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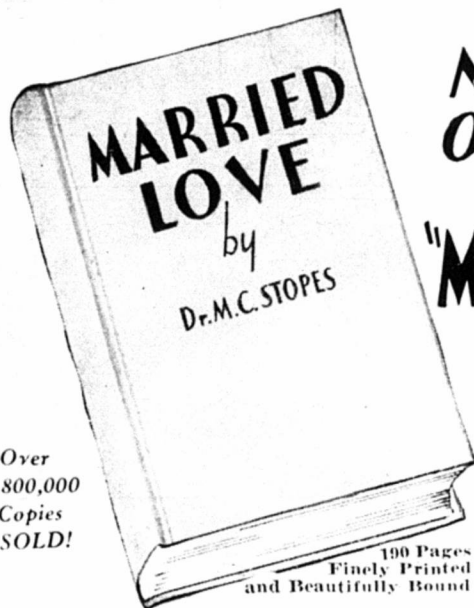
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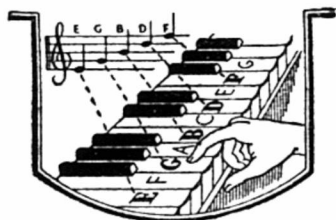
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THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. II, No. 2

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

June, 1932

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Fate Entrusts With the Emerald of
the Pharoahs and the Mystic
Secrets of the East*

By HENRY LEYFORD

Author of "Men of Assam," "Golden Hands of Zhanapl," etc.

CHAPTER I

Shadows of Death

PEYTON caught the fellow's wrist just in time. The knife, point upwards in a thin, dirty hand, was flashing sidewise in a direct line to the ribs of the heavily cloaked figure that had caught Peyton's attention because of its air of

somber mystery. He bent back the murder-intent arm, giving it a sharp twist.

The knife fell to the ground and the would-be assassin writhed in Peyton's grasp.

He was a strange, weird figure, lean and wiry, with wrinkled skin the color of old parchment. He was virtually naked under a loose, flap-

in the WIND



ping garment that resembled a monk's robe save that it opened down the front, held by a soiled green sash. His head was bare and his jet-black hair clipped tight.

THE captive glared up into Peyton's face, his deep dark eyes malevolent. He muttered a curse in some unintelligible tongue and then suddenly thrust his knee hard into the pit of his captor's stomach. The blow caught Peyton unawares and caused him to double up and loosen his hold.

In a flash the little fellow was lost in the crowd.

Peyton stared about him, his muscles twitching to be at the fugitive's neck, but there was no sign of him. Only the changing kaleidoscope of the East; Lascars from the China ports, Buddhist monks from

Burma and Siam, sleek Levantines come from Aden for a fresh cargo of contraband women, and fat Malay merchants who waddle into Victoria Square every afternoon at four o'clock to look at the Eurasian girls who have paraded into the Square from the near-by Street of Temporary Loves.

Every day at four o'clock the human scene in the Square is the same, but everything in Singapore was all very new to Peyton, who had landed that morning from the Pacific Mail's *Mongolia*, eighteen days from San Francisco.

It was a new and multi-colored world, pungent with the strange odors of the Orient, mysterious, like the cloaked figure that had passed him at the mouth of Prince Edward Street and given him a look out of eyes as black as grotto pools.

It was only a brief, passing look that meant nothing at all save that he, a staring American, was obviously a stranger in Victoria Square, but something in the eyes and air of the figure touched his curiosity.

He made up his mind it was a woman, but the face to which the eyes belonged was completely veiled and the cloak, of a dark unfamiliar cloth, swept to the ground. He had followed her without much thought of what he was doing.

She walked quickly and he thought that two tall, slender forms in long brown coats were her bodyguard, for they were always close to her. He wondered, now that the dirty little fellow with the rat-like face and the knife had disappeared, where these two shrouded figures had been.

HE saw them a little way ahead and now, at least, they were close behind the one they guarded, but neither they nor the other appeared to be aware that he had saved Victoria Square from a bold four o'clock murder.

Even while he looked after them they were gone.

Dissolved into the dense crowd that was so intent upon its own affairs that no one had seen the little drama of the knife that had been stopped and dropped.

With a wry curve at his lips Peyton stooped and picked up the weapon which still lay at his feet. It was a curious blade, with no guard separating the hilt and the steel. It was curved, so that once imbedded it would not be easy to withdraw it.

Peyton slipped the thing under his arm beneath his coat, since it wasn't an object that could be put into a pocket without a sheath, and turned out of the Square meditating upon the circumstances of having arrived in Singapore only that morning and already saved the life of a stranger

who apparently was utterly unaware that her life had been in danger.

ONE direction out of the Square being like another, he chose a narrow street which he discovered presently led to the waterfront. It was an unsavory street that threaded the Chinese quarter and when Peyton turned into it three furtive figures in long dirty robes that were open down the front and held with green sashes slipped close behind him, hilts of their knives dropping from their sleeves to their palms.

Once Peyton thought he caught a glimpse of the woman in the long cloak. She crossed the narrow street a hundred yards along. He struck out after her and the three shadows behind him followed with quickened pace.

But if he had been right, he had lost the mysterious figure again. He found himself suddenly in the heart of the "Sampaeng," the quarter given over to the "doll houses" and opium resorts of the Chinese.

Here the street was packed with an eddying mass of slant-eyed faces, here and there among them the flower-like faces of the "dolls," the Chinese girls who are smuggled in from Canton in wicker baskets, that their masters may sell their smiles and favors to those who come into the Sampaeng to buy.

Peyton slowed his pace. There was no need to hurry anywhere—particularly since he was now convinced that he had been mistaken in thinking he had glimpsed the stranger whose life he had saved. Tomorrow he would be going northward, as far northward as the jungle on the farm rim of Assam, but today he had only to enjoy the newness of Singapore.

From a curtained window under a red-globed light a pale yellow face peeped out at him. He caught a

glimpse of black hair, with a white rose that was bedded against its silken sheen.

He remembered what had been told him of the "doll" who nests a white rose in her hair. High caste, and therefore desirable above all others as a "pearl of Heaven."

IN sheer good humor the young American lifted his hand in friendly gesture to the fragile little prisoner who had chosen him from the passing crowd for her hopeful smile, and then he would have passed on but something in her gaze startled him. It was as if her smile had suddenly frozen on her painted lips and into her eyes had come panic and horror.

She was staring past him—not at him, now, but over his shoulder. He swung about in intuitive alarm. The descending point of a knife ripped his coat at the shoulder!

And it seemed, in that one horrible instant, as if his escape was to be short-lived. Two other assassins—yellow, he could see, and cloaked as had been the first one, were bearing down upon him.

The stream of humanity which packed the street flowed past within finger touch, but in the Sampaeng one has business of his own to attend. If he hasn't it is the rule that he leaves others strictly to attend to theirs.

Peyton heard the glass-muffled shriek of the little "doll" whose face was now pressed against her window pane. He heard, too, another sound, a hearty shout that boomed cheerfully above the droning murmur of the street.

While he was throwing up his arms in what would have been a futile attempt to stave off the three assassins at once, the shout was followed by the appearance of a rescuer.

Taken by surprise the three thugs hesitated, and lost their advantage. The newcomer, who was big and husky, threw himself upon the nearest. Peyton lurched at the others.

In an instant the three bent and dodged in under the flapping sleeves of the many hued robes of the Chinese pedestrians. Peyton held out his hand to the newcomer.

"I certainly owe you a lot," he said. "That was handy work."

"It's twisted ye are," the other declared lustily. "'Tis me that's thankful. It's only now and ag'in you get a chance to take a good rap at one of them little yellow rascals."

THE other's grin was so infectuous that Peyton could not help smiling back to him. He was broad of shoulder and heavy of chest, and Peyton could easily determine that he would belong to the waterfront, though not as one of that quarter's denizens. A mate, perhaps, on one of the China Sea boats.

"Lucky for me, just the same," Peyton insisted, "that you happened to see them. I didn't, until it was too late."

The big fellow shook his head.

"Again you're wrong. I didn't just happen to see 'em. I was watchin' 'em, and prayin' that they'd be going for someone.

"I saw their knives and I was ready to bounce."

Peyton proposed a bottle of wine and confessed that he didn't know where to go for it. The hotel bar was across the city from the district he had wandered into.

"There's places," said his companion, "I could recommend and there's places I couldn't. You look as if you had a pocketbook and that rules out the Sampaeng. There's a feelin', you might say, against letting

pocketbooks be where they belong in this district. We'll go where I know the decks, as you might say, an' can keep a watch out fore an' aft for your three little friends."

Peyton remembered the "doll" in the window, and that it had been the terror in her eyes that had saved him from that first knife, despite the boasted watchfulness of the big fellow who had rushed in. The big fellow would have been a second too late for that thrust.

The girl was still at her window, her painted lips smiling again, the rose gleaming alabaster white against her jet-black hair. She motioned him to come into her little hall but he indicated her window. She raised it and spoke in twittering pigeon.

"Chia-win liking white man."

"Chia-win?" Peyton said. "That's a pretty name. And you're pretty, too."

The little face broke into bright eagerness but Peyton shook his head.

"Just want to thank you, little Chia-win! And give you something—for a bracelet, perhaps."

HER sloe-eyes danced while he fumbled a gold coin out of the pocketbook the big fellow had reminded him of, and which was indeed full enough of bills and coins to attract treachery in any Sampaeng resort.

He laid the coin in the girl's tiny palm, and turned from the window. A diminutive hand touched his shoulder. The painted smile was gone and in the sloe-eyes was intent appeal.

"White man being look aloud all time," she said in a small, quick whisper. "Chia-win flaid. Dyak knife no finding here—" and she indicated by putting a hand over her heart—"one time, maybe finding othe' time. Dyak knife no stopping.

Chia-win ask joss go side of white man all the time."

THEN she closed the window, and her little face disappeared behind her fluffy curtain.

The big fellow's eyes twinkled.

"Made a hit there, my friend, Chia-win, eh? Them of us as ties up hereabouts now and again, hear a lot about Chia-win. Mandarin's slave girl from Saigon. Killed the fat duffer when he twisted her hair plaits once too often, so his wives sold her in Singapore. They say her feet are cut on the bottom so she can't run away—with stones sewed under the skin."

"You heard what she said—something about 'Dyaks?'"

"I did hear. An' you might say it didn't make good hearin', my friend. If them birds was Dyaks from the Tibetan borders, which is where they come from, you're not walking so easy—whoever or whatever you are."

"It's just like the doll said. If a Dyak doesn't get his knife home one time, he hangs around and gets it home another time. They're a persistent lot of murderin' scoundrels. Maybe over the wine you'll be tellin' me what the likes of you has been doing to the Dyaks or to them as hires 'em."

"Over our wine I'll tell you that I haven't been in Singapore twelve hours and that I was never here before, and that I don't know a soul and haven't spoken to a soul except the American consul and the attaches at the hotel."

The big fellow shook his head. "I'll be dropping back, maybe, to have a jabber with Chia-win. These sing-song girls know more than the gods intended anybody to know at one time—about deviltry that's goin' on. Maybe she knows the why of what almost happened in front of her bird-cage window."

CHAPTER II

The Dancing Girl

EH! What's that?" Out of the shadows of an abandoned temple a vague shape had emerged. A shape that blended into the unlit night. A finger, light as the touch of a lotus leaf, laid an instant on Peyton's arm and then was warm against his wrist. His hand closed automatically on some small, hard and round object that had been slipped into his palm. A throaty voice murmured softly.

The shadow was gone.

"Eh! What's that?"

In his bewilderment Peyton repeated his exclamation. The big fellow of the afternoon's affair, who still clung to him, though one bottle of wine had become two, with a bit of dinner between—the wine, certainly, having begun to prove its potency to the cheerful rescuer—the big fellow lurched forward but the unknown was gone.

Peyton, who experienced a vague premonition of alarm, drew out his pocket-lighter and held its flare close to the object the Unknown had slipped into his hand. The other, who had confided that his name was Shane O'Neil and that, as Peyton had suspected, he was a China Sea mate out of a berth, looked over his shoulder and grunted:

"Bit o' glass. Green, like an Arak bottle."

Peyton, his nerves unstrung, stared at the bit of round, uneven green, until his lighter flare went out. Then he realized that O'Neil was gazing at him, trying to study his face through the night's curtain.

"Faith, my friend! Are you seein' things in the bauble?"

Peyton shook his head to drive out visions that had begun to float across his brain; intangible, indeterminate visions, that made a chaos of in-

describable forms that seemed to be neither animal nor human. His head cleared, he steadied his companion, who was beginning to weave on his feet.

"A souvenir, undoubtedly," he said. "I made no mistake about that figure that came out of the shadows. It was the woman of this afternoon. I'd give a lot if I knew what word she was trying to give me—and where she went to."

O'NEIL began to turn glum.

"There's feelin's inside me," he grunted, "that are not right. First its Dyak knives and then its shadows that come out of temple walls and leave their mark. Where she could come from so unseen-like, the little yellow rats could come. It's guarding you, I am, and its taking you in out of the street I'm doing next."

Peyton was too thoughtful to object when the other took his arm and led him into the middle of Saigon Street, into which they had strolled when Peyton began to realize that his companion would be the better for as much fresh air as he could possibly get.

Saigon Street begins brightly, but soon becomes an unlit path through the old temple district that flanks the waterfront. Here the denizens of the night are furtive and sinister and already Peyton had begun to look for an exit from the neighborhood when he felt that feathery touch upon his wrist.

Ahead of them a green light shone, pale and sickly in a whorl of mist. O'Neil, who seemed to have his bearings, made a sound of satisfaction.

"'Tis Antoine's, the Frenchman's! Were ye not just speakin' to me, my friend, of the welcome you'd give for a drop of rare brandy?"

"I wasn't," Peyton laughed, "and it

would do you no harm to get the thought out of your head."

O'NEIL was heavily saddened. "A shame it will be to be going into the Frenchman's and be uppish, like you might say, about his brandy. 'Tis no-license brandy, and its a duty, I claim, for every good citizen to encourage the use of no-license brandy, when you think of the criminal tax the government's always collectin' for the good things o' life."

The green light came closer. Beneath it amber light escaped through the clinks of a door, and the sounds, too, of weird string instruments and the rhythmic beat of taut drums.

Peyton drew back, determined to get his companion to his lodgings as soon as possible. He had stood dinner and the wine and the after dinner walk, which, he felt, was sufficient acknowledgment for one day of the debt he undoubtedly owed the big fellow.

But O'Neil pushed in the heavy wooden door and Peyton found himself in an evil smelling corridor that rambled away to some far interior of what once had been a Buddhist temple, but long since converted to the more worldly designs of Antoine, the Frenchman.

"It's forbidding," O'Neil offered, with quick return of his cheerfulness once he was out of the dark street, "but it's enticing. Known up and down the archipelago for its brandy, its women and Antoine's opium bunks. Enticin' and amusin', to say nothing of being where we can take a sensible glint at the bit of green glass."

At the end of the long, murky corridor, another wooden door swung on well-oiled hinges to open on to a scene that can be nowhere found except in the Malay ports.

A long wide room which once had

been a cloister of the monks, but was now flanked by tables at which twos, and fours, and parties, culled from all classes of Singapore life, sat under shaded dim lights. These table lamps were the only illumination in the place and over them hung a blanket of purple smoke.

HERE and there among the tables were little groups of venturesome tourists who had won the confidence of their guides and enjoying their sinister adventure into a Saigon Street den. At one table was a party of British naval officers in civilian clothes, and next to them was an Afghan prince, his inscrutable face topped by an immaculate white turban.

At other tables yellow faces, brown faces, and green—some of them as green as the "souvenir" Peyton fingered in his pocket while O'Neil led the way across the smooth stone floors of the ancient cloister to the table he had chosen.

The big fellow's advent was made into something of an hilarious event by a party of sailors who, apparently, were frequenters of the Frenchman's. From their knees they slid Eurasian girls to the floor uncereemoniously and shuffled out to make their noisy and thickly guttural greetings.

O'Neil waved them away.

"They're thinking," he explained, "that I've got a berth and my first month's pay. They'd drink it up on me joyful, you might say, full knowing that I've had no first month's pay for many's the day."

Which circumstance in his affairs, O'Neil had explained to Peyton over their wine earlier in the evening, but Peyton was dubious of his excuses. He rather imagined that O'Neil had been caught ashore with his kit full of "chandou," non-government opium, and was for some longer or shorter

time suffering the smuggling mates' black list.

TO Antoine, however, when that amiable proprietor with a rat-like face and two scars that bisected either cheek came up with a smirk, O'Neil was eloquent and booming heartily. He jerked a thumb in Peyton's direction and shouted pleasantly:

"'Tis not for the fame of your dirty den my friend comes in this night, but for a tiredness he has of dodging Dyak knives. Saved he was, this day, by me—which is good for a stand of brandy three ways around, I take it."

Peyton demurred but Antoine, after a startled examination of the American patron who was marked for Dyak knives, ambled away to return with a decanter of his smuggled brandy which he sold at the same price it would have brought with the official tax added.

"Ver' glad," Antoine murmured to Peyton. "Dyaks ver' bad. You walk maybe middle of streets after dark. Or maybe you stay till daylight? This ver' nice place. Big time tonight."

O'Neil grunted his scorn of Antoine's compliments to his den and his unbelief in "big time tonight." The oily Frenchman ignored the taunt and added:

"Famous dancers come to Antoine's tonight. Sainya, from Bangkok."

To Peyton, "Sainya, from Bangkok," meant nothing. To O'Neil it seemed to mean much. His face, which had fallen into moodiness, lit up.

"You lie, you slinky devil!" he accused the Frenchman. "For what, now, would the most famous dancing girl in Siam be coming to your chandu den?"

Unperturbed, Antoine smiled. When he smiled his thin, scarred

face took on a grotesque expression that caused Peyton to shudder.

"Siam's king is not home. He goes to that America which is your own. Maybe it happens Sainya is not so welcome in Bangkok when the king is not at home. Maybe she thinks safer to dance for Antoine, in Singapore."

WHICH seemed to impress the big Irishman, but he would not admit it.

"All the same you lie, Antoine. Sainya wouldn't stub her pretty green toes in your place. There's places where she'd get a fortune—Sainya and her girls! Here! Bah!"

Again the Frenchman's face contorted into its fiendish grin.

"Maybe yes. Maybe no," he grunted. "Maybe other places Sainya afraid. Long hands can reach down from Bangkok when the king is not at home."

"Maybe so. Maybe so."

O'Neil seemed to understand the possibility that the famous dancing girl who had her own pink marble palace at Bangkok, might want to remain hidden in Singapore while her friend, the king, was absent from Asia.

Peyton, who had been fascinated by the grim colorfulness of the Oriental resort, questioned his companion about the dancer when Antoine had departed.

O'Neil told him of the pink marble palace. Of the fame that had reached from Bangkok to Calcutta. And then he ordered more brandy, motioning toward the pocket in which Peyton had deposited the "green glass."

Peyton brought it out and examined it curiously. It was as large as a small egg, and somewhat egg-shaped. Its green was deep and limpid—a colored crystal, Peyton decided. And marvelously colored, for

its buried green flames were scintillant.

WHILE he turned it over in his hand curiously he gave a sudden exclamation. To O'Neil he pointed out a face that was deeply carved in the green. A curious face, serene and arrogant, with wide almond-shaped eyes—unquestionably an Egyptian face, and carved by some master craftsman.

While he stared down at the miniature face the same feeling of premonition he had experienced outside the Frenchman's came over him. Again he began to see the visions that had clouded his brain before, and again he had to shake his head to clear it.

O'Neil, however, was only mildly interested in the carving.

"Fake antique," he scoffed. "Plenty of them in the Street of Bazaars—maybe not just like it, but same kind o' stuff, you might say. When I'm sailing I always carry things o' that kind to cheat passengers with. Which I'm meanin' to say, most all passengers in these seas are fools and fair cheatin'."

Peyton dropped the bauble on to the table top, by his brandy goblet, taking his mind from it only by a determined effort. He fell to thinking of the strange adventures of his first day in the Malay port—his first and only day, for he was due to start for the jungle's edge the next morning.

Inevitably his mind rested upon the cloaked figure of the Unknown—who had so mysteriously shadowed him through the waning afternoon and early night, to slip into his hand in the temple shadows the bit of carved glass.

His reflections were suddenly interrupted.

At a far end of the smoke-thick room, curtains parted on a dais

on which were grouped the musicians whose weird and monotonous strains had filtered out into Saigon Street. They were of all races, these musicians, yellow and brown and—even an American negro whose native banjo had been replaced by a gourd-like instrument with strings woven from sea weeds. O'Neil grunted.

"Now we tell Antoine again that he lies," he muttered.

But, it seemed, the Frenchman hadn't lied.

The musicians swung into a prelude in furious tempo. Around the room guttural shouts from men and shrill cries from women went up, for Antoine had spread the news of his rare treat well. Then a heavy silence fell across the room. The silence of expectancy.

A SECOND pair of curtains, behind the musicians, parted to admit an avalanche of sinuous forms, a veritable cascade of full curved limbs that gleamed through the tenuous silk swathings of the Siamese dancing girl.

They lost no time, these dancers from Bangkok in posing or parading, but plunged fiercely into their rhythmic ecstasies. There was more than a score of them and they completely filled the floor, a voluptuous, whirling mass. O'Neil was satisfied.

"There's no mistaking that crew," he muttered. "I've seen 'em many's the time—but never in a den like the dirty Frenchman's."

Peyton was interested in this, as in any other native sight of that East into which he was having his introduction. He adjusted his senses to the unbelievable evolutions of these famed beauties, to their thin garments that gave the impression of voluminous wrappings and yet were so light and sheer that they were barely veils.

He understood his companion's

wonder that they should be seen at the Frenchman's vile haunt. They didn't belong to that evil scene. But he was fairly convinced that it would be useless to try and understand any of the mysteries of this new world he had come into from the States until they explained themselves.

He was glad he had given the evening over to the company of his afternoon's rescuer, the big fellow who waxed heartier and boomier than ever over their first bottle of wine, and showed signs of being morose after the second.

He was sure O'Neil was some kind of a rascal himself, but he was agreeable enough, and faithful. He'd kept a sharp lookout for the Dyak knives he was certain were trailing them, though he had missed the human shadow by the temple wall.

THE cloud of vari-colored figures on the Frenchman's floor retreated to the dais at the end of the room with a great clashing of bracelets and anklets against the furore made by the musicians.

There was a wave of applause and drunken shouts from some of the tables, then a moment's expectant silence again while the musicians waited for a new cue.

The cue came and was imperceptible in the dim light from the table lamps, but the curious instruments broke into a new noise, the dancers swirled into a new formation, and then Sainya, perhaps the most famous of the dancing stars from Shanghai to Suez, leaped on to the stones of the old cloister.

Peyton supposed it was pure scandal—that thing about her being such a favorite of the Siamese king that when he was gone from his capital she had to flee to escape the jealousy of the Bangkok court.

But she might, he decided, be a

favorite of anybody who could go in for khol painted lashes that lay on her cheeks like spread fans, a cloud of black hair framing a green-tinted face. She was taller than her company, more limber and agile, and more flamboyantly jeweled.

SAINYA leaped from among her girls, whirled on to the floor, a riot of color, tossed her head at the hearty applause that broke now without stint, and began her dancing tour of the tables. O'Neil's eyes turned watery with sheer fascination and he constantly grumbled:

"She didn't come to Antoine's for the fun of it—there's something in the wind!"

At the moment, however, there was nothing in the wind but Sainya. She danced like a comet, scorning the slow, contorting gestures of the typical Siamese dance, to leap through paroxysms of rhythmic frenzy.

At last she subsided in a graceful heap in the center of the stone floor, her forehead touching the stones. Her dancers grouped around her. At one table a man who knew the custom signaled with a coin.

Sainya rose, for all the world like some sea-form rising from the waves, and seemed to hesitate for a moment while her deep eyes stared at the man who was flashing his coin toward her.

Peyton was certain the famous dancer would retreat from the condescensions of any of the Frenchman's customers, but Antoine himself suddenly slid into the middle of the floor and quite apparently begged of the dancer to go through the customary ritual.

She nodded, flashed her dark smile, and approached the man with the coin, she stood before him while he tossed the coin at her throat. She caught it in her bodice, and by some trick that was surprising, flipped it

out and into the air, catching it on her forehead.

She whirled then, on her toes, and the coin was gone. Perhaps back into the bodice. Now there was clamor from other tables, and other silver coins. She made the rounds and came at last to Peyton's table.

O'Neil looked at his friend pleadingly. His own pockets, Peyton quite well knew, were empty. Peyton produced a coin and handed it to the Irishman who made an elaborate gesture of his generosity at the expense of his companion.

Sainya caught the coin deftly, tossed it to her forehead, pirouetted and turned again to the table for her set smile of acknowledgment, showing her white teeth.

Then something happened.

The dancer's ornaments tinkled sharply. Her head straightened and something luminous came into her face. Her slender body was poised, rigid. O'Neil grunted and scraped his chair. Peyton, startled, leaned forward over the table.

THE widened almond eyes of the dancer were staring at the green bauble which still lay on the table beside Peyton's brandy goblet.

O'Neil reached to touch Peyton's arm, as if to call his already fixed attention to the dancer's actions, but he seemed to sense some incongruity in even the slightest motion—for Sainya seemed to cast a spell over the whole room which a moment before had droned with conversation and tinkled with the sounds of the breast-plates of all the other dancing girls.

The Frenchman, coming up, was stopped and held by the spell, and stood motionless in the center of his floor, watching.

Suddenly Peyton was aware that the hands and arms of the dancer were reaching out, slowly, and that

her palms were turned upward, a gesture which Peyton vaguely recognized as a pagan salutation of some sort.

The carmine lips were moving. At first their whisper was unintelligible, then Peyton caught it quite distinctly—the thing she was saying over and over in a tone of indescribable awe:

"The Emerald of Pharaoh!"

AT first he could hardly believe his ears. But soon he knew there was no mistake. Again and again the whisper came from the lips that were a splash of scarlet across the dancer's luminous face.

"The Emerald of Pharaoh!"

And never once did the girl take her eyes from the carved face on the green surface, until at last her whole body drooped, and with an indescribable grace she bent her legs under her until she had wilted down much as a flower wilts, and she was a vivid mound of color on the ancient stone floor, her head down so that her forehead touched the ground.

In an instant she leaped up from her strange obeisance. Her dark eyes were shining. She flicked Peyton and O'Neil with a single glance and then, with lithesome grace, slid close to the table. Her head bent, as if she nodded for another coin, but this time it was to whisper clearly into Peyton's face:

"The wind is from the North, my pretty American!"

That was all.

A second later the dancing girl had whirled down the floor, the Frenchman and all his patrons gazing after her.

The curtains behind the musicians' dais parted and, with her dancing company clattering behind her, Sainya disappeared.

CHAPTER III

Prisoner

WHEN Peyton's somewhat dazed wits began to straighten out he was conscious of a stir all about him, and of a determined movement by the big O'Neil.

The Irishman was completely sobered, it seemed. He had got to his feet and his huge, brawny hand was in the act of closing over the green thing at which the dancing girl had stared and to which she had made her astonishingly solemn obeisance. And the big fellow was saying, sharply:

"Come, my friend. We'll be leaving the Frenchman's behind us."

Antoine was shuffling up to the table, his beady eyes glowing sharply, and others of his patrons were beginning to come toward the table which Sainya had distinguished with her startling scene.

Antoine was trying to catch a glimpse of the thing in O'Neil's hand, but the big fellow unceremoniously pushed him back so fiercely that he held to his balance with difficulty.

"You were not a liar, Antoine," O'Neil said, his voice loud and booming, but not pleasantly. "But you are a bad kind for honest men to be hangin' 'round, just the same. An' if you have us followed into Saigon Street I'll turn 'round and come back with an idea of wringin' your dirty neck."

What the Frenchman returned to that, Peyton never knew, for O'Neil had him by the arm and literally dragging him across the stone floor. In the long corridor to the street door O'Neil muttered to himself:

"'Emerald of Pharaoh' is it now, an' 'the wind is comin' from the North'."

Peyton began a query:

"What the devil does it all mean?"

But they reached the street door and when he would have gone out into the night O'Neil thrust him back suddenly:

"Wait a bit! Wait a bit! Little fellows with nice little knives can hide on either side of a door mighty cute-like."

O'Neil went out first, with a jerky movement of his huge frame which any lurking assassin would have found disconcerting. Apparently, however, the street was deserted.

"Just the same," O'Neil muttered, "we'll keep to the middle of it an' if you'll look ahead I'll walk backwards."

SENSE of menace oppressed Peyton, though it all seemed foolish and silly. What was it that had happened that day?

He had happened to see a little fellow in a curious garment about to assassinate another strange pedestrian in an equally curious cloak.

He had interfered and for his pains the fellow's accomplices had followed him and would have assassinated him if the learty O'Neil hadn't interfered.

But what of the green "glass" bauble that had been so mysteriously pressed into his hand?

An emerald? Not glass, or crystal at all, but an emerald?

Ridiculous! An emerald of that size would be worth an untold fortune, literally a fabulous amount of money, for the depths of it were clear and flawless and though it was uncut, its deep green fire was a veritable blaze.

Emerald of Pharaoh!

Some Arabian Nights' dream was taking possession of him! He began to think even the dancer at the Frenchman's was unreal. Perhaps the no-license brandy had got the better

of him as it had O'Neil, and by the time he got to his hotel—

"Look out!"

It was O'Neil's cry, and it was too late.

The night in the unlit street was black, but a deeper blackness enveloped him. A sack had been thrown over his head and drawn tight about his forearms, so that his hands were helpless although he struggled furiously.

Strong, wiry arms closed around him and he was lifted from his feet and was being carried by shoulders and ankles as easily as if he were a child—carried by captors who seemed to skim the cobblestones of Saigon Street in bare, soundless feet.

He heard, muffled by the heavy, smothering sack that wrapped his head, the cries of O'Neil. The Irishman was putting up a fight of some sort and, he gathered, not getting the worst of it, for the cries seemed to have the ring of fierce triumph in them.

BUT they grew fainter and fainter as his captors—who must be quite a band since it seemed a dozen pairs of arms were fastened around his body—hurried him away.

Suddenly he was aware that he was slowly sinking into oblivion. His senses were dulling and his brain yielding to stupor. A drug of some sort, he realized instantly. A drug that had vaporized within the sack, filling his nostrils and lungs with every breath.

He made a valiant effort to hold on to himself, to hold on to his wits while he fought through a supreme struggle, but knew all the time it was utterly useless. The blackness settled over him like an opaque blanket wrapping tightly.

It seemed that there was no interval of time, after that slow lapse into unconsciousness until his brain

began feverishly to pick up his wits and senses.

But time had elapsed, he was soon aware, for thin lines of daylight were outlining the shutters of a room in which he lay outstretched on an unkempt cot. The shutters were tightly drawn and the room was gray with a thin, half light that turned various objects into vague bulks.

FOR a space of time Peyton lay quite still. He had been knocked out a time or two on the football field and remembered his mistake at those times in lifting his head too quickly when he came to.

While he lay there he marshaled his wits into definite order, even to the extent of remembering that he had left O'Neil apparently getting the better of the attackers who had assaulted him, and that the Irishman had the emerald in his pocket, having failed to return it after his big hand recovered it from beside the brandy goblet on the Frenchman's table.

So if the motive of his kidnapers had been robbery, they had found themselves thwarted in advance.

He had closed his eyes during this process of experimental thinking. Now he opened them and lifted his head tentatively. There was no pain. He remembered, suddenly, that there had been some kind of a drug in the sack and that he hadn't been knocked out with a blow.

The room in which he lay was a murky, dingy enclosure. Furnished only with the cot he was stretched on, a ramshackle table and a single chair. In a corner there was a box, or a drawer-chest of some sort, and on the walls a framed lithograph over which there was no glass.

But he was not alone in the room!

Gradually he made out the presence of three silent forms, two of them standing tall and rigid against

a door frame, their arms folded across long brown robes. The third, standing a little away from the other two, was moving toward him. Even while his eyes picked this one out he recognized her—Sainya, the dancer from Bangkok!

THEN the other two became clearer and took shape in his brain as those two tall figures that had apparently so far failed to guard the cloaked Unknown in Victoria Square, that if it had not been for him she would have felt the point of a Dyak knife.

He had not seen the faces of those two guards, only their backs and broad, sturdy shoulders. But instinctively he knew that here they were, standing guard over him—either the same pair or their counterparts.

Sainya came close to the side of the cot. He raised himself and swung his feet to the floor. He saw that the girl had changed her costume—as of course she would have, now that a new day had dawned.

She had put on some kind of European dress that was dark. At her wrists jewelry glittered, diamond bracelets. Her face, paler olive in the half-daylight of the room than it had been in the smoke-purpled lights of the Frenchman's place, was expressionless, menacing.

"The usual question, I suppose," Peyton said, "in a circumstance like this, is 'what do you mean by drugging me and bringing me here?' I might add that I am an American citizen."

Only an arrogant gesture of the girl's hand answered him. She stood quite close above him, searching his face silently. Again he spoke:

"If you haven't taken my pocket-book, already, you may have it—save for an address or two that's in it, and I'll get out of here peaceably.

If that won't do, I'll get out not so peaceably."

From one of the shapes near the door there was a low grunt. The dancing girl stepped back as Peyton got to his feet, but the others still did not move.

"You do not go, my pretty American," the girl said, in her measured, sibilant English, "until we have the Emerald of Pharoah. Perhaps you do not go then!"

Peyton managed a laugh that, he hoped, sounded real enough to hide the nervousness behind it.

"You've found out, then, that I haven't got—whatever it is that you call your Emerald of Pharoah. If I did have it I shouldn't be in a hurry to turn it over, what with only half a promise that I'd get out even then."

Sainya stamped her foot.

"Fool! Do you think this the time to laugh? To play? It is a time of danger for you. A great danger. It is not only that there must be ~~the~~ emerald. There must also be talk. Of the master you serve. Of the treachery you have done. Of the designs you have. And of what it is that you know.

"All of this there must be. And quickly. My people are not patient. The Priests of Ra do not wait upon a weakling."

IT struck Peyton like a thunder-bolt that the girl was insane, and that he had been made a victim of her lunacy. Her cry, back at the Frenchman's—"Emerald of Pharoah!" was part of her insanity, and doubtless the little bauble was but green glass after all.

But even while this thought was going through his head his better judgment rebelled against it. This girl who faced him, her eyes smouldering fiercely, was not insane.

She knew, or thought she knew,

whereof she spoke. And it could not all be some fanciful dream, for those two grim guards at the door in their strange robes, and with their lean, swarthy faces, were not shapes of fantasy.

The knives of yesterday and the attack of last night were not more real than the predicament he was now in.

"See here!" he exclaimed, earnestly, "you may know what you're talking about, but I don't. Emerald of Pharoah means nothing to me—and your Priests of Ra, whether they are cut-throats or temple monks, are about as well-known to me as a rajah's concubines.

"In other words, you are on two kinds of a wrong track for all of your pains. I haven't the emerald, if it is an emerald, and if you think I know anything about it, whence it came or what it means, if anything—that's your second wrong track.

"Now let's open the shutters, make up our minds like good friends together that its broad daylight and we're in the midst of a civilized city, and then I'll go along and catch my train to where I'm bound."

HE swung on his heel and moved toward the windows. Silently, but like a double flash, the two guards leaped from the door and blocked him.

At their hands were glints of steel. Their eyes held him by the very tensivity of their malignant hatred. He recoiled and then turned questioning to Sainya.

The girl spoke to the others in a jargon which Peyton could not understand, a liquid, flowing tongue that seemed to be all vowels. She spoke rapidly, as if she explained what he had said. The two dark men did not move. The girl turned again to Peyton.

"If what you say is true how came

the Emerald of Pharoah to be at your hand last night?"

FOR a moment he was of the mind to give her a sharp reply, then thought better of it. He shrugged his shoulders and attempted a wry smile.

"That's better," he said. "I don't mind telling you all there is to tell."

Briefly he explained the affair of yesterday—the little fellow in the monk's robe and his thwarted knife in Victoria Square. He would have gone on at once to finish the history with the apparition in the shadows of the abandoned temple in Saigon Street, but all at once his attention was caught by a movement of the girl's hands.

He had just spoken of the cloaked Unknown whom he had saved from such bold assassination, and had described her as she walked through the crowd ahead of him.

And now he observed that Sainya's arms were extending in front of her, as they had the night before at the Frenchman's when she glimpsed the carved ornament by the brandy goblet, and that her hands were turned up, her palms cupped, in the same gesture of salutation.

When he paused her arms dropped to her sides, but when he explained how the "emerald" had come into his possession, they extended again, as if their movement was involuntary, and again the palms were upturned and cupped. He asked, suddenly:

"You must know who my Unknown was? I'd be mighty interested to have you tell me—in return for what I'm telling you."

For a second the girl's eyes probed him, probed deep. Then her scarlet lips moved again, and in the same whisper of the night before, she said:

"You saved her life? And she came to you—to put into your hands the emerald of her fathers?"

He was so struck by her strange manner, a manner of awed reverence, in which there was an undertone of mystical awe, that he did not reply. But she must have seen in his glance convincing assurance that he had fully explained whatever the mystery to her had been—the mystery of his possession of an object that meant much to her.

For, silently, she wilted to the floor, in quick obeisance, her forehead drooping to touch the room's frayed carpet, and then she was on her feet again.

SHE spoke rapidly and vehemently to the two dark-faced watchers, in her strange voweled tongue. They looked from her to Peyton with curiosity showing in their coal-black eyes, but it was not a friendly curiosity.

It was borne upon Peyton that the girl argued in his behalf, but that whatever her plea, she was refused.

One of the men spoke, his voice guttural and staccato like. And in his tone was finality.

Sainya continued her harangue. Her face was expressive, and her hands fluttered in her vehemence. Peyton was at the point of breaking in, but some intuition whispered him to caution.

Suddenly one of the swarthy chaps appeared to give way. He grunted a terse sentence and turned majestically toward the door.

At the threshold, however, he paused, and turning, showed the point of a curved blade that partially dropped from the sleeve of his cloak. He touched the blade expressively and shot a glance at Peyton.

The door closed then, behind the precious pair.

Peyton at once sprang toward the shuttered window but Sainya was quicker and flung herself in

front of him. In hurried whispers she said:

"Fool! Do you think you could escape that way? There are many who watch from the street below. I will set you free. But you must obey."

There was a truth of purpose in her manner. Some miracle had happened—she who had been so unfriendly was now Peyton's friend. A lifted hand warned him, however, to silence.

"I bargained that I talk with you alone. It is believed that you do not speak the truth. That you are the enemy of the One who is served by the Priests of Ra. The bargain is that I try alone to persuade the truth from you while they wait outside the door. Talk, pretty American. Talk, that they may hear."

PEYTON was bewildered. Again that mysterious phrase—the "Priests of Ra!" Assuredly more of insanity, yet the girl unquestionably was not insane!

"The only thing I can talk about," he stammered through his bewilderment, "is the matter of what the devil this whole thing means, what is the Emerald of Pharaoh and who are these people who stand guard over me and look as if they are about to cut my throat?"

While he talked the girl had flown across the room and was tugging fiercely, yet with incredible silence, at the heavy bit of furniture that had the appearance of a crude crate into which drawers had been inserted.

He decided immediately that she was following some plan of her own to set him free without his having to run the gauntlet of those who watched from the street—or the pair on the other side of the door.

He started toward her to help her, but she waved him back imperiously.

"Talk on. From where you are.

Let them hear your voice else they will enter the door."

"Will you not explain some of the things I've asked? That I am curious about?"

The box was slowly moving into the room, away from the wall. It must have taxed the strength of the slender dancing girl whose hands were far too tenuous and daintily cared for to be accustomed to any kind of labor.

Yet she answered in an even tone that could have caused no suspicion on the part of the listeners outside the door.

"I am setting you free because I believe it would be the wish of the one who gave to you the emerald. If it is ordained, she will reveal herself to you. Perhaps already it is ordained that you are to serve her, as you say that you served her in Victoria Square. I, Sainya, dare only to explain nothing."

NOW the box was free from the wall. And behind it an opening, large enough to admit the stooping frame of a man, was revealed. Peyton started, but again Sainya held him back.

"We will go," she said, indicating the opening with a brief motion of her hand. "But when we leave this room we must go quickly. Soon there will be pursuit. I will go first. You will follow."

With freedom promised at the other end of some hidden passage Peyton's spirits returned and he could afford to give a thought to the strange creature who first was his jailor, and was now his liberator.

"And you?" he said. "Are you sure no harm will fall to you? Those fellows with the handy knives don't look as if they have a very forgiving temperament."

The girl straightened suddenly to

her full height. Her eyes glinted in the semi-darkness of the room.

"To look upon the Emerald of Pharaoh," she said, with indescribable impressiveness, "is to see a sign. To you, and to me, that sign has been made. It may not be recalled, or altered. What is to be—must be!"

With no other word she touched his wrist and disappeared behind the box.

PEYTON followed her, bending low, into the cavern. At first the darkness was impenetrable, but soon his eyes, growing accustomed, made out a small square of dim light ahead that grew larger and larger as he crept along in the wake of his guide.

He could not see her, except when the bulk of her shut out the light ahead, but the perfume of her was close, and when he put out his hand to feel his way it came in contact with her garments.

Over her shoulder her faint whisper came:

"Hurry. They will be entering the room by now."

And even as she spoke there were the unmistakable sounds of a commotion behind, of a door slamming shut, of guttural oaths and shouts of alarm.

The passage threatened to be interminable, but suddenly it ended against a painted pane of glass. The patch of dim light that expanded as they approached it was explained. Only the faintest rays could penetrate the encrusted glass pane. Now the girl stopped, so abruptly that he crowded against her.

"Break the glass—there is no more need of caution. They are after us."

And indeed he could hear the guttural shouts at the mouth of the passage behind them! He hoped they wouldn't shoot blindly ahead, and then was comforted by the

thought that such rascals as the swarthy chaps in the long brown robes seldom relied on other arms than their sleeve knives.

Without hesitation he crashed an elbow through the glass. The shattered fragments clattered loudly on what appeared to be a tile laid roof. With both elbows working furiously he cleared the frame of jagged pieces and crouched backward that the girl might go through the opening first.

An instant later both were on the glass-strewn roof outside.

He saw that there were other roofs to cross, irregular patches of sloping tile, before there was a drop to the ground.

ACROSS these the nimble feet of the girl fled swiftly and he followed, more concerned with the job of keeping his balance.

He saw that the house to which he had been taken was close to the waterfront, for he could see the sapphire blue of the Bay of Siam and the tall masts of coffee ships from Sumatra and Java riding at anchor outside the inner roads.

Here, in this vicinity, he knew, would be the derelicts and vagabonds of the Seven Seas, cut-throats all, lurking in doorways to ambush any passerby who promised to yield even the smallest of the coins that produce a pinch of white "chandu" in the opium dens.

A well chosen neighborhood for a rendezvous of swarthy kidnapers!

Directly ahead of him the girl paused abruptly. Peyton saw that she had stopped at the rim of a well-like opening in the tile roof.

"We must drop down here," she said. "Below there is a corridor to the street."

Below Peyton could see the passage she indicated, and that the drop was not difficult.

"I will go first," he said. "Follow quickly—I will catch you."

SHE shot him a grateful glance which spoke mutely of her fear for her fragile dancing ankles. Peyton dropped into the well without hesitation and sprawled on the floor below, between walls that shut him in closely on either side.

While he regained his feet he made out a ribbon of light laid across what would be the top of a street door near at hand. He looked upward and raised his arms.

Instantly the girl dropped into them, her slender body sliding through his hold until her feet touched the floor lightly.

"Quickly!" she breathed. "The street, before they cut us off."

He supposed she meant that confederates of the pair behind, of whom he had caught glimpses hurrying across the roofs after them, would be rushing around into the street outside, but suddenly there was a still more threatening explanation of her fear.

They had almost reached the street door when, from some unseen opening into the passage, a half score of brown-robed forms appeared. To Peyton it seemed as if they emerged from the wall itself, but the girl behind him must have known of another door and a connecting corridor.

She screamed, but her scream was choked off quickly.

"To the door!" she cried. "There is a latch that slides!"

Somehow he fought his way through the swarming figures—their sheer number was his advantage, and his heart sang when he realized that the girl had pressed close and—unless one of the glinting blades had scarred her—was as safe as he.

The iron latch slid easily and light from the street leaped in. With a glad shout Peyton plunged into the

open air, with the girl's hand in his and she close beside him.

Close beside him, but suddenly not there at all!

An assassin's hand fastened from behind on his arm. He swung around to ward off the expected knife thrust and, swinging, tried to fling the girl free. But she broke from his grasp even as his body wheeled and he was horrified to see that she had flung herself directly at the swarthy mob that was at the point of flowing into the street.

SOMEWHERE close the shrill wail of a one-toned whistle sounded. Peyton was conscious of the red-jacketed form of a Sikh policeman hurrying into the street.

With a fierce cry he sprang after the girl, his blood frozen before his brain's awareness of steel being buried in soft flesh. He caught one horrible vision of Sainya's body sinking—falling outward from the cavern of the corridor, outward toward the sunlight in the street.

Cursing he plunged toward her but already one brown-robed form was leaping across her.

Again the shrill note of the Sikh's police whistle, and this time close at hand.

The assassin leaped backward. The door slammed as Peyton's body crashed against it. Sound of its latch sliding into place was an ominous finality for the girl who had died that Peyton might have his chance at escape!

When his shoulders, reinforced by the Sikh's, had battered in the door after a furious assault, he found her, crumpled between the narrow passage walls, her sloe-eyes staring up at him unseeing.

The Sikh, his pocket lamp flashing, plunged across the body to his exploration of the corridor which, save

for the still form by the street door, was empty now.

Peyton remained behind, to close the dancing girl's lids, and to touch the scarlet lips and erase their pain before they became cold.

Other Sikhs in red jackets crowded into the corridor from the street. Peyton gathered that no trace of the brown-robed crew could be found in the maze of areaways into which the passage led.

When he had explained his flight with the girl across the tiled roofs, the Sikhs clambered up through the roof opening, utilizing each other's shoulders and lifting Peyton after them. The broken window was quickly located, and the room at the end of the upper corridor.

The search spread through the entire beehive block, but the sinister band had made good its escape, with only valueless clues left behind.

CHAPTER IV

The Message

FROM Singapore to Dessa Luak on the Tibetan border is ten days, by steamer through the Straits of Malacca to Rangoon, by the wheezy little train to Mandalay and Cherra Punji, and then by pony to the jungle's edge.

On the maps of Upper Assam, Dessa Luak is marked as a village, but it is in reality barely more than a compound surrounded by low rambling houses of the tea planters whose plantations spread away to the Brahmaputra River which borders the no-man's land of the savages who bar the way to the Tibetan passes.

On one side of the compound stands the club house where the tea planters gather in the twilight for brandies and soda and to swap the news from home that comes in the weekly delivery of mail, and to flirt half-heartedly with each other's

wives or to recount the day's contacts with the head hunting tribes beyond the border jungle.

Behind the club house, the jungle begins, pierced only by rhinoceros trails and occasional paths beaten by the hoofs of a herd of wild yaks.

NIGHT had fallen on the tenth day after Peyton's escape from the brown-robed assassins in Singapore.

The compound was silent, save for the occasional tinkle of glasses in the lounging room of the club house, the far calls of night birds, and the ominous whispers that crept out from the jungle depths.

On the far side of the compound from the club house lamp, light outlined the windows of the one floored bungalow of Matthew Breedon, Dessa Luak's only bachelor, owner of one of the neighboring plantations and guardian of another.

Breedon was a youngish man, in comparison with others of the Dessa Luak exiles, slender-framed but sturdy, tanned by the fierce noon-day sun with lean features that could, at times, take on an unprepossessing cast.

Breedon was not disliked by the little colony of planters, most of whom were Englishmen, but there were few in the outpost settlement that held him to be as friendly as the glumest of the other residents. By the natives who worked his plantation he was held to be a hard, though scrupulously just, task master.

The great plantation which adjoined his own, and over which he had been master for more than a year, belonged now to Blair Peyton, who had inherited it from the brother of his father, and who had come out from San Francisco to examine and take possession of his property.

Behind the lighted windows of

Breedon's house, Peyton sat before a teak-wood table brightened by the glow of a massive oil lamp.

On the table the Emerald of Pharoah, was a shining green pool. Beyond the lamp, along the edge of its shadow, Breedon paced the room nervously. Suddenly he wheeled about.

"Tell me," he said abruptly, "about this fellow O'Neil. Why did you bring him along with you—and why did he want to come?"

Peyton shifted in his chair with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

"Why he wanted to come, is more difficult to answer than why I brought him. When I had seen to it that the dancing girl's body was properly cared for, and had spent a futile hour at the barracks of the Sikh police, I went to my hotel and there, in the gardens that flank the street, I came upon O'Neil.

THE poor chap was woebegone and well out of his senses. He had come through the tussle in Saigon Street fairly well, with only a few bits of his skin slashed off, but he had spent the night hunting the dens of Singapore for me. He seemed to have some antipathy to an enlistment of the police, and had carried on his search alone.

"At daylight he began his vigil in the hotel gardens, and there he was or, rather, there his hearty shout was before I could locate him, when I turned up. I hadn't really expected to ever see him again for, you see, he had the emerald in his pocket."

"And so, out of appreciation for his honesty, you brought him through Burma and Assam to this jumping-off place of the world?"

"Not exactly. More, perhaps, because he wanted to come. He seemed to have become attached to me and he swore to a conviction that I was in some dread danger. The persistence

of the Dyak knives that followed me in the Sampaeng seemed to bear him out in this conviction, and, another thing! To him, at least, the Emerald of Pharoah had a meaning, vague though it is."

BREEDON gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

"That is what I want to hear! You mentioned before that he recognized the stone when the dancing girl had named it. What does he know?"

"He didn't exactly recognize it," Peyton compromised thoughtfully. "He was not quite clear, neither then nor during our trip northward, but he spoke of a legend that persists, he says, in the ports of the China Sea, that somewhere beyond the Tibetan passes there is a mountain, he called it the 'Blue Mountain,' which is inaccessible but which nevertheless harbors a human settlement on its snow-covered peak—a company of isolated humans with whom the Emerald of Pharoah is identified by the legend.

"As I have said, he is quite vague. He explains that he never listened to the legend except when he was drunk, and that every time the tale differed.

"Frankly, I fancy he thinks he knows more than he confides. He has been a ship's mate about the Malayan ports for years. He has picked up many strange tales—with which he regaled me during our journey up from Singapore. He has proven that I could trust him with valuables, and he was pretty faithful to me on two treacherous occasions in Singapore. He's broke and anchorless—"

Again Peyton shrugged his shoulders. He finished dryly:

"And there you are! I brought him along—hoping to fit him in on the plantation somehow. Anyhow, I hated that ten days alone. Somehow,

I've been oppressed by premonitions."

Breedon did not at once reply, but resumed his pacing. Peyton watched him quietly, uneasily.

Earlier in the day, when Breedon rode out the Dessa Luak trail to meet him, he had been free of the vague feelings of alarm which had come over him at Singapore.

The ten days on the way northward had restored his belief in the sanity of things and his doubts of the inexplicably mysterious.

O'Neil, too, had recovered his jovial heartiness and by common consent discussion of the events in Victoria Square and Saigon Street had been dropped.

If O'Neil kept a constant watch over his new American friend, and looked askance at suspicious travelers on the train or among the pony caravans on the trail from Cherra Punji, Peyton was not observant.

At Rangoon, where the Singapore steamer docked, there had been several hours delay waiting for the Mandalay train to start northward.

Much of this time was occupied by the transfer of Peyton's baggage—O'Neil had only his dunnage bag—but there was still time for a stroll into the foreign quarter where British, French and Dutch merchants and craftsmen kept their shops.

BECAUSE O'Neil had been horrified at the thought of his carrying the huge emerald on his person, Peyton had stubbornly clung to it. His logic had been:

"If any of the Dyak chaps, or the brown-robed fellows decide to come after it, we will, at least, know they're around if they have to come directly to me to get it."

O'Neil had accepted this situation, after a day on the boat. The baggage disposed of at Rangoon the two wandered into the foreign quarter and Peyton was attracted by the sign

above the door of a Dutch jeweler's shop: "Oriental gems appraised."

On impulse he entered the shop and called for the proprietor. He left O'Neil on guard at the street door.

THE jeweler exhibited startled astonishment when the green stone was laid on his counter. But, watching him closely, Peyton decided that in his amazement there was no sign of recognition.

"It is impossible, sir," the jeweler exclaimed, "that there should be an emerald of this size and weight in existence and still not be known to all of us who pride ourselves upon our knowledge of such things."

"Granted that such a circumstance would be impossible," Peyton returned, "then it remains that the thing is not an emerald at all, but a marvelous bit of green crystal. Isn't that it?"

The jeweler weighed the stone both in his fingers and on the delicate balance of his scales. After a long re-examination under his glass, he shook his head, his amazement increasing.

"There is no question, sir, but that it is an emerald. One of the purest specimens of African emerald I have ever seen. Almost all emeralds, you may know, are flawed. Even the smaller ones. The Russian emerald and the Indian stone are practically valueless as modern gems for this reason.

"The African emerald is purer—but I have never seen a stone so pure as this one. The carving, too, is surprising. There is no craftsman today who can sink his stylus so deeply into an emerald surface without flaking the gem."

"No craftsman today? You mean to say that the nature of the carving indicates some degree of antiquity?"

The Dutchman held the stone si-

lently, gazing at it intently for several moments before he replied. Then, laying it on a soft square of counter velvet tenderly he said:

"I will venture to say, sir, that its antiquity is beyond estimate. Shall we say a thousand years? Then I would add that a thousand years ago that carved surface had been polished by the wear of still other thousands of years.

"No, my dear sir, it would be useless for me to count its age. The face that was carved in its surface is the face of a Pharaoh. It may well have been the signet of a Pharaoh princess."

PEYTON started at that statement. He had not said of the stone that strange carmine lips, now forever silent, had called it the Emerald of Pharaoh. He could only echo the jeweler's announcement: "Face of a Pharaoh?"

"Unmistakably. The glass reveals a microscopic cartouch, or dynastic signature on the scroll of the garment at the throat line. It is the cartouch of a Pharaoh king. That evidence fortifies the unmistakable lines of the features. If you wish to know something more definite of the jewel, I must refer you to the museum at London, or, better perhaps, at Cairo."

The jeweler regarded his American visitor with a questioning glance that appealed for some explanation of his custody of such a remarkable gem, Peyton, however, did not oblige him. He asked his final question.

"What would you think, then, that such a jewel would be worth—in my own American dollars?"

The jeweler smiled patiently.

"My dear sir! By what standard would we compare its value? The Emir of Afghanistan is credited with the finest collection of emeralds in

the world—among them the largest and purest specimens. I have had the honor of examining the collection.

"Its most valuable stone is appraised at half a million of your American dollars. It will weigh, however, less than a tenth of this stone, and there are half a dozen flaws that mar the purity of its green depth. Shall we hit upon a value for this stone by appraising it against the Emir's?"

PEYTON whistled and for the first time, perhaps, handled the green gem with a distinct reverence, not omitting, however, to tell himself that his interview with the Dutch jeweler was only an incident of a recurring dream.

O'Neil had guessed his mission in the jewel shop and looked at him expectantly when he emerged. He vouchsafed him no information, however. He put the jeweler's amazing conclusions away with the unnamed premonitions that had settled down upon him.

But now, with the emerald before him on Matthew Breedon's table, and with Breedon himself pacing the room, struggling to conceal the all too evident signs of some inner agitation, his uneasiness returned to him.

Chia-win, the Chinese "doll," had warned him that knives that fail once are surer next time. And, so far, knives had failed twice!

Suddenly Breedon executed one of his abrupt movements, strode to a corner of the room and jerked a cord that set up a melodious clatter of Chinese chimes. Almost instantly an inner door opened noiselessly and Breedon's Pathan houseboy appeared.

"Have you been in the compound tonight, Sohbat?" Breedon inquired sharply.

"Yes, sahib. To the club house, for

lemons and tobacco. And once again, sahib, on another errand."

Breedon studied the Pathan intently. The "boy" was a full grown native of the Peshawar region who had once guided Breedon on a panther hunt. He had insisted upon returning with Breedon to Dessa Luak and taking charge of his bungalow.

Breedon had not been averse to this arrangement. Hindu servants were hard to keep on the jungle frontier if they were of the reliable classes, and the other kind were far too treacherous in a country where treachery was always guarded against—the treachery of men as well as of leopards and cobras.

To the master it was apparent that the "other errand" into the compound had not been an idle one.

"You went out," Breedon charged the servant, "to gossip. Of whispers from the north. Is that not so?"

Peyton suddenly sat stiffly. So far as he could remember he had not repeated to Breedon that curious warning of Sainya's—"the wind is coming from the north!"

It had been so utterly senseless that he had forgotten it. But now Breedon was speaking to his houseboy of "whispers from the north!"

SOHBAT was ill at ease before his master's scrutiny. His face fell, and his reply was hesitant.

"It is nothing—that is what the sahib will say. And it is as the sahib says. Nothing. But when the orchid flower turns its petals to the south the omen is ill. The orchid flowers in the jungle have turned their petals to the south, sahib!"

"Were there more of the Bhutanese rascals from the plantations hanging about the outreaches of the compound?"

The servant glanced up sharply, then nodded solemnly.

"The sahib will be angry. But it

is true. The Bhutan men have come in from the plantations. More and more. At sunrise this day the sahib saw that some of his own men had deserted the tea fields. The master was angry then. His servant does but speak the truth when he say that from all the plantations the Bhutan men are stealing in."

OVER his shoulder Breedon explained to Peyton that the plantations in Upper Assam were almost wholly dependent for their labor upon natives of the Bhutan country in the foothills of the Himalayas. The Bhutanese were a sturdy race, accustomed to the jungle trails and less afraid of marauding panthers and leopards than the Hindu native, who stuck to his villages.

To the servant Breedon said: "Do they give any more explanation of their sudden fears?"

"I gathered no more news, sahib. Of what they fear, like it is with what they know, the Bhutan men speak little. They point only to the orchid flowers and then say that the rhinoceros has not been to his water hole for three nights. This much they say, but they gather outside the compound and turn their faces to the north."

Breedon took a few turns down the room. The servant waited, immobile. Breedon stopped before him after a time and issued a curt command. "Go out into the compound and find Gomba. Bring him here."

WHEN Sohbat was gone Breedon poured from a decanter that had been left on the table, a stiff drink of brandy. He shoved the decanter toward Peyton while he siphoned soda into his glass. Peyton, instead of pouring a drink for himself, watched the other expectantly.

"Gomba," Breedon said when he put down his glass, "knows much.

But he has never been made to talk. Perhaps—"

He paused abruptly, crossed the room to a magazine rack and brought out an English monthly of a long past date but still precious on a frontier where mail was always a month late.

He opened the magazine and, with a "Do you mind?" to Peyton, spread it over the emerald, concealing it. He dropped into a chair, then, across the table from Peyton.

"You are wondering," he said, in his abrupt, unexpected way, "why the sight of that emerald and the story of your experiences in Singapore have affected me. It will take Sohbat half an hour to find Gomba, the fellow I sent him for. He could probably produce him in five minutes, but he will want to loiter at the edge of the settlement to pick up more murmurings of the natives. I will occupy the half hour."

PEYTON nodded. "You have been mysterious," he said. "And I am interested in a phrase you used—'whispers out of the north'."

"I will begin there," Breedon returned. "If you remain in this part of the country long, you will soon learn that 'the north' has a significance that is ominous. We use the designation in much more than a geographical sense. The north, to us, here in Dessa Luak, means danger."

"But there is only Tibet to the north," Peyton observed. "The border, I have always understood, is impassable."

"You know your Assam out of the geographies only," Breedon remarked dryly. "Tibet is to the north, but so is the noman's land of the Nogi tribes."

"Nogi tribes? I've heard there are savages beyond the jungle."

"The Nogis are there. Cannibals

by legend, head-hunters unquestionably. Nominally the territory they inhabit is under British control, but Britain has been careful to avoid any attempt at administering it, or bringing it under any kind of government.

"The Nogis are a fierce tribe, perhaps the last of the world's pure savages. They are a mongrel race, part Tibetan, part Chinese and part Mongolian. They allow no stranger to intrude upon their domain. A few venturesome white men have tried to invade their country. They have not returned.

IN the past there have been Nogi raids on this side of the jungle. The British sent expeditions against them, and returned with fewer men than set out and no other result. The Nogi fastnesses are impenetrable."

"Pretty sort of neighbors," Peyton commented.

"Pretty! The last time they called upon us—that was before my time out here, but your uncle then was running his plantation—they left half the settlement dead behind them.

"Tomorrow you will meet at least one man, gray-haired and bent now, who killed his wife, little more than a bride, rather than let her fall into the hands of the raiding Nogis. That was the last time they came through the jungle. But we've been afraid ever since."

"Was that what you meant by—'whispers from the north'?"

"Yes. It began three days ago: The Bhutanese began to be restless. Began to desert the plantations and come into the settlement. Questioning them was of no avail. They pointed to the jungle. Something that they understood came to them out of the forest. The situation has been growing more and more mysterious.

"The Hindus whose huts are out-

side the settlement are disappearing, to the south. The native Asamese are spending hour after hour before their Buddha. And, as Sohbat said, the orchids have turned on their stems to face the south. The jungle's omen."

"You expect to get some information from the native you have sent for?"

FIVE years ago I found Gomba in the jungle, torn and bleeding, a dead baby leopard beside him. His poisoned spear was in the animal's shoulder, but the leopard's paws had mangled him before the poison got in its work.

"I recognized him as a Nogi who had wandered farther south than is the wont of his tribesmen. But I brought him in and managed to patch him up and save him. It took quite a while.

"He was so astounded by my failure to finish off the leopard's work that he refused to go back to his tribe. Perhaps he was afraid. He has remained in the settlement. He has been acting strangely for the last three days."

Peyton pointed to the magazine spread over the emerald. "Why cover this because your man is coming in?"

Breedon was thoughtful for a moment, frowning to himself. He looked across the table to Peyton suddenly.

"You spoke of the 'Blue Mountain.' Gomba told me of the Blue Mountain. And told me—"

He did not finish. A sound at the compound door interrupted and an instant later Sohbat stood within the room, a strange figure behind him.

A thin, half-naked, brown figure, with beady eyes and nose and lips split grotesquely, as by an animal's claws. Above his loin-cloth the man wore a cape of yak hide. His thin, wiry legs were bare, as were his feet.

His little eyes blinked at the lamp light, then he slid into the room and stood uneasily, his gaze never leaving the tall form of Breedon, who had risen from the table.

Breedon eyed the newcomer for a full minute. He spoke suddenly and sharply.

"What comes out of the north, Gomba?"

The man started and shifted uneasily.

"Come!" Breedon rapped. "Why do the Buhtanese come in from the plantations? Why do the Hindus flee?"

Gomba glanced at Peyton. With a gesture of his hand Breedon sponsored his guest, but the Nogi's glance did not leave Peyton's face.

"Three nights ago," Gomba said, in a high, shrill voice that was, nevertheless, little more than a murmur, "the jungle began to talk. It began to tell of strangers from the south. One stranger comes. The jungle speaks truth. There is another stranger who comes soon."

SOMETHING in the Nogi's steady gaze at him caused a shiver to course Peyton's spine. Yet the man did not seem to be unfriendly. In his eyes there was no antagonism. Peyton couldn't understand his feeling.

"But what of the arrival of strangers?" Breedon demanded. "They come regularly to Dessa Luak."

The Nogi shifted his glance to the man who had saved his life and upon whom he spent a devotion that was slavish.

"The jungle speaks further, sahib-master," he said, still in his shrill but quiet monotone. "The jungle leaves speak to each other and say the strangers come to the Blue Mountain."

"To the Blue Mountain?" Breedon

exclaimed. "Go on, Gomba. What more does the jungle say to you?"

"That the stranger who is still to come from the south may pass through the lands of my tribe and ascend the mountain in peace. But the other one, the stranger who is already come, he may not pass among the Nogis."

Gomba had returned his gaze to Peyton and Peyton leaped to his feet.

"Is it possible the man refers to me?" he exclaimed. "By his manner, he seems to. I don't understand."

"I do not know, sahib-master," Gomba said quickly. "I know only what the jungle says."

Peyton would have spoken again but Breedon intervened.

"As I warned you, Gomba knows more than he will admit—even to me. To him every sound in the jungle is speech—speech that he and the Bhutanese can understand as easily as we understand our native language. In the trail a marmot makes when it crosses a wild yak's path he can read every jungle secret."

While he spoke he turned his back on the Nogi, and with an appearance of utter detachment, casually lifted the spread-out magazine and folding it, tossed it to the opposite end of the table.

PEYTON, watching Gomba out of the corner of his eye, saw the Nogi stiffen, his eyes fastened on the emerald. Curiously, a shade of the native's deep brown seemed to ebb from his face and his eyes to bulge.

Breedon turned slowly and gazed steadily at the transfixed Nogi. The silence in the room drew out. Peyton, bewildered, stared from Breedon to the other.

From the compound outside, the sound of a door being closed in one of the bungalows around the square

filtered in, and the far call of a night bird. A dog howled, and the low, monotonous drone of the wind through the arack trees at the jungle's edge came closer.

Still the Nogi gazed at the emerald, tense and fascinated. The silence grew weird. Peyton would have broken it, but there was a sudden interruption.

A sound that was close. To Peyton it sounded as if a visitor had tapped at the door that opened onto the compound. Tapped not with his knuckles, he thought, but with the ferule of a cane, or riding crop, perhaps, for it was a sharp sound.

Breedon moved toward the door but Gomba, suddenly galvanized into life, leaped across the room and threw himself upon the white man. Breedon stumbled backward with an oath and Peyton stepped forward to interfere. Gomba whirled upon him.

"It is to you, sahib-master, the jungle speaks now!"

BREEDON swore again, but not this time at Gomba. To Peyton he said sharply:

"Keep out of range of the door. That's what Gomba means."

From a drawer under the table Breedon brought out an automatic pistol and flipped the safety catch.

"What is it?" Peyton cried.

"Wait," Breedon commanded, "until Gomba opens the door."

Gomba was already creeping toward the door, keeping warily to one side of it as he approached. When he turned the knob and flung the door open he leaped backward, as if he expected a danger of some sort to come rushing in upon him.

But there came in only the sudden swell of the night's weird noises, the rustling of creepers in the jungle underbrush and the stir of prowling animals.

And the wind, a brisk wind, that

found the pages of the magazine on the bungalow table and fluttered them.

There seemed to be nothing else, but Gomba suddenly grunted and sprang at the opened door. From its panels he withdrew an arrow which had been imbedded deep. When he flung the door shut he held the arrow for Breedon to see.

"A message, sahib-master," he said, "from my tribe. To the stranger who has come to the sahib-master's house."

CHAPTER V

The Blue Mountain

IN unthinking amazement, his wits dulled by the Nogi's manner, Peyton reached for the arrow which Breedon had dropped upon the table. Gomba cried a shrill warning.

"Poisoned," Breedon said. "Don't touch the tip. We've never discovered an antidote and Gomba swears there is none."

The Nogi gave signs, now, of growing antipathy to Peyton. Breedon noticed this and said, curtly:

"He comes to this house as my friend, Gomba. If the wind from the north brings peril, it brings it upon me as well, for what comes to him I shall share."

The Nogi bowed in a sort of formal salaam.

"It is as the sahib-master says," he said. "To the sahib-master's friend, Gomba also is friend."

"That is good, Gomba. Now speak up. What does the poisoned arrow mean?"

"The jungle has said that a stranger comes from the south who may not pass the Nogis. The jungle speaks true. The stranger has come. The Nogis warn that in the jungle there is death for him. They warn more. That death will come here

for him, perhaps for all white men. Death is near, sahib-masters."

"But in God's name, why Gomba?" Peyton exclaimed. "I have no intention of trying to pass through the Nogi territory. I never until this night heard of your people."

The native regarded him stolidly. "The jungle speaks true. One stranger comes. A woman stranger—!"

"A woman?" Peyton cried.

"A woman stranger. She the Nogis will protect. Another stranger is already come. Him the Nogis will kill, and all who would save him. If sahib-masters ask why, Gomba cannot say."

Breedon indicated the emerald which glittered green beside the sombre arrow.

"You recognized this, Gomba."

The Nogi flashed Breedon an uneasy, pleading glance. Breedon persisted.

"If you wish to serve me, don't hold back what might help us."

THE native was silent a moment, then apparently made up his mind to speak.

"It is the sign the jungle speaks of. The sign of the strange people of the Blue Mountain."

"Ah! I thought so!"

Peyton was so struck by Breedon's exclamation, and his manner, that he could not speak at once. Breedon seemed to be lost in thought, staring at the pool of shimmering green. Presently Gomba glided up to the table.

"If sahib-master will watch with pistols while Gomba gone, Gomba will go into the jungle, quick. Gomba will come back, maybe quick, maybe next moon."

"We will watch, with pistols, Gomba!"

The native salaamed in the Hindu fashion he had picked up, and dis-

appeared—not through the door that opened to the compound, but in the back of the bungalow from where he could slip out into the night noiselessly and unobserved.

Now it was Peyton's turn to pace the floor, and Breedon's to sit at the table motionlessly, watching the younger man.

Between the two men there was a marked change. Blair Peyton, fresh, young and active, his face modeled with strength, yet touched with the handsomeness of a boy.

THE prospect of his trip into the unfrequented regions of Assam had enthused him. He had done no little dreaming, on the way across the Pacific, of the glamor and adventure that seemed to be promised.

Since Singapore, however, his manner had somewhat changed. He was subdued and thoughtful. More than he would have acknowledged the prophecy of Chia-win, the China girl behind the doll house curtain, had entered his mind.

He was imaginative enough to wonder, occasionally, if indeed some necromancy of the East was not at work around him.

And the vision of Sainya, the dancing girl, falling back against the knives of her brown-robed assassins, persisted in his brain. There, surely, was not necromancy—but awful horrible fact.

And there remained the other fact—that seemed more and more to be associated with dread. The Emerald of Pharaoh!

Fantastic as it seemed—the priceless gem had been pressed into his unwitting fingers by the woman whose life he had saved. And that woman remained an utter stranger—

What was it Gomba had said? "A woman stranger comes—she, the Nogis will protect!"—"The emerald is

the sign of the strange people of the Blue Mountain!"

Breedon watched him quietly. A somberness had settled over the features of the older man. It seemed that into his eyes a shade of moroseness had entered. He seemed to be reading the other's mind while his own mind dwelt upon some secret thoughts that, now and again, brought a glitter into his morose eyes. Occasionally he glanced from Peyton to the emerald on the table before him.

Suddenly Peyton swung around. "For God's sake, Breedon, tell me what its all about?"

BREEDON nodded quietly and motioned to the chair across the table Peyton had vacated. When the younger man dropped into it, Breedon produced a second pistol from the table drawer and slid it close to Peyton's fingers.

"While we talk," he observed, "we might keep our attention on the crack of the compound door. If it begins to widen noiselessly, take a shot without waiting. That arrow indicates that the Nogi's have come close."

"But it is all so preposterous!" Peyton exclaimed.

Breedon nodded again. From the drawer where the pistols had been he brought a square of paper marked with ink-drawn lines which, Peyton decided, represented a crude and amateurish map. He spread the map under the glow of the table lamp and pointed with a pencil tip.

"Here," he said, "is Dessa Luak. And here is the jungle."

To Peyton the markings suddenly became quite clear. Breedon's manner was tense, impressive. Peyton watched the pencil point while the other talked.

"The width of the jungle is approximately ten miles. We penetrate

it for a mile or so quite easily when we are in the mood for a hunt, or when we go out after a raiding panther. For that distance the arack trees are moderately far apart and the underbrush is mostly orchids, fir and loose creepers.

"But after that there are no tracks save the paths of the rhinoceri and these converge at the water holes. Exploration parties seldom return. The jungle is a barrier between Assam and Tibet almost as impregnable as the mountain passes beyond."

ALL of this Peyton already knew, but he did not interrupt.

"Beyond the jungle," Breedon went on, "lies the Nogi domain, a barren, rocky country that marks the beginning of the upward slope to the Himalayas. What we know of this domain is wholly unreliable.

"The Nogis, as has been said, permit no visitors. They guard the Tibetan passes more stubbornly than could a dozen regiments of British soldiers. They are as unfriendly to the Tibetans and Mongols as to the whites on this side of the jungle.

"There are a dozen separate tribes of them and they fight one another industriously, but they unite at the first whisper of intruders from either the north or south.

"And as you saw tonight, their weapons are poisoned darts and spear-heads—which are more gruesome than the metal of bullets or steel of blades."

While he spoke, his tone settling into a drone, Breedon's pencil point followed twisting lines of the map, to settle at last at a point beyond the Nogi domain.

"Here," he said, "is supposed to be the Nyinser—the only known pass through the mountains into Tibet. Twenty years ago a group of whites managed to cross the Nogi territory

and came upon this pass. The party ventured through it and managed to get into Tibet.

"One of the party managed, also, to get back to Dessa Luak. The rest did not. But this one came back dying of jungle fevers. He left little more than a legend of the Nyinser and its location. What I have drawn here is the interpretation of the faltering descriptions he was able to give, as they have been handed along during the twenty years.

"And I have made a few corrections based upon what Gomba has tried to tell me. Gomba can make neither head or tail out of a map, of course. And he can talk geography only by the use of landmarks which are planted in his mind. But he has described the Nyinser itself, with much detail. If ever I come upon it I shall be able to get through it—to what is beyond."

Peyton looked up sharply.

"If ever you come upon it? Do you mean to say you have some idea of braving the jungle yourself?"

BREEDON was silent a moment, his pencil point wandering over his improvised map aimlessly, touching here and there at markings which to Peyton remained unintelligible. At last he said, quietly:

"Sooner or later I shall try to find the Blue Mountain. It is somewhere close to the other end of the Nyinser."

"Again the 'Blue Mountain'!" Peyton exclaimed. "This emerald—Gomba's prattling—the mysterious 'woman stranger'—all seem linked, in your mind and your Gomba's, with your weird Blue Mountain. And even O'Neil mumbles about it."

"Shall I tell you, briefly, the story brought back by the man who returned, dying of jungle fevers?"

Peyton nodded silently.

"There are one or two pioneers in

Dessa Luak left, who remember his return. They would tell you emphatically that the fellow came back utterly crazed. That the fever had sapped his brain.

"He cried out, in his delirium, about a mountain with a blue peak where other peaks were white with snow; a mountain that reached not so high as Everest, but was more difficult to scale. 'Beyond Nyinser' he screamed, over and over while he was dying. 'Beyond Nyinser, the Blue Mountain—and the strange people—and, besides, the Lake of Monsters'."

PEYTON leaned back in his chair suddenly and laughed aloud.

"Oh, come now! 'Lake of Monsters!' I'm beginning to think some kind of fever has got hold of the whole batch of you—O'Neil included, though he's never been near the jungle before."

"Yes," Breedon admitted surprisingly. "Perhaps I am crazy. Sometimes, when I listen to Gomba, I think I am."

"Your man Gomba, a Nogi himself who knows the Nyinser Pass, verifies the yarn of your dying man?"

"And adds to it. Let me go on. When I came to Dessa Luak, the story of the chap who came back from the north was soon retold to me. You see, up here, we have few things to talk about after the mail has been gone over and the news from home exhausted. Politics, plantation gossip and our little scandals, become tiresome.

"Seven years ago, when I came, there still were many who had listened to the ravings of the dying man. They liked to pass them on to newcomers. His tale of a mountain with a blue nose was intriguing. As was his incoherent attempts to tell how he and his companions had followed a yak trail up its side to come

at last upon the home of what he called 'the strange people.'

"At this point, it seems, he began to scream of monsters in a pool, or lake, monsters that he wouldn't even describe, they filled his tottering brain so horribly. But it was gathered that the rest of the party met their deaths in some terrible fashion in this pool of water. How the one escaped was never discovered. He died with his screams on his lips."

"And Gomba has decorated those ravings with a semblance of truth?"

I RELATED them to him one day when he was convalescing, in a back room in this bungalow. The fellow was worshipping me by then, and had begun to pick up English words with an amazing facility—with Sohbat's help. He gave me to understand at that time that he knew of the blue mountain and of the strange people.

"From that minute on I turned myself into a language teacher. I made an amusement out of it, not having a woman to occupy my mind. At length Gomba filled in the gaps in the other poor fellow's ravings.

"He swears there is a blue mountain. He has never seen it, nor, he says, have any of his tribesmen, for they do not go beyond the Nyinser. But they know of it. And more, they know of the 'strange people' and the 'Lake of Monsters'."

In sudden gesture Breedon dropped his pencil and lifted the emerald.

"Gomba recognized this," he said, impressively. "Do you doubt that?"

Peyton frowned. "You heard me accuse him of knowing something about it. I was astounded."

"And your dancing girl—the Sainya of Bangkok who had taken refuge in the Singapore cabaret—she called it the 'Emerald of Pharoah?'"

Peyton was appalled by the glitter that came into the other man's nar-

rowed eyes. Breedon had leaned across the table. The hand that held up the gem clenched it so tightly that the veins in his wrists were purple ridges, and his lips were so tightly pressed that they had ebbed a sickly white.

Peyton could nod his affirmation. He wondered if there could be a strain of madness somewhere in Matthew Breedon's blood.

BREEDON dropped the jewel and got up. He paced the room with long strides, gazing all the while at the floor and muttering to himself. His pistol lay where he had left it and suddenly Peyton realized that both of them had forgotten to watch the door for the possible widening of its crack—which was to mean Nogi danger.

He forgot everything save the man who walked the floor and muttered to himself, and that other form that was never out of his memory, the cloaked figure that walked ahead of him in Victoria Square and that had so mysteriously confronted him for that brief second in Saigon Street at the entrance to the Frenchman's.

All at once it seemed to him as if there were two people walking the floor of Breedon's bungalow. Breedon himself and another, a vague, dim figure that was transparent—in a long cloak that completely hid her face.

He grew cold with apprehension of some impending thing, and rose, gropingly, lost in his spell. His movement seemed to bring Breedon back to a sense of his presence.

The man swung around and came up to the table, his face darkened in the shadow above the shaded lamp. Peyton saw that he was lividly white.

"Emerald of the Pharoah!" Breedon said, his voice tense. "That explains everything—that Gomba has

told me! I know who the strange people are. I know who the 'woman stranger' is—the woman whose life you saved from the Dyak knives!"

"Good God, man. What is it you are saying?"

Breedon's voice rose to a cry.

I KNOW, I tell you! I know why the orchid flowers have turned their faces to the south. In welcome to that one who comes to join the Strange People. Who comes back to them with the blood of the royal Pharaohs in her veins. The living Pharaoh, Peyton! Think of it!

"The Pharaoh strain kept alive through all these thousands of years. Kept alive by the Pharaoh Priests of Ra, who fled from Egypt to make their home through the centuries on the hidden crest of the Blue Mountain! Fled with the gold and jewels of ancient Egypt and crossed a continent to hide in safety while the world moved on below their feet—to hide and wait for and pray for Egypt's restoration!"

Now, Peyton knew the man was insane. Or so he told himself. And no sooner did he accept this conclusion as final than doubts began to enter his brain.

Something in the other's tenseness, his utter conviction, seemed to bridge the gap across the top of the lamp and grip at his own wits. He discovered to his amazement that he had unconsciously lifted the emerald, and was grasping it as tightly as had Breedon a moment or two before.

And when he looked down at his own wrist he saw that his veins were purple ridges too.

"It's fantastic!" was all that he could say. Breedon echoed his word.

"Fantastic? Yes. Unbelievable. But, Peyton, God knows that I believe it. What became of the Priests

of Ra when the Pharaohs fell? Are there not a thousand hints in the papyri at Cairo's museum that the household priests of the last Pharaoh fled across the Dead Sea, taking with them the accumulated treasures of the dynasty?

"Have not the tombs disclosed hieroglyphics that more than one Egyptologist has translated into phrases that point to a living Pharaoh spirited away to an unknown harbor? Fantastic? So the savants have said. But the Nogis say differently.

"Their legends tell of the Strange People, who came before Buddha of the Tibetans; before Christ, of the Christians; before Bhrama, of the Hindus. They tell of rites and sacrifices on the Blue Mountain—that were the rites and sacrifices of Old Egypt. They have never seen these people of the mountain, as Gomba declares, but they serve them faithfully—because their ancestors served them.

"Every generation of young Nogis is taught to watch for the coming of the stranger from the south, the stranger who is to be guarded and passed through the Nogi domain and guided through the Nyinser pass to the base of the mountain. Who would these strangers be—if not the living Pharaohs, one after the other through all the years, come to preside over the councils of their hidden guardians—the living Priests of Ra?"

COLD perspiration gathered on Peyton's forehead. He wanted to laugh, to ridicule this wild fantasy of Breedon's. But, somehow, he couldn't. He could only grip the emerald tighter, and stare, speechless.

Breedon dropped into his chair abruptly, completely exhausted. Wraith of a dry smile curved at the corners of his tight-lipped mouth. It

was the first smile Peyton had seen on his somber face.

"I am not talking," Breedon said, almost pleadingly, "without knowing what I am saying. I have spent seven years translating into meaning those incoherent ravings of the poor chap who came back to die. I taught Gomba to be my slave and to understand English, that I might fit those ravings into the legends of the Nogis.

AND I have sent to Egypt for such clues as the savants permit to escape into the world. They believe their own clues, these Egyptology fellows, but they—like you—have the word 'fantastic' always in the back of their heads, and unlike me, are afraid of ridicule. But I believe, Peyton, that the Priests of Ra inhabit the Blue Mountain and that the woman whose life you saved is the princess of the House of Pharaoh!

"Remember your Sainya—'The wind is from the North,' and 'Emerald of Pharaoh.' Remember Gomba—just a little while ago. 'The sign of the strange people.' And remember the assassins who would have killed you for no other reason than your possession of the emerald."

Peyton sorted out another memory that confused him. "But why, then, the attack on this unknown woman's life in Victoria Square? Dyaks sought to wipe me out, presumably because I had interfered in their plan to kill her. Somehow that doesn't fit in with after events."

Breedon shook his head. "I don't understand that. The living Pharaoh has enemies who have hired the Dyaks. That is the only possible explanation. The Dyaks are murderers for hire, you know. I refuse to try to understand everything—until the right time comes."

"The right time? Can there be such a time?"

"I am going through the jungle, Peyton," Breedon said quietly. "I have made up my mind. I probably shall not return. There is no one to grieve if I don't. But I've lived seven years with my brooding over the strange people on the Blue Mountain, and now I shall hunt them out."

Peyton was conscious, again, of the emerald in his hand. He opened his palm and stared down into the shimmering, watery green. He turned the stone so that its carved face looked up at him.

Something of the serenity of that face communicated itself to him. And, somehow, the vacant circles of the eye pupils seemed to grow vivid and animate, and the whole face to take on the warmth of life.

When he spoke, after the drawn-out silence, it was as if he did not speak to Breedon at all, but to the girl of the face carved in the priceless gem.

"I'd like to find her again," he said. "I'll go with you, Breedon."

CHAPTER VI

Through the Jungle

DAWN was breaking over the compound and drifting through the curtains of Breedon's bungalow when the two men rose finally from the table on which Breedon had spread his improvised map of the regions to the north.

Again and again he had attempted to dissuade Peyton from joining in the adventure in the Nogi domain. But his protests were half-hearted. Peyton knew that under his reserve Breedon was delighted that his friend should volunteer to join in what promised to be a dangerous as well as foolhardy undertaking.

Some of Breedon's enthusiasm had communicated itself to the other.

In his calmer moments Peyton pretended an utter disbelief in the curious conclusions Breedon had arrived at—that there could still exist in the world a carefully preserved strain of the royal blood of Egypt, and, more, that the Egyptian priesthood had perpetuated itself in such a far exile as the unknown pass in the Himalayas and there hoarded the ancient treasure of the Egyptian kings.

But always these saner moments passed before the logic of Breedon's arguments—and before the memory of the recent events of Singapore and Gomba's strange conduct.

With the dawn, and relief from further fear, temporarily at least, of a Nogi visitation out of the jungle, Peyton decided to prepare O'Neil for what was ahead rather than lie down. O'Neil had been put up temporarily at the club and Peyton left the bungalow to cross the compound toward the club house.

THE settlement's life already was astir. Behind the houses which skirted the square, moved the lurking figures of the Bhutanese laborers who had stolen in from the plantations. The uneasiness that had settled down over the little colony brought its residents early from their beds and through the windows of the bungalows could be seen their women, moving about in their house sarongs, the long single garments affected on the frontier.

The breeze from the jungle was fragrant with the scents of wild clematis, mimosa, beech and lotus. The bordering arack trees waved lazily in the wind, lazily and peacefully.

In the bright light of day Peyton ridiculed himself for the night of tense consideration of the strange menace symbolized in the poisoned arrow sunk into Breedon's door.

Still the zest of the adventure tingled in his blood.

Breedon had spent the small hours of the night elaborating upon his conclusions and explaining his "evidence." He had produced a voluminous correspondence with Lord Kildaire, the celebrated British expert on Egyptian history.

LORD KILDAIRE had professed a consuming interest in the story told by the Dessa Luak settler who had returned from the jaunt into the north and died while he raved, and in Gomba's story of the "strange people" who had inhabited the inaccessible summit of the unknown "blue mountain" far back in the Nogi legends.

Dramatically, Breedon had produced Lord Kildaire's last letter, written shortly before his lordship died from a mysterious disease contracted during a visit to the newly opened tomb of Tutankhamen in the Valley of the Kings.

In this letter Lord Kildaire, commenting upon the full text of Breedon's transcription of Gomba's story, said that in the papyri discovered in Tutankhamen's tomb there were many cryptical references to a "hegira of the priests of Ra," the household priests of the ancient Pharaohs, which could only be explained by Breedon's own conclusions that when the dynasty of the Pharaohs crumbled, the household priests had fled with the royal treasure and the royal heir, to perpetuate themselves through centuries of waiting for the miracle of restoration.

This letter from the great British Egyptologist did more than anything else to persuade Peyton that the secret of the Blue Mountain, granting that there was such a thing as a "secret of the Blue Mountain," might prove to be interesting, if not startling.

O'Neil, grumbling against the dawn, which he swore he hadn't met for time out of mind, rolled from his cot at the club house to listen sleepily while his patron explained that they soon would be carrying the Emerald of Pharoah still further than the outpost of Dessa Luak. When Peyton mentioned that it would be a quest of the Blue Mountain the big Irishman was suddenly full awake.

THERE are two tales," he said, solemnly, "that have come down through the years to get at the hearts of sailormen; if you might say sailormen have such things as hearts. The one has to do with the Flying Dutchman, which is told one way or another on all the seas, and the other has to do with the Blue Mountain of Tibet, which is an Oriental tale and you hear it mostly in the ports of the Gulf of Siam and the China Sea.

"You never get the straight of it, and you never hear it told the same way twice, but still, you might say, it's always about the same—that up where civilization ends and hell begins, which is way of saying where Tibet starts, there's something that links the old world to the new. I've told you before what I've heard. Pity it is I've mostly been drunk when I've heard it, which in a manner of speakin' is not a bad way to be when you're a-hearin' of curious things. It makes you more believin'.

"I'm with you, my lad, on any sort of adventuring, but I'm saying here and now that from the little I've seen of him, considerin' that we only arrived late on the yesterday, I don't trust your Mister Breedon."

THIS, probably, was the longest speech Shane O'Neil ever made in his life and he immediately apologized by adding: "There! I should have stopped before I begun."

"Why don't you like Breedon, O'Neil?"

"Ask me why I have warts on my fingers every two years when I've never been near a toad? I'll tell you I don't know."

"Then we'll not speak of that again. Mr. Breedon has aroused my curiosity. I believe that he thinks he is on the track of a great and interesting discovery. Whether he is or not, I'm going in with him. Fact is, my tea plantation is shot to pieces, nothing to be done about it in a hurry, so I've time."

"Fact is," O'Neil said, slyly, "you're wanting to know what kind of a face was wrapped in the collar of the long cloak you spared being punctured in Victoria Square. There's no chance at all your little heathen friend Gomba meant that lady, when he told of a woman stranger, but you might say it's what there's no chance of that comes true now and then. When do we pack?"

"We travel with little packing," Peyton returned. "And we wait until Gomba comes out of the jungle."

GOMBA reappeared, not with "the next moon," but at noon of the second day. Peyton and Breedon were at the club, in the bar, when Sohbat came in to salaam before his master.

"It is Gomba," he said. "Gomba say, come quick please."

The Nogi had thrown himself on the rug of the Breedon bungalow's front room, in complete exhaustion. His yak-hide cape was tossed aside. His body was bare save for the loin cloth. His back was cut by brush thorns. At Breedon's step the native leaped to his feet. He attempted a low salaam and his weakness overcame him. He toppled again to the floor. Breedon commanded Sohbat, sharply, to bring brandy.

"Gomba go far," the Nogi said

when the brandy had brought life and strength to his veins. "Everywhere in the jungle are Gomba's tribesmen, but never are there two in the one place. Gomba must hear two of them talk, one to the other, so Gomba go far. At last Gomba hear."

"Good!" Breedon exclaimed. "What did you hear?"

"Even now the woman stranger passes through the jungle, sahib-master. Tomorrow she will be among the Nogis, where the Nyinser begins. My people guard the jungle paths. They wait for the other stranger."

Now the little fellow's beady eyes turned upon Peyton. He murmured:

"The new sahib-master must not go out under the moon."

BREEDON laughed shortly. "We shall be under the moon in your own domain, Gomba. Tomorrow we start—for the Blue Mountain."

Gomba leaped to his feet, his eyes blinking. Suddenly he fell to his knees and in the Nogi gesture of supplication bent to lay his palms flat on the floor before him.

"You will not go, sahib-master," he cried. "Not with the new stranger. The Nogis seek the green stone. From the strange people on the mountain there has come word. It is word to the Nogis. It is the command that the Nogis bring to the foot of the mountain the green stone. The strange people say the green stone does not belong in the keeping of the white stranger."

"Ah!" Breedon exclaimed. "That explains the poisoned arrow and the attacks of the assassins in Singapore. The friends of the unknown woman in Victoria Square don't approve of her little gift of an emerald that is without price."

"Yes, yes!" Gomba cried. "The strange people want it back. To the Nogis they have said: 'Return to us

the green stone. It is held by hands that defile it. Those hands must not keep it.' That is what the jungle repeats to Gomba."

PEYTON frowned. "I understand the unrest in the jungle became apparent three days before my arrival, yet I came as fast as boat and train could bring me after my escape from those who killed Sainya. I'm puzzled to know how word could have gone into the Nogi domain, with which there is no communication, before an enemy of mine could have brought it from the south. That is, of course, admitting that Gomba is right and that there is a link between the stone and the unknown residents atop his Blue Mountain."

"That is a mysterious thing," Breedon agreed, "but when you have lived close to the East as long as I have you will not bother yourself with seeking the explanation of things that seem miraculous. You will accept them as facts and let it go at that. The Nogis were warned of your coming, Gomba says, and Gomba is never fooled by news out of the jungle."

"The tribesmen filtered down to the very doorstep of Dessa Luak, before your arrival. And the Bhutanese and other natives who work the plantations knew they were coming. You might ask 'how?' the Bhutanese knew, but you'll wait until doomsday for your answer."

Breedon warned Peyton, and O'Neil as well, that the settlement must have no sign of their plan to go north on any kind of an exploration. Gomba also urged that the purpose to attempt reaching the Nyinser Pass and the fabled Blue Mountain be kept secret. When he was convinced that his master was adamant in his decision Gomba was eager for the journey to begin.

"We do not return," he said, com-

placently, "but my eyes shall see much before they close. Perhaps we shall come to the end of the Nyinser. Beyond the Nyinser is the next world."

PREPARATIONS for the plunge into the jungle were simple, and were quietly made. From the settlement commissary, jackets and breeches of native woven box-cloth were procured for Peyton and O'Neil. Panther rifles were cleaned and oiled, to be slung on Gomba's shoulders. No food supplies were included, save tea and sugar.

"In the jungle there are fruits," Breedon said. "Beyond the jungle there is human life, and that means that also there is food."

The start was made long before the dawn of the day after Gomba's return. To Peyton it seemed that the ten miles through the dense underbrush could hardly require more than a portion of the day, but Breedon warned him that days might be consumed.

For a mile after the start the jungle was criss-crossed with easy paths, beaten and trodden by generations of hunters for marmot and partridges and peacocks, but after a mile the verdure thickened. Gomba led unerringly to an age of rhinoceros trail which wound through arack and fir trees and cut through the matted undergrowth.

Of this trail there was a full three miles, and progress was swift. Peyton was eager, zest of the adventure tingling his veins. Breedon was intent. Peyton occasionally glanced at him, when a clearing overhead permitted a shaft of the thin morning sun to creep down, and wondered why it was that O'Neil did not trust him.

And more than once, coming suddenly upon a patch of light, Peyton surprised O'Neil's quiet scrutiny of

their companion. A changed mood had come over the big Irishman. By nature hearty and exuberant, he had assimilated some of Breedon's natural moroseness. Peyton charged him with a change of heart.

"'Tis mistaken you are," O'Neil promptly assured him. "'Tis only that I'm used to seeing fore and aft, port and starb'd when I'm navigatin'. I'm tardy gettin' accustomed to be going where you can't see, and coming from where you can't look back."

The rhinoceros path led eventually to a long dried water hole upon which other long abandoned trails converged. Gomba chose one of these paths. Breedon called Peyton's attention to the converging paths.

"The stranger in the jungle would be bound to pick the wrong one," he said. "He would be in luck if he found himself where he started. More often they have gone on until they've found themselves in a panther's claws."

WHEN Peyton's nerves became accustomed to the slow progress they made, barely creeping along behind Gomba's heels, he grew conscious of the strange jungle noises which were a weird murmur. He had the feeling of being surrounded and watched by unknown living things, underfoot, behind each matted brush, overhead.

This feeling was intensified by the actions of Gomba who seemed barely to creep along the path, even when the trail opened straight ahead for many yards at a time. The native's brain sorted out the noises. A marmot whistled close and O'Neil jumped, slapping his hand at his pistol holster. Gomba, however, appeared not to have heard the little beast's startled protest.

An instant later a sound none of the others could hear found its way

to the native's ear. He dropped in the path, prone, signaling the others to do likewise. Presently Peyton was aware that the little brown man—his body innocent of its yak-hide cape now, was creeping forward, inch by inch, on his stomach. Suddenly he rose. The alarm, whatever it was, had been false, or the danger was passed.

IT was Breedon who announced, suddenly, that night had fallen. Peyton was astounded. He had forgotten to keep track of time, and they had penetrated the jungle's darkest interior. For hours they had been pushing forward through utter blackness, but Peyton had supposed the sun was still shining above the impenetrable canopy of tree foliage.

"My people soon will be all around us," Gomba whispered. "But they will move south, toward Dessa Luak. With arrows ready for the white man. We rest off the path, and we be very still."

"Resting off the path," Peyton soon discovered, meant creeping into little clearings in the brush that Gomba shaped with his hands. Clearings barely roomy enough for a body to be fitted into, not stretched out but cramped into a sitting position.

Vaguely, Peyton understood that the native was bent upon surrounding each of them with a foliage screen that would serve to some extent to shut in their scents, protecting them not only from the lurking Nogis on their way to the settlement's outskirts, but from prowling beasts.

So far as Peyton knew, the interminable night, softened only by occasional periods of fitful sleeping, passed without incident. Gomba, never at hand, seemed however to be ever close. O'Neil snored once, but consciousness of the sound he made

startled him more than either Breedon or Peyton. He awoke with a frightened gasp and after that slept noiselessly when he slept at all.

But the night had not been without incident!

Gomba's bullet-like head protruded through the verdure screen that sheltered Peyton and signed that morning had come. The native led the way to the trail. Peyton stumbled over a solid object in the undergrowth and Gomba, contorting his face into the semblance of a grin, made a faint, hissing sound.

Peyton's probing fingers identified the object he had stumbled over. The prone body of a naked brown man. Breedon, stumbling up, whispered in Peyton's ear.

"We were pretty close to the end during the night. Gomba got two of them. This one and another, who were stealing up."

CHAPTER VII

Nearing Blue Mountain

IT was high noon of the fifth day from Dessa Luak before the narrow stretch of borderland, which was the domain of the Nogis, lay behind the little party.

In the clear atmosphere of the Himalayas foothills, on a tableland hedged in on either side by the rising slope of rocky hillsides, Breedon and Peyton, with O'Neil beside them, looked down upon the territory they had crossed at last.

A land of deep valleys in which were strewn the crude tents of the tribesmen who had lived in this remote corner of the world for time out of mind, ruled by a strange religion that was a mixture of all the religions of the East, fierce and forever at war with each other, cannibals by legend, head-hunters now.

It had been a perilous journey across those valleys and open plains,

mostly made at night, by following the bending lines of little rivers that rushed down every slope of the land to haven in tiny pools that, Peyton thought, must surely overflow but never did.

Gomba explained that these pools were bottomless. He was quite sure that his tribesmen had solved the secrets of the great oceans of which they knew only the vague rumors that had come down through past generations.

"The pools go deep into the earth," he explained naively, "and then they come out on the side and the water from the mountain rivers flows out and makes the big lakes the sahib-masters call the seas."

PEYTON was soon to learn that Gomba's explanation of the ocean was quite as sane as the only possible explanation of many events he was to confront.

Far off to the right, from the tableland on which they stood looking back upon the Nogi tents, the white crest of Mt. Everest was lost in the sky. And ahead of them, beyond the tableland, was the opening to the fabled Nyinser Pass which cut through the mountains into Tibet.

Peyton remembered the Dessa Luak tea planter who had returned from this pass only to die in his ravings of a "Lake of Monsters." Perhaps he had stood on this very rocky ledge and picked out the path he was to take through the Nogi territory to reach the jungle.

O'Neil was, perhaps, the most weary member of the party. His great bulk had told upon him somewhat, and at Breedon's suggestion an eighteen hour rest was taken before the pass was entered. The rest was welcome to all, save, perhaps, Gomba, who seemed to have been unaffected by the experiences of the past few days.

The start into the pass was made early the following morning. Travel was not difficult. The cleft in the mountains was a natural gorge, a full quarter of a mile wide and its valley fairly level. A half day's progress had only been made when other travelers in the pass were sighted.

GOMBA was unfamiliar with the region, yet he recognized these other mysterious figures instantly. Lamas, or Buddhist monks, he explained to Breedon, who were the only contact between the Nogis and Tibetans. For bits of cloth and baskets, brought by the monks, the Nogis traded hides.

"If one of those chaps should catch a glimpse of us," Breedon grumbled, "we're done. From the fact that they are appearing in larger and larger numbers on the pass floor, we're pretty sure to have to run the gauntlet of a lot of them."

The walls of the pass were thick with outjutting spruce and the tall stems of rhododendron bushes. Both Breedon and Peyton had brought glasses. When these glasses picked out an approaching figure, usually accompanied by a dog hitched to a tiny cart, the party would instantly disappear in a clump of rhododendron and wait, silent and motionless, while the traveler passed. These interruptions became more and more frequent.

The lamas wore long dirty robes that flopped about their sandaled feet, completely covering their bodies. On their heads they wore the broad-rimmed straw hat of the Tibetans. Under their hats the hoods of their cloaks fitted tightly against their heads, covering much of their cheeks and all of their necks. Only a patch of their muddy-yellow faces were visible.

And each one carried the prayer-wheel of his race, a curious contriv-

ance of a series of wheels, each smaller than the other, pyramided at the end of a long pole. Breedon explained:

"They constantly whirl the wheels and they have a knack of making the wheels revolve in opposite directions. Each revolution is supposed to make a complete prayer to the Supreme Buddha. The prayer-wheels of the lamas are their protection against robbers and unfriendly bands. The lama is not molested by the rival factions of the Tibetans."

AS the day drew out it became apparent that something had to be done about the increasing parade of lamas, all traveling to the south, toward the Nogis. Black tents began to appear, dotting the floor of the pass and clinging to the side walls.

"There will be a temple farther along," Breedon said. "That means a gang of them clustered in one spot."

"It might be possible now," O'Neil suggested, "for me to start an argument with one, or maybe two, of those fellows. If I argued strong enough, maybe I'd come out of the fracas with a pair of those robes and two prayer-wheels. By repeating the argument when the occasion arose I might acquire another pair of outfits. For myself, I'd pick out a fat one."

The suggestion meant nothing to Peyton who began to despair of going much farther, and Breedon had said that the Blue Mountain, granting that it existed at all, would be well beyond the far mouth of the pass, in the heart of the outlying Tibetan settlements.

But Breedon shot O'Neil a quick glance while the Irishman was proposing his whimsical plan. A few moments later Breedon talked to Gomba animatedly, some distance apart from the others. Peyton saw

that Gomba nodded, and set out along the floor of the pass at an incredibly swift trot. Presently he was out of sight.

"We'll wait until he comes back," Breedon announced.

"You've sent him to the corner store, maybe?" O'Neil murmured.

But Breedon made no reply to the sally. Peyton felt a vague uneasiness coming over him.

It was full two hours before the Nogi returned. He appeared suddenly out of a clump of spruce close to where the party waited. In his arms were the tall poles of prayer-wheels, wide-brimmed straw hats, and around his neck hung a bundle of rags that, when pulled apart, became three lama robes in various states of delapidated patchwork.

Peyton whistled. "To the corner store was right! How did he manage it?"

Gomba avoided his glance and Breedon occupied himself by an examination of the robes, tossing what seemed to be the most voluminous to O'Neil. Its filthiness evoked a disgusted grunt from the Irishman. Peyton shrank silently from the touch of the garment Breedon handed him. Tibetan lamas might be holy men, but they were not sanitary!

IN a little while the party had changed its outward aspect. Certainly none of the lamas who walked along, twirling their prayer-wheels were fatter or more impressive than O'Neil, and surely none was thinner and more cadaverous than the tall, angular Breedon.

Through their glasses Peyton and Breedon studied the movements of the occasional pedestrians while they twirled their prayer-wheels, and watched their manner of saluting each other.

"So long as we don't have to talk," Peyton observed, "we may get along."

"The holy men of Buddha," Breedon returned, "are accustomed to long periods of silent contemplation. The Indian, Gandhi, is silent through one day each week. Some of these lamas take a notion to be speechless for a year at a time. When we have found the right vegetable matter with which to dye our skins, and can thus risk being looked at face to face, we shall simply be under the 'silence vow,' as Gomba, our servant will explain by the proper motions."

"Since Gomba scorns the effort at disguise, he will be in himself suspicious, will he not?" Peyton wondered.

"Again we may rely on the peculiarities of the lamas. Exceptionally holy is the monk who has rescued a savage tribesman from the mire of unbelief in the Supreme Buddha. Many of them have servants captured or lured from the border tribes."

IT was O'Neil who solved the mystery of Gomba's acquisition of the three lama outfits, from sandals to enveloping robes, from straw head coverings to spinning prayer-wheels. When the stop for the night was made, within sight of the first of the temples they were destined to pass, O'Neil drew Peyton aside.

"Gomba is an efficient arguer," he said.

Peyton looked at him, puzzled. O'Neil nodded solemnly.

"You notice he had a chat with our friend, back there in the pass. And that he went away alone. I said nothing about it at the time, but I slipped out of the path to investigate a couple of the Nogi's side glances, back aways, and each time I found a dead monk. I missed the third, but he would have been the fat one whose robe I acquired, because the two I discovered in the spruce were skinny chaps, who had been argued

with nice and clean, straight to the heart with a knife from behind!"

Peyton's soul sickened. What manner of a man was Breedon? The remainder of the journey through Nyinser pass ever remained a confused memory of events in Peyton's mind. As the grasslands of Tibet proper drew nearer, the temples, little piles of crude stone with their Buddha shrines within, became more and more numerous.

MANY were the narrow escapes for the party when they passed these stone piles and the groups of lamas gathered about them. Some day, Peyton promised himself, he would tell of the initial stages of his venture, in a book perhaps.

The moment when he recalled this promise, and swore that his journey to the Blue Mountain should ever remain a secret, locked in his soul as well as his memory, came swiftly after his fourteenth day of travel from the little compound of Dessa Luak.

Their presumed "vow of silence" had got them safely past the temples, and had even made it possible for them to spend one tired night at a great lamasery, a house of monks, beyond the pass where the grass plateaus began.

And it was while they were stretched on the hard stones of the lamasery, after the manner of travelers who accept a night's lodging, that Gomba came creeping up, and waking Breedon, whispered:

"Tomorrow, sahib-master, we come to the Blue Mountain. Gomba has learned!"

How Gomba "learned," Peyton never knew. The Nogi had picked up many Tibetan words, holy words most of them, for he talked only with the lamas who came and went through the pass, and who trudged the narrow roads of the grass pla-

teaus high in the Himalayas. But they were words that helped to mutual understandings. Yet he could hold no conversations. Still, he had "learned."

And toward noon of the next day Breedon pointed ahead, and up, excitedly. Peyton's blood raced and O'Neil grunted. Unquestionably the high nose of a peak that towered above its neighbors, was of a blue tinge, startling, in a sky into which the white capped peaks of the neighboring mountains faded.

The peak was not higher than many of its neighbors. Not high enough to be ranked as a rival of Everest. This, to Peyton, explained what had been his mystery, that there could be a Himalaya peak of any unusual character that had not been noted by the explorers of the range.

"It is a trick of the sun's rays that give the crest its bluish tinge," he said to Breedon. "If we attempt to climb it and succeed, we will probably find, instead of your 'strange people,' a waste of impenetrable snow that, at close range, is as white as any other."

Breedon, through the preceding days, had become more and more morose. He had entered into few conversations. Peyton thought his eyes had taken on a permanent glitter that was something of a madman's. He talked at length with Gomba, and Gomba reported to him after many absences from the party. Absences which Peyton could not explain.

CHAPTER VIII

Lost

SOMEWHERE on the ascent Peyton had lost Breedon, O'Neil and Gomba!

Through two torturous days they had climbed and climbed. Always the trail upward was marked, definite,

an ever ascending path that showed the handiwork of human hands. Now it was a natural ridge around the mountainside. Now it was an opening cut through rocks. And again it led across the stumps of trees that had been cut, not by any cataclysm of nature, but by saws.

AT dawn of the third day the upward climb had begun again. Peyton estimated that they were twenty thousand feet above the level of the sea. Gomba, who had never wearied, began to show the effects of the altitude. He breathed with difficulty. O'Neil was frankly tired. Breedon was as fresh as the day the party started.

Breedon had gone ahead that morning, as usual, Peyton following close behind. And suddenly they had come to the snow line. Here were great drifts of snow that seeped down, and down, onto the trail, in endless drifts of powdered white.

Peyton never remembered just what had happened—but suddenly an avalanche of dry, powdered snow swept down upon them. He heard Breedon calling, an "all right; push on." And he had pushed on.

Once again he had heard Breedon's call, unintelligible but reassuring, and he had not stopped. Another snowslide might occur at any moment, and it would be better for both of them to be beyond the area.

Presently he was aware of the ominous silence, the emptiness behind him. Steadying himself against a protruding rock he halted and looked back. Behind him the trail had made a sharp bend. He shouted. In the clear, frozen air of that great height, his voice gathered volume and echoed back to him from a thousand crags in the mountain valleys and gorges, but there was no alien sound—only his own echo.

He shouted again and again, something akin to panic coming over him. During the last few days the nerves of each man in the party had become taut. O'Neil had become as moody and morose as Breedon ever was. Gomba had taken on a bit of his master's surliness. Peyton felt that a line had been drawn between Breedon and, in a minor sense, his faithful servant, and he and O'Neil. A line of budding enmity.

BREEDON regretted that he had not made the journey alone! This was borne in upon Peyton more and more. The never lessening mystery to him was, why?

Still, there in the awful solitude of that isolated Himalayan peak, with the menacing Tibetans below them, and memory of many days that had linked them together in endless danger, the echoing return of his call, vacant, empty, disheartening, wrought something of terror.

He attempted to retrace his steps, but the slide of snow completely blocked the trail. He attacked the powdered pile feverishly with his gloved hands and soon realized that he might as well ladle the ocean with a dipper.

For the first time his ears began to sing, as an effect of the rarefied atmosphere, and he felt himself suddenly growing dizzy, his brain weakening before the awfulness of his utter aloneness, the altitude and the intense cold. He began blindly to rush upward, crazed with the thought that if, as Gomba and Breedon had declared, there were "strange people" on the blue summit above, they could not be so strange as to deny him aid in rescuing Breedon from the downfall of tons of enveloping snow.

He had groped his way upward perhaps a dozen yards when the

narrow path swung sharply in a curve around the mountain. He made the bend carefully, steeling his reeling wits against the bottomless precipice that stretched downward from the outer edge of the path. He knew that he was shouting, still shouting, hoping to sort out of the echo an answering cry from either Breedon, or from O'Neil and Gomba, who had been still farther behind.

Suddenly his shouting died in his throat.

Around the bend in the path he came face to face with—

One of those figures in long brown coats that had walked behind the Unknown in Victoria Square.

That was his first impression, for the long cloak that confronted him was brown against the dazzling white of the snow. And the figure was tall and lithe, and around its head was wrapped the same white semi-turban that had covered the heads of the pair of guards in Victoria Square.

BUT of course it couldn't be. Singapore was far behind—back, behind the Nyinser, and the Nogi territory; behind Dessa Luak. He rubbed his eyes to rub the vision out, but when he looked again it stood there, still, silent, menacing.

"It is the stranger from the South alone who is welcome. His friends will not answer his call."

Though it was perhaps but a second until Peyton was certain that it was the man who stood in the path before him who spoke, it seemed to him as if ages passed before he persuaded himself that his senses could be believed.

The voice seemed to come not from the one who was close, but from afar off, as if it came down from the summit above. And the purity of the English accent was extraordinary startling.

Slowly Peyton absorbed a distinct impression of the figure that confronted him. The brown robe was of the same unfamiliar cloth as were those in Victoria Square, and later, in the room in which he was a prisoner with Sainya, the dancing girl.

The face, that looked out from under a hood that was wound into a curious head-dress on top of the head, was dark, but it was not brown, as was the Nogi skin, nor yet yellow, as that of the Tibetans. The cheek bones were high, and the nose long and finely chiseled. The eyes fascinated him. Inexpressibly black, and wide with narrow lids.

He remembered, suddenly, the eyes that had glanced at him in Victoria Square—the eyes of the Unknown. Black as grotto pools they were, and that is what he thought of now—grotto pools!

The man did not move. Had not moved since Peyton stumbled upon him around the bend in the path. Peyton heard his own voice, asking the question that was framed in his mind but that seemed so fatuous in spoken words:

"Who—and what—are you?"

"Does the stranger who brings the Sign of the Pharoahs need to ask that?"

"Sign of the Pharoahs?"

PEYTON was certain that his terror for Breedon had got the best of him. He laughed inanely. He rubbed his eyes to rub the fantasy out of them, and in great good humor with the trick his senses were playing upon him—as he thought—he exclaimed:

"Oh, come now! You will be telling me that you are part of the 'strange people,' and that you live at the top of the mountain and are one of the Priests of Ra!"

Funny, he thought to himself, that

Breedon should have created such a tale for himself to enjoy in the solitude of his Dessa Luak bungalow. Funny that he, Peyton, should have believed that in this, the twentieth century, such things could be—even on the far top of a mountain in the Tibetan Himalayas.

The strange apparition did not answer. Peyton began to laugh again, louder this time, knowing all the time that his wits were deserting him, but laugh he must. And then his laugh broke off. He felt that the eyes that peered out at him from under the long, narrow lids, were boring into him, boring in and taking hold—smothering him—clutching—sending him—slowly—into—oblivion!

CHAPTER IX

Holpat

HIS first thought was that he was stretched on the lamasery floor at the end of Nyinser Pass. Breedon would be lying close, with O'Neil next to him. And Gomba would be hovering about, holding his strange conferences with the lamas who would trouble themselves to solve his jargon of acquired words and his fluent gestures.

"Breedon!" he murmured. "I'm tired. This is a fools' chase. Suppose we go back to Dessa Luak and call it a day?"

"From one world to another it is far, my friend, but not so far as from my feet to Dessa Luak!"

Peyton sat up with a smothered cry, wits and senses alert. "Where am— You!"

"Is my friend not happy that he has found favor in the eyes of Holpat?"

Groping, in a daze, Peyton got to his feet. He was conscious of strange, unbelievable surroundings,

but his brain would admit an awareness of nothing save the face and form before him.

There were the grotto-like eyes, under long black lashes that were like fans, upraised and spread against an alabaster skin. Hair, black as night, that lay flat against head and cheek, to lay across a shoulder in long, rolled plaits. An oval face, with mouth as scarlet as the heart of a pomegranate and chiseled as finely as a rare gem. Jewels, myriad of them, wrapped around a stem-like throat, circling bare arms and flashing at slender wrists.

ALL this his brain absorbed before he realized that he was staring dumbly at a woman who transcended every dream of loveliness he had ever had. Barely more than a girl, he was certain, yet a woman withal, for in the deep black eyes there was ineffable wisdom and mystery, and in the lift of her head on its stem-like neck, there was a poise indescribably majestic.

She was seated on a bench of some sort. A shining bench that might have been carved from pure gold, or gilt—he was only vaguely aware of it, for his brain would still admit nothing else but the woman herself. But she was seated, and her hands were spread, like flattened lilies on the bench at either side of her, and she leaned a little forward while she gazed up at him.

Her lips moved. "For all the Pharaohs who have gone to the Heaven of Endless Time, Holpat thanks you for the gift of her life when the evil blade would have claimed her. Holpat commands that you smile upon her beauty."

Much as a parrot might mock a prettily sounding word, Peyton could only murmur a dazed echo. "Holpat?"

"Princess of the House of Pharaoh, Queen of Egypt."

For one frenzied moment Peyton thought he must give up at last. Must shout aloud for deliverance from the spell of insanity that, he thought in that brief instant, had been gripping at him since the day of his arrival in Singapore.

But, even as the eyes of the man on the mountain path had held him in their hypnotic spell, held and conquered him, her eyes held him now—but more gently, lovingly, soothingly.

Quite suddenly his brain cleared and was orderly. No, he was not insane.

Breedon had been right. And Gomba.

THE Pharaohs had lived through the centuries. And here, before him, the Unknown of Victoria Square, was the Living Pharaoh of today!

A strange sound, that seemed to be close and yet was not within the chamber in which he stood, caused him to start and for the first time to take his eyes from the one who called herself "Holpat—Queen of Egypt."

The sound was indefinable. The snarl of a beast, yet of no beast he knew. A deep, sullen roar that began on a low note and rose, then, to change into a shrill, dolorous wail. On its echo a thousand other similar sounds swept upon him in a wave that deafened him and froze him with horror.

He looked about him wildly, and for the first time took to his mind a picture of his surroundings.

The chamber he was in seemed to be cut from solid stone by some master architect and with infinite patience, for all about him were cloisters and corridors that wound

among age-gray pillars of the mother rock.

Curiously the chamber seemed to have no confines, no walls, or beginnings or endings. It seemed to stretch away into interminable distance bisected endlessly by the corridors between the columns.

It was not until some time later that this effect was explained to him by the unique arrangement of the columns by which the planner—would he have been one of the original Priests of Ra of ancient Egypt?—had achieved his imposing result.

The shrieks and protests of the beasts who must be close and yet could not be seen continued to make an unearthly din. Bewildered, Peyton returned his glance to the woman on the bench. To his amazement she was watching him, serenely smiling!

"The monsters are eager for their meal of Royal Egypt and her loyal friend," she said.

And then, when he stared, uncomprehending, Peyton discovered that the jewel-laden wrists that drooped beside her were chained to the bench on which she sat!

CHAPTER X

The Lake of Monsters

PEYTON'S ears became accustomed to the ravenous cries of the beasts she had called "The Monsters." And her voice lulled him, a voice that was tuned and throated and that flowed with a rhythmic melody that was ineffable—it lulled him into a strange sense of oneness with the unbelievable surroundings.

"Holpat cannot understand?" she had said, her marble-like brow wrinkling, when he stammered out his pleas for some understanding of her, of the "strange people" whose captive she became, of her presence in

Singapore—and of her predicament now. "Holpat cannot understand? Is it true, then, that her friend was not aware that he saved Royal Egypt from the assassin's blade?"

Again he assured her that she, and everything into which he had blundered, was an unfathomable mystery. And then, in her melodious voice, she told him what was unbelievable then, and what he ever after must doubt if he would remain sane.

"—and here, on their mountain-top," her voice went on, "the priests found their refuge, and here, each generation, the heirs to my ancient Egypt have been born. Each has been sent out into the world, to cross its distances to a haven on the Nile, where he or she, prince or princess, has waited the Restoration. And to the Blue Mountain each has returned, when the time has come, to be betrothed and to give birth to an heir. I came from the Nile, to be betrothed to the chosen Priest of Râ."

DUMBLY Peyton pointed to the chains. Again the marvelously red lips curved to their serene smile.

"Holpat defied the Emerald of the Pharaohs, which was her sacred heritage. She passed it into the hands of her friend. That defilement was to her mind a graciousness and a sign that she had chosen her own betrothed.

"The Priests of Ra have asked of the gods their verdict, and the verdict is given. Holpat and her friend, whom the emerald drew after her, must expiate in the Lake of the Monsters. Holpat is glad that her happiness is to be rendered her, if not in life, in death. Is not her friend happy, too?"

When, at last, Peyton fully understood the import of her strange recital, and her calm assumption of a combined happiness in their deaths

together, he sprang away from her and plunged through corridor after corridor, always ending up at the bench and in front of her serene, unperturbed smile, until at last some fortunate turn brought him to an opening arched in the rock.

Suddenly the din of the animals threatened to burst his ear-drums. Stumbling across a flat rock-floored space in utter darkness, he came abruptly to the rim of a vast pool of black water under a roof of solid stone.

"Lake of the Monsters," she had said. Here, before him, was the "Lake," a mass of black, unfathomable water, into which no ray of light shone, but from the surface of which glistened the fiery eyes of thousands upon thousands of slimy monsters whose shapes Peyton could not make out.

The din of noise was evidence enough that these were not water beasts, yet their bodies made a hideous splashing in the dark. And he was suddenly aware of a horrible, strong odor, the odor of myriad foul breaths.

SICKENED, he staggered back into the chamber of the princess. She was still smiling calmly.

"The moment of passing from life to death," she said sweetly, "is but an instant. The life beyond is eternity."

"An eternity," Peyton declared, "that will come to both of us in due time—but it must not be now!"

The girl was frankly puzzled. Again her smooth brow wrinkled, and her black eyes widened.

"Not now? But do you not understand, my friend, that the Priests of Ra have spoken? They speak the will of the gods they have consulted."

"Their will may be their own,"

Peyton said. "It is far from being mine! Not in that horrible pool!"

Hardly knowing what he was doing he knelt before the girl and attacked the chains at her wrists. To his amazement they parted easily—their golden links as fragile, almost, as strands of seiper stems.

When he rose the girl rose with him, her golden-laid robe draping gracefully about her slender figure. The broken links of the golden chains dangled from her freed wrists. Her lips were slightly parted, and in her eyes was wonder.

"You dare challenge the gods?" she breathed, and in her tone there was a new note of reverence. "Are you, then, above the gods who rule the Priests of Ra?"

He could not help crying out to her:

"Do you mean to say you would sit there, bound by straws, until your people came to toss you to the beasts?"

She shook her head and was deeply troubled.

"Holpat cannot understand," she said slowly. "The commands of the gods are final. Yet you, who break Holpat's bonds and yet live, defy them!"

PEYTON realized that he was dealing with no ordinary mind. He caught the girl by the hand and sprang into the corridor which, he knew, would lead him to the flat open space that spread to the Lake of Monsters.

Why he chose to lead her to that stone ledge, his brain refused to reason. He supposed it was because there lay the only exit from the columned chamber he had discovered and his intuition warned him that if he were to find escape to the mountain path which must lead to the refuge of the exiles, he must begin

by fleeing the prison chamber itself.

Before the black yawning of the beast-infested pool, Peyton drew up. The girl stood beside him quietly.

"Would you take Holpat back into the world? Is that the command of her friend?" she asked.

"Yes, yes! If I save myself I shall also save you. Come! You must know a way of escape."

"Holpat does not escape!" Suddenly the girl had drawn herself up. Her voice rang imperiously. But her tone instantly softened. "Holpat obeys her friend, and will go with him where his hand would lead her. Wait!"

In quick panic Peyton realized that he stood alone on the rock floor in the dense blackness. He thought to call aloud, then checked his impulse. Of what good to call? If she proposed to return to him, she would, without being summoned. And he felt that she had not deserted him.

Minutes passed.

Heads of the monsters thrust themselves over the brink of the pool, their fiery eyes gleaming close. Peyton drew back and then began to feel his way cautiously along the edge of the floor. His senses, quickened in the darkness, became aware of a narrow, swinging bridge that led out over the surface of the black waters.

TENTATIVELY he slid a foot on to it. He drew back in horror when, throwing spray to the stone roof overhead, a thousand beasts lashed the waters and bore down in hideous mass.

He realized that if he had taken a single outward step he would have been drawn into the swirling vortex of monsters below.

"Holpat will lead the way across the bridge. The monsters will obey Royal Egypt."

Her voice was close. She had slid

up noiselessly. He missed the glints of gold in her robe and knew, somehow, that she had garbed herself in the dark cloak he had seen in Victoria Square. Her hand, cool and firm, touched his wrist.

When she stepped ahead of him and he realized that she had stepped free of the rock floor and was full upon the swinging bridge, his heart flew into his throat and he tried to cry out. Then, suddenly, he knew that some miracle was being performed.

The girl's voice, droning unintelligibly, was floating out over the pool in some weird, unearthly incantation. Switching bodies lashed at the black water and then were quiet. Whole constellations of fiery eyes were blotted out at the same moment, until the pool was quiet and of the monsters the only evidence was their foul breath.

"Come, my friend. The monsters sleep!"

CHAPTER XI

Royal Egypt Commands

OF "the strange people," the Priests of Ra, Peyton had no other glimpse than that encounter on the ascent. While they still were feeling their way across the swinging bridge in the rock chamber of the pool he spoke to his companion of a possible danger still to come when her people should discover her flight.

And though she replied in a whisper something of her imperious tone entered it.

"It is Holpat's will that she not die. It is her will that she goes where her friend shall lead. The Priests of Ra are angry, but they dare not oppose the will of Egypt's heir."

In silent thankfulness and an ever deepening awe, Peyton descended

the narrow path with the strange Holpat by his side. Save when he spoke to her, she was silent.

He felt that her eyes were not on the path at all, but upon him, and he feared to look aside and meet them—what his fear was he couldn't determine, but her eyes were like those of the priest he had met on the upward climb beyond the snow-slide, and those eyes had hypnotized him.

He wanted now, more desperately than ever before in his life, to keep his wits clear and sane.

Presently, if they could pass the point of the snow-slide, they would come to the bottom of the mountain. There would be O'Neil, and Breedon, he hoped, and Gomba. With them would come return of normal things, of sense and the world as it exists.

He would not believe, even, that a woman walked beside him; a woman whose voice had calmed hideous monsters who clamored for the flesh of their bodies; a woman who called herself "Royal Egypt"—he would not believe that her cool hand was on his wrist, until he was face to face again with things in which he could believe.

The snow had been blown from the path. The descent was open. At the bottom of the trail were O'Neil, Breedon and Gomba. O'Neil ran toward him with a great shout. Breedon came up glumly, his morose glance never leaving the partly exposed face of the one who walked at Peyton's side.

SUDDENLY the grasp at Peyton's wrist tightened. The girl stiffened. Peyton saw that her head lifted high.

"Holpat does not like the one who comes. His thoughts are not of Holpat, but of the treasure of the priests."

Clearly she indicated Breedon. At Peyton's first word of reassurance

her body relaxed, but her hand did not release its hold of his wrist. Did not release its grasp until Breedon, with a surly snarl, flung himself at Peyton, his hands clutching for the other's throat.

Just what happened Peyton never clearly knew. He heard Breedon's oath, and a wild accusation that he had been treacherous—that he had found the store of gold on the Blue Mountain—had found it and planned to "cheat" him, Breedon, of his share of it.

AFTERWARDS O'Neil explained that Breedon had extricated himself from the snow-slide with greatest difficulty and that, finding it impossible to continue the ascent after Peyton, had returned to the lower approaches of the trail, grumbling that Peyton had tricked him and had gone ahead alone to discover the treasure.

It had soon become apparent to O'Neil, so he declared afterwards, that it had been Breedon's plan to find the treasure and appropriate it—

"You might say to the detriment of you and me, since I've no doubt he would have had Gomba help kill us both if he ever got his fingers on gold."

But at the moment this explanation was still unmade. Peyton was taken by surprise and only a quick leap from the edge of the trail saved himself from falling over the side of the path into the precipice that descended into a bottomless gorge between the mountains.

O'Neil plunged to his assistance but Gomba, with a snarl that copied his master's, flung himself in his path and O'Neil drew up sputtering against the threat of the Nogi's poisoned knife.

The Irishman, however, would have flung himself on the blade, certain of death to follow, but certain, also of saving his friend from the

surprise attack by the maddened Breedon, when there was a sudden interruption to the scene.

Peyton sensed a quick movement by the girl who had been flung behind him by Breedon's onrush. He heard her voice, with its imperious note. But the voice was calm, commanding.

He could not understand her words, for they were in her strange tongue, but he saw Breedon sway suddenly and throw up his arms against the gaze of her eyes from beneath their narrowed lids. Throw up his arms and shriek, and then disappear!

O'Neil shouted and Gomba released a shrill scream.

Peyton swayed backward against the mountain wall. He had seen the white hand that a moment before had been so cool to his wrist, press calmly against Breedon's breast, and the weight of the girl's body press behind the hand.

ONLY Breedon's shriek came up from the precipice gorge, fainter and fainter.

Peyton was overwrought by the tragedy. Its sudden, inexorable swiftness held O'Neil, too, in a daze and Gomba hovered close to the descending abyss at the edge of the pass peering down, trying to pierce the opaque blue haze of the depths into which his master had disappeared.

The girl came over to Peyton and stood beside him. In her serenely modeled face there was puzzle, and a touch of trouble.

"He was not good," she said. "His mind was on gold, while Holpat's mind was on love. Come, my stranger! We will go—back into the world. Holpat, who is the rightful queen of Egypt, shall be the slave of her stranger. With her the Pharaohs

shall die, but she will have known love."

O'NEIL stood near, staring. Gomba still looked down into the precipice, but O'Neil wanted explanations.

Wearily, half-heartedly, Peyton sketched briefly the events that had marked his venture into the retreat of the Priests of Ra, while he told of the Lake of Monsters, and the patiently willing waiting of Holpat for her penalty for having resigned the "Emerald of Pharaoh."

"'Tis a yarn," said O'Neil, "that'll be good for the tellin' from Borneo to Formosa. But there'll be none as'll be believin', you might say."

Peyton brought from his pocket the flashing green emerald. He looked from it into the marble-like face of the girl who stood so regally motionless in the path, her dark, grotto-like eyes always fixed upon his face.

"To many who are in the service of the Priests of Ra," she said, "the emerald is a sign. It will provide for my stranger and for Holpat all the delights of the world save love. Holpat has granted that. Come, let us go! We will go into Egypt, whence Holpat came. There we shall find refuge for dreams to pass the days and nights away. Holpat knows the way and the friends along the path."

O'Neil grunted. "We found some Dyak knives strewn along the way," he murmured.

The girl whirled upon him. "The Dyaks are enemies of the House of Pharaoh. Through the years their knives have been drawn against the wards of the Priests of Ra, but always their knives have been thrust aside. Death does not come to a Pharaoh until the gods are ready."

She turned again to Peyton and held out both her hands.

"Come, you will go with Holpat. There is far to go, then Holpat will be ready for love."

Peyton shook his head.

"We are going back, my child. Going up the path. Your people up there will obey you when you tell them you must live. I shall return to them the emerald."

She moved close to him, her slight figure drawn to its full height.

"Holpat has decreed that she shall have love. It is Holpat, who is Royal Egypt, who issues commands."

Peyton again shook his head, and took her hands, and spoke gently.

"Listen, my dear. None of what has happened this day could be true—if it wasn't that poor Breedon disappeared into the abyss. That is true. Other miracles have happened, but love cannot happen—as other things have. Tomorrow I shall remember you as a dream of what couldn't be. Today—I must take you where I found you."

He felt the cool soft hands he held tremble. Their coolness gave way to a surge of warmth, and then they were cold again.

"Holpat is not loved by her stranger?"

He looked into her cold, haughty face for a moment, and then said:

"It can't be that you know—love! You are not of the world that love rules—whoever, whatever you are—you don't belong where I must ever be. Nor would I belong where you must ever be."

SHE took her hands from his, slowly, gently. Once her dark eyes dropped, but lifted instantly.

"Holpat has learned love," she said, quietly. "It is not happiness, love. It darkens the world. A Pharoah scorns a world that is dark."

O'Neil cried out, and Gomba made a shrill, startled noise. Peyton, thrown into a trance by the ineffable

majesty of her calm voice was suddenly snatched to life—but not quick enough!

The girl had backed away from him, until she was at the far edge of the path, on the precipice brink. Then, regally, yet quickly, she had turned.

A strange incantation echoed across the abyss, a chant that reached heavenward. Then Peyton sprang, but his hands caught only a fold of her cloak. Horrified, he watched her body falling—falling—until it, like Breedon's had disappeared in the blue haze below.

THE Emerald of Pharoah is now on display in a glass case in the Dynasty room of the Royal Museum at Cairo. Any visitor may see it, and ponder over it, and from any attendant may buy a beautifully printed pamphlet which gives the history of the marvelous stone which, it is said, belonged to the House of Pharoah throughout its dynasty and disappeared with the fall of the last of the dynasty.

There is much in the pamphlet about the Priests of Ra and of the legend that these household monks disappeared from Egypt and fled to a far hiding place.

Also there is a paragraph referring the reader to a long monograph, in the archives of the Museum, by one Blair Peyton, an American, who tells a strange story of his discovery of the Blue Mountain, the Priests of Ra, and the Lake of Monsters.

King Fuad, of Egypt, the monograph states in an introduction, invited Peyton to Cairo to relate the story of his adventure into Tibet, of the Dyak knives and the Princess Holpat. And after the audience, it is noted, the king bestowed upon Blair Peyton the rare order of the Crescent, in return for Mr. Peyton's gift of the Emerald of Pharoah.

Death's Orchids



*A Ship's Doctor Forced to Join a Treasure Hunt
With a Blind Man and His Crew
is Marooned on an Island*

By LANE ARCHER

Author of "Chinese Puzzle," "Triple Trouble," etc.

CARTWRIGHT was on the beach at Brisbane with only a couple of months' wages in his pocket.

Bitterly he realized that it does not pay for a ship's physician to be too conscientious; careful attention to his duties on the *Southern Queen* had earned him the cordial dislike of her officers and was responsible for his unjust discharge.

He waited around in the hope of getting a berth on some other passenger steamer, but the officers of the

Southern Queen had given him a bad name in shipping circles as an unmanageable, quarrelsome fellow, and he soon saw that his chance was hopeless.

Brisbane is an expensive town to live in. Soon his money began to disappear. He tried to get medical work and failed. He moved from the modest hotel at which he had put up, to a ramshackle little boarding-house in Powis Street—a house which was so far respectable that, though most of its inmates seemed to be in a perma-

ment state of intoxication, he never saw knives drawn.

That was more than could be said of most houses in the street. The riffraff of two hemispheres seemed to have gathered there. Ladies with diamond-studded teeth, who had made San Francisco too hot to hold them; trim little Japs, who looked neat and demure and modest, and were the biggest thieves of the lot; a wild harpy who was the uncrowned queen of the street, and was known by the cheerful name of "Poison Kate"—these were the women, and the men matched them.

A sprinkling of ships' officers and managers of the sugar plantations out on a spree—these were the most respectable of the men. Then there were Frenchmen who smelled of the penal colony at New Caledonia, a mile off, placid-looking Chinese, who ran opium dens, card-sharpers of every nation, bullies and receivers of stolen goods, and, above all, drunken, easy-going, easily robbed merchant sailors.

THERE was a grog-shop, known to its clients for some obscure reason as "Barton's Coffin," which presented a highly respectable frontage to the street.

If you were in the know, however, there was a courtyard at the back where you could sit in the shade and drink the worst spirits in Australia, and dance with the ladies—American, Jap, and even Kanaka. There was a kind of balcony on one side, in which the more respectable visitors sat.

One evening Cartwright was there talking to the master of a steamer, and buying him drinks with the hope of getting a free passage to America out of him. The captain was very drunk, and though he addressed Cartwright every moment as "good ole friend," the doctor was scarcely able

to keep his attention to the point at issue.

Every reference Cartwright made to his ship brought the reply, "That reminds me, good ole friend, of a ship I once had," and then there was no checking the drunken old fool till he had gotten a quarter hour's yarn off his chest. Cartwright was wondering whether to give up the attempt when a rough-house began below.

"Grab that knife from the nigger!" shouted the captain.

His drunken eyes had picked out shrewdly enough what was happening. A gaunt Yankee sailor had quarrelled with a dark-complexioned man about one of the Japanese girls.

"My gal—you damn hook off," said the dark man.

The Yankee's hand went to his side. There was a scream and the Yankee darted from the courtyard.

Cartwright leaped from the balcony and was down in the crowd in a moment.

"Out of the way; I'm a doctor," he cried.

Barton, the proprietor, strolled leisurely up, cigar in mouth, and then signed to one of the women of the house to swab up the blood from the dance floor.

"This man's badly hurt," Cartwright said. "Where can I take him?"

Mr. Barton, a man of few words, indicated by a motion of his head a shed at the far side of the courtyard.

Cartwright had the man carried there and began to examine him.

"Come, boys," said Poison Kate to the crowd of onlookers, "we hain't stopping this dance for a buck-nigger."

THE crowd melted away and Cartwright was left alone with his patient. In half a minute he saw that there was little hope for the half-caste. Every time he breathed, a froth of blood came to his lips. Cart-

wright did what he could for the poor fellow, and could see from his face that the dying man was grateful. He tried to speak once or twice.

"Don't talk," Cartwright said, "you'll never get better if you talk."

The fellow's hand went to his left ear. It was pierced for earrings, but he wore none. Instead, there was inserted a tiny roll of paper.

"Take—no let blind boss have him," he whispered.

He pressed it into Cartwright's hand. The doctor put it hastily into his pocket, thinking it might be some message from his friends. Then there came a splutter of blood, and the half-caste died.

Cartwright bent over the body for a moment, looking at the wound, and saw that the body was covered with vivid scarlet blotches which showed strangely on the dark skin. It looked like a malignant type of lupus, and Cartwright thought that perhaps it was all for the best the poor fellow had had such a mercifully sudden death.

"He's gone," he said to Barton, when he had left the shed.

Mr. Barton's indignation overcame his customary taciturnity.

"That's it," he grumbled. "They come here, knife one another on my premises, and then I get into trouble with the police. 'Tain't fair to have my business upset by niggers. Well, it'll be less bother now he's dead right away. They make ten times the fuss if a beggar dies in a hospital."

CARTWRIGHT went away rather sickened by this callous inhumanity, and resolved never to go near his filthy place again.

It was not till Cartwright was going to bed that night that he remembered the little roll of paper his patient had given him. He took it out of his pocket and looked at it.

In exquisitely neat writing, which

was obviously not that of the half-caste, he read, "Serwalli Islands—mound by big bay on north island—scarlet flame." It meant nothing to Cartwright; so he burned it over the candle.

THE next night, when he returned to his boarding-house, he found the proprietress waiting for him.

"There's a patient waiting for you, doctor," said Mrs. Malone, who, for a wonder, was almost sober.

"A patient for me?" Cartwright said surprisedly.

"So the Chinese devil says in the kitchen."

Cartwright went to the kitchen and found a neatly dressed Chinaman sitting there.

"Capitan boss plenty sick—want plenty doctor," he said.

Cartwright wondered whether his drunken friend of the previous day had gotten to the delirium tremens stage yet.

"Go on," he said; "show me the way."

He was glad of the prospect of earning a few shillings.

His guide led him to the wharf and stopped at a boat on the steps. There were two other Chinamen sitting, waiting.

"Where's the ship?" Cartwright asked.

His guide pointed to a blur in the darkness.

"Right you are—go ahead," Cartwright said.

In ten minutes he was mounting the side of a small schooner.

A big, burly, sinister-looking man met him on the deck.

"Are you Doctor Cartwright?" he asked.

"Yes."

"The sick man's down in the cabin," he replied, pointing to the stairs.

He allowed Cartwright to go first.

The cabin door was open at the bottom and the doctor went straight in. Two men were sitting there.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said. "What can I do for you?"

"Please sit down, doctor," said a calm, refined voice.

Cartwright looked at the speaker and saw a little shrunken man with a keen, hard face, and eyes that he recognized at once to be sightless. The other man was a corpulent German, whom he instinctively took a dislike to. As he sat down, the man who had met him on deck locked the cabin door.

"We've no actual patient for you, doctor," said the blind man smilingly.

Cartwright rose to his feet. "If you've got me here to rob me, you've mistaken your man. I've no money with me," he said coldly.

"Sit down," said the blind man commandingly. "Don't move in your chair. We want to know what 'Yellow Sam' said to you yesterday evening."

"Don't know the person," Cartwright answered.

"I understand he died in your arms yesterday."

"Oh, the half-caste. He said nothing in particular. He was dying when I got to him."

"But he gave you a paper."

"Yes. I burned it last night."

ONE of the men swore ferociously. "Be quiet, Harkins," the blind man reproved. "I cannot endure your language. Remember that you are in a gentleman's cabin, and not conversing with your usual dock rats. Perhaps you can recall what was written on the paper, doctor."

"He's got it. Let's search him," said the burly man.

"You could search him better when he's dead," answered the blind man carelessly; "only I'm inclined to believe that Doctor Cartwright is speak-

ing the truth. Let me feel your pulse, doctor. Now say what was written on that paper."

CARTWRIGHT was not afraid of the two bullies in the cabin, but something in the blind man's tone made a chill run through him.

"All it said," he answered, "was this—and it is meaningless to me: 'Serwalli Islands—mound by big bay on north island—scarlet flame.'"

"The Serwallis, the very place where the typhoon would have driven the boat," commented the blind man. "I am inclined to believe that Doctor Cartwright has spoken the truth."

"No, Harkins, put your knife back. If the doctor were killed and it turned out afterward that he had spoken the truth, our business would be upset. Besides, there might be inquiries made. The doctor will come with us on the voyage. Do you care for a treasure hunt, doctor?"

"Not for a compulsory one," Cartwright answered.

"Ah, I regret that it is a compulsory one; for if we let you loose in Brisbane, you might talk. We don't want a steamer racing us to the spot. As I said before, there are objections to killing you. You've no objections to a month's voyage in a schooner and five thousand pounds for yourself."

The other two men grumbled loudly at the suggestion.

"I think I am the head of the expedition. This is my schooner," remarked the blind man suavely. "Well, Doctor Cartwright, are you going to accept my offer?"

"I'm afraid that I have no option," Cartwright said.

"Well, I'll explain the matter to you. A few months ago one of the pearling fleet found a unique oyster bed. They made the hit of a lifetime, and then, by the irony of fate, they had bad luck. The steamer was

caught in a typhoon and wrecked on an island.

"Only the chief officer and one of the divers were saved. However, the box in which the pearls were stored was driven ashore when the wreck broke up. The two survivors, quite naturally, thought it useless to take the pearls back to the Brisbane company which had financed the expedition.

"Unfortunately, the first ship that sighted the fire the two men made as a signal, belonged to the same company, and had one of the directors aboard. They were half naked and could not conceal the pearls about their persons, so they merely took two or three and hid the rest. They were taken back to Brisbane, and then Stevens, the chief officer, died suddenly.

THE diver, like a drunken fool, talked. I got a hint of it and managed to get him aboard here. Through the incompetence of my companions, he was allowed to escape and swim ashore. I was on the point of recapturing him when he got stabbed.

"So you are our companion instead. I congratulate myself on the change. Now, if you will write a note to your landlady, I will send a Chinaman ashore for your things. You can tell her that you are going off on a voyage."

"I'm apparently to be compelled to take this voyage," Cartwright began.

"You can decline if you wish," said the blind man playfully, "though in such a case I could not undertake to restrain my friends here."

"Let me stick him mit a knife," growled the German.

"You see Mr. Muller is not an amiable character."

"I'll write a note, but I owe her for a month's board," Cartwright commented.

The blind man threw a handful of gold on the table.

"Take what you want, doctor. Now I guarantee that no harm comes to you on the schooner *Islander*. We shall sail in the morning. As it would be risky for you to attempt to leave the vessel or communicate with another ship, it would be well if you went and slept in a bunk in the spare cabin."

Cartwright wrote his note; Harkins scrutinized it, and then the blind man gave it, with some money, to one of the Chinamen.

"Now everything is arranged," he said, "and, Doctor Cartwright, I wish you pleasant dreams."

Cartwright was locked in the cabin and left to his meditations. After all, though he had been kidnaped, he did not much object to the voyage. He had the prospect of starving in Brisbane if he were ashore.

If this voyage took a couple of months, by that time conditions might be better in Brisbane and he might have better luck in getting back to America. He did not count much on the five thousand pounds promised him. All he wished was to get out of the adventure alive.

They had not searched him. He had a small revolver in his pocket, and if the worst came to the worst, he felt sure that he could account for Harkins and Muller. So he turned in and slept pretty comfortably, though all his dreams were of a little man with sightless eyes, who, nevertheless, perpetually watched him.

WHEN Cartwright awoke he could tell by the regular movement of the schooner that they had left the harbor. Soon his door opened and a polite Chinaman brought in his baggage.

"Capitan boss hab breakfast plenty soon," he said.

"What did they say when you

went for my bags?" Cartwright asked.

"No savee," replied the Chinaman.

In a few minutes Cartwright was ready and went to the cabin.

"Good-morning, doctor," said the blind man as he entered. He knew the doctor's step at once. There was a horrid alertness about him.

"Good-morning," Cartwright replied. "I see you are already off on your voyage."

"I ought to introduce myself. My name is Jordan," he said. "This will be an interesting experience for you. I cannot say much for the society aboard. Harkins is a schooner captain. One need say no more for him. As for Muller, he is an illiterate German. Why is it, doctor, that when a German is offensive he is so much more offensive than any other type of human being?"

"I mustn't criticize your partners," Cartwright answered.

"Why not? They would not hesitate to criticize you, or, what is more annoying, shoot you on sight. Pray, don't trouble to pass me anything. My Chinese servant arranges everything for me in a certain regular order. I can look after myself at meals."

CARTWRIGHT was surprised at the extraordinary ease with which he managed his food. No one watching him could have detected that he was blind.

"I see you have finished, doctor," the blind man said at last. "You need not be surprised. I said 'see,' but I meant that I could tell by the way you set down your cup that it was empty. Let us go up on deck."

Cartwright saw Muller at the wheel, and Harkins pacing the deck.

"Good-morning, my friends," said Jordan. "Out of sight of land, aren't we?"

"Yes," grunted Harkins.

"I thought so. The wind is blowing off the land, and yet the land smell is not to be detected. Tell one of the Chinamen to rig up an awning on deck. Now, doctor, your medical duties won't be heavy on this voyage, so you may pay your passage by reading to me. You'll find a bundle of books in the lower bunk of my cabin. Would you be so good as to bring them up."

CARTWRIGHT went down and got the books. To his surprise, he found that nearly all of them were Greek.

When he came up on deck again, Jordan said to him, "Of course you can read Greek?"

"If you mean translate it, I should be a very poor hand," Cartwright apologized.

"Oh, no; just read it to me. I can translate it. You have the 'Iliad' there. Just begin where the page is turned down."

Cartwright read steadily to him for an hour. His face was lit up with interest. Sometimes he stopped the reader to comment on some splendid phrase.

"Stop now," he said at last, "your voice is getting tired. You have given me a great pleasure. Your pronunciation is defective, but still I can grasp the sense."

"On my last voyage I had a man before the mast who had taken high honors at Oxford. He was a delightful companion. I was so sorry when he got at the rum cask, and in the interests of discipline, I was compelled to shoot him."

"To what?" Cartwright exclaimed.

"To shoot him, I said," responded the blind man calmly.

"You took the law into your own hands then?"

"There is no law except that of one's own hands in these seas. Harkins and Muller will confirm me

on that. What keeps them from shooting me and seizing the schooner? Nothing, except the certainty that my Chinamen, who are devoted to me, would kill them by inches. It is never pleasant being killed by a Chinaman. These inscrutable persons put all the intelligence they possess into their tortures."

He held up his hand as if to feel the air.

"Captain Harkins," he called, "the breeze is freshening. Shorten sail a trifle. The schooner is too old to carry much."

The next three weeks were a curious experience for Cartwright. During the day he read Greek and talked to Jordan. On calm nights, when a Chinaman could be left at the helm, they had a rubber of bridge in the cabin.

The cards were marked in some way so that Jordan could feel them, though Cartwright could never detect the almost imperceptible pin-pricks which guided him. Each called out the card he played as it fell. Beyond that there was nothing to indicate that one of the players was blind. Cartwright was usually Jordan's partner. Often they were so successful that Harkins and Muller sullenly declined to play any more.

ONE night when this had occurred, the blind man, with calm disregard of their presence, remarked to Cartwright, "You can tell the breeding of a man by the way he takes a beating. Look at the two of them now—angry with us when they should be angry with their own stupidity. You need not stop to scowl at me, Muller."

"How did you know I looked at you?" grunted Muller.

"You stopped as you were going out, and I judged that as you were too cowardly to say or do anything,

you probably contorted your already sufficiently ugly face.

"You see," Jordan observed to Cartwright, when the others had gone on deck, "one must keep the whip-hand of that type of man. If only the Chinamen were competent to navigate the schooner I would have the pair of them over the side in five minutes. I never so much regretted the intellectual limitations of Chinamen.

"Good-night, Doctor Cartwright. With care and constant practice you will become a decent bridge player. You are far from being the worst off this coast now. By the way, have those others suggested to you that you might poison me yet?"

CARTWRIGHT started. "Not yet; I will tell you if they do."

A few days afterward Muller and Harkins suddenly became very friendly with Cartwright. They hinted that it was too bad having to sit reading to a blind man all day.

"If it were not for the Chinamen he would not for von minute trouble us," Muller whispered. "But if he died from something else in his bunk—"

"If so my life wouldn't be worth two-pence," Cartwright answered. "So you had better not discuss such remote possibilities."

Muller shook his fist at the doctor. "If you talk—" he threatened.

"Don't worry," Cartwright replied. "Mr. Jordan told me a week ago that you would probably ask me to poison him. I should think he would be pleased to find his judgment verified."

"Not von wort about poison did I say," snarled Muller.

From that time Harkins and Muller never spoke to Cartwright. As he loathed the sight of both of

them this made the voyage all the more pleasant.

AT last Harkins' anxious calculations of their position made Cartwright certain that they were approaching the Serwalli Islands.

It was evening when they cast anchor off the most northerly of the islands.

Captain Harkins, for once, became civil to Cartwright. "You said 'mound by big bay,' didn't you?" he asked.

"Why, that must be the mound!" Cartwright cried, entering into the excitement of the treasure-hunt. "It's the only elevated place on the island, and look where the sun is on it, it's scarlet—the scarlet flame. Some flowering shrub on it, I suppose."

"We'll see about it in the morning," said the captain. "It'll be dark before we can get a boat ashore. Them pearls 'll have to wait another night."

As soon as the sun rose in the morning the big boat was lowered.

"How many shall we take ashore?" asked Captain Harkins.

"The ship's company," replied Jordan. "We must not leave Cartwright on board alone. He might be tempted to set sail. And I want all my Chinese bodyguards; I might need them. Even the best of men may feel tempted to suppress an inconvenient blind partner."

Cartwright obeyed him and entered the boat and sat a little nervously while the Chinamen rowed them ashore. He felt that if the pearls were not found his life would stand an excellent chance of terminating promptly.

"Give me an arm," said the blind man to Cartwright when they landed. "I can't walk over this rocky shore."

The others all hurried on toward the mound. Only one Chinaman stayed with Cartwright and Jordan.

While they were stumbling along the beach the others were thrusting through the great mass of scarlet flowers which covered the mound. Muller at the top of the mound was lifting up a spade.

Suddenly he gave a great roar.

"I feel der box mit my spade!"

"Then you spoke the truth, Doctor Cartwright," said the blind man. "I think we can dispense with your services."

HIS tone must have been a signal to the Chinaman, for he made no sign that Cartwright could distinguish. With a quick movement the Chinaman whipped out a knife and stabbed the doctor in the back. Cartwright staggered away over the stones for a few minutes and then collapsed. The blood seemed to be welling out below his shoulder blades. There was no pain, only a kind of lassitude, and he dimly thought, "How easy dying is."

For an hour or so he must have lain unconscious. Then in a dream he seemed to hear voices.

"Somewhere about here," said the blind man indifferently. "I saw no use in having interminable arguments about his share of the pearls."

"There he is," cried Harkins. "Go over and see if he's a goner, Muller."

"Don't trouble," said the blind man. "Ah Lin is a servant of mine, and he knows that I do not allow mistakes. Leave him to the land-crabs."

Their footsteps died away, and Cartwright was left alone, bleeding, as he thought, to death under a burning sun. Fortunately, a fragment of rock sheltered him a little.

He lay quietly waiting death for hours as it seemed. Then he heard something scuffling at his feet and saw a great land-crab staring at him with its protruding goggle eyes. That gave him strength to move

away from the beach. Somehow he scrambled up the shore and saw among the scrubby growth a wretched kind of shelter.

Perhaps it had been put up by the two castaways who had hidden the pearls. Cartwright got to its shade and sank down.

Then, from sheer weariness and loss of blood, he fell fast asleep.

WHEN he awoke it was broad daylight. He seemed to have been asleep no time, and yet, from the position of the sun, he could gather that he must have slept nearly twelve hours. There was a curious snorting noise outside. Cartwright took it to be a humming in his ears.

Slowly he moved out to the fresh air and rubbed his eyes as he gazed at the bay. A British warship was just coming to anchor and he heard the throbbing of the engines. Frantically he staggered down to the shore and waved his handkerchief. Soon he saw his signal was perceived, and that a boat was setting off for the shore. He remembered being lifted into the boat, and after that knew nothing for some days.

When he became conscious he found the surgeon of the cruiser leaning over him.

"You've had a near-shave, but you're all right now. You're a medico, I suppose?"

"Yes. Who told you?" he answered.

"No one; but you talked in your delirium. That stab was a bad one. If the point of the knife had not struck a bone and been deflected an inch or so you'd have been done for. Who did it—some native? The other fellow wasn't as lucky as you."

"What other fellow?"

"A big stout man, with a yellowish beard. He'd been stabbed in just the same way, but the point of the

knife had penetrated the heart. His body was farther up the beach."

"That must have been Muller," Cartwright said, thinking that the blind man must have had another person removed who might have wished to share the pearls.

"I meant to have him buried, but the big waves which followed the cyclone that broke the night we found you, must have washed the body away. What is the meaning of it all?"

Cartwright told him the story, to which he listened with intense interest. Then he smiled.

"We're here to take sounding of the uncharted shoals and rocks round this island. As soon as we've finished we're under orders for Brisbane. Ten to one we shall arrive there before your blind friend, unless his schooner enjoys exceptional luck with the weather."

The next day Cartwright was well enough to go ashore. He took his friend the surgeon to the mound where the treasure had been buried. Once, evidently, it had been covered with a mass of brilliant red orchids, but the cyclone had stripped every blossom from the plants.

"It shone like a fire when we first came to the bay," he said. "That was one of the marks of the treasure-hunt—the scarlet flame."

RED—that's the proper color for your treasure-hunt," said the surgeon. "You and that other fellow must have lost blood enough."

The next day they left the bay, and the cruiser was soon making its steady way toward Brisbane. Cartwright was on deck the second afternoon when the captain, who was talking to him, stopped suddenly and said, "What's amiss with that schooner?"

Cartwright looked in the direction

he indicated and gasped. "I believe it's the *Islander*."

The captain had his glasses on her in a minute.

"There's no one at the wheel," he said, "and the deck's deserted. I'll send a boat aboard. There's something very wrong there."

Cartwright went with the surgeon in the boat. As it came alongside they waited for the beginning of some attack, but a deathly silence seemed to reign on the ship. In a minute the sailors had scrambled up the sides.

"No one on deck, sir," reported one, saluting.

"Let's look in the fo'c'sle," said the surgeon.

They glanced in and a fearful sight met their eyes. Lying about in grotesque attitudes were half a dozen Chinamen. All dead!

"What's this?" said the surgeon to Cartwright.

"I've seen one case like it before," he replied, "and that, curiously enough, was a man who had been to this island."

"Let's go aft," said the surgeon. "We'll find the captain there."

CARTWRIGHT was just going down to the cabin, when he heard a voice. He trembled as it struck his ears.

"Is that you, Cartwright? Dear me, Ah Lin must have bungled. It is an unfortunate thing that my infirmity prevented me from doing my own work. Well, what do you want here? The pearls, I suppose. Well, I dropped them overboard when Harkins died this morning."

Cartwright leaned forward and looked in the cabin. Jordan's face and hands were one great scarlet blotch. He was hideous.

"Who is your friend—the one standing behind you?" continued the dying man. "A naval officer from

his step. Oh, a surgeon. Well, I think you may observe in me an interesting case. I can't account for it.

"My Chinese servants said that they had caught it from the scarlet orchids which grew on the mound, and that explanation is as likely as any other. Now, gentlemen, if you will pardon me, I think I have only a few moments to live.

"Excuse me, Dr. Cartwright, if the exigencies of a somewhat piratical profession brought us into disagreeable conflict. Will you oblige me now by reading me something from Homer, and quickly, please."

Cartwright took up the book and read for two or three minutes.

Jordan lifted his hand to check him at a line.

"I remember my tutor once said—" he began, and then his breath failed.

They returned to the cruiser to report to the captain, and told him that after this weird disease it would be inadvisable to send a crew aboard.

The schooner was old and worth little, and the captain thought that it would be nearly impossible to tow her to port. So in a few minutes the fate of the *Islander* was settled. A couple of shells and she went down by the head.

Since that day Cartwright has been a surgeon of a Queensland hospital, and has seen many forms of tropical diseases, but he has never seen a case of that curious scarlet blotching which showed alike on dark and white and yellow skins.

In some ways he is inclined to credit the idea that the great scarlet orchids contained some malignant venom, and to believe that both the men who hid the pearls and those who found them must, from their contact with these death flowers, have been scorched and blasted by the scarlet flame which led them to their doom.

JUNGLE JOSS



A Weird Story of Macao and the Mysterious Unseen Forces of Black Magic

By PAUL REGARD

Author of "The Haunted Legacy," "The Abyss of Wonders," etc.

CORBIN had often heard Macao referred to as the Monte Carlo of the Orient. From what he'd seen of it so far he'd decided that Monte Carlo as compared with Macao was as a kiddy-car compared with a super-tank.

If there was any vice this old world has ever known that Macao hadn't put on a wholesale, commercial basis, it was simply because it didn't pay. He was sick of it. His soul was in revolt.

He'd cabled his resignation and was ready to leave Macao and the Chinese Coast forever when he ran

into a blind beggar one morning in front of the Yeng Hang gambling-house who thrust up a piece of paper at him. He was about to brush on by when something stopped him.

It was as if he'd heard a cry—a girl's voice crying out to him for help—in English.

A moment later he was explaining this to himself. He'd stopped impulsively and taken the paper from the beggar's hand. There was something written on it—in a woman's handwriting—in English.

No doubt he'd caught a glimpse of this writing in the first place and

his subconscious mind had done the rest.

The writing on the paper suggested a cry. Feverishly written, and yet with a character to indicate that the writer was educated. There were just four words: *something terrible—Po Lum.*

When Corbin looked up from the paper the beggar was gone. He couldn't remember whether or not he'd given the fellow any money. But he must have done so, he argued, else he'd be there yet.

It gave him a touch of added eeriness that the beggar was nowhere in sight. Had the fellow been shamming? Was this some sort of a trick?

His eyes came back to the writing.

He'd felt the inclination to crumple up the paper and throw it away. Half the sing-song girls of the China coast were writing some English nowadays. Even if they didn't they knew how to bait a hook.

But something was telling him—repeating to him—that this had been written by no such girl. The girl who'd written this was English—American—in trouble—*something terrible!*

A couple of bearded Sikh policemen were strolling past—striped turbans and khaki uniforms, revolvers at their hips.

CORBIN made a move to stop them, a word was on his lips. But just as he did so there was a disturbance down the street. A seller of lottery tickets was shrieking and clinging to a man, probably a thief, who was trying to beat him off. The Sikhs were away at a run, opening their holsters as they went. Suddenly, the whole street was sweeping in that direction.

Again that touch of eeriness returned to Corbin. Was this all part of his *ming*, his destiny?

China, he knew, had been getting him for a long time past. He'd been going steadily downhill. Macao had just about finished him. It was to himself, his own soul, that something terrible had happened.

THE blind beggar had been a symbol, unreal, supernatural. That's how he'd come to disappear the way he had. He shook himself free from this and came back to the end of the message—those last two words:

Po Lum!

The words were calling up a picture in his mind. The picture was that of a Chinaman, huge and vague and seen through a veil of smoke. He was fighting for his memory now as one fights for the memory of a dream. Suddenly, but still vaguely, he remembered.

One night—he couldn't recall just when—while wandering about the streets of Macao he'd come upon a little old man who'd been knocked down and probably left for dead by a band of robbers.

He'd carried the victim to some doctor or other and had had him fixed up, then offered to take him home. The old man had declined, but he'd minutely described the place.

The place was Po Lum's.

Po Lum himself had often brooded over the vices of Macao. None knew them better than himself. For he'd not only garnered a fortune from them, he'd tried them.

He'd tried most of them so persistently that presently he was spending as much money on doctors as he'd spent on pleasure, and for vice was reduced to mere gluttony and opium, which he regarded as two of the minor indulgences.

His preference, moreover, finally settled on Chinese doctors, whom he could bribe to make his treatment fairly pleasant. The much-vaunted

European doctors he came to despise and hate. Their advice was obnoxious and their decoctions worse.

Then he'd heard of one Dr. Muk, or Dr. Muk had heard of Po Lum. In any case, the two of them had got together. And it wasn't very long after that before Po Lum was learning certain things about vice he'd never thought existed before outside of dreams and legends.

Incidentally, the Chinese have a saying to the effect that the king of hell decrees how every man shall die—and how!

There was one formula that Dr. Muk explained to his patient at great length and which fascinated Po Lum to the exclusion of all others.

First of all, it had to do with a black stone image, very primitive and about a foot in height, which came, he explained, from a hidden temple in the jungles of West Africa. He produced such an image. It was, he said, of incredible antiquity, dating from the time when there was no great difference between men and animals.

It looked it.

Next, there was the famous *mi-hun-t'ang*—a word or phrase which might be translated as "confuse-the-spirit-liquid"—the secret of which had been kept, practically since the beginning of the world, in Thibet. Dr. Muk was able to secure, for a price, one of the small jade bottles in which this magic liquid was kept.

The only other thing required—apart from the knowledge of how to use it—was a full-grown male orang-utan, preferably one that had come straight from the jungles.

PO LUM, having carefully learned all that there was to learn, commissioned Dr. Muk himself to go to Borneo and get the big ape. But as any man could get an orang-utan,

provided he had the money, and fearing blackmail later on when the magic was put into operation, Po Lum ordered the doctor suppressed.

This, to the best of Po Lum's knowledge, had been done. Such orders had always been properly carried out before.

There was some delay in getting the sort of big ape he wanted. But in the meantime there were other things to keep Po Lum occupied. And when the orang-utan did arrive it created a sensation.

Everyone who saw it agreed that it was the largest and finest specimen that had ever been captured.

PO LUM commenced his experiment all that there was to learn, commencing first in a tentative way. He wanted to try the formula on others before he tried it on himself.

Even these experiments convinced him that he hadn't been lied to—that he'd got hold of a big thing. But he was also convinced of its danger. The experiments had resulted in the death of a couple of girls and of three or four waterfront coolies.

He ascribed these deaths to various causes, none of which had anything to do with the value of what he had acquired. Once there had been a bad *feng-shui*—a bad spirit-vibration—because he hadn't handled the black joss right. Another time, he'd dosed the big ape with too much opium; and the next time with not enough. And so on.

He was an educated man. He'd been dabbling in Oriental magic off and on all his life. The more powerful the magic, the more careful you had to be. Not that the deaths so far mattered. He was thinking of himself.

The mere thought of himself—the soul and the mind of him—using that big orang-utan's body to enjoy himself while his own body refreshed it—

self in a blissful sleep would have driven him to any lengths.

TO have seen Po Lum you would have understood his desire for such an escape. He weighed somewhere around three hundred pounds—mostly fat; not very healthy fat. As he sat there now in a rear alcove of the "flower and happiness house" he'd inherited from his grandfather, he looked like a Chinese belly-god, more than man-size, in the shrine of a temple.

The place itself was something like a temple, of a purely pagan sort. There was a large room, softly lit and hazy with smoke, rich with carved teak and decorative banners. No noise. The main gambling hall was to the right.

All that was heard from that direction was a murmur of voices and a perpetual soft clicking. To the left were rooms for other forms of entertainment. It was mostly silence from that direction, also, except for an occasional screech of nasal music.

This room Po Lum overlooked was the main reception-hall.

There were plenty of customers—Chinese mostly, or mixed-bloods, like the girls who were there to receive them; but all of them sleek and prosperous looking, some millionaires among them. He knew them all and they knew him.

He wondered which one of them he could kill—if it came to another killing—without getting himself into trouble.

For the main trouble with those earlier experiments, he'd decided, was that the coolies he'd used didn't have any real souls anyway, or their grip on their souls was too weak. For a real test he would have to experiment on someone like himself—educated, well-born.

He was meditating this when his little black eyes saw a white man

come in. A white man was a rarity in Po Lum's place. He'd never encouraged the tourist trade.

The main entrance to his establishment was up a *hutung*, or alley, into which tourists didn't like to venture. Ordinarily a white man coming in here would have been politely steered out again. But this was different.

Po Lum raised a finger and a little Chinese girl with a painted face drew near.

"Go sweetly," he said, "and bring that foreign devil here."

The girl did as she was told. The white stranger followed her, looming large and pink, manifestly embarrassed. He was a handsome youth, somewhere in the mid-twenties.

"An American," Po Lum shrewdly judged, noting his well-cut Tuxedo. He was right.

"I'm an American and a stranger," the young man began at once, while Po Lum inwardly thrilled. "But I beg your pardon. Do you speak English?"

"I do." And Po Lum smiled. He'd lived in San Francisco. "Is there any way in which I can be of assistance?"

The American brought out a strip of red paper with Chinese characters written on it.

"This," he said, "is supposed to be the address of the place I was looking for. I can't read it and I seem to have been misdirected."

Po Lum took the slip and read it.

"Ah," he said, "you were looking for the Long Life Tea Garden. It is but a step from here. But these Macao lanes are confusing. Permit me to send a servant with you to show you the rest of the way."

CORBIN wondered if the big Chinaman hadn't recognized him. He was pretty sure that he had. But neither he nor Po Lum gave any sign of doubt or suspicion. They chatted

pleasantly and exchanged compliments until the servant arrived.

To the servant Po Lum droned something in an undertone. Then, speaking more loudly, told him to exert every care for the American's comfort. After which, he told his caller good-night and invited him to come again.

Corbin followed the servant out the front door. His exit, he knew, was being watched by a hundred pairs of eyes.

So far everything had happened as Dr. Muk had predicted it would. He'd found the queer little old man waiting for him, when he'd returned to his boarding-house, after having received the note from the blind man in the street.

Dr. Muk had told him all about Po Lum's experiments and what the end of them was apt to be.

THROUGH a number of narrow alleys and by a series of sharp turns, Po Lum's servant had brought Corbin to a door in a high brick wall. Here the servant knocked, and the door was opened at once by an old man with a staff and lantern.

"Welcome to the place of delight," he said in Chinese. "The flowers await the humming-bird."

As he said this, he suddenly dashed the lantern toward Corbin's face, as if he intended to blind him. Corbin jerked back and threw up his hands. As he did so, his feet were snatched from under him. He went down fighting, dragging others with him. How many he couldn't guess, but it was a mob.

It seemed to be a mob with ropes. Each hand was noosed, each foot. There was a rope about his neck that was strangling him. He tried to go on fighting. But it was like fighting in a quagmire.

He was going down—going down.

He still felt that he was sunk in mud—suffocated and paralyzed—when he was coming out of it. But he had to come out of it. He had to climb. Someone was calling him. It was a voice that he'd tried to forget.

He'd been trying to forget it ever since he'd received a cable, on his arrival at Shanghai three years ago, telling him that the girl he'd loved and was expecting to marry had married someone else.

For the first time since then he would to pronounce her name.

"Mary!"

It was her voice that pronounced his name. She was pronouncing it over and over again. It was this that had called him up from the depths.

"John! John! John!"

"Yes, I'm John Corbin," he panted, with an effort. "And you—you are Mary."

He opened his eyes. Her face was swimming before his eyes. He was afraid that this was delirium. It had happened to him once before. He tried to raise a hand to touch her face. He was unable to do so.

"I'm Mary," she told him.

His heart seemed to stand still. But he summoned such strength as he had in his heart and brain.

"You were married," he said.

"That was a lie," she almost sobbed.

"He"—Corbin knew whom she meant—"sent you that lie because I wouldn't marry him. I've been trying to find you ever since.

"When I went to Shanghai, you were in Canton. When I went to Canton, you were in Saigon. When I went there, you'd left for Singapore. I had no money. You had no fixed address until you came to Macao—"

THERE came to Corbin a recollection of the paper the blind beggar had given him.

"What's happened?" he cried.

"What's happened—to you?—to me?"

He was struggling to get up. Another voice broke in.

"This is somewhat better than I thought."

It was Po Lum standing a little away from them. He loomed like a grotesque specter in the dim light. At sight of him, Corbin made another desperate effort of the will. He could feel that neither his arms nor legs were bound, and yet he was unable to move.

He was lying on a couch with his head propped up. Mary, who'd been kneeling at his side, had swung round partly until she also was facing Po Lum. She was still on her knees. She'd put out an arm across Corbin's body, as if to protect him.

Po Lum looked at the two of them, but finally his puckered eyes rested on Mary. She would have made a picture to attract the eyes of any man—fair, her delicate face flaming whitely, her yellow hair falling about her slender shoulders.

"Somewhat better than I thought," Po Lum began again. "O Ming! O Fate! To think that you two should know each other! Have you shown your hero his colleague in this little drama? Lift him up."

Mary was shrinking, growing whiter.

"Lift him up, unless you want me to—with a noose," Po Lum insisted. "He can't move. He's like the caterpillar stung by a wasp. He's paralyzed. I gave him the sting myself before they brought him here."

MARY, shrinking, put an arm under Corbin's head and lifted him slightly. He was able to see. He stared uncomprehending for a moment or so, then with a growing horror as his dull brain came more widely awake.

He was recalling now all that Dr. Muk had told him. It seemed as if

he were recalling a story he'd heard centuries ago, in some remote preceding life.

He struggled to find some secret spring in mind or heart that would bring him out of this nightmare.

The room where he lay was not very large. It appeared to have neither windows nor doors. Walls, ceiling and floor were black, of solid teak or ebony. Except for the couch on which he lay he saw no furniture—nothing to relieve the solid black but the thing just opposite that held him absorbed.

THIS was an iron-barred cage, the front of it flush with the wall, except for a narrow shelf along the top. Then, behind the bars, intently watchful, maniacal but human, the gray face and glaring eyes of the great ape that had been brought from Borneo.

The beast snarled and withdrew into the shadows at the back of the cage as Po Lum advanced.

"Then this," Po Lum said. He was lighting incense sticks to either side of a black stone figure—ape or man, it was impossible to say—standing on the shelf above the cage. "The Jungle Joss!"

For the time, at least, Po Lum was completely master of the situation. He savored this situation. The whole three hundred pounds of him were beginning to swagger a little.

The excitement of the present triumph and of triumphs that lay ahead were putting a strain on his heart and nerves. Purple blotches were beginning to appear on that sallow ham which was his face. His eyes were beginning to protrude. Falsetto notes began to sound in his voice when he spoke.

Once he had looked at Mary just as she was rising as if in response to some irresistible impulse to attack him if with nothing but her hands.

"Make a silly move like that," squeaked Po Lum in a voice that was nearly hysterical, "and I'll kill this white dog of yours right now. Would you prefer another?"

"You're killing him anyway," Mary gasped. Her own voice was as if frozen.

"I'm not killing him. You shall see."

"You've killed others," wailed Mary softly. "I've seen them die. And the girls!"

Po Lum laughed. For him this was a let-down, sheer bathos. In a normal voice he explained:

"Those fellows who died were nothing but coolies. Their souls were as light and fragile as bubbles. A breath, and they disappeared! The girls! Bah! They were slave girls, worn out. In six months or a year they would have been dead anyway. Now you, my ivory goddess—"

Corbin roared: "Po Lum, what is this thing you propose to do?"

Po Lum became the mincing, condescending walrus. His humor was like an obscene offense. At first he answered nothing. There was something else engaging him.

He'd pressed a lever hidden in the wall. The top of the cage began to descend. The great beast, familiar with this horror, began to fight the increasing pressure. It trumpeted. It roared. It shrieked.

MARY, already overwrought by such ordeals as Corbin dared not imagine, pressed her hands against her ears and turned her face away. Her head drooped to Corbin's breast.

He could feel the spasms of her sobbing. He was stricken. With the supremest effort of his will, he was still unable to move arms, legs, body.

The orang-utan no longer howled. It made no more than a subdued moaning. From the wide sleeve of

his kimono-like robe Po Lum produced a shining instrument.

In a few more seconds the big ape was silent. Again Po Lum pressed the lever. As the top of the cage went up the great ape lay still. On its forearm, extended beyond the bars, there was a slight stain of blood.

NOT until then would Po Lum turn to Corbin to complete that explanation he'd begun.

"The beast sleeps," he said. "It sleeps as no beast sleeps without scientific aid. Its tiny seed of a soul has fled and left a vacancy. Here comes the mystery.

"The soul of a man responds to gravity—like air, like water, like anything else in nature. It seeks the lowest level available whenever a man loses his grip—shall we say on spiritual things? I'm going to set your own soul free.

"I hope I'm making myself clear. It's one of the oldest tricks of natural magic—the release of a human soul and its descent into an animal body."

He was like a lecturer. He was picking up enthusiasm and authority.

"You've surely heard of that," he said. "The shamans, the ghost-doctors, the left-hand yogis, the red lamas, and others, here in the East, have never lost that secret.

"In the old days you Westerners used to have the secret yourselves—hence the stories of vampires, werewolves, dryads, donkeys that spoke."

He stopped to laugh.

From the fold of his coat he pulled out a carved jade bottle and held it up to the light.

"What's that?" Corbin asked, in a stifled voice, although he knew now what the answer would be.

"This," Po Lum answered, "is the solvent known as the *mi-hun-t'ang*. It's the good old 'confuse-the-spirit-soup,' what the ignorant believe the

demons give to the newly dead, so that their souls will go rambling off into the shadows and so be unable to find the road back to the sun and air. But which we wise ones know can be put to better use before we die."

HE laughed again, but he quieted down. He was looking at the Jungle Joss on the shelf above the cage.

He began to murmur something in the Mandarin dialect. Corbin caught a number of the words. What Po Lum said seemed to be an invocation:

"O Ancient One . . . O Grandfather . . . the soul of this man . . . into the soul-pod . . . of this Man of the Beginning . . . the Man of Four hands . . ."

A chill crept over Corbin as Po Lum turned from the Jungle Joss and looked at him instead. The face of the big Chinaman had undergone some sort of a Satanic transfiguration.

His face was all purple now. His stare was fixed. He leaned over Corbin with the unstopped jade bottle in his hand.

Almost before Corbin knew what was happening, some of the liquid had fallen on him. He felt a sear on face and throat. It was as if he were being burned alive, swiftly, yet lingeringly, terribly.

He felt his body arch and collapse. He saw a pillar of white smoke or mist going up and knew that this was some vital part of himself.

He seemed to hear a scream.

A silence followed.

YET when Corbin opened his eyes it struck him that he was hearing the end of a scream—a shriek that, somehow, had awakened him a long time ago from a curious dream. He'd dreamed that he was a man. He hated men. He hated the scent of them.

He sat up with a sense of strangeness about him and an aching. He remembered now. In his man-dream he'd thought he was paralyzed, as one might be by a fire-bolt, either fallen from the sky or sent up from the ground by men.

He saw a small bloodstain on his hairy forearm and he brought the wound to his lips and sucked at it. The familiar taste of blood was mingled with a bitter taste.

He wondered what insect or snake had stung him. He hated snakes. But he hated men more. There was the man-smell now, getting stronger. He crouched back into the shadows of the cage as the man-shadow and the man-stench grew stronger.

"Stench," he growled, "get back!"

The man stopped.

QUICKER than a snake might strike, Corbin thrust out a crooked forefinger—it was like a black iron hook, as hard and strong—and ripped a gash down the great moon face. A little more and he would have had an eye, an ear, a slab of jawl.

Listen to the two-legged elephant squall.

There was a barking of human voices from which Corbin was inclined to retreat. The man-thing he'd scarred was loudest. But through the man-howls Corbin could hear the accents of a woman.

From the depth of the cage he looked out at the woman. For the first time, Corbin saw that there was another man-creature lying on a high place and that the woman was weeping over him, like a four-handed mother weeping whose baby has been shot by men. Maybe this other man-thing there was sick—or dead.

Suddenly, Corbin saw that the woman had turned and was looking in his direction. She appeared to be calling to him.

Something white jabbed into the

cage, and Corbin, his interest fixed on the woman, had been almost impaled.

He saw what had happened. The man he had scratched had found a long knife—long as the arm of a man. It was this that he had thrust through the bars of the cage in an effort to cut him.

The effort did not frighten Corbin, but it threw him into a rage.

He began to scream his rage. You could frighten even a crocodile with a proper scream. You could make a python unwind its coils in terror even after it had completed a kill. He gathered his lungs full of the air, fetid though this air was, and rolled out a challenge.

The noise was so terrible that the big knife drew back.

But now the woman had sprung at the man with the knife, and there came to Corbin the strange, incredible thought that it was for him that this woman was fighting—was risking her life.

Not so incredible! He remembered now. No woman of the forest had ever killed a member of Corbin's tribe.

There came into Corbin's throat a curious tingling at this thought. He called at the woman softly. But again he was all fury. The man had thrust her aside, was threatening her with the sword.

HER only answer to this was to try to seize the long knife with her hands. The man backed away from her, bellowing.

Again Corbin shot out the iron hooks of his fingers. He had the reach, almost, of a striking python.

This time he'd hooked the robe. He was drawing the man backward. It was the man's turn to scream again—a jungle screech, the death-cry of a pig struck by a leopard.

A huge and terrible shape emerged

—as if skinned and hairless to the waist, mountains of flesh, an albino buffalo, boiled and scraped. But above this a mask of Gwa, the god-devil, that both animals and men encounter at times.

Still Corbin was unafraid. He'd learned from those previous thrusts. As the blade came toward him he let it come. Then, swift as a dancing shadow, he'd slid aside, and seized the white wrist beyond the blade. The blade dropped.

Close to his own face Corbin saw a purple moon—a purple moon with two black holes that must have been the eyes of the man-thing.

Even now, in this crisis, he could find time to stop and gaze into those tiny black caverns—the eyes of a man—the eyes of a man like this.

CORBIN snapped the fat wrist and slowly, fatefully, with a sort of gusty satisfaction, drew the arm further and further through the bars.

The man-thing was struggling like a tapir taken by a crocodile. He was making much the same sort of sounds—a grunting, a whining. The man sought to save himself by catching the bars with his remaining hand, and Corbin took that and snapped this wrist, as well.

He now jerked the man against the bars with such violence that something fell from just above—a heavy mass of polished black stone.

It struck the great white melon of a head, and Corbin released his hold. He'd seen what had happened. The ape people hate a live man, but they hate a dead man worse. . . .

The woman had turned her face away. She was weeping over the figure on the high place. Now and then she kissed the face of the man lying there. But the man was alive.

He wasn't dead. Corbin could tell. And each time that he saw the woman kiss the face of the sleeper, Cor-

bin felt that curious burning in his throat that he had experienced before.

It was something like the feeling that he'd known, somewhere, some time, for wife and babies—nights, when the moon came up, and he was sitting sentinel in some lower crotch of a tree while these people of his were sleeping in the branches above, and a night bird warbled, and you could hear the answering voice of running water.

At such a time he'd seen Gwa again—devil-god that both animals and men could see at times, and Gwa would look at him with wonder as he, the ape, would look at Gwa with wonder, each of them wondering what it was all about, but feeling friendly.

It was with a thought of Gwa, curiously consoling, that Corbin now began to feel a strange sense of weariness, of homesickness, a desire to be gone.

He tried, as he knew he must have tried a hundred times before, to spread the bars at the front of the cage or to break the planks. The near presence of the dead man made him feel unhappy.

But he fell to looking at that black stone that had struck his enemy dead. There was something about it, something to recognize. Then recognition came. This was Gwa—the face of Gwa that had been carved in stone—and the expression of Gwa was friendly.

CORBIN, in the body of the ape, no longer felt alone, no longer felt hopeless. Gwa was there. Even here, in this house of infamy and horror, lo, he'd found Gwa.

There was something so lulling, so soothing, in the thought that Corbin let the weariness and the sleep creep over him. He was safe. Whatever

happened, he was safe, with Gwa sitting sentinel like that.

There seemed to have been a silence.

Corbin, dreaming, was conscious of that burning in his throat and he knew it for what it was. This was love, and all the things that love must always stand for—faith, courage, patience.

He remembered how once, in the dim past, he'd lost faith through believing a lie. He resolved he would never do that again.

As if to reward him for this silent troth he felt a kiss on his face—light as dew, gentle as the rain. He smiled and opened his eyes. He saw Mary there leaning over him.

"What happened?" he asked.

All she could answer was to cry.

He came out of his sleep. He was remembering. He recognized this room. He remembered that he had here been horrified, mistreated. He should have been horrified now. But a curious sense of peace persisted—persisted beyond all reason.

HE asked no further questions for quite a while. He merely put his arms about Mary and drew her face close to his and let her cry as long as she wanted to.

A curious place for love and peace it occurred to him a little later. The room was horrible to see. Dead, Po Lum was vaster than when he was alive.

Corbin saw what had happened.

Po Lum must have tried to kill the ape. The ape had seized him and dragged him to his death. No, it must have been the Jungle Joss that killed Po Lum, as old Dr. Muk had predicted it would.

Corbin crept close to the cage.

The great orang-utan appeared to be asleep. Corbin watched. He could see no sign of breathing. Finally, with steady nerves, he put

his hand through the bars and touched the ape's great black hand.

There was something about that contact, he couldn't tell quite what. But as the orang-utan's fingers and Corbin's half interlocked in what was something equivalent to a farewell handshake, he felt such an out and out fellowship with the beast it was as if he'd lost a brother, something—who knows?—closer than a brother; an integral part of himself.

"I wish we could get the poor old fellow out of the cage," said Corbin. "I hate to leave him here with Po Lum."

"Neither of them are here," said Mary.

That servant of Po Lum's—the one who had ostensibly led Corbin to the entrance-gate of the Long Life Tea Garden, but who had in fact merely conducted him around various corners to Po Lum's own back gate—suddenly appeared.

At sight of him, Corbin was on his feet and ready to fight, feeling within himself something of an old battle-strain that may have come down to him from hairy ancestors.

But there was to be no fight. The man wilted to his knees. He didn't know whom to fear most—Corbin alive or Po Lum dead. His panicky eyes kept rolling from one to another.

"Get us out of here," said Corbin, "and pretty damn quick! You savvy?"

"Yiss, master," the fellow said.

He'd worked in Shameen, the foreign concession of Canton, like so many other of the Macao Chinese. He was ready to go.

Corbin picked up the image of the Jungle Joss.

"You won't need it where you've gone to, old pal," Corbin said. "But I may need it where I'm going. We're still on earth."

It was curious how that fellow-feeling of his for the great ape kept coming back to him. For he remembered nothing at all of that fight with Po Lum. Not just then.

But sometimes, for years and years to follow, he'd catch himself dreaming that he lived in the jungle, that he'd sat sentinel in long peaceful nights when some family of his, wife and babies, were sleeping in the branches overhead. He never told Mary these dreams for fear of hurting her feelings.

AS for Mary, neither did she tell him about the time she'd seen him—in no dream, either—as a hairy ape. She also was afraid of hurt feelings, perhaps.

Anyway, it's always better to look ahead, not back.

But, just the same, they'd think of all this when one or the other of them, or both, would happen to look up at the Jungle Joss that they kept in the place of honor on their mantelpiece.



Pirates and Gentlemen



A Plot Against a Feared Young Pirate in the Boston of the Pre-Revolutionary Days

By SCOTT MORGAN

Author of "Giants of the Road," "Playing in Luck," etc.

NIGHT had fallen that July evening in 1770, when a boat, with two who rowed and three who sat, stole quietly out from dark and silent Boston harbor and headed toward a ship lying at anchor in the calm waters of the bay.

The three figures might have been but three dummies, they sat so still, so silent, and so close together in the stern of the dinghy. Their chins were sunk deep in the mufflers that swathed their necks in spite of the warm summer night, hiding half their faces, while their three-cornered hats, tilted forward on their brows, effectually concealed the upper features.

Only their eyes remained brightly visible and those three pairs of eyes seldom removed themselves from an unswerving gaze across the dark waters to the great hulk that loomed like a blot against the inky sky.

No man spoke. The ripple and swirl of the tide, glittering with phosphoric bubbles, hurried past; the regular creak of the oars and the lap and splash as they dipped were the only sounds to break the stillness. Even the night around them seemed filled with lurking shadows.

The men rowed carefully as they came under the great black hull of the ship that towered high and threaten-

ing above them; then, as they grated against her side, they heard the quick patter of feet on the decks above.

A voice from the darkness demanded who they were and what was their business. One of the three answered by a single word. Then silence again as they waited.

The boatmen clung with difficulty to the slippery side of the great ship that rode ponderously upon the swell, striving to keep the dinghy from being ground and broken as the tide washed them close on the crest of a roller.

Then came the sound of returning feet, and a moment later a lantern was swung over the side of the ship. A rope ladder came overside and then, for almost the first time, the three muffled figures showed signs of life. Two in turn scrambled up the ladder and disappeared above the dangling light.

As the last man placed his foot upon the unstable rungs he turned to the two who rowed.

"Do you await us, my lads," he said; "and—hark ye, the less seen and marked for remembrance by your eyes, the better for your pockets, to say nothing of your necks."

THEN, he, too, swung to the top. There was the sound of voices as he reached the deck; the rope ladder was hauled up and the light withdrawn.

On the deck the mysterious three stood close together, their eyes looking with scantily concealed suspicion at their surroundings.

From the few lanterns there filtered only small circles of light, into the radiance of which strange forms and faces came and went: men with untended beards and hair unshorn; clothes of many hues and varied nationalities; with pistols and cutlasses thrust into wide, buckled belts.

More than once, beneath their

cloaks, three left hands sought their sides and held their swords in readiness for instant service.

The time of waiting seemed interminable, until the coming of a negro slave set an end to their fears. At a word, they followed him, stumbling along the galleries and descending the numerous steps and stairs and arriving at last in a large cabin splendidly fitted and illuminated with lamps hung from the crossbeams of the ceiling.

Their eyes becoming accustomed to the light after a few seconds, they saw standing at the head of the long table a tall, well-built man who appeared considerably more at ease than his visitors.

He looked gallant enough in a crimson damask waistcoat and breeches, a black laced coat, and a wig that was irreproachable. Suspended by a silk scarf flung over his shoulders, were a pair of pistols, and a sword of incomparable inlaid workmanship dangled at his side.

He bowed to his three visitors, and with a wave of the hand dismissed the negro. After a momentary hesitation, he who had been the last to climb the ladder advanced.

"I have the pleasure of addressing Captain Jonathan Atkins?" he said in a somewhat strained voice.

NOW that they were face to face he had difficulty in totally mastering his fear.

The other bowed.

"The same. I give you welcome to the *Wanderer*, Sir Alwyn Fortescue. And you Mr. Philip Fortescue, and you Mr. Crowne.

"But come forward and be seated, gentleman; there is much room under the light. We leave the shadows for honest men who do not fear a lurking foe—rogues are like moths, ever drawn to the light whether they will or no, eh, Sir Fortescue?"

Fortescue laughed haltingly.

"I have always been interested in your career," he said hurriedly. "You have my admiration for a fame rapidly achieved, elegantly maintained."

"Substitute 'notoriety' for 'fame' and I'll not quarrel with you, Sir Alwyn," replied Atkins. "Even a rogue may love the truth, and flattery has ever been distasteful to me."

"Unless it comes from the other sex, shall we say?" interposed Philip Fortescue, seating himself on the left of the captain.

"Indeed, you have many admirers among the women since it has gone forth that the most daring pirate on the high seas is a young and handsome man. But, talking of women, 'tis all on account of one small virago that we are here tonight. Now, Alwyn, my brother, do you proceed to tell Captain Atkins of our plight and your plan."

THE elder Fortescue clasped his nervous hands upon the table before him. As Philip finished speaking he turned his eyes toward Jonathan Atkins.

"It is on account of our sister—our half-sister I should say, Pamela Fortescue. She has been wooed for no little time by our friend and cousin here, Halsey Crowne.

"But in spite of the fact that we, her brothers, strongly urge the match, she is saucy enough to turn up her nose at what is in every way a suitable matrimonial alliance, and not only does she absolutely refuse to be a party to the affair—"

"But, in addition, the jade openly ridicules me and to my face, forsooth!" interrupted Crowne, whose thunderous brow betokened no good will toward Mistress Fortescue.

Atkins glanced at him and repressed a smile.

"And then," continued Sir Alwyn, "what must my lady do but add insult

to injury and contend that she has given her heart for good and all to a paltry nobody—in short, the son of the Governor of an obscure port in the West Indies. 'Fore Heaven, 'tis not to be thought of!"

"But, my dear Sir Alwyn, why come to me?" Atkins interrupted. "In what way can I possibly assist you to straighten out this family tangle? I can assure you that I have no liking for a job that already smacks of parting a maid and her lover."

"Hear me a little further, Captain Atkins," pleaded Sir Alwyn. "The scheme is simple and will, I hope, commend itself to you. 'Tis well known that most women admire chivalry and bravery, so I have lighted upon a plan whereby the affections of our sister may be turned from this nobody and, by a little stratagem, given to our cousin here; 'tis in this wise:

"We have discovered that Pamela and Pierre Hautecourt have decided to elope tomorrow night during a ball held at the house of a friend. Hautecourt is to slip from the dancing room a few minutes after nine of the clock; in a short period Pamela follows to the meeting place—a secluded arbor from whence the road is easily accessible, and where a chaise will be waiting."

Atkins bent forward.

"Well?" he said shortly.

WE will undertake to account for Hautecourt, so you will be free to seize the girl—gag her, bind her, stifle and silence her, so you bring her safely here to your ship. Mind you, I would not have you use her ill or harshly; but, on the other hand, you must not prove too kind an abductor. As soon as she is safe on board do you get under way immediately, and make for a route which we will decide upon later.

"A few days upon the high seas

will afford my lady sufficient time to repent of her sins, and she will hail with gladness the sight of a sloop that will give you chase—you must let her give you chase for some little time. Our cousin here will be much in evidence when the time comes to stop you and board you.

"Then, amid much fighting, which, needless to say, will have no ill effect, as we shall take care to instruct our men to fire wide, and will expect of you the same, Halsey, here, will board your vessel, overcome your men, make you a prisoner in your room, and rescue Pamela in triumph from her seemingly perilous position.

"Once he is a hero in her eyes the rest will be easy; Hautecourt will seem but a mean creature by comparison. What do you think, is it not a pretty plan and one that might appeal to the susceptible heart of any foolish wench?"

Atkins had sat silent throughout, with a somewhat supercilious smile curving his lips. Now he glanced up into the eager face of Sir Alwyn.

"And the terms for this service?" he asked.

"Ah, now that we come to terms we know that the captain has consented!" replied Fortescue, with a quick smile to each of his companions.

Later, when the three had again sunk their identities in the folds of their mufflers for the return to land, they bade their host good-night.

"We shall meet again shortly," said Crowne, a smirk wrinkling his pugnacious face. "Do not forget the instructions."

A FLUSH of rosy light, faint and warm and still elusive, flickered at the closed eyelids of Pamela Fortescue and, awakening her, recalled the strange surroundings which the sleep of exhaustion had blotted from her thoughts.

With a start of bewildered recollec-

tion, she rose unsteadily to her feet and looked around her, still uncertain of her position.

One glance proved that she was in the cabin of a ship; and the uncertainty of her walk—as she crossed to the square, window-like port convinced her that the ship was moving.

With quickly beating heart she hurried forward and peered eagerly out over the waste of waters that met her startled gaze. Far away the sun—a great red ball—showed above the rim of the sea. A trio of shrieking gulls followed in the wake of the vessel—the only living things in all that vast expanse of a landless world which she had never seen before—a world all sea and sky.

WITH a cry she went back to the center of the cabin and buried her face in her hands, blotting out from her eyes the scene that, to her land-bred mind, held in it nothing but limitless desolation. The mournful cry of the circling sea-birds found an echo in her heart, and she flung herself upon her couch in the uttermost despair.

But the even, monotonous motion of the vessel quieted the overwrought nerves of the girl, and when the mood of tearful desolation had spent itself she turned her thoughts to more practical matters.

She was surprised, but greatly pleased, to see on the other side of the room a small box which she had packed secretly to accompany her on her elopement. Who had frustrated their carefully prepared arrangements she could guess without much difficulty, but whom she had to thank for her present strange position she had yet to discover.

With this resolve in her mind she set about making her toilet and erasing the effects of her grief. Then with her heart beating quickly at what lay before her, and with a certain

courage born of anger she tried the handle of her stateroom door.

TO her surprise it opened easily at her touch, and she stepped into a large, airy cabin.

As she advanced, she saw that the saloon was not empty, and that its other occupant was one of handsome face and figure.

On seeing her he came forward, and to his elaborate bow she responded with her best curtsy.

"I give you good-morning, Mistress Fortescue; you are astir early. I trust the motion of the boat does not disturb you?" he asked, with a charm of manner that was not wholly lost upon Pamela.

"Indeed, no; the motion itself does not disturb me, 'tis the oddness of my being here at all on board a ship that causes me much trepidation. But you, perchance, can clear the mystery—or can it be that you, too, are one who owes his presence to abduction by force?" she asked.

"Why, no, Mistress Fortescue. The fact is I happen to have a good deal to do with the affair that has caused you so much inconvenience. But come, I shall be honored if you will breakfast with me. Let it never be said that Jonathan Atkins was once known to be lax in the laws of hospitality and keep a lady waiting. Your hand, mistress."

For some moments Pamela could not recall where she had heard the name before. Then, with a start, she remembered, the notorious pirate! The man whose word was law, whose will was iron; and who, for his extreme beauty no less than for his feats of daring, his phenomenal success in capturing richly laden prizes, was famed throughout the colonies.

And here she sat at breakfast with him, though at his command she might walk the plank five minutes

afterward! He noticed her sudden pallor, and asked her, was she ill?

"I am not ill, Captain Atkins, but I entreat you to tell me, what is it you want with me? Why have you dragged me on board your ship? Why do I sail away from Massachusetts, from my home, my friends and those I love?" she cried piteously.

"My sweet lady, you alarm yourself needlessly. I have no thought but to serve you, and you shall hear how I have done so presently. But, I entreat you, do not look upon me as if I had the ferocious aspect of Teddy Teach, or others of such-like calibre.

"But since it will lessen your fears, I must tell you that it was at the suggestion of your brothers I undertook this affair, and that I had but little liking for the job. But thinking that if I refused you might fall into hands less to be desired than mine, I agreed, took their money, heard their orders—and here you are."

As he finished speaking, Atkins had the satisfaction of seeing the color ebb back into the girl's face. She looked up at him with gratitude.

"And then what happens?" she asked.

"They, together with one Halsey Crowne, intend to follow in an armed sloop, whose guns they tell me they do not intend to use with ill-effect against me.

"So, Mistress Pamela, do you wish to be overtaken on the high seas by your worthy brothers and, after being conveyed on board their vessel, forced into a marriage with Mr. Crowne? For if such be the case I shall adhere to their commands."

AS Atkins spoke he watched the girl narrowly; he saw her expression change from fear to hope, and she turned to him impulsively.

"Captain Atkins, if I ask you not to give me over to my brothers; if I ask you to give me safe conduct back to

Massachusetts, where I may find what has befallen him whom I was to have married today; or if that be not your destination, to Ennisto in the West Indies, where I have friends who would receive me, will you do so? You were my friend before you ever saw me; now, if I ask you, will you continue so?"

"To the death, if need arise," replied Atkins quietly, as he raised her fingers to his lips.

"And now, Mistress Pamela, I have some other news for you. Your brothers told me that while I was engaged in securing you, they would take upon themselves to account for your lover, Hautecourt.

"I liked not the aspect of the affair from the first, and for that reason I secretly commissioned my men to seize him before Sir Alwyn's men came upon the scene.

HOWEVER that may be, my boys were a little late and arrived only just in time to save him from the united strength of three blades—one had already scratched him in the arm, otherwise he would have joined us at breakfast this morning."

"What, Pierre is hurt?" cried the girl.

"'Tis but a trifling scratch, and will be well within twenty-four hours; you must rest thankful that he is alive at all," replied Atkins.

"But," said Pamela, when she had poured out thanks upon the head of her benefactor, "what motive can Alwyn and Philip have in causing you to abduct me in this manner? What can they hope to gain by these measures?"

"That, dear lady, is more than I can tell," replied Atkins.

"It seems to me that they must have some other design in those heads of theirs. They are forever hatching and hoping, and 'tis all for money, money, money. Think you, Captain

Atkins, that there is something on board this ship of yours that other men might know about and covet?"

PAMELA, in her eagerness, gazed slowly at the captain. So looking, she saw a sudden thought dawn in his mind; she saw him clench his hand upon the air and his jaw set in iron lines. He rose with some haste from the table.

"Mistress Fortescue, if what I think is true, you have given me the clue to a mystery. I believe this abduction, real enough in its way, was their method to gain admittance to this ship, and throw dust in my eyes by making me believe that you were the only object to attract them thither."

Even as he was speaking they heard the noise of sudden commotion overhead, and before he could cross the cabin a man entered hurriedly and without ceremony.

"A sail has been sighted, captain—"

"Ah, then, 'tis as I thought!" cried Atkins, speaking rapidly. "They intend to take us unawares! Well, Mistress Fortescue, I hope you bring us luck. Let's hope that we not only shatter this, our mutual enemy, but gain a prize as well—"

"What, do you mean that you will fight?" cried Pamela aghast.

Atkins turned to her with a glow in his eyes such as no woman ever had the power to bring there, nor ever would.

"Fight? Assuredly we'll fight. We'll show these greed-stricken landmen who are the masters of the sea. We'll teach them to make a woman their decoy and lies their passports.

"The sea is ours; pirates from pirate ships are safe—that is the honor of our trade—but from these cringing curs we'll exact a recompense that'll leave them with shattered hull—with masts gone by the board—

and with sails that flutter like ribbons in the breeze!"

His impassioned words fell like hail around Pamela's ears. When he had finished, she dared not speak, for she was fearful of the steely light of outraged honor that glittered in his eyes.

Then, with a quickly spoken command that she was to remain below, he strode from the saloon and disappeared up the stairway to the deck.

THE morning wind was blowing freshly across the expanse of blue where the white-caps tossed and twirled. The *Wanderer*, leaping forward under her stress of sail, clove through the waves and sent the strong, salt spray flying up almost into the faces of the men who leaned over the wide balustrade of the galleries, their heads swathed in bright handkerchiefs, and the sunlight glinting on the knives and cutlasses in their belts.

All eyes were turned to the horizon, where a tiny speck of white hovered against the brilliant azure sky.

Jonathan Atkins, as he stepped out upon the deck, took in the scene at a glance. He saw the distinct prize, saw how she had set her course to cut them off on the starboard tack; and he smiled grimly as he pictured the faces of the three conspirators when they met with the reception he held for them.

Then, above the noise of the breeze, his voice carried orders for all hands, the uncovering of the guns and the clearing of the ship's decks for immediate action.

As his eyes roved over the faces of his crew he smiled with cold serenity to think that there were those so ignorant as to pit their pigmy strength against these fearless cut-throats, who now kept up a running fire of oaths and curses—their satisfaction on sighting a prize.

As the morning advanced, the wind dropped slightly; the *Wanderer* lessened canvas and awaited the approach of the sloop.

As they came up with her at length, Atkins glanced significantly at his masthead where the Jolly Roger fluttered threateningly. Then he lowered his eyes until they rested on the eager, upturned faces of the men who thronged the decks of the sloop.

Among them, he picked out the swarthy features of Halsey Crowne, as that gentleman waited for the critical moment to give orders to his men.

At that moment Crowne caught sight of Atkins well in evidence upon his own poop, and something in his bearing, a subtle hint of purpose in his manner, sent a forewarning glimmer of doubt darting through Crowne's guilty mind.

Almost before those on the sloop were aware of what the *Wanderer* was about, there came the thunder and clap of a broadside which was poured into the sloop, now almost alongside.

AT the first onslaught, Halsey Crowne turned and fled into the first sheltered spot he could spy.

As the sound died away, giving place to the crash of splintered wood and the agonized shrieks of the wounded, Crowne, persuading himself that it was some dreadful mistake on Atkins' part, shouldered his way through the dense curtain of smoke.

Quickly he ascertained what damage had been done. Then with his heart beating sickeningly at his own nearness to the spot where the shot had struck, he scurried across the deck as fast as his shaking legs would carry him.

Reaching the side, he looked up and beheld the *Wanderer* looming up through the smoke, like some gigantic apparition, its very size increased by the smoky pall.

He saw Atkins looking down upon him from the high walls of the galley; and he heard the calm voice of the pirate as he gave a command. Then the grappling irons fastened like the tentacles of an immense octopus on the ill-fated little sloop, which he and the Fortescues had chartered with such sanguine hopes.

A moment later and the men from the pirate ship came swarming over the side like a plague of flies.

Turning rapidly, on seeing that Atkins had anticipated his move, Crowne gave frenzied and incoherent orders to his crew to get free or make the best use of their guns.

Then he dashed down to the cabin, where Sir Alwyn Fortescue and his brother sat awaiting the news of victory and the coming of their sister.

As their confederate entered, trembling, they turned and listened in dismay to the account that fell from the little man's stiff lips.

Then, together, the three hastened to the decks, where they found a hand-to-hand conflict taking place between both crews, until, overpowered by numbers, those on the sloop yielded and were forced to look on helpless while the pirates looted what they chose.

The three looked on in helpless silence, seeing every hope slip from them.

In the midst of the mêlée, they were approached by two of the pirates, still red with the stains of the engagement, and commanded in no gentle manner to appear before Captain Atkins on the *Wanderer*.

KNOWING it to be useless to resist, they complied with the best grace they could, and within a few minutes they found themselves again within that cabin where they had so recently discussed this scheme.

Atkins was standing, as they entered, at the head of the long table,

and seated by his side they saw, with no little astonishment, their sister Pamela.

"So, gentlemen, we meet again?" cried Atkins, with an inscrutable smile.

They stood, ill at ease, in a row before him. They scowled, but made no further reply to his salutation.

"But our meeting is somewhat sooner than the arrangement warranted, eh?"

JONATHAN ATKINS, you black traitor! What is the meaning of this outrage that you have perpetrated upon us?" cried Sir Alwyn, his voice ascending in a nervous squeak. "Where are your oaths and promises of fair play, and what means this manner in which you have kept your compact?"

"What useless questioning," answered the pirate with dangerous gentleness. "It is known to me, even as it was known to yourselves that night you came to me in Massachusetts waters, that the abduction of Mistress Pamela here was but a blind that you might take me unawares.

"You thought to make sure of gaining my decks by a pitiful stratagem that you might take my unsuspecting crew by surprise while seeming to act a part in your pretty love-drama—that you might rob me of the sixty thousand pounds' worth of diamonds which you knew me to be carrying for one who is my friend.

"So, gentlemen, if I may apply an honorable term to such a scurvy set of rogues, I anticipated your movements. 'Tis but a case of the biter bit.

"You may be glad that I permit you to go free with your lives, though, doubtless, my jolly scamps have left you precious little else!"

"And Pamela Fortescue?" cried Crowne, struggling for breath and speaking with barely restrained fury.

"Why does she sit there at your side? Has she no word of pity to put forth on behalf of her brothers and her affianced husband?"

BEFORE she could reply, Atkins interposed.

"What little right they have to beg her intercession has already been used on their behalf, and on yours, too, dog that you are. Thus it happens that you are not all set adrift like helpless derelicts. As for returning to those who would have so cowardly slain her lover, and who have already used her so ill—why, I have her own answer to that."

"Well?" snarled Sir Alwyn.

"So she remains with me. Is that not so, mistress?" asked Atkins.

Pamela nodded.

"A fine protector you have, my amiable sister!" sneered Philip. "It seems your taste is ever for the base born of the earth; but search as you may, Hautecourt is lost to you forever."

"He paid for his gallantry in attempting to elope with you with his life—my servants had orders to kill the reptile—"

"But failed to do so!" said a weak voice.

They started round, their faces suffused with an ashen pallor. Pamela sprang to her feet with a cry.

"Pierre, dearest, you are better; you are recovered!" she cried, running to him and clinging to his unwounded arm.

"I am well, dearest; they told me I should rest still, but I could not resist the idea of coming forth to face these cowardly wretches," he replied.

Halsey Crowne turned a purple, apoplectic face toward Atkins.

"You think you have cornered us, but if we don't raise a storm when we land again in Boston, such as will

cause the seas of the world to be scoured in search of you—"

"Enough!" cried Atkins, interrupting. "You seem to forget there must be a condition to your freedom. One well-directed volley from my guns and not a man of you will ever see land again. That freedom which I offer you and yours is the price of your silence. So, choose — your solemn word—to be kept forever, not broken—silence, or a more intimate acquaintance with the ocean?"

FOR a few seconds there was a tangible stillness. Then, in sullen tones, one by one, they gave their grudging promise.

Atkins recalled the men, who during the interview had withdrawn from the room to stand on guard outside the door, and commanded that the three prisoners should be returned to their own vessel, which he ordered to be immediately cast adrift.

Then he turned to Pamela and Hautecourt.

"Perhaps you would like to go up on deck now?" he said, smiling. "Doubtless your brothers and Mr. Crowne would be grateful to you for seeing them away?"

"It is quite safe then, Captain Atkins?" asked the girl timidly. "There will be no more fighting?"

"There will be no more fighting, Mistress Fortescue, for the simple reason that we have relieved them of all they had in the way of ammunition—and for the matter of that, of a good deal more besides, which they will have to account for as best they may to the astonished owners of the sloop."

So they went into the clear air that seemed vibrant with hope and life.

Leaning upon the balustrade they watched the sloop disappear in the distance, then turned their faces hopefully southward.

Keeping the Peace



The Sheriff of Painted Post Knew His Duty in this Story of a Desperate Struggle Between Two Men of the West

By COLE WEYMOUTH

Author of "Killers Three," "Trails West," etc.

TOM BLAIR ducked instinctively as the roar of a rifle echoed from the little clump of cotton-woods. He laughed harshly as a bullet spattered against the face of the big rock which served him as a barrier.

Behind him rose the towering gray walls of the mountains that formed the ravine, the narrow entrance a streak of black shadow that seemed as though a grimy finger had been drawn carelessly down a painting of sun-baked rock and deep-blue sky.

Blair's lean face was grim as he

tossed his worn gray Stetson behind him and slid further along the rock. His eyes were hard as he finally found himself peering around the side of the massive boulder. His gaze swept the green-clad valley basking peacefully in the warm sunlight and then centered on a little cluster of trees less than fifty yards away.

An expression of cold hatred crept over Blair's face as he stared steadily at the deep shadows beneath the trees. The barrel of the Winchester in his right hand was still warm from the last shot he had fired—a shot that

had brought a prompt answer from his hidden foe.

He searched eagerly for some slight motion that would reveal the exact location of the man who lurked amid the cotton-woods.

Blair cursed softly as he again heard the echo of a rifle. As a bullet sped by not more than two feet above his head he raised his Winchester and aimed carefully at a dark object beneath the low hanging branches of one of the trees.

There was a roar as his gun spoke sharply.

An instant after he had fired Blair ducked back behind the rock. He was taking no chances. He knew that the man in the cotton-woods was "Slash" Hawkins, a grim and ruthless killer, and Tom Blair was no fool. Possessed of plenty of courage, he nevertheless dealt cautiously with rattlesnakes and men like Hawkins.

IT was a duel of death the two men fought, a combat in which mercy was neither asked nor thought necessary. Hawkins was an outlaw who would die fighting, while in Blair's heart lurked a bitter hatred that only the other's death would satisfy.

The memory of Lem Gray as Blair had found him five days ago lingered in the mind of the man sheltered by the big rock. Lem weakly gasping out his story as he lay on his bunk at the ranchhouse dying from the bullet wounds of the man out there in the cotton-woods.

Slash Hawkins had brutally murdered Tom Blair's partner without giving the latter the slightest chance to defend himself.

Hawkins had come to the ranch owned by the two partners at a time when he had been sure that Blair was away. He had planned his visit carefully, for there had been a sinister motive behind his appearance at the Box X. He had known that Lem Gray

was laid up with a broken leg, and at first the outlaw had pretended his visit was a friendly one. But Lem knew and disliked the man and had resented his presence.

As soon as Hawkins had realized this, his tactics had changed. With a sneer he had revealed his real purpose. It was to get the money, five thousand dollars, that he had seen Blair draw from the bank the previous day, and which the partners intended to use to buy an addition to the Box X herd from a neighboring rancher.

The outlaw had been sure the money was somewhere in the ranchhouse and that Lem Gray knew its hiding place. He had tortured the disabled man in a fruitless effort to make him tell, for loyalty to his absent partner had sealed Lem's lips.

When he had found Lem would not speak, Hawkins had gone into a wild rage and finally he had deliberately shot Blair's partner as the latter lay weak and helpless on his bunk, and the killer had left Lem slowly dying from his wounds.

But he had not told his secret and Hawkins had torn up half the house before he had finally found the money and made his hasty departure.

TOM BLAIR had returned half an hour later and learned what had happened from his partner in the last words that Lem Gray would ever speak.

With a cold and vicious anger in his heart Blair had started after Hawkins. The realization of what he had done had sent the killer riding toward the Bad Lands. Hawkins knew that Blair would follow him, that the latter would never give up the chase until one of the two men had died.

For five days Blair had followed, pushing on steadily. Hawkins had been careless from the start and it

had been easy to pick up his trail. Blair had paused only once, save to rest his horse and himself at night, and that had been at the little town of Painted Post.

Here he had learned that Hawkins had passed through, still heading toward the Bad Lands. Blair had traded his weary mount for a fresh horse at a price that proved the man with whom he dealt was a shrewd bargainer and then continued riding steadily through the night.

At last Blair had sighted Hawkins ahead of him as he had ridden through the mouth of the canyon and into the entrance of this valley. But the killer had sensed the presence of the other man, and after firing wildly in Blair's direction Hawkins had made a dash for the little clump of cotton-woods.

Blair, realizing that it was to be a fight to a finish, had left his horse back in the canyon while he sought to get Hawkins from his position behind the big rock.

Again Blair edged around the side of the huge boulder and took a snapshot at the shadows beneath the trees. He realized that unless he was able to find Hawkins' exact location he was merely wasting bullets but he was anxious to keep the other man right where he was at present, and give him no chance to change his position.

"This is a private fight or can anybody get in?" drawled a voice behind Blair.

THE owner of the Box X swung around abruptly to find a tall dark-haired man standing a short distance away smiling sardonically. The stranger's right hand was very close to the butt of the heavy Colt .45 that he wore in a worn holster tied low on his right hip.

Blair half raised the rifle that he held in his hands, but something in

the cold blue eyes of the new arrival stopped him before he had completed the motion and he slowly lowered the weapon.

"You're a friend of Hawkins, I reckon," Blair was unable to keep the bitterness from his tone. "I might have known that jasper wouldn't play anythin' but a sure bet, like two against one!"

YOU'VE got me wrong, stranger," the dark-haired man's smile grew wider. "I rode into the other end of the canyon, heard some shooting, so I left my hoss back yonder and comes to investigate."

"Right curious, ain't you," said Blair shortly.

"Yeah," the stranger laughed. "Reckon Hawkins mus' be th' feller out there in the cotton-woods that you been arguin' with right pointedly for the last half hour or so."

"That's Hawkins," stated Blair grimly. "You say you heard us shooting?"

"Naturally, seein' as I ain't deaf, or nothin'. Just like I said, I hears rifles, so I goes to see how come th' gunplay."

"And it took you half an hour to find out about it?" demanded Blair.

"Sure. Me, I'm right cautious like when it comes to nosin' into things that may be none of my business."

"Then you're not a friend of Hawkins?"

"Nope—this is the first I've heard of the gent."

There was a calm sincerity in the tall man's words that made Blair feel he might be telling the truth. Yet the ranch owner did not dare take any chances. The stranger might have appeared in the casual fashion that he related and then again he might be in league with Slash Hawkins. The new arrival still held his hand very close to his gun.

"Who are you?" Blair demanded abruptly.

FOR an instant the two men stood glaring at each other, their bodies tense and their eyes cold and hard. Then suddenly the stranger smiled and the tension relaxed.

"I'm Jack Martin," he said slowly, his dark face serious. "Not that I'm figurin' its any of your business, but seein' as you're right active-like this mornin' I ain't blamin' you for wantin' to know."

"Uh huh," said Blair with a smile. "I'm kinda funny that way."

There came the report of a rifle and a bullet whistled over the top of the rock and went humming through the mouth of the canyon.

"You're friend out there seems to be gettin' right anxious about you," drawled Martin. "He ain't what I'd call a patient cuss. Looks like he craves action."

For a long moment Blair stared at the other man. Finally he deliberately turned his back toward Martin and began to edge his way along the left side of the big rock.

The tall man watched his actions with slow dawning admiration in his eyes. He realized that Blair was taking a long chance in turning his back on a stranger he had never seen before, and Jack Martin was a man who appreciated bravery.

"I'm figurin' you got a right good reason for wanting to get that feller out there," he said moving closer to the rock.

"I have," stated Blair grimly as he swung around. "Hawkins killed my partner—shot him without giving him a chance. Deliberately murdered him, even though he didn't die right away. Shot him when Lem was unarmed and laid-up in his bunk with a broken leg."

"Lem," repeated Martin softly. "Lem who?"

"Lem Gray. Him and me owned th' Box X ranch down in th' Pecos. I'm Tom Blair, maybe you've heard of us somewheres?"

"Yeah," said Martin slowly, and the dryness in his tone caused Blair to look at him wonderingly. "Maybe I have."

THERE were questions Blair wanted to ask. Perhaps this man had known Lem in the days before he and Gray had become partners. Blair remembered that Lem had told him of a brother who had been a wild and reckless wanderer, a brother that Lem had not seen for ten years. He might be this stranger who called himself Jack Martin.

"Lem Gray," said Martin finally. "And this Hawkins killed him, eh? What for?"

"Five thousand dollars we drew from the bank to buy some new stock. I was away. Hawkins came to the ranch, shot Lem and got the money. Lem only lived long enough to tell me who did it."

"Then this Hawkins is a murderer and thief to boot?"

"He sure is!"

As he ceased speaking Blair turned and began to edge along the rock. He had left Hawkins in peace far too long—the latter might think he had given up the fight.

"Drop that rifle!" Martin ordered suddenly, prodding the barrel of his Colt into Blair's back and swiftly wrenching the revolver from his hip. "Drop th' rifle, I said, pronto!"

Blair cursed as he let the Winchester fall. "Looks like I figured you wrong," he said bitterly. "I thought you was a white man, not a dirty skunk that would be sidin' with Hawkins."

Martin did not answer as he swung Blair around so that the latter faced the entrance to the ravine.

"Walk back into th' canyon," Mar-

tin commanded. "An' don't look back!"

With a curse Blair turned away. It was not until he was half way through the entrance of the canyon that resentment got the better of him and he glanced over his shoulder. Martin was no longer in sight behind the big rock and the Winchester was gone.

Blair smiled bitterly as he swung around. It was quite clear to him now. Martin was in league with Hawkins, and there was no reason for the dark-haired stranger to fear the killer.

Suddenly there came the sound of shots. Blair stood for an instant listening tensely, and then started on a run for the big rock. Just as he reached it Martin slid around the edge, the Winchester in his hands and blood staining the left sleeve of his gray flannel shirt.

"I got him!" he exclaimed. "Only he was quicker than I thought he would be."

"I think I understand," said Blair. "You're Lem Gray's brother that he hadn't seen for ten years. When you heard that Hawkins killed Lem—you wouldn't let me get him because you had to do it yourself!"

"That's a swell story," Martin smiled grimly. "Only it ain't quite true. I'm not Lem's brother, but I have heard of you both and I know you are both regular. I didn't have any time to argue with you but I didn't want you to do any killin' or get killed around here."

"But why?" demanded Blair.

"Well, you see," Martin chuckled apparently not in the least perturbed by his wounded arm. "I'm th' Sheriff of Painted Post and I kinda like to keep things quiet and peaceful around here!"

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Famous SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

By STOOKIE
ALLEN




CAPTAIN
PHILLIP
McANDREW

WHO WAS BORN IN GLASGOW, SCOT-
LAND IN 1840. HE WAS PROBABLY
THE FIRST OF THE SO CALLED "BIG
GAME HUNTERS" BEFORE HE WAS 25
HE HAD HEADED TWO EXPEDITIONS
INTO AFRICA.





BUT
EVEN THE
HUNTING OF FIERCE
ANIMALS BEGAN TO
BORE HIM AND HE TURNED
TO FIGHTING



JOURNEYING
TO SPAIN HE FOUGHT
THROUGH TWO CARLIST
REVOLUTIONS - IN THE
FIRST HE WAS SHOT FROM
THE BACK OF A HORSE AND
FOR DAYS HIS LIFE WAS
DESPAIRED OF BUT HE RE-
COVERED TO BECOME A HERO
IN THE SECOND REVOLUTION
ALTHOUGH HIS WAS THE LOSING
SIDE.

HE WAS FORCED TO FLEE FOR
HIS LIFE AND WAS NEXT HEARD
FROM IN THE INDIAN
MUTINY.

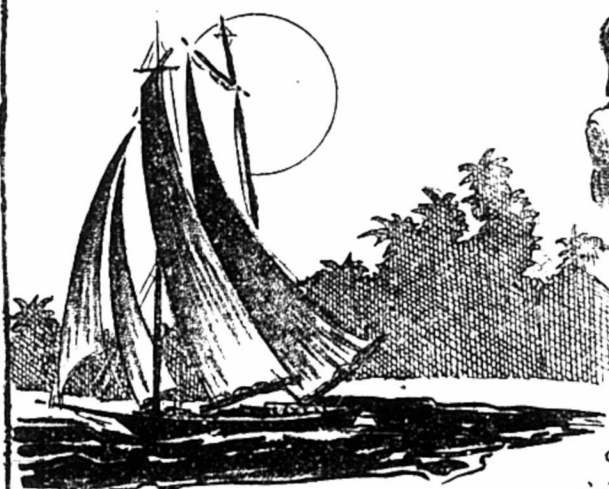




IN ONE OF THE NATIVE UP-RISINGS MEANDREW OFFERED TO FIGHT THE BEST SWORDSMAN AMONGST THE NATIVES IN THEIR OWN STYLE OF FIGHTING TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE.

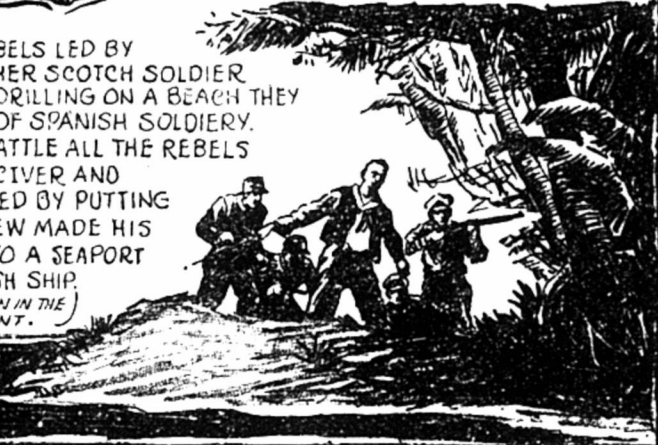
ALTHOUGH HE HAD NEVER FOUGHT THIS WAY HE WON THE FIGHT AND THE REBELLION WAS CRUSHED.

FOR THIS THE EAST INDIA COMPANY GAVE HIM A LARGE SUM OF MONEY AND A CAPTAINCY IN THEIR SERVICE.



FIVE YEARS LATER HE SAILED TO CUBA IN A SMALL SAILING SLOOP LOADED WITH GUNS AND AMMUNITION. CUBA AT THIS TIME WAS GOING THROUGH THE TEN YEARS WAR.

HE SOLD HIS CARGO TO THE INSURGENTS AND THEN JOINED IN THE FIGHTING.



HE JOINED A BAND OF REBELS LED BY GEN. RONALD MACIVER, ANOTHER SCOTCH SOLDIER OF FORTUNE. ONE DAY WHILE DRILLING ON A BEACH THEY WERE SET UPON BY A TROOP OF SPANISH SOLDIERY. AFTER A FIERCE ONE-SIDED BATTLE ALL THE REBELS WERE CAPTURED EXCEPT MACIVER AND MEANDREW. MACIVER ESCAPED BY PUTTING TO SEA ON A RAFT. MEANDREW MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE JUNGLE TO A SEAPORT WHERE HE BOARDED AN ENGLISH SHIP.

(HE DIED IN SCOTLAND IN 1884, A CAPTAIN IN THE FAMOUS SCOTISH HIGHLANDER REGIMENT.)

Conclude This Thrilling Serial Novel of

The Leopard Man

A Three Part Serial

By

PERLEY POORE SHEEHAN

Author of
"Those Who Walk in Darkness," "Dead
Men Talk," etc.

PART III

SYNOPSIS

The old woman Gozeli, said to have "powers," tells Pierre Bayard about the Solomon Bush and the Leopard Men of Africa. Farouk, the most dangerous white-black man in dark Africa, long ago put a curse on Bayard's mother. Bayard feels, stronger than anything else, that he must kill Farouk. He must go to Africa, find him, and avenge his mother's death.

Bayard's most intimate friends, Commodore Haven and Dr. Holbein, secure a berth for him at the Natural History Museum in New York, and an opportunity arises to go to Africa in search of scientific information.

His friends give Bayard a farewell party. Lily Estelle Haven, the Commodore's daughter, interests Bayard greatly. He is attracted to her, and also is startled at her wide knowledge of Africa.

Before his departure, Pierre gives Lily one of his most precious private possessions—an old family map of Africa.

A year later in Africa, in the Guineas, Bayard meets Dom Gonzalo Faro, an old exiled Portuguese, who gives him the first information he gets of Farouk.

Dom Gonzalo and his grandfather were both at one time Leopard Men.

Dom Gonzalo tells Bayard of the story of the Smollets, how the father left his young wife and baby daughter all alone, and re-



turned to find the mother clawed to death, the Leopard Sign, and the daughter carried off.

Farouk did this when he was white; but he got himself and the little girl turned black.

Through Faro, Bayard meets Eboreh, a witch doctor, and the dark little gorilla-like griot or minstrel-man, Gunday. Old Faro continues with his story of the Smollets. The little girl turned white again; Farouk has to sell her to slave dealers in the Soudan, who sell her to a wealthy Englishman and his wife. When Farouk pursues he puts the Leopard sign on the girl—meaning that she must return some day.

The Leopard Men attack Faro, Eboreh, Gunday and Bayard. Farouk, the largest among them, claws at old Faro—who is his own father—and at Pierre. In the struggle Faro dies.

Pierre, at the funeral, is told that Faro's spirit is instructing him. He is told that he must turn black if he wishes to assure himself of vengeance on Farouk.

Meanwhile Commodore Haven, his daughter Lily and Dr. Holbein plan a trip to Mombasa, Africa. Lily goes on to Africa alone as the others are not yet ready. At Nairobi she gets up her own party of natives and goes into the interior. She is completely under the spell of Africa.

She flies to the frontier in a chartered plane, using the old map Bayard has given

Dark Africa's Mystery, Magic and Fantasy



her. Native bearers take her to the region of the Zandey Hills.

Alone in her tent one night, she looks up to see a Leopard Man of unusual size. This man-beast has brought something else into her tent: a body unmistakably human, but flayed. Before Lily can fire, one of the horrible creature's paws has struck the weapon from her hand—then slid across her throat, taking away her breath—taking away her senses.

Now go on with the story.

CHAPTER XII

Back to Noah

THE particular mountain, or hill, called Gumbah, was the broken-down core of an ancient volcano. So Bayard gathered from what they told him, while he sat there with his mind adrift, and only some faint line of attention holding him to what they said.

Gumbah was like a porous island, fissured and caverned like an enormous sponge, mossed over with a depth of clean and fragrant forest.

It was here that the last pure remnant of the original Yaga people lived, ancestors to half the tribes of Africa—fetish, sacred, like the place they lived in, shut off and remote. Around Gumbah there was a broad zone of marsh. Around the marsh, the Zandey hills rose like a chaotic dike.

"Gumbah!" hummed the minstrel, as he plucked his harp. "Him We-country!"—his native land, and to hear him was to hear any patriot, slightly homesick, speaking of home.

Something in his voice gave Bayard a glimpse of his own We-country:—New York, the high skyline of it fleeced with steam and proud with flags, all under the crystal purity of a cool blue sky. And he felt sick again.

He and Eboreh and Gunday had come, soon after the burial of Senhor Faro, to Eboreh's medicine-house

hidden far back in a taboo crotch of forest between two creeks.

Bayard was very sick. He could see, at times, his own soul hovering over him like a toy balloon. Who was he? He didn't know. But he was learning—he was becoming what he would be.

Long before another moon came up, he'd fixed up his story and—there was another black man in this old Africa. Not very black. But he was getting blacker.

His name was Keefa, Prince Keefa, Keefa Banh. He was not only Yaga but also he was a Leopard Man. He had the three scars; he knew the three words; and then the seven signs, only four of which were ever used this side of the old Dahomey ritual of "the goat without horns," or the Inlaga cannibal ritual, which was the oldest of all.

AS Bayard looked at himself in the foot-square mirror that Eboreh passed to him, he saw this other man. Keefa was Bayard; Bayard was he. Yet the Bayard of yesterday was nowhere, giving him that sense of giddiness, making him feel as a toy balloon might feel when it bobs off into the blue.

He was unmoored. He was something that had been held by Pierre Bayard. Now Pierre Bayard had let him go. He'd left himself behind.

He was out of sight and almost out of memory. He was Keefa, a dark man, yet a personality with no assuring weight of experience, or recollection, or connections of blood or memory.

"Batura-Dudu!" Bayard muttered; "one of the Black-White People."

"All same for one Gozeli!"—he'd told them about Gozeli.

Which gave him some growing sense of reality. And, anyway, they had rehearsed the story which would account for the new Prince Keefa.

Who was Prince Keefa? Where had he found his money? What had he been doing in the course of his travels?

He'd been captured in his youth by an old Portuguese-American by the name of Captain da Silva (Would Farouk remember him?) who'd taken him to America. But latterly, Keefa had come back to Africa and had found his chance to get even.

KEEFA had come upon the grandson of Captain da Silva and had murdered and robbed him. (Farouk would approve of that.) As proof of the exploit, should Farouk want proof, here was the late Pierre Bayard's safee, his *borru*, this gold-encased miniature.

And would Farouk like to see the face that the locket contained?

The story was perfect.

Bayard looked in the mirror, and now he recognized this man who looked back at him. Once, in the dim, dim past, there had been a real Keefa. Bayard knew his thoughts.

HE knew the slugging of his heart. Keefa also had looked into the hazy future, as Bayard was doing now, and for the two of them, now become merged, the future meant climb, and risk, and love, and fall perhaps, and climb again.

Eboreh and Gundey were going with him. They'd start toward the end of sun-time—say, four in the afternoon. It had been a bitter day and night, and painful. But Eboreh gave him a banquet. There was warm champagne, with fish from the river, and jars of charcuterie from France, then coffee and cigarettes.

After which the new black man turned in and slept.

Neither on the West Coast do you have to travel through Africa anymore as Livingston and Stanley did.

There are railroads, steamers, motor-trucks, and Fords; not to mention all the well-policed safari-trails.

Only, these were not for the three strange Negroes. What you might call the back-alleys of traffic were the roads they traveled—by river wherever they could; but never, never out of the glooming forest, where roads were bush-trails, or, more often, no trails at all.

THE Fans (Fungeno on that old man of Bayard's) passed the trio back from village to village, in the ancient way, although these villages themselves were often at war with each other, generally because someone's uncle, or wife, or grandmother had disappeared.

First, that village where they'd eaten the Banoko man, and where, Bayard believed, Eboreh told them who he was; for here there were old men who remembered both Captain da Silva and that Daddy Bayard who'd been Bayard's father.

Perhaps they thought that he was some new avatar of both these notables. You can never tell about white-man fash. Him strong too much!

But, whatever the original myth it was that Eboreh or Gunday had spun about their passing, it took on depth and extension the further they went.

KEEFA BANH! A fetish-chief! A *mbottumu*! And not only a prophet, but a Yaga, an "uncle" to all these people! Bayard, now shining black, "felt" the part.

Centuries ago, the Fungeno had migrated down from the north and east, wave after wave; degenerating, dying out, the further they went; but always leaving that tradition of a superior race—the hope of Africa, perhaps—back where they came from. And now this Prince Keefa was one

of these black supermen: Keefa! Keefa Banh!

Bayard had been shedding his white get-up more and more. He wore a very fine Yaga shirt of cotton and wool—he had three of them in his antelope carryall; Mandingo boots of a rich canary yellow, but generally just sandals; and then a powerful, native, handmade umbrella. No jewelry: nothing but his safee, and this had been wrapped, locket and chain, in bat-skin.

The only two other articles of his wardrobe to be in evidence from this time on were a Soudanese cloak or burnoose, to be used at night or when it rained, and then, most important of all, the leopard-skin mantle that only chiefs, *banhs*, and such, could wear.

Keefa didn't belong to any sodden Guinea tribe, willing and proud to ape it in buckra finery. He was Yaga.

HIS fetish grew stronger. It was something that called for secrecy and speed.

The black tribes themselves seemed to realize this the more deeply, the further he went. He seldom spoke. Eboreh was his "mouth"—and Bayard let him do the talking; and Gunday, the little minstrel-man, made up songs about Keefa and acted them.

Keefa was the ancestor of all these people whom they met. Nights, according to Gunday, Keefa went out and talked to the leopards in the forest, and the leopards crawled to his feet and licked his hands.

Such was the persuasiveness of Gunday's acting that Bayard almost believed it himself. There was a contagion in the facile belief of these others. There was a suggestion in the abiding presence of the forest. The sights and smells and anguishments of Africa had become as the facts of eternity.

This wasn't New York. This wasn't modern. This wasn't a white man's world, at all. The world had moved back about twenty centuries—back to Noah. Maybe, that long ago, facts weren't so frozen and static as they are today. They were fluid. They changed. At one moment they were one thing, visible; then, something else, invisible. Hence, magic.

There were times when Bayard wondered if he wasn't black for good.

Out in the woods, one night, in a thunderstorm—the word is weak for what was really going on—he came face to face with a leopard. It was the biggest leopard he'd ever seen.

The lightning and the thunder matched him—lashes and lariats of blue flame coiling and jerking about, all the howitzers of heaven banging in their ears.

THE leopard had slid from the bush on his belly. His paws were like the paw in the song-net. He looked to be as big as a Bengal tiger, and it was clear that he hated this combination of fire and water and noise as only a big cat could. He complained. He cursed. He raised his mask to Bayard as if Bayard were the author of it all and screamed his misery in Bayard's face.

One second, or five, or a dozen, and he was gone.

And all Bayard had been able to do was to sympathize with the beast, to understand what he said, agree that he felt that way too.

"Maybe," he told himself, "you are in truth this thing that Eboreh and Gunday have been pretending that you are. Maybe they weren't pretending—they've really made you what you seem."

And Bayard, from then on, wasn't pretending even to himself.

They'd reached the dark and tangled land of the Akkas, who were

Gunday's original tribe. They were like him—so like apes that they gave you the same shock of surprise, and something like shame, that you feel in the presence of a too man-like ape. They had hair the color of jute. Their skin was a dingy russet verging on gray. Their eyes had the brightness and pathos of a monkey's.

They were, as Eboreh called them, "a shame people"—uneasy and aloof.

But they brought Prince Keefa wild fruits and wild meats of kinds. To pay them for this Bayard gave them a "book"—a piece of paper—that would be honored at the nearest Congo post and make them rich in the two things they wanted most, which were salt and iron.

It was they who guided the travelers through the last stretch of the Zandey hills. It was a region into which the Akkas didn't dare go unless under cover of a powerful prince; and to them Keefa was all that and more.

They'd heard rumors of Farouk. They had heard that he was a stranger and dangerous. There had been a lot of feeling against him and his Leopard lieutenants among the Yagas. And the little Akka monkey people, intuitive like animals, had guessed somehow that Keefa was Farouk's enemy and was coming now to drive him out.

The Akkas left mysteriously.

Eboreh understood their disappearance.

"We close in," he said.

"Close in!" Gunday confirmed.

CHAPTER XIII

Guardians of the Morass

BOTH Gunday and Eboreh sniffed the air. It was as if they could smell the old sacred mountain they were looking for, although neither of them had

ever approached Gumbah from this direction before.

"Close in!"—Bayard heard the phrase. It meant that Gumbah was close. After all these years his dream of coming to Gumbah was soon to be realized.

Was it to be realized, as it was with so many dreams, only in the final shock and eclipse of death?

It was as if he himself could see the thing that lay ahead, although this was invisible to his eyes. He would kill or be killed.

In his imagination he could see the figure of Farouk like that of a colossal leopard—snarling and deadly like that leopard he had seen in the rain—but uncanny, perhaps super-human, master of the black magic that had killed that other "Miss Lily."

Bayard—black as any tribesman in Africa, dressed like a Yaga prince—found himself staring into a black patch of jungle. Dimly, at first, then with fiery suddenness and brilliance, he saw the face of what might have been either leopard or man.

The thing was so real that he gave a gasp. But he reasserted himself.

"Get back to hell," he said in English, and was able to laugh.

The apparition was gone.

EBOREH and Gundey leading, they made their way up and around a jungly shoulder of the hill through wild celery and bamboo by what Eboreh said was an old gorilla trail.

He also mentioned that the gorillas and Akka pigmies lived in terms of friendships. Bayard could tell that Gundey and Eboreh—and, for that matter, he himself—now moved with the fatality of animals. They were guided by instinct alone.

They couldn't stop. They couldn't turn aside. Like that, just after nightfall, they came out on to what

had been a rockslide but now was the slope of a grassy meadow—so sweet, so open, after the long smother of the forest, that Bayard felt a gulp in his throat.

There were stars. They were on the shore of an ocean of air.

"O Gumbah!" came Eboreh's voice like a moan.

Bayard thought it was one of Eboreh's prayers. They were all crouched together in the middle of the little meadow. Bayard brought his own thoughts back to the here and the now.

Out across the black emptiness that he faced he thought he saw a quaver of heat-lightning.

"O mother!" whimpered Gundey, and he touched his harp. He added: "Gumbah, take me to your breast!"

"It's Gumbah!"—Bayard could hear his own heart shouting it to his slower mind.

The supposed heat-lightning had become a spreading glimmer, soft and remote. It wreathed and crept and disappeared. Then, there it was again, spreading a little further and becoming more pronounced.

THERE was an eeriness about it, something to bring the wonder billowing over him, gently, in wave after wave. It was as if he had been a voyager through space—it seemed so to him, in any case—and that now he'd approached the frontier of a strange star.

There was an accompaniment to this train of thought. It was a kind of astral music that Gundey drew from his harp.

Then, "Look!" breathed Eboreh. With reverence he announced it: "The Mother has heard. She sends us a messenger!"

The far-away shimmer of Gumbah still shone but another and nearer light had appeared. It was this to which Eboreh referred.

"A messenger!" Gunday chirped, with a voice like a cricket's.

It may have been a full minute before Bayard saw it. He would have said that it was one of those swamp lights he had seen on Bayou Tanga.

A luminous green globe, shining glimly, had appeared as if out of nowhere, off somewhere ahead of them, down the slope. From the first, the movement of this was erratic.

Now it danced like a lantern carried by someone who walked nimbly through the dark, and whom you could imagine to be in a playful mood, as the light swung up and hovered and completed the circle or else came swinging back again.

OR it darted to left or right and up in the air, and held there, with the speed and poise of a humming bird.

Eboreh touched Bayard. So did Gunday. Both were crooning and straining, as Bayard had seen Gozeli's people do at the Voodoo lodge on Lac Perdu.

"She'll lead us," panted Eboreh.

"Across the swamp," wailed Gunday softly.

And Bayard found himself repeating their words and believing what he said:

"She'll lead us across the swamp."

He remembered that zone of marsh they'd told him about—the one that isolated Gumbah proper from the outer ring of the Zandey Hills, and he needed some sort of assurance to tackle it in the dark. So did they.

The marsh may have been from ten to fifteen miles across, mostly grown over thick with saw-grass higher than an elephant, but with weedy pools in it that had no bottom and a scattering of matted islands which weren't really islands at all but mere snarls of aquatic jungle, tall as ships, that teetered and floated in the ooze.

Then, in this morass, all the creatures that usually breed in such a habitat, from crocodiles to small green snakes; and yet others, worse, of a sort no white man would ever believe in.

So, why mention them now?

It was with the haunting sense that all things might be true, both black and white, devilish and divine, that Bayard fixed heart and eyes on that shimmering small globe and clung to the thought that it would lead him to that greater shine beyond the marsh.

The globe was no longer like a lantern that someone carried. It had assumed an unearthliness that was all its own.

The dance had taken on a leisurliness and flourish to suggest an aerial creature, more aerial even than a humming-bird. It was a guide to follow not so much with your feet as with your soul.

Gunday led the way. He was the poet of the party. In any case, between him with his harp and this entity, this "thing," with its light, there seemed to be some sort of a bond. He whimpered to it. He twanged his harp. And the light-bearer, whatever it was, seemed to respond. Bayard followed Gunday. Back of him was Eboreh, making medicine as he came. They crept and stumbled down the hill, taking chances, going it blind; and, before they knew it, were in the slime almost up to their necks.

THE situation developed a technique. Just before they smothered they dug a foot and an arm into a clump of grass, and as this lay over them they sprawled on it and drew a breath.

The grass had stems as thick as corn-stalks down in the ooze and the cutting-edge lay only along the shivering blades.

But it was like choosing the way they preferred to die, by the saw or by suffocation. The wet stench at times made them think they were under, and part of the wet was hot and had the taste of blood.

"Each man is his own Inlaga," Eboreh said while he struggled and panted.

"Each man is a cannibal," Bayard said, "and himself is his own sacrificial victim."

But his mind would come back to his body and help it like a distracted friend—like a man trying to save his dog, save it from one of those sucking horrors of the swamp that only the primitives could believe in.

Bayard was a primitive now, just a wallowing blind worm, most of the time. But there were moments also when he knew the added grief of a creature that has developed a faith in something and then had seen that faith go null and void.

With hope or without they waded and floundered. There were still flickers enough of the pale-green dancer that was guiding them to keep them going. That, or the memory of it; or the old life-drag that did bring the blind worms up out of an ooze like this at the beginning of the world.

For a while they clung to one of those floating islands and sobbed for breath, then used such breath as they could spare for mutual encouragement.

THE island had a life of its own. It twitched and heaved and half-decided to roll over and submerge. Black cranes went up squawking and snapping their bills. The mosquitoes swarmed in.

The pool about them rocked and belched. And Bayard thought of New York—it was like a vision of a distant, distant future—built solidly, on a rock, of steel and cement; then

of Lilian Estelle, as the spirit of this New Jerusalem.

At that moment, everything was black. The dancing light was gone. The shine of Gumbah was gone out. All that was left was a sprinkling of stars.

In the faint, distorting glimmer of these a great head lifted like a barrel from the silver murk and yawned. It was so close that the breath of it gave a new tang to the stench and heat. The floating island bobbed. The head belonged to a hippopotamus—or something else.

MISS LILY, take me by the hand," Bayard said to himself, and swung at the head with his antelope carryall.

He had to have something to cling to, if it were nothing but a thought. And Bayard clung—as he took a scrambling header into the murk. But his hold must have been with his teeth.

He fought in all directions at once, with legs and arms, and found himself clutching at what felt to be a hairy throat like that of a horse. It was the antelope bag, and he brought it with him as he clutched a root and raised himself again, with Gunday and Eboreh just beside him.

The shock had brought his nerves back. He was all of a piece again, as a man ought to be—nerves, beef, and brain. He laughed, and after a second or two they laughed with him.

"My medicine is strong," he said. "We go to Gumbah!"

It must have been that the floating tangle had drifted round, circling, for he'd hardly got out his boast and was getting it nested in his own thought when—there was our dancing light again, and there was Gumbah shining stronger than ever.

Eboreh and Gunday broke out in quavers of rapture. It was like the

"Bless Gawd!" and "Glory be!" of a camp-meeting.

They saw the dancer bob joyfully down into the pool and go away down under water, still shining, then emerge again, and wheel and disport; so, pretty soon they treaded down in this direction, with the water to their chins, but felt a ground so solid under their feet that Bayard could lend a hand to little Gunday—riding him on his hip and the box of his harp making hollow sounds against Bayard's head as Gunday clasped his neck.

They crawled out of the marsh at last and lay where they found themselves on a slope of solid earth.

They were clotted with mire and blood. But they knew that they were saved.

"Wo-wol!" mumbled Gunday, for the strings of his harp were broken, and he'd lost most of his charms and tatters.

But they laughed at him, and he clicked laughter with them.

"Oh, behold, I am here!" said Eboreh.

He rolled over on his belly and kissed the ground where he lay.

CHAPTER XIV

"Inlaga! Inlaga!"

BAYARD was on his knees, trying to scrape himself to rights and readjust the sodden rags of clothing that still remained to him, when he saw a luminous cloud sweep around a black contour of rising ground.

It was as if there were millions of those green dancers like the one they had followed across the great morass. It was like the sweep of fire-mist from a volcano. But there was no heat. The spectacle brought a sense of awe but no terror.

This—Bayard's own mind was telling him—was what made Gumbah

shine by night. This was the spectacle that his grandfather and others of his family had seen at different times in the past.

In a moment, Bayard had seen the nature of the light. It was a swarm of giant fireflies—they were more like luminous moths. They were there in unnumbered millions, dense as a swarm of locusts.

Eboreh and Gunday also had come to their knees. They raised their arms and their faces and kept them raised as the swarm went over. Then, just as the swarm was dissolving into the blackness of some hidden valley, they both cried out that this was the Inlaga light and that they had no time to lose.

They were up and running in a moment, taking the same direction that the swarm had taken. His companions knew where they were going. Bayard didn't. Nor had they conferred on what they should do when they got there.

It didn't matter. They ran, and there was an excitement on all of them that made them forget their fatigue and their hurts.

The darkness was no longer opaque. It was as if a faint shine came down from the sky. And the silence wasn't such as it had been.

There was a throb and a murmur in it, which Bayard took at first to be the throb and murmur of his blood but which he learned, without conscious discovery, was the same sort of throb and murmur he'd heard that other night while sitting by the river with Dom Gonzalo.

That was cannibal music, and this time the victim wasn't to be just a poor Banoko man.

SOMEWHERE near in this black wilderness a white girl was captive. In accordance with the oldest rites in the world she was being prepared for sacrifice.

They ran like wolves, first along what you might almost call the beach of Gumbah, where the shrinking of the marsh had left a skim of dried mud over the ooze.

It was a ghoulish highway, crooked but easy, with a surface so fragile that a jackal would scarcely have trusted it; yet elastic, sending them along with the sensation of falling down hill.

Then, they struck off into a bush-path up a rising valley, still running, hoisted along on a gale of excitement, for the light was growing stronger and the drums louder, and added to the drums there was a roar of voices.

The valley curved round into an amphitheatre, a vast green bowl with a jungle background, lit up weirdly by the Inlaga swarm overhead.

In the bowl there were upward of a thousand people, seated in circles, leaving a round open space in the center; and Bayard's first impression was that all these people had something the matter with them—that they were lepers or ghosts—but his wits came back and told him that they had painted their faces a chalky white.

The crooning and drums filled the place with a booming roar like that of surf, and when this suddenly stopped the shock of the silence made his heart stand still. A moment later he knew the reason for the silence.

A PROCESSION was filing into the open space—girls with fagots and boys with small flaming torches, men who tugged along under the weight of a great stone box, like an Egyptian mummy-case, but black and shining, like obsidian; then priestesses and priests.

All the procession was black. The members of it had increased their natural blackness with the blippo

medicine. The naked bodies of the boys and girls were like fluent jet. The women and men wore black robes and veils.

Eboreh and Gundey had Bayard wedged between them as they watched this entry. They crowded against him just as hounds will do when confronted with something they can't understand.

THIS was something they had never seen before. They were filled with a dread. They shivered. They were taut. So with Bayard at first. He wondered what it was all about, what he was to do—what could he do—and where was Mary Smollet.

The porters had set the stone box down in the center of the clear space. Around this the boys and girls danced and set a circle of a dozen or a score of small fires going. Then, all except one of the processional party were seated in a tight circle close up to the fires.

Bayard heard a whisper from Eboreh:

"Farouk!"

Farouk was the one who had remained standing.

Bayard knew then he would have recognized him without Eboreh's whisper, and in spite of the additional news of Farouk that the Akkas had given him. There was that about Farouk that sent a twitching over his skin.

Farouk had flung back his head-cloth and robe. He stood there naked to the waist. It was as if he'd sent out an emanation and this had flooded over Bayard telling him who this was.

Farouk must have been about fifty, but still the hulking, powerful type, very muscular, a bull neck and shoulders supporting his sufficient head; blacker than Bayard had suspected, for Farouk also had applied the blippo, but undisguised; short-

bearded and long-haired, to recall certain pictures of Samson.

The resemblance was heightened by the weapon he carried in his right hand, for this was a *trumdash*, a Yaga wooden scimitar, shaped like a donkey's jawbone.

Bayard knew it later. There had been a revolt of the Yaga people against the intrusion of Farouk, and Farouk was playing a dangerous rôle. He had won his way back to his high place as *Mbottumu*, or Prophet, with only about half of the Yagas to support him and the other half ready to kill him—if they could only overcome their fear of him.

But at that actual moment Bayard didn't know it. He didn't know anything but the evidence of his eyes. And what he saw was so impossible, so outside reason, that he had no more reason, or will of his own, than the bullet in a gun.

FAROUK had leaned over the stone box with a sort of two-handed gesture, as if he were expostulating with the spirit of the box. He straightened up and raised his arms, as if calling down the forces of the swarming light.

All this was mummery to impress the watchers. Then he leaned forward and exhorted again; and this time as he did so, Bayard saw a stir of white in the big black coffer, like a puff of steam—a magician's trick that anyone could imitate.

But, slowly and impressively and without hesitation, Farouk had thrust his left arm into the stone coffin and was helping a girl to get to her feet. She was a white girl. She looked as if she'd been asleep and was just now awake—shrouded in white, the old fetish color—surprised, amazed, wondering what it was all about.

"Inlaga!"—everyone was murmuring it; and the drums were rolling

it too, in a way the experts have of making the drums pronounce certain words:

"Inlaga! Inlaga!"

CHAPTER XV

Face of the Dead

THAT gale of sound had caught Bayard as if he'd been no more than a leaf in a whirlwind. He had no more will than a leaf. And yet he never had felt so sure of himself in his life before.

This was the time he'd waited for. It was as if his whole life had been a preparation for this moment. White or black, it made no difference.

It made no difference what would happen to him, what he was.

The shouting was a part of himself.

"Inlaga! Inlaga!"

He himself might have been, just then, "that spirit come from afar."

Eboreh and Gundey both may have made some effort to seize him as he started forward. He was unconscious of their hands.

He was aware that others were trying to stop him—hulking old warriors, ambassadors from tribes up and down the length of Africa, women, boys—all of them as white as ghosts, smeared with the fetish paint that made them ready for the expected ceremonial feast.

He brushed these aside as easily as if he himself had been nothing but a ghost. They must have gathered such rags as he might have still been wearing.

But this made no difference. He was black. Time had gone back another thousand years or so. He was shameless as a black Adam.

Almost unconsciously—it was as if his voice had belonged to someone else—Bayard had shouted Farouk's name. It was a blast that made itself heard even in that roar of shouting.

It was as if a shout were let out in church while the organ rolled.

There was a shock, a straining pause, even while the roar continued.

Farouk had raised his trumdash. It was such an ancient weapon that it had become sacred, like the mace that has become a marshal's baton or a king's scepter. It was clear that in another instant he would have brought this down on the head of the victim. But the shout and the racket had upset him. He must have thought that this was part of the revolt he had feared.

He turned a little, with the trumdash still raised, and there was a look on his face that warned Bayard that Farouk would bring it down on his own head instead of that other.

On Farouk's face was exactly the look that Bayard had seen on the leopard's face that night in the storm; and, not knowing what else to do, Bayard sprang one of the Leopard words that Eboreh had taught him.

Not once during this time—it had been too short, too crowded—had Bayard looked at the girl again; but now he shouted out in Yaga for the others to take the girl away, and he still kept his eyes on Farouk.

In the meantime, Eboreh and Gunday must have been busy. For Bayard heard other shouts of "Keefa!" and "the true Prophet!"—and knew that this must have meant himself.

He saw his chance—or a reflex jerked him to it—and he grabbed Farouk's right arm with both hands just as it started in his direction.

FAROUK was encumbered in the robe he'd dropped about his heels. He fell. Bayard went with him.

Maybe others have the power of slow-motion camera effects when it comes to describing a rough and tumble fight. All Bayard knew was that after a spell of strain and suffo-

cation in which it seemed that the whole tribe took part, he was on his feet again, with the trumdash in his hand, and that all the hands that had helped him up now seemed to be holding him. But others had also helped Farouk to his feet and were holding him as well.

"O People!" Bayard shouted, in Yaga. "I have come to save you. I have come to save you from the Father of Lies!"

SOMEONE, or many, were shouting about the Inlaga. They wanted the show to go on. First settle the Inlaga. They'd settle the rest of it later. And those who said this may have been the followers of Farouk. This gave Bayard his cue.

"She is the true Inlaga!" he yelled. "He would have killed the true Spirit Come from Afar!"

And he could feel that the words went home.

Farouk broke in—with something Bayard was not sure what; for Farouk's own command of the language was far from perfect. But now Bayard spoke to him direct. He gave it to him in English. All he said was this:

"I've come all the way from Bayou Tanga!—Lac Perdu!"

That reached him. It got to him just like a poisoned arrow—first a prick, then a spreading blur—and he tried to throw this off, but a new fear had seized him.

Some were now saying that Farouk was a devil and others were saying that Bayard was a devil. The confusion was great. It would have taken but a blow or a little blood to set a general massacre on the way, and now this was what Bayard dreaded worse than he dreaded Farouk.

So he managed to get himself free, with the sacred trumdash still in his hand, and he shouted out that there

was a way to tell who was devil and who was not.

Lo, it was written that they should drink juice of the Solomon Bush!

At this a cheer went up. Everyone cheered, Farouk's enemies as well as Bayard's. For here was a spectacle that would end in death, maybe two deaths, and then—the events that followed such death made entertainment of the strongest. They were painted white—and ready.

Bayard turned to see what had happened to the Inlaga. But they'd taken her away. Eboreh was there, and it was he who told him. For the time she was safe. She was in the hands of the old women who had prepared her for the ritual. To them she was sacred.

So Bayard shut his mind to the thing he'd seen—or thought that he'd seen—and merely kept the hope and the glimmer of it down deep in his heart as the thing that might keep him alive when he drank the juice of the Solomon Bush.

CHAPTER XVI

"Mary Smollet"

BAYARD believes—as he has always believed and as he believed it then—that Farouk had equal chances with him in the test of the Solomon Bush.

The brew of it, as the Yagas prepared it, was a deadly poison. And the only antidote known was the blippo medicine. Bayard had been dosed with this. But so, he was convinced, had Farouk.

On the other hand, he may have been leaning on Eboreh. He knew him to be no ordinary witch-doctor but a real medicine-man with a knowledge of herbs.

He'd trusted him with his life when he'd allowed him to dose him with the blippo back at Senhor Faro's place. Eboreh had learned his

art—or had done his post-graduate work, so to speak—here in Gumbah itself,—where an old Yaga priest had taught him, a man named Manuba, and it was Manuba who would have charge of the poison ordeal.

All this flashed through his mind. But it didn't matter. Somewhere he'd read—and he remembered it now—that no man follows a logical train of thought in a crisis, not even a Napoleon. He jumps to a decision, and the decision is made for him by a sort of inner self by his mind ignored.

However, "this be white man fash, not country fash," as they say. Such speculations may come afterward.

THERE was a sort of lull, an *entr'acte*, during which Bayard saw a number of headmen of the Yagas shepherding the crowds back into something like their former order—using white rods to do this and sometimes thwacking those who were sullen or too slow.

And Gunday, the little black minstrel, weirder than ever with the mud caked over him, had borrowed a brother minstrel's harp and had skipped out to a position just back of Bayard, twanging and singing and—Bayard had no doubt—acting again the story of how Farouk had killed Mrs. Smollet and carried away the missionary's child.

The effect of this on Farouk was evident, and the evidence gave Bayard an idea of his own.

IN all these poison trials, it is fear or conscience that kills as often as poison. Bayard's safee was still hanging from his neck. The bat-skin that had been wrapped about it had protected it from the mud and water. He scraped the skin away and the gold of the locket shone bright. He opened the locket and looked at his mother's portrait.

"Farouk," he cried in English. "Look at this—and remember!"

There were a dozen Yagas guarding each of them—but respectfully, aloof, as became the guardians of potential devils.

Bayard still had the trumdash in his right hand as he stepped toward Farouk, and it appeared that Farouk thought Bayard intended to strike him. For, on the instant, Farouk drew a dagger from a fold of his robe.

But Bayard wasn't afraid as he stepped toward him and thrust the miniature forward in front of his eyes.

Farouk's eyes came round to it.

You would have said that he knew what he was going to see. All saw a change come over him. And on a sudden all seemed to know what this change was. It was something that had been at work on him since the moment of Bayard's interruption.

IT was all the superstition of Africa that had begun to bubble up in him—boiling hard; not of Africa so much as the superstition of the old Guinea coast. Farouk wasn't fetish or white at all any more. He was just plain West Coast "nigger,"—which is a word over there reserved for slaves.

Bayard told him what he had to say in the trade English of the West Coast. He told him:

"Her lib for come!"

What he meant was that his mother's spirit had tracked him here—that she was now "putting her face" on him.

Farouk stared at the portrait like a hypnotized ox. For a moment he seemed to be falling. But it was a feint. In a moment he had whirled at Bayard with his dagger.

Bayard's magic was stronger than his. Faster than his will Bayard slipped aside and crashed the trum-

dash at him. Somehow, even then, Bayard knew that into that blow was going everything he'd dreamed about at Lac Perdu—the poisoning of his father, the haunting of his mother, the stories his grandfather and Gozeli had told him of this country that was his own second homeland. He believed now that old Gozeli herself was there, in spirit, to nerve him.

AND the heavy trumdash caught Farouk at the junction of head and neck. After that Farouk was like an uncorked bottle.

They let him lie. It was at the moment when old Manuba, the poison chief, came with his brew of the Solomon Bush.

"Lo, lo!" he shouted out. "The spirits intervene!"

Manuba had a big black bowl in his hands. He lifted this above his head and came striding over to where Farouk lay.

"If not in life, drink, then, in death," he shouted; and he poured the contents of the bowl over Farouk, holding the bowl high and pouring the stuff out slowly.

Now it may have been an effect of the light from the Inlaga swarm. The light was brilliant enough, but not like any other light. It was more like the light from mercury vapor, such as one sees in tubes named after Cooper-Hewitt, misleading to the inexperienced in the matter of color.

But whatever the cause, they saw Farouk blanch. It was as if he had received a wash of some other light. Under their eyes, now after he was dead, he was going white.

WHILE we're explaining, we'll explain about the Inlaga swarm and that green dancer they followed—or thought they followed—across the marsh. The mystery remains, and the spell of it—like so much else in

this life of ours, even here in White Man Land—although it has been catalogued and named.

They call it "the Inlaga moth," although there's a longer name in Greek. In some respects, it's like the locust, breeding underground for a number of years, then, still like the locust, enjoying a brief period of air and liberty.

Yet rather it's like a giant firefly, with a light that expands to a most fantastic size and never goes out during its aerial life. And its only known breeding-place in the world is Gumbah, which likewise is the only known place in the world where the Solomon Bush grows.

Such insect-plant associations are common enough. A German entomologist has undertaken to clear up the subject. In all confidence, we may leave the rest of this matter to him.

A GREATER mystery was ob-
serving Bayard—the mystery of Mary Smollet!

He'd seen her. She'd reeled there before his eyes. It was her presence that had sent him, like a blown leaf, down into that murder-circle; and this, not just because she was white, just because she was Mary Smollet. Or had he been the victim of a delusion?

As soon as he could, and now with sufficient backing to make him feel safe, Bayard insisted on being assured again that "the Inlaga" was safe; and, that much settled, on insisting further that he be given a chance to bathe and put on the clothing that was proper to one of his position; and doing this with that contraction about the heart that may be there when one is to submit himself once more to a trial of life or death.

Yet unhurried.

He had, perhaps, a secret as yet

unknown to all the world but himself. This secret had become a frantic hope. It was filling him with visions.

It was doing to him what the Solomon Bush is said to do—stirring up in heart and mind every precious bit of wisdom that has ever been put there by a thousand or a hundred thousand generations of ancestors.

When he was ready, and not until then, Bayard commanded that he be conducted to the place where they had taken the Inlaga and that their interview be private, just she and he alone.

HE had on his Yaga shirt and his leopard skin, his Mandingo boots of yellow leather; but he was praying that these would rather complete his disguise than make him ridiculous.

He was very dark. His hair was long. He hadn't shaved for a week, although his beard was never very strong.

They had taken her to Manuba's stockade, his *borumbanga*, or collection of houses in a private stockade. The whole place had been cleared, except for her, and she had been told that Lord Keefa was coming.

They met out in the open air while the Inlaga swarm rained light about them.

He hadn't been wrong. This was no Mary Smollet he'd ever heard about. This was no stranger. It was Lilian Estelle who was standing there. But a Lilian Estelle so different!

Because, for one thing, she looked so beautiful.

Bayard couldn't speak. He could only look. The shadow and light of sleep, or dreams, still shone in her eyes. Her lips were parted. They had a curve of tenderness he'd never noticed before.

Then, that something in her face

that had always made her so different from other girls, had now become, he didn't know what, straight out of the Arabian Nights.

She made him think of an Oriental princess, one that had upset Ghengis Khan or Marco Polo.

CHAPTER XVII

Where Two Ends Meet

SHE said later that she had recognized him right away. Privately, he doubts this, as just a bit of poetic license, say, or feminine license, which is the same thing. She couldn't have recognized him. He was too dark; and in that costume, with the ceremonial trumdash still in his hand.

In any case, she let him come forward and kneel at her feet—as a Yaga prince should not have done in such a case—and kiss her hand. All this, without her having spoken a word.

But her hand went over his face and pressed it back until he was looking up at her. And then he saw that she was breathing hard, and there was a limpness in the way she stood.

Then he forgot himself.

"Oh, Lily!" he said; and "Thank God!" and also, it seems, "You don't know how beautiful you are!"

"Pierre!" she said; and just repeated it: "Pierre! Pierre!"

Now and then a squeal of music reached them, followed with a chesty chorus. That was Gunday, the minstrel-man, letting the Yagas know how Keefa had saved them from extermination; for soon the English and the French would be pouring in upon them and they would have been slated for Shadow-land, and the Yagas were celebrating.

It sounded like an old-fashioned Hallelujah.

Overhead the Inlaga moths were

still celebrating, too; in a way so brilliant, so haunting, that you had to feel as if something great and wonderful had come over the earth. It was a feeling that grew no less as the Inlaga light began to fade and a pinkness in the air told them that the sun was coming up.

It's a feeling—so Bayard and Lily say—that has lasted ever since, to some extent; or which is easily renewed by going to look at the Solomon Bush.

WAS Lily Haven's real reason, after all, for that almost fatal safari of hers toward the sacred mountain to find and use the Solomon Bush? She'd learned a lot of things from Gozeli on repeated visits to Bayou Tanga even after Bayard had left that place.

The girl had been haunted by the web-like trails she'd followed in her mind on that old map Bayard had given her.

Bayard never asked her—then or afterward. Just then he was preparing to have several doses of the strong medicine himself to counteract the black poison of the blippo that he'd swallowed.

Whether it made him wise or not—after the manner of Solomon—remains a question. Maybe any man is wise—when he marries the right girl.

After their recognition there in the stockade they decided, in any case, to accept each other as they were.

"What's that thing you have in your hand?" she asked. "An African boomerang?"

"That's a trumdash," he told her.

She may have recalled, now, that this was the thing that Farouk was going to kill her with. Her voice went down so soft and low it became like the murmur of a drum or a harp.

"Oh, I know," she said; "they used

to throw such a thing at a girl in the old ceremony of marriage by capture."

Their eyes met.

"Are you going to make me see it that way?" he asked.

Silence was better.

BEFORE he slept he'd seen that ten native runners were on their way to scatter news.

He found out afterward, that Dr. Holbein had been headed for the Zandey district anyway. He'd been hard hit—with a fear which was awful, but which he refused to believe in—by the news that had reached him back in the Mombasa to the effect that Miss Haven had been killed and carried off by a leopard.

But there were tints in the blackness of this information that gave him a desperate hope. The natives had talked too much about the leopard having been not a regular leopard but a "devil-leopard," a beast, that is, with a human brain and soul—African version of the werewolf tales.

Dr. Holbein wasn't the sort who "goes black," as they say, and gets to believing too much about fetish and so forth; but he'd been too much on the Congo to think that the Congo was the same as the Bronx. And hadn't Miss Lily talked to him a lot about the Solomon Bush?

Commodore Haven came next, not far behind.

A certain young doctor from London, acting as coroner, had assured the commodore that while there was evidence of a female victim, all right, she was surely "native" not "white."

He examined the bones through a microscope. And there were other tests (all of them stranger than Solomon magic) but which the commodore perforce must believe.

Bayard missed much of the *dé-nouement* because he was bowled

over by a postponed attack of fever.

In any case, he came out of this white—a bit too white, perhaps—so he had no qualms about approaching a delicate situation when the commodore and he were alone. You've probably guessed what it was. If the commodore was willing, as Miss Lily was, well, Bayard wanted to marry her.

The commodore surveyed Bayard with a sparkling eye.

"You speak of her, Pierre," he said, "as my daughter. I love her as such. My dear wife loved her. But, as a matter of fact, it's been one of the sorrows of my life—God forgive me!—that I know nothing of her origin. We picked her up, here in Africa, from a fellow, a slaver—"

Bayard began to see the light.

"A slatee," he broke in; "down from the Soudan!"

COMMODORE HAVEN'S eyes sparkled. If he'd been another man, one would have said that his eyes were moist. All that he said was "Yes," and Bayard could see that he was waiting.

"And later," Bayard went on, "down in Cairo, a big tawny brute came and claimed her, and you struck him with a whip—"

The commodore nerved himself. He whispered:

"Pierre, for God's sake, tell me the truth, as you seem to know it. Was he really her father?"

So Bayard was in a position to tell the commodore a thing or two, to his own great elevation of soul. Lilian Estelle Haven was Mary Smollet, or the other way round.

Not that it mattered. It would not have changed matters much—the way they felt—if Farouk actually had been her father.

And this brings us back to a consideration of the Solomon Bush.

The End

Dead Man's Flight



*A Tense Story of the World War and a Young
Aviator Who Progresses From Cowardice
to Valor*

By JOHNSTON CARROLL

FREDERICK GARFIELD KEATS clambered down from the mud-spattered lorry, and with his duffle bag perched precariously on his shoulder, glanced uncertainly about.

The faint crackle of a machine-gun's bitter song drummed into his ears and the distant Howitzers roared a devastating welcome. A badly lettered signboard proclaimed that this God-forsaken spot was the headquarters of the Sixteenth Aerial Squadron of the A. E. F.

The ugly squat hangars and bulky

shacks thrust themselves obtrusively into his vision. The barren leafless trees and brimming shell holes filled him with a hollow sense of foreboding. The gray sky above was pouring forth a steady ominous drizzle that seemed to cast a shadowy melancholy over his very being.

A moment later he deposited the bag on the orderly room floor and was ushered into the presence of the squadron commander. He snapped his hand to the precise military salute that he had been taught by the martinets behind the lines.

"Second Lieutenant Keats reports for duty, sir."

A lean face and a pair of subtly humorous eyes looked up at him. For a moment Major Tarvin scrutinized the youngster before him as though he would read the calibre of this replacement in a steady, silent scrutiny.

Keats shuffled uneasily. He was aware of a faint empty feeling at the pit of his stomach that invariably came to him when he was nervous.

"Pilot or observer?" snapped Tarvin.

"Observer, sir."

The S. C. considered this for a moment.

"Age?"

"Twenty, sir. You'll find all that in the papers."

THIS last was an unfortunate statement. It was prompted solely by a desire on Keats' part to say something; to give a personal touch to the brittle military interchange of words.

But the S. C., competent enough at his job was by no means a psychologist. He glared at the youth before him, and when he spoke his voice was ironic, acid.

"So," he said slowly. "I'll find it all in the papers. Will I?"

Keats nodded. He realized his mistake, but the muscles in his throat seemed suddenly paralyzed. He found no words to retrieve his error. Tarvin's suave, sarcastic tone evolved into a bullying roar.

"I'll find it in the papers, eh? Do you think I've been accepting replacements for six months without knowing what the hell to do? You training camp aces don't have to tell me how to run this outfit. Now get out. Have the orderly take you to Maxwell."

"You're to bunk with him. And

if he squawks, as he probably will, tell him it's not my fault if H. Q. sends me a lot of lousy green kids when we need men. That's all."

Keats turned and walked blindly toward the door, when the major's voice again keyed to a cool ironic note, came after him.

"And it's customary, Lieutenant, to salute your superiors—even in the air force."

Keats' teeth caught his lower lip as he turned again and brought his hand to his cap visor. Tarvin gravely returned the salute and returned to the papers on his desk. Keats marched from the room, his eyes moist and a disconcerting tremble in his knees.

An orderly escorted him down the long line of rain-swept shacks. The heavens pounded a steady tattoo on half a hundred corrugated roofs. The orderly paused before an unpainted door and knocked respectfully. A Gargantuan bellow crashed through the wooden portal.

The orderly flung open the door and deposited Keats' bag on the threshold. Then he disappeared into the rain, leaving the youth standing there staring at a huge figure prostrate on a creaking cot.

"Well," said a voice testily. "Come in, come in. And for Pete's sake close that door. There's enough damned rain outside without getting it in here."

KEATS slammed the door shut, and with a sigh picked up his kit. He glanced nervously at an empty bunk in the far corner.

"Is—is that mine?" he queried.

The man on the bed sat up and stared at him.

"I don't know," he said at length. "Is it?"

"I'm a replacement," Keats ex-

plained. "The S. C. said I was to bunk with you."

The big man sighed and made an attempt to conceal the disgust that crept across his florid countenance.

"Then," he said indicating the vacant bed, "I guess it is yours. Though why in hell Tarvin wishes all you kids on me, I don't know. All right, make yourself at home and try not to annoy me with too many questions."

He threw himself back upon the bunk, rattled the leaves of a month old paper and ignored the boy completely. Keats remained standing uncertainly for a moment, then as the other paid no attention to his presence, he set about the task of unpacking his belongings.

It was a glum and silent job and when he had finished, he sat heavily on the edge of his cot.

He was utterly and wholeheartedly miserable. In his mind he contrasted the sunny lawns of the training camp with the depressing scene framed by the small window of the shack.

He weighed the brusqueness of the S. C. and the surliness of his present roommate with the gaiety of the rollicking youths whose company he had just left. He sighed heavily, miserably.

THEN, as his depression grew, it evolved slowly to the bitter anger that youth alone knows. Anger against these hard-boiled men who thought just because they'd flown at the front that the rest of the A. E. F. was as dirt beneath their feet.

All right, he'd show them. He'd let them see what sort of a man he was. As soon as they let him go up, he'd grab the controls and show them that he, too, was a daring, death-defying fool who feared neither God nor devil. He'd show them!

The door opened, admitting a flurry of rain and a tall, thin individual in a trench coat.

"Out of your hop, Maxwell," he said. "There's a little job to be done."

Maxwell propped himself up on his elbow and gave vent to a legato flow of profanity before he asked exactly what the job was.

"Just a little flying instruction," said the newcomer. "The S. C. wants you to take your new sleeping partner for a little spin over the lines. Says he wants to use him on patrol tomorrow and he'd better have a short hop before then."

Maxwell contributed three oaths that he had overlooked before.

"Why the hell do I always draw that assignment?" he asked. "What's the matter with you, Lawrence? Or Frost? Or Simmons?"

"I guess you must have a way with children," said Lawrence. "Anyway you'd better get going if you expect to be back in time for mess. It's clearing up a bit, too."

He left the shack as abruptly as he had come. Never once while he had stood in the room had he indicated by word or gesture that he was aware of Keats' existence. The dull rage in the youth mounted, when Maxwell, with a grunt, slid off the bunk and spoke to him.

"All right, kid, get out. We're going flying."

THEY struggled into their flying togs in silence, and not a word was exchanged as Keats followed the other out into the drizzle and headed toward the tarmac.

Standing before the huge hangar was a DH4 equipped with dual controls, quite in contrast to the sleek, trim-lined Spads that were parked at the deadline.

Maxwell stood with his hands on

his hips casting expert eyes over the fuselage. A pair of grease monkeys waited respectfully at his side. Maxwell approached the ship and leaned casually upon the turtleback.

"Now listen," he addressed Keats. "Get this: no panic, see? If anything happens, you sit tight. If you can handle that rear Lewis, go to it. I'm running this ship, and when I do get bumped off it's not going to be the fault of any lousy training camp ace. Got it?"

"Yes, sir," said Frederick Keats, stifling with an effort the hot words that rose to his lips.

"Right," said Maxwell. "Climb in."

Keats clambered clumsily into the rear cockpit after Maxwell. The latter leaned over for a moment in the forward office and picked up a wrench from the floor.

"See this?" he asked.

Keats nodded.

"This is a little present for children who freeze on to the controls. They get this square over the base of the skull."

Without waiting for a reply he opened up the throttle. A reverberating roaring answer from the engine crashed against Fred Keats' ears. Slowly Maxwell eased her down again, then casting one swift glance at his flying partner, he signaled the mechanics.

KEATS was aware of a sudden lurch as the heavy ship took to the air. He sat grim and white-lipped in the cockpit, his hands closed hard over the sides of it.

The earth evolved into a cockeyed, rain-soaked panorama. The biting wind and the slipstream conspired to send the flying rain drops into his face. He watched Maxwell dully and saw him flatten out as the alti-

meter indicated the fifteen thousand mark.

He was obeying the other's instructions literally. His feet were jammed uncomfortably up against the cockpit, sedulously out of the way of the rudder bar.

The stick before him wobbled invitingly, but he kept his hands glued tightly to the supports at his side. He peered out into the gray mist that enveloped the roaring ship.

He thought grimly that the flights he had taken at the training school and this were two utterly different things. The only point in common was the steady staccato roar of the motor and the whirling arc of the propeller blades up front. The struts trembled violently as the ship pounded her way toward the danger zone.

Maxwell sat immobile at the stick, the one tangible thing in a universe of intangibility. Suddenly he thrust the stick forward and dived. For a moment he glanced over his shoulder and pointed downward. Keats' eyes followed his outstretched hand. The nose of the DH swept earthward in a long low arc.

FOR a short second Maxwell cut the motor, and there came to Keats' ears a succession of devastating detonations. Below him the ground burst suddenly into myriads of small volcanic eruptions, as a horde of steel sheathed shells plowed their way into the torn surface of the battlefield.

Like brown ants living in roofless tunnels, he saw the infantry. Rifles and machine-guns joined in a deadly, bitter barking chorus. For the first time in his sheltered young life, Fred Keats saw death close at hand.

The entire scene flashed into the lad's consciousness in something less than a minute. Then Maxwell gave her the gun again and they zoomed

gallantly over their own lines to approach those held by the foe.

Fred Keats felt a little ill. Deep in his heart he knew that the tightening of his nerves and the pounding of his pulse meant that a gripping pall of fear had descended on him. A horrible vacuous sensation attacked the pit of his stomach. He could almost hear the beating of his heart.

He visualized the battlefield below and pictured himself as one of those deserted corpses, left for whatever vultures the elements might bring forth. He gazed at Maxwell's broad, untroubled back and hated him for his indifference, his utter lack of fear, and the calm capability which he showed at the controls.

Maxwell threw the DH over the enemy front line trenches at an altitude of barely a thousand feet. Keats was acutely aware of the gray figures below. Some ten men tossed their rifles to their shoulders and blazed away at the big Allied plane.

In a culvert over to the left, the sinister black barrel of a heavy machine-gun thrust its nose into the air, and unleashed a crackling flame of tracers.

Maxwell banked easily, as he pulled back on the stick and sought a safer height.

A HUNDRED whining rounds whistled about them. There was a slight popping sound as a steel pellet ate its avid way through the fabric of the wing. Fred caught his breath quickly. His teeth sank into his lower lips.

Maxwell waved reassuringly to him over his shoulder. The gesture was almost one of gaiety. Keats' fear was, for the moment, almost banished by the hatred for the man who could meet death eye to eye with such nonchalance.

Up and to the left the big DH4

pulled herself. Her prop raced madly and her straining engine roared against the crashing noise of the falling shells below.

Of a sudden there was a puff of black smoke at their side. Keats gazed at the explosion, a vague and haunting fear in his eyes. He turned his questioning glance at Maxwell's back. The latter cut the motor for a moment.

"Archies," he yelled back into the teeth of the wind that sang through the struts. "We'll head back for home now."

Keats nodded mechanically, hoping that the other had not noticed the quiver of his pallid lips.

MAXWELL gave her the gun again. The engine coughed dubiously for a moment, then responding to her controls, poured all her potent power into the prop thrust. The blades spun round in a frantic cycle.

Maxwell again tried for altitude, circling in wide banks and climbing as he did so. The black puffs of smoke were growing nearer and more frequent now.

A crashing reverberation fought against the pounding of the motor. Keats was dimly aware that this shell had been much closer than the others. He saw the wing suddenly become permeated with holes from some invisible agent as the speeding shrapnel hurled itself viciously through the fabric.

SOMETHING deep within him seemed to assume control of his whole being. His senses were utterly numbed. His mind retained one single picture—his mangled body lying far, far down on that bloody field beneath him.

The vision stuck. Nothing else was possible in the paralyzed nerve centers of his brain. The atavistic

horror of death seized him in an implacable grip.

He gave a weird unearthly shriek, and half rose in the cockpit seat, and leaned over the dashboard. He shook Maxwell violently by the shoulder. The ship swerved crazily, as Maxwell's hands were momentarily jerked from the controls.

The veteran shook him off, and shouted unintelligibly into the vibrating air. Keats pointed down frantically. His own hand seized the rear stick and thrust it downward. Below was safety, even though it meant certain capture.

Maxwell's arm descended swiftly to the floor of the fore cockpit. It came into view again holding a wrench. Keats met his gaze, and saw a grim determined look in his flaming eyes.

MAXWELL lifted the weapon and brought it down with all the strength of his powerful forearm. Keats cringed back, mounting curses and appeals.

A puff of wind hit the right wing, and the ship reeled precariously. The wrench missing its mark, landed dully on Keats' shoulder. He sank back into his seat, trembling violently. Maxwell hurled the wrench violently at him, and the weapon, aimed inaccurately, went whirling off into space. Maxwell swiftly sprang back into his seat and seized the controls in his expert hands.

Slowly the ship came back to an even keel. The puffs from the Archies were bursting around them in a perfect circle, essaying to cut off their retreat, but Maxwell was an old hand at this sort of warfare.

Steadily he gained altitude, with banks and zooms, but never once did he cross the edge of the circle of smoke. Slowly the altimeter hand crawled around to ten—fifteen—six-

teen thousand feet. Almost at the ceiling he flattened out.

FAR over to the east, a half dozen black spots appeared against the horizon. Maxwell, circled easily and holding the stick even, gave the ship everything she had in an attempt to beat the enemy's patrol back home.

He opened the throttle wide, and veritably flung the roaring ship back toward her home field. As they pounded their way over their own lines, Keats sat, an abject silent figure, behind the rear controls. The gripping fear had passed and left him with an even more gripping reaction.

He still trembled slightly, and a bitter loathing of his own conduct filled his heart. The only greater emotion than that awful fear, was his fear of being afraid. He was thinking of the taunts and jeers he must endure when they reached the tarmac, and Maxwell gave an account of his yellow conduct.

Before he was aware of it, Maxwell had throttled the motor again, and they were volplaning down to earth. The huts of the field loomed larger and larger as they seemingly rushed up to meet the descending ship. The motor roared again as they drew close to the field.

MAXWELL deftly pulled back on the stick as the wheels came in contact with the wet ground. There was a bumping contact as the ship rolled unevenly along the field, then slowly came to a stop.

Half a dozen mechanics rushed from a near-by hangar, and took over the plane, before the pilot had sprung from his seat. Keats clambered clumsily from his position in the rear and joined the hulking figure of Maxwell upon the ground.

He jerked off his helmet and looked at the big pilot.

Maxwell said nothing but returned his gaze quizzically. Two figures approached from the mess. With misgivings, Keats recognized them as Lawrence and Tarvin, the S. C. He set his teeth grimly and waited for the torturing moment when Maxwell would make his report.

The pair saluted stiffly as the S. C. approached. Lawrence was the first to speak. He shot a shrewd glance at Keats.

"Well," he remarked to Maxwell, "from the look of the boy scout here, I'd say that you'd rammed at least a dozen Fokkers, and about four sausages."

Maxwell shook his head.

"No," he said briefly. "Nothing at all. An Archie plugged us in the wing, but that's all."

Lawrence surveyed the shattered wing, as the S. C. took up the burden of the conversation.

"How's our new pilot, Maxwell?" he asked. "Did he take it all right?"

LAWRENCE looked up with interest at this question. Keats felt the pall of misery descend upon him. He stood, an immobile automaton, awaiting Maxwell's jeering words. The latter's voice came to him through a hazy aural screen.

"Why, yes," said Maxwell slowly, meeting Keats' eyes squarely. "He handled himself pretty well for a rookie. The Archies bit through the wings a couple of times, but the kid here, didn't seem to mind. In fact, he seemed sort of sorry to leave, but I spotted a Jerry patrol, and decided not to take any chances."

The S. C. beamed, and crossing to Keats, slapped him heartily on the back.

"Good," he said genially. "We

need all the guts we can get in this sector."

KEATS murmured something inarticulate as the Major turned and walked off with Lawrence, then he turned to Maxwell and overwhelming gratitude deluged him.

"Thanks," he said huskily. "That was damned white of you. I didn't deserve it. I'm sorry I was so yellow."

Maxwell flung a friendly arm about his shoulders.

"Yellow, hell!" he scoffed. "That was nothing. You'll get over it, and wish you hadn't. It's natural to be afraid of death and it's a terrible thing not to give a damn about anything."

"But that's what war does, son. I only hope to God you can keep on being afraid."

Days passed; days of blood and death which quickly snatched away the youth of Keats and gave him hardness, cynicism and maturity twenty years before his time.

No longer did he know that gripping, hungry fear as he rode into battle; no longer did he envy the calm of Maxwell as he piloted their roaring Pegasus across the lines.

No, now he was one of them. He had conquered man's natural fear of death by the reckless philosophy of the war birds: *Ce fait rien*. He understood now those enigmatic words that Maxwell had spoken after his first flight.

Yet his mind was not entirely free from worry. Maxwell was beginning to slip. Nine months of flying with no leave seemed to be taking its toll of the big man who seemed so impregnable.

The others had noticed it too. In the mess Keats had taken Lawrence to task for uttering some idle

quip which reflected on the courage of Maxwell.

But deep in his heart Keats knew that truth lay beneath the jest. Maxwell was on the verge of succumbing to the terrific strain.

This perturbed him, because the two of them had become fast friends. He had never quite rid himself of the sense of obligation that he had incurred after their first trip together.

And, hard and impervious to emotion that he had become, he felt a tug at his heart when he saw Maxwell come off the dawn patrol with a tremble in his fingers as he lit a cigarette, with eyes hollow and deep set in his head, with a ghastly pallor creeping through the normal ruddiness of his face.

He had spoken to Tarvin about leave for the big pilot, but the S. C. had been regretful but firm. Men could not be spared at this time. It was utterly out of the question. Keats had stormed, had said things that one does not say to one's commanding officer.

HE announced in no uncertain and severely profane terms that it was murder to keep a man flying daily for nine months. It was torture to a man's nerves to force him to face death every morning before breakfast for such a long period. He had told the S. C. other and unprintable things.

Furthermore, Tarvin had agreed with him, but he had still been firm. Leave was out of the question.

Keats then essayed to take the case of Maxwell upon himself. First he tried dosing him with whisky before they hopped. That was all right as a temporary relief, but when Maxwell reached the hangover stage it served merely to intensify the precarious condition of his shattered nerves.

IN answer to Tarvin's summons the entire squadron assembled in his office early one evening. They found the S. C. frowning over a huge map that covered the top of his desk. He looked up and regarded them with anxious eyes. He was obviously upset over something.

Young Keats stood beside Maxwell who had seated himself in the only chair of the room. The latter seemed unaware of his surroundings. He stared vacantly at the floor and twined and untwined his fingers. Keats rested a friendly hand on his shoulder as he listened.

"We've got a job, boys," Tarvin was saying grimly. "A job that may be the last."

The gravity of his voice engendered a tension in the room. Even the mocking smile of Lawrence was missing. They waited in silence for him to continue.

"Yes," he went on at last. "I don't like it, but what the hell, it's a war. Now get this."

He ran a pencil over the map. Necks craned and bodies bent to follow the lead that might pilot them to their death. Maxwell alone remained aloof. He sat silent, his hands moving nervously as the others crowded around the speaker.

"This," said Tarvin, making a mark with the pencil, "is a bridge. At the side of it there is an ammunition dump. Why Jerry put it there I don't know.

"Either it was plain dumb or else he figured in case he had to blow that bridge up in a hurry, a well directed shell would do it. However, he's not going to have a chance to blow it up. That's what we're going to do."

He paused for a moment and looked about as though to make sure they understood. Lawrence said:

"Go ahead, Chief, let's have the rest of it."

"They've pushed the infantry back," went on Tarvin. "The Jerry troops will start crossing that bridge in the morning. We've got to bomb the dump and smash the bridge."

"If the infantry is crossing," put in Simmons. "They've sent plenty of Fokkers out with them."

"That's the catch," said Tarvin. "HQ told me to bomb the dump. They said when and where, but not how."

"You're crazy," came a voice from the rear of the room. "That's suicide, Tarvin. Let HQ do it themselves. To hell with it."

A dozen pair of eyes turned to look at Maxwell. He glared back at them, twisting his fingers desperately, a look of tortured anguish in his eyes. A short silence, then Lawrence laughed mockingly.

"It's a war, Maxwell," he said ironically. "Lots of people get killed, risk their lives every day. Why not us?"

Maxwell flinched visibly at the word "kill."

"I don't want to risk my life," he mumbled.

"Well," said Lawrence bitingly. "There's lot of people who don't want to risk their lives either. They keep a whole mob of them in the jails at home."

KEATS started across the room toward the speaker, then thought better of it. Maxwell, who less than a month ago, would have thrust the insulting words down the other's throat, appeared not to hear them. He murmured something unintelligible and went back to twisting his nervous fingers.

He followed the rest to the door docilely enough as they took their leave, yet he walked like a man in a

daze. Keats stood in the doorway and watched him amble toward their shack, then he turned back and faced Tarvin.

TARVIN," he said, and there was a desperate sincerity in his voice. "You can't let him go up in the morning. You simply can't. The man is shot to hell.

"He's not yellow as Lawrence seems to think. You know that. But his nerves are ripped to pieces. Hell, a man can't keep this business up without some relaxation and he's been at it for the better part of a year now. You've got to let him stay down. Ground him. Do anything."

Tarvin sighed wearily.

"I can't, son," he said, and there was a vague pain in his tone. "It wouldn't be fair to the others. I've got to put every ship I can into the air tomorrow morning. We've just got to gamble on Maxwell's coming through. I'll ground him when he gets back if you like."

"If he gets back," said Keats bitterly. "All right, Tarvin, I see your point, but, nevertheless, it's murder."

He stalked angrily from the orderly room to his quarters. To his relief he found Maxwell curled up on the bed fast asleep. He tiptoed quietly from the room and headed over to the mess in search of a bottle which had not yet been violated by his thirsty comrades.

Two hours later he had drowned the problem of Maxwell in a quart of really excellent cognac.

Dawn! A sickly mist settled over the country, thick and sinister as though it were tossed there by the casual hand of Death himself. The air was damp and raw.

The solid bulk of the hangers appeared ghostly and evanescent through the grayness of the morning. On the tarmac, like fabulous

birds half obscured in smoke, stood the ships of the patrol, their motors idling as though they were eager to be off in search of the sun which shone above the blanket of fog.

Young Keats was the last man of the squadron on the field. His mouth still burning from the coffee he had gulped, he arrived at a dog-trot. Maxwell was already there.

He leaned against the turtleback and smoked dully. His abstract mood persisted, for he gazed vacuously into space, seemingly unaware of his surroundings.

Maxwell seemed normal enough as his hands found the controls. His take-off was perfect. He taxied her half-way down the field, then gradually pulled back the stick until almost imperceptibly she started to rise.

Keats' hopes began to soar as he saw the other's skillful handling of the heavy bomb-laden Breguet.

Suddenly the fog vanished. A sparkling sun hurled its myriad rays down upon them. Below, the mist was a swirling screen that obscured the torn terrain of war.

TARVIN flattened out at seven thousand feet and thereafter the flight kept in even array. Keats noticed that the fog was thinning out.

Now he could make out the roads and derelict buildings beneath them, and far in front the trenches were dark cuts in the soil that even the fresh sunlight failed to enter.

Up ahead, at the apex of the V, Tarvin suddenly waggled his wings and shot downward. Almost instantaneously Maxwell followed suit.

Keats glancing below saw a shining ribbon of silver as the Aisne flowed gaily to the sea, oblivious to the carnage that would shortly stain her argent waters. A scant half mile to the South he made out the net-

work structure of the bridge. Near-by stood a bulky square of tarpaulin—the ammunition dump.

The five ships ripped through the air toward their objective. Tarvin seeking enough altitude to render them safe from the frightful detonation that would result when one of their bombs went home, and at the same time essaying to keep close enough for accuracy of aim.

Suddenly the S. C.'s ship detached itself from the flight and swooped forward at a terrific rate of speed. Something white and glistening shot from its undercarriage and hurled itself to earth like a thunderbolt.

Maxwell manipulated his controls and hung close to Lawrence's tail. A shower of mud threw itself into the air as Tarvin's missile missed by a good fifty feet. Lawrence sped forward to make the second attempt.

Keats' eyes swept the sky anxiously for a sign of the enemy patrol, but he saw nothing. Casting his gaze downward again he noticed a mass of gray dust approaching down the road from the East.

Moving so slowly that it seemed motionless, the Imperial German Army marched steadily toward the doomed bridge in pursuit of the Fatherland's enemies.

LAURENCE'S bomb scattered the earth harmlessly, as had Tarvin's. Maxwell glanced back over his shoulder. His face was pale and drawn.

Keats nodded his head in signal and the Breguet shot forward toward the bulky mass of tarpaulin. His hand was steady enough on the release lever, though his heart pounded with excitement.

He *must* score a hit this time. Two had already missed it, and there in the distance, tramping steadily

down the road came the Hun horde, ready to cross the Aisne and slash the stragglers of the Allied retreat. He *must* score a hit.

Maxwell flew the ship steadily enough at an altitude of fifteen hundred feet. Keats shook his shoulder and motioned downward with the flat of his hand. For a moment Maxwell hesitated, then an expression of vague fear crept across the pallor of his face. He shook his head violently, leveled her out and shot straight ahead for the bridge.

Keats cursed beneath his breath. This was the first indication of the morning that all was not well with Maxwell. Well, if he would not go down, they must shoot from where they were. His eye trained itself on the objective below and his hand tightened on the lever.

Even before the gleaming bomb reached its destination, Keats knew that it was wide of the mark. It was already about fifteen feet off with a strong south wind carrying it further away each foot of its drop.

He gestured over the rear of the office to Simmons to come on and try it, when something red flashed in the corner of his eye. He turned quickly to see a red Very Light falling to the ground.

A second glance showed him only too certainly why Tarvin had fired it. There, high up in the heavens, like a black-crossed Nemesis, came the proud Fokkers of Germany, swooping upon them, their engines shouting a raging song of battle.

AS the combat started Keats found himself more worried about Maxwell than of the flaming death that threatened him from above. True, the two things were irrevocably interdependent.

If Maxwell failed, that was the

end, their powerful roaring ship was a crippled helpless thing with man's brains and skill to aid her. If—

But he had no time for further meditation. The Fokker flight was upon them. In front he saw Simmons and Tarvin engage a pair of the enemy ships, while Lawrence and Young Carstairs maneuvered for position. For a fleeting second Maxwell seemed to hesitate. He kept straight on an even keel.

THEN his fighting instinct momentarily conquered his fears. He jerked back the stick and zoomed as Keats, clinging to the rear Lewis, prayed for an opening that would give him a mortal shot at the foe.

He didn't get it. Maxwell whipped out of the zoom at eight thousand feet, thrust the stick forward preparatory to diving at the foe. Keats couldn't see his face, but the hand on the stick was clenched tightly and white showed at the knuckles.

Down they went at terrific speed. Keats swung his Lewis around on its pivot and glued his eyes to the ring-sights.

Before them two Fokkers were engaging Tarvin. A staccato threnody from Maxwell's Lewis ripped through the air. Keats saw the barrel shake violently as the pilot's hand trembled on the stick. The shots flew wild. Maxwell plunged down past his quarry, followed by a tearing hail from a German Spandau.

Keats looked up and fired a short burst at a black cross that appeared from nowhere into the ring of his gleaming sights. The Fokker lurched crazily for a moment, threatening a spin, but her pilot deftly brought her out. He then charged down upon them.

By this time Keats was thoroughly alarmed. Maxwell had failed badly. It seemed as though the cracking up

that he had feared was at last upon him. Desperately he pressed the trigger, lining his sights on the Jugernaut of death that was hurtling like a plummet upon them. Frantically he stretched his left hand behind him and shook Maxwell's shoulder.

He felt the ship flatten out a scant two hundred feet above the ground and even as his sights were pulled off the foe, he saw a thin, cruel flame shoot avidly up the Fokker's cowlings. Then Maxwell pulled back the stick and for a moment the German ship vanished from his vision.

He saw it once again as they were ascending. Down it came like a flaming live thing, quivering, smoking, reeling to a certain death below. Keats caught a swift glimpse of a face stamped with terror as she passed.

UP above them the air had become a veritable hell. Lawrence and Tarvin were fighting desperately. Simmon's ship was still flying, but her wings were riddled with machine-gun bullets.

Then suddenly Maxwell leveled out again. For a second he cut the motor and shrieked into the relative silence.

"To hell with them! I'm not going to die. I'm going home. To hell with them!"

His face was distorted by a terrible, overwhelming fear. His strained aching nerves had at last overcome the dogged courage of the man. Before Keats could move, Maxwell had given her the gun, centered the stick, and headed in the direction of the field.

Desperately Keats leaned over the forward office and reached for the stick, but Maxwell, with the strength of a maniac hurled him off, throwing him hard against the side of his own

cockpit. The Briquet, throttle wide open, was scurrying for home, deserting her patrol in the midst of battle.

KEATS' brain raced madly as he grappled with the terrific problem that confronted him. He half rose in the cockpit and reached out to grasp Maxwell's shoulders, when Death and Destiny stepped in simultaneously.

Something pinged past the observer's ear. Three times he heard a faint humming sound through the pounding engine. Then his startled eyes saw a small red patch in Maxwell's back. A small red patch that rapidly grew larger.

The back of the pilot's head, too, was red. A crimson stain flowed down his neck and ran crazily down the back of his tunic. His shoulders heaved silently, and he fell forward over the stick.

Keats' hands shook in spite of his desperate effort to steady himself. Maxwell—his comrade, killed! Shot in the back while fleeing an attack! Shot in the back while deserting his flight!

In his heart the youth knew that it was not the big pilot's fault. He knew that the man's natural courage was still there, but no mortal can live under such terrific strain and retain sanity.

TRUTH, indeed; yet he saw Lawrence's mocking smile and Tarvin's cold, superior air when they discussed it in the mess. Maxwell had run away, committed the unpardonable sin of the air force. That fact remained, no matter what the explanation.

He shuddered as he thrust the body aside and reached for the stick. Then, in that sudden heroic illumination that comes to men under terrific stress, he knew the answer. Max-

well was dead, but still he could be saved from the calumny and sneers of the living. Even now he need not bear the coward's brand.

Almost directly below him was the river. The river, and the bridge that they had come to destroy. There it stood, erect as though defying the men who had come to raze it. Less than half a mile away the gray mass of troops approached, plodding tenaciously through the mud of the road.

In a split second Keats' decision was made. True, his own life hung in the balance, but what of that if the objective was accomplished and Maxwell was snatched from the gloating tongues who would tell and retell the tale of his cowardly flight?

Keats clambered over into the fore cockpit. The extra weight forced her nose down a trifle. He pulled back on the stick and noticed with satisfaction that his left wing was smoldering slightly.

Gently he thrust Maxwell's inert form to one side and aimed the nose of the throbbing Breguet directly at the tarpaulin-covered dump at the side of the bridge. The Aisne flowed on calmly.

THE ship tore through the air at sixty-five miles an hour. Closer and closer drew the ammunition dump. Closer and closer marched the gray troops. Keats shot one last look above him. The embattled planes still jockeyed for position above him. He cast a swift lingering look at the torn plain beneath him. Ugly as the earth might be, no man relishes leaving it, and in a moment he might be a citizen on the outermost realm of eternity.

Gripping the stick with his left hand he cautiously put a foot out on the trailing edge of the wing.

The flame on the wing had flickered into life now.

That was his last conscious register. The Breguet engine roared a raging swan song into his ears. The whirling prop blades hummed a whirring threnody.

The dump was less than a hundred feet away. The river was directly beneath him. He pushed hard against the plane and jumped.

THE Breguet charged head-on for the ammunition dump. Sitting upright at the controls was a man clad in the baggy flying outfit of the American air forces. Sitting upright with glassy eyes gazing straight ahead.

A dead man carrying out the orders he had received in life. A dead man in death, it seemed, had found the inherent courage which had temporarily deserted him in life.

The prop blades whirled within a foot of the tarpaulin. The engine pounded and sucked its last breath of air through the intake. The man sat immobile at the stick. Then—

Hell and bedlam broke loose together. A terrific detonation hurled itself into the air. Steel crashed upon steel and disintegrated.

Flame shot upward and the air was black with jagged missiles. The gray mass on the road scattered and ran for cover. The fighting hawks above ceased their hostilities as a sound louder, more devastating than the noise of their combined engines, beat against their ear-drums.

Below the placid Aisne was a spouting, whirling stream. The solid bridge was a twisted mass of wrecked, distorted metal; the tarpaulin-covered bulk was a huge crater at the river's bank.

And somewhere lost in the jagged, crazy hail of metal that scattered

(Concluded on page 128)

THE GLOBE TROTTER

GREETINGS—adventurers!
We're glad to see you again this month. Perhaps you're sorry to have reached The Globe Trotter, for by this time you've finished the issue and must wait an entire month for your next big adventure treat.

But—cheer up. You'll soon be reading the July issue. We made a promise when we started **THRILLING ADVENTURES**, to make it the best magazine of its kind—and we think we've lived up to it. For, judging by the many letters we receive after each new issue, we're getting better every month.

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Our aim was to find stories that were original and new, vital and vigorous, fascinating and glamorous—that would stimulate your interest and enthusiasm so that out of sheer enjoyment and appreciation you would continue reading the magazine and telling your friends about it.

What do you think of this issue—especially Henry Leyford's first novel for us, **PERIL IN THE WIND**? We thought it a wow—so much so that the author has been asked to do us another. And then that short story gem by Paul Regard. It'll be a long time before any magazine will be able to top that yarn. Variety in the issue—why, we'll say so.

The Globe Trotter has taken us all over the map again—this time to Africa, Tibet, China, Australia—our own West—and even back to pre-revolutionary colonial days and the World War. All in all, another great issue.

There'll be three big features next month.

The magazine will open with a colorful Shanghai adventure novel by one of the best-known writers in the fiction field—Anatole Feldman. **MANCHURIA TREASURE**, his complete novel, will take you to war-torn China and tell of the exciting adventures of a group of Americans seeking the lost treasure of the Manchus—also sought by the Chinese and the Japanese for the power it wields over millions of yellow souls.

With the ending in this issue of his splendid novel, **THE LEOPARD MAN**, Perley Poore Sheehan has written for us a brand new series of adventure stories. We confidently believe that they will be a sensation among adventure stories.

CAPTAIN TROUBLE, "The Fighting Fool," is in all probability the best thing that this world-famous author has ever written. In many ways it is the best adventure tale of the Far East in years. Do not fail to start it, for it is crammed full of action, excitement, mysticism, fantasy, and some of the finest writing of the year.

We also start a new serial in the next issue—**THE LAKE OF FLAMING DEATH**. It brings Jack D'Arcy back to our pages. You remember his gripping novel, **THE SACRED SCIMITAR**, which we gave you complete some months back—well, in this new story of his he goes it one better.

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I WILL PAY \$250.00
for the Winning Answer to this Question

I am going to give \$3,000.00 to some deserving man or woman who answers my announcements. You may be the one to get it! But, before I give it to anyone I would like to know that the money will be used wisely. **WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THIS FORTUNE, IF I GIVE IT TO YOU?** Just answer this question—tell me in a sentence of 20 words or less, and in your own way, what \$3,000 cash would mean to you right now—nothing more to do toward the \$250.00 cash prize! Sounds easy? It is easy! The first answer that comes to your mind may win the prize. No selling—no soliciting. There are no strings at all to this amazing prize offer of \$250.00 cash.

**20 SIMPLE WORDS WIN \$250.00
FOR SOMEONE, MAYBE YOU!**

Nothing More For You To Do!

\$250 Prize given just for the winning answer to my question

There is no way you can lose. Simply tell me what \$3,000.00 would mean to you right now, if I give it to you. The prize for the winning answer is \$250.00. Just sending an answer qualifies you for an opportunity to win \$3,000.00 in final prize distribution. Think what an amazing opportunity—why, many people work hard for a lifetime without ever having such a vast amount of money as you may now win.

**Think, NOW, What Would \$3,000.00 Mean
To You Right Now?**

Would it mean a business of your own; would it mean investment in bonds; would it mean paying off a mortgage on your home or buying new furniture and clothes? Maybe it would mean an education for you. Just think what \$3,000.00 could mean to you! Think of all the things you could do with it. Plan now—then write your answer—rush it to me at once. Yours may easily be the winner. All replies become the property of Richard Day, Manager.

**BE PROMPT! I Will Send You \$100.00
Cash Certificate AT ONCE!**

To make it worth your while to be prompt in sending in your answer to my question, "What would \$3,000.00 Cash mean to you RIGHT NOW?"—if you will see that your letter is postmarked not more than three days after you read this offer I will send you a Cash Promptness Certificate entitling you to an extra \$100.00 in cash should your reply, in the opinion of the judges, win the \$250.00 cash prize offered above.

Hundreds Have Won

Throughout the past year we have given financial help to hundreds of deserving people in all parts of the United States. . . . have given away hundreds and thousands of dollars in prizes. Beemer just won \$750. Beatrice Lauter won \$500. Hundreds more made happy with huge prizes and cash awards. Now is YOUR opportunity—ACT TODAY!

RULES

Only one answer accepted from a family. Use your own name. \$250.00 given for best answer to "What Would \$3,000.00 Cash Mean To You Right NOW?" Answers must be postmarked not later than Sept. 15, 1932. Judges will consider answer only for practical value of the idea, construction and spelling. Neatness or in-remunty of submitting answer not considered. Duplicate prizes will be given in cases of duplicate winning answers.

RICHARD DAY, Manager

909 Cheapside, Dept. 701-F,

Cincinnati, Ohio



**Just Sending Answer Qualifies You
for Opportunity to Win \$3,000.00**

Some say I am wrong. They say that giving money to people will not help to bring back prosperity. They say that the people who get money from me will spend it foolishly. Now I want to find out, I am going to give away over \$5,000.00. Someone is going to get \$3,000.00, all cash. If I gave you the \$3,000.00 what would YOU do with it? Tell me in 20 words or less. Just sending an answer qualifies you for the opportunity to win \$3,000.00. If you are prompt I'll send you a \$100.00 Cash Certificate AT ONCE! Here is an opportunity of a lifetime. Costs you nothing to win. Rush your answer today. Send no money—just tell me what you would do with the money, if I gave you the \$3,000.00 that I have promised to give to some yet unknown deserving person.

Richard Day

Use the Coupon or write letter with your answer

\$250.00 PRIZE COUPON

RICHARD DAY, Manager
909 Cheapside, Dept. 701-F, Cincinnati, O.

\$3,000.00 cash would mean this to me right now:
(Write your answer plainly here, in 20 words or less):

.....

.....

.....

.....

Name

Address

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

Date I read your offer.....

A Year's Protection Against
SICKNESS

Less than 3c a Day!

A Year's Protection Against
ACCIDENT

CASH or sympathy?

Which do you want?

Suppose you met with an accident or sickness tonight—salary stopped—which would you prefer

\$25 Weekly . . . or Sympathy?

Which would you Pay?

Would you rather pay bills and household expenses out of a slim savings account or a . . .

Which will your family want?

In case of your accidental death, which would you rather give your family . . .

\$10,000 Cash . . . or Sympathy?

\$10 Bill

For a Whole Year's Protection Under a

LIMITED COVERAGE

Accident and Sickness POLICY

Get Cash instead of sympathy. If you met with an accident in your home, on the street, or road, in the field, or on your job—will your income continue? Remember, few escape without accident—and none of us can tell what tomorrow holds for us. While you are reading this warning, somewhere some ghastly tragedy, some flood or fire, some automobile or train disaster is taking its toll of human life or limb. Protect yourself now.

Get Cash instead of Sympathy.

If you suddenly became ill—would your income stop? What if you contracted solar pneumonia, appendicitis, operation, or any of the many common ills which are covered in this strong policy, wouldn't you rest easier and convalesce more quickly if you knew that this old line sympathy stood ready to help lift from your shoulders distressing financial burdens in case of a personal tragedy? Protect yourself now.

Get Cash instead of Sympathy.

Don't Wait for Misfortune to Overtake You

The Independence Indemnity Company,
236 Wallach Building, Newark, New Jersey.
Gentlemen: At no cost to me send copy of your booklet "Cash or Sympathy."

Name

Address

City..... State.....

Mail the Coupon today!

Mail the Coupon before it's too late to protect yourself against the chances of fate picking you out as its next victim.

The Independence Indemnity Company
236 WALLACH BUILDING, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

Under Supervision of State Insurance Departments

Agents Wanted For New Territory

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION

\$10 a Year Entire Cost.

No Dues. No Assessments.

MEN AND WOMEN

18 to 70 Years Accepted.

\$10,000

Principal Sum.

\$10,000

Loss of hands, feet or eyesight.

\$25 Weekly Benefits

for stated Accidents or Sickness

Doctor's Bills, Hospital Benefit, Emergency Benefit and other liberal features to help in time of need—all clearly shown in policy.

This is a simple and understandable policy—without complicated or misleading clauses. You know exactly what every word means—and every word means exactly what it says.