared – say about thirty-five. He was tall, well-proportioned, and very well dressed, although there seemed to Mr. Callender's hasty scrutiny something indefinably odd about his clothes.

The two men looked at each other appraisingly for the space of a few seconds, in silence, and then abruptly Mr. Callender saw what was wrong with the other's appearance. He was dressed in the fashion of about fifteen years back, in the style of the late nineties. No one was wearing such a decisive-looking piccadilly collar, nor such a huge puff tie which concealed every vestige of the linen except the edges of the cuffs. These, on Mr. Callender's uninvited guest, were immaculate and round, and held in place by a pair of large, round, cut-cameo black buttons.

The strange gentleman, without rising, broke the silence in a well-modulated voice with a deprecatory wave of a very well kept hand.

'I owe you an apology, sir. I trust that you will accept what amends I can make. This room has for me a peculiar interest which you will understand if you will allow me to speak further, but for the present I confine myself to asking your pardon.'

This speech was delivered in so frank and pleasing a fashion that Mr. Callender could take no offense at the intrusion of the speaker.

'You are quite welcome, sir, but perhaps you will be good enough to continue, as you suggest. I confess to being mightily puzzled as to the precise manner in which you came to be here. The only way of approach is through the door, and I'll take my oath no one came through it. I heard a knock, went to the door, and there was no one there.'

'I imagine I would do well to begin at the beginning,' said the stranger, gravely. 'The facts are somewhat unusual, as you will see when I have related them; otherwise I should hardly be here, at this time of night, and trespassing upon your good nature. That this is no mere prank I beg that you will believe.'

'Proceed, sir, by all means,' returned Mr. Callender, his curiosity aroused and keen. He drew up another chair and seated himself on the side of the fireplace opposite the stranger, who at once began his explanation.

'My name is Charles Bellinger, a fact which I will ask you kindly to note and keep well in mind. I come from Biloxi, down on the Gulf, and, unlike yourself, I am a Southerner, a native of Mississippi. You see, sir, I know something about you, or at least who you are.'

Mr. Callender inclined his head, and the stranger waved his hand again, this time as if to express acknowledgment of an introduction.

'I may as well add to this, since it explains several matters, though in itself sounding somewhat odd, that actually I am dead.'

Mr. Bellinger, at this astounding statement, met Mr. Callender's facial expression of amazement with a smile clearly meant to be reassuring, and again, with a kind of unspoken eloquence, waved his expressive hand.

'Yes, sir, what I tell you is the plain truth. I passed out of this life in this room where we are sitting almost exactly sixteen years ago. My death occurred on the twenty-third of December. That will be precisely sixteen years ago the day after tomorrow. I came here tonight for the express purpose of telling you the facts, if you will bear with me and suspend your judgment as to my sanity. It was I who knocked at your door, and I passed through it, and, so to speak, through you, my dear sir!

'On the late afternoon of the day I have mentioned I arrived in this hotel in company with Mr. Frank Stacpoole, an acquaintance, who still lives here in Jackson. I met him as I got off the train, and invited him to come here with me for dinner. Being a bachelor, he made no difficulty, and just after dinner we met in the lobby another man named Turner – Cassius L. Turner, also a Jacksonian – who proposed a game of cards and offered to secure two more gentlemen to complete the party. I invited him to bring them here to my room, and Stacpoole and I came up in advance to get things ready for an evening of poker.

'Shortly afterwards Mr. Turner and the two other gentlemen arrived. One of them was named Baker, the other was

Mr. Valdemar Peale, of Atlanta, Georgia. You recognize his name, I perceive, as I had expected you would. Mr. Peale is now a very prominent man. He has gone far since that time. If you happened to be better acquainted here you would know that Stacpoole and Turner are also men of very considerable prominence. Baker, who lives in Memphis, Tennessee, is likewise a well-known man in his community and state.

'Peale, it appeared, was Stacpoole's brother-in-law, a fact which I had not previously known, and all four were well acquainted with each other. I was introduced to the two newcomers and we commenced to play poker.

'Somewhat to my embarrassment, since I was both the host and the "stranger" of the party, I won steadily from the very beginning. Mr. Peale was the heaviest loser, and although as the evening wore on he sat with compressed lips and made no comment, it was plain that he was taking his considerable losses rather hardly.

'Not long after eleven o'clock a most unfortunate incident took place. I had in no way suspected that I was not among gentlemen. I had begun, you see, by knowing only Stacpoole, and even with him my acquaintance was only casual.

'At the time I mention there began a round of jack-pots, and the second of these I opened with a pair of kings and a pair of fours. Hoping to better my hand I discarded the fours, with the odd card, and drew to the pair of kings, hoping for a third. I was fortunate. I obtained not only the third king but with it a pair of eights. Thus, equipped with a full house, I considered my hand likely to be the best, and when, within two rounds of betting, the rest had laid down their hands, the pot lay between Peale and me. Peale, I noticed, had also thrown down three cards, and every chance indicated that I had him beaten. I forced him to call me after a long series of raises back and forth; and when he laid down his hand he was holding four fours!

'You see? He had picked up my discard.

'Wishing to give Peale the benefit of any possible doubt, I

declared the matter at once, for one does not lightly accuse a gentleman of cheating at cards, especially here in the South. It was possible, though far from likely, that there had been a mistake. The dealer might for once have laid down his draw on the table, although he had consistently handed out the cards as we dealt in turn all the evening. To imply further that I regarded the matter as nothing worse than a mistake, I offered at once to allow the considerable pot, which I had really won, to lie over to the next hand.

'I had risen slightly out of my chair as I spoke, and before anyone could add a word, Peale leaned over the table and stabbed me with a bowie knife which I had not even seen him draw, so rapid was his action. He struck upwards, slantingly, and the blade, entering my body just below the ribs, cut my right lung nearly in two. I sank down limp across the table, and within a few seconds had coughed myself almost noiselessly to death.

The actual moment of dissolution was painful to a degree. It was as if the permanent part of me, "myself" – my soul, if you will – snapped abruptly away from that distorted thing which sprawled prone across the disordered table and which no longer moved.

'Dispassionately, then, the something which continued to be myself (though now, of course, dissociated from what had been my vehicle of expression, my body) looked on and apprehended all that followed.

'For a few moments there was utter silence. Then Turner, in a hoarse, constrained voice, whispered to Peale: "You've done for yourself now, you unmentionable fool!"

'Peale sat in silence, the knife, which he had automatically withdrawn from the wound, still grasped in his hand, and what had been my life's blood slowly dripping from it and gradually congealing as it fell upon a disarranged pile of cards.

'Then, quite without warning, Baker took charge of the situation. He had kept very quiet and played a very conservative game throughout the evening.

“This affair calls for careful handling,” he drawled, “and if you will take my advice I think it can be made into a simple case of disappearance. Bellinger comes from Biloxi. He is not well known here.” Then, rising and gathering the attention of the others, he continued: “I am going down to the hotel kitchen for a short time. While I am gone, keep the door shut, keep quiet, and clear up the room, leaving *this* (he indicated my body) where it lies. You, Stacpoole, arrange the furniture in the room as nearly as you can remember how it looked when you first came in. You, Turner, make up a big fire. You needn’t begin that just yet,” he threw at Peale, who had begun nervously to cleanse the blade of his knife on a piece of newspaper; and with this cryptic remark he disappeared through the door and was gone.

The others, who all appeared somewhat dazed, set about their appointed tasks silently. Peale, who seemed unable to leave the vicinity of the table, at which he kept throwing glances, straightened up the chairs, replaced them where they had been, and then gathered up the cards and other debris from the table, and threw these into the now blazing fire which Turner was rapidly feeding with fresh wood.

Within a few minutes Baker returned as unobtrusively as he had left, and after carefully fastening the door and approaching the table, gathered the three others about him and produced from under his coat an awkward and hastily-wrapped package of newspapers. Unfastening this he produced three heavy kitchen knives.

‘I saw that Turner went white as Baker’s idea dawned upon his consciousness. I now understood what Baker had meant when he told Peale to defer the cleansing of his bowie knife! It was, as plans go, a very practical scheme which he evolved. The body – the *corpus delicti*, as I believe you gentlemen of the law call it – was an extremely awkward fact. It was a fact which had to be accounted for, unless – well, Baker had clearly perceived that *there must be no corpus delicti*!

‘He held a hurried, low-voiced conversation with the

others, from the immediate effect of which all, even Peale, at first drew back. I need not detail it to you. You will have already apprehended what Baker had in mind. There was the roaring fire in the fireplace. That was his means of making certain that there would remain no *corpus delicti* in that room when the others left. Without such evidence, that is, the actual body of the murdered man, there could be, as you are of course well aware, no prosecution, because there would be no proof that the murder had ever been committed. I should simply have "disappeared". He had seen all that, and the opportunity which the fireplace afforded for carrying out his plan, all at once. But the fireplace, while large, was not large enough to accommodate the body of a man intact. Hence his hurried and stealthy visit to the hotel kitchen.

The men looked up from their conference. Peale was trembling palpably. The sweat streamed from Turner's face. Stacpoole seemed unaffected, but I did not fail to observe that the hand which he reached out for one of the great meat knives shook violently, and that he was first to turn his head aside when Baker, himself pale and with set face, gingerly picked up from the table one of the stiffening hands. . . .

'Within an hour and a quarter (for the fireplace drew as well then as it does tonight) there was not a vestige left of the *corpus delicti*, except the teeth.

'Baker appeared to think of everything. When the fire had pretty well burned itself out, and consumed what had been placed within it piecemeal, he remade it, and within its heart placed such charred remnants of the bones as had not been completely incinerated the first time. Eventually all the incriminating evidence had been consumed. It was as if I had never existed!

'My clothes, of course, had been burned. When the four, now haggard with their ordeal, had completed the burning process, another clearing-up and final rearrangement of the room was undertaken. Various newspapers which they had been carrying in their coat pockets were used to

cleanse the table. The knives, including Peale's, were washed and scrubbed, the water poured out and the wash-basin thoroughly scoured. No blood had got upon the carpet.

'My not inconsiderable winnings, as well as the coin and currency which had been in my possession, were then cold-bloodedly divided among these four rascals, for such I had for some time now recognized them as being. There arose then the problem of the disposal of my other belongings. There was my watch, pocket-knife, and several old seals which had belonged to my grandfather and which I had been accustomed to wear on the end of the chain in the pocket opposite that in which I carried my watch. There were my studs, scarf-pin, cuff-buttons, two rings, and lastly, my teeth. These had been laid aside at the time when Baker had carefully raked the charred but indestructible teeth out of the embers of the first fire.'

At this point in his narrative, Mr. Bellinger paused and passed one of his eloquent hands through the hair on top of his head in a reflective gesture. Mr. Callender observed what he had not before clearly noted, that his guest possessed a pair of extraordinarily long, thin hands, very muscular, the hands of an artist and also of a man of determination and action. He particularly observed that the index fingers were almost if not quite as long as the middle fingers. The listener, who had been unable to make up his mind upon the question of the sanity of him who had presented this extraordinary narrative in so calm and convincing a fashion, viewed these hands indicative of so strong a character with the greatest interest. Mr. Bellinger resumed his narrative.

'There was some discussion about the disposal of all these things. The consensus was that they must be concealed, since they could not easily be destroyed. If I had been one of those men I should have insisted upon throwing them into the river at the earliest opportunity. They could have been carried out of the room by any one of the group with the greatest ease and with no chance of detection, since all together they took up very little room, but this simple plan



seemed not to occur to them. Perhaps they had exhausted their ingenuity in the horrible task just finished and were over-anxious to depart. They decided only upon the necessity of disposal of these trinkets, and the actual disposition was haphazard. This was by a method which I need not describe because I think it desirable to show them to you.'

Mr. Bellinger rose and led the way to a corner of the room, closely followed by the amazed Callender. Bellinger pointed to the precise corner.

'Although I am for the present materialized,' he remarked, 'you will probably understand that this whole proceeding is in the nature of a severe psychic strain upon me and my resources. It is quite out of the question for me to do certain things. Managing to knock at the door took it out of me, rather, but I wished to give you as much warning of my presence as I could. Will you kindly oblige me by lifting the carpet at this point?'

Mr. Callender worked his fingers nervously under the corner of the carpet and pulled. The tacks yielded after several hard pulls, and the corner of the carpet came up, revealing a large piece of heavy tin which had been tacked down over an ancient rat-hole.

'Pull up the tin, too, if you please,' requested Mr. Bellinger. The tin presented a more difficult task than had the carpet, but Mr. Callender, now thoroughly intrigued, made short work of it, though at the expense of two broken blades of his pocket-knife. At Mr. Bellinger's further direction, inserting his hand, he found and drew out a packet of cloth, which proved on examination to have been fabricated out of a trousers pocket lining. The cloth was rotted and brittle, and Mr. Callender carried it carefully over to the table and laid it down, and, emptying it out between them, checked off the various articles which Mr. Bellinger had named. The round cuff-buttons came last, and as he held these in his hand, he looked at Mr. Bellinger's wrists. Mr. Bellinger smiled and pulled down his cuffs, holding out his hands in the process, and Mr. Callender again noted carefully their

peculiarities, the long, muscular fingers being especially conspicuous, thus seen under the direct light of the electric lamp. The cuff-buttons, he noted, were absolutely identical.

'Perhaps you will oblige me by putting the whole collection in your pocket,' suggested Mr. Bellinger. Then, smiling, as Mr. Callender, not unnaturally, hesitated: 'Take them, my dear man, take them freely. They're really mine to give, you know!'

Mr. Callender stepped over to the wardrobe where his clothes hung, and placed the packet in his coat pocket. When he returned to the vicinity of the fireplace, his guest had already resumed his seat.

'I trust,' he said, 'that despite the very singular – I may say, *bizarre* – character of my narrative and especially the statement with which I thought best to begin it, you will have given me your credence. It is uncommon to be confronted with the recital of such an experience as I have related to you, and it is not everybody who is – may I say privileged? – to carry on an extended conversation with a man who has been dead sixteen years!'

'My object may possibly have suggested itself to you. These men have escaped all consequences of their act. They are, as I think you will not deny, four thorough rascals. They are at large and even in positions of responsibility, trust and prominence in their several communities. You are a lawyer, a man held in high esteem for your professional skill and personal integrity. I ask you, then, will you undertake to bring these men to justice? You should be able to reproduce the salient points of my story. You have even proofs in the shape of the articles now in your coat pocket. There is the fact of my disappearance. That made a furor at the time, and has never been explained or cleared up. You have the evidence of the hotel register for my being here on that date and it would not be hard to prove that these men were in my company. But above all else, I would pin my faith for a conviction upon the mere recounting in the presence of these four, duly subponaed, of my story as I have

told it to you. That would fasten their guilt upon them to the satisfaction of any judge and jury. They would be crying aloud for mercy and groveling in abject superstitious fear long before you had finished the account of precisely what they had done. Or, three of them could be confronted with an alleged confession made by the other. Will you undertake to right this festering wrong, Mr. Callender, and give me peace? Your professional obligation to promote justice and set wrong right should conspire with your character to cause you to agree.'

'I will do so, with all my heart,' replied Mr. Callender, holding out his hand.

But before the other could take it, there came another knocking on the door of the hotel room. Slightly startled, Mr. Callender went to the door and threw it open. One of the hotel servants reminded him that he had asked to be called, and that it was the hour specified. Mr. Callender thanked and feed the man, and turning back into the room found himself alone.

He went to the fireplace and sat down. He looked fixedly at the smoldering fire in the grate. He went over to the wardrobe and felt in his coat pocket in search of negative evidence that he had been dreaming, but his hand encountered the bag which had been the lining of a trousers pocket. He drew it out and spread a second time that morning on the table the various articles which it contained.

After an early breakfast Mr. Callender asked for permission to examine the register for the year 1896. He found that Charles Bellinger of Biloxi had registered on the afternoon of the twenty-third of December and had been assigned room twenty-eight. He had no time for further inquiries, and, thanking the obliging clerk, he hastened to the railway station and resumed his journey north.

During the journey his mind refused to occupy itself with anything except his strange experience. He reached his destination in a state of profound preoccupation.

As soon as his professional engagements allowed him the

leisure to do so, he began his inquiries by having looked up the owners of those names which were deeply imprinted in his memory. He was obliged to stop there because an unprecedented quantity of new legal business claimed his more immediate attention. He was aware that this particular period in his professional career was one vital to his future, and he slaved painstakingly at the affairs of his clients. His diligence was rewarded by a series of conspicuous legal successes, and his reputation became greatly enhanced. This heavy preoccupation could not fail to dull somewhat the sharp impression which the adventure in the hotel bedroom had made upon his mind, and the contents of the trousers pocket remained locked in his safe-deposit box undisturbed while he settled the affairs of the Rockland Oil Corporation and fought through the Appellate Division the conspicuous case of *Burnet vs. De Castro, et al.*

It was in the pursuit of a vital piece of evidence in this last-named case that his duties called him South again. Having obtained the evidence, he started home, and again found it expedient to break the long journey northward, at Jackson. It was not, though, until he was actually signing the register that he noted that it was the twenty-third of December, the actual date with which Mr. Bellinger's singular narrative had been concerned.

He did not ask for any particular room this time. He felt a chill of vague apprehension, as if there awaited him an accounting for some laxity, a feeling which recalled the occasional lapses of his remote childhood. He smiled, but this whimsical idea was quickly replaced by a somber apprehension which he could not shake off, and which emanated from the realization that the clerk by some strange fatality had again assigned him room twenty-eight – the room with the fireplace. He thought of asking for another room, but could not think of any reasonable excuse. He sighed and felt a positive sinking at the heart when he saw the figures written down at the edge of the page; but he said nothing. If he shrank from this room's occupancy, this room with its

frightful secret shared by him alone of this world's company with the four guilty men who were still at large because of his failure to keep his promise, he was human enough and modern enough in his ideas to shrink still more from the imputation of oddity which his refusal of the room on no sensible grounds would inevitably suggest.

He went up to his room, and, as it was a cold night outside, ordered the fire to be made up. . . .

When the hotel servant rapped on his door in the morning there was no answer, and after several attempts to arouse the occupant the man reported his failure at the office. Later another attempt was made, and, this proving equally ineffectual, the door was forced with the assistance of a locksmith.

Mr. Callender's body was found lying with the head in the grate. He had been, it appeared, strangled, for the marks of a pair of hands were deeply imprinted on his throat. The fingers had sunk deeply into the bluish, discolored flesh, and the coroner's jury noted the unusual circumstance when they sent out a description of the murderer confined to this peculiarity, that these marks indicated that the murderer (who was never discovered) possessed very long thin fingers, the index fingers being almost or quite as long as the middle fingers.

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