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25¢ FANTASTIC Novels MAGAZINE

Vol. 3

NOVEMBER, 1949

No. 4

Novel

MINOS OF SARDANES

Charles B. Stilson 10

Strange was the call that summoned him across the frozen wastes to unknown Sardanes, and stranger still his mission. . . . For only he, of all the world, knew the secret beyond the Southern Pole—a gem brighter than eternity, colder than the stars—and more dangerous to possess than the Rose maiden. . . .

Novelette

THE LIVING PORTRAIT

Tod Robbins 76

The dread desire he had never acknowledged looked out at him from that tormenting canvas—taunting him with the bloody deed it meant to do . . . and the face of the killer was his own!

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Silently, it waited in a woodland glen, baited with dreams to tempt . . . the strange lost company that time had forgot!

THE WHITE GORILLA

Elmer Brown Mason 114

Murder, madness, death, were in the jungle tom-toms' warning beat—but Van Dam meant to have the sacred gorilla in spite of the she-devil that dwelt within his quarry. . . .

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

6

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Address comments to the Letter Editor, Fantastic Novels,
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From F. N.'s Editor

Dear Readers:

There have been some very interesting letters concerning our policy in publishing the Munsey stories, from the readers of *Fantastic Novels*. In the present issue there are some well thought out questions from John C. Nitka, Bob Barnett, and Ed Cox, in particular.

It would seem from these that my own remarks about letting the generation of newcomers have a chance at the Merritt stories and other high points of F.F.M.'s backlog, in F.N., were to a large extent responsible for these interesting comments.

To make everyone happy, a magazine will be brought out at a near future date to take care of the Merritt stories and some others in the same category of classic value, and some of the later triumphs of the *Argosy* before it changed its contents altogether.

That means that *Fantastic Novels* will have, for the most part, the old stories for which many of the fans have been asking, and neither will anyone be deprived of the other stories under question in the letters of our colleagues in this department.

In spite of these few complaints, F.F.M. and F.N. are flourishing, and fantasy in all its branches seems to be more popular than ever, new readers are always joining our ranks, and the old ones have stayed with us through the years. It is a great field, and the news is spreading!

Sincerely,
Mary Gnaedinger.

Suggestions

Dear Editor:

If I had not seen your note in "What Do You Think?" of the July '49 issue of F.N., I'd of probably never thought of saying anything.

I think I have one complaint to make, if not

more; not with the type or quality of the stories appearing in F.F.M. or F.N., but with the pacing and the choice of tales. You ask that the old-timers (I sort of consider myself as one, as I've been reading fantasy since 1921) be patient and wait till we get some of our requests published and in the meantime let the younger fans or newer generation, as you style them, have their day. Though I halfway agree with you, don't you think that they, being much younger, could afford to wait a little, too?

If we wait much more, we may, with our grey beards, ask old St. Pete to read us what we want as we may not be in a position to read them ourselves. Although that is slightly morbid, it is past the humorous stage. I've personally had so much of Merritt, that though he is a maestro, he's beginning to approach the "bore" stage.

I do know that Popular Publications has to make a certain amount of money each issue to keep their heads in the clear financially, and the only way to do that is by bringing the best money makers to the front. But since there is only a limited amount of England's, Merritt's, etc., works, don't you think that it would be best to pace those a bit slower and throw in a few tidbits to us older readers (the backbone of *Argosy* & F.F.M.) and, that way, keep everyone happy?

Why not bring out some of Francis Stevens' tales, (not those that were already published in F.F.M. and F.N.) that came out in *Argosy* and one really good one that appeared in "Thrill Book" of around 1919 titled "Heads of Cerebus"? Stevens has been compared to Merritt and not to his discredit. Some even think that Merritt first wrote under the name of Stevens. I've never heard proof to the contrary since Stevens is more or less legendary. Also, Charles B. Stilson is somewhat neglected and his yarns in book form sold well.

Then there are those good yarns of Loring Brent, Rousseau, Julian Hawthorne, Flint, Blighton, Anderson and MacIsaac, to mention a few, that deserve to be duly reprinted. The list of tales in *Argosy* and *Popular* are far too many to be casually neglected.

Not to be outdone by others, I have an axe to grind. I need a few issues of the very old *Weird Tales* and *Thrill Book* to complete my files, and, to any who can help me, I have scads of books and equally old magazines to trade, and if these lack, I have Uncle Sam's money.

JOHN C. NITKA.

486 Kosciuszko St.,
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(Continued on page 8)

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(Continued from page 6)
An Interest-Holding Novel

At long last, Garret Smith returns! 'Twas in Jan. 1940 that his first story was reprinted (in F.F.M.) and over nine years passed before we got another story from his pen. Too long! "Between Worlds" was very good, except for the usual number of little flaws old stories have. Behind a misleading cover (on which three elements are represented to draw fantasy fan, science-fictionist and the herd that drool over a lush girl such as depicted) there is an interest holding novel. The author turned on the propaganda quite heavily toward the end of the story, but that is only natural for a story written when the first world war was in full swing.

This story, unlike some you've given us recently, has that air of newness to it. That is, that overtone of exploring the realm of fantasy, that only the old, old fantasies have. That same one that the old F.F.M. had when it first started, giving us the great fantasies. Somehow, we newer fans can't seem to grasp that atmosphere in this day of well established science-fiction where it is no longer something new and questing, but a science in itself. Anyhow, I hope you have more like this Smith novel and soon!

"The Throw-Back" also was quite good. Not the story itself so much, but the atmosphere of tense expectancy it built up as the climax was approaching, where Bull built the barricade, got the fire way up and looked out into the night, for "it"!

Elmer Brown Mason writes an entertaining story but hardly fantasy. I'm glad you are using his stories now, but how about more like "Black Butterflies"? The fiction this time was all satisfying. Finlay's work this time was only vaguely pleasing. He still does his usual superb job of artistry but he no longer inserts the fantasy element. Only in the front-piece (you could call it) and in those three figures advancing across the field on page 77 does any of the old Master-of-Fantasy-Artists Finlay show.

Of course, I'm probably spoiled by the old Merritt novel illustrations, but...

The book-review section is worthwhile and I hope it appears more often.

Well, Merritt fancier that I am, I do not look upon the next issue's selection with great joy. Finlay illustrations will be nice but still why not just print several pages of Finlay pics that illustrate "Dwellers" and have a different novel? Or issue a portfolio of Finlay pics just illustrating Merritt novels? As to your "explanation", why not follow the suggestion of Dr. Tom Gardner and issue separate booklets of Merritt novels (with, of course, Finlay pics) and leave F.N. for the much more needed novels never before republished? There have been many pocket-book editions of Merritt novels and I don't see why the fans, the newer ones, can't get them and satisfy their craving for Merritt.

Hah! I see that you are trying to appease the clamoring horde by tacking a little note at the head of the letter column in lieu of an Editress'

Page or even li'l answers to pleading letters! Pah! on half-way measures!

Bing Clark can pick up "Out of the Silent Planet" in pocket-book form on any newsstand if he hasn't discovered this already. As for his other wants, I guess they are hopeless since this 'zine reprints only from Munsey files, which is enough for me.

As for suggestions for future issues, see my remarks about reusing Merritt first, and then look over the rich files of "classics" as yet unprinted.

Well, I've been hounding you long enough, this time. Pretty soon comes F.F.M. and then I'll be after you about Chambers. And then F.N. again and I can start in all over again. . . . One of these days you'll tire of this (and the same from many others, I hope) and give in!

Fantastically,

Ed Cox.

4 Spring Street, Lubec, Maine.

"Between Worlds" Great

I have just completed the reading of "Between Worlds" in F.N. and I enjoyed it very much. I have heard a great deal about this story in years past and was glad of the chance to read it. I started reading the old *Argosy* in 1921, so I must have just missed the original publication of "Between Worlds" by a couple of years.

It is great to read F.N. and come across stories that are all but forgotten in the mind. As the reading proceeds, the memories come flooding back, the years fall away, and once again I am a youth just starting high school and thrilling to the adventures depicted by the old masters.

One of the greatest of the old writers, to my mind, was Edgar Rice Burroughs. I have a complete set of his books—that is, almost. I need "Jungle Girl", "Back to the Stone Age", and "The Oakdale Affair" and "The Rider".

WILLIAM MEDINE.

2859 N. Stillman St.,
Philadelphia 32, Pa.

Wants Pics By Paul

"Between Worlds" was terrific. Let's have more by Garret Smith. F.N. gets better with every issue. I rate F.N. over F.F.M. I'm glad to see more Merritt coming. We younger fans want to have more Merritt stories. Don't forget "The Snake Mother" and "Burn, Witch, Burn!" which are hard to get. How about printing Merritt's short stories as fillers in issues when you have shorter novels? Let's also have more early Leinster. Where are some of those Paul illos you promised us? Lastly, when is F.N. going monthly? Two months is a long time to wait between fantasy classics. The magazine is swell in every other respect and keep up the book reviews. They're a real help.


RICHARD ELSBERRY.

413 E. 12th St.,
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(Continued on page 123)

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Charles B. Stilson

Author of "Polaris—of the Snows"

MINOS

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They saw the long procession of those about to die sweep up the fire-lighted steeps of the Gateway to the Future. . . .



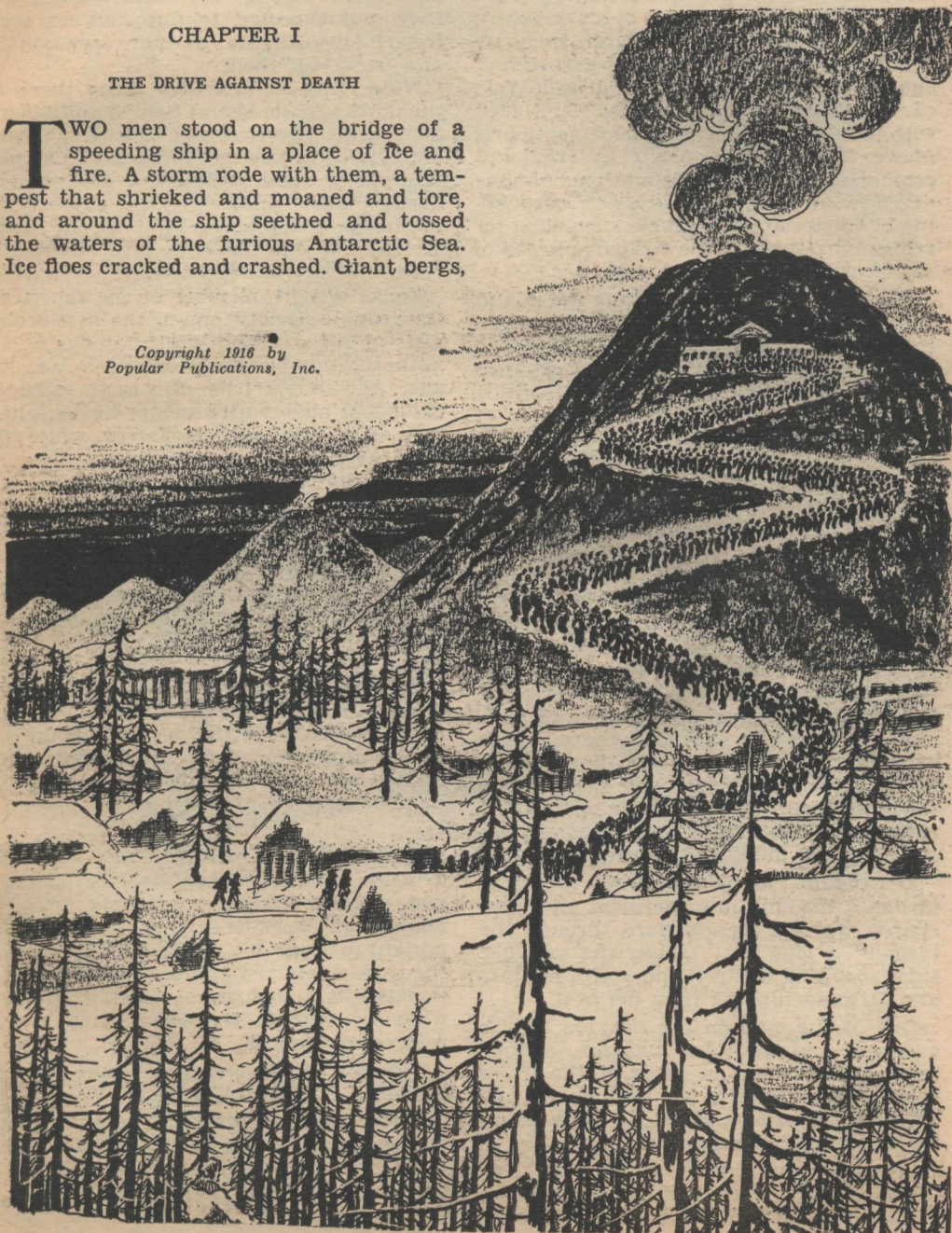
OF SARDANES

CHAPTER I

THE DRIVE AGAINST DEATH

TWO men stood on the bridge of a speeding ship in a place of ice and fire. A storm rode with them, a tempest that shrieked and moaned and tore, and around the ship seethed and tossed the waters of the furious Antarctic Sea. Ice floes cracked and crashed. Giant bergs,

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staggering under the lash of the gale, added the dull thunder of their impact to the wild din.

Yet all the fury and clamor afloat paled in comparison with the appalling splendor of that which was taking place on shore.

On the port side of the vessel, a scant league across the heaving frenzy of wave and ice, lay land. Once a stark, bleak mountain range, rising inland from its beetling shore cliffs, now it was gashed and quivering in the throes of a terrific volcanic outburst. Rocky hillsides were laced with streams of molten, iridescent fire. Above them mighty peaks tottered and crumbled. The titanic detonations of sundered mountains, with each new outpouring of the tremendous forces struggling for release, drowned all the strident discord of shrilling air and booming sea.

For a full score of miles along the inland range the mountain crests had been riven to loose the internal torrents. Cascades of white-hot lava poured down their calcined sides, in places streaming over the foothills themselves, to be quenched in clouds of roaring steam where the sea met them. Geysers of flame shot skyward from some of the more lofty peaks, and spread out like the unfolding petals of monstrous, unholy lilies, thrust into bloom from the underworld.

Above them loomed masses of vapor, rolling and shifting, and were lost in the murk of the Antarctic night. Below, the raging fires lighted land and sea for leagues, the colors of blue and green and violet reflected back from the myriad facets of the whirling icebergs with dazzling magnificence. Across the churning chaos, where every wave was a dancing flame, each mass of ice a lustrous opal, six miles to the west, the great fires shone against the cliffs and peaks of another shore, that lay cold and quiet and snowbound.

Destruction, many hued and fantastic, menaced the ship in a thousand glittering shapes, but she tore forward through the turmoil. A long gray cruiser she was, her sides sheathed in steel, and with the Stars and Stripes whipping from her bow.

One of the men on the swaying bridge, a blond and youthful colossus, clothed from head to foot in skins of the white bear, leaned toward his companion and lifted his voice to a shout, to carry above the screaming pandemonium.

"Hinson, your friend spoke truly," he cried. "Here, indeed, are the great fires." With a sweep of his arm shoreward, he indicated the long arrays of flaming furies.

It was the first time for hours that either of the men had spoken. Indeed, since the ship had entered this arm of the sea and come upon the stupendous eruption of nature's vitals, there had been little conversation aboard, with the exception of sharp orders and a few subdued comments among the crew. Volcanoes they had expected to find, but no such tremendous display as here confronted and overawed them.

"Now, this is Ross Sea. Back there to the northwest lie Mount Sabine and Mount Melbourne. Here, where the great hills burn, is King Edward VII Land," pursued the young man. "Yonder," he pointed ahead to the south, "lies the pathway to Sardanes. Shall we be in time, old Zenas Wright, or will the end have struck already?"

Zenas Wright, member of the American Geographic Society, one of the first geologists of his day and world famous as an authority on volcanic phenomena, tore his gaze unwillingly from the most splendid exhibit of his favorite science his eyes had ever seen. He shook his shaggy, white old head slowly.

"I can not tell, my son," he said. "Often the great changes of nature are of slow growth, and may be months or years in the making. Again, they are done in a day. An outburst of such violence as this one I've never seen before. It would seem to me that the end must be at hand down there, if not already passed. We must make haste."

He turned his short, wide-shouldered figure. Clutching the bridge rail with tightened hands, he settled his ears again into the protection of his great ulster, and feasted his eyes on a sight of which he would never tire.

FROM the wheelhouse another man came onto the bridge. He was tall, lean and weather-beaten with close-set eyes above high cheekbones, and the alert and upright carriage of a soldier. For a moment the three conferred, the newcomer tugging impatiently at his sparse, black mustache, while he took in the scene around him with sharp glances.

"Speed, and speed, and more speed. Scoland," said the old scientist.

"Aye, speed," echoed the young giant, "all the speed in your good ship, Captain, while yet there is open water. Yonder, ahead, the ice gathers for the drive, and there we must needs go slowly. So speed while speed we may."

Scoland nodded shortly and strode back to the wheelhouse. Down the speaking-tube to the engine-room went his call:

"Crowd her, Mac, crowd her!"

"Aye, Meester Scoland, aye! But, mon, is she no doin' beautifully the noo?" The grizzled MacKechnie turned from the tube in the bowels of the cruiser, to bellow his orders among cursing, panting stokers and sweating coal-passers.

For this was a race with death; not the death of one man, or of a ship's crew, but the extinction of a nation.

Down this swirling pathway one of the men on the ship had passed once before. No stout ship swam under his feet on that journey. He rode on a careening iceberg. He was the fur-clad young viking on the bridge. His name was Polaris Janess.

Born in the wilderness of the Antarctic by one of the strangest freaks of circumstances, Polaris had reached manhood seeing no human being besides the father who had reared him. When that father died the young man started to break his way to civilization.

In his wild adventurings northward he had found Rose Emer, an American heiress, lost in the snows. Where they made their camp an ice floe broke up, and they were whirled down the coast to the south again on an enormous berg. Inland, they had found the kingdom of Sardanes—Sardanes, the mystical volcanic valley, set like an emerald in the white fastnesses of the Antarctic, blooming with tropical verdure, and peopled with a fragment of the ancient Greek nation, the Hellenes, whose victories Bard Homer sang. And they were the first people from the outer world of men to set foot there in nigh upon three thousand years.

There a king would have wedded the American Rose, but Polaris fought his way out of that valley with his dogs and guns, saving the girl, and taking with them Kalin, the young high priest of Sardanes. The priest had died in the snowlands, but the man and the girl had come at last to the ship *Felix*, Scoland's ship, from which the girl had strayed.

Long before they reached America, Rose Emer had lost a not-too-warm admiration for the captain in a great love for the man who had saved her. Scoland, the daring explorer, who had reached the South Pole in an airship, saw the girl won from him by the man from the wilderness.

Fearing lest the girl was glamourised by the strange events through which they had passed, and might come to scorn the half

barbarian that he was, Polaris delayed to wed her for a year, which he devoted to intense study of men and their ways. Of books he knew much, and commanded many languages; of men he knew little.

Before the year was ended came Zenas Wright, with a report from the Smaley and Hinson expedition into Ross Sea, telling of a mighty volcanic outbreak there. The scientist declared it to be an outpouring of the fires which warmed Sardanes. With the going of those fires, he asserted, the mystic valley was doomed to return to the wastes, and its wonderful people to die.

"It is fitting that the man who discovered Sardanes should be the man to save her," said Zenas Wright to Polaris, "and without you, who know the way and the people, the trip would be well-nigh hopeless."

Polaris had responded to the call of what he deemed to be an almost sacred duty. Still unwed, he said farewell to his Rose maid for another long year, to start south and face the hardships and perils of the Antarctic once more, and to fetch to America the two thousand or so inhabitants of Sardanes, or as many of them as should be found alive.

With tireless haste a relief expedition was organized. Dogs were brought down from the upper reaches of the Yukon. Men whose lives and callings had inured them to the perils of the colds and the tempests of the snow-lands were enlisted for the great errand.

Foremost among those who came to enlist for the venture was Captain James Scoland. He came with a heart full of hot hate for the man who had balked him, and whom he considered little more than a half-mad barbarian. But he hid his hate well, and bided his time. With Polaris Janess, the enmity that had been between himself and the captain was a closed book. He had forgotten and forgiven. Scoland was a man of unquestioned bravery, a born leader of others. Above all, he had the knowledge of the Antarctic that made him an invaluable ally.

Polaris accepted his proffered services gladly.

Through the influence of Zenas Wright and of Scoland, the United States second-class cruiser *Minnetonka* was turned over for the use of the expedition, and manned. All the great fortune his father had left him Polaris had guaranteed in payment for the expenses of the expedition. Danger and death lay before him. He would be a poor man if he returned. He did not falter.

He stood on the deck of the rushing ship, his topaz eyes turned toward the blazing, thundering mountains on the shores of Ross Sea. Their weird lights shone on his handsome, high-featured face, but at times he saw them not. Persistently there arose before him a picture of a quaint old New England garden, bright with its sunshine, its phlox and marigolds and honeysuckle. He looked again into the gray eyes of the garden-woman; long eyes, wet with tears. He felt her soft lips cling to his. In the moaning of the wind he heard again her sad voice pleading, "Oh, Polaris—how can I let you go?" and a great gray dog that answered to the name of Marcus stood by them, whining and ill at ease.

From his reverie the voice of Zenas Wright recalled him.

"The bergs are getting thicker," the old man said. "Stout as this ship is, we will have to slow down soon, or risk worse than we've risked already. You say the sea narrows down there ahead?"

"Aye, old man, it narrows, and then sweeps wide again, so wide that from one coast you may not see the other for many a long day," Polaris answered. When he spoke it was with the quaintness of expression that had come to him from the pages of the "Ivanhoe" of Scott, a treasure he had found among the few of his father's books that were not of science, and over which he had pored and pondered lovingly through many years. A few short months of civilization had not worn that custom from him.

Zenas Wright gazed aft. "Well, whatever happens to me now," he said, "I've seen a sight to-day few men have ever seen."

He waved his old hand toward the spouting hills, which they were now leaving behind him. "I'd like to study that eruption and write a book on it," he added regretfully. Despite his age, and the long hours he had spent on the bridge he left it with a vigorous springy step as he went below.

At racing speed, wherever the way lay clear, the stanch *Minnetonka* tore forward, her nose of steel pointed straight into the dark, mysterious South, hurling her eight thousand tons through every available gap in the ice flotilla with all the strength of her twenty-one thousand horsepower.

Down the seas behind the vessel, faster and ever faster, crept the dawn of a six-months' day.

CHAPTER II

THE CURSE OF ANALOS

ON THE brink of the ledge of death in the crater of the Gateway to the Future crouched Analos, high priest in Sardanes. Two hundred feet below him in the monstrous funnel of the crater, seethed the lake of undying fires. Billowing vapors wafted from that troubled caldron passed upward beyond him, an endless procession of many-hued wraiths. First mist, smoke and sulfurous gases intermingled, spiraled and coiled in the drafts that blew through the mountain's cone, and passed on to the vent of the enormous flue, three hundred feet above.

The rumble and muttering of the raging flames smote his ears continually. Beneath his feet the solid rock of the hollow hill vibrated and trembled. Anon as the wreaths and curtains of vapor shifted and curled, disclosing their furious source, the weird light shone garishly on his red vestments of office. His high-templed, crafty face, above its black beard, turned livid in the glare.

It was evident from the tense bearing of the man that he was himself in the grip of an inward fire that threatened to break forth with consuming fury. He ground his teeth, and blood ran from his bitten lips into his beard.

Curse them, O Lord Hephaistos! Curse them, for thy sake and for thy servant's!" he prayed as he prayed many times before. He stretched his arms out over the gasping pit, raised himself on one knee and sent his voice wailing out across the fire-shot depths.

"Aye, curse them and spare them not! Curse him that was before me here! May Kalin be accursed! Curse him who now opposeth my will! May Minos be accursed! Curse her who hath flouted me, thy priest! May she be thrice accursed! Curse them all, and for all the years to come! May they know no rest in Sardanes or in the world! May they find no peace in that far place beyond, whither thy gateway leadeth!"

Panting for breath, he paused. His writhing features were hideous in the flare from the chasm. Again he tossed his arms wildly.

"Come to my aid, Hephaistos!" he screamed. "Aid thou thy servant! Give me a sign, that I may know. A sign, Master, send me a sign!"

Booming up from the depths, his answer

came—a mighty diapason from the throat of the crater that seemed to carry with it every chord of nature's tonal gamut. As if the hammer of Hephaistos, indeed, had smitten, the solid rock beneath him quivered to a terrific shock from the bowels of the earth.

Almost jarred from his foothold, the man, by a quick spring backward, saved himself from toppling into the fiery funnel. Crawling on hands and knees, he approached the brink of the ledge again, and there lay flat. His eyeballs bulged and his senses swam when he gazed downward.

He saw the fire-fretted sides of the giant crater swept free of all their clouding vapors, every glittering vein every projection, every detail of their many strata, revealed in startling clearness by a blinding flood of light. He saw the fire lake itself surge upward in its white-hot sheath. Up, up the sheer declivity of the crater it crept. As it came, for yards above it the rocks glowed red.

Another tremendous shock swayed the ledge where the priest lay. Masses of rock, reft from the precipitous walls near the mountain summit, hurtled past him down the chasm. Again the molten lava heaved up a great wave. Never in all the traditions of Sardanes had the fires of the Gateway leaped so far! From the center of that swirling maelstrom there arose a cone twenty feet high. It opened with a shriek as of a legion of devils released, and an appalling pillar of blue flame shot up from it and stood like a plume.

Although the highest reach of the flame was a full hundred feet below him, the blast of the heat was like to burst the veins of the watching priest. His very beard curled in it. Springing to his feet, Analos went back to the darkness of the passage that led to the terraces on the lower slope. Already it was hot to suffocation in the winding corridor.

Down the spirals ahead of him Analos heard the squealing of his affrighted priests as they scurried for the open. But Analos quaked not. He strode forth from the lofty arch of the portal and trod the upper terrace with the step of a master conqueror. He glanced up the outer acclivity of the mountain. He saw its peak ablaze with a crown of fire against the gloom of the Antarctic night—a crown which shone there for the first time since man had made history in the valley of Sardanes. He drew a deep breath, a breath of triumph and exaltation.

"Master, thy sign is sent!" he cried.

With head held high, Analos passed down the fire-lighted terraces. As he went, he heard through the red twilight of the valley cries of wonder and heart-rending wails of fear.

A FAR on the Hunter's Road, twenty miles to the north and west of the valley, Minos the king and eight of his hunters followed the trail of the white bear. Two sledges they had with them, each hauled by six-horse teams of the sturdy little Sardanian ponies. But Minos coursed the snows more swiftly by far with a lighter sledge, whisked over the frozen crusts by a racing chain of beasts that could outstrip the small horses by two miles to one. *Seven great gray dogs drew the sledge of Minos!*

Now, a strange thing must be related. When Polaris fought his way out of Sardanes, along the crater ledge and through the rift in the wall of the Gateway to the Future, his team of splendid dogs battled with him. Their fighting fangs aided him fully as much as did his long, brown rifle and brace of revolvers in holding Minos and his men back until it was time to pass the rift and join Kalin the priest and the Rose maid. One of his fiercest charges was made to avenge the dog Pallas, when she was struck down by an ilium spear, and pitched over the brink of the ledge.

Although her master gave her up for lost, Pallas did not die. When Minos the king made his way back to the valley after his last struggle with the outlander, men came and told him that the beast lay sore wounded and moaning on a rock-ledge in the side of the crater pit, some score of feet below that from which she had fallen. They would have stoned her to death, or let torches fall to drive her into the fire lake, but Minos would not suffer it. The king himself ordered that he be let down the crater wall with ropes. There he bound and muzzled Pallas and brought her to the upper ledge and to his palace, and tended her hurts, for Minos was skilled in the rude surgery of the valley.

Analos, who succeeded Kalin as high priest in Sardanes, later demanded the brute to be a sacrifice to Hephaistos, but Minos withstood him and his priests, and the dog lived on.

Some six weeks after her rescue from the pit, Pallas whined her mother joy over six blind puppies. Twice the great darkness had fallen on the Southland since the man of the snows had left it, and the pups had grown tall and strong. Minos had given

them much care, and it was his whim to train them and use them as had Polaris. Now, with Pallas as the leader, they drew the king's sledge.

Sardanians, who had never known dogs until the advent of the strangers, eyed them askance, but the will of Minos was an ill thing to tamper with.

The chase was fruitful. When the king and his hunters broke camp and turned homeward, where the red haze of the moons of Sardanes lighted the southern horizon, the carcasses of two monarchs of the wastes were lashed to their sledges in token of the huntsmen's prowess.

Three miles from the north pass into the valley they stopped to rest and to feed their beasts. Minos was busied straightening out a kink in a harness strap, when he heard a shout of amazement. A flash of light shone with startling brightness across the wilderness of rocks and ice hummocks and snow.

Thé king sprang to his feet and saw a mighty, flaming pillar spread fanwise heavenward from the summit of the looming bulk of the mountain that lay to the left, at the northeast sweep of the oval range that encompassed Sardanes.

Gloomy and silent always through the centuries since their ancestors had found the valley, now the towering peak of the Gateway to the Future blazed with a fury that dimmed the moons of all its sister mountains. That sight smote the Sardanians with terror. With upraised arms, they stood among their snorting beasts, their staring, affrighted faces ghastly in the flare.

Beneath their feet they felt the rock-strewn bosom of the plain heave gently, and, after a short space, again. They moaned in terror.

Of a mold to be daunted little by natural or supernatural, Minos the king was less moved than the others. While they groaned and called on Hephaistos, he strode among them with a quieting word.

"Old Mother Nature played a trick for her amusement," he said. "She hath lighted Sardanes brighter than ever before, and now she melteth the snows of the wilderness. Look! Never saw I such a mist!"

He pointed to the east. Extending from the foothills below the Gateway, northeast, as far as their eyes might see, a rolling bank of fog hung over the snow lands.

"Bring in the sledges as soon as may be," Minos ordered. "There will be many a shaken heart in Sardanes at yonder sight. I will hasten on."

He leaped on his own sledge, gave the word to his dogs, and in a moment the swift snow-runners had carried him around a bend in the pathway toward the valley. As he went, he heard the dull booming of the huge drum that hung in the hall of the Judgment House, whereon some lusty wight was making play with all the strength of his two arms.

So it happened that, as Analos crossed the green stone bridge over the river, the king entered the valley through the north pass, both of them bound in haste for the Judgment House.

As was his custom, Minos left his sledge in a rock-built shelter at the base of the pass cliffs, where the snows broke into bare ground and rock. With his gray beasts in leash, he hurried through the pass and set off across the valley at a loping, light-footed gait. Skirting the marshes, where the river lost itself in its subterranean channels at the lower end of the valley, the king and his shaggy companions crossed the bridge and took a path above the main road that led them over the slopes through groves of gigantic hymanan trees.

The yellow-bronze and rustling foliage of the forest monarchs reflected the radiance of the mountain moons in a shimmer of whispering gold. Among their gnarled trunks the shadows lay thick. He was still ten minutes' journey from the Judgment House when the gleam of a white robe in the dusk and a subdued growl from the dogs told the king that some one loitered in the path ahead of him. He heard a woman's voice raised in anger, a voice that thrilled him to his heart's core.

Silencing the muttering beasts, he went forward cautiously.

A black-haired girl stood with her back to the bole of a tree, against which her white arms were thrown out at each side. Her head was tilted defiantly. Her bosom heaved and her black eyes snapped. In front of her the dark form of a man barred her way. He was draped in a long robe, the cowl of which obscured his features.

"How darest thou!" Her tones bit scornfully. "How darest thou lay a hand on the daughter of the Lord Karnoon? I care not for thy threats of powers. I tell thee that wert thou twice what thou art, to me thou wouldst be all that is foul and abhorrent. Mate with thee!" She laughed shortly. "I'd sooner mate with the meanest of my father's servants than with thee."

Analos, for he it was whom opportunity had tempted thus to tarry, shook his clenched fists over the head of the girl. Brave as she was, his face turned so hideous in its leering rage that she shrank.

"Twice hast thou flouted me, girl," he said in a choked, hard voice, "me, the minister and mouthpiece of the Lord Hephaistos. It shall not be so again." He tossed an arm toward the flaming crown of the mountain whence he had come. "Yonder the god ruleth in all his splendor, and I am his faithful servant. To the Gateway shalt thou come, whether thou wilt or no. Thither shouldst thou go this moment had I not more pressing business elsewhere."

A strong and open hand smote the words from the priest's lips. In an instant he was gurgling on the ground, his neck beneath the heel of Minos, and the dogs were sniffing about him, anxious to lay hold.

"The Lady Memene may go her ways in peace," said the king quietly, bowing low.

No word of thanks got Minos for his timely coming. The girl flashed him one quick look, and then passed by him hastily with head up. He gazed after her ruefully.

"It seems that I am no more welcome than thou," he said, and dragged Analos to his feet. "What doings are these, priest, and what passeth yonder in the Gateway that doth so affright Sardanes? Answer, thou!" He shook the burly priest like a refractory child.

However wicked in spirit, Analos lacked not in bravery. He snatched an illum dagger from his girdle and struck fiercely at Minos's chest. The big man saw the flash of the weapon, but made no parrying move. Instead, he shoved the priest from him with one powerful arm, and so violently that Analos spun many feet and brought up against the trunk of another tree.

Minos called the dogs back, which would have followed eagerly.

"Wouldst thou, Analos, indeed?" said the king with a laugh. "The time cometh, I can see it plainly, priest, when thou and I must try a fall for place in the kingdom. Thou growest insolent. At least there be two in Sardanes who fear thee not." He laughed again. "Now, an thou hast naught to say, begone on that most pressing business of thine, and cross not my path again in such pursuits as I found thee but now, lest I be tempted to waste a spear on thy dirty carcass."

Twice the priest essayed to answer, but each time his words were choked. Then there burst from his throat an inarticulate bellow of rage. He turned and dashed madly away into the shadows, his black robe flying out behind him.

"He groweth troublesome, as did Kalin, who opposed Helicon, my brother," mused Minos; "but he hath not Kalin's mettle. For myself, I did like the man Kalin passing well."

Another burst from the great drum recalled his errand to the king, and he hastened on.

FOR more than an hour had Gallando the smith smitten the drum that hung in the pillared hall of the Judgment House until he was aweary. Far through the valley and over the hills had its thunderous summons rolled, calling to all Sardanes.

Those who labored had ceased, and those who slept had awakened. They had come until nearly two-thirds of the inhabitants of the valley were gathered. Those abroad when the first spurt of flame had leaped from the peak of the Gateway and the earth had quaked had let everything fall and hastened in. Those indoors had followed soon. From the open façade of the hall more than a thousand white faces were turned toward the flaming hill. From the upper reaches of the valley, nearly a score of miles away, others were coming with other tales to tell. Black fear sat heavy upon the shoulders of all.

"Where is Minos the king?" "Analos? Is he here?" "Doth Hephaistos smite his people?" These and many other cries rang in the hall. One stupendous liar swore that he had seen the shape of the god himself outlined in fire on the crest of the Gateway—and many believed his tale.

Women, their high-plaited hair disheveled, tunics all awry, clung to their husbands. Bewildered children added their shrieks to the din and confusion. Never had Sardanes been so shaken.

Not until the somber figure of Analos was seen ascending the marble steps of the dias at the upper end of the hall was the clamor quieted. The priest crossed the platform and sat himself on the black stone seat of his predecessors. He stared gloomily out over the sputtering of the torches in their cressets about the hall, an occasional sob or murmur of a frightened child, the singing of the river, and the far-away roaring of the hills.

Some minutes passed, and from the door at the rear of the dais came Minos. His

dogs trooped in with him, bristling at sight of the priest. The king took his seat on the ancient, raised throne of his forefathers, with its plinth above, whereon were carved the words

MINOEBAEIVEYETHEEAPAANHEOH

(Minos, Basileustes Sardanes Ho Hekaton, or Minos, hundredth King of Sardanes.)

A number of the nobles climbed up the steps from the lower hall, and took their stations below the throne.

Scarcely was the king in his place when the tumult of affright again broke forth, an unintelligible clamor of many voices. Minos raised his hands to still it. He addressed his people calmly, with the demeanor and smile that long before had earned for him the name of the Smiling Prince.

"Tradition saith, and the writings of history which the priest keep do confirm," he said, "that in time very long ago our ancestors came to Sardanes from a great, bright world to the north, a world wherein they were part of a mighty people. By a strange mischance came they to Sardanes, and might return no more whence they came. Here have their descendants lived in peace and plenty. But a little time ago two strangers, that Polaris—of the Snows, and the Rose girl, came among us. They, too, told us of the outer world—a place so different from this that we scarce could conceive of it. There the sun shineth always. Here he is hid from us for half of each year. There all things live in his warmth. Here are we warmed by the ring of fire-mountains, and all without is the bleak desert of ice and snow.

"They told us also, did the strangers, of the nature of the fires which spout yonder, and of the mighty forces in the earth from which they are sprung. Wherefore tremble ye now, my people? Because a hill shaketh? Because a fire flameth anew that perhaps flamed aforetime, long before your forefathers came? Fear not. These things be of nature, and of nature only, and will pass. I, Minos, your king, am sure that no great harm impendeth, and that all things will be again as they have been."

Reassuring as were his words and his calmness, murmurs broke out anew from the people.

"Never hath it been so chill in the time of the great darkness as now it is," cried a voice.

"Hephaistos! Hephaistos! These things

must be of the great god, who is sore wroth with Sardanes. The priests have said it," called another. Above the many-tongued murmur swelled the name of the high priest.

"Analos! Analos! Let us hear from the wise priest of the Gateway!" they shouted.

With a smile of grim defiance at the king, Analos glided from his seat and stood at the edge of the platform. He drew his long, black cloak around him, and stood poised like a bird of dark omen, wrapped in its sable pinions. His somber eyes glowed.

Good actor was the priest. He spoke never a word until the silence of death in the hall told him that he had the attention of every straining ear.

"Angered is the great Hephaistos," he began slowly, in hollow tones. "And hath he not borne much? Is it a little thing that the kings of Sardanes lead the people from their god? Aye, and that one of his own chief ministers hath turned false? Now the god turneth his face from the valley. Punishment falleth apace. Already hath the doom of Kalin, the traitor priest, struck. It was revealed to me in a vision that he and the outlanders perished in torture in the wilderness—but first Hephaistos used the man of the snows as an instrument of vengeance against those in high places who turned against their master.

"Remember ye the deaths of Helicon, the king, of Morolas, his brother, and of many others? Take warning and tremble, ye of Sardanes! A greater vengeance is at hand—"

He was interrupted by the clatter of flying hoofs on the roadway down the valley from the south, and the rumbling of a two-wheeled chariot. Four ponies driven at furious speed drew the chariot. Down the long roadway they dashed, and brought up with clashing hoofs on the stones of the paved court without the hall. Their driver, a tall, black-bearded man, sprang from his car and pushed through the press in the hall, tossing his arms wildly.

"From the mansion of the Lord Ukalles in upper Sardanes am I come!" he screamed as he reached the steps to the dais. "And this my message: Quenched in darkness are the moons of Mount Helior and Mount Tanos, and there is ice to the thickness of a man's hand on the holy river Ukranis, where never was ice before!"

Like standing grain in a chill wind the people quivered, as a thrill of abject terror ran through them—a despairing murmur.

Joy that was demoniac lighted the countenance of the priest. He leaned far out from the verge of the dais and spread his arms with fingers hooked and clutching at the air.

His voice broke in on the echo of the courier's dire message.

"Woe to fair Sardanes!" he howled. "Hephaistos smiteth and spareth not. For the sins of the few shall the many be smitten. Woe to Sardanes! I have read it in the Gateway that the doom shall fall until the punishment is completed, and every soul in the valley bendeth to the will of the ancient god!"

Back from a hundred throats was flung the cry:

"It shall be done!" And from a thousand: "What is the will of the god? How may we be saved? Tell us quickly, Analos!"

To his full height drew the priest. His face was alight with triumph. He had chosen his words and his time well. Advantage was with him.

He cast a glance over his shoulder at Minos. The king had come down from his throne. The nobles were grouped around him. To this new terror Minos had found no answer. He had no comfort to give his frenzied people to which they would listen. Superstition and fear and the wild words of the priest held them in thrall. Analos had full sway.

Not for an instant was the crafty priest at a loss. His god was in the ascendant. Now was the time to wrest into his own hands the power he desired in the valley. With the blind faith of a fanatic, he believed in the ancient religion; but, like many another priest in the world before him, he invested his own person with much of the power of the godhead he preached.

Troubled not a whit was he by the calamity that threatened in the valley. That was punishment merely—how dire or how long he cared not. When it was completed Sardanes would be in the hollow of his hand.

"Back to your homes, ye Sardanians!" he thundered. "And pray to the Lord Hephaistos for mercy. On the third day from now shall word come to you from the Gateway, the word of the ancient god. When the word cometh, obey it, or he shall not spare you. Let the word go forth through the valley that the captains of all the crafts and the nobles of the land be assembled here in the Judgment House on the third day. Then shall the commands of Hephaistos be made known to them. Away! Away! Analos hath spoken."

He threw his mantle over his head, passed out through the narrow portal at the side of the dais, and was gone, on his way through the gloom to the Gateway. In subdued silence the people trooped from the hall and slipped away to their homes.

SOON the thrashing propellers of the *Minnetonka* carried her beyond the radius of light sent out across the sea from the bursting volcanoes. It lay far behind, a garish bar athwart the waters. That faded also, until only a reflection could be seen against the sky, a waving, lambent radiance, like that of the *Aurora Australis*—which the voyagers had deemed it to be when first they had sighted it on their way into Ross Sea.

As they passed into the gloom of the Antarctic night their perils grew apace, and their real fighting began. Everywhere the bergs lay about them. Now here, now there, darted the cruiser, backing, turning, and zigzagging, seeking the safety course. Again rolling clouds made stygian gloom, and the cruiser fought on through the unquiet seas by the rays of her powerful searchlights.

One good turn of fortune came when the fury of the gale was abated. But the icebergs drove on in the clutch of a racing current, a constant menace. A hundred times the stout ship pushed through between drifting masses of ice that closed their scintillant, clashing jaws behind her, thrilling those on deck with the nearness of complete disaster. As many times were the engines reversed in furious haste, to back the steel-clad adventurer from a closing trap that would have crushed her like a toy.

Here it was that the cool captain in command showed all his resourcefulness, had need for all the splendid seamanship and the reckless daring that had brought his ships unscathed through three voyages into the polar zones.

Fortunate was the foresight that had armed the ship for the dangers she was to meet. From her bow projected an immense ram of wrought steel, almost razor keen at its cutting edge. All around her sides she was rimmed with a protection of triple rails of the same metal, clamped fast to her hull, and set with powerful springs, to withstand the shock of impact with the floating ice. Ever her twin-screw propellers whirled within a sheltering hood of steel. She had been dismantled of many of her trappings and remodeled to conserve the two qualities most needed in

her present straits—speed and strength.

Useless as he was in the management of the ship, Polaris spent four hours on deck to one in his cabin.

"Better to meet death up here in the free air, if death be fated for us, than to strangle down there like a trapped beast," he said to Zenas Wright. When perils thickened, he abandoned his cabin altogether, brought a huge bearskin on deck and slept there, when sleep he must.

Although in life's evening, the scientist was almost as active. For days Scoland seemed never to sleep at all. Under his guidance the *Minnetonka* pierced the dangers like a projectile launched from a cannon of the gods, and directed by a calm, clear mind that lived within it.

When they reached the lower end of Ross Sea a pale, uncertain light that shone in the north behind told them of the coming of the polar day. There a new and formidable obstacle confronted them. Where the sea narrowed to a three-mile channel, beyond which lay wider water, great ice floes had drifted in and barred the way. They were formed of drift and flat ice, of no great thickness, but lay acres in extent in a mighty jam. All along the edge of that field fretted and stormed the giant bergs that had come down with the tide.

Back and forth across the narrowed sea the *Minnetonka* steamed, playing her searchlights in vain. No passage was open. Scoland called a conference.

"There are two things we can do," he said. "We can hew ourselves a safe harbor and wait for the jam to break up, when we can fight our way through the channel with the bergs; or we can smash a way through ourselves with the ram and explosives. We can't remain as we are, for the big fellows are getting thicker. Every hour lost adds to the danger of being crushed in where we can't get out, perhaps of being sunk. Which shall it be?"

Lieutenant Everson, second in command of the *Minnetonka*, said nothing. Zenas Wright, who was a scientist first and a sailor very far second, said as much.

"The snug harbor idea likes me varra weel," remarked Engineer MacKechnie, and he peered across the glistening floes and out at the drifting bergs with anxious eyes.

"It may mean weeks," suggested Scoland. "What do you say, Janess?"

Polaris glanced down the barred lane of the channel with heightened color. "I am no man of the seas," he answered

quietly, "but I say, break through. For, look you, the wind rises again. Here all is held. Yonder in the open sea the bergs drive on. Where we break a pathway, no berg may follow us. When we are come through, the gale will have cleared the waters beyond, and we shall find our sailing smooth, ahead of the jam and behind the bergs that are gone before."

"Aye, mon, mon, the boy is right," cut in MacKechnie. "This ship's not a plaything. Yon is varra hard cutting, but she can do it, dinna fear."

Scoland turned to one of the mates. "Jameson, bring up the lyddite," he ordered.

Where the floe fields seemed weakest and narrowest, near the left of the channel, the captain sent men onto the ice with drills and explosive, charge after charge of which was sunk into the floe and exploded from a battery in one of the cruiser's boats.

Scoland took personal charge of the mining. Under his orders, his men blasted out a large basin in the floe, a hundred yards in from its face.

"If we cut a channel straight in," he explained, "the pressure of the jam is likely to close it at once, or else shut it like a vise on the cruiser, after she is in. We will blast a narrow channel to the basin, drive the ship in, and then make another basin farther on, and a second channel. By zigzagging and letting the channels close in behind us, we will avoid the danger of being nipped and held fast in the floe."

LIKE a watchful sentinel, the *Minnetonka* patrolled the edge of the floe, nosing small vagrant bergs from her way, in an endeavor to keep cleared the spot where she would have to make her dash for the channel. Scoland stood on the bridge, tapping its rail with a nervous hand, his sharp eyes darting from one to another of the larger ice masses which might be disposed to contest a passage with his ship.

The men on the ice signaled that their lyddite train was laid and ready. They withdrew to a distance, one of them carrying the small battery, from which the slender connecting wires led to the sunken charges of explosive.

Picking up her boat, the *Minnetonka*, under reversed engines, backed away and stood ready for the dash to the basin. Twice the captain raised his megaphone to his lips to give the word, but each time

he hesitated. Suddenly he dropped it and sprang into the wheelhouse. Immediately the ship lunged forward.

Keenly alive to these proceedings, Zenas Wright and Polaris, from their station near the forward davits, wondered at this new move.

"Now what has happened?" questioned the scientist. "One would think we were going into battle. See, they are manning the guns!"

Polaris glanced down the ship's rail and saw the eager-eyed gun crews tearing the coverings from their long-silent ordnance. Forth from their ports crept the grim muzzles of three of the *Minnetonka's* six-inch guns.

"Battle it is to be," said Polaris; "and yonder floats the enemy." He pointed to where a huge iceberg had broken from its mooring at the edge of the floe, and, momentarily gaining headway, was drifting in to bar the channel way.

The ship swung about sharply. One of her powerful searchlights played steadily on the face of the looming ice cliffs as it came on, its hundred towers and crags glittering and flashing in the brilliant ray, a mass of floating silver. A sharp word of command, and the three gun captains,

bronzed and alert, bent to their levers with machinelike precision. The crackling of the floes and the grinding of the bergs were lost in the thunder of the guns.

At that point-blank range, the effect of the volley was terrific. Where the shells struck, the surface of the berg flew to pieces. The air in the radius of the searchlight was filled with a shower of scintillating splinters. Larger masses of ice slid from the face of the slow-moving mountain and plunged sullenly into the tossing waves. A cavern was made from which a thousand gleaming fissures shot into the darker body of the ice behind.

Working like beavers, the gunners reloaded and sent another crashing discharge into the floating wall at its water-line. As a small chunk of ice is parted by a few blows from an ice pick, so the repeated impact of the exploding shells shattered the berg and sundered it. Pitching and toppling, down came its lofty towers into the sea. Its giant menace crumbled into scores of insignificant blocks and a spreading bank of drift.

Again the *Minnetonka* backed and pointed her nose toward the floe, whither her searchlights were concentrated. Scold appeared on the bridge.

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"Fire!" he shouted frenziedly through his megaphone.

A dark figure on the floe let its hand fall on the battery knob. A succession of thunderous detonations followed, and from every lyddite mine was flung skyward a column of water and glittering debris. For many yards the mighty floe pitched and heaved.

Her twin propellers thrashing the water to foam, the *Minnetonka* drove her steel-clad length through the opened gap, smashing the wreckage right and left, and came to rest in the basin beyond. She was scarcely in before, with a long, angry roaring, the great rift closed behind her.

As the cruiser pushed through the channel a cry of consternation rose from the men on the ice, drowned in the turmoil of her passing, but audible to one man on her decks whose ears were almost more than mortal keen. Another cry came from the gunners as *Polaris* dashed through them and hurled himself into the ice-strewn waters.

One of *Scoland's* sailors, separated by some distance from his fellows, had climbed to an icy eminence near the west side of the basin. In the disturbance which followed the blasting of the channel and its closing, the ice where he stood had parted from the floe, and, his footing riven from under him, the poor fellow had been pitched into the dark water in the midst of the pounding drift.

From the deck of the cruiser, *Polaris* heard his despairing cry, and, straining his eyes through the half twilight, saw his form silhouetted for an instant against the ice before he took the plunge.

Straight and true leaped the son of the snows. One of the things civilization had taught him that he had never known before was the art of swimming. The staring gunners saw his white-clad figure reappear once many feet distant from the side of the cruiser, and then he was gone, tearing his way with powerful strokes through the swirl of ice and water.

As fast as many willing hands could cast her loose, a boat was put out from the ship. The miners on the ice rushed to the spot where their comrade had disappeared. Across the drift one of the cruiser's searchlights swept a long finger of light. It played on sullen waves and heaving ice, but revealed no struggling swimmer.

"That is the last of Janess, and the finish of this expedition," rapped out *Scoland*.

Zenas Wright, standing at the rail of the ship beside him, groaned aloud. He did

not see the fleeting, satisfied smile that accompanied the words of *Scoland*. A mist that was not of the air or sea rose and obscured his vision, and he wiped it away with his shaking old hand.

The boat had nearly reached the edge of the basin when a strong white arm shot up, not ten feet away from it, and laid hold of a projection on one of the larger pieces of drift. A glad cry arose from floe and ship as, with a lusty thrashing of feet, *Polaris* emerged from the water and sprawled his length across the slippery surface. Again the shout, when it was seen that he dragged after him a smaller, darker form. *Parkerson*, the sailor, was unconscious, having struck his head against floating ice in his fall.

When the boat returned, and *Polaris*, still bearing the senseless man in his arms, climbed over the side, the cruiser's company cheered him as only American sailors can cheer a hardy deed bravely done.

MINOS the king left the Judgment House shortly after the going of *Analos*, the high priest of *Hephaistos*. With the king went the nobles.

"When ye have slept, come ye on the morrow to the palace," he bade them. "There is much to be considered, wherein I would have your counsel."

A short way from the Judgment House, on the slopes of Mount *Latmos*, stood the palace of the kings of *Sardanes*, a temple-like structure, reared of the green stone from the cliff quarries and faced with lofty pillars of white marble. Thither *Minos* walked slowly, pondering much. One of his household, a lad of some eighteen years, who had tarried when the people fled from the hall, now followed his master.

As they ascended the path through the great trees toward the royal hill, a scrap of conversation drifted to the ears of the king from the porch of the stone cottage of one of the tillers of the soil.

"The world hath rocked. Cold enters the valley. The dread high priest threateneth the king. What will the outcome be?" A woman's voice asked the question.

A man made answer: "*Hephaistos* ruleth the priests. *Analos* and fear rule the people. What can the king do?"

Minos smiled. What, indeed? Yet there were some things that he could and would do.

A booming stroke of the huge drum echoed through the valley, telling that the day was done, and that one faithful soul had not forsaken its post. The drum swung

between two pillars in the center of the Hall of Judgment. Near to it was a vase of nearly the height of a man. In the bottom of the vase was drilled a tiny hole. The vase was filled with water from the holy River Ukranis. Usually a lad watched it.

When the water had seeped away and the vase was emptied, a process that consumed some ten hours, it was the duty of the watcher to smite a blow on the drum and to refill the vase. Then another took up the vigil. So the Sardanians kept rude reckoning of time.

When Minos reached his home he sent the lad to fetch parchment, brush, and pigment. By the flaring light of a torch he wrote:

To the Lady Memene, greeting:

Though the syllana be a flower little
in accord with thy thought, yet when the
hour shall strike that thou hast need for
a friend who will do and dare all things,
wear one on thy gown.

Folding his message, unsigned, the king called the lad.

"Alternes, take thou this parchment to the hall of the Lord Karnaon," he directed. "Give it into the hand of the Lady Memene, and to no other. On thy way thither send to me Zalos and three of his men. Then seek thou thy rest."

Minos seated himself on the topmost step of the palace portico and leaned his head against a pillar. His eyes roved across the shadowy valley, where the flickering light of the mountain moons mingled with the cold, pale radiance of the Antarctic stars. He scarcely saw it. He had fallen into a reverie.

Ill had gone the love-making of this king. Never, since the days when they had played together as children, had the Lady Memene given him one word of love, one single glance in which a lover might read joy. Ah, those far, fair days of childhood! Then he had been but the younger brother of the man who would be king. She had been kind then.

Imperious, proud-spirited, disdainful was this Lady Memene in her dark loveliness. Minos could only dream that she would soften to him, and to him alone. Days of terror were falling on the valley. Perhaps worse were to come. He would like to stand at her side and hold her safe. Well, he had sent her his first love letter. He would watch for the syllana, the peerless blue rose of Sardanes that bloomed in the months of the long night, and, though

Sardanians knew it not, bloomed nowhere else in the world besides. It was the Sardanian symbol of love. Ah, that she would wear it, if only to call him to her service!

Presently came Zalos, a tall man of nearly forty years, captain of the huntsmen, who were, even more than the nobles of the valley, close in the affections and confidence of the king.

"Thou hast summoned us, O king," said the hunter, raising his arm in salute and indicating three of his men who stood back in the shadows.

"Aye, Zalos, old friend, I would lay a trust upon thee," replied Minos. "Set a guard about the hall of the Lord Karnaon. Let no hour pass that thou or three of thy men are not on watch. If aught untoward befall there, let the feet be fleet that bring the news to Minos. And if help be needed there—I believe thou understandest—give it—even with thy spears, and at the cost of life. I trust thee."

"Say no more. It shall be done," answered Zalos. "The life of every hunter in Sardanes is thine, O king, for the asking." He saluted again, and was gone along the forest paths with his men.

The king was aroused again by the cold muzzle of the dog Pallas thrust against his hand. She whined inquiringly. He patted her rough head.

"Ha, Pallas," he said, "thou art another who fearest not the darkest the Gateway hath to send. And thou art the namesake of a goddess, if the scrolls of the priests read truly; a mighty goddess of old, who was the friend of this Hephaistos. Pallas Athene they did name her. A most wise goddess she, and came not to Sardanes." He rose and led the dogs to their quarters at the rear of the palace hall.

FAR up in the side of the Mount Latmos, above the palace, a deep cave pierced the rock. It was the granary, storehouse, and treasury of the Sardanian kings. Thither Minos climbed after his hunters were gone on their errand, carrying with him a smoldering torch of hymanan wood.

At the entrance to the narrow, tortuous passage which led into the cave he whirled the torch into flame and passed in. The cave was wide and deep and high. Along its sides were huge bins, wherein was grain sufficient to garrison a small army for some time. Some forty feet within the cave a small jet of water spurted from a crevice in the rock, ran along a well-worn channel to the mouth of the cave, and drained away down the mountainside.

Minos thrust the torch into a cresset in the wall. He dragged forth from its place a bulky chest of dark, carved wood. From within it shone the gleam of polished metal. The king took out and laid down on the rock floor one by one the pieces of a suit of armor—greaves, corselet, a belt with pendant leaves of metal, a rounded helm with winged crest, and last, a shining, keen-bladed sword in its sheath and thongs.

Aside from the battle in the crater, when Polaris Janess hewed his way out of the kingdom, and an occasional bickering among the quarrelsome fellows, Sardanes had never known war. Then whence this warlike gear?

Little there was in the valley that the king had not interested himself to learn, with the one exception of the religion preached by the priestly crew, at which he scoffed. One of his favorite crafts was that of the smiths who wrought in the iridescent ilium smelted from the mountainsides. It had been his fancy to fashion this suit of mail, beating it from the finest metal and modeling it after the armor sculptured in the groups of statuary at the Judgment House, representing the founders of the race, the Greeks from the blue Aegean Sea. Each piece had Minos copied, only making them of a larger mold, to fit a figure taller and broader than that of any Greek who ever had trodden the valley.

There were no arms like these in Sardanes. Those which the Greeks had brought there had rusted into red dust centuries before.

Minos packed the bright trappings in a sack and carried them with him back to the palace. He had a feeling that the time was near when he should wear them. Then he, too, sought his couch, for he was sorely wearied.

Ill tidings were early on the morrow. Another messenger rode down the valley to tell that one more of the volcanic hills had yielded up its spirit, and that a rim of white snow was creeping over the mountainsides.

One by one came the nobles of the valley to the house of Minos. Each man represented an ancient house, each house one hill of the valley's ring. All were gloomy, some of them beset by fears but little removed from those of the terror-stricken people. The king found less of comfort and support among them than in the company of his hunters, who, at the least and last, would die for him to a man.

Two there were, the oldest and the

youngest, who upstood firmly for him.

"That which the king shall decide will Garlanes abide by," said his old-time friend and counselor, still hale and strong despite his grizzled crown. "I am old, and it mattereth little. If it come to an issue, the wrath of Hephaistos shall not divide my friend and me."

Almost insolent in his carelessness was the boy-lord Patrymion. "If this be the end of the world, and thou promisest me a fight before the end, then am I with thee, also, Minos the king," he laughed, "and will kill me a fat priest or two right willingly, if so be that they will fight. Methinks it is they and not thou who do weary their master."

So doubtful was the mien of the remainder of the nobles that the king did not prolong the conference, but soon dismissed them. It was agreed that no decision as to what course to take could be made until Analos had made known the word from the Gateway.

More and more the king felt that he must meet what perils were before him almost alone. His people and the nobles were slipping from him. Well, so be it. His spirit rose to the test.

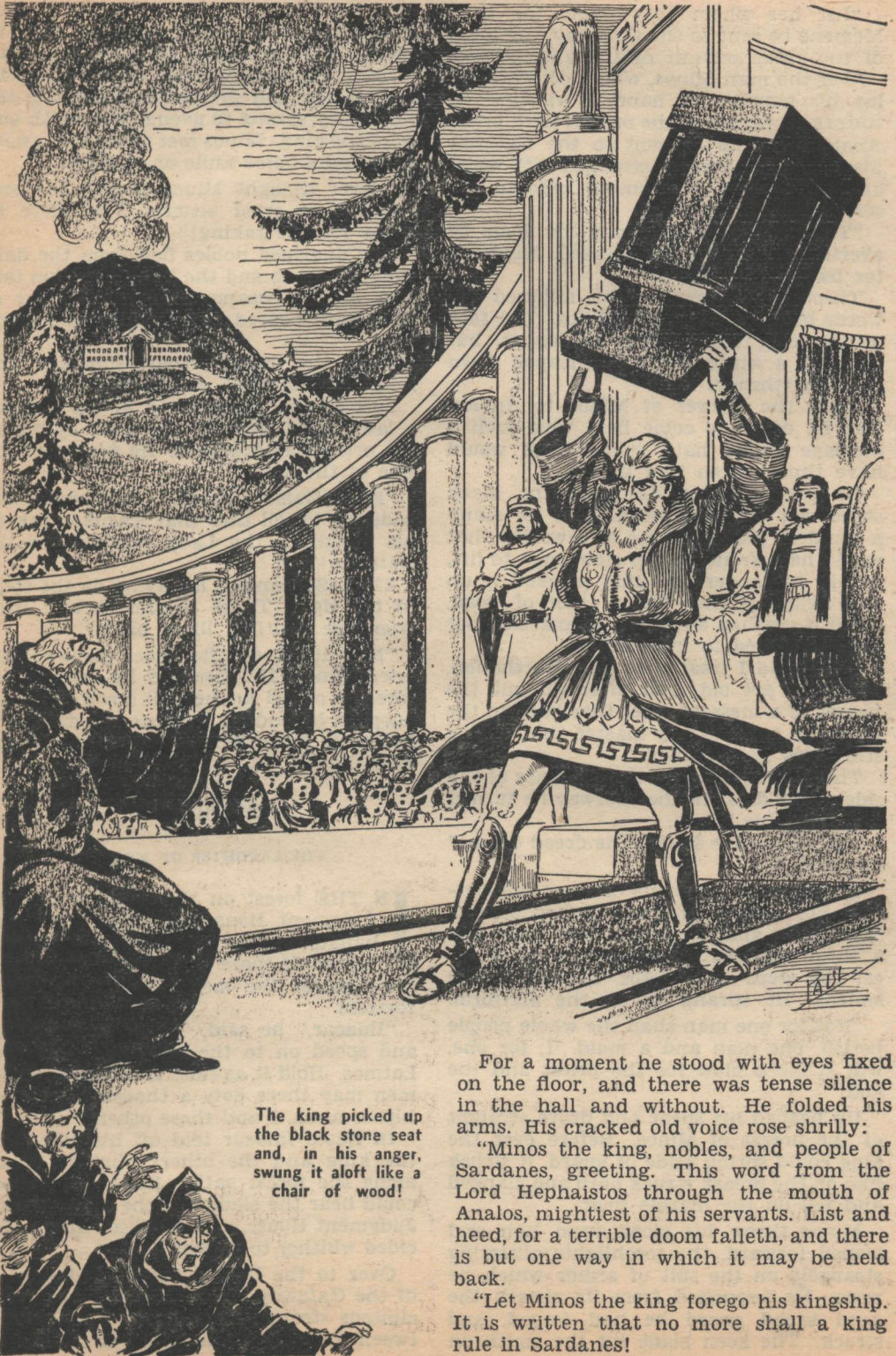
Two more days passed slowly. Three more of the moons of Sardanes waned from their mountain heights forever. The state of the stricken people bordered on frenzy. All the ordinary pursuits of the valley were abandoned.

Then, at midday, the booming of the drum gave them a moment of wild hope. The word of Hephaistos had come!

Surrounded by his hunters, Minos hastened down the hillside to the Judgment House. From upper Sardanes down to the Gateway the people were assembled, a throng that filled the hall and overflowed in the paved court. The captains of the crafts were gathered at the foot of the steps to the dais. The nobles were in their places. The king ran his eyes quickly along them. Only the Lord Karnaon was missing.

Standing in front of the black stone throne of the high priest was a heavily draped figure. It was not Analos, but one of his ministers.

AS SOON as the king had seated himself on the throne the priest advanced from his station to the center of the dais and threw back the robe from his face. He was Karthanon, oldest of all the priests of the Gateway, the oldest man in all Sardanes.



The king picked up the black stone seat and, in his anger, swung it aloft like a chair of wood!

For a moment he stood with eyes fixed on the floor, and there was tense silence in the hall and without. He folded his arms. His cracked old voice rose shrilly:

"Minos the king, nobles, and people of Sardanes, greeting. This word from the Lord Hephaistos through the mouth of Analos, mightiest of his servants. List and heed, for a terrible doom falleth, and there is but one way in which it may be held back.

"Let Minos the king forego his kingship. It is written that no more shall a king rule in Sardanes!

"Let her whom they name the Lady Memene be sent to the Gateway, the bride of the great servant of the ancient god.

"Let the man Minos, who hath dared to lay his sacrilegious hand of violence on the sacred person of the mighty high priest Analos, let him be sent to the Gateway also, where he shall be scourged with whips and humiliated as seemeth best to the servants of the god!

"Thus and thus only may the doom be averted, thus the god appeased. Hephais-tos hath spoken!"

Through the pause that followed his words broke the voice of Minos. The face of the king was smiling no longer, but fierce as a winter sea as he leaped down from his throne:

"This the answer of Minos to Analos. Had he dared to come here with such a message as he hath sent, Minos would have thus broken him in two!"

He caught from its place the black stone seat that had stood there for many a hundred years. It was of a weight that would have troubled two stout men to lift, but in his anger the king plucked it up and swung it aloft like a chair of wood. Then it crashed down on the marble floor and splintered to fragments.

"So would I treat thee also, Karthanon, but thou art old, and after all but the bearer of a message. Get thee back to the Gateway and tell thy master that a king still rules in Sardanes!"

The priest shuffled to the entrance at the side of the dais. In the doorway he turned and lifted his hands.

"On the people falleth the dread doom!" he cried.

Through the moments of these happenings not a man in the hall had stirred, save Minos and the priest. Now there was a surge forward toward the dais. Nearest the steps stood Istos, captain of the smiths. He sprang up on the platform.

"Not for one man shall the whole people perish, one man and a maid. I, for one, will strike a blow for the priest and the god!"

Up flashed his spear and drove straight at the breast of Minos. Before ever the king could spring aside or guard, it struck him on the breast, struck hard and clanged and fell on the marble floor.

Minos threw his cloak from him and leaped forward, the torchlights glittering strangely on the suit of armor which he wore. He wrenched from its sheath the good broad sword he had forged, and struck. The keen blade hit the smith on

the point of his shoulder and hewed through to his ribs, so terrible was the stroke. With a scream Istos fell and died.

Made mad by fear and superstition, the men in the hall pressed forward. Up the steps they sprang to avenge the smith and seize the king. Minos met them with sword aloft and a fierce smile on his face.

"Never thought Minos to slay his own people," he cried bitterly, "but here be blows for the taking!"

The unarmed nobles fled from the dais. Only Garlanes and the lad Patrymion tarried, seeking weapons. From the rear of the throne poured a score of Minos's hunters.

"For the king!" they shouted, and ranged themselves at his back.

Just as the battle hung in the balance a lad leaped through the door by which the priest had departed. He sprang to the side of the king.

"From Zalos I come," he gasped. "He bade me to tell thee that Karnaon taketh his daughter, the Lady Memene, to the Gateway!"

Three Sardanians lay dying on the steps to the dais. Those behind shrank back from the whirling ilium blade.

"Now here is another black game afoot!" cried Minos. He sheathed his sword. Before the crowd in the hall could guess his purpose, he and his hunters had dashed in hot haste from the rear door of the Judgment House.

CHAPTER III

THE LAUGHTER OF MEMENE

IN THE forest on the slopes above the Judgment House, Minos and his men halted, and the king made a division of his forces. If there was to be battle of the few against the many, he must have a fortress.

"Imacar," he said, "take thou six men and speed on to the cave in the side of Latmos. Hold it against all comers. Seven men may there defy a thousand. I come hither anon, I and these others."

In haste Imacar told off his men, and the king and the others plunged ahead along the forest paths. Below them they could hear the clamor of the crowd at the Judgment House, now confused and undecided whither to pursue.

Over to the left of the rugged heights of the Gateway mount rose the more precipitous steep of the Mount Zalmon. Between the two was the notch of the north-

ern pass that led into the Hunter's Road. At the foot of Zalmon lay the marshes of the holy river Ukranis. Still farther to the west, on the turn of the hill toward Mount Meor and Mount Latmos, lay the estate and palace of the Lord Karnaon.

As they ran, Minos questioned the lad who had come from Zalos. He learned that two other priests of the Gateway had come down with Karthanon the Aged. While he had gone on to the Judgment House to deliver the message of Analos, they had proceeded to the home of Karnaon. There a conference had been held. At its end the Lady Memene had been summoned. With the priests, her father, and a number of servants they had set out for the Gateway.

"And did she not resist?" asked Minos of the lad.

"Nay, O king, not openly, and thereat was Zalos much perplexed. He followeth on with two men, and knoweth not whether to intervene or no."

There was no direct way by which to reach the Gateway from the Mount Zalmon. The pathway skirted the marshes to the green stone bridge across the Ukranis. From the bridge a road lay straight to the foot of the terraced hill of the god.

Minos, his thirteen hunters, and the lad left the slopes a distance above the marshes, crossed the tilled lands, and reached the bridge. They were none too soon. When they reached the river they could hear voices on the marsh path in the direction of Mount Zalmon. The king bade his men hide in a clump of astarian bush on the river bank.

"Bide thou there, and stir not unless I call," he ordered. Alone, he strode on to the bridge and took his stand in the angle of the first buttress.

He had not long to wait. Within five minutes the party from the palace of Karnaon hurried from the path to the road and approached the bridge. First came the Lord Karnaon, clutching his daughter by the arm. On either side of them walked a sable-robed priest of Hephaistos. Close in the rear seven or eight men of the lord's household slunk along, with many a side-long glance, fearful of they knew not what.

The Lady Memene looked neither to right nor left, but carried herself very straight. Her face was pale now, but her eyes blazed, and her mouth was set in an ominous line.

A burst of shouting came to their ears from up the valley in the direction of the Judgment House, and the members of the

party paused at the bridge. As they hesitated, came a hollow clanking, and an apparition moved out from the buttressed rail and confronted them in the bridge's center—a frightening apparition in clashing armor.

For a moment there was awed silence. Karnaon let go his hold on his daughter's arm and stepped a pace forward, for the lord was no coward. The two priests of the Gateway drew close together behind him. From the servants rose a moan of terror, and they seemed ready to make a break up the valley road.

Not one of the party recognized Minos the king in the towering figure on the bridge. To their startled imaginations, he seemed of more than mortal proportions. The red glare from the heights of Zalmon and the Gateway shimmered on his armor. His winged helm shaded his face. For aught they guessed in their first fright, he might be a supernatural messenger come forth to meet them from the temple of Hephaistos—if not the god himself.

He spoke, and broke the spell.

"Whither in such haste goeth the Lord Karnaon, and for what purpose?" demanded the king.

Karnaon started, and immediately pushed forward. "Ha, 'tis but Minos, who was the king," he growled. "Bar not our way, for we be summoned in haste to the Gateway."

"Who *was* king?" repeated Minos sternly. "Mend thy manners, lord, for the king still liveth, and while he liveth he ruleth."

"Thou art no more king. Analos hath banned thee with the ban of Hephaistos," countered Karnaon. "But I will not waste words with thee. We must hasten."

"Tarry a moment, Karnaon. Thou art all too hasty," Minos replied. "I would learn the mind of the Lady Memene concerning this journey to the Gateway, and if she knoweth its purpose, and goeth willingly."

"What's that to thee, rash man?" said Karnaon. "My daughter doth not wait thy word as to her goings and comings. She doeth as I, her father, command."

"That is only half the truth, father," broke in Lady Memene. "As thou hast commanded, thus far indeed have I done, but there is little of my own will in it."

AS SHE spoke, the girl whipped her cloak aside, and the heart of Minos leaped within him. For on the whiteness of her gown was set a splendid syllana bloom!

One glimpse he had of the shining petals of the blue rose, and the cloak fell back and hid it, but in that one glimpse the mind of the king cast all else aside. She had summoned his aid. Gladly would he face priest or god or angry men for this woman.

One of the priests had been whispering low among the men of Karnaon. Now he sprang aside.

"Seize him!" he yelled.

Armed with spears, the men rushed at the head of the bridge. Karnaon and the girl were thrust aside. Minos saw the flash of glittering points before him, and leaped backward, tearing his sword from its sheath. At the same instant Zalos and his two men, who had crept up unobserved, leaped from the shadow of the bridge to rush in the rear of the spearsmen.

Minos was not minded to slay any of these poor fellows. Already his heart was sore for the four dead men he had left in the Judgment House. Only to save his lady and his own land would he slay. He shouted to his hunters who lay concealed. With the giant form of the king on the bridge in front and the seventeen determined hunters who now ranged themselves behind them, Karnaon's men lost all stomach for fighting. They hung back.

"In, and bear him down!" shouted Karnaon. He snatched a spear from one of his servants. "Fear not, here cometh aid!" It was true. Down the valley came the clamor of running men. Karnaon set foot on the bridge.

Minos leaped from where he stood. Spears clashed on his armor, but he was unscathed by edge or point. Catching one of Karnaon's men by the shoulders, Minos floored three of his fellows with the sweep of the man's body. He broke through them in an instant. The Lord Karnaon struck fiercely at him, but the stroke fell short.

At the side of the bridge stood the Lady Memene. The king paused at her side. His hunters closed in around them. By reason of his superior height, the king could look over the heads of the men around him. Scarce three hundred yards away on the white road were more than a score of running Sardanians, shouting loudly as they came.

"Choose thou, lady," he said low in the girl's ear, "and quickly, for here come those who will make choice for us. One word, and I hold thee against all Sardanes, and to the death."

Here was a strange girl, truly. She looked

the king in the eye coolly. "Choose thyself, and please thyself, O king," she answered.

"Thou wearest my flower," he replied.

"And I bear also a gift for the priest," she interposed. "See." She opened her cloak and showed him the hilt of a long-bladed ilium dagger. "Little joy would he have had of the bride he did summon," she said, and laughed a short, hard laugh.

Karnaon's men had rallied. In a moment they would rush the hunters. On down the roadway tore the party from the Judgment House. Minos parleyed no longer. He stooped and caught the girl under shoulders and knees, lifting her as a mother might lift a child.

"To Latmos!" he shouted. "Death be the lot of anyone that stays us!"

Thrusting his way through the hunters, he took the marsh path, running lightly and fleetly, for all the weight of his armor and his lovely burden. Zalos led his hunters in a short, fierce charge that turned back the men of Karnaon, and then the hunters broke and followed fast on the heels of their master.

Where the tilled fields broke into the foothills of Mount Zalmon, Minos turned, and plunged into the forest, making straight for Latmos. Before him all was quiet, but from the rear, where Zalos and the hunters covered his flight, the clamor and clash of arms told him that they were hard pressed. He set the Lady Memene down and drew his sword.

Two of the foremost hunters made a chair for the girl with their crossed hands, and started on for the cave. Minos ran back along the forest pathway. He found a running battle. Karnaon and his servants had joined forces with some thirty Sardanians who had gone to the bridge under the leadership of Gallando the smith. Finding their efforts to win the hunters of Zalos to their aid of no avail, they were making a desperate attempt to annihilate them.

Already two of the stout hunters were down. A number of others bore spear wounds, for all of the men of both the lord and the smith were armed with spears or daggers, and several carried axes.

Minos strode through the press of men to the center of the fighting. He found Zalos bleeding from a gash in his cheek, growling and dealing out blows like a wounded bear.

"Thou has done enough here, old friend," cried the king in the huntsman's ear. "On to the cave, thou and those with thee. 'Tis time that I, who am well protected, took

a few of the knocks that are falling. Nay, tarry not. I will hold these who follow in play for a time."

Up flashed his sword, and he sprang into the center of the path. The hunters dashed by him into the shadows, and he stood alone against the pursuers. First man to meet the king was the Lord Karnaon. Spear met sword in midair and, straightway that spear was pointless. The keen blade shore through its haft, cutting it like a straw.

"Thee I will not slay, Karnaon, who wouldst slay me!" cried Minos. With his left hand he clutched the noble by the belt, jerked him forward, and hurled him back against the foremost of the pursuers so violently that both men fell and lay stunned in the path. Half a dozen ilium spears clashed on the king's armor, and one grazed his neck as he leaped over the fallen men and met their fellows. In an instant he was among them, swinging his weapon until it shone in the pale light of the stars like a whirling ilium wheel.

"Come on, thou whom the priest hath made mad," he shouted. "Minos, who before had little to fight for, now hath much. Here lieth a short, straight road to the Gateway." As he shouted, he struck.

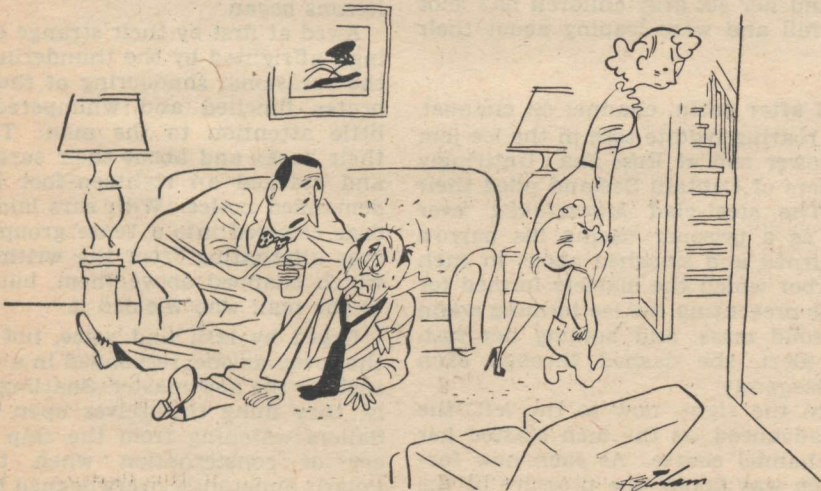
So close he was, that spears were well nigh useless to the men who bore them, and daggers fell harmless upon his armor.

The broad, keen blade made sore havoc among the unarmored Sardanians. Three men were down and dead and a half dozen others were out of the fight with wounds to nurse, when Gallando the smith faced the king.

Gallando fought with an ax. He was a large man and powerful. Watching his chance, he leaped to one side, just as Minos stumbled over the body of one of the slain men. For only an instant the broad blade faltered, and gave the smith opportunity. He swung his ax with both hands and brought it down on the winged helm of the king.

Minos saw the smiting danger and stooped low to avoid the stroke. It fell on the helmet with the clang of an anvil blow. Down to his knees sank the king, his senses swaying. Had the stroke of the smith's ax been one jot more direct, his opponent had not risen again; but it lacked that jot. The rounded helm turned the blow aside. The ax crashed from it to the ground, and was buried to the haft.

Recovering his balance, the smith poised himself for another stroke. Minos, his head still swimming, raised his sword as if to parry, then cast it from him suddenly, lunged forward and gripped Gallando about the knees. He put forth his strength in a mighty tug, causing the smith to let fall the ax. Before ever a



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man could move to his rescue, Gallando found the arms of the king clipped about his waist.

Never but once in his life had a man bested Minos at the wrestling game. Now, fighting for his life, he crushed the burly smith to him. Twice he contracted the muscles of his great arms. The veins of his forehead stood out with the strain, and his helm fell from his head. Once more he exerted all the strength of his body, bending forward to bring his weight to bear. Something snapped like a breaking stick. Gallando's head fell back and his body went limp in the arms of Minos. His back was broken.

With Gallando dead and Karnaon out of the battle, the Sardanians lacked a leader with sufficient heart to take up the tale. They stood for a moment with staring eyes as the corpse of the smith rolled at their feet. Then they gave way and ran.

Catching his helmet and sword from the ground, Minos hastened on toward the cave. On the hillside above the palace he stopped, cupped his hands and shouted, "Aternes!"

A faint hail from below told that the lad had heard the call. "Loose the beasts," cried the king, "and then seek safety."

He waited a few moments, and then sent down through the dusk a long, shrill whistle. A full-throated chorus was his answer. Before he reached the mouth of the cave, Pallas and her six gray children had shot up the hill and were leaping about their master.

BASIN after basin, channel on channel, the roaring lyddite tore in the ice jam at the lower end of Ross Sea. Untiringly the miners of Captain Scoland plied their drills. The steel-clad *Minnetonka*, ever restless as a prisoner pacing his narrow cell, churned and smashed about in each new harbor which the blasters formed for her, thus preventing the ice forming again into a solid mass, and holding her fast. Always alert, she dashed through each new passageway.

Now to the right, now to the left, the cruiser advanced, as the men blasted her zigzag channel course. As each new forward step was taken, the pressure of the vast jam closed the way and the channel was left behind. It was slow work, but sure. Behind the adventurers the sun came slowly on his southern path, turning dim twilight into weak and pallid day.

Steadily as they worked, ten days passed and saw the blasters little more than a

third of the way across the enormous jam.

All around them thundered and crashed the ice, in the grip of the great breaking forces. At times the uproar of smitten bergs and cracking floes made the sound of their exploding lyddite seem a puny and futile mockery of nature's mighty hammers. On the decks of the *Minnetonka* uneasy men paced restlessly, and, worn by waiting and danger, cursed or prayed, according to their natures. In their long hutches, the Alaskan dogs, still more uneasy, snarled and howled.

Seeking to turn the delay to some advantage, Polaris selected from the forty-odd dogs on the ship seven of the likeliest, and, with sledge and harness, left the ship to acquaint himself with them. It was time that they knew the master whom they must carry both fast and far. Huskies they were, from the finest of the Yukon strains, big and shaggy, their coats splotched with brown and white, but they were not the equals in size or strength of gray Marcus and his fellows, which the son of the snows had driven aforetime. He found them not at all lacking in temper.

On a level spot in the floe, not far from the ship, Polaris laid out his harness, and chose his animals for the positions in which he would have them run. Largest of all the brutes was the tawny Boris, sullen and vicious, but intelligent. Polaris selected him as the team leader, and the lessons began.

Awed at first by their strange surroundings, affrighted by the thundering ice and the occasional shuddering of the floe, the brutes flinched and whimpered, paying little attention to the man. Then over their backs and about their ears shrieked and cracked an eighteen-foot lash that demanded notice. With ears laid flat, the dogs cowered into a tense group, burning eyes alternating from the writhing whip, which snapped above them, but fell not, to the man who wielded it.

Urged by lash and voice, not one, but the seven as one, responded in a concerted rush on the new master. Snarling hideously, they flung themselves upon the man. Sailors watching from the ship set up a cry of consternation when they saw Polaris apparently overwhelmed by a wave of maddened dogs. But the son of the snows was a match for any dog team that ever snaked a sledge. He met their rush with a powerful hand and a ready whipstock, that seemed never to miss its aim. For the whip that had only menaced before fell now in earnest, fell on tender

snouts with stinging force and a most disconcerting accuracy. Once more the mutinous beasts cowered away, trotting in circles with bared teeth, but loth to try conclusions with that vengeful whip-butt.

Boris, the leader, alone was unsubdued and persistent. Again and again, the brute gathered himself together and charged and leaped, howling with rage. Each time the waiting whip rose up to meet him, and the great brute, twisting his head in mid-air, sprang short and aside, to circle madly on the ice for another opening.

Soft-voiced methods were of no avail with Boris. He must be made to feel the power of the master, must be conquered at once, or he would be forever treacherous and useless.

Again the dog sprang from his haunches. That time no whip seemed waiting, but rested at the man's side. The huge brute, with a moan of hate, launched himself straight at his adversary's throat. Crouched low, Polaris let him come. Lightning quick, the left hand of the man flashed out and closed on the windpipe of Boris, just below the clashing jaws. Watching sailors on the *Minnetonka* rubbed their eyes and looked again in wonder.

POLARIS stood rigid as a statue in steel. His left arm extended straight in front of him, and in his grasp he held the struggling animal, held him as he had caught him, in midair, a yard above the ice—and Boris was no toy, but would have tipped the scales to the weight of a powerful man. Polaris' cap had fallen to the ice in the struggle. He wore his white bearskin garments. His yellow hair tossed back, he seemed to the watching, wondering men the embodiment of the wild spirit of this wild land, come into his own again.

With a stern eye to the other dogs, he held Boris, as though in a vise, and fear grew in the stout and sullen heart of the brute. To the terror of those steely fingers that clutched his throat was added the terror of the empty air, through which his four feet thrashed madly, and could find no hold or rest. The deadly grip tightened. The dog's struggles grew weaker and weaker. His jaws gaped wide. He gasped and gulped in vain for one breath of air that should give him life and energy and spirit to fight on. His struggles ceased, and he hung limp in the hand of the master.

Gently Polaris set the animal down on the ice, and relaxed the grim hold on his throat. With great gasps Boris took

into his lungs once more the life-giving air. The man snaked in the long whip-lash. Waiting a few moments until the great dog's senses had fully returned, he took a yard of the thongy tip of the lash and laid it smartly across the flanks of Boris, not cruelly, but with sufficient sting to make the punishment tell. The other dogs trotted uneasily about, sniffing, whining, and eying their fallen leader.

Presently Polaris stood up, turned his back deliberately on Boris and walked a few steps from him, still holding the whip. He called the dog to come to him. The huge animal arose, shook himself, glanced shamefully at his mates, stretched himself, tossed his head with a snort, and followed after the man. Polaris bent down and patted his shaggy head, with a word of encouragement. At his touch, the brute trembled slightly, but the man's voice was reassuring, and the whip hung idle. Boris rubbed his head against the knee of Polaris and whined. He had found his master, and he knew it. Other dogs might, and did, turn on Polaris again, but Boris never.

One by one, the other brutes learned their lesson of obedience, learned that they served a wise and vigilant master, and gave in to the lash and the harness. Soon the man was able to take them far afield, and crossed the floe to the east for a number of long runs.

On the twenty-ninth day from the firing of the first lyddite blasts, the stout *Minnetonka* shook her sides clear of the drift ice from the last channel, and shot southward into free water. Picking up the miners and Polaris and his team, Scoland pointed a course some three miles from the eastern shore, and the cruiser tore on under forced draft, so continuously that the canny MacKechnie shook his gray head many a time and oft over the depletion of coal-bunkers.

"'Tis all varra weel, the gettin' on in such haste," he grumbled, "'but, ma certes, 'twill be a long, weary drive back again, and coal doesna grow on icebergs."

Several days of clear going gave all on the ship opportunity to take much needed rest, after the perils and labor that had racked both minds and bodies. Spring and spirits returned to jaded men, and it was an eager and hopeful crew that cheered to the echo on the day that Polaris shouted from the bridge:

"Steer the ship in to the left. Yonder is a point of land that my eyes remember well, and behind it a harbor that marks

the end of this journey, I am certain."

It was the rocky promontory across which his own ship of ice had been broken, nearly two years before. Inland, to the north, extended the looming barrier range, which he had sought in vain to pass.

Polaris and old Zenas Wright stood on the bridge as the cruiser rounded the headland. The young man clapped the geologist on the shoulder, and pointed up the snow-covered slope, that led from the cove to the foothills beyond.

"There lies the way," he shouted, "straight in to the east, the way to Sardanes!"

NEAR to the cave entrance on the Latmos hill King Minos found the Lord Patrymion. The boy was sitting on a boulder, swinging his heels against it and whistling in a minor key the bars of a Sardanian love ditty. Leaning against the rock beside him was a long-hafted bear spear. In his belt were thrust a dagger and a heavy-bladed hatchet.

As the king came from among the trees, the lad stood up and saluted. Minos saw that the arm he raised was bandaged above the elbow. The king, whose own neck bore a slight cut, where a spear had stung as it hummed by him in the forest mêlée, and whose tunic and armor were red with blood not his own, smiled grimly.

"And did the Lord Patrymion perchance fall and bruise himself in the forest paths?" he asked.

"Nay, nay, O king, I came by this while a-hunting," laughed the lad.

"Hunting?" queried Minos.

"Aye, the game we play now in Sardanes hath fulfilled a part of its contract to my great satisfaction. Not an hour ago I did stick me the good, fat priest whereof we talked awhile back. Right pleasantly did he kick and squeal—"

"Hast slain a priest of the Gateway?" Minos asked him. "I fear that is ill done."

"Nay, king, 'twas well done. 'Twere well, indeed, with us, were every one of the black crew hot alight in their own fires, with Analos, the high priest, frying merrily atop the heap. Then, perhaps, would the people listen to reason. This fellow did come from the Gateway to my palace on Epamon's sides, whither I had gone from the Judgment House to arm myself. He would have haled me thence to the Gateway like an unwilling maid. When he found me coy, he did raise mine own household men against me. Well, he got a dagger in his midriff for his trouble. And

I got this scratch on the arm, with perchance a slit throat to follow, were it not that I am somewhat swift of foot. My men did rage upon me like fiends when they saw the priest down. I thought it better to die here in good company than where I was, so I came away."

"Hast seen Garlanes?" asked Minos.

"Nay, nor will I," said the lad shortly. "The men of Analos slew him on the portico of his own hall. That I had from the priest who came to summon me. Had he not given me that word, I might have spared him."

The king bowed his head. Garlanes had been his dear friend.

Within the cave the warmth from the bowels of the hill was almost oppressive. The men had lighted torches and oil lamps, and were dressing their hurts, of which there were not a few, and discussing in low tones the details of the fighting.

In a carved chair of wood, just beyond the rim of light, the Lady Memene sat. Her face, as she rested it on her hand, was almost devoid of expression, but her black eyes, alert and lustrous, missed no detail of the scene before her. Minos removed a part of his armor, and laved his head and hands in the little streamlet. Although the girl appeared to take no note of him, not a move that he made escaped her. Each time that the king's glance strayed to her, and that was often, she appeared to be watching the hunters or the dogs, or anything but himself.

When he had removed the stains of battle, Minos crossed to her side. He seated himself on an ancient chest and considered her for a time with puzzled eyes. She made no move, nor seemed to notice that he was there.

"Lady," he said at length, "lady of the blue rose and the keen dagger, who reckest so little which thou usest, canst tell me now why thou hast come here?"

"Come here?" she echoed quickly. "Why, because thou didst carry me a part of the way and thy friend yonder the other part. Why else?" She flashed him an elfish smile.

"So we did," he answered. "Wouldst go back?"

"Not yet—unless thou sendest me," she replied coolly. "There is little at the Gateway to stir my heart. Here—" She paused, and the king bent forward that he might lose no word of her answer. "Here, methinks events will pass that will be worth the watching—unless thou dost weary of my presence and bid me go seek Analos."

Minos straightened his back suddenly. "Lady," he said, "I find thee of a temper like to that of the Lord of Patrymion, who would make believe that he careth naught for tears and death and doom, and laugheth at all alike. Yet back of all thy quips and scorns I believe there dwelleth in thee a spirit brave and true, as there doth in him also."

The girl inclined her head, but there was mockery in the bow. "Thou doest me too great honor, my Lord Minos," she replied. "Count not too greatly on thy estimate, for I fear thou hast mistaken me sadly."

This fencing with words suited Minos not at all. "In one thing I mistake not," he said, "and that is the heart of Minos." He hesitated, and then asked her, gravely and slowly, "Lady Memene, wilt be the bride of Minos?"

A ringing peal of silvery laughter was his answer, but the girl drew farther back into the shadows that the king might not see the red flush on her cheeks.

"Strange is the time thou choosest for thy wooing of a bride, O king! Thy kingdom tottereth. Scarce a score in all the land are faithful to thee. Thy head is target for curse of priest and spear of enemy. Mayhap Sardanes itself dieth. Yet dost thou woo a bride."

Up to his full height drew the king and looked down upon her. She waited for an angry answer, but none came.

"Nay, thou canst not provoke me, lady," he said gently. "I know not how it is, but the love I bear thee I think is so strong that it will endure all things and abide forever. All that thou sayest is true. In spite of all, I wait an answer."

Still farther into the shadows withdrew Memene. Her eyes shone strangely.

"The end is not yet. When that end cometh—when thou hast won or lost all that there is to win or lose, then thou shalt have an answer, King Minos, shouldst thou still desire it."

"Be it so, lady, I hold thee to the end, and will seek my answer then, though it be at the gates of death." He bowed and turned away.

OUTSIDE the cave two of the dogs were baying. Through the rifted rock came the voice of the Lord Patrymion:

"Here cometh the overlord of the Gateway devils. Say, king, shall I loose the beasts on him?"

"Nay, loose them not," called Minos. He caught up his arms and hastened to join the lad on the hillside.

Some forty paces down the slope stood Analos.

Patrymion held the gray dogs by their collars. "Well would I like to see them worry him," he grumbled. "Perhaps it is best for the brutes," he added. "They would surely die of a stomach sickness, did they taste him."

"What wouldst thou of Minos, Analos of the Gateway?" demanded the king. "Thou hast turned the valley to madness. Here we have little need for thee. Were it not that I will slay no more except to save myself and those with me from death, I would send a spear through thee where thou standest, Analos. Say, what wouldst thou here?"

"Insult me thou hast, slay me thou canst not," answered the priest, glowering up at

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the king from where he stood with folded arms. "Hephaistos protecteth his servant. I came to say to thee that the great doom falleth apace. Mountain after mountain adown the valley giveth up its fires. All upper Sardanes wasteth. This shall go on until thou and those with thee are humbled and Sardanes is as one in submission to the ancient god.

"Beside thee standeth one who this day hath smitten a priest of the Gateway. Give him up. Come thou with him to the Gateway, thou and the girl. For the sake of thy people, Minos, for the sake of the very existence of the Sardanes, yield thee to the god."

"Analos," answered the king, "did Minos for one instant believe that by any act of his Sardanes might be saved, in that instant he would perform it, however bitter. But thou art a madman, thy god of thine own distorted fancy. The things that are happening are in obedience to some law of nature whereof we know not. They will pass, and all will be as before, or they will continue, and Sardanes will be no more. Let that fall out as it is fated. Minos waits the end here, and yieldeth to no man."

Zalos and several of the hunters had come from the cave. Analos turned from the king to them.

"What saith the Captain Zalos?" he demanded. "For this rash man, no longer king of thine, and for the woman he hath stolen, art thou prepared to die and to go cursed of Hephaistos to the torments he hath in store for those who rebel against him? Say, wilt not give him up, he and the maid, and save thyself and thy companions?"

"That will I not," answered the captain. "We have eaten the king's bread, and we are his faithful servants. Where he standeth, there stand we. Whither he leadeth, there we follow, be it to battle, to death, or to ghostland and its torments, if such there be. Forsake him? Not until my breath forsaketh my body!"

Zalos faced his men. "Is it not so?" he growled. "If there be a man among ye who thinketh otherwise, let him speak and stand forth." He fumbled with the dagger in his belt.

"Needst not fret with thy dagger, Captain," laughed one of the hunters. "We be all of one mind, and thou hast said it."

"I thank thee, friend," said Minos. His hand fell lovingly on the captain's shoulder.

"After all this useless talk, methinks some diversion impendeth," whispered the

lad Patrymion. "Unless mine eyes are passing poor, spear points gleam in the thicket yonder and men are moving."

Minos peered keenly into the shadows beyond the priest. He, too, saw dim, moving shapes, and caught the glint of bare blades. He tightened his grip on his sword-hilt.

"Zalos," he said, "slip thou within the cave and fetch me the ilium disk that leaneth against the wall near to the spring. I think there is like to be more fighting anon, and I am still unwearied. Take the dogs with thee. They be of rash mettle, and I would not have them harmed."

Analos still stood in the little clearing, eying them gloomily, his features working.

"An the holy rascal swelleth much more with anger he will burst, and the foulness of the venom let loose from him surely will overcome us all," said Patrymion with grim humor. "See how his beard waggeth."

Zalos came from the cave and passed to the king an oval plate of burnished ilium, nearly four feet in length and wide enough more than to cover his broad chest. It was the shield which went with the other arms he had fashioned. It had a broad leather arm-strap and a handhold affixed to its concave side.

The king slipped it onto his arm.

With a shake of his shoulders, the priest cast his black robe from him and stood forth in the red vestments of the office of death. He waved his arms in air.

"Sons of Sardanes," he roared, "do the god's will!"

From every rock and tree near him creeping men sprang to their feet. A swarm of yelling spearmen charged up the slope.

CHAPTER IV

BATTLE ON LATMOS

AT THE opening of the passage into the cave the way was scarcely wide enough for two men to enter abreast. Farther in, where the entrance curved, it was narrower yet. There Minos elected to meet the attackers. He ordered the other men into the cave, whither Patrymion went sorely against his will.

"Art not going to take all the sport to thyself, king, I hope?" he asked. "I would make claim to a share in it."

"Thou shalt have it, and to spare, my lad," said Minos comfortingly. "No one of us will have complaint for lack of fighting while yonder red robe flameth in the valley."

As he spoke the king backed into the cave-passage and took position at the first turn, crouching low behind his shield. "Stand thou behind me here," he directed the boy, "and into thy keeping I commend any who may pass me." The king and the boy took their places.

The spearsmen of Analos, fully two hundred strong, poured over the little plateau on which the cave fronted. With a rush and yell they came, but found no foe to fight. Only the dark rift in the rock yawned silently before them. Strain their eyes as they might, they could not see what danger lay in wait for them within.

After a brief conference they decided to force the entrance, for Sardanians, when not arrayed against their own superstitions, were not cowards. Two by two, for the way was narrow they crept into the passageway. Those foremost proceeded cautiously, and with their spear points well advanced.

In this warfare all the advantage lay with Minos. The besiegers could not see him, but from his position they were outlined against what light there was without the cave, and the king could see them well.

So it was that groping forward the spears of the first two of the attacking party clanged against something that was not rock. A flash in the dusk before them, a whine in the air, where the sword of Minos sang as it flew and two of the warriors of Analos were out of the fight forever.

Behind them their companions sprang to their feet and thrust desperately with their spears. So straight was the way that there was little room for spear play. Thrust and cast alike fell on the rocky wall or the shield of the king. Out of the darkness the strongest arm in all Sardanes swung unceasingly, dealing blows that none could see or parry.

The passage became hideous with cries and groans. Only Minos fought in grim silence. At his shoulder young Patrymion stood and laughed aloud at death unloosed.

Presently the king found his blows falling on empty air. Convinced that this method of battle was of small avail, the priest's men withdrew from the cave, dragging with them the fallen. They carried eight men down the steep sides of Latmos, to be sent to the Gateway, and five others were so sorely smitten by the blade that guarded the narrow way that they were little better than corpses.

"Now, let us out, master, and fall on them from behind," said Zalos. "One good charge may break their spirit."

Minos shook his head. "Nay, Zalos, we fight not save to defend ourselves. This slaughter of my people doth grieve me much. Would that 'twere at an end!"

"In verity, if thou grieveest over long in thy present fashion, there will be none left in Sardanes to withstand thee," put in Patrymion. "At least let me go forth and hunt the high priest. With him dead, the rest are easily managed."

"Nay, he shall not be slain, and there's an end," said Minos sternly. "He hath coupled his mad talk to these strange manifestations in Sardanes, and so brought about all the trouble that is on foot. His death now will mend matters but little, for he hath done his damage among the people. When things right themselves once more (if, indeed, they ever do come aright), it is my will that he be living witness to his own confusion."

"Have they gone, or do they still watch, I wonder?" said Patrymion. He turned the passage and walked boldly to the entrance. Scarcely had he reached it when a spear whizzed by his ear and splintered on the rock wall. He picked the shattered weapon

Message from Garcia

Texas Artist Tells Why It's
Smart to Switch to Calvert

SAN ANTONIO, Texas—Tony R. Garcia, San Antonio artist and illustrator, knows that it's *taste* that counts in a whiskey. "Tell everybody," he says, "that I switched to Calvert because of its *mild, and smooth taste.*"



up with a laugh. "We are still watched," he said, as he bore it back into the cave.

Below in the hall of the Judgment House the stroke of the great drum echoed through the valley, giving notice of the passing of another day—a day fuller of events in Sardanes than any since Polaris of the Snows had fought his great fight on the crater-rim and struck out for the unknown North.

Through the sleeping hours a watchful hunter stood guard at the turn in the cave-passage, but no attempt was made to surprise the besieged. They ate from the store of grain in the cave and took what rest they could, undisturbed. With cloths from the king's chests the hunters curtailed off a section of the cave for the Lady Memene, and thither she withdrew in silence, to sit with wakeful eyes through half the slumber hours.

On the morrow there was little rest for any. Within an hour of the first drum-stroke, the clamor of fighting men rang through the cave once more.

Again Minos took up the tale, but he found his foes more wary. Not again would they rush blindly the narrow way and the singing sword. They built a big wood fire at the edge of the plateau, in such a position that its flames cast their light into the passage. Six of their strongest warriors charged the cave-mouth. Four of them engaged the battling giant with their spears. The other two, on hands and knees, endeavored to creep under his guard, and got near enough to pull him down.

Straightway the Lord Patrymion went down on all fours, and with a spear in either hand fought between the knees of the king. As he fought, he taunted the attackers with mocking jests more bitter than the spear-thrusts. With his legs guarded, the strength of Minos was more than the strength of six. Of those who charged, only two reached the outer plateau alive.

IN THE respite the king turned and became aware of the Lady Memene. Shrouded in her long cloak, she stood against the wall of the passage, almost at his shoulder. She had watched the fighting with kindling eyes, but when Minos turned to look at her, she assumed again the mantle of indifference. Only behind the folds of her cloak one of her little feet was tapping, tapping on the rocky floor.

"Lady Memene, I pray thee, go within.

Here is no place for thee," the king said. "A chance spear might pass this guard of mine, and then were all of Minos's fighting of no avail."

Wordless, she turned away and disappeared among the shadows.

Time after time the Sardanians, in stubborn fury, charged the cave-mouth. They fetched ladders from the valley, erected them against the cliff-face at the sides of the fissure, where the wall rose too sheer for a foothold otherwise. From the ladders, spearsmen leaped down, essaying to overwhelm the guardians of the pass and bear them down. But Minos drew back to where the closing roof of the entrance defended him from their attempts, and men who fell found the great sword and the keen spears of Patrymion and Zalos always waiting.

But one man, however brave and strong, cannot fight an army. Slowly, very slowly, the warriors of the priest tired that mighty sword-arm, although the dauntless spirit behind it flagged not. Again and again the rock passage was choked with dead and dying. Its floor ran red with blood. As often, the besiegers dragged the bodies of their comrades forth and renewed the struggle with fresh men. The champions of the god showed a fighting will even with that of Minos, laying on for his own head and his dear lady.

At last the king, sorely wearied, and wounded, although but slightly, in a score of places, yielded his place to Zalos and the Lord Patrymion. The lad took the shield of the king, and knelt with his spear at the turn of the passage. Behind him the stout captain plied a ponderous woodsman's ax with both hands, and the battle went on.

An unexpected circumstance ended the conflict. Several of the Sardanians on the cliffside with their long ladders discovered a ledge some forty feet above the opening into the cave and scrambled to it. On the ledge lay a number of large boulders, masses that had rolled down and rested there perhaps an age before.

With much labor and prying with spear-hafts, the men brought down several of the smaller rocks to the lip of the ledge. Poising one of them where, as nearly as they could judge, it would fall straight into the passage below, they waited for a lull in the fight. When they saw the pass clear of their fellows, they loosed the big stone with a shout.

Down it crashed, but, aimed too far to the left, missed the cleft and struck on the

cliff-face with such force that a part of it flew to splinters. The main mass bounded through the air, struck again at the edge of the plateau, and thundered down the slope, carrying three of Analos's fighting men with it.

Unheeding the cries of their fellows from below to desist, the men on the ledge poised another boulder with better aim. It smashed into the rock corridor so near to the turn that the wind from it blew hard in the face of the Lord Patrymion, looking forth, and it struck the spear from his grasp and shattered it.

Up sprang the lad with a loud laugh.

"Now there's an end to this pleasant business of fighting," he said to Zalos, and pointed to the fallen rock. It lay wedged in the passage, jammed against the sides, and breast high, a natural barrier, stronger than the shield of Minos. One active man might hold the pass against any number, as long as he held strength to thrust, for room was left for but one man to pass over the rock at a time, and in no position for fighting.

Outside the plateau the Sardanians also had seen this new guardian in the narrow way, and reviled their fellows on the ledge for their lack of thought.

Nevertheless, they made one more attempt. They fetched up the slope a long and heavy timber of hymanan wood. Fixing an ilium-bar the thickness of two spear-hafts across the crevice, they slung the beam from it with a stout rope. Twenty men then seized the bar and swung the battering-ram against the boulder until they were weary. Every blow did but fix the rock firmer. All efforts to ram it in to where it might fall into the wider portion of the passage failed. They gave it up.

"Here we may stay now until we be old and gray-headed, Zalos," said Patrymion ruefully. "There can be no more fighting worth the telling. They cannot come at us. A puny girl could withstand them all here." He peered over the rock. "Aye, they know it, the rogues, and are going. 'Twill be but poor sport here." To himself he added: "I know a better, even though it lasteth but a few moments. What's the odds?"

Carried away by the love of fighting, a madness seemed to seize the lad. He let fall the shield of Minos, caught Zalos's ax from his hand, and before any man could hinder, he leaped over the rock.

"'Tis a pretty weapon," he called back over his shoulder to the hunter, and shook the ax aloft. "I will use it well." He ran

out across the plateau singing loudly.

Unmindful of the danger, the hunter captain clambered over the rock to follow him. It was too late. For an instant Zalos saw the lad outlined clearly in the glare from the fire on the plateau, swinging the great ax with both hands. Then the spearsmen closed in on him from all sides. Four men he felled with four lightning strokes, and went down, dying as he had lived, with careless song on his lips, making a jest of death itself.

A storm of spears fell about the hunter as he emerged into the light, and he was fain to scramble back into the passage and over the rock to save his own skin.

Utterly exhausted, Minos, when he left the battle, had entered the cave and thrown himself on a couch to regain breath and strength for further combat. His hunters dressed his wounds and chafed his numbed sword-arm. First to reach him with water and bandages was Memene, but when she saw that his injuries were light and that he was merely tired, she gave way to the men and went back to her carved chair. But as she sat, one of her feet was ever tapping softly.

After a time came Zalos, and told his story to the king. Minos stood up and called for wine. When the beaker was fetched, he bowed low toward the rocky entrance, raising one hand in silent salute, and drank.

"To whom dost thou drink a toast, King Minos?" asked the girl, who noted all with curious eyes.

"To a brave man gone from among us," he replied gravely; "to a very brave man, to the Lord Patrymion."

AROUND the rocky headland, and into the cove swung the *Minnetonka*. The cove afforded the cruiser a safe harbor, storm-protected and free from ice. Down swung the boats from their davits, filled with eager men. For the first time shouting American sailors set foot on the shore where, more than two thousand years before, the little band of Achaeans had left the wreck of their ancient trireme, and pushed on into the unknown wilderness to find and people Sardanes.

Scotland, from the wireless room on the cruiser's deck, released the electric current that sent a splitting, chattering call out along the air-waves to the north. Nor was that call long unanswered.

Loaded with supplies and coal, the staunch old ship *Felix*, which Scotland had commanded on his previous polar dash,

had left America before the *Minnetonka*. The faster cruiser had passed the *Felix* on the sea-road, but she had toiled sturdily along, and was now in harbor at the upper end of Ross Sea to wait what might befall; the *Felix* and her wireless constituted the one link that joined the Sardanian relief expedition to the outer world.

In the second boat to the shore went Polaris Janess and his dogs. The son of the snows was moccasined and furred, and ready to try conclusions with the worst that the white wildernesses had to put forth against him, the wildernesses that once had been his home. He wore the garments of white bearskin that had kept the warmth in his body in his great dash to the north.

His hair of red-gold had now grown long and hung again to his shoulders. Except that time and the perils through which he had passed had marked his face a thought more grave, he was the same indomitable young man who once had fought his way across the drift-ice in this selfsame cove, when the fiends from the sea deeps, the killer whales, had striven in vain to make a meal of him, and his Rose maid had stood on the snowy shore and called encouragement to him in his fight.

Beside Polaris in the boat was seated the short, wide figure of Zenas Wright. His white hair shone from under a shapeless cap of lynx fur from the Hudson Bay country. He was buttoned to the ears in a suit of mackinaw wool with a furred parka. Like the young man, he had a pair of snowshoes slung at his back. He, too, was determined to tread the white pathway to Sardanes.

Polaris had done his best to dissuade the aged scientist from the attempt, and Scoland had added his plea. The determination of the old man to go with Polaris had seemed a particular annoyance to the captain. Zenas Wright would listen to neither argument nor entreaty.

"In my time I've put my name on one or two spots on the map," he said, "but I would rather have it erased than to miss my share in this expedition. I'm going to see this Sardanes of yours, my son, if I have to leave my old bones there. I was responsible for your coming down here. Now I'm going in with you. You are not going to take all the risks alone. Don't try to stop me. My mind's made up, and I'm obstinate as a Tennessee mule."

Ashore with them went the ship's carpenters with tools and lumber to establish a winter camp. A number of shacks were

knocked together. More sledges and dogs were taken ashore. Within a couple of days a small but noisy settlement had sprung up on the bay shore. Men and beasts, confined for many weary weeks to the cramped quarters aboard the cruiser, were glad, indeed, to have the chance to be ashore and move about freely, bleak as the place was. Shouts and barks arose joyously where for untold centuries few voices had been heard except those of many-tongued Nature herself.

Sure that his wireless connections with the *Felix* were in working order, and that the crew of the supply ship had chosen a safe harbor, where he could find them, Captain Scoland also went ashore, and threw himself energetically into the details of camp making.

Never a talkative man, the tall captain had grown, in the latter days of their voyaging, more taciturn than ever. Morose and moody, for hours at a time he never opened his lips except for the giving of orders, and they were more sharp and stern than even was his wont. His associates had been quick to notice those things, but laid them to the cares and dangers of their enterprise. In one thing the captain was not lacking. That was a great capacity for work. Scarcely a detail of the work on board the cruiser or ashore went forward without his personal supervision.

Seeing that the heart of Zenas Wright was firm set on making the trip inland to Sardanes, Polaris, with inward impatience, was forced to delay the immediate start he had premeditated. Once started, the going would be swift as they were capable of, and it would be a cruelty to expect the older man, unused for years to snow travel, to keep up the pace on snowshoes.

While others of the party were busy with the camp building, Polaris and the scientist spent hours on the snow slopes, and made a number of short trips over the ridge to the east. As the young man had foreseen, Wright's first experience with the shoes nearly crippled him. In the course of a couple of days, however, his joints and muscles were limbered to the labor, and he was able to make surprising progress, proving his boast that he was an adept snow runner.

Scoland, whom previous years in both Arctic and Antarctic regions had made expert in the management of dogs, selected himself a team from the huskies, and took a sudden interest in snow journeying, an activity that nearly cost the expedition dearly.

ON THE second day after their arrival at the cove, a man came ashore from the *Minnetonka* with a message for the captain from Aronson on the *Felix*. The message bearer failed to find Scoland at the shacks. When Polaris and Zenas Wright came in later, at the end of their day's exercise, the captain was still missing. They had not seen him. Dogs and sledge which the captain had been using were missing also.

"Either he is strayed and lost in the snow, or some manner of mishap has befallen," said Polaris. "I will go and find him."

Turning his own beasts, he set out at once to study the tangle of snow trails that led inland from the camp. There had been no snow and little wind for a number of days, so it was an easy matter for him to read the paths. Starting from the ridge at the back of the cove, he swung out in a long loop, whose farther curve took him five miles or more from the camp. Four trails he crossed that were plainly back-trailed. The fifth snow path that he came to led on into the wilderness, with no evidence of a return, and he followed that.

Along the foothill slopes of the icy barrier mountains the land lay comparatively level, except for the rocky hummocks that were everywhere sprinkled. A few miles to the south of the range, low rolling hills began again, extending as far as eye might see. Into the hills Scoland's trail lay. Some six miles from where Polaris first picked up the path, he found the captain.

Where a deep and jagged crevasse yawned beneath its treacherous coverlet of snow crust, the trail ended. Where the crust had broken under their weight, men and dogs and sledge had disappeared into the depths.

Outspanning and tethering his own

team to a rock, the son of the snows crept forward cautiously to the brink of the chasm.

Scarcely a yard below the level of the broken snow bridge, Scoland's sledge was caught fast between two projecting teeth of rock and hung over the crevasse. Head downward in their harness, and frozen stiff and dead, dangled the carcasses of two of the captain's huskies. Below them the forward harness hung in strips. Peering into the lower deep of the crevasse, as his eyes became accustomed to its gloom, Polaris could make out the mass of fallen snow from the bridge. It lay forty feet below him, on the floor of the crevasse, which extended away to either side in an irregular corridor, rock-walled and carpeted with snow. Of the man and the other dogs he could see nothing.

He shouted, and his heart leaped gladly when, faint and weak and faraway, came an answering halloo, followed immediately by the howling of dogs. Scoland lived!

Lengths of thin, stout rope were part of the equipment of every sledge, and with each a small steel pulley for hauling. Polaris sprang to his sledge and fetched his tackle.

Testing every inch of the rock with his utmost strength, he crept over the lip of the crevasse, whipped a short bight of rope about one of the rocks that held the wreck of Scoland's sledge, swung his pulley and threaded it. Of rope he had nearly a hundred feet, so that, doubled, it reached the floor of the crevasse, and to spare. He did his work in haste.

Within five minutes of the time of Scoland's answering hail from the depths, Polaris went down the doubled rope, hand under hand, and set foot on the crevasse bottom. He shouted again, and again received a faint answer, away to the south in the windings of the crooked corridor.

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He started that way, and had gone but a few steps when, whimpering and howling, two of the captain's dogs came floundering through the snow to meet him.

When Scoland broke through the crust he had been running with the dogs ahead of his sledge. He had pitched downward with the mass of falling snow, and landed, badly shaken but uninjured, on the floor of the crevasse. He saw at once that it would be impossible at the point where he fell to scale the height of the crevasse wall. The corridor-like fissure, extending south, took an upward course. The captain followed its windings in that direction, hoping that it would lead again to the surface.

Another mishap had made his case almost hopeless. A break in the rocky floor, masked by snow, yawned across the entire width of the chasm. In the half darkness, Scoland had reached its edge. Too late he felt the snow slipping from beneath his feet, and fell again. He had found himself in a pocket some eight feet deep, its sides so sheer that he could not climb them. Vainly he explored every inch of the walls at either side, and tore at the rocks until his hands bled, in an effort to gain a hold. His struggles only brought exhaustion. Three of his huskies had taken the leap, the other two remaining in the upper corridor.

Utterly worn out, the captain at length had curled himself up with the beasts. The warmth of their bodies alone had held the life in his body, for the cold was deadly. Dogs and man were waiting for slow death when they heard the hail of Polaris.

Flat on his stomach, Polaris crawled to the edge of the break in the floor. Cramped and chilled, Scoland was barely able to stand and stagger to the wall. Polaris reached down and found that he could grasp Scoland's upstretched arms between wrists and elbows. Turning on his back, the son of the snows exerted his mighty sinews. Scoland hung almost a dead weight, but he raised him. Up, up, slowly, carefully, and then over the edge, and the captain lay gasping beside him.

On his face again, Polaris called encouragement to the huskies. Barking loudly, the dogs sprang high, leaping repeatedly at the face of the wall. One by one, the man caught them in the air as they leaped, and raised them to the upper floor.

Half carrying the exhausted Scoland, Polaris hurried along the passage to the

ropes, and made him fast. Fearing that the captain was too weak to effect his own release from the tackle, Janess climbed the rope to the lip of the chasm. Again he exerted his tireless strength and hauled the other to the surface.

Scoland rolled weakly into the snow.

"Brandy," he muttered; "there's a flask in the back of the sledge. Can you reach it?"

Polaris found and fetched the flask. Scoland took a long pull at the fiery spirit. Seeing Janess about to lower himself over the rock again, he asked:

"What are you going to do?"

"Fetch up the dogs," Polaris answered.

"Let the damned brutes go, and get me back to the camp. I'm nearly all in."

Polaris eyed him narrowly.

"Not so," he said shortly. "They are good dogs. Were it not for three of them I think you would not now be living." He slipped down the side of the crevasse.

Scoland sneered. He lay watching the straining rope. It seemed to fascinate him. His hand crept to the knife at his belt. Slowly he drew it, and laid its keen blade against the rope. A wave of weakness came over him. Alone, he could never reach the camp. He put away the knife.

One by one Polaris brought up the huskies. He placed Scoland on his own sledge and drove back to the camp, leaving the wreck to be recovered later.

Not one word of thanks did Scoland speak to him for his deliverance. All the way back to the camp the captain lay on the sledge with closed eyes. All the way he cursed furiously within himself that it should be his fortune to take his life at the hands of this one man of all men.

NO MORE was battle done on the steep slope of Mount Latmos. Assured that Minos and his men were holed in where they might not come at them, the fighting men of the priest went up against the cave no more. Although they must have known that the treasure cave was provisioned and watered so abundantly that it would keep its small garrison for many months, they did not give up their siege entirely. That was discovered when one of the hunters thought to go forth by stealth in the slumber hours, and pay a visit to his wife and children at his home in the valley. Hardly was he over the ledge of the plateau when men seized him in the dusk.

His comrades in the cave above heard him scream out once and twice, and then

the minions of Analos cut his throat.

On their part, the hunters maintained a guard of one man at all hours, who sat behind the boulder in the passageway.

Late in the fourth day that they had been immured in the mountainside, Dukulon, one of Zalos's men, as he stood his turn at guard, heard a rapping at the mouth of the pass as one who tapped gently on the wall with a stone.

"Who cometh?" he hailed.

"Sh—it is I, Alternes," came the whispered answer. "I would have speech with Minos the king."

Minos came and bade the lad enter the cave. He wriggled slowly, and with not a few groans, through the passage, and was helped over the rock. When they took him to the light, they found that he was in evil case. Most of his clothing had been torn from him, and he was bruised and with dried blood on his flesh.

"They have hunted me in the hills like a goat," he gasped, as he bent to kiss the hand of his master. "Thy palace is a dismal ruin, O king. Thy servants are scattered or slain. The stone with thy name on it has been cast down from above thy seat in the Judgment House. Even thy throne they toppled from its place and shattered."

The king turned from him sorrowfully. The hunters gathered round, and, as they tended the hurts of the lad, they sought news from him of their families.

"I can tell you naught," he said wearily, "but I believe that every soul in the valley that stood faithful to the king hath been sent to Hephaistos. The dead lie unburned in rows on the upper terraces of the Gateway. For in the hill the fires of the god do wax so mighty that none, not even his own priests, dares to come near to them. All upper Sardanes is snow and ice. Ten of the great moons have gone dark, and as they die the cold cometh on apace."

Then Alternes turned his face to the wall on the couch of skins where they had laid him, and slept long and well.

One more attempt Analos made to bring Minos to his will. The priest sent a delegation of all the lords of the valley to the cave mouth. Minos came and talked with them over the fallen rock. To his side came the Lady Memene and leaned upon the stone, her chin upon her hands.

Ukalles, now an outcast from his home on Tanos in upper Sardanes, was spokesman for the nobles.

"We are sore beset of troubles, O Minos!" he cried. "The priest saith the land is

doomed to the anger of the Lord Hephaistos, and day by day the doom marcheth. Thou dost stand against it and lure it on the people and on all of us, saith Analos. Wilt not yield to the god, and not let this fair valley perish, that hath stood for ages? Consider, for the people's sake—the people whom once thou didst love so well, and who love thee. It is promised thee that thou shalt not die if thou dost yield. Thou must, indeed, go to the Gateway and submit to what decree of punishment the god maketh, but not to death. Come, ere that we hold dear be gone, and Sardanes be blotted out."

"Strange is the love the people bear their king," answered Minos calmly. "Strange, indeed, when they have slain my servants, laid my palace in ruins, and stricken my very name from the seat of my fathers—"

"But that was by orders of the god through his priests," broke in Ukalles.

"Right well I know that so ye are deluded to believe," replied the king. "Yet were those orders from the priests carried out by hands and hearts of those who once were my people. Minos hath no people more, save these few faithful ones who abide with him, risking all."

"Now list thee, Ukalles and all of those with thee, for this is the last word of Minos. Once, before he did send his spearsmen against me, I did tell this Analos that, were Minos convinced for one little moment that by any sacrifice, however great, he could avert that which falleth on the valley, that sacrifice he would make, and hesitate not. Of such is Minos not convinced. Not of the god are the rumblings of the hills, the dying fires and the coming of the snows."

"Thou blasphemest," Ukalles shouted in anger, "and in thy madness dost bring doom on us all. My curse and that of all these, and of the people, the priests and the great Hephaistos, lieth on thee, if thou dost not yield thee to his grace."

"Curse on, thou fool," was Minos's answer. "I mind thy curses as little as the wind that bloweth. If this god of thine be great and powerful, as thou sayest, and as the priests do preach, how is it that he doth allow me, one man alone, to stand in his divine path? Why hath he not come hither and plucked me from my place and bent or broken me to his will?"

Minos raised his hand on high with the great sword shining in it.

"I, Minos, king in Sardanes until the end, do defy this Hephaistos. Hath he need of

such as thou and Analos to do his will for him, he is no cause for fear. Away, ye superstition-ridden dullards, and run your mad pace through. Minos yieldeth not. He defieth all of you. Your god cometh not, nor will come, because—*there is no god!*”

Shaking and trembling in the fears aroused by the king's defiance, the nobles turned to go. Only Karnaon stood out from among them.

“Memene, my daughter, leave thou this madman and come to me,” he called. “Come, girl. Thy father commandeth thee.”

“And I, my father, do disobey thee,” said the girl.

“Then take thou thy father's bitter curse,” Karnaon shouted. He stamped his foot in his anger.

“That thou didst give me once, O father, when thou didst send me to the Gateway to marry the foul priest,” answered Memene. “That is neither forgotten nor forgiven thee.”

“Thou art no more daughter of mine,” Karnaon said between his set teeth. Then he, too, turned away and followed the others down the steep hill, walking heavily.

Slowly the nobles crossed the valley and the river and took their tidings to Analos at the Gateway.

At the top of the pathway to the first terrace, the high priest met them, escorted by the black robed company that served the mighty altar of Hephaistos. When he saw that they brought no royal captives with them, and heard the tale of the defiance Minos had hurled at the ancient god, his anger rose and choked him so that he answered them nothing. He stood and heard them through, his hands clenched under his robe so that the nails of his fingers bit into his palms.

For a time he stood so. Then he rent his black robe from him, tearing it to shreds, and in his red paraphernalia of death ran up the terraces like a flame. In a room in his own house on the upper terrace he threw himself on the marble floor and writhed and rolled and tore at his black beard, gone clean mad with impotent rage. When one of his priests came to consult him, he leaped in frenzy, and slew the man with one stroke of a stone vase, then hid the body and went forth, somewhat calmed.

As he passed his threshold, a roaring smote upon his ears. From the lofty arched portal built against the side of the cliff gushed a tide of molten lava as wide

as the river Ukranis. The fire-lake had risen until it overflowed the ledge and poured down through the spiral passage that led from the temple of death to the upper terrace.

Out from the carved portal flowed the fiery torrent, hissing and snapping. Right in its path lay the rows of dead Sardanians, awaiting the rites of Hephaistos, their quiet faces upturned and ghastly in the baleful radiance reflected down on them from the flaming hill-crown. One moment they lay there in their still lines, and then the seething flood passed over them and licked them up.

On it poured, and crept over the brink of the terrace, and down in a fearful cascade, setting fire to the forest on the side of the holy hill. The force of the torrent soon abated, and the lava lay as though some terrible serpent had crept forth from the depths of the earth and stretched itself adown the terraces. For hours it glowed before it cooled into dross and ashes. The fire in the forest spread, until half the mountain was aflame, and the lower end of the valley presented a spectacle of unearthly splendor.

That flood of lava was a spurt of the very heart's blood of the valley. Even as it jetted from the side of the Gateway, half way up the valley's rim three more of its volcanic guardians gave up their fiery ghosts, and the cold grip of the Antarctic took hold of their gaping throats.

Undaunted by the fury that raged on the Gateway to the Future, Analos would not desert his post on the upper terrace. All of the other priests he drove from him, bidding them abide below with the stricken people until such time as he should summon them to him again. He stayed alone with his god.

More days of terror passed. The red priest from the flaming hill and Minos the king from his lair on Mount Latmos watched the march of winter down the valley.

CHAPTER V

THE WARNING OF THE LAST MOON

WHEN Nature issues a decree, the execution thereof is pitiless. She recks naught of dynasties or nations. When she would have a clean page on which to write, she erases, if needs be, and with inexorable completeness, the fairest characters she may have inscribed previously. The smallest and the greatest,

the tiny grass blade, the towering forest giant, the lowly anthill, the lofty mountain, the blind worm in the dust, proud man, the "lord of creation"—be any or all of these in her path. Nature breaks them, and, with her ally, Time, makes smooth the page for her next writing.

Only those who are wise and instructed may pore over such an erasure and, from a faint trace here, a blur there, partly read and partly guess at that which once was writ.

Years uncounted, Sardanes had flourished in the wastes of the Southland. Then, the great All-Mother, always unhurried, drew a steadfast white finger across the valley.

Only a fortnight elapsed from the day on which the Gateway to the Future sent forth its first flare of fire, that followed centuries in which it had been dark—only a brief fortnight, and the Gateway alone of all the volcanic ring still sent fire and smoke heavenwards. All the sister hills lay silent and lifeless, their furious spirits spent and gone elsewhere, their seamed summits crowned with the white of Antarctic snows.

First to yield was the holy river Ukranis. Ice bound its sources until it became a mere streamlet, soon paralyzed by the cold into a glittering thread. A gray time crept over the green velvet of the grass, and a white pall covered it softly. The blue roses withered and fell. The grain in the fields ceased to grow and lay lifeless. Bushes and shrubs died. The giant trees shed their faded foliage, their roots strangled in the chill of death, their palsied branches brittle and breaking down under a weight of snow. The bright birds of many hues that had flashed back and forth through the forest glades and lanes fluttered to the ground with mournful cries and died. The hum of insect life was stilled. On the hill-

sides, the little brown rabbits shivered in their burrows, nestled together and slept forever.

With all of these, there passed a hundred things, animate and inanimate, that had their living like in no other spot on the whole earth.

Only man and his closest companions lingered. At the foot of the terraced hill of Hephaistos all of Sardanes that still lived were gathered—all, with the exception of Minos the king and his company on the hill of Latmos.

At the north end of the valley, with their backs to the last of the flaming hills and their faces towards the encroaching snows, the Sardanians pitched a great camp. Some few small houses that once had been those of the tillers of the fields, were occupied by the lords and their families. The people, nearly two thousand of them, camped on the ground with blankets and furs and some articles of their wooden household furniture, each little family in its own group.

Against the creeping white enemy that had invaded the valley, they set a barrier of flame. A hundred axmen, working in shifts, with as many ponies, cut and dragged trees from near-by hillsides. Hour after hour they piled the fires with wood from the hymanan forests, and kept a blazing ring around the camp. When one party was wearied, another took up the work.

So, with hope departing, they kept life in their bodies for a few days.

To that end of the valley were brought all of the small horses in the kingdom, to the number of several hundreds. There was not enough fodder to maintain the poor animals for long, and they died by the score. The slopes of the Gateway swarmed with wild goats, driven thither with all the rest by the sinister white in-



"Elementary!" says Watson

CAIRO, ILL.—Calvin Watson, Cairo businessman, says it's easy to pick today's best whiskey buy. "Judge taste, lightness, mildness, flavor—and you'll switch to Calvert. I did. Elementary!"

vader that had crept to their loftiest haunts in the cliffs, and had cut them off from their food supplies. They and the horses were all that remained of animal life in Sardanés, except the dogs of Minos on Latmos.

Bitter as was the exigency, Analos the priest would not suffer the people to ascend to the terraces of the Gateway, where was still some warmth from within the hill. So strong was the grip of their superstitions and his threats, that, shivering, facing death and desperate, the people still heeded and obeyed him.

Analos, guardian of the portals of the Gateway, dwelt alone with the majesty of his god, save for the wild goats, which cared naught for orders, priest or god.

Watch was kept no longer at the mouth of the cavern where Minos and his party lay. Well it was for them that it was so, else they had perished of cold. No longer was the cave tenable without fire. Like the people below in the valley, the refugees were forced to work in shifts of axmen to keep the lives within them. In the cave a fire roared constantly, and another without on the plateau.

Analos had given up his battle against the king. It was by his orders that his spearsmen kept watch at the cave no longer. His fiery spirit was burning itself out within him, and he was turning cold, as the lifeless hills turned cold. It seemed to him that his will roamed through the chambers of his mind, and in them could find no more of anger against Minos; nor could it conjure up, as it had been wont to do, more terrible behests of the god Hephaistos. Chaos had come to Analos, and let it come, said he, for no more might he read the mind of his mighty master and interpret his wishes.

On the Gateway he dwelt alone and in a daze, and waited, waited, for he knew not what. But he was to see one more vision—wild as any his madness ever brought to him.

He hardly ever slept. Hour by hour he paced the paths of the upper terrace, before the carven portal of the cliff, until there came a day when he found that he could enter the winding way that led to the ancient temple of death on the crater ledge.

On the stone steps of the sanctuary the priest laid himself, worn out with his vigil, and there sleep bound him fast. For hours he slumbered on. He awoke with a great start of horror, the fear of a half-remembered dream, a monstrous vision. He

rushed to the brink of the sheer ledge.

HUNDREDS of feet below him writhed the fiery lake, wafting upwards its roseate mists and vapors, as it had for centuries. It was once more at its ancient level—or was it below? He stared; and as he gazed, it seemed to him that, inch by inch, very slowly, the seething maelstrom was sinking!

Suddenly realization came to him. The flaming crown of the Gateway was gone. The fires of the Gateway were going!

Poised at the ledge's brink, he flung wide his arms. "Hephaistos! Hephaistos! Master, whither goest thou?" he shrieked. The dull rumble of the fires, the sighing of the wind in the mighty cone, the soft curling reek of the fire mists drifting by him were his only answer. Came the thought of those below in the valley, and he rushed from the temple and passed down the terraces.

Already snow was falling on their green declivity.

His appearance on the side of the mountain was greeted with a shivering moan from the people. When the Gateway had gone dark, and new terror had assailed them, they still had held to the word of the priest. No one of them set foot on the holy hill. Quaking, they crowded together at its foot and waited the coming of Analos. A thousand eyes were upon him as he went down the terraces—not the arrogant, masterful man they always had known him, but a bowed and silent figure, walking with folded arms and eyes cast down, great eyes that glowed but dimly in their caverns. Even so, he was still the master—and still mad.

As he paused on the lowermost terrace, they crowded closely about him. A nation held its breath and waited for his words. He raised his head and his gaze swept over the close ranks of the people. He held out his arms toward them in silence for a moment before he spoke.

"A message I bear to his people from the mighty Lord Hephaistos," he said clearly. "Patience for but a little time, and he shall hear it. But first I must go to Latmos. Take me thither."

Six strong men made a litter and carried him, fighting their way through snow almost knee-deep, to the plateau on Latmos.

Hunters of the king, laboring at their fire on the plateau, saw the party on its way. One of them summoned Minos.

"The red priest hath come again from

the Gateway," he shouted into the cave.

Armed and ready, Minos the king came forth, but laid his weapons down when he saw only six unarmed and gloomy men. Analos clambered from his litter and faced him.

"Once more, and this the last time of all, cometh Analos, priest of Hephaistos, to look upon thy face, thou Minos, who wast king," he said. "Nay, answer me not in anger, for I speak not in anger or bitterness," he continued quickly, when the king would have replied. "Hear me through. That which hath passed between us, let it pass and be past. No longer beareth Analos command of his god to do harm to thee or thine."

He raised his arm and pointed to the south up the valley. Minos saw that the arm trembled, and the man was swaying.

"Sardanes lieth dead," the priest went on. "Life cometh to the valley no more, for the god goeth hence forever, and leaveth all things behind him as doubtless they were before he came in the ancient days and made his home and guided hither his chosen people.

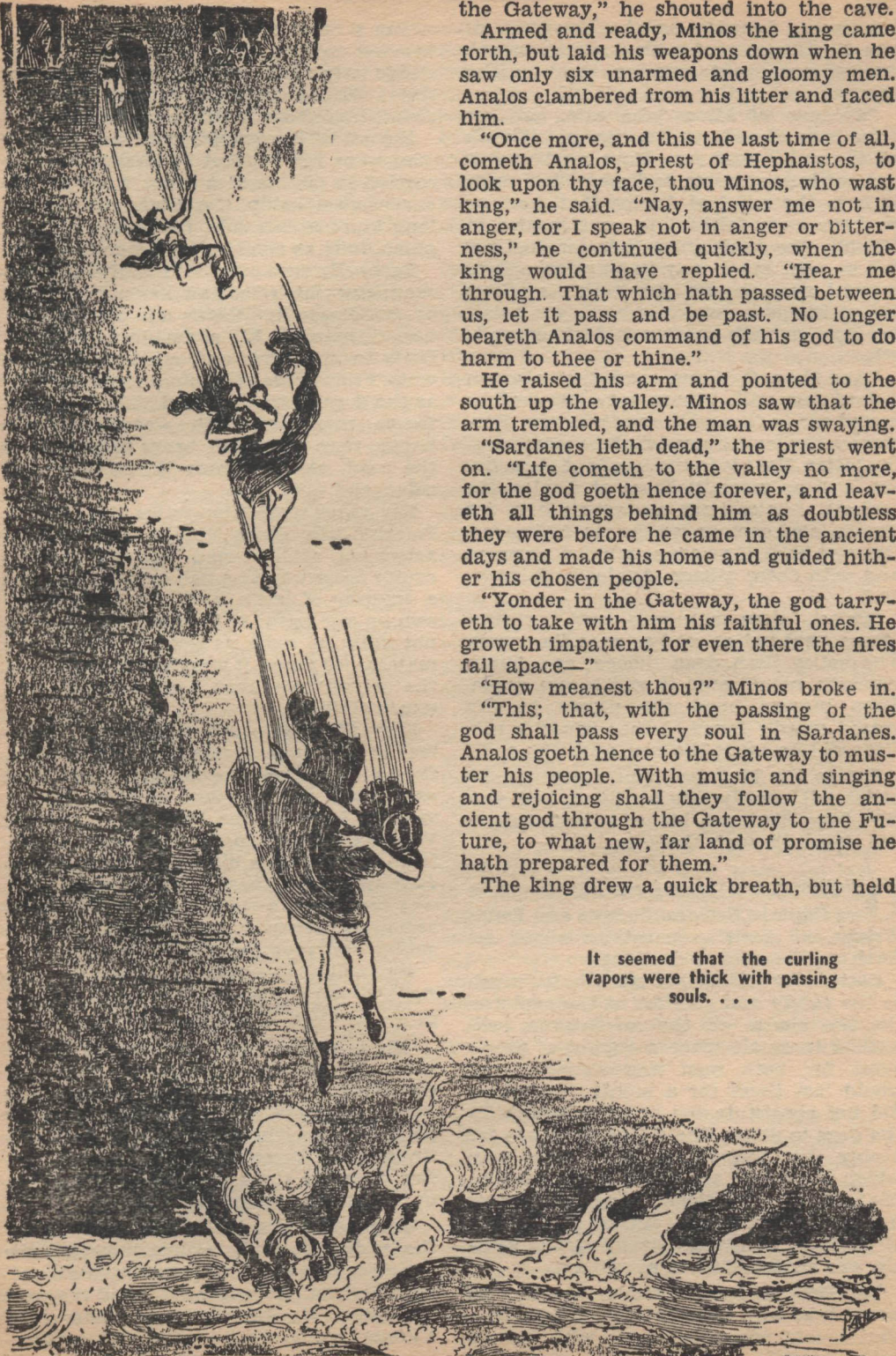
"Yonder in the Gateway, the god tarryeth to take with him his faithful ones. He groweth impatient, for even there the fires fall apace—"

"How meanest thou?" Minos broke in.

"This; that, with the passing of the god shall pass every soul in Sardanes. Analos goeth hence to the Gateway to muster his people. With music and singing and rejoicing shall they follow the ancient god through the Gateway to the Future, to what new, far land of promise he hath prepared for them."

The king drew a quick breath, but held

It seemed that the curling
vapors were thick with passing
souls. . . .



his peace. Leaning on the shoulders of two of his bearers, for his strength waned, Analos turned his somber eyes on the hunters.

"Ye men of Minos," he said, and his voice was almost gentle, "come yet with all the rest, I pray you. Your people await you, with your wives and your little ones. It is in the mind of Analos that, because ye have been faithful to your master in his folly, the punishment therefor shall not fall on you. Much may be forgiven a loyal servant, even though he setteth his master before his god. Analos biddeth you come, for time groweth short, and darkness fall-eth.

"And thou, O Minos, come thou also, an indeed thou wilt. I know not what shall be meted out to thee of the god's mercy. Perchance thy punishment shall be most passing bitter. That is in the hands of Hephais-tos, and no more in those of Analos, his servant. Analos hath no further hate for thee in his heart, or for the maid Memene. Come ye both, if ye are so minded, in peace and with these others. Analos hath spok-en."

"Priest, thou art mad still," replied Minos, "but not so mad as once thou wert. The valley lieth dead indeed, and Minos knoweth not if ever it will bloom again. Thou mayest bend the people to thy crazed mind's fancy. Minos bendeth not. Here will he await the end, until the end."

Before the king had quit speaking, the priest fell wearily into his litter, and at a sign from his hand, his men started down the slopes through the snow.

ON THE day following the misadventure of Captain Scoland, Polaris and Zenas Wright, all their preparations made, set forth on the road to Sardanes.

Latter-day science has contributed much to the safety and comfort of the explorer. On the sledge of the adventurers was packed in small space a supply of provisions for both men and animals that would last them for a month, yet which did not constitute too great a weight for the dogs to draw. The sledge itself was far higher than the old affair of wood with which the son of the snows had set out on his previous perilous trips. Wherever lightness would not detract from the strength to withstand straining, the vehicle was constructed of aluminum.

The travelers were armed heavily. Ill would it go with any shape of man or beast that should cross their path with threaten- ing intent. From the belt of Polaris

swung a brace of automatic pistols of the heaviest caliber. Strapped handily on the sledge were three-high-powered rifles. Old Zenas Wright contented himself with one pistol, like those of his companion.

Not all of the trappings of the younger man were the product of civilization. He carried in his hand a stout spear of his own workmanship. On that, and on the long knife at his side, he depended, in a pinch, fully as much as he did on the guns.

Farewells were soon said at the camp, a ceremony which Scoland was not on hand to participate in. Polaris laid out his harness, inspanned his seven dogs, with big Boris in the lead, and cracked his long whip. From shore and ship a cheer went up as the dogs sprang forward. The two way-farers responded with waves of their hands, then bent their backs to the toil of the road, vanished over the crest of the ridge, and were gone.

For years more than twice the span of Polaris's life, Zenas Wright had been an active and athletic man. He had made no empty boast when he had said that he was a traveler of parts, and able to hold his own on any path. If the pace they set was not quite as swift as Polaris might have maintained alone, it was far from slow, and the old explorer kept it up tirelessly and uncomplaining.

Mile after mile fell behind the flying feet of the agile beasts and gliding men. Occasionally they stopped and made brief camp, but the pressure of their errand spurred them to the limit of endurance. Weather favored them. They met no blinding tempests with blinding snows to confuse and delay them. Lack of clear light was their only serious obstacle. The skies remained overcast and leaden, and no golden sun rays came to point their way.

"More light I could wish for gladly," said Polaris, "but I think the very instinct within me will not let me lose this road."

Often he scanned the horizon to the south, frequently halting the dogs and ascending to the summit of craggy snow hummock or low hill, with which the great plain was besprinkled. He also studied continually the formation of the ice-clad barrier range to their left, its sinister peaks in silhouette against the sky.

Used for years to fix his bearings by the landmarks set by nature, the eye of the snow dweller was photographic, his memory unerring. At length he found the path he sought. Spying afar from the crest of a craggy eminence, he noted the combination of contour and surroundings that told

him they were near to the end of their journey

He swung the dog team from the eastward course, and veered away to the south. Soon they came to a long depression, that wound southward among the low hills, in much the semblance of a sometime traveled highway.

With kindling eye, Polaris pointed down the reaches of its sinuous course

"Yonder, old man, stretches the Hunters' Road, and Sardanes lies at its farther end!" he cried. "In a few more hours we shall know the best or worst of this long trip of ours."

Even with the aid of the powerful glasses carried by Zenas Wright, Polaris could not pierce the distances to where the volcanic hills lay around the valley.

"If all were well, there should be at least some flare of fires against this dull sky," he muttered, "yet I see none."

Guiding the dogs into the road, Polaris urged them on at a pace faster than any they had yet taken, for he knew that this path was free from obstacles or pitfalls. As they came nearer to their goal, both men grew taciturn. Zenas Wright was absorbed with the food for thought that his eager old eyes supplied him. Polaris was oppressed with a prescience of tragedy. Why were there no fires on the horizon, and why no signs of travel on the white reaches of the Hunters' Road?

Once more they camped against a bluff cliff at a turn in the road, and then went on again. First with the glasses, and then with their eyes alone, they picked upon the dim outlines of the Sardanian mountain ring, dull white against the dun skies. Polaris shook his head gloomily.

"Much my heart does misgive me, old Zenas Wright," he said, "for I fear we are too late. Green, yon hills should be, and dark at their summits, but they are white.

The breeze blows from them to us, but is tempered with no warmth. I fear that the great calamity which your science has foretold is complete, and that all Sardanes is passed away."

As they drew nearer to the mountain ring, out to their left across the snowfields, they saw the evidences of a mighty disturbance of the face of the earth. Hills riven in twain, tremendous fissures and pits marked a long, wide scar that extended from the base of the hills and reached northward farther than they could see.

"Some giant force has passed that way," Polaris said, "the like of which I never saw in these lands. It is not unlike the track of a giant's sledge across the face of the country. How do you read it?"

"It is the path taken by the volcanic fires on their way from here to where we found them blazing on Ross Sea," Zenas Wright answered. "As they tore their way through the channels opened to them, they writhed and shook the earth and rock above them, and left this appearance when they had gone. That would have been a sight worth watching and study. The earth out there must have pitched and tossed like waves of the sea."

He paused, and his face was very solemn.

"I, too, am afraid that it's all no use," he said slowly. "That seam out there is cold, or there would be a fog above it so thick we could not trace it. That means that the fires have been gone for some time. It looks bad. But let us hurry on and see for ourselves."

THEY reached the north pass of Sardanes and found it half choked with snow where it always had been bare. It was a comparatively easy matter to sledge up and through it. Halfway up the pass

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the dogs balked and refused to go forward. Slinking and whining, the brutes skulked in their harness and cowered back against the sides of the sledge, nor would word or whip urge them on.

Hardly less keen than those of the animals themselves, the senses of the son of the snows soon warned him of the danger's nature. He sniffed at the air of the pass and turned smilingly to the scientist.

"A bear," he said, and then, contemptuously; "these dogs are of a poor spirit or we would have to hold them back rather than whip them on. Stay you here and try to quiet them. I will go on and clear the way."

He took a rifle from the sledge and laid down his spear, saying almost apologetically as he did so, "Well would I love to fight him after my old fashion and show you sport, but we haste, and have no time for sports."

Taking off his snowshoes and loosening the knife in his belt, Polaris ran forward around a turn of the rock. Hardly had he disappeared when the air reechoed to a burst of horrid howling, followed by the spitting crack of the rifle.

Polaris found his foe a few rods up the pass, a lean old bear, almost toothless, his once snow-white coat rusted to a dingy yellow, his claws well worn. He was feeling his way cautiously down the snow-covered rocks. With the wind blowing from him, he had no warning of the presence of an enemy until he saw Polaris kneeling scarcely fifteen feet from him. Then he howled indeed. It was his last challenge. A bullet from the powerful rifle, truly aimed, plowed through his shaggy breast and found his heart.

Whipping out his knife, Polaris cut the throat of the huge beast and hacked a piece of flesh from its shoulder. He ran down the path again and threw the bloody fragment before the dogs.

"An old trick," he laughed. "They smell the blood, they taste it, and they fear no more."

Up through the pass the travelers drove their team, past the carcass of the bear, and stood at the lip of the valley slope. Sardanes lay before them. Zenas Wright groaned aloud. Polaris Janess threw wide his arms in a gesture of sorrow, and his face grew solemn with pity.

"Gone," he whispered; "men and women and children, and the wonders they wrought—gone, and the snows have covered all!"

As they stood there, the Antarctic sun,

freed at last from its cloud bonds, shot a sullen red ray over the hills and down the valley, and laid bare the full measure of the ruin. From the gleaming cap of the Gateway to the Future, to Mount Helior in upper Sardanes the valley was banked with snow, its mansions hidden, its fields and forests buried deep. Only on the higher slopes was evidence that life had ever been. There the giant hymanan trees still stood against the storms, their branches bleak and bare, thrust out above the white masses that covered more than half their mighty trunks. Behind them loomed the cliffs of the mountain ring, their sheer sides also splotted with white.

Some distance down the valley, Polaris fancied he could distinguish a mass bulking up in the snow that he deemed marked where the Judgment House stood.

"In the hollow of the Gateway hill, and in caves in the mountain sides, perchance there is that which will repay your visit somewhat, old man," Polaris said to the geologist. "All else is dead."

Before the old man could answer the dogs became suddenly uneasy, growling and snarling. Polaris bent forward and cupped his ear with his hand. A long-drawn howling floated across the valley from the western range. "More bears," he said, then started and turned a flashing eye on his companion.

"Come on, old Zenas Wright!" he cried. "More than bears are here. Yonder howl dogs also. Did I not know that my gray brothers were dead these many months, all but Marcus, I might swear I heard their own voices. But, where dogs are, there are men also. Here is a new riddle. Come!"

Urging the huskies, they shot down the snow crusts of the hillside and started across the valley.

WHEN he reached the Gateway from his last visit to Mount Latmos, Analos despatched four men and a pony sledge to the deserted Judgment House to fetch to the hill of the god the huge drum of time. When it was brought, he appeared on the steps to the first of the terraces. His priests clustered about him in a black robed group.

He gazed down into the upturned faces of his people. At a signal, both priests and people knelt. For a space the crackling of the vast camp-fires was the only sound. Analos gathered his strength for what was to be his last speech. Never had man an audience more breathlessly attentive.

"Hephaistos calleth his children," the

priest began, his voice hollow and solemn, his words falling slowly. "Through me, Analos, high priest in Sardanes, his life-long servant, he calleth. It is not for man to question the ways of the ancient god. Analos questioneth not. When his master calleth, he answereth, 'Whither thou leadest me, there will I follow on.' I am ready. Are ye also ready, my people?"

In the pause that followed the question rose the voice of the Lord Ukalles of upper Sardanes. "Whither calleth the god, O master? Read thou his message to Sardanes."

Piercing clear the voice of the high priest in answer:

"To the Gateway to the Future calleth he his children, through the portals of the temple of death to the glory that lieth beyond, whither every Sardanian hath trod since the land was new."

A shiver passed through the kneeling ranks, and a whisper, half a moan, from two thousand human throats. Again spoke the Lord Ukalles: "Must this thing be, master? Is this the end? Is there no other way?"

"This thing must be," answered the red priest steadily. "There is no other way. This is the end in Sardanes. Be ye brave, all my people. In a far country, brighter even than the fair Sardanes ye have known, Hephaistos will welcome you. Think; since our forefathers came up from the seas to this place, no Sardanian ever hath lived, save one man only, but hath passed the Gateway when his time came. Without fear and without flinching have they passed whither the god beckoned them. And, if they died elsewhere, faithful friends brought them thither, and still they passed the portals. Thousands have gone this road. Will ye falter now, when the great god doth summon you to accompany him?"

Again he paused. From the people rose a many-voiced murmur, and its burden was, "We are ready, master, lead thou us on."

"The end hath struck, indeed," cried the Lord Ukalles. "Now is no time for words or thoughts, but to do the bidding of the god. It is fitting that the lords of Sardanes should take their proper station. Stand ye forth, my fellow nobles of the land, ye and yours."

In measured tones he called the roll of the mountains, omitting only Latmos, Epamon, and Lokalian. Minos dwelt on Latmos, Patrymion of Epamon and Garlaes of Lokalian had journeyed on before. Man

by man the nobles answered and took their places at the foot of the terrace with their families. Brought face to face with doom, the people met it sad-eyed and silent, but unflinching.

"It is well," cried Analos. "The children of the god fear not. Form in procession, my people, as for a festival. Cast wood on the fires to light the way."

Under this direction the huge drum was hoisted to the first terrace.

"Beat the drum, Karthanon, while the people make ready," commanded Analos. Karthanon the Aged bared a withered arm and laid on with measured stroke. Below the drum gathered the trumpeters. To the blare and boom of the music the Sardanians formed their ranks.

"When all is ready, Analos leadeth," said the priest. He staggered to the steps that led to the second terrace, and prostrated himself in prayer, with his face on the lowest step.

Across the valley from in front of the cave on Latmos, Minos and his men and the Lady Memene watched these proceedings from afar. The hymanan forests were down or bare, and they could see clearly by the light of the fires that ringed the camp. When they saw the people marshaling on the slope at the foot of the Gateway, and the first booming stroke of the drum beat up to their ears across the intervening space, the hunters drew apart and conferred among themselves in low tones.

Then came Zalos, their leader, and knelt at the feet of the king.

Tears rolled down the face of the sturdy captain.

"Lord Minos the king, I have served thee faithfully for many years, thee and thy royal house," he said in a broken voice. "As long as there was fighting to be done for thee, I and these men of mine would have stood with thee until death found us all. But now there is no more fighting, and here is the end of all things. Yonder go our people. With them are our wives, our fathers and mothers and children. At the gates of the temple of death do they stand and hold out their hands to us. Lord, think us not disloyal. We ask thee that we may join them and die with them. O king, if thou goest not also, let us go to them."

He bowed his head on Minos's hand, and wet it with his tears. The king raised him gently.

"Zalos, old friend and comrade, faithful and true hast thou been unto the end, thou and all these men, thy friends and mine.

Now do I absolve thee from thy allegiance and bid thee farewell. Go—go freely, and where thy hearts are calling thee. Minos hath nothing to forgive of thee, and much to thank. Farewell." In the flickering of the fire, tears gleamed on the cheek of the king also.

ONE by one the men came to him and knelt and kissed his hand. As they were about to depart, they heard the lad Alternes crying out within the cave, and he climbed over the rock in the passage and staggered to the side of the fire. He was weak with illness. His cheeks flamed and his eyes shone bright with fever.

"I heard the drum calling me," he cried. "Ah, look, the people gather at the Gateway!" He pointed across the valley. "A great festival is toward."

"Aye, lad," said Zalos, "the festival of Death. Yonder all Sardanes is gathered to march through the Gateway."

For a moment the boy stared, wild-eyed.

"Why, then, must Alternes go, too!" he said. "Take me with thee, Zalos. Farewell, my king." He reeled toward Minos, but his strength gave way. He pitched on his face, and a stream of blood welled from his lips. Minos bent and laid his hand on the lad's head. At a sign, four of the hunters picked the boy up and wrapped him in his cloak.

"Take me with you," said the king. "It is his right. . . . Lady Memene, what of thee?" he asked. "Here is the end. Thy people march to their last long sleep before the darkness cometh. There on the Gateway are thy father and all thy house. Goest thou also?"

The girl gazed at him for a moment, while Zalos and the hunters waited on her answer. She drew herself up proudly.

"Memene goeth not," she said; "here will she await the end, whatever it may be."

The hunters raised their arms in silent salute to the king and the maid, then turned, bearing the lad among them, and ran down the hillside, the snow spurting from beneath their flying feet.

When they arrived at the Gateway their loved ones welcomed them, only to bid them farewell for a longer journey than any they had yet taken. For the procession was formed and on the move.

At its head, leaning on two of his servants, Analos the high priest passed up the terraces. Behind him strode the others of the company of Hephaistos. Two stalwart priests bore the drum of time, and Karthanon the Aged walked beside, smiting it as

he went. After them came the nobles of the valley and their households, and then the concourse of the people, marching slowly and with raised faces.

As they set foot on the topmost terrace, the priests took up the chant of death, softly at first, and then with increasing volume. Voice after voice joined in the measured chant. The procession crossed the upper terrace, entered the lofty carved arch of the portal, and wound upward through the spiral passage to the edge of the Gateway's crater.

On the steps of the temple of death Analos took his stand, supporting himself against one of its pillars. The priests with the drum gathered before him.

"Forward without fear, children of Hephaistos!" he shouted. "Falter not! There waiteth the ancient god." He pointed to the brink of the ledge.

Firmly the trumpeters marched on, the red glow of the fire mists playing on their faces. They reached the brink, and they faltered not, and their trumpets sounded no more. On marched the nobles and the people, still singing as they marched. If any Sardanian, man or woman or child, blenched or cried out that day, the press of the people carried them on, the mighty chant drowned their voices. No coward turned back. Even a number of the small horses entered the hill with their masters, whinnying and nuzzling with their soft muzzles. They passed the Gateway with the rest.

Nearly the last of all came Zalos and his hunters. They carried with them the corpses of Alternes, who had not lived to reach the mountain.

At length it was done. Only the priests remained on the ledge. The reverberations of the smitten drum and the roaring of the fires in the fearful pit overbore their feeble chant.

"Forward, my brothers, true servants of the god!" cried Analos. "Forward, and I will follow you! Analos shall be the last of all, his duty done, his work complete."

With set faces, and bearing with them the drum of time, the members of the black-robed company advanced. Before the last stroke of Karthanon had ceased to echo through the hollows of the mountain, Analos stood alone. Staggering and weak, he, too, advanced. To his disordered fancy it seemed that the curling vapors before him were thick with passing souls.

Half the distance from the steps of the temple to the great hall he stumbled and fell. Faintness numbed his limbs.

His head swam dizzily.

"Hephaistos! Master," he cried in terror, "desert me not here! Strength! Grant me strength!"

He struggled madly. He clawed at the very rock of the floor, and dragged himself inch by inch toward the death he sought. His breath came in gasps. His jaw fell. The iron spirit of the man held back dissolution itself until his will was accomplished. Groping and crawling, he reached at last the polished chute in the rock, cut there by the priests centuries before and worn smooth by the passing of thousands of Sardanians.

"I thank thee, master," he sighed, content. He rolled into the chute, and his body shot downward and outward above the fiery lake. His red robe spread wide as he took the plunge, like the wings of some immense crimson bird swooping downward from a flaming sky to a blazing sea.

MINOS the king stood by his fire on the hill of Latmos. With folded arms he stood, and the Lady Memene sat near to him on a log of hymanan wood cut for the burning. Their eyes strained across the white Sardanian valley. Both were silent. They saw the long procession of those about to die sweep up the fire-lighted steeps of the Gateway to the Future. They heard the chant of death from two thousand throats as the people marched across the upper terrace and through the gloomy portal of the cliff, to the music of the trumpeters and the booming of the drum of time.

When the last man had passed within, they still heard the muffled thunder of the drum. Then that ceased also. Strong spirited as were they both, their hearts seemed to stop with it.

"Now art thou and I and Kalin the last Sardanians in the living world," the king said. So he spoke, not knowing that under the rocks and the snows, many long leagues to the northward, Kalin, the priest, lay asleep where Polaris Janess had left him nearly two years before.

"That end is come which the priest preached and the people feared," he continued, "the end which Minos could not believe would come. Nor doth he believe yet, nor will so believe, that it is wrought of a god. Nature hath withdrawn her mercy, and all things in Sardanes die.

"Believing not, Minos hath tarried. Now he is a king no longer. He hath no people left to rule. Naught remaineth but a snow-swept valley which death hath touched."

From her seat on the log the girl arose. She stood in front of Minos, so close that her soft breath fanned his cheek. A slow, red flush that was not of the firelight overspread her features. Her dark eyes flashed like jewels. She spoke, and her heart was in her voice.

"Little of all that thou hast valued is left to thee, Lord Minos," she said. "Thy people have turned against thee and are gone. Thy home is a ruin. The fast-falling snows cover the land thou didst love well. Some few friends were faithful unto the death, but death came, and they left thee. All that thou hadst to lose, thou hast lost, save thy life, thy dogs yonder, and one other thing, which, perchance, thou wilt value but little. In all the world, Lord Minos, there is not one to take thee by the hand and call thee friend.

"This is the hour which Memene hath foreseen and awaited. Say not that thou art no more king, my Lord Minos. Thou art *my* king. It was my will to stand beside thee when all the rest had passed—to tell thee that with thee I fear no danger and no death. I love thee, Minos—"

Like a man in a spell, Minos heard her words. Closer to him she swayed. He felt the softness of her body against his breast. From the folds of her cloak her white arms crept up about his neck and drew his face to hers. Their cheeks touched. Flame answered flame. With a deep-voiced cry, "*Memene!*" he caught her to him and crushed her lips against his own.

For a time they stood, locked fast in each other's arms. Then Minos lifted his face to the scintillant stars in the pale Antarctic sky. "If somewhere above there dwelleth a power which doth guide the destinies of men, Minos giveth thanks," he called, exulting—"thanks for the will within him which hath stood firm to wrest from dark days of strife and death one moment such as this!"

He shook his fist toward the south. "Come, thou wild spirit of the wastes," he cried, "o'erwhelm the valley of Sardanes with thy snows and thy tempests! Minos thou canst not daunt. Thou mayest kill, but thou canst not take away that which this day hath given!"

Again he bent above the girl, and saw her face all rosy and dimpled, where before it had been cold and indifferent. Mockery dwelt there no longer. The lights of love shone so strongly as to shake his stout heart.

Had he won her but to lose her?

"Ah, Memene, Memene, loved one," he

whispered, "love like ours was never doomed to die here in the snows. There must—there shall be some way to cheat death—"

From within the cave the baying of Pallas and her brood interrupted him. He started, his every nerve athrill with a new thought.

"There is a way!" he cried. "The beasts of the stranger! Whither passed Polaris and Kalin and the Rose maid, to that far-away land they named America, there shall we fare, also—there where is light and warmth for love. When the long night hath passed, my princess, then shall we journey northward!"

Memene, nestling close to him, replied, "Would that it might be so, O king of mine. Would that time might give us of its mercy and its years. Then would Memene show thee how a Sardanian girl can love. But if so much be not granted to us, and cold death cometh, Memene shall be well content to die with thee."

He led her gently through the passage, and with infinite tenderness lifted her over the rock and into the cavern. When they were come thither, Minos suddenly smacked his thigh, and a short and foolish laugh burst from him. He looked at her, abashed.

"What is it that maketh thee to laugh thus and look so strangely?" asked the girl.

"Why, lady," he said, shamefacedly, "it did strike upon my mind that every priest in Sardanes hath gone, and there is none left to wed us."

A flood of burning color made the face of Memene more lovely still. She covered her hot cheeks with her hands. When she looked up again, she met the troubled gaze of the king with a brave smile.

"Thou knowest the words of the ancient ceremony, Minos, dost thou not?" she asked him.

"Aye, by rote."

"Yonder is wine, and here be lights. Let us say it, each to the other. I think that those who watch from above, seeing how it is with us, shall not greatly blame."

Minos stretched a rug on the rock floor and fetched a gleaming ilium flagon, which he set on one of the chests. Then lover and maid knelt before one of the flaring torches with joined hands. Sentence by sentence, they repeated the responses of the quaint old Sardanian marriage rite, through to the "Be thou mine and I thine until our call cometh." They touched the wine with their lips, then rose and passed

their hands with fingers locked above the flame of the torch.

"My bride!" Minos whispered, and gathered the girl in his arms. The great gray dogs looked on with curious eyes. So were Minos and Memene wed.

WITHIN a week after the death march of the Sardanian nation, the fires that had lingered in the crater of the Gateway to the Future had passed away, and that hill was cold and still as any in the ring of the valley. On its slopes the grass and herbiage withered, and the snows fell. For a few days the steeps swarmed with goats, the hardy animals outliving the last of the ponies; but they, too, soon died of the cold and starvation.

The big bonfires that the people had built around their last camp had long since burned out to ashes. The mantle of darkness that fell over the valley was broken only by the blaze on the hill of Latmos, which Minos tended, laboring mightily, and hewing therefor vast quantities of wood from the stark hymanan forests.

The task of bringing the wood up the mountainside through the snow overtaxed even his great strength, if he would have enough to keep his fire big and bright. Leaving three of the younger dogs with the Princess Memene, he took Pallas and the other three, one day, and set off for the storehouse at the outer foot-hills of the north pass to fetch his sledge.

On his way to the pass, he stopped at the Gateway. He climbed the rugged terraces, passed the arch and the spiral pathway, groping his way in the darkness, and once more, and for the last time, stood within the temple of his father's god.

The night was clear, and the polar stars shone brightly down. Some portion of their radiance penetrated through the open summit of the mountain, making faint twilight within it. Fierce gusts of wind shrieked and eddied through the giant cone, tossing with them swirls of drifting snow. The gale clutched at the cloak of the king. The white snow-wraiths leaped and danced. In the wild moaning of the wind, it were easy to fancy that the ghosts of the dead Sardanians were wailing above the ruins of their temple. In that place of gloom Minos tarried but a little while, then went his way.

Returning with his sledge some two hours later, the king found that a new and powerful life had entered the valley. As he passed across the snow-fields where once had been the marshes, he heard a

far-away and hideous howling break forth from the cliffs of the Gateway. It was answered by the snarling of his dog-pack. The four as one turned in their traces and strained toward the hill, mouthing their challenge loud. From the Latmos hill echoed the baying of their three fellows.

Well did Minos, the hunter, know the meaning of the outcry above him. Holding back his dogs sternly, he peered up the towering mass of the mountain. Outlined against the dark body of a cliff, he saw, or thought he saw, two monstrous white forms roaring and striking. Cracking his long lash above the backs of his unwilling beasts, he hurried to Latmos.

With the far-flaming menace of the fiery hills removed, the monarchs of the wilderness, the polar bears, had come to Sardanes, where they never had dared to penetrate before. They had crept over the mountain rim, and were quarreling among themselves as they tore at the carcasses of the dead goats on the sides of the Gateway. How long would it be ere they came up against Latmos? And should they beset his path when he ventured on his journey northward? thought the king with sudden fear. What then? He carried no weapons that would slay from afar, as did the son of the snows who had gone before him.

From that day on Minos went no more afield. With the aid of the dogs and the sledge, he hauled huge store of wood and piled it against the cliffs at either side of the cave entrance. Laborious as was the work, he carried large quantities of the fuel to the interior of the cavern and stacked it against the walls.

Weeks grew into months. Darkness and starlight alternated, grew at length into gray twilight, as the slow sun journeyed farther and farther southward. Still Minos and his princess dwelt in their cavern and

kept life strong within them. With wood and skins and cloths, of which there was an almost inexhaustible store in the cave, the king constructed a sort of room, by walling off a gallery that branched into the cliff from one side of the main cavity and adjoining the entrance. That made much smaller the space he must heat and light. He abandoned the practise of keeping a fire on the plateau, kindling it there only when he made an excursion after more wood. In that way he cut down his labor much.

For food, they drew on the vast granary bins that lined the sides of the cavern, supplemented with dried fruits and honey. In one of the galleries of the cave was a stock of smoked meats, and that Minos reserved for the dogs, fearing that a diet of bread alone might cause the animals to sicken.

His labor and forethought, his splendid struggle against odds, did not avert the lash of calamity. Unlooked for, it dealt him a stroke that ended all his hopes.

He had brought a sledge load of wood up the hillside one day, and had loosed the dogs from their harness and driven them through the passage. Ahead of him, the lithe beasts scrambled over the rock into the cavern. As active as they, he put a hand to the rock and leaped. A loop of the harness he bore caught on a projection on the boulder and threw him. He fell heavily on his face. His ax of ilium slipped from his belt and fell beneath him, its keen-edged blade uppermost. His head struck on it, and it bit deep into his right temple.

WITH his senses swaying, Minos dragged himself to his feet. He reeled along the passage to the curtained entrance to his home. Nearly spent, and with the bright blood coursing down his neck, he



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staggered straight through the fire and fell across his couch. He heard the cry of Memene, his loved one, but it sounded faint and far. He felt her arms close around him, and then darkness let fall its heavy curtain over his mind.

Days passed while he lay in a stupor and strange dream dramas played themselves out around his pillow. Again he stood in the narrow pass, and stout Sardanians went down before his good sword. Again he stood on Latmos's side and saw the stricken people march boldly to their doom, only that time the one most loved of all went with them, and he was chained and could not follow.

Vainly he called out to her, "Memene! Memene!"

With that dear name upon his lips, the king awoke. He found her head pillowed close to his own. Her arms were around his neck. She was weeping softly and gazing into his face, her black eyes filled with sorrow and terror. Around the couch he heard the dogs whining and growling. It was very cold, and only one faint ray of light struggled through a cleft in the rock above the passage that went into the little room.

Minos strove to raise himself on his elbow, but found himself too weak. "What hath befallen," he muttered, "and why is it so cold and dark?"

"Oh, Minos, Minos," wailed the girl, "our end is come. Our fire—'tis gone. Worn out with tending thee, for thou hast lain sick these many days, I did give way and sleep—for but a little hour, I thought—and when I woke our fire was gone. Not one little spark was left. Ah, Minos, thou diest, and I myself have slain thee, my love, my love."

With a mighty effort he raised an arm and set it about her. "Nay, fret not for that which thou couldst not prevent," he whispered. "Minos is content to die. It was to be. The end cometh but a little sooner, this way."

A burst of howling from without interrupted him and goaded the dogs to frenzy.

Memene shuddered. "The great white bears are there," she whispered. "They have howled for hours. Soon will they enter and rend us. I have tied the dogs fast so that they might not rush out and fight and be slain—Ah—see!"

Horror struck, she pointed to the passage. Overcoming by degrees his fear of an unseen trap, one of the monsters had penetrated the pass and was clawing at the rock. The way was narrow, but, by

dint of much writhing and squeezing, the bear reared his ponderous bulk over the boulder. In the dusk of the passageway his shaggy head and colossal shoulders shone white. His cruel jaws slavered as he craned his head around the turn in the wall, swaying it slowly from side to side, as his blazing merciless eyes sought out his prey.

At that sight the Princess Memene turned from fear to rage. Like a tigress with young, she leaped from the couch, caught a spear from the wall, and dashed into the passage.

"Thou shalt not!" she shrieked, scarce knowing what she said. "Thou shalt not enter! My king and I shall die in peace, and not be torn by thee!"

As she screamed she struck furiously at the bear's head with the illum spear, and gashed him deeply. Wedged where he could go neither backward nor forward without great effort, the huge animal was hard put to it to defend himself from the attack of the infuriated woman. Dauntlessly she faced him, thrusting with the spear.

Minos, on his couch, strove with all his will and strength to rise up and go to her aid, but so weak was he that all his struggling did not lift his shoulders from his pillow.

In the narrow confines of the cave, the howling of the bear and the snarling of the seven dogs, gone mad at sight of their enemy and with balked lust for fighting, made the din of an inferno. The gray snow runners twisted and tore at their leashes, and leaped and leaped again, only to fall back on the rock floor, as their ropes held.

Pallas alone used method. Finding her struggles for freedom in vain, she turned on the stout rope and rent it with her teeth. Tearing at it furiously, she weakened it. At last it gave way, and she bounded past the princess and leaped straight in the monster's face.

Slashed and bleeding, with the sight of one eye nearly gone, the bear was fully aroused. As the dog leaped, one powerful white paw swung, armed with its spread of crescent claws. It caught Pallas in mid-air, hurled her against the side of the passage, and she fell, her lifeblood spurting from a jagged wound in her neck. Another stroke dashed the spear from the hand of Memene.

Gathering his hind legs under him against the rock, the bear thrust himself forward into the cave!

CHAPTER VI

BACK TO LIFE AND LIGHT

SCREAMING in a desperate frenzy that cast aside all fear, the Princess Memene sprang back along the passage and caught up another spear to replace that which the stroke of the bear had spun from her grasp. In her veins surged up the blood that had faced death on many a hard-fought battlefield in the years when the world was young, and counted no odds. Pale to the lips, her eyes ablaze, she fronted her towering antagonist. For the bear was over the rock now, reared on his hinder legs, and advancing to make an end.

At her feet writhed the dying dog, above her swung the crescent talons; the roaring, slavering jaws were opening wide to rend and tear her tender flesh.

Came a flash of fire from the passage, a crashing report that echoed and vibrated through the rocky corridor. The bear stiffened in every limb and line. A shudder ran through his immense bulk. He turned half around and, with one unearthly howl, collapsed across the floor of the passage, his life gushing from him in a crimson torrent that jetted from under his shoulder.

As though in the grip of a dream, the girl saw the beast go down. She heard the fiendish clamor of the ravening pack behind her, sounding faint and from a distance. Then with a shout a great man clothed in white furs strode into the passage. His cap had fallen from his head, and long golden hair fell about his shoulders. In his hand he carried a smoking rifle.

For a moment he stood out to the girl's sight, clear cut as a living cameo. The darkness fell upon her. Vainly she strove to command her dizzying senses. Her knees gave way. With a little sigh, she pitched forward, falling across the carcass of the bear, which still was moving feebly in its death agony.

Polaris leaped over the body of his fallen foe and stood, peering about him with quick glances. As his eyes became accustomed to the half light in the cavern, he saw the princess lying across the dying monster, her long black hair disheveled and mingled with the snowy fur of the brute. He stooped and caught up the girl and laid her gently to one side, where the beast in the throes of dissolution might not do her harm.

Looking beyond her, he saw the small

room hung with skins, saw the six gray dogs crouched in leash, every burning eye turned on him, and, at the farther side of the room, saw the long, broad form of a man lying loose flung across a low pallet, his head hanging over its side. All that he saw, and then from the dusk along the wall of the passage a gaunt, gray form reared up in his path, and he forgot all else.

"Pallas!" he cried. "Pallas! Are you come back from the dead?"

Taking a stiff step forward, the dog gathered all the strength in her weakening frame and raised herself on her hind legs. She set her forepaws against the breast of the master loved so well and, whining, strove to look into his face. Her eyes were glazing, and the blood was spurting fast from a ghastly wound in her neck.

"No, my Pallas, you are no ghost—but soon will be," Polaris said with breaking voice. "I find you, and I lose you." He steadied the dog with his strong hands and laid her cold muzzle against his cheek.

With each gasping breath she tried to bark her joy, but she was too weak. A low howl burst from her lungs that carried with it a world of glad greeting, affection, and farewell. She shuddered, her head drooped, and her limbs relaxed.

"Good-by, Pallas," whispered the master. He lowered the limp body to the floor and stepped forward, wet-eyed, to explore the other wonders of the cave. First he carried the unconscious girl into the room and laid her on one of the large chests, drawing a blanket over her. Crouching along the wall, where they were tied fast to a beam, the six children of Pallas watched his every motion, their hackles erect, their teeth bared. He ran his eyes approvingly over their powerful forms, and noted with a smile the leathern harness that hung on the beam.

"You serve a master who has trained you well," he muttered. "Soon you and I shall be fast friends."

APPROACHING the pallet, Polaris took the man who lay there by the shoulders and turned him over, placing his head back on its pillow. He started with surprise when, despite the emaciation of sickness and a ten days' growth of beard, he recognized the well-remembered features of the Sardanian king.

"You, too, Minos?" he exclaimed. "Truly, the ways of fate are strange."

A touch of the hand told him that the heart of the king still beat. He glanced

around the room. The fireplace, with its dead ashes, told its story. For the first time he realized the cold of the place.

"A wound, sickness, the loss of fire, and no means to make one, then the beast. I find you in evil case, indeed, Minos the king," he said.

He hurried to the fireplace and piled wood upon the hearth. With his keen knife he hacked splinters and set them to the wood. Producing a box of matches from the breast of his shirt, he struck them and fired the pile in many places. Going back to the king, he exerted his great strength, and dragged the couch across the rocky floor to the side of the fireplace. He spread a rug on the floor and laid the girl on it. She showed no sign as yet of returning consciousness.

While he was at work, he heard the voice of Zenas Wright calling him insistently from the hill slopes outside the cave, where he had left him to mind the dog team.

Polaris hastened out, and met the old man in the passage.

"I was getting worried," the scientist said. "I've unhitched those wicked brutes of yours and given them something to chew on. They'd have taken a chance at me if I hadn't, I guess. What's in there?"

In a few words Polaris told him what he had found, the old geologist tugging at his white beard and punctuating the tale with many an exclamation of surprise.

"Now haste you within, old man, with that flask of yours," said Polaris, "and see if the man may be saved. The girl, I think, is sound and well—she has only fainted—but Minos the king has been sorely wounded, and lies so ill that his bones almost show through his flesh."

Zenas Wright ran to the sledge and fetched a small medicine case and a leather-covered flask of brandy. Polaris helped him to scramble over the rock to the inner corridor.

"Ware the dogs," the young man cautioned. "Keep well away from them, or they will have the clothes from off your back. There are some things to be done out here, and then I will join you."

The scientist hastened along the passage. By the leaping firelight he surveyed the strangest room that ever he had seen in all his threescore and odd years. The huge carved chests, the cloths and rugs of strange materials, the quaint utensils, the weapons of iridescent ilium, lighted the fires of enthusiasm in his eyes.

"Marvelous!" he said. Well as he would have liked to stop at once, and handle and

study those curiosities, he hurried on, giving a wide berth to the snarling brutes, which gave him no friendly greeting. He reached the side of the couch and bent above the still form of the king.

With expert fingers, the old man felt the wrists of Minos. "Um-m, he's not so bad," he muttered. He unbound the bandage from the king's head and inspected the wound in the sick man's temple. It had been a deep gash and a wide, but it was nearly healed. Zenas Wright found a small flagon and water, in which he mixed a draft of the fiery brandy. Supporting the king's head on his arm, Wright forced his lips and teeth apart and poured the strong spirit down Minos's throat.

The sick man coughed weakly, but swallowed the liquor. Almost immediately a line of color crept across his white face. He turned on the old man's arm, his head wavered from side to side; then he settled himself, and his deep, regular breathing indicated that he had passed from swooning into sleep.

From the king the geologist passed to the girl. He lifted the long, dark tresses from her face. "A beauty, or would be if she was washed," he commented. For Memene's cheeks were stained with tears, and grime from the floor where she had fallen, and smeared with blood that had jetted from the polar bear.

Polaris's fire was blazing hotly, and the room was warm. Wright loosened the girl's dress at the neck. He poured a few drops of the brandy into her mouth. Finding a small cloth, he dipped it in water, and laved her face and hands. Fear, rage, and despair had combined strongly in the shock which brought about her faint, and she did not respond at once. When he saw that her breathing was becoming easier, the old man left her, and set about redressing the wound on the head of the sick man.

He was busy with scissors, bandages, and ointment, when he heard a gasping cry behind him.

Over him stood Memene. Far above her head, in the grip of both hands, she swung the flashing ilium sword of Minos. Zenas Wright let fall his bandages and shrank, startled fully as much by the rage of suspicion and anger in the girl's face as by the menace of the glittering blade.

"Drop it, foolish girl! Drop it!" he shouted hastily, recovering himself somewhat. "Can't you see that I'm only mending your man's broken head?" He held out the bandages and pointed to the wound in

Minos's temple and the basin and balm.

His words meant nothing to the Sardanian princess, but she comprehended the gestures. The suspicion left her dark eyes. Slowly she lowered the sword. With a little cry she let it fall on the floor. In another instant she was curled at the head of the king's couch, and her quick, soft fingers were aiding the old man lavaging the wound, and picking up for him, in turn, each article that he required, almost before he indicated it.

Her eyes followed every minute step of the operations. She watched jealously every fleeting shade of expression in the old man's face. Several times she overwhelmed him with a torrent of words that were "Greek" indeed to him. He could only spread his hands out helplessly and shake his head in answer.

Clutching at his arm when the bandage was made fast, she pointed to the sleeping man. Zenas Wright replied to the concern and the question in her face by placing his finger first over the heart of Minos and then on the wound, and smiling and nodding.

Wild joy shone in the eyes of Memene. She made as if to kneel at Zenas Wright's feet, then remembered that she was a princess. She raised her arm in the Sardanian salute. Then the strange girl threw herself into a chair, covered her face with her hands, and gave way to her woman's need for tears.

ON THE hill slope Polaris busied himself making a camp for his huskies, for, said he, "There would be a rare uproar, without end, did I take them in there where the gray brood of my Pallas are."

He stamped a circle in the snow, and made a fire of hymanan wood from Minos's store of firewood. He found Minos's sledge and set it against the cliff, with wooden

blocks for braces. He rolled a big log into place in front of it, screwed a number of rings which he carried for the purpose into its side, and tethered the huskies, where they might not come at the stores on the other sledge. Some loose robes cast into the hollow behind the log sufficed, and the tired brutes crawled onto them thankfully and curled up for a well-earned rest.

So tired were they that they bolted without fighting for the food he threw to them—and it is a tired husky, indeed, that will not try to rob his neighbors of his rations.

Presently the step of the son of the snows sounded in the passage to the cave room. The Princess Memene sprang up and faced him.

One searching look she gave him, poignant with inquiry. With hands extended as though to ward back a danger, she stepped in front of Minos's couch.

"Ah, well I know thee!" she exclaimed. "Thou art that stranger from the North come again to Sardanes. Thou wert his enemy. Thou wouldst not harm him now? Thou canst not have the heart! See, he hath suffered much and lieth low—"

"Nay, nay, save thy fears, lady," Polaris answered in the ancient tongue. "Polaris fighteth not with sick men, and would be friend to Minos and to thee. From many a hundred leagues to the north hath he come hither to save whom he might from the doom which this man's knowledge told would fall on thy land." He pointed to Zenas Wright.

"My mind recalleth thee not, lady," he continued. "Of what house art thou, and how named?"

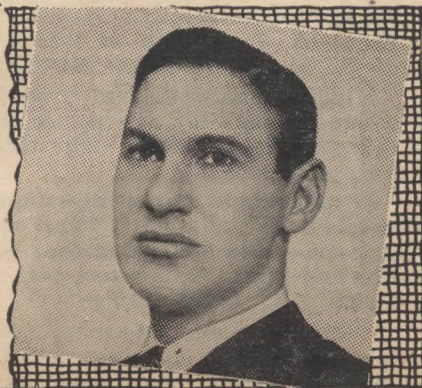
"Memene, daughter of the Lord Kar-naon, am I," replied the girl proudly; and still more proudly, "I am the bride of Minos, King of Sardanes."

"And, lady, art thou and the king the

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last to live in all the valley?" asked the son of the snows eagerly. "I can see sign of none others."

"We be the only Sardanians who have not passed the Gateway," the girl replied, "save Kalin the priest, alone, who fared north with thee and the Rose maid."

"Then art thou indeed the last," Polaris said, "for Kalin died out yonder in the snows, and these hands did bury him."

"Now, lady, take the rest thine eyes do tell me thou needest so much. All shall be well with thee, and thy husband lieth safe in the care of a skilled man. An thou gainsayest me not, I will feed thy gray beasts yonder, and clear thy doors of the carcass of the snow-wanderer there. When thou are refreshed again, we fain would hear from thee how it went with you, how Sardanes fell, and how it is that we found thee so."

With the ax of Minos, Polaris hacked apart the carcass of the huge bear and hung it in sections along the outer corridor, reserving it for food for the beasts. Indeed, the six dogs of Minos were almost friendly with him after they had taken a meal at his hands, receiving the fresh meat ravenously after a long diet of smoked flesh.

Memene slept, but with much tossing and crying out, as in her dreams she reviewed the troubled hours that preceded slumber. Minos lay quiet for many hours, while old Zenas Wright watched and Polaris busied himself about the fires and explored the recesses of the cavern. When at length the king awoke, the first thing he saw with conscious eyes was the face of the son of the snows bent over him. Polaris saw the leaping question in the sick man's eyes, and answered it. "I come in peace, and as a friend to thee, O Minos, an thou wilt have it so," he said. "See, thy princess slumbers yonder, safe and well. Thou shalt soon be strong, and then will be time for the telling of strange tales between us. Then shall we fare hence out of the wilderness on the northern road."

Minos's glance strayed from him to where Memene lay asleep, her dark hair fallen across her cheek. The face of the king grew very wistful.

"I understand it not," he said, his voice hardly above a breath. "The end of all had come, and now I find thee here—and fire and light. Almost too weak am I to think. Thou and I did fight—"

"Vex not thy mind at present with thinking, O Minos," Polaris interrupted. "All is well, and shall be. Here now is my friend,

Zenas Wright, with that for thee that shall put new life into thee. Eat and rest."

With curious interest the king studied the kindly face of the scientist as he came to the couch with a flagon of steaming broth, brewed of grains and flesh, laced well with wine. So weak was Minos that the old man must raise his head from the pillow while he drank. When he had finished, the sick man lay looking at the beloved face across from him, and so passed again into sleep.

Great vitality and a constitution kept hardy by years of vigorous living responded quickly to the care he received, and within less than a week Minos was on his feet again, still pale, but mending rapidly.

When he was strong enough to talk, he learned the purpose of the visit of Polaris and Wright, and he struck hands of friendship with both of them. His great heart bore no enmity toward Polaris, who told him all of the story of Kard the Smith, and other events which preceded his troublous departure from Sardanes, somewhat of which had been hidden from Minos.

"Though thou hast slain two of my blood and more of my people, I hold thee to no wrong for it," he said, and added simply, "Truly, had I been so circumstanced, I should have done no less." He glanced tenderly at Memene, who sat at his knee, and touched her dark hair with his hand. "I, too, have fought and slain for my lady."

Then the adventurers heard from the lips of the king of the passing of the fires from Sardanes, the madness of Analos, the battles and the death march of the nation through the Gateway. Polaris translated the telling of the tale to Zenas Wright, who hung upon each word with breathless interest.

Some days later, when the king had become strong enough to be about the cave and to keep the fire aglow, Polaris and Zenas Wright took torches and journeyed across the white valley to the Gateway hill, and paid a visit to the ancient temple of death on the ledge of the mighty crater. There was a spot from which the old scientist scarce could tear himself, even after he had spent hours in examination, and the torches were nearly exhausted.

On the wall in one of the temple chambers they found hanging a small cross, with its ends curiously turned. It was not of the ilium of Sardanes, but of gold.

"Priceless!" said Zenas Wright in an awed whisper. "That ornament came here from the Aegean Sea long before Christ was born in Judea."

Although it seemed almost an act of sacrilege to disturb it, the old man plucked it from its place and carried it away with him.

THREE more weeks passed, and Minos the king apparently was as whole and well as on that day when he fell over the guardian rock. Each day saw added preparations for their journey back to the *Minnetonka*. From the stores in the cavern Polaris replenished his sledge supplies, and packed the load for the sled of Minos. From boughs of the tough hymanan wood the son of the snows fashioned the frames of snowshoes and wove their nets of sinew of the bear. For both Minos and Memene he made them, and there was much sport when they both fared forth in the snow



Came a flash from the passage,
and the bear stiffened in every
limb. . . .

to try them. After much floundering and not a little lameness, both of the Sardanians mastered this new method of locomotion.

Many questions Minos and his princess asked about the land to which they were going, and its people and customs. To them, who had known only the mountain-ringed valley and the impenetrable wilderness, it was well-nigh incomprehensible that a land could be where the sun shone alternately with the blackness of night, day by day, the whole year around. The immensity of the world, as pictured to them by Polaris and the geologist, staggered them.

"And the ladies in thy great, far world, are they most fair," Memene asked—"fairer than those of poor Sardanes?"

Polaris gazed on the regal beauty of the girl, and answered dryly, "Few, indeed," and bethought himself that her question boded ill for the king, should he ever look too long on other charms.

"But in this land of thine, how will it fare with me," questioned Minos, "where possessions are valued thus and so, as thou tellest me, and where men barter of their labor and their wit for thy medium of exchange thou namest 'money'? Say, what shall be open to one like Minos, who hath naught, and who is but little skilled in aught?"

They were seated about the fireplace in the cavern room. Polaris met the perplexed look of the king with a smile.

"If I guess aright, that problem shall not afflict thee, O Minos," he answered. "Thou has that, I believe, which will find an eager market, and having which, thou shalt want for nothing all thy days."

"How mean you?" asked Minos.

Polaris pointed to an ilium bangle on the arm of Memene. It was set with dull red stones, similar to those in a necklace that once had been the gift of Kalin to the son of the snows.

"He that wast true friend to me aforetime," he replied, "did tell me that in Sardanes were many more stones such as those. On an occasion when I was sore in need of aid three small gems, not half the size of those in that bracelet, did get me friends and servants, and carry me whither I would go. Rubies, they call them in the world. Greatly are they prized. I judge the price in money of that one ornament thy princess weareth would maintain her and thee in comfort all your years. Add a few more, and thou shouldst be rich, indeed."

Minos rose quickly from his seat. "An

that be truth, then we shall all be rich," he answered, "for here in the storehouse of my fathers are many such."

He dragged out from its place against the rock wall a stout chest and threw back the lid. Stretching a rug before it, he strewed it with every variety of ornament known to the ladies of Sardanes. Rings, armlets, necklaces, slender crowns to be worn on the hair, girdles, brooches, and even anklets, he added to the profusion of the glittering heap.

Zenas Wright gasped, his wonder and pleasure as a savant fully aroused by that pouring forth from the treasure-chest of antiquity. The toys were of exquisite workmanship. What would not a museum give for even one of them to grace its show-cases?

"Many a Sardanian princess hath found delight in these," said Minos, as he emptied the last of the contents of the chest onto the rug. "Scarcely a child in all the valley that did not possess some ornament set with the red stones that were dug from the hillsides. These things, you say, may be exchanged for wealth?"

"That they may," Polaris said. "Thou hast there enough to buy for thee a space of land as large as this valley of Sardanes and place in it almost what thou wilt." In English, he asked of Zenas Wright, "What say you, old man, of the worth of the gems?"

The explorer was on his knees, examining these new wonders. He ran his eyes appraisingly over the heap. "I am not an expert lapidary," he replied; "but if these are anywhere near the quality of those you brought to America—and they seem to be even better—their value will run into millions of dollars."

"We shall share them," said Minos the king, nor would he listen to protests from either of the men. "Ye did come hither at the risk of your lives, and brought life to us," he said. "It is but a little thing that Minos can do in return. These baubles, these red rubies from the hills that Sardanians call *thalmi*, if they will add to your comfort in your world, are all too little. It is the will of Minos that the division of them shall be equal—if, indeed, there are not too many of them to carry hence."

He stood stubbornly to that decision, and the end was that they took the greater part of the stones from their settings and packed them in small sacks. Even then, so many there were of them that they threw out any that did not give promise of being first-class gems. They were packed

securely away then on the sledge of Minos.

By their reckoning, little more than four weeks from the day on which they entered Sardanes, Polaris and Zenas Wright bade farewell to the cave on the Latmos hill, and with them went the two so strangely saved from the still white death that had settled on the ancient valley.

They stood on the lip of the north pass to take their last look. The Antarctic sun shone strongly on the snow reaches. Only in their minds' eyes could the travelers recall the wonders of the lost kingdom. Except for their own tracks in the snow on the hillside, there was naught to tell that man had ever set foot in the valley.

Minos raised his hand in the Sardanian salute.

"Farewell, land of my fathers," he said aloud. "Minos leaveth thee without regret for a larger life than thou couldst hold. All the bitterness of parting was his when his people passed from him. He feeleth none now."

THEY pressed on into the notch of the pass, Polaris keeping well ahead with his team of huskies lest there should be fighting of dogs, for there was no love and much hatred between the brood of Pallas and the Alaskan brutes.

Halfway down the north side of the pass, while they were proceeding slowly, one of the huskies balked for an instant to burrow in the snow. He dug up a brown object, which Polaris snatched from him. Immediately he turned to Zenas Wright.

"How can this be, old man?" he said. "This is none of ours, and who else can have passed this way?" He held out the thing which the dog had found. It was a man's shoe, a stout hunting shoe, well spiked at the sole for snow traveling. It was torn as though by sharp teeth, and its thongs were gone.

While Polaris and Wright examined the shoe in wonder, the three leading huskies, sniffing eagerly, suddenly plunged into the drift to the right of the pass, turning the rest of the team with them.

"There is worse than a shoe there!" cried Zenas Wright. "Stop them!"

By main strength, Polaris tore the snarling brutes out of the bank and whipped them into the path. They dragged with them a heavy coat, the torn fragments of other garments, and a number of human bones, clean of flesh.

Zenas Wright viewed the relics with a shudder. "Some one has perished here in the snow, and the bears have eaten him," he said.

Polaris, exploring farther in the hole the dogs had dug, straightened up suddenly. "Some one has been done to death here," he said sternly. He held in his hand a ghastly skull. In it there were two holes, one at the base, the other in the forehead—the smooth, round holes that only a bullet leaves!

Further examination of the snow disclosed other bones and fragments of clothing. There was nothing in the pockets of the coat or about the scene of the tragedy to indicate who it was that had met his death there, or whence he had come. He had died, the bears had devoured his remains, leaving naught but his bones and a mystery, which the snows had shrouded from all but the keen nosed dogs.

From the path above them Minos drove his team down and halted it close behind. He could not leave his dogs, and so Memene came on to find out the cause of the delay. Polaris hastily threw snow over his grim find so that the princess might not see it, and went back with her to tell the Sardanian. The king could make no more of the affair than could he.

Polaris scraped away the snow and ice

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from the base of the pass-cliff, where a fissure ran up the rock, and there he laid the bones of the stranger, placing them well within the crevice, and covering them with the coat. He rolled a boulder to the mouth of the fissure and jammed it fast with all his strength.

"It is all that we can do," he said. "Whoever he was, or where from, he sleeps, and cannot answer the least of our questions."

"Who can have been here since we came?" Zenas Wright asked, as they once more went on down the pass.

"Not sure am I that he was not already here before we passed this way," said Polaris.

"But wouldn't the dogs have found him on the way in, in that case?" persisted Wright.

"It was hereabouts that we did meet the bear when we entered Sardanes," replied Polaris. "At that time the dogs had noses only for the scent of their enemy, and might have passed a hundred corpses and given no sign. That poor fellow back yonder might have lain in his snow bed all unsuspected. He might have been there for months. The snow and the cold would have kept the bones as we found them. How it came about that a man from the outer world did penetrate the wilderness to Sardanes, and then was slain in her very portals, passes my comprehension."

As the two teams passed swiftly along the reaches of the Hunters' Road, Zenas Wright noticed that his younger companion, running with the sledge, hesitated often, and cast many a keen glance along the path they followed. Once or twice, Polaris halted the animals entirely, while he knelt in the snow to scrutinize intently manifestations which he seemed to find there, but which were beyond the ken of the scientist. His face grew thoughtful, and there was a shadow in his amber eyes.

"What is it, son?" queried Wright at length, when the actions of Polaris had aroused a curiosity which the younger man did not volunteer to satisfy.

"I know not yet," Polaris answered; "and would not say the thing I think until I am wholly sure."

"Has it something to do with the corpse we found back there?"

"Aye, much perhaps," and the son of the snows relapsed into a moody silence that was strange to him.

AT THEIR first camping spot, well out near the end of the Hunters' Road, Polaris left Minos standing his turn as

sentinel, and, while the old man and the girl slept, he went forward along the way alone. He was absent for more than two hours. He returned with overcast countenance, and without a word as to his explorations, crawled into his sleeping bag. For a long time he lay staring out across the surrounding snows before he closed his eyes for a few hours of slumber. When he awoke, Zenas Wright was on watch beside him.

"Well, did you find anything to give you a clue?" asked the geologist.

"I found the trail of a sledge and dogs on ahead of us," Polaris replied; "and know not what they may mean."

The old man regarded him sharply. "I hardly need to ask you if they were the tracks we made coming in?" he said.

"It was to be sure that they were not that I went on to see," said Polaris. "If it had not snowed since we came through, some parts of the road are so sheltered that our tracks might not have been filled in by the drift. But what I have seen sets aside all doubt. *The tracks lead both ways!*"

"Then some one has been on our trail, or, at least, over the same path, and has gone north again."

Polaris nodded.

"From the ship? That seems incomprehensible."

"That is to be told only when we reach the ship," answered Polaris; "that, and why a dead man lies in the north pass to Sardanes with a bullet hole through his head."

More enigmas waited along the road to the coast, but none as gruesome as the white bones of the unknown.

Turning to the west from the Hunters' Road, they skirted the great barrier range, and had made nearly half the distance to the end of their snow journeying when they came upon the spot where a camp had been made, and not many days before. The snow at the side of one of the hummocks was packed down where a man, or men, and dogs had slept. Search as they might, the adventurers could not find a trace to indicate who it was that traveled ahead of them.

Polaris hid from his companions as best he might a growing uneasiness, a suspicion that he resolved should go unsaid. He was only partially successful. The king and Memene noticed nothing, and were only passing curious; but Zenas Wright was oppressed by forebodings as dark as those of Janess, if not as definite.

When they were not more than four hours' journey from the coast, a biting blizzard of gale-driven sleet sprang up in their faces. The sun was storm-darkened, and the tempest blew with such violence that they could make but little headway against it. Finding a snug shelter in a hollow between two beetling crags, they decided to make camp and wait for the first fury of the storm to wear itself out.

Tossing and unable to sleep, Polaris formed a sudden resolve to rid himself of all uncertainty. He aroused Zenas Wright.

"It is in my mind to take the five freshest of the dogs and make a quick dash on to the ship," he said. "There I can get new beasts and come back. I will lighten the sledge to make the going quick. In this storm there will be no bears abroad to attack the camp, if there be any of the animals in this neighborhood. I shall not rest until I have seen the ship. Because of the illness of Minos, we have been over-long away, and my coming will set many minds at rest."

Zenas Wright nodded understandingly. He reached in his pocket for his long-since emptied flask and handed it over.

"You might fill this for me, if you will," he said with a smile. "This cold chills me to the very marrow of my bones. I'd give almost the weight of the flask in these red rubies of ours for one good nip of cognac."

Polaris removed a part of the load on the sledge, and routed the dogs from their sleeping-nest. He found it no light task to whip the beasts into the teeth of the storm, but they feared the cracking lash more than they did the biting of the wind, and, once under way, they made good time.

Driving snow had wiped away all trace of the double track which the unknown traveler had left; but he had left another trail—the trail of blood.

He was an hour upon his way when Polaris felt the pace of his dogs slacken. The man swung the long lash in the air, but held his hand. Boris, the leading husky, balked, slid on his haunches, and threw up his nose, to emit a long and doleful howl that sung against the shrilling of the tempest like the wail of a violin in a stormy overture.

They were passing one of the towering rock hummocks, and the dog plunged from the trail at its base, throwing his mates into confusion. With a chorus of howls, the entire pack struggled into the drift at the side of the hummock.

Knowing from their actions that something lay there that was worthy of in-

vestigation, Polaris waded into the drift ahead of the frantic animals. Under the snow he found an overturned sledge and, within a radius of a few yards, the carcasses of eight dogs, stiff and cold. A glance told the man that each of the animals had been shot through the head. The sledge was of the same pattern as the one he drove! The dogs were of the same breed!

* * *

High on a jutting prominence of ice-sheathed rock, overlooking the storm-driven, tossing waters of the furious Antarctic Ocean, stood a man clothed in skins of the white bear, with a circle of whining dogs at his feet. A terrific gale lashed the crests of the waves into spray that froze as it flew, and which fretted the face of the rock as with driven hail. So keen and bitter the blast that the hardy brutes cringed and whimpered under its sting, yet it tore by the man unheeded.

Towering among the shivering beasts, he stood like a man of marble. Every line of his handsome, high-featured face seemed graven. Only his tawny eyes smoldered. They were fixed on a small cairn, reared of rocks at the cliff brink. The tattered remnant of a small American flag whipped from a bit of ice-coated stick at the top of the cairn.

Beneath it a slab of wood had been made fast in the rock, and on its face a careful hand had carved a simple, fateful legend:

IN MEMORIAM

ZENAS WRIGHT, A.G.S.

POLARIS JANESS, Adventurer

JAMES PARKERSON, seaman

Of the Sardanian Relief Expedition, Who Perished in the Snows in November, 1923.

Erected by orders, Captain James Scoland, Commanding Cruiser Minnetonka

Moment succeeded moment. Still the man stood in the biting tempest, his eyes fixed steadfastly on the text of the simple memorial. He turned and faced the north, whence the gale was driven. Twice he raised his clenched fists above his head, as if presaging some fierce outburst of spirit, but no words came. His features relaxed into a stony smile.

"Of all puzzles, surely this is the strangest," he muttered. "Yet will I have its answer on that day when I find Captain Scoland again, so sure—so sure as my name is Polaris Janess!"

He glanced again at the swirling waters

in the bay below him, where a stout cruiser should have ridden at anchor, but where no ship was; and then, with his dogs at his back, he strode away into the shrieking wilderness.

ON THE tenth day after the departure of Polaris Janess and Zenas Wright from the camp, the crashing and grinding of bergs beyond the mouth of the little harbor where the *Minnetonka* lay, warned Scoland and his men that the mighty southern drive of ice was on. The jam through which they had smashed their perilous way was broken. Soon the bay was filled with swirling drift that churned its surface water into a caldron of foam.

Close watch was kept lest one of the glittering monsters from the outer sea enter the bay and crowd the good ship against the rocks ashore. Once that danger was imminent, and the berg which thrust its menacing bulk into the neck of the bay was shattered by the *Minnetonka's* guns.

When the passing of three weeks had brought no sign of the two men who had penetrated into the white Antarctic fastnesses to carry the message of salvation from the outer world to Sardanes, speculation grew into anxiety among the members of the expedition left behind with the ship. Several of the hardier members of the expedition, who were innured to life in the cold places of the earth, broke their forced inactivity by short trips inland with the sledges and dogs, in the hopes of meeting the returning adventurers. Not even a trail was left to follow. The drifting snows had obliterated every trace of travel.

Most restless of all the company was the lean, dark captain, and day by day that restlessness grew. Spurred on by his unquiet spirit, he at length turned the command of the ship over to Lieutenant Everson, and announced that he was determined to make a dash inland and ascertain the fate of the two men who had gone before. He took a well-stocked sledge, and prepared to penetrate all the way to Sardanes, providing he could find it. With him went one sailor, that same James Parkerson whom Polaris had snatched from the icy waters of Ross Sea when the *Minnetonka* made her first drive into the blasted channel of the great jam.

Cool, confident, and daring, Scoland had no fears in making his sortie into the wilderness. He was equipped with a map drawn from memory by Polaris, and had little doubt but that he could find the Sar-

danian valley. He had a premonition that that was more than half a conviction that, having found the valley, he should find no living man in it.

When he had seen the fury of the fires that had burst forth on the shores of Ross Sea, and had considered the distance which those fires must have traveled, he had lost faith in the ultimate success of the relief expedition. The more he had thought of it, the more was he convinced that the nation they sought to save had been engulfed in the snows of the Antarctic and had perished utterly.

Reason further told him that some serious misadventure must have befallen Wright and Janess; else why had they not returned to the ship long before?

Scoland and the sailor pushed inland as nearly on a straight course from the harbor as the conformation of the ground over which they traveled would allow. The captain kept a keen eye on the peaks of the barrier range, comparing them often with the map of Polaris. When he came at length to the appearance of a trail extending to the south at a right angle to the path he followed, Scoland had the aid of the bright sun to determine that it was the Hunters' Road. With his glasses he could see dimly in the southern distance the shimmering heights of the hills that ringed Sardanes.

Coming to the foothills, and finding in the snowdrifts the storehouse of the Sardanian hunters, where Minos and his men were accustomed to leave their sledges, Scoland and Parkerson knew that they had found the place they sought.

"No fire. Not a sign of smoke or fire," said Scoland, surveying the towering rim of the mountain range above them. "I'm afraid our men found nothing living here, if they found their way here at all."

"If they got here, where can they be?" Parkerson said. "There'd be nothing to keep them here this long, unless they met a mishap of some sort."

"Well, we shall soon see," Scoland replied. "Here appears to be a cut through the hills."

They guided the dogs up through the north pass. In another half an hour they stood in the notch, and had their first view of Sardanes—green Sardanes no longer, but aglitter down all its length with cold, cruel silver and glass.

As he gazed down that long and silent vista, the heart of Scoland leaped furiously, and his brain was overwhelmed with a flood of thoughts that shook even his

iron control. Polaris was gone! The outlander who had thwarted so the ambitions of the captain had perished! The son of the wilderness who had turned Scoland's mighty discovery into a second place achievement, who had won from him the one woman in the world, who had broken through his fine web of painstaking precaution, and had triumphed at every turn of the wheel, no longer stood in his path!

Scoland's breast swelled. His eyes glittered. He, Captain James Scoland, should be the victor yet, in spite of all!

He would go back to America and wrest from the heart of the girl the phantom that now was his only rival. With that thought came the quick resolve that, did the man of the snows still live, he must look to himself.

Now Scoland knew the meaning of his uneasiness. Clearly into his mind trooped, naked and unashamed, the horde of black thoughts that for weeks had kept him company, but that had not dared to push themselves into the light of his brain where he might know them for what they were. He welcomed them now. This was why he had left the ship and come this journey through the snows. This was why he had brought one man only with him. All in an instant his mind was fixed, his course laid. That Polaris Janess had given him life, once, mattered not at all.

FROM right to left across the valley, and up and down its length, through the powerful lenses of his field glasses, the eyes of the captain swept. He returned them to their case with a snap.

"There's nothing to do but go back to the ship," he said, and it was by an effort that he curbed his voice to an ordinary tone. "Wright and Janess never reached here. They must have perished in the snows. Perhaps they fell into a crevasse. And here the great calamity that the geologist prophesied has come. All is dead."

But, kneeling in the snow with shaded eyes, Parkerson the sailor discovered what Scoland with his glasses had failed to find. He sprang up with a glad cry.

"They're here! See! See the smoke! There, on the side of the third hill!"

He was on his feet and dancing in his excitement.

Scoland whipped the glasses out once more. He directed them against the snowy slopes of Mount Latmos. Under his thick, black mustache his lips writhed as he gazed. Yes, there was no doubt of it. From a dark patch against the whiteness

of the drifts, a slender curling spiral of smoke was ascending.

Already Parkerson, his honest face aglow with delight, had started on down the slope, leading the team. His heart was filled with thanks that he should be able, in some measure, to repay the man who had saved his life.

With his eye Scoland measured the distance down the valley to that spiral of smoke. No, the sound would not carry. And if it did? Well, he was ready, and a desperate man. He unwound from his neck its thick woolen muffler and sprang down the slope behind the sailor. Drawing his heavy automatic from its holster and wrapping it in the scarf, he shot Parkerson through the head.

Scoland caught the man as he fell and threw the body on the sledge. To turn the dogs back was the work of an instant, and in the next he was speeding down through the north pass as though devil-driven. Halfway down, he halted and hid the corpse in the drift at the side of the way, kicking loose snow above it. Then he leaped on the sledge and urged the dogs on recklessly.

On down the pass they flew. Far out on the Hunters' Road their master was still driving them in frenzied haste, nor stopped to camp and rest until he had put a full score of miles between himself and the still figure that lay beneath the

SAOUS

He followed his own trail back, finding it unobliterated for long stretches in many places. When he was two hours from the ship, he drove the team off the trail at the side of a cliff, overturned the sledge, and shot the eight huskies, one by one, as they cowered and whimpered in their harness.

Taking to the road on foot, Scoland exerted his wiry strength to the utmost, and his exhaustion of body was not all simulated when he staggered into the winter camp of the expedition on the bay shore. A storm had arisen, and none of the men was abroad when the captain reached the camp. He reeled to the door of the first shack and knocked. When the door was opened, he fell on his face within. His face was frost-nipped, and he had purposely exposed his hands and arms to the blasts as much as he dared, not wishing to disable himself permanently.

Consternation thrilled through the shack on his appearance, and there was a rush of questioning men. Brandy was poured down his throat, and his limbs were chafed with

snow as he lay in well-feigned unconsciousness.

When he opened his eyes again, Scoland waved the eager men aside weakly.

"Take me to the ship," he commanded.

Tender hands bore him to a boat. Once in his cabin on the *Minnetonka*, he ordered Lieutenant Everson to strike the shore camp at once, and make preparations for an immediate departure.

"Tell the men that the Sardanian relief expedition is a complete failure," he said wearily. "Three of our men—God rest them—have lost their lives—"

"What!" Everson exclaimed. "Wright and Janess! Are they gone?"

Scoland nodded. "Yes, and Parkerson, too, poor fellow. The valley of Sardanes—I have been there—lies buried under many feet of snow. Its people must have perished months ago. Not one trace of humanity did I find there, except one old stone building in the shadow of the cliffs at the north end of the valley."

"But the other party, and their dog team—are you sure?" Everson gasped.

"Sure—too sure," replied Scoland. "I found their bones in the snow beside their sledge, not five miles from the valley. They never reached it. How they died was impossible to tell. Their bones were picked clean by the bears. Their dogs may have gone mad with the snow distemper and turned on them when one of them slept on his watch; the bears may have attacked them in force; a sudden tempest may have overwhelmed them—I could not tell. They are gone. We buried them in the snow."

"I think probably it was the dogs. Mine turned on me. We were on the way back. Parkerson and I. The brutes went mad. They pulled him down before I could get them. He was on watch, and I was asleep. I—I shot them all—but it was too late. I buried him in the snow, also, and came on alone and on foot. My God, what a journey!

"Tell Lennon to put up a tablet on the headland above the bay. Get up steam and let us get away from this accursed land before some mishaps engulfs us all."

Groaning, he turned his swollen face to the wall.

Everson went on deck and imparted the news to the members of the crew. The men gathered aft, while the young lieutenant read the burial service. Within six hours the bay shore was deserted and the *Minnetonka* was churning northward, a long wake of black smoke trailing over the waters behind her.

CHAPTER VII

FOLLOWING NATURE'S TRAIL

POLARIS drove his weary and dispirited dogs back along the trail to the little camp. In the breast of the man burned an anger that made him tireless, and that was proof against both the cold and the storm.

When he arrived at the camp he found the tall form of the Sardanian king standing on guard. The Princess Memene, who had adapted herself to their necessities with the bravery and fortitude of the true woman, was busy about the portable oil cook stove in the shelter tent. Zenas Wright slumbered peacefully in his sleeping bag.

Minos strode through the snow to meet the white-clad figure that urged on the drooping brutes. Polaris greeted him with a strange smile.

"What hath happened thee, my brother?" questioned the king; "misfortune, it seemeth, from thy mien. Hath aught befallen thy ship?"

"This hath happened, O Minos," Polaris replied, leaning on his spear; "the ship hath hailed into the north, and we four be left to travel as seemeth us best for many a long hundred miles of perils, an the tempests claim us not."

"Sailed—the ship! What mean—" and Minos paused. Here was a matter that defied question.

He looked wonderingly at the son of the snows.

"Dost find it a riddle, Minos?" said Polaris with a hard laugh. "Well, so do I also—a riddle that much I hope I shall one day have the reading of." His anger came upon him again, and he clenched his strong hands on the spear shaft so that the tough wood cracked in his grip.

"Many things might have happened. Minos. Some one thing *hath* happened. The ship that should have been our rescue and our refuge is surely gone, and on a rock yonder by the sea did I find writing on a wooden slab that told of mine own death, and that of the old man, Zenas Wright, and that of still another man of the ship's company."

"Another man of thy ship's company?" Minos said. His face grew stern. "A man lay dead in the north pass of Sardanes, and who did not die of age or sickness." The king glanced sharply at Polaris. "Couple that with the double trail in the snow, my brother, and it is my mind that thou art

not far from reading of the riddle. Is it not so?"

"Mayhap," answered Polaris. "Yet would I do no man injustice by giving word to that which is not proved."

"That, too, is well," said the king. "And now, for us, what is thy counsel?"

"Let us wake the old man and the three of us make a plan," Polaris replied. He tethered and fed the dogs, and the two men entered the tent.

Zenas Wright opened his eyes and blinked when Polaris shook him by the shoulder. He straightway thrust out his hand.

"The flask, my son," he said with a droll smile; "I trust you filled it. Not that I am what you'd call a toper, but I surely dreamed of that cognac."

"With all the heart of me, old man, do I hope for the fulfillment of that dream," said Polaris, and handed back the empty flask. "That it will be soon, the chances are most slender. Every passing hour is adding leagues to the distance between this empty bottle and the cask with which it is acquainted."

Zenas Wright heard the tale of the shipless harbor, and met it like a philosopher.

"So Scoland's gone," he said slowly. His old blue eyes narrowed a bit as he thought, but he, too, held his tongue from his suspicions.

They held a council, three men and a woman, one old and wise in the ways of the world, one to whom civilization was but a foster mother, and two true children of a prehistoric past. The other three looked by common consent to Polaris as the guiding spirit in this extremity.

"We are in your hands, now, my son," said the old scientist. "I guess you are the leader of the Sardanian relief expedition. What shall it be?"

"Two courses be open," Polaris said. "We can go back to the cave in Sardanes and there live our lives and die our appointed deaths, for, truly, I think no living man will ever come and seek us there. We can strike out for the north over that path of many dangers, which I followed once aforetime, with the Rose. And then, when we are come up to the great seas that lie above this frozen land, if we take that course, we must chance a rescue by some wandering ship—a small chance, but I speak for that risk. Death lies at the ends of all paths, and I think it better to meet it in the midst of our strong endeavor than to have it find us out while we lie meekly

to wait for it. What say you, friends?"

Zenas Wright reached him a gnarled hand. "I'm with you, my lad," said he. "I had hoped to lay a report of some moment before my colleagues of the Geographical Society. I still have that hope. If there is a man in the world who can guide us safely through the dangers which face us, you are that man. And, if we fail, and leave our bones on the road—well—I'm for the North."

Polaris translated to the two Sardanians. "Not two courses, my brother, but one, let us say," said Minos gravely, and he, too, put his hand in the hand of Polaris. "Let us fare along the northern road, and win through or die. Myself and my princess, with only our poor knowledge, would have tried that path had we lived until the light came, if you had not come seeking us."

After a day's rest they turned their faces to the east and followed the chain of the barrier range until they reached once more the Hunters' Road. There they made a camp in the trail, while Polaris took the gray dogs of Minos, which were stronger, and which had learned to obey him, and drove through to Sardanes. From the cave on Mount Latmos he took of the stores of meats and grain all that he dared to load onto the sledge. They would need all the supplies that they might carry with them.

Fearless in the face of their disasters, the members of the little party rested their hopes on the broad shoulders of the son of the wilderness, and they began their bitter drive. That leader set his tireless strength and will of iron to the task, with a silent tongue and a flame in his heart—a flame and a vision of a dear face a continent and a half away to the north, that he swore he would live to see again.

WHEN men had failed them and fortune had seemed to turn her face away, a mighty friend aided them—no less a one than old Mother Nature. The path that might have been so beset with hardships, she elected to make smooth, and tempered even her wild winds, so that the going of the travelers was more swift than they had dared to hope.

Long before they came to the notch in the chain of ice mountains, through which Polaris had passed north on his previous journey, they reached the monstrous seam that the furious volcanic fires had left across the southern continent when they had poured from their ancient bed in

Sardanes to rear their flaming bulwarks on the shores of Ross Sea.

Where the fiery torrents had burst through under the barrier range, the mountains must have been but empty shells of volcanoes active ages ago. One of them had collapsed. Where once it had reared its snow-capped peak, was now a jagged gash like a broken wall.

Through that gash the travelers went. It took them all of an arduous day's labor to reach a spot from where they could see on ahead—labor that was wasted, should they find that the lands beyond offered no hope of a pathway. Most of the way the dogs were useless. The brutes finally had been whipped into a semblance of amity, and flocked along without fighting; more, it is true, through fear of the ready lash than because of any love between the two breeds. With all their weights of food and trappings the sledges were lifted by the son of the snows and the Sardanian, and carried over many a torn and twisted scar in the half-healed breast of the mountain.

If the thews of Polaris were more mighty than those of the king, in endurance the men were equal. They performed feats that perhaps no other two men in the whole world could have accomplished.

At last they gained a height in the pass from where the miles lay spread out before them. As far as their eyes could see was a mark across the land, as though a mighty iron wheel, white hot, had turned its slow way northward, searing everything that it could not crush. Not all the snows that had fallen had been sufficient to obliterate that trail.

"There, my son, lies a road that we cannot lose," said Zenas Wright when he set eyes on it. "And we know where it leads to—straight to Ross Sea. There, above the volcanic area, is the most likely place of all in the Antarctic regions for a ship to come."

"Aye, Zenas Wright, it is a good, broad roadway," Polaris said. "It will be the play of children to follow it, set against the difficulties of that other path to the east, which I took."

On through the pass they struggled, and were on the plain beyond in three days. The pathway of the fires was not so smooth to follow as it had looked from afar, but still offered no great obstacles. Once more the long whiplashes sang over the galloping dogs, and Polaris, who had not sung in many weeks, lifted his voice as he ran in a lilt that quivered across the snows

and woke strange echoes from the cliffs.

Most wonderful of all the journey was the wiry, dogged strength of Zenas Wright. Hour by hour the old man toiled on with the younger, seeming never to tire. When they insisted that he ride on one of the sledges, it was always under protest that he did so.

Often he tapped the pocket in which he still carried an empty flask. "I'm just chasing the fellow that went north with my cognac," he would say, or some other quip that exhibited his undaunted spirit and helped to hearten his companions.

Of a like spirit was the Princess Memene, and tender and gracious and true. No hardship of the many that were her lot wrung word of complaint from the lips of the bride of Minos. Only as they proceeded farther north, they noticed that she seemed to tire more easily, and rode more upon the sledge, and noticing, they were much concerned thereat. But Memene seemed not a whit concerned, meeting their solicitude with a brave show of strength, and smiling gently to herself oftentimes when no one saw.

Came a day when far on the northern horizon they saw low-hanging clouds of curling smoke, and when a north wind brought an acrid smart to their eyes, and a tempering of the atmosphere.

"Yonder flame the moons of thy Sardanes," Polaris said to Minos, and the king nodded and his eyes grew sad with memory.

Two days' travel brought them to the foothills of the coast range of mountains, into which the volcanic torrent had broken. Then they were forced to make a detour inland, to seek a gap through which they might approach Ross Sea. About them was little snow, on the mountains none at all, and the climate was such that the members of the party had to shed their heavy parkas.

"Never a need to freeze here," said Polaris, "or to starve either, while there be bears to kill." Not a single monarch of the wastes had they encountered in all their journey, but, as they approached the volcanoes, signs had not been lacking that bears were to be found in the neighborhood.

As there was lack of snow on which to sledge, Polaris deemed it best to find out where they could best make their way through to the sea before attempting the labor of dragging the vehicles on any needless path.

With Minos and the old man he rolled boulders in a ring around a hollow in the

side of a cliff and set up a camp there—a welcome home for a time at least to Zenas Wright. Now that the goal of their journeying was near, the geologist was not ashamed to admit that he was weary.

Several times Polaris explored without success paths that seemed likely, and at length marked one that led, by devious turns and detours, to the open water. Following it through to the shore, he penetrated north along the coast a number of miles. He found that there which sent him back to camp on flying feet.

"Now are our troubles at an end!" he shouted. "I have found a ship!"

SCOLAND and his men had been a half day on their northern journey when the *Minnetonka's* wireless operator brought to Scoland's cabin the following message:

Earthquake or volcano cut ship off from sea. Fear in great danger.

Aronson,
Felix.

Directing the operator to answer that they were on their way north, Scoland gave the orders that hurled the cruiser on with redoubled speed to meet this new peril!

Icebergs floated along their sea path, but in diminished numbers, and in size far inferior to those whose menace had made the great southern drive and jam so perilous to the ship. When they reached the lower neck of Ross Sea, the passage that had taken twenty-nine days of weary and dangerous labor, blasting every rod of the way through the solid ice of the jam, was accomplished in four hours.

Wireless exchanges kept them informed that the position of the *Felix* was unchanged. Scoland found her at the upper end of Ross Sea, cut off from open water. As islands appear suddenly from the depths of the South Pacific, so had the volcanic forces upheaved the Antarctic sea bottom. The *Felix* had ridden at anchor in a sheltered bay. Now she lay in a basin, surrounded entirely by land and rocks. A strip nearly two hundred yards across separated the ship from the tossing open waters of the sound. So shallow was the water where the ship was that the vessel had heeled over and lay on her starboard side, her decks tilted at a precipitous angle.

Scoland saw at once that his supply ship was hopeless of rescue. It would have taken tons of explosive to blast a channel to where she lay, and, that accomplished,

there would be no water to float her. Off the edge of the strip of sea bottom that had been thrown up by the volcanoes, the water was some twelve fathoms.

Scoland laid the cruiser alongside the ledge, rigged carrying tackle, and spent two days replenishing the coal bunkers of the *Minnetonka*, to the great satisfaction of Engineer MacKechnie, who was assured that, if the cruiser failed to escape from the jaws of the southland, it would not be from lack of coal for her engines.

Aronson and his crew, choosing between a swaying shore and a heaving sea bottom, had left the *Felix* and made camp among the rocks inland, where, instead of the antarctic rigors of climate to be expected in that latitude, they were oppressed by almost torrid heat, the result of their volcanic surroundings. Very glad were all of them to feel the decks of the steel cruiser beneath their heels; and would have been willing to chance the seas with depleted coal bunkers to hurry their departure from a place where, as the Swedish ship's master said, "the Almighty had put them in dry dock, and they hadn't been able to figure out whether He was going to spill a new sea or build an island."

Leaving the sturdy old *Felix* mewed up to be the prey of what chance or providence rules the ordering of volcanoes, the cruiser struck out for the north and America.

* * *

On a blustering March morning, Captain James Scoland sat in the reception hall of an ancient homestead in Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, and told his story to a sad-eyed young woman, a young woman who did not weep, but whose tightened lips and wistful gaze told of a grief that tears could not soften or relieve.

By cable and by wireless from South American shores, days before, had come speeding on electric wings the tidings of the failure of the Sardanian relief expedition. All America had been thrilled with sorrow and pity at the news, sorrow for the famous scientist who had lost his life on his chosen path, and for the equally famous son of the wildernesses, Polaris Janess, who had trodden that path to death with him; pity for the unknown nation that had been crushed out by inexorable nature, and pity most of all for the gray-eyed girl who sat alone in her Boston mansion, grieving for a hero-lover lost.

The captain finished his tale. "And so there was nothing to do but to come back,"

he said; "and I have come. And, Rose, is there nothing I can say that will bring back to your eyes the light I used to know there?"

Rose Emer did not answer him. She sat looking at the wall, seeing through it and beyond it. Many a thousand miles away her fancy pictured clearly a great plain of ice and rocks and snows, storm-swept by shrieking tempests. She saw a dismantled sledge half covered by the drifting white, and beside it a lowly mound, the monument above all the hopes and joy of her young life. She shuddered, and a little bitter cry of desolation burst from her lips. At her feet a great gray dog raised himself on his forefeet, rested his shaggy head upon her knees and whined uneasily.

Scoland arose and stood beside her. As if he divined the heart of the man, gray Marcus left his place at the feet of his mistress and stalked across the hall to the doorway, where he stood watching the visitor with gloomy eyes of distrust and menace. The hair around the great brute's neck was ruffled, and his powerful muscles were flexed. Neither the man nor woman took heed of Marcus. He stood quietly, but very watchful.

"Rose, dear Rose, can it be that this wild man from the wilderness held such power over you that you have forgotten all that we once were to each other?" Scoland said, his emotions fast carrying him beyond caution, or comprehension of the fitness of time or place.

Rose Emer raised her head suddenly and looked into the man's burning, brooding eyes.

"What do you mean, Captain Scoland?" she said with quiet dignity, but with a mounting flush on her cheeks and a flash in her eyes that boded rising indignation. "You forget—"

"No, Rose, I do *not* forget," he interrupted. "I shall never forget that you were mine first, and were stolen from me. Janess, who held you in the glamor of romance, is gone now. We have the present to face, with its things as they are—the future with things as they may be, if we will them so. Is it too much for me to hope that some time—not now, I know, but some time—we may take up our lives where they once seemed to be shaping, and live them on—together?"

Before the girl opened her lips to speak, Scoland read her answer in her eyes, in the angry tilt of her chin. It maddened him beyond restraint.

"God!" he cried, "is that accursed barbarian to stand forever at each turn of my life and thwart me?" His voice rose into a shrill shriek. "No! No!" he shouted. "Not to be balked like this have I risked my eternal soul to hell fire! You were, you are, you shall be mine. Mine! Mine!"

Cast loose in his madness from all moorings of caution, he sprang at the girl, his arms outstretched to seize her and crush her to him.

"Stop!" The voice of Rose Emer rang out, clear and commanding. She leaped from her chair and backed against the wall, checking him with outstretched hand. Her deep eyes were aflame with anger. "You shall not touch me. You have insulted a noble man who is dead. Your words are an insult to me also. I will not listen to you Go!" She pointed to the door.

Attracted by the loud voices, a gray-haired butler came hesitatingly into the room from the back of the house. "William," said the girl, "you will please open the door for this man."

But Scoland did not need. It is to be doubted if he even heard her; and, if he did, her words fell meaningless on his ears. Whirled on in the rush of his emotion, he thrust the chair from his way and approached her. She struck him in the face with her clenched hands, but without effect. His arms were closing around her. She felt his hot breath on her cheek.

The butler, who had stood aghast for an instant, started hastily to cross the room to the assistance of his mistress, but he was not needed.

An eye more keen by far than that of the aged servant had watched the course of events, and a force more powerful than his now intervened.

Scoland's hand had just touched the girl's shoulder when a bolt of living fury shot across the hall and hurled him so violently against the wall that its stout oaken panels quivered, and he went down under the weight of gray Marcus. Overleaping in his rage, the dog missed his aim, which was the man's neck. The gnashing fangs closed on Scoland's cheek, below the left eye, and tore the flesh down to the chin. His victim down, the furious animal crouched on the body, worrying it horribly.

Instinctively, Scoland threw up his arms to protect his throat. The brute seized on one of his bare hands, and the bones crunched in the grip of the iron jaws. Screaming aloud, the man sought to roll

over on his face. The sharp teeth ripped through his sleeves and deep into the biceps of his right arm.

Rose Emer stood paralyzed in white horror against the wall. Blood spurted from Scoland's mangled face and stained her skirts.

"Marcus! Back, Marcus!" she cried.

The fighting blood of the dog was up, and she might as well have commanded the wind. She threw her arms around the shaggy neck of the brute and strove with all her strength to drag him from the shrieking, slaving creature that had been James Scoland. Combe, the butler, came to her aid, bringing a heavy oak chair, a leg of which he thrust between the dog's jaws. Between them, the man and the girl finally tore Marcus from his prey, and his mistress led him, still snarling hideously, into another room and shut him in.

With the help of Combe, Scoland dragged himself to his feet and stood leaning heavily on a chair, his breath coming in great gasps. One glance Rose Emer had of his ghastly, disfigured countenance, and averted her eyes with a shudder. His punishment had been swift and horrible, more so than she knew. It was not alone the flesh that Marcus had marred. The brain had given way also.

Commanding his laboring breath, Scoland shook his uninjured hand at the shrinking girl.

"Curse you!" he cried, his voice rising into an unnatural screech. "Curse you and your devil-brute! May your heart rot in loneliness, waiting for your wild man. He'll never find his way back from where I left him. He'll die hard, for he is strong. He will starve and wander and go blind and mad—as I am going mad, and then he'll freeze—very slowly, and die—and come and haunt me—"

"What are you saying!" Rose Emer sprang toward him. She forced her unwilling eyes to look upon that terrible face. "You left him, you say? *Alive*?"

Scoland threw back his head and laughed—the shrill, terrifying laughter of a maniac.

"Yes, I left him," he croaked hoarsely, "left him, alive, he and the doddering old man. Ha! ha! ha! I reached Sardanes and found them there, and they didn't see me. Ha! ha! I came away again, and they didn't know. I left them, with a dead man to keep them company—in frozen, dead Sardanes—"

He caught sight of his face in a mirror, and his voice broke.

"My God!" he whispered. He held his arms out toward his reflection in the glass. "God!" he repeated, and collapsed on the floor in a fit of convulsions.

Combe and other servants brought ropes and tied him.

A little later men came and took Captain James Scoland away.

Like a far-flung, radiant ray of dazzling sunshine, one fact penetrated through all the horror of the moment to the heart of Rose Emer. Polaris, her Polaris, was alive! Alive, and living, might be saved—*must* be saved! She left the horrors of the hall on flying feet.

Before the madman was out of her house, Rose Emer had called up Washington on the long-distance telephone, and had spoken with the Secretary of the Navy.

ENOUGH of English had the Sardanians learned to understand the words of Polaris, when he shouted that he had found a ship, and their glad exclamations were mingled with those of Zenas Wright, as the three sprang to meet the returning explorer.

"A ship, said I," Polaris said, lifting his hand, "but naught did I say of men or rescue. 'Tis the *Felix*, caught fast in the rocks by some mischance that is our great good fortune. She has been abandoned." He made haste to explain how he had found the ship. "Unless Scoland found means to empty her, which seems unlikely," he continued, "she has that on board to keep us four in comfort for years, if need be."

Breaking camp at once, they followed his lead through the mountain gap to the rocky shore.

Aye, there lay the *Felix*, right enough, and snug in her basin, but how were they on shore to reach her?

Polaris did not delay for long in solving that problem. Stripping Minos's sledge of hymanan wood of all its load, he set it afloat in the basin. It served him in lieu of a raft. For a paddle he took his long spear and poled his improvised craft out on the still waters of the miniature sea. It floated him safely, although his weight submerged it so that the water lapped at his ankles.

"Give me that flask, old Zenas Wright," he cried joyously. "I'll warrant you wait not long for the filling of it now, even if I have to desert this stout boat, and swim to the ship."

In a few minutes he had poled his way to where the *Felix* lay, her decks far

aslant, but her rail still above water. To board her, he was forced to leap from the floating sledge. He caught the rail with his hands and pulled himself aboard. He clambered up the tilting deck and forced the forward hatch, which had been battened down by Scoland's men. Below decks he found all right and tidy. A glance into the hold discovered its stores of supplies almost intact. At least, he and his companions faced no menace of starvation.

Returning to the deck, he made his way aft, and opened the cabin hatch. He found the storeroom where the ship's supply of spirits was kept, and smashed in the door with a blow of his foot. Smiling as he did so, he filled the flask of Zenas Wright.

As he emerged on deck once more, he glanced shoreward. Danger, white, cruel, and desperate, was stalking his companions and they knew it not. From his position of vantage on the deck of the *Felix*, Polaris saw a moving mass that showed silver against its dark background in the rocks some hundred feet back from the shore of the basin, where his fellow travelers were waiting for him. Gliding among the boulders, with all the sinuous caution of a cat intent upon a group of mice, an immense polar bear was creeping to attack them!

Noiselessly, the great brute crept on in the cover of the rocks. The wind blew from the party, so that the keen-nosed dogs were unaware of the presence of a foe, and sounded no alarm.

Across the waters Polaris sent a warning shout. "A white bear!" he shouted, pointing. "In the rocks behind you! Ready with your guns if he charges!"

As he raised his voice a change in the wind or some other appeal to their finely attuned senses, informed the dogs that their foe was near. Gray runners and brown turned to face the rocks, every neck bristling. Stimulated by the brave demeanor of the fearless children of Pallas, the huskies' ugly snouts were as snarlingly defiant as the others.

Over the rocks and into the open clambered the bear. His flanks were lean, and he was hunger-mad, to the point where numbers did not daunt him. He stood uncertain for but a moment, then broke into a lumbering, padded gallop, which, clumsy as it seemed, would have pressed a fleet runner hard to distance. A menacing roar answered the ear-splitting clamor of the dogs.

Wright and the Sardanians seized rifles from the sledge. Sternly calling back the dogs, they opened fire together. Minos, a novice in the use of the weapon, missed widely at the first shot, and in his haste jammed the lever of his rifle. The bullet of Zenas Wright, who was always an indifferent marksman, only grazed the flank of the bear, injuring him little and adding much to his rage. Again the geologist fired, but did not stop the great brute. The galloping monster was close upon them.

As he shouted his warning from the ship Polaris scrambled to the nearest davits that swung a boat. With no time to manipulate the ropes, he cut through them with his keen knife, and leaped for the boat as it fell. More by good fortune than else, the craft was not swamped. The son of the snows headed inshore, pulling so powerfully at the oars that their oaken lengths bent to his strokes. Swiftly as moved the boat, the drama ashore was played through before its prow touched the rocks.

Once more the scientist pressed the trigger in desperation, but a leaping, frenzied dog struck him from behind in the hollows of his knees, spoiling his aim, and sending him sprawling on his face. Minos's spear lay buried under the load that had been cast from his sledge. The third rifle was out of order and useless. Weaponless, he stood in the front of the charging enemy, except for his dagger and the light rifle, which he now clubbed and swung over his shoulder—a slight defense against the onset of the polar monster.

As the bear reached him, it reared on its hind legs, towering far above even the great height of the king. One vast forepaw, armed with its formidable talons, swung high to strike. Aloft also went the steel rifle in the grip of Minos. With the agility and eye of a trained boxer, the bear, even as it struck out with one paw, whirled the other with lightning quickness. The gun was torn from Minos's grasp, and spun through the air, to fall with a splash many feet out in the waters of the basin.

From the falling stroke of the crescent claws the king sprang back, snatching his dagger from his belt. Around him seethed the dogs, his own good gray beasts, no longer to be restrained from the battle, the huskies hanging doubtfully behind them. The white giant seemed to have marked the Sardanians

for his prey, for, paying no attention to the dogs, he came on in a vengeful rush that they could not stop.

With his back to the sledge, Minos bestrode the body of Zenas Wright, who had struck his head against a rock, and lay stunned. Dark was the outlook. A woman's hand turned the balance. Tearing in desperate haste at the packs that had been thrown from their sledge, the Princess Memene strove to reach the spear of Minos, but found another weapon first.

A GAIN the bear reared to attack, when over Minos's shoulder was thrust a broad and shining blade of ilium. With a shout, the king let fall the puny dagger, and gripped hard the hilt of the good sword under whose razor edge many a stout Sardanian had fallen. Swiftly he swung the great blade, and far out, all the weight of his shoulders behind the stroke.

Before the bear could strike again, the sword hit him in the side, well below the shoulder, and so deeply that he howled in agony, and fell to all fours.

Immediately he was all but buried by a wave of maddened dogs. Drenched with the blood that spurted from the sword gush, the king leaped to one side, whirling the heavy weapon aloft. Once more the bear essayed to rear, and to shake from him the swarming furies that hung at his sides, and clung to his jowls.

His mighty head, blood-bedabbled and fearful, rose out of the ruck of dogs. It offered a fair mark to the watchful king. Down came the glittering blade, the air whining under it, and struck on the bear's neck. The bones parted under the stroke. So deeply had it bitten, that the sword was wrenched from Minos's hand.

With a last convulsive effort that threw the dogs from him, the polar monster arose to his full height and toppled backward, crashing to earth, stone dead.

Zenas Wright came to his senses a few moments later, with an unmistakable tang of cognac in his throat, and an aroma in the air that made him smile, despite the pain of his bruised head.

"It's a brave spirit," he gasped. Then he got up and extended his hand to the Sardanian king. "I guess I owe my life to a braver," he added. "My friend, I thank you."

Minos understood a part of the remark. He grasped the proffered hand with a deprecating shake of his head.

Untroubled by the fears which had

driven Aronson and his men from the ship, the members of the party took up their quarters on the *Felix*, drawing upon her inexhaustible stores for comforts which had long been denied to them.

For two of them, the ship was a revelation of wonders undreamed of. Machinery, books—a hundred and one things were marvels to the two Sardanians. They learned with an eagerness that was almost childlike, absorbing knowledge against the coming of that time, so hoped for, when they should become of the great world of their visions. That, having come this far, they would reach that goal of their desires, they did not doubt.

To Polaris Janess and the geologist the situation was more serious. They knew that the chances were few that any ship should penetrate into Ross Sea, perhaps in many years. The Pole had been discovered. The Smalley and Hinson exploring expedition had come and gone. There was no reason of which the scientist and his companion knew to call other men to brave the perils of the Antarctic.

"If we are ever to get out of here, we must help ourselves, lad," Zenas Wright said to Polaris, as they discussed their plight several days after their coming to the ship. He shook his white head. "It seems just about hopeless. There's only one way, and that's by water, and we're cut off from the sea, even if we could navigate the ship, which is doubtful."

"But a boat—" Polaris began.

"Suicide!" exclaimed the old man. "One of those shells wouldn't live for five miles. Even if it should, they are not large enough to hold the four of us and the things which it would be absolutely necessary for us to have. Once away from this volcanic neighborhood we have a long stretch of icy sea to traverse. The nearest land where we should find aid is New Zealand, and that is more than two thousand miles to the north."

"There's a large boat with an engine and a sail," Polaris said, "but it is in pieces."

"What's that!" shouted Zenas Wright, "an auxiliary launch? Lead me to it, boy! Pieces or no pieces, we can put it together. I know enough for that, with you two strapping big fellows to help. If there's enough gasoline aboard to run her when she's assembled, we will have to chance her. It's our only chance."

Without delay the two of them scrambled along the slanted decks. Aft of the deckhouse, under her tarpaulin, they

found the launch. As Polaris had said, she was in pieces. Only the hull lay on the deck of the *Felix*, a stout twenty-five-foot craft. Her sixty horsepower engine and her auxiliary mast, sail, and jib were below decks.

Zenas Wright looked her over with flashing eyes. "If there's gasoline enough we may make it," he said. "We've got to make it!" He did a mental computation. "It's a rough two thousand miles to New Zealand. Let's see. If you can steer, son, and I think you can, running twenty-four hours a day, and using the sails to save gas when we can, we can make it in a month—if we meet no obstacles; which, of course, we will. We must provision for two months. If that doesn't take us through, God rest our souls!"

"Set us at work, for there is need for haste," Polaris said. "We must be out of this place before winter closes in above us." He called the Sardanian.

In the paint locker and the hold they found gasoline, twenty twenty-five gallon tanks of it—more than they could take with them. Under Zenas Wright's directions, they coaled the donkey engine on the forecastle head, rigged tackle to the mainmast, and hauled the engine up through the hatch. Many hours were spent in searching for various parts of the mechanism which they needed, but they found it all at last.

The patient mechanical knowledge of the scientist was equal to the task of installing the engine. With that in its place, they stepped the mast, hauled the gasoline tanks on deck and shipped their cargo. With spirits new in the hope their work aroused, they sang at their labors. Memene, who had drooped, regained her usual vigor and vivacity.

So stoutly did the two young giants set their hands to their task that within four days of the time they started they attached the sturdy launch to the davits and swung her over the side of the *Felix* by aid of the invaluable donkey engine. Zenas Wright immediately went aboard and tried out the engine. He spent the most of another day tinkering with the mechanism until it suited him, and then announced that they were ready for their perilous dash for the open sea and freedom.

The ring of rock that had made the *Felix* prisoner did not offer the same obstacle to the launch that it did to the greater ship. Near the north coast of the bay was a channel deep enough so that

the launch could barely pass through to the sea. In a number of places it was so narrow that Wright and Janess were forced to use drills and dynamite, and blow away projecting rocks.

It was a great regret to the voyagers that they could not take their dogs with them. There was not room on the launch for the animals and food for them. Zenas Wright, now formally nominated the leader of the expedition, by right of his knowledge of navigation, compromised to the extent of carrying along two of the gray brutes of Minos, named Kalor and Thetis. But the old man conditioned that, if it came to a question of food scarcity, the brutes would have to be done away with. The rest of the animals they turned loose ashore.

Not forgotten in their preparations for departure was the wealth of Sardanian rubies. Finding a small leather traveling bag on board the *Felix*, Polaris packed it with the skin sacks in which they had placed the gems before they had left the cave on Latmos.

At last they bade farewell to the old *Felix*, now doubly deserted, and put out for the open seas. It was nearly three months since the two adventurers had left the *Minnetonka* to find Sardanes, when they passed out of the enclosed basin and turned the bow of the launch northward. Around them roared the volcanic mountains. They saw the last of the *Felix* through a falling storm of impalpable ashes, so thick that it darkened the sunlight.

FOUR weeks' steady progress, sailing when they could and using their treasured gasoline sparingly, carried them well above the Circle. Unceasing vigilance alone enable them to make that progress, surrounded as they were by the menace of floating ice, collision with which would have crushed their craft like an eggshell. When they made use of their sail, Polaris took long spells at the wheel; but when it was necessary to put the engine into commission old Zenas Wright could neither rest nor sleep.

Came a day when the Princess Memene whispered briefly in the king's ear the burden of a pretty secret that she could no longer bear to keep from him. Close enfolded in his arms, she told him that which caused him to flush as radiantly as she.

"Another king is coming," Minos murmured low. "Hail to the king! But alas,

his sire hath for him no kingdom to rule, unless indeed one may be won in the land whither we are journeying."

"Mayhap not a king, but a princess," said Memene.

Strong of the hope that was in him, Minos made answer, "Nay, he shall be a king."

And after thoughtful pause he added, "We will call him Patrymion."

Thus was another incentive added, bidding the wanderers bend every effort to reach with speed the friendly arms of civilization.

* * *

When they came again to the region of nights and days they were forced to do their traveling by sunlight mostly, and at night to drift. Twice the chill in the air warned them just in the nick of time of the proximity of icebergs, and they escaped them by recourse to the engine.

Then a storm came up from the southwest and hurled them north under bare poles, with the prospect of utter destruction momentarily before them.

"Let it blow," said Zenas Wright grimly. "If we can only keep afloat, it's helping us north fast enough, and, besides, it saves gas."

North they went, and east, far out of the course they had laid for New Zealand. For two days and nights the gale held, dying away in the dawn of the third day. The first gray daylight found them tossing on a choppy sea. When the light came, and Zenas Wright was able to figure out their position, he announced that they were somewhere in the neighborhood of the Tubuai Islands, a French possession, and they decided to turn the prow of their boat in the direction of these islands.

Taking the glasses, Polaris climbed a few feet up the mast and swept the sea. He was unable to raise land in any direction.

What he did raise, however, sent him clattering back to the deck.

"A ship!" he cried. "Straight ahead of us, a steamship! I can see her smoke!"

"Look again, lad," said the practical Wright, "and tell us which way her smoke hangs, if you can."

"To the north," Polaris shouted a moment later. "And she's headed this way, too!"

With a splendid disregard for their remaining gasoline, the scientist forced his engine to its best efforts, and they soon

were making eighteen knots on their way toward the stranger.

Nearer and nearer came the two craft together, and finally those on the launch saw the steamship swing off her southerly course and point straight toward them.

They had been sighted.

Suddenly Polaris, who had been studying the approaching ship through the glasses, threw them down and sent up a great shout:

"It's the *Minnetonka*!"

It was.

In another half hour they were alongside. A line was thrown them and made fast. Canny even in that moment of excitement, Zenas Wright opened a locker near the wheel, and buckled fast to his leathern belt the traveling bag that held the rubies of Sardanes.

While Polaris stood by with a boat-hook, fending the launch from the steel side of the cruiser, the other clambered up the ladder, Minos pausing to snatch up one of the gray dogs, climbing up with the animal tucked under his arm. Catching up the other dog, Polaris leaped into the ladder, and the deserted launch swung away from under him and passed out of their lives forever.

Once safely on the deck, Minos and his bride stood clutching each other's hands and gazing wonderingly at the scene, so different from that of the only other ship they had ever set eyes on. Then, as the officers and crew came forward in greeting, the Sardanian prince slid an arm protectingly about his princess and met them hand to hand, while Memene dimpled and blushed happily.

On the deck stood Lieutenant Everson, his eyes alight, his hands outstretched. Before the son of the snows could grip those outstretched palms, came flying feet.

"Polaris!"

In his dreams he had heard that voice, ringing nearly half way round the world. He opened his arms. His amber eyes looked into her long eyes of grey. Their lips clung.

"At last—my Rose Maid!"

This novel is the second in the trilogy which began with "Polaris—of the Snows." Each novel in the trilogy is complete in itself.

The third story is "Polaris and the Goddess Glorian," which will appear in a future issue of this magazine.

THE LIVING PORTRAIT



By
**Tod
Robbins**

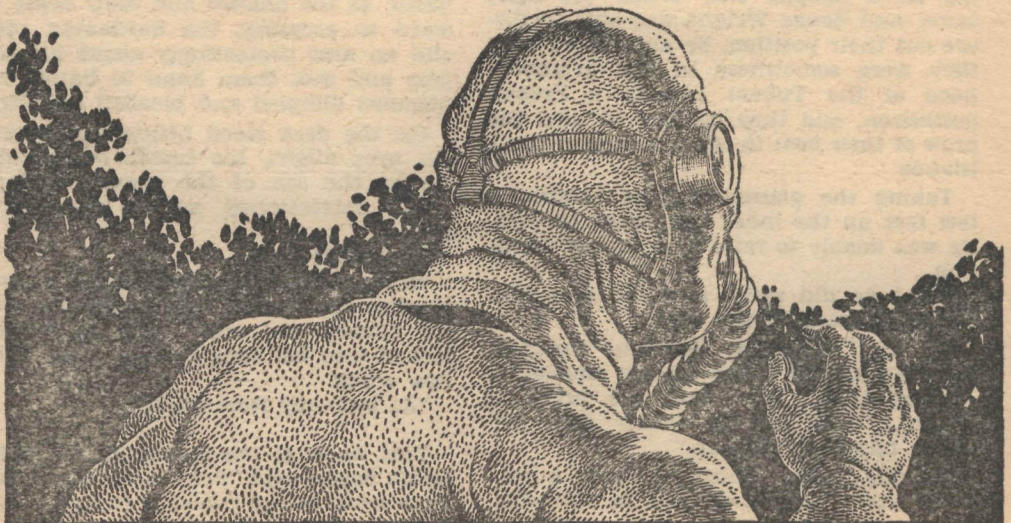
The dread desire he had never acknowledged looked out at him from that tormenting canvas—taunting him with the bloody deed it meant to do . . . and the face of the killer was his own!

I AM not insane! You doctors who wag your pointed beards over me, you specialists who attempt to analyze my brain in all its separate cells, you nurses and keepers who buzz about me continually like summer flies, have you no pity for a man robbed of everything which can make life dear—a man unjustly accused of homicidal mania—a man forcibly deprived of the sovereign rights which accompany intelligence?

You have incarcerated me in this beehive of insanity because the scope of human imagination cannot embrace an

unusual chain of events. Like Christ, I find myself abused because I am neither understood nor believed. Very well—but I shall snarl a bit.

May I ask, learned doctors, in what way your combined intelligences overshadow my single mind? You who follow in dead men's footsteps; you, the apprentices of a profession which it has been my lot to advance into a yet unexplored wilderness; you, pitiful practitioners of a knowledge handed down to you between the covers of countless books, dare to put your hands upon me and lead me to this dungeon!





"What happened then was photographed on my brain for all time. . . ."

Like *Gulliver*, I am at the mercy of Lilliputian minds!

But if I could once escape from here, if I could once break down the barrier which you have so carefully erected, what then, learned doctors?

There are elements in the sea and air as yet unknown to science. I have the key which unlocks the arsenal of the heavens. Did you think, when the Purple Veil lies ready to my hand, that I would strike with a poniard?

If so, you little guessed your man—if so, you did rightly by confining me in this place. It is written that one's acts cannot exceed one's intelligence.

And yet it is not with your stupidity that I quarrel—it is rather with the teaspoonful of knowledge which you have absorbed and which has made you incapable of understanding the slightest truth not written on a printed page. You smile—wagging your beards at me, you smile.

But will you smile at my translucent child, the Purple Veil? I doubt it very much, my genial friends.

But I must not wander. Even though the moon has pressed her soft, leprous face against my barred window, I must not wander.

And yet what a strange power rests behind those haggard, sightless eyes! With them she beckons from us our calm, collected thoughts. Like a mother she bends over us—a sad, shy mother who dares visit her children only at night.

She had stolen into the nursery to see us play. Now she is shaking her black, tangled locks over the world. They trail out behind her; and, afar off, through their moving blackness, tiny trembling disks of light appear.

She, our mother, has plundered the infinite. Like a mad queen she steals to my window, her diadem of precious stones caught and dangling from the intertangled meshes of her hair.

"Play!" she commands with a wide, toothless smile. "Play!"

But I will not play—not tonight. Even she shall not dominate my mind. It is necessary that I first give to the world a clear, collected account of the strange chain of events which has drawn me hither—a narrative which shall prove to unborn generations that Gustave Ericson was a victim to the stupidity of his age rather than to the slow inroads of egomania.

After that, if she is still there and still smiling—well, perhaps—

CHAPTER I

TWO DISCOVERIES

I WAS not born to battle for existence. My father had amassed a considerable fortune before I came into the world. He was a large obese man with round, protruding eyes which gave his florid face a look of perpetual astonishment.

He never understood me and it tickled the ribs of my humor to set his slow mind revolving on the axis of a new idea. At these times he would regard me with an air of amazement and pique—the air, in fact of a hen that has inadvertently hatched a duck's egg with brain-numbing results. Undoubtedly I was the cause of much mental worry to the poor old man.

It is not my purpose to bore you with a long dissertation on my boyhood. Suffice it to say that even at that time I had an instinctive love for chemistry. Soon I fitted up a room in the house as a miniature laboratory, and with a school friend, Paul Grey, experienced the various vicissitudes common to most youthful exponents of science.

What soul-stirring odors permeated the atmosphere of that house! What ear-jarring explosions rattled the window-panes!

Daily the expression of rapt astonishment on my father's face deepened. I was at last breaking through the barrier of his mercantile calm; I was proving the fact that life is precious only because it is precarious.

Paul Grey, even in his teens, gave promise of some day making his mark in the world. He was my direct opposite in every physical and mental attribute.

Excessively blond, with pale-blue eyes and the girlish trick of turning fiery-red at any emotional crisis, he fluttered about our laboratory like a pigeon swooping after each stray crumb of knowledge, while I, with my swarthy skin and unmanageable tangle of blue-black hair, followed as sedately as a crow.

And yet, although he was far quicker, he lacked the depth of insight which makes toward originality of thought. It was I who unearthed hidden knowledge in later years; it was he who put it to an immediate practical use.

I was very attached to Paul—I am still attached to his memory despite his colossal theft of my discovery. You smile incredulously, but it is a fact, I assure you.

One could not cherish a lasting hatred for such a sunny personality.

Even a thief is forgiven, if he can amuse.

We grew up together like two brothers, united by the chain of a common interest. At school and college we were inseparable. I shared the burden of his wild escapades; he dispelled the gloom of my rather melancholy temperament. He was sunshine; I, shadow.

We were as united as day and night, as moonshine and madness, as sorrow and joy. Then one day the old, old story—a woman came between us.

Only a month ago Evelyn testified at my trial. As she stood in the witness-box I looked at her quite calmly. There was no feverish throbbing of the senses, no wild beating of the heart, no feeling of sadness or of joy.

On the contrary, this slender figure in black conjured up nothing but a kind of dull resentment. "What a tiny speck of dust," I thought, "to slow down the wheel of Progress!"

And suddenly this inconsequential doll in her widow's weeds, this female straw whom I had loved, lost all semblance to humanity and became a meaningless automaton—an automaton created by my attorney to squeak out on the silent air one mechanical phrase:

"He is insane—he is insane—he is insane!"

Ah, no, waxen puppet, Gustave Ericson is not insane! Squeak on till the end of time that lying phrase and still it will find no echo of the truth.

Many years ago, perhaps, there were chords of moonlight in my brain which you could play upon, intertangled threads of wild emotion which throbbed at your slightest touch—but now I am reason itself enthroned, silent and smiling, as impervious to that small, petty passion as is the mountain-peak to the fretful, flickering lightning.

I do not attempt to justify my youthful infatuation. Evelyn Lawrence, as I saw her in the court-room—her eyes red from weeping, her dark hair prematurely streaked with gray—makes that impossible.

But there was a time, not so many years ago, when she possessed a certain languid charm which one associates with a warm summer afternoon spent in the country. She was the kind of woman toward whom an overworked man naturally turns with thoughts of rest.

I remember distinctly how I chanced to meet her. It was two years after my graduation from college. Paul and I had

been working steadily in the laboratory for upward of a month.

I was at that time on the point of discovering Zodium, the life-giving chemical which was afterward to revolutionize medicine. We were both worn out and plunged into a fit of depression. We had gone far, but still success trembled in the balance.

Suddenly Paul, with a muttered imprecation, flung himself on the leather couch in one corner. Spots of color flamed up in his cheeks, and he began to pluck at his lower lip—a sure sign that he was out of sorts with the world.

"What's the matter?" I asked, looking up from the test-tube which I was heating over an electric burner.

Paul's blue eyes wandered to the window. "It's hell to be cooped up in here day after day!" he murmured. "I've grown to feel like a rundown machine. Let's chuck it and get out into the air."

"But there's our experiment," I expostulated. "We may find the secret any day now."

"That's what you've been saying for the last week!" he cried impatiently. "Let Zodium wait a while. My aunt's having some sort of an affair over the weekend. Let's go!"

"Who'll be there?"

"Oh, there'll be the Turners and a cousin of theirs—Evelyn Lawrence, I believe her name is. She's quite a beauty, Aunt Grace tells me."

I snorted contemptuously. Here we were on the brink of one of the most noteworthy discoveries of the age, and Paul was yapping about house-parties and pretty girls!

As fond as I was of him, I was never quite reconciled to this frivolous strain in his nature—a strain that kept popping up at the most inopportune moments, interfering with hard, conscientious work toward the furthering of science. And yet it was necessary to humor him on these occasions—otherwise he would sulk for days and be of no use in the laboratory.

"Well, if you go on a strike, I suppose the shop must close up!" I said regretfully. "But it seems a shame when—"

He cut me short with the gleeful shout of a released school boy.

"Now you're talking!" he cried. "Get your things together and we'll be off in two shakes! And, remember, not a word about chemistry until after Sunday."

The upshot of the affair was that I spent the weekend out of town and met Evelyn Lawrence. I can only explain the emotional

crisis I passed through by the fact that I was in an exhausted mental condition, and that the girl's languid atmosphere soothed my tingling nerves like a sleeping draft.

Certainly love at first sight is a ridiculous hypothesis to be entertained for an instant by the scientific mind. And yet on the evening of the second day—as we drifted lazily along on the smooth, moon-lit waters of Lake Deerfoot in one of Miss Grey's canoes, seemingly as far distant from the noisy frivolous world as the small, remote stars—I had all I could do to refrain from voicing an ardent protestation of an enduring love.

What a fool! Even then the moon exerted an undue influence over me.

ON the following day I regained a measure of common sense. Here I was wasting the precious moments when I might be at work in my laboratory.

If I happened to be in love—well, even love must wait its turn on science. After I had completed my discovery, why, then, it would be time enough to analyze my emotions toward the girl.

I pointed out to Paul that our holiday was over. He seemed very loath to leave the country.

Finally he said that he would follow me into town later in the day, but that no consideration could move him to travel on such a warm morning. I had to content myself with his promise, and, after saying my farewells to Evelyn and Miss Grey, caught the ten-thirty for town.

I have always prided myself on an ability to banish everything from my mind but the work at hand. Perfect concentration is the ladder by which man may ascend to unknown heights.

And yet, on returning home, I had great difficulty in fixing my attention on Zodium. For the first hour or so in the laboratory Evelyn Lawrence's face hung like a brilliant, languid moon over my mental horizon, drawing my thoughts away from the hunt for unknown knowledge. I broke fully three test-tubes and scalded my hand severely before I regained my usual mental equilibrium.

Paul, in spite of his promise, failed to put in an appearance during the afternoon. I did not see him for the entire week—in fact not until after I had made the final, triumphant experiment which gave Zodium to the world.

By an acute chain of reasoning I had succeeded in discovering the essential with-

out him, and was actually holding a vial of the precious amber-colored liquid in my hand when he made a rather shame-faced appearance in the doorway of the laboratory.

At the moment I was so flushed with success that I greeted him with no shade of reproach in my tone.

"Let me introduce you to Zodium, Paul!" I cried, leaping to my feet and advancing toward him. "At last the secret is ours!"

His face, which had worn a ruefully penitent expression, flushed on a sudden to a deep red. He advanced a step and examined the contents of the vial which I held out for his inspection.

"You don't say!" he muttered. "So you got it, after all!" His eyes avoided mine and wandered to the window. "Well, now you've discovered it," he said almost belligerently, "of what practical use is it?"

"Of what practical use?" I cried. "Why, you talk like a grocer, Paul! How should I know as yet? But undoubtedly it will be invaluable for medical purposes."

"Perhaps," he muttered. "That remains to be seen. But tell me how you happened to hit upon it."

When one has worked unremittingly to the successful conclusion of a problem—worked both day and night, as I had done—one often finds recompense for one's labor by explaining the solution to an enthusiastic, comprehending listener.

So it was in my case. It was a pleasure to unburden my mind to Paul. I even went so far as to repeat with equally good results my triumphant experiment.

"You see how near we were to the solution last week," I finished. "If you hadn't insisted on taking a holiday it might have been you who discovered Zodium."

He laughed a trifle bitterly.

"You deserve all the credit, Gustave. It was your idea, in the first place. But I made a discovery this week which puts Zodium in the shade."

"You did? Why, I didn't know you were working this week. What is it?"

I had an uncomfortable feeling that Paul had stolen a march on me.

"You wouldn't call it work, exactly," he answered with one of his vivid flushes. "My discovery is simply this: I am in love!"

In spite of myself a feeling of relief permeated me. So it was just another one of his silly sentimental affairs and no startling chemical discovery which might overshadow Zodium.

Paul, in spite of his brilliancy, was as susceptible to Cupid's darts as any school

girl. A lack of constancy alone had pulled him up short on the very brink of matrimony at least a score of times.

"Who's the lucky girl now?" I asked indulgently.

"Mrs. Paul Grey."

"Mrs. Paul Grey?" I repeated, aghast. "You don't mean to tell me that you're married?"

"Just that," he said simply.

"But after that affair with Laura La Rue, I thought—"

He cut me short impatiently.

"That was just moonshine and nonsense. This is an entirely different thing. Evelyn Lawrence is a girl any man would be proud of winning.

"We loved each other from the first day. What was the use of waiting? We were married this morning before a magistrate."

"Evelyn Lawrence!" I muttered. "You married *her*, Paul?"

Suddenly all the air seemed to have been pumped out of the room. It became difficult to breathe. He had been right—this discovery of his had completely overshadowed Zodium.

"To be sure Evelyn Lawrence," he continued joyously. "You remember her, don't you?"

And then I could not refrain from smiling. Remember her? Good God, I should always do that—always! And this red-faced fool had dared to ask me. Gustave Ericson, if I—

But I must be quite calm, smiling, cheerful. He must never know that he had blundered unpardonably into the web of my attachment. While I had been working like a slave for science, he, the shirker, the woman-seeker, had slipped out and stolen my life's happiness!

Very well—but some day he should answer for that! Now it was necessary that no shadow of the truth should fall between us.

Rising, I grasped his hand.

"My heartiest congratulations, Paul!" I cried. "She is indeed a prize well worth winning!"

How much longer we talked I do not know. I was like a man coming out of an opiate to the presence of feverish pain. And everything I said did not seem to come from myself but rather from a talking-machine which had suddenly been placed in my breast, wound, and started; and everything he said fell on my eardrums like the relentless beating of tiny steel hammers. *Tip tap! tip tap!* his words sounded, driving in painful thoughts

which were as searing as red-hot nails.

And all the time the vial of Zodium grinned at me from the table like a tiny misshapen Judas.

THERE is no medicine in all nature's Apothecary shop so potent, so soothing as the slow-falling sands of time. They cover up in due course the painful bleeding wounds of yesterday; and when we attempt to retrace our steps into that by-gone era, when we attempt to portray the agonies which once seemed so real to us, we stumble over the mounds of buried feeling like strangers in an unknown graveyard.

My infatuation for Evelyn was real enough at the time—so real indeed that it caused me unparalleled agony to think of her as another man's wife.

Even my sincere affection for Paul failed to lessen the weight of the blow. Realizing that I could no longer put my mind on science, I closed up the laboratory and left the city.

For several months I traveled aimlessly from place to place, driven on by a restless energy to be moving. Gradually peace began to settle over my tormented mind.

And then, a year after Paul's marriage—just as I had begun to take a brighter view of life—I met the man who was unconsciously to play such an important part in future events.

At the time I was living at a small hotel in one of those picturesque little towns to be found in Virginia. I was in the third week of my stay when a young man stepped up to where I was sitting on the veranda and accosted me.

"You have a most interesting face," he said without any preamble. "I would like to paint your portrait."

Naturally I was rather taken aback by his bluntness. However, I had already learned never to take offense at an artist. One might as well grow angry at a hummingbird. It is a waste of energy.

Besides, there was a pleasing frankness in this young man's manner which was very attractive. He stood with his legs wide apart, cocking his head at me as though I were some strange specimen under a microscope.

"You flatter me!" I said with a half-smile. "But may I ask why you find my face of interest?"

Before he answered he scrutinized me with a pair of very keen eyes. In spite of his immaculate flannels, pink cheeks, and youthfully egotistical mustache, there was

something of the wolf about this young man. He had the air of one sniffing at the heels of vanishing Truth.

"Before I tell you that," said he, "I wish you would visit my studio. I'm sure I could explain everything more easily there.

"An artist can only be natural when he is surrounded by the works of his art. Can I presume upon your good nature to the extent of enticing you up three flights of stairs?"

I rose to my feet willingly enough. The boredom which so often accompanies loneliness had weighed down my spirits of late. Perhaps the company of this ingenious young man would prove amusing.

"I must warn you beforehand that I know nothing about art!" I told him as we entered the hotel together.

"No matter," he rejoined lightly. "You yourself—if you will pardon my frankness—are a work of art, a walking portrait of an advanced passion.

"There is a look in your eyes at times—a certain twist to your lips that— But, no matter, I will explain later."

As we mounted to his room he told me that he was the famous portrait painter, Anthony Worthington, of New York, and that his doctor had ordered him to take a protracted rest in the country. He had already been away from town for nearly two months, and during that time had not done a single stroke of work.

"I'm fairly itching to get back at it," he continued. "And when I saw your face at breakfast this morning I knew that the moment had come."

Anthony Worthington had secured the largest and brightest room in the hotel. It had two long French windows, through which the sunlight streamed, lighting every corner and illumining several dark portraits on the wall.

The whole place had absorbed the personality of its occupant. It was indisputably the abode of a painter.

"Is this some of your work?" I asked, stepping up to the wall and examining the portrait of a bull-necked individual with a jaw which jutted out like the prow of a battleship.

"Yes," he answered, offering me a cigarette and lighting one himself. "That's Bill Sands. I painted him a week before he was arrested for murder.

"You may remember the case. He killed his father and robbed him of a cheap watch. The most primitive type. But still we must have a beginning."

"Am I to understand that you are in-

terested in portraying criminal types?"

"Murderers!" he replied simply. "It's my life's work! We all have our hobbies, we artists. Some of us paint cows, sheep, geese—even pigs.

"But give me murderers every time. I've painted dozens of them in the last five years."

"But isn't it rather difficult to find sitters?" I asked.

"Not at all," he told me. "Any city is loaded with murderers. Walk a block and you'll meet ten.

"Most of them are of the primitive type like Bill here and of course nearly all of them are in the embryonic state. These remain out of jail merely because the peculiar twist in their characters has never been properly developed."

"This poor young man is mentally deranged." I thought to myself. "What a shame it is that so many artists live on the borderland of reason!" Aloud I said:

"But I suppose in time they all succumb to their natural tendencies?"

"Not necessarily," he answered lightly. "On the contrary, very few attain a full mental growth. Perhaps the natural fear of the consequences holds them in check, or perhaps the psychological moment never enters their lives."

I began to feel a strange interest in this crack-brained artist's theory. He stated his opinion with such evident sincerity that I knew well enough that he was not joking.

Could there be any truth in such a bizarre belief? If so, it would cause timid folk like my father no end of worry—timid folk who had amassed large fortunes and whose progeny would be benefited by an early demise.

"And some of these embryonic murderers go through life never guessing the truth about themselves?" I suggested.

"Just so," said he. "It often takes war to wake them up. A great international conflict serves as a mammoth incubator for all the vices. It hatches out some strange chicks, my friend—some very strange chicks."

He paused for a moment, and I caught the glint of his sharp, gray eyes as he turned toward the window.

"A fair light," he murmured. "If you would oblige—"

"You want me to sit for you?" I asked. "I am then one of these embryonic murderers?"

I had spoken facetiously and was scarcely prepared for his answer.

When he said, "Out of your own mouth you have spoken it," I started involuntarily.

"But not at all like Bill," he went on encouragingly. "You're of a very uncommon type. Just glance at that other portrait near the window."

TO humor him, I did as he told me. I saw a strikingly handsome face, lean dark, esthetic—a face with haunting eyes and drooping, crimson lips—a face which one felt instinctively to be quite soulless quite malign

Like an assassin's mask, time had carefully carved it out of ivory to conceal the grimaces of the soul. And yet, through the slanting eyelids, death looked out at the world; and behind those languid crimson lips, one sensed the cruel white fangs.

"That," Anthony Worthington continued, "is Burgess Corell. He murdered his wife by mental suggestion. He forced her to commit suicide

"The law could never touch him. That is the face of an advanced type of murderer, just as Bill's is the primitive type. Together they represent crime's ultimates."

I turned from the portrait with an involuntary shudder. The atmosphere of this mad artist had got on my nerves. Of course, what he had said about me was ridiculous.

And yet there had been a time, a year ago now, when Paul had stood in my laboratory and told me that—

What nonsense! Of course I had been hurt and angry. What man would not? But I had long since reconciled myself to my loss. I could now view the affair with a philosophic calm. All my affection for Paul had returned.

"Do these murderers whom you paint confess their crimes to you?" I asked.

"Very often," my host answered genially. "It's embarrassing. Murderers are inclined to be too communicative, in anything.

"They're all great egotists at heart. Many a confession has been made because the guilty man thought the story too good to keep all to himself."

"To be the confidant of a murderer I should think would be a trifle dangerous. They might repent of their loquacity at leisure."

Anthony Worthington smiled pleasantly.

"You're right," he said. "It is dangerous. After a few unpleasant experiences, I always put wads of cotton in my ears and made sure that my models saw me do it.

Now, if you'll be kind enough to sit in that chair by the window, I'll get to work."

"You think that my face really deserves your attention?" I asked as I seated myself.

"It stirs me!" he cried enthusiastically. "You have a remarkable expression. Turn your head a trifle to the right, please. The chin a little higher. Ah, that's it! Splendid! Splendid!"

He began to take aim at me with a piece of charcoal.

And I, in spite of my great sanity, once more experienced an involuntary tremor. At first this young man's silly pretense had amused me. I had looked on him as a crack-brained child and had humored him accordingly.

But the portrait of Burgess Corell had unaccountably affected me. For an instant it had seemed that I was looking into a distorted mirror at my own face.

There was something about the tilt of the chin, something in the curve of the lips and the lifted eyebrows, which resembled the Gustave Ericson I met each morning in the shaving-mirror. It was just a coincidence, of course, but then—

Anthony Worthington's voice broke in on my thoughts. He stood before his easel, making quick, definite strokes, and while he worked, he talked coherently.

"We all have two faces," he was saying. "Men go about in masks. It is the art of the portrait-painter to unmask humanity. He must see more than the surface values; he must get a glimpse of the soul, or he is merely a photographer.

"It is difficult in some cases; and especially difficult with you. Now, if you would kindly think of some special enemy of yours—some person whom you hate with all your soul."

"I have no enemies," I answered coldly. "I hate no one."

"Have you seen the morning paper?" he asked hopefully. "No? Well, there's a most interesting murder on the first page, and a rather vivid description of the details. Allow me."

He rose, and, picking up a copy of the *Sentinel*, presented it to me.

"Read it carefully," he pleaded. "It's the first column to the right. All about the murder of an old woman in Roanoke."

I smiled in spite of myself.

"I have no interest in such things," I assured him. "Well, if you insist." I took the paper and glanced at it. The next moment I had all I could do to stifle a cry of astonishment.

My eyes had become riveted upon an article to the left where he had pointed—an article which bore the heading:

YOUNG SCIENTIST GIVES ZODIUM TO THE WORLD

I had great difficulty in holding the paper steady while I read the short paragraph.

One of the most interesting discoveries of modern times was recently made by the young chemist and scientist, Paul Grey. And he has put his discovery to an eminently practical use. Zodium, we have been told, is likely to revolutionize medicine. Dr. Madden, an eminent physician and specialist, prophesies that this drug will add at least ten years to the longevity of the race. It acts as a powerful stimulant on diseased and wornout organs, and is said to be a sure cure for hardening of the arteries.

For a moment the room seemed to be revolving slowly about me. Allowing the newspaper to slip to the floor, I seized the arms of the chair. And then a great wave of blood swam up into my head, burring my vision with a curtain of dancing purple.

So Paul had betrayed me! Not contented with robbing me of a wife, he had now robbed me of my discovery. Like a sneaking hound, he had waited till my back was turned before stretching out his plundering hands to my treasure.

And I had trusted him always! What a fool I had been! But now—Why, he would smart a bit. I would see to that. I would—

"Hold it, hold it!" Anthony Worthington cried out. He was working like a madman.

"The very expression I wanted! Hold it, man—for God's sake, hold it! Hold it, and I will paint a portrait of you which shall be life itself—as true as your own soul!"

CHAPTER II

"I HAVE PAINTED YOUR SOUL"

TWO weeks after I learned of Paul's treachery, Anthony Worthington wrote his name on the canvas and stepped back with a sigh of content. My portrait was finished.

"Come and look at yourself," he called to me. "This is a sample of my very best work."

With no small amount of curiosity I

took my stand beside him and examined the painting. Up to this I had purposely refrained from looking at it.

It is unfair to judge a man's work until it is the finished product of its creator. The satisfying results often rest in the very last touch of the master's hand.

For some time I looked at this painted likeness of myself with amazement. This could not be I! This face, distorted by passion, with pinched nostrils and glaring eyes, was not the face which had so often looked reassuringly at me from the mirror.

Like Medusa's head, this horrible apparition froze me into dumb immobility. The painted figure seemed to be crouched there waiting but for the signal to spring forward to all its murderous length. And while thus waiting, the stored-up venom of the world was welling into cruel lines about the lips, glowing dully behind the starting eyeballs, writing its message to the world on the furrowed parchment of the forehead. Shuddering, I turned away.

"This is a portrait painted by a madman," I said aloud.

Anthony Worthington smiled.

"It is you," he answered. "I have painted your soul."

For an instant hot anger overmastered me. It took all my self-command to hold in check a wild desire to pick up one of the pallet-knives and cut into the shreds the painted lie.

What right had this crack-brained artist to so parody my emotions? I had been a fool to sit for him!

"It is a fine piece of work," he continued, rubbing his hands together gleefully. "If you don't want it, I'll hang it in my studio at home."

I was silent for several moments. It would never do to let him have this portrait. He might show it to his friends; he might even put it on exhibition or sell it.

In my mind's eye I could see a crowd of the curious surrounding this abomination and commenting on the model who was so very different. Such a portrait could well-nigh brand a man a felon. I had a shrinking shame that other eyes might see it.

No, that would never do. I would buy it and destroy it at my leisure.

Once more I looked long at the painting. It was necessary to humor the artist until I rescued it from his clutches.

After that? Well, after that I could destroy it in a thousand different ways.

"It improves on a second glance," I told him. "In fact, it isn't at all bad. You seem to have got the—er—"

"The hidden expression," he broke in impatiently. "This is your real face, my friend."

"To be sure," I said mildly, "to be sure. The hidden expression, that's what I meant. Now I want this portrait, Mr. Werthington. The price?"

"In your case, nothing. It was a positive joy to paint you. I would like to do another one of you."

"I am leaving for home tomorrow," I told him hastily. "Perhaps some other time."

"That's a shame," said he. "However, as you say, perhaps some other time. When I return to the city, I intend painting my conception of the Spanish Inquisition."

"You will be invaluable as a model. May I call on you?"

"Certainly," I lied. "And my portrait?"

"I'll have it crated up and sent to your address."

We parted with this understanding; and on the following afternoon I boarded the train for home. Strange to say, I had a feeling of unbounded relief as the wheels began to revolve.

It was as though I were escaping some imminent peril. Try as I would, I could not then account for this uncalled-for sensation.

On arriving home, I found my father greatly altered. During my absence, he had aged considerably.

His face, once as round and red as a harvest moon, had dwindled. Now it was as shriveled as a winter apple; and his large, protruding, brown eyes looked out of it with the hopeless expression of a sick animal.

Also his disposition had altered for the worse. He now evinced an impatience toward the petty little annoyances of everyday life which he would have blushed for at an earlier period.

He greeted me with an unpleasant allusion to my long absence which was galling in the extreme. It was all I could do to refrain from voicing my opinion of his churlishness.

"Well, now that you're home," he continued, "I hope you'll go into the office and be of some credit to me."

The mere thought of Gustave Ericson in an office made me smile. An eagle in a hencoop could not be any more incongruous.

"My dear father," I said patiently enough, "do you not realize that I am a scientist? My time is invaluable to the progress of the world. No business is im-

portant enough to absorb my mentality."

Now this truthful answer should have silenced him. But it did not silence him. On the contrary, it seemed to infuriate him.

The poor old man was such a mental dullard that he could not appreciate the gifts of his son. No doubt my words sounded to him like hollow boasting.

"A scientist!" he sneered. "What have you ever discovered? All you do is to make vile stinks in your laboratory."

"Now, if you were like Paul Grey, and really did something, I'd put up with it. If you had discovered Zodium, which is of practical use, why, then—"

Suddenly he paused, and his eyes seemed to fairly pop out at me. He had the look of one who beholds an unaccountable transformation.

"Why, what's the matter, Gustave? Aren't you well?"

"Certainly, Father. Do I look ill?"

"No, not now. A moment ago your face seemed to change. It must be my eyes."

He put his hand to his forehead with a weary gesture.

"I haven't been myself lately. What was I saying? Oh, yes! You must go into the office, Gustave. I'll not support you in idleness."

"Idleness!" I cried angrily. "Have you no conception of my life? I have worked very hard."

"Where are the results?" he asked in an aggravating tone.

I HAD opened my lips for a bitter reply when the tall figure of the butler appeared in the doorway, interrupting for a time the family quarrel.

"The express company just left a large box for you, Mr. Gustave," he said. "Where shall I put it, sir?"

Instantly the feeling of exhilaration which I had experienced since leaving Virginia vanished. It was as though an invisible weight had descended upon me.

I had a sensation of guilt—a sensation as though I were in immediate danger of being detected in some crime. If the butler had been a relentless policeman, and I a cowering felon, his words could not have caused me a greater shock.

Ridiculous as it now seems, beads of perspiration gathered on my forehead, and my knees began to tremble.

"You may put it in my laboratory, Tom," I said at length.

"Shall I take the crate off, sir?"

"No!" burst from me with such ve-

hemence that my father and the butler both started involuntarily. "I'll open it myself!"

"Very well, sir," said Tom in a grieved tone. "I'll leave a hammer on the table."

"Why did you shout at Tom like that?" my father asked when the butler had gone. "That's no way to speak to servants, Gustave. I won't tolerate that kind of thing in *my* house."

"It won't happen again, Father."

I turned on my heel and strode into the laboratory, leaving the old man pacing up and down the room with the pompous air of one who has come off best in a battle of words.

Tom had obeyed me with rather more than his customary alacrity. I found a tall, crated package leaning up against one of the walls. Undoubtedly it was the portrait.

Picking up a hammer, I began to tear the laths free. They gave readily enough, coming out with the sharp, rasping sound of nails torn from wood; and, in a moment more, I lowered the paper-swathed portrait to the floor and began to unwrap it. Soon the painted apparition of myself glared up at me with all its blood-curdling ferocity.

While I had been at work, my nerves had been steady enough; but now, as I met the fixed regard of the portrait, I noted something which at the time I thought a foolish fancy. The figure in the gold frame seemed to writhe from side to side; as if in a death agony, its thin, red lips drew back from long, white fangs. Its breast rose and fell spasmodically and its malignant, narrow-lidded eyes rolled wildly, as though seeking some loophole of escape.

And then a strange hallucination possessed me. For an instant it seemed that we had struggled together, this painted creature and I; that we had had a fierce combat in this very room; that at last I had thrown it on its back and was holding it there.

Sweat poured down my face and my knees were trembling from fatigue; yet an overmastering hatred burned my veins like molten lava. I would destroy it forever. That was my only hope, my only salvation.

I would bring the hammer down on its leering face again and again till nothing was left but an unrecognizable pulp. Now for a straight blow and a strong blow. I raised the hammer aloft.

Suddenly a human hand grasped my

arm and a loud voice called out, "What are you doing, Gustave?"

Instantly the strange hallucination passed. I found myself on my feet, the hammer still gripped tightly in my hand.

My father stood near me, his face unnaturally white, and his eyes staring. He had raised one arm on a level with his head, as though to protect himself from a blow.

"What do you say?" I muttered hoarsely. The hammer slipped from my hand to the floor.

He lowered his arm, and his face became suffused with blood. He seemed to be in a towering rage.

"You must be insane!" he shouted. "I'll have no madman in this house! Whether you like it or not, I tell you that that painting does resemble you."

"Just a moment ago, when you lifted the hammer to strike me, your face was exactly like that."

"I lifted the hammer to strike you, Father?" I cried, dumfounded. "Why, I didn't know you were in the room!"

"You're lying or you're mad," he said. "I knew you had an abominable temper, but I didn't think—" He paused and shot a suspicious glance at the portrait.

"If I hadn't seen you in time, you'd have killed me, Gustave! I know it. I could see it in your face—it's in the face of your portrait now. Good God, what a son!"

He began sidling toward the door, his frightened eyes still fixed upon me.

"But I don't know what you're talking about!" I cried in desperation. "I was unpacking the portrait and didn't even know—"

"It's no use lying," he sneered. "I came in here and found you on your knees staring at that painting. Looking over your shoulder I said that I thought it was a very good likeness."

"At that you shouted out, 'You lie!' and, springing to your feet, attacked me with a hammer. I avoided your first blow, and then you came to your senses."

"A ridiculous story!" I shouted after him.

"Perhaps so," said he. "But if the facts were known, you'd get a term in prison. From now on we'll not live under the same roof. I think you'd better be off on your travels again tomorrow."

Once more he gave me a fearful look over his shoulder, and then, without another word, slammed the door in my face. Soon the sound of his shuffling footsteps died away.

SOMEONE has said, "Truth is stranger than fiction." Bear this well in mind as you peruse the chronicle of the startling events which befell me and do not deafen your ears to these unparalleled experiences because they seem unbelievable.

Once more I repeat, "I am sane, quite sane!" And as a proof of my sanity, I refer you triumphantly to Zodium and the Purple Veil. Which one of you, my readers, has given to the world such proofs of sound mentality as these?

On the night of our altercation, my father was stricken with a severe attack of paralysis. Perhaps the abnormal excitement under which he had been laboring brought it on prematurely. But, as I look back on the scene, as I weigh again on the scales of time his uncalled-for accusation, I exonerate myself from any shadow of blame.

Thus all my life I have been more sinned against than sinning.

It is terrifying to see a robust man stricken down in an instant—at one moment to see him strong, upright, master of his powers; at the next, a fallen tree-trunk, twisted, motionless, dumb.

An unseen ax has been at work for days, months, years—but we have noticed nothing till the fall. Who wields this ax so essence of our lives.

Who then is safe?

Even now the shadowy woodsman may have signaled us out in the waiting forest, even now he may be chopping through the essence of our lives. Who then is safe?

My father, once a virile, boisterous man, had become an inanimate, voiceless lump of humanity—an odd, waxen dummy which lay motionless in its large four-posted bed.

Only his eyes moved. In them had centered the spark of life. They followed the nurse, the doctor and myself about with feverish anxiety. And often, when my back was turned, I knew that they were still staring at me.

Although he had lost both the power of speech and the power of motion, in fact was as completely shut off from human intercourse as if he were already dead and buried, I knew by the expression in his eyes that he feared me and would continue to fear me up to the very end. If nothing else, fear dwelt behind those eyes.

How ridiculous, how laughably absurd! He should have been as immune from fear as a fallen tree is immune from the rising storm.

Suppose his ridiculous surmise *had* been correct, suppose I had once threatened him with physical violence, what then? Surely he was now quite safe from me. I could offer him nothing but a blessed relief.

A man of limited intelligence, he remained one to the very end.

I had a consultation with the family doctor shortly after my father's stroke. He offered no hopes of recovery, but seemed to think that his patient might retain this feeble spark of life for years. It was at that time I made the statement which was later to count so heavily against me at my trial. It was simply this: "It would be a work of kindness to put my father out of his misery."

Surely it was a very innocent and truthful remark. And yet how sinister it has been made to appear when repeated triumphantly by the prosecuting attorney!

For a time my father's illness caused me to forget the portrait. I had a thousand and one things to attend to. It was necessary that his business interests should be looked after. I was plunged into a whirlpool of commercial affairs.

Exactly two weeks after my home-coming, I entered the laboratory for the second time. It was evening and the room was bathed in blackness. Lighting the electric-lamp, I glanced about me.

Unconsciously my eyes sought the corner where my portrait had rested against the wall. It was no longer there.

An unaccountable tremor passed through me. I circled the room with my eyes apprehensively and at the next moment uttered an ejaculation of relief. Someone had hung the portrait above the fireplace.

Now it looked down at me with sneering, sardonic contempt—the look of a life-long enemy who has suddenly obtained the upper hand. "I am here for all time," it seemed to be saying.

Instantly all my old hatred and repugnance for this painted abomination returned in full force. Seating myself opposite it, I repaid its baleful stare with all my mental strength, attempting to break its almost hypnotic influence.

And sitting thus, apparently in repose, but in reality tingling all over from an overmastering sensation of loathing and fear, I soon beheld a clarified vision of the truth. It was simply this:

Suddenly my painted likeness moved, its breast rose and fell, and its lips lengthened in a mocking smile. Then, nodding its head at me solemnly, reprovingly, it spoke.

Like dry, wind-swept leaves, its words came to me—leaves that halt for an instant only to rustle on again about our feet.

"Gustave Ericson, why do you deny me?"

And then it seemed to me that hot, angry speech tore my lips apart, that challenging words leaped forth like an army going out in battle array.

"I know what you want," I cried aloud. "But I will not obey you! How dare you claim to be my soul?—you with your murderous eyes and loathsome lips! I will do more than deny you—I will destroy you!"

"No man can destroy his own thoughts," the portrait murmured.

"You are not my thoughts," I answered. "You are but another's painted fancy of my thoughts."

Again the portrait smiled.

"Your father found me true. Do you not remember when you denied me first?"

An involuntary shudder passed through my frame.

"It was *you* then," I gasped, "who threatened him with a hammer?"

The portrait bowed and smiled. Placing one of its long, thin hands over its heart, it bowed and smiled.

"You or me, what can it matter?" it murmured politely. "In the eyes of the world, it will not matter."

"In the eyes of the world it will not matter," I replied dully. The portent of its words sounded a brazen alarm somewhere in my breast. God! how true that was. In the eyes of the world, it would not matter.

What it did, I must answer for. And if it could once escape from its golden prison, what might it not do?

I feared the look in its eyes, the crimson cruelty of its lips, the long, thin hands which seemed to vibrate with evil energy. I must destroy it now or never!

"You wish me to kill my father?" I said at length, glancing about furtively for some weapon to use against it.

"I demand that you kill your father," the portrait answered calmly. "We need his fortune to advance science. How can you hesitate?"

At that moment my wandering eyes encountered what they had been in search of—a bottle containing a powerful chemical which had gone into the making of Zodium. A few drops of this sprinkled on the canvas and I would be rid of my loathsome visitor for all time.

Rising, I took the bottle from the shelf and approached the portrait.

"You're right," I said in a reassuring

tone; "it is evidently my duty. But there are the means to be considered.

"Now, this chemical is deadly and leaves no telltale traces. If I gave him a drop in his sleeping-draft, he would never wake again."

The portrait's lips were once more contorted in an evil smile, and for an instant its eyes were covered with a gray film.

"Poison?" it muttered. "To be sure, *poison*. Let me see!"

By now I had reached the wall and stood directly beneath the portrait.

"Perhaps you are unfamiliar with this chemical," I murmured, uncorking the bottle deftly. "It is guaranteed to be efficacious—to remove all the stains from our lives. Here, take it in the face, you dog!"

The portrait made a protective movement with its thin, white hands. But it was too late. With the speed of lightning I had thrown the contents of the bottle straight into its leering eyes.

Now the fiery liquid was running down the canvas, burning and destroying everything in its path. I heard a choking cry, and then all was silence.

PICKING up a large sponge from the laboratory table, I began to pass it up and down the canvas till every square inch of paint was saturated with the liquid. Then I seated myself with a feeling of relief and watched the grizzly apparition decompose and fade away before my eyes.

Soon the canvas offered nothing but a bare expanse of withered white. My portrait was no more.

And now a great drowsiness descended on me like a soft, languorous sea of mist. The mental struggle through which I had passed left me weary in both body and mind.

Closing my eyes, I was soon wafted away to the land of dreams—dreams, gigantic and ponderous, under which the subconscious mind toiled wearily along up mountain-peaks and down deep declivities, on and on till the break of dawn.

And through these dreams, like the motif in music, as persistent and relentless as the voice of eternal alarm, rang these words in strange cadence: "What it does, I must answer for; what it does, I must answer for," till all the weird valleys of sleep took up the refrain and whispered it softly.

When I awoke, a sickly morning peered in at me through the trembling curtains. The room was still a ghostly battlefield for day and night.

In the corners, an army of shadows



When it saw her, the creature leaped to its feet and fled screaming.

lurked, dark-browed and sinister, crawling ever back before the spear-points of dawn. Suddenly the picture above my head was illumined, and I uttered a cry of horror.

Surely I could not have dreamed that I had destroyed the portrait! There was the empty bottle to prove that I had not dreamed. And yet the canvas no longer offered a bare, seamed expanse.

No, there was my abominable painted likeness glaring down at me with an added venom in its eyes! And, while before the crouching figure had seemed several paces in the background, now it appeared closer, as if it had made a long stride forward while I slept.

Rubbing my eyes, I stared at it. But no stare of mine could wipe it out. If the acid had failed, was there anything in the world which *could* wipe it out?

And the portrait seemed to answer silently with its eyes: "No man can destroy his own thoughts."

How long I sat confronting this incomprehensible apparition, I do not know. I was suddenly brought to myself by the sound of the door opening behind my back.

Starting, I turned and saw the butler's long, lugubrious face peering in at me.

"Well?" I asked sharply.

The man's watery eyes avoided mine. He licked his lips as though they were dry.

"I went for the doctor as you told me, sir," he said at last.

"You went for the doctor?" I cried at a loss. "When did I tell you to go for the doctor?"

Again Tom moistened his lips.

"Why, only two hours ago, sir! You must remember, sir, it was when I ran against you in the dark just as you were coming out of the sick-room!"

"Nonsense! I haven't been near my father all night long."

"If you'll pardon me, sir," Tom continued more firmly, "I advise you to take a little rest. You're not yourself, sir. Your father's sudden death has—"

"My father's death!" I cried, aghast. "You don't mean to tell me that he's dead?"

"Yes, sir. It was as you thought—he was dead when I met you in the hall. Dr. Parkinson said it must have been his heart which failed him at the last.

"Now brace up, sir! Don't give way! Just lean on my arm, sir. That's right; that's right."

My overstrung nerves had suddenly snapped at the butler's news. Trembling

from head to foot, I burst into uncontrolled sobs. So this was where my portrait had vanished to while I—slept.

I had thought the acid had destroyed it, while in reality it had only liberated it for a time to do a ghastly business. There had been a few drops of the chemical left in the bottle—enough to kill an old man; and when I had dozed off, *it* had used them.

See, the bottle was now bone-dry. God help me! What was I to do?

"Come into your own room and lie down, Mr. Gustave," Tom pleaded. "You need rest, sir."

I could no longer resist him. Indeed, I was so weak both in mind and body that I could not have found the strength to disobey a child.

What I needed was sleep—an ocean of tranquil, dreamless sleep. In the future lay a silent struggle between this painted demon and me, an heroic struggle for which I could expect no help from the world.

Before I quitted the room, I glanced over my shoulder at the painting. And as I did so, I saw its crimson lips curl up like a cat's, I saw it place its hand on its breast and bow ever so gracefully, like a famous actor responding to an encore. Bowing and smiling, it followed me with its eyes.

"Can I destroy it!" I murmured. "Will I ever be able to destroy it?"

CHAPTER III

THE PURPLE VEIL

FORTUNATELY my father's death called for no unpleasant investigations. It was natural enough that a man well past the prime of life, suffering from paralysis and a weak heart, should flicker out without a moment's warning.

After the funeral I was plunged into a whirlwind of financial affairs which kept me thoroughly occupied. My father's estate proved to be a complex affair and one which took the family lawyer and myself many weeks to straighten out.

And yet I was not able to forget my painted evil genius at this time. It would obtrude itself before my mental vision at the most inopportune moments, parting the calm, collected chain of thought with its ghostly hand, bowing and smiling at me in mockery from the picture frames which hung in the lawyer's office, and even interrupting me as I spoke solemnly of my affliction with some ribald jest at the expense of my poor dead father—jests which

my companions evidently considered as proceeding from my own lips, and which soon won for me an unenviable reputation.

And I was powerless to clear myself! Even then I realized that any accusation launched against the portrait would rebound and destroy me. The incredulity of a world given over to safety and sanity—a world marked out into squares of possibility like a chess board—offers no mercy to a man such as I, a man lost in the labyrinth of unparalleled experiences.

But do not think that I suffered meekly and in silence. No, on returning home from some scene in which I had been made to appear odious, I would sneak into the laboratory, close the door softly, and take my stand before the portrait. Then, with a heart heavy with horror, I would upbraid it.

"You are a murderer?" I would say.

And my portrait would smirk at me with vivid lips, smirk and bow with its hand on its heart.

"I am a thought," it would murmur—"I am your crimson thought!"

"But why do you persecute me?"

"Do you not deny me?"

"And if I did not deny you?"

"Why, then we would be as one, united and peaceful—quite happy with one another. Do you not long for rest?"

And then somewhere in my breast the strident voice of eternal alarm would cry out, "Not yet—not yet!" And fear would ripple over me like an ice-crowned wave; and it would become difficult to face the portrait.

Shivering and drawing my dressing-gown about me for warmth, I would steal out of the laboratory and up the creaking stairs to my room. God! how cold it was!

A month after I came into my inheritance, I once more took up my scientific studies. Under the eyes of the portrait, grimly and in silence, I experimented with various chemicals.

And such was my concentration that even its gorgonlike regard failed to shatter a theory which was springing up in my brain. Already I had visualized my translucent child, the Purple Veil.

You, who have experienced the poisonous gases on foreign battle-fields, can have but a minimized conception of the Purple Veil. Imagine, if you can, a thick, purplish smoke, shot here and there with tiny iridescent specks of flame like spangles in an eastern shawl—a thick, purplish smoke which coils about its victim fold on fold, smothering and burning till all life is

transformed into mere blackened ashes.

Imagine this, and you may have some slight conception of the Purple Veil.

Hate is one of the great motive forces in the world. Often, like love, it inspires its devotees to unprecedented achievement.

It is a matter for speculation as to how many artistic masterpieces have been inspired by the transcending delirium of rage. And if this is true of Art, so also is it true of its calm but more deadly sisters, Science and Invention.

Hate drove me to the discovery of the Purple Veil—hate and fear. The seering, evil face of the portrait lashed me to herculean mental efforts.

"Perhaps," I thought, "my salvation rests in such a discovery. This grimacing, painted thing has life—life hard to touch, indeed; but still life—and what has life can surely be smothered in the Purple Veil—"

Thinking in this wise, I redoubled my efforts to reach the goal, slaving both day and night till my brain reeled and my nerves seemed like tightly drawn, throbbing wires. And while I toiled thus, my portrait looked down on me calmly, ironically, seemingly quite safe in its impregnable immortality. Often now it conversed with me.

"Why do you toil thus?"

"Because I hate deeply."

"And whom do you hate?"

"I hate the world. It has taken another to its breast in my place."

"And you would destroy the world?"

"Yes, I would destroy it! I would clothe it in the Purple Veil! Death shall hover over its cities and towns, over its valleys and mountain-tops."

And then my portrait would smile as though well pleased; and it would moisten its crimson lips like one who is athirst. Ah, my cunning was more than a match for it!

How eagerly it swallowed the bait! Little did it guess for whom I was so carefully preparing the Purple Veil.

Once it said, "But is there no one among the multitudes, no especial enemy whom you have singled out?"

At that, I nearly dropped the test-tube I was holding. Had it guessed my secret? No, evidently not. It was smiling at me with a new, strange affection in its eyes—a loathsome affection which made my flesh crawl with unspeakable horror and dread.

For an instant I felt that I was stripped bare, that I could move neither hand nor foot, and that its eyes had multiplied into thousands of cold, slimy creatures which

were crawling over me in a noisome wave—creatures which nestled against my body with a sickening sentimentality! It was possible to bear its hatred, but its love—

After a moment I answered:

"Yes, there is one. No doubt you have guessed. I would strike the false friend who robbed me of my discovery—that false friend whose treachery was responsible for your existence."

And then my portrait laughed a low laugh of satisfaction.

"We have become as brothers," it murmured, barely moving its lips. "No longer will we struggle with one another. We will enjoy a lifelong peace."

There came a day at last when my toll culminated in triumph—a day when the Purple Veil became a reality. A dozen tiny glass globes lay on the laboratory table, each one of which contained a thimbleful of crimson liquid—glass globes which, if broken, would exude a poisonous purple vapor spangled here and there with tiny iridescent sparks of living fire.

And my own self-protection had not been neglected. I had taken no risks. Upstairs, in my bedroom, there hung a suit of asbestos and a gas-mask warranted to protect its wearer from the fatal fumes. Also, I had designed a covering of asbestos for the picture-frame.

IT WAS a melancholy afternoon in late autumn, an afternoon when Nature seems grieving over the sins of a prodigal youth. Through the laboratory window I could see the rain-swept street glistening dully where the early electric illuminations touched it. Above the heads of passersby, umbrellas would open their petals like parched buds welcoming the moisture.

And I thought with a grim smile, "What a commotion would be caused in this slow-moving stream of people if I dropped one of the little glass globes at their feet! How they would take to their heels if the Purple Veil were cast among them! Then this multitude of umbrellas, which are passing so sedately, would be caught up and blown away in an instant by a gale of fear."

"Why not do it?" the portrait murmured from its shadowed corner.

But I shook my head.

"You must not forget my personal enemy," I answered. "He comes first, so that others may follow."

"True," said the portrait, believing that I spoke of Paul. "Of course he must be the first and then—"

Suddenly it broke off and cautioned me

to silence by a stealthy finger lifted to its lips.

Someone was coming. I heard footsteps in the hall, the murmuring of voices; and then the door swung open, letting in a stream of golden light. I rose to my feet, my heart beating great waves of blood up into my head.

Paul stood on the threshold in the very center of this river of light—Paul, like a vision of the past, who had stolen from me both love and fame! Time had not even touched him in its passage. He looked not a day older than when I had seen him last.

"So you have come!" I cried.

He shaded his eyes with his hand and peered in.

"Is that you, Gustave?" he asked. "It's so dark in here that it's hard to make things out. I can see your face now, but—"

He broke off suddenly and uttered an ejaculation of astonishment.

"Why, what are you doing?" he cried. "Why are you standing on a chair before the fireplace?"

Instinctively my eyes followed his. A shaft of light from the street rested on the portrait's face, but everything else was in unstable, tottering shadow. One could see indistinctly the leather armchair beneath it, and that was all.

He had evidently taken Anthony Worthington's painted lie to be his friend whom it so brazenly caricatured. It was scarcely complimentary.

A month before, no doubt, I would have been unable to control my temper at this insult. But since then I had learned caution from close association with the portrait.

Now my answer was cooled by cunning before it left my lips. One had to be on guard against the stupid misapprehension of the world.

"This is a case of mistaken identity, Paul," I replied, touching the electric button at my elbow which illumined the room.

He evinced a ludicrous surprise when he realized his mistake. Wheeling about, he stammered:

"Why, I could have sworn that it was you! It seemed to move and smile!"

"Merely the play of light and shadow," I rejoined carelessly. "Surely to a scientific mind there can be nothing incomprehensible in natural phenomena? But what do you think of the portrait?"

"Not at all flattering," he muttered at length. "It portrays you in an ugly mood. But it's you, old man; it's undoubtedly you. I've seen you look just like that."

"When?" I asked curiously.

"Let me see." He paused for an instant and plucked at his lower lip with nervous fingers. "Why, the last time I saw you.

"You were put out because I had deserted the laboratory for a week to get married. I remember—"

"You didn't lose anything by that desertion," my portrait broke in ironically.

As was usual on such occasions, its words seemed to come from my own mouth. Paul thought that I had spoken to upbraid him for his theft of my discovery. His face flushed to a dark crimson.

"I came here to see you about that, Gustave," he began in a halting voice. "You don't know how I've suffered ever since. I wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been for Evelyn. All my money went in that Wall Street panic and I had to do something."

"Your money went?" I said kindly enough. "How was that?"

He ran his hand feverishly through his flaxen hair.

"It was my father's fault," he continued hastily. "He was always a gambler, you know. Someone gave him the wrong tip; he put everything he had on it and even borrowed Evelyn's little fortune.

"Then came the crash. Everything went—everything! We were all in debt."

"That left—Zodium," I suggested.

"Yes, Zodium was our only chance. I tried to get hold of you; but your father didn't know where you were. From the first I knew that there was a practical side to Zodium—a side worth millions if we could get the medical profession interested.

"Here was a great scheme lying idle, Evelyn and I at our wits' end, and you somewhere in the wilds.

"It was a temptation. I couldn't wait for you—I simply couldn't! You had shown me the formula; I went ahead and made Zodium and put it to a practical, money-getting use."

"You appeared in the eyes of the world as its discoverer," the portrait said coldly.

"That was necessary," Paul answered, evidently again laboring under the delusion that I had spoken. "I couldn't have sold it otherwise."

"But now," I cried joyfully, "you'll make full reparation; won't you, Paul?"

All my confidence in him had returned. As I spoke, I gazed challengingly at the portrait, which repaid my regard with an almost imperceptible curl of the lip. Evidently it was my friend's enemy as well as mine.

"Most certainly, Gustave," Paul rejoined solemnly. "I've come to offer full reparation. I have prospered in the last year. I am now able to pay you back every cent Zodium has made for me.

"And as for the fame, I will renounce that, too. I have already sent a letter to the *Scientific Monthly*, telling the whole truth about the matter and naming you as the discoverer."

I was overjoyed. All my old-time affection for Paul returned. His offense had not been so heinous as I had imagined.

When one considered the temptation, one had to acknowledge that it would have taken a supernaturally moral man to have resisted.

And besides, was he not making full reparation?

Grasping his hand, I told him that there was now nothing to forgive; I assured him of my friendship and spoke so warmly that I soon saw suspicious drops of moisture in his eyes.

And all the time, behind his back, my evil painted passion mocked and moued, parodying our emotions with ugly grimaces which furrowed its face into wicked lines.

And on the table, within arm's reach, lay the little glass globes, each with a beating, crimson heart—the little glass globes in which lay waiting for any murderous hand, the Purple Veil.

I SPENT that evening with Paul. He insisted that I return home with him; and I, nothing loath, accompanied him through the glistening streets.

As we sauntered along, side by side, two united shadows in a world of shadows, it seemed to me that nothing could ever again come between us.

A ten-minute walk brought us to his house. It was a large, pretentious-looking building—a building which reminded me of public libraries one finds in small Southern towns. It exuded an atmosphere of frigid learning not at all in keeping with its laughter-loving master.

At first I rather dreaded meeting Evelyn again. Perhaps she could still play upon my emotion—perhaps I had not yet outgrown my feeling. And if this were so, would not my reborn affection for Paul be eaten away in an instant by that deadly chemical, jealousy?

But I might have spared myself all fears. That foolish sentiment had been buried somewhere in the past. As I greeted her, it was as though I were meeting her for the first time.

I saw a rather tall, anemic-looking girl with the dissatisfied expression of one who attempts to find happiness in material luxuries. What had become of that languid lily which had grown to such rare beauty in the fertile soil of my imagination?

I dined with Paul and his wife, and he and I talked of the past. We went over again our school and college days, while Evelyn struggled against boredom. At last our conversation flowed into the present.

"What are you working on now, Paul?" I asked.

"Nothing at present," he murmured, flushing slightly. "Evelyn has me nicely crucified on the cross of society. What with bridge, dances, and receptions, I haven't been able to draw a free breath in months."

"But it's a very good thing for you to go about!" Evelyn broke in with a note of irritation in her voice. "You were almost a hermit when I married you."

Paul a hermit! I allowed myself a smile. My friend had never been *that*. On the contrary, his mixing propensities had interfered greatly with his scientific studies.

"And what are *you* doing now?" Paul asked eagerly. "Have you made another remarkable discovery?"

Before I answered him, my eyes wandered to a large oil landscape which hung on the opposite wall. To my horror, a familiar figure suddenly stepped out of a grove of trees in the background of this painting and warned me to silence with a ghostly finger lifted to its lips.

There was something immeasurably terrifying in thus being confronted by my relentless enemy. With a muffled exclamation of dismay, I stared at the canvas.

"Why, what is it?" Evelyn cried in alarm. "What do you see, Mr. Ericson?"

With a superhuman effort of will, I turned my head, glanced at her, and even smiled.

"Nothing," I murmured. "I was trying to discover if there were any human figures in that landscape. A shepherd, perhaps?"

"No," Evelyn answered wonderingly. "There are no figures."

"Quite so," I said lightly. "My eyes have been playing me tricks lately."

"But you haven't told me what you've been doing!" Paul broke in. "Have you come across anything as good as Zodium?"

Stiffening my will, forcing my eyes away from the tiny figure of fear in the painted meadow, I answered truthfully:

"Yes, I believe I *have* discovered something as good as Zodium."

Paul's cheeks were suddenly suffused

with blood and his eyes shone brightly.

"I'd like to be let into the secret, old man," he muttered. "Perhaps I could be of some help. Of course, after what has happened, it seems—"

He broke off lamely with a muttered "damn" under his breath and a quick look at Evelyn. Evidently she knew nothing of what had formerly transpired.

And now the tiny figure in the painted meadow was waving its arms about as though possessed. "Stop! Stop!" it seemed to be screaming through its wide-open mouth.

But my determination to trust Paul was adamant. There was a look in his eyes that wrung my heart. For the once I would prove that I was stronger than my enemy—I would speak.

"My new discovery is called 'The Purple Veil,'" I began. "It is the most powerful, the most deadly chemical compound ever known to man. It is invaluable for military purposes. A shell containing the Purple Veil could destroy a city and the population of a city."

"If that is true," Paul cried with flashing eyes, "you can ask your own price for it! Any nation in command of such a secret would soon rule the world. I suppose you invented it with the idea of making it the most powerful weapon of modern warfare?"

Smiling slightly, I bent forward and murmured in his ear:

"I invented it to destroy a portrait which has become loathsome to me!"

Evidently Paul considered this remark as an attempted joke. He laughed rather foolishly and immediately suggested showing me his laboratory which was situated in the garden at the rear of the house. Evelyn excused herself, saying that she had some domestic matters to attend to and would perhaps join us later.

Strange as it might once have seemed to me, I was glad to be rid of her. Tonight I wanted no one but Paul. We had so many things to talk over, he and I, that the presence of an unsympathetic listener seemed an irksome encumbrance.

With a sigh of relief, I followed my friend out of the house and down a winding garden-path which led to a small cement building a score of yards away.

"Why didn't you have your laboratory in the house?" I asked idly.

"Because of Evelyn," he called back over his shoulder. "She didn't like the idea of having all those combustibles so near her."

"What a blessed escape I have had!"

was my thought as I followed him up a flight of stone steps and waited while he swung back the heavy door of his laboratory.

THE out-house consisted of a single large room lighted by electricity. The walls and ceiling were of stone, and in the center was a long metal table, on which were grouped several bottles of chemicals and the various appliances to be found in most laboratories. There was a musty odor about the place which called out for thorough airing and cleansing.

"You haven't been very busy here?" I suggested, pointing out several glass jars which were gray with dust.

"No," he answered with an almost inaudible sigh. "I have let my ambition go to the dogs. I've always needed you, Gustave, to keep me going."

He seated himself on the table.

"This is a wonderful workshop," he continued, glancing about him, "and yet it's of no use to me. No ideas stirring. Gustave."

"Why not help me with the Purple Veil?" I asked.

Paul leaped down and took a stride toward me with outstretched hands.

"You mean that, Gustave?" he cried. "After all that's happened, you can still trust me? That's awfully decent of you, old man! I'd work my fingers to the bone; I'd—"

I have always had a dread of sentimental outbursts. Now I broke in on him abruptly.

"This is an excellent place to experiment with such a powerful chemical. Nothing can be hurt in this vault."

"When can we begin?" he cried excitedly. "I'd like to start tonight."

"Would you?" I asked. "Well, why not? I've got several vials of the Purple Veil in my laboratory now. It's barely a ten-minute walk. I'll step around and bring them over, if you say the word."

"That would be corking! I'm in just the mood for a little work. Shall I go with you?"

"No, don't do that," I answered. "You stay here and remove every inflammable object that may be about. I tell you, the

Purple Veil is the nearest thing to hell's fire ever uncorked."

"Very well," he said with a laugh. "I'll see that everything's shipshape before you get back."

"Will I have to go out through the house?" I asked.

"No, there's a gate in the garden which opens on the street. Come this way."

Paul conducted me to a large iron gate set in the garden wall. At first he had some difficulty in unlocking it, but at last, with a shrill, complaining sound, the key turned in the lock and the gate swung slowly outward. I followed my friend through this aperture and into a side street.

"I'll leave the gate on the latch," Paul said as we parted. "You can come right in any time. You'll find me in the laboratory when you get back."

"Very well," I answered. "I won't be long."

Turning, I left him standing bareheaded under an arc light and hurried up the street. At the corner, I turned and looked back.

He was still standing where I had left him. To this day I can see him thus—one hand resting on the rusted bars of the gate; the other shading his eyes from the bright electric rays which streamed down on his flaxen hair. And to this day there is a great love in my heart for that slim, upright figure—a great love and a great sorrow.

CHAPTER IV

FIND THE MURDERER!

NOW, as I near the end of my tale, once more Horror holds my beating heart in the hollow of her hand. It is as if I were once again facing the terrors of the past. I am cold, bitterly cold—so cold that the pencil shakes between my trembling fingers.

And yet I must force myself to finish this chronicle. Truth has lain for months buried deep. Before she crumbles to dust, I must unearth her! Yes, although it is a ghastly business, I must unearth her!

After I had left Paul I hurried home. Opening the door with my latch-key, I

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mounted the stairs to my own room. Here I found everything as I had left it—the asbestos suit over the back of a chair, the gas-mask hanging from a peg on the wall.

It was but the work of a moment to don this gray uniform; and then, resembling some tattered derelict who has slept all night on a dust-heap, I began to descend the stairs to the laboratory. At every step I made a swishing sound as though I were clothed in paper.

I had not as yet put on the gas mask. I carried it in my hand as if it were a lantern. Now and then it swung against my thigh, causing me to start involuntarily.

The laboratory was plunged in blackness. Turning on the lights, I took a quick survey of the premises. *There* were the tiny globes in which glistened the Purple Veil; *there* was the picture-frame cover of asbestos in which I intended placing the portrait at the last moment.

The portrait! I wheeled about and met its satanic regard. During the last few days it had grown ever more lifelike. Now one could fairly see the blood coursing behind the swarthy skin, the beastlike moisture on the crimson lips, the vibrating tension of the curling fingers.

There it crouched—malevolent as a spider—studying me with its unbearable eyes. Would I be able to destroy it? Would I *ever* be able to destroy it?

"Well," I said at last, "why do you stare at me thus?"

Then its thin, red lips curled in a sneer.

"You interest me," it murmured. "You are such a fool—such a weak fool!"

"I do not understand you," I answered coldly.

"You do not understand me?" it cried vehemently. "I thought we had become friends, you and I! Well, I will make my meaning clear. Is it wise to trust one who is untrustworthy—one who has proved himself untrustworthy?"

"Did you not see me warning you from that picture in Paul's house? Surely you saw me; and yet you still persevered. Why have you given yourself into the hands of your enemy?"

Veiling the hatred in my eyes, I laughed aloud. Surely I was more than a match for it! It had called itself a crimson thought—well, even a *crimson thought* can be the toy of man. Now I would play a little game with it—a game of life or death.

"I do not trust Paul," I answered. "Have I not told you that I intend to kill him?"

"Then why did you speak to him of the Purple Veil?"

"Crude, stupid passion," I cried, "you are like some frenzied wild beast! You have no cunning, no subtlety. I spoke to Paul of the Purple Veil because I intend to choke him with it.

"He himself has opened the way. He has offered to help me in an experiment tonight—he has given me the use of his laboratory."

"So that he may rob you again," the portrait broke in.

"Perhaps. But in reality I shall rob him. I shall take his most precious possession—his life!

"There will be an unavoidable accident, you understand? His widow will have the consolation of knowing that her husband died in the service of science."

The portrait began to chuckle. The rasping sound of its merriment, the gray film which covered its eyes, and lastly the greedy way it licked its lips, made my flesh crawl. And yet it was necessary for me to go on building a dwelling of lies in which it might feel secure.

"That is the reason I came back and put on my asbestos suit," I continued. "Paul is now awaiting me in the laboratory. I shall take him one of these little glass globes and then we will experiment."

"How I wish I could be there!" the portrait murmured. "Are there any paintings in his laboratory? If so, I might manage it. I have access to all paintings."

"I'm sorry to say that there are not," I said regretfully. "However, I think it could be managed. I'll take you under my arm as a gift to him—you understand?"

"But first you must put on this picture-frame cover of asbestos. It will protect you from the Purple Veil."

The portrait gave me a look of loathsome affection.

"You are growing very fond of me," it whispered. "We are becoming as brothers. Let us hurry. I am anxious to see Paul enshrouded in the Purple Veil."

STILL masking the hate in my eyes, I slipped the asbestos cover over its frame; next I went to the table and picked up one of the tiny glass globes. Then I returned to the portrait which still regarded me with its loose-lipped smile.

"Does it suspect anything?" I wondered. "If I can only put on my gas-mask before it suspects anything!"

At that instant, the portrait pointed out my path. It said anxiously:

"How can you carry me when you have that mask in your hand?"

"That is true!" I cried with a laugh. "I'll have to wear the mask, then."

With fingers that shook, I slipped the contrivance over my head.

"You will appear ridiculous on the street," the portrait expostulated. "But take me down and let us hurry."

Suddenly its voice changed and it eyed me intently.

"What are you waiting for?" it cried. "Ah, traitor—traitor! You dare not!"

"I dare everything!" I cried exultantly and cast the tiny glass globe straight at its terror-stricken eyes.

What happened then was photographed on the film of my brain for all time. The blinding flash as the glass globe exploded, the thin stream of purplish vapor which coiled over the canvas like twisting snakes, the iridescent sparks of flame which whirled hither and thither in a mad dance—all these I had expected to see.

But the passing of the portrait! Ah, that was different—that was enough to turn a strong man's brain to quivering jelly!

At first the portrait remained motionless, its mouth agape in ludicrous astonishment. But when a stream of the Purple Veil coiled about its knees, it began to struggle.

With distended eyeballs and lolling tongue, with foaming lips and bursting lungs, it writhed back and forth in its efforts to escape. And as it fought for life, silently, vindictively, its venomous eyes were still fixed upon my face.

But soon there came a change. The Purple Veil squirmed upward till it reached the portrait's gasping mouth. For an instant I saw my enemy's breast rise and fall in a last convulsive movement.

At that superhuman effort, its lungs must have broken like wind-distended bags. At the next moment, the portrait toppled forward on its face.

Yet all was not over. It still held tenaciously to life. Like a wounded spider it lay there, quivering slightly.

And now the tiny sparks of flame gathered on the fallen body like fireflies settling on a withered branch. Burning now green, now white, now green again, they fell on the portrait in a shower. In vain it writhed beneath their fiery weight.

Soon they had buried it; and the whole canvas was aflame. Then long fingers of fire reached upward till they touched the asbestos-covered frame, retiring sullenly and attempting an outlet on another side.

And I stood looking aghast at this living

painting of hell. Long after my enemy had fallen, I saw the heap of red-hot ashes, under which it lay, stir slightly.

At that I turned on my heel, sick and dizzy, and dared not look again till the canvas was but blackened ashes. Then, at last, I realized that I was free.

Trembling with excitement, I then opened the window and let the cool night air cleanse the poisonous atmosphere. Next I removed the gas-mask, and, sinking into the nearest chair, closed my eyes.

A great fatigue had overmastered me. As on a former occasion, I felt myself drifting out on the drowsy sea of dreams. Even Paul had become a secondary consideration.

Why should I not sleep? Had I not earned the right to sleep? I had at last conquered, and to the conqueror what more blessed wreath than sleep?

I AWOKE with a start to a feeling of dread. Sitting up, I rubbed my eyes and looked about me. A pallid, ghostly light stole in through the open window; and the air was damp with the promise of dawn.

While I had slept a breeze had sprung up. Now the curtains in the alcove, like phantoms of bygone courtiers, seemed curtsying and bowing to one another.

Long habit turned my eyes to the portrait. With a feeling of unbounded joy, I saw that this time I had really succeeded. The entire surface of the canvas was charred a deep-black.

What delight took possession of me then!—a delight which carried me to childish lengths. I rose and capered about the room, I shook my fist at it, I even laughed aloud.

Suddenly I was brought to myself by the faraway, brazen voice of the door-bell. Who could be ringing at this hour? I wondered. And as I turned this question over in my mind, I once again glanced at the charred canvas.

My God! Will I ever be able to forget what I saw then?

My eyes had fallen on the left-hand corner of the portrait—the side nearest the window. With an inarticulate cry of horror, I saw something stirring there.

It was yellow and small, and not unlike an oddly shaped autumn-leaf; and it twitched spasmodically.

"It must be a leaf," I told myself firmly—"a leaf which has blown in through the open window and caught there."

Once more I looked, and hope deserted

me. It was not a leaf—ah, no! It was a human hand—a human hand which felt its way with writhing fingers—a human hand which I knew only too well!

Ah, *there* was the arm, long and slender; and there was the body itself sidling into the canvas! Like a thief in the night, it stole forward, with averted face.

Crouching, it crawled along till it reached its old spot; and then—ah, then it turned and I saw its eyes!

For an instant I stood there, motionless, dumb, staring into my enemy's face, and then, with a cry of terror, I fled to the door and threw it open. As I hesitated on the threshold, I heard the sound of footsteps in the hall.

"There he is now, sir," I heard Tom's voice say, and the next moment I was confronted by two strangers.

Any human manifestation was welcome indeed on such a night. Instantly I was calm and even smiling.

"You wish to see me, gentlemen?" I asked, wiping the cold perspiration from my forehead. "Won't you step into my laboratory?"

The presence of these strangers had given me confidence. Perhaps, after all, I had dreamed of the reappearance of my enemy. At any rate, it would be as well to get normal opinion on such a phenomenon.

"Now, gentleman, will you kindly fix your attention on that canvas," I said. "Is there a figure in it, or is there not? My common sense tells me that there is not."

"Certainly, there's a figure there," said one of my guests brusquely. "It's a full-length portrait of you, and a very good likeness, I'd call it."

I turned to the other one in despair. "Do you also see it?" I cried.

But he cut me short with even more brusqueness than his companion.

"We've got a warrant for your arrest," Mr. Ericson, he said.

"My arrest! You are police officers, then? Under what charge?"

But before he answered me, I knew well enough what had happened while I had slept. I saw it all in a blinding flash.

Not I, but my portrait, had kept the rendezvous with Paul. As on a previous occasion, in my attempt to destroy my enemy I had only succeeded in loosing it on the world.

"You are charged with the murder of Paul Grey," one of the police officers said heavily.

It was as I had suspected then—Paul was dead! Poor old Paul whom I had

loved like a brother! And now I was charged with his death, I who would not have harmed a hair of his head!

"You're going a little bit too far in this!" I cried angrily. "You have no reason to accuse *me*. Are there not others about as capable of committing crimes as I—others who hated Paul while I loved him?"

"Look at that face on the canvas! What does it tell you?"

I glanced full at the portrait as I spoke; and, to my joy, it was bowing and smiling—bowing and smiling with its hand on its heart.

"Look, look!" I cried in an agonized voice. "Can't you see it silently affirming my words? Where are you taking me? Stop! I demand justice! The real murderer hangs on the wall!"

But my captors were deaf to my words. They had handcuffed me and were leading me toward the door. On the threshold I cast a last glance over my shoulder.

My portrait was still bowing and smiling like a mechanical doll. And I knew then that it had conquered for all time.

And I? Why, I must suffer for it in silence and solitude. And because of its victory—like a famous actor who has played his rôle to the applause of the house—it would continue bowing and smiling, bowing and smiling, bowing and smiling.

I HAVE but little more to add. You, who I have followed my trial in the papers, will remember Evelyn's testimony—how, on the night of the murder, she visited her husband's laboratory at a late hour to find his charred remains on the stone floor and a crazed being, whom she falsely declared to be Gustave Ericson, crouched in one corner, mumbling to itself; how, when it saw her, this creature leaped to its feet and fled screaming; how she made her way back to the house and called the police.

And also you will remember that, in spite of my brilliant speech accusing the portrait of the crime, the jury was swayed by the opinions of certain learned asses and brought in a verdict of homicidal mania, and that shortly after my trial, I was removed to this asylum for the criminal insane.

But have you ever thought of what a terrible punishment it is to be incarcerated among mental derelicts—to be exposed night after night to the caresses of our mother of madness, the moon? When *she* commands us to play it is difficult to resist.

And have you ever longed, in your safety and sanity, to throw back your head and

howl like wolves? We do strange, unaccountable things here—acts which we blush for when the sun again rules the world.

No, this is not a healthy spot. While I still possess all my mental powers undimmed, I have certain presentiments which make me extremely anxious for the future.

It is on account of these presentiments that I have written this truthful chronicle, hoping that it will fall into the hands of some worthy person who will gather sufficient evidence to finally secure my release.

And yet, how few there are who can see the truth even when it is pointed out to them! For instance, we hear on all sides such phrases as these: "That painting has life," "This book will live." Yet, who of us actually believes that these statements are true?

When I tried to prove that Anthony Worthington's portrait of me had life, I was laughed at and labeled insane. And even my fellow sufferers mock me when I tell them that I have actually discovered that books may live.

We have a library in the asylum with some splendid books. They whisper all night long. They tell their separate stories over and over again, each vying with the other, each attempting to drown out the other with its low, sibilant whisper.

I have sat in this library listening to them until sometimes my brain began to swim—there are so many of them, each is

so perfectly convinced of its own immortality!

Please pardon this digression, which perhaps is not such a great digression after all. It may at least be of interest to the kind of man who will be my saviour and friend—a man broad enough to acknowledge the still, small area of plowed soil in this wilderness we call the "world"—a man with humanity enough to acknowledge that there may be phenomena of which he is ignorant.

And when my unknown friend has read this chronicle and believed, let him go out and hunt my portrait down. I understand that my relatives have sold all my effects—therefore, the search may be difficult.

But to the strong in heart all things are possible. Somewhere in the city—perhaps in some art dealer's—the real murderer of Paul Grey is lurking. Hunt down the assassin and deliver it to justice!

Now, give heed, my unknown friend. It is the portrait of a strikingly handsome young man—swarthy, with cruel, crimson lips and a mole on its right cheek. But if this description is not sufficient, it has other telltale characteristics.

The portrait to which I refer—that living portrait of an evil passion—like a great actor responding to an encore, is continually bowing and smiling, bowing and smiling, bowing and smiling.

And because of these calm, graceful salutations, it should not be difficult to recognize it among thousands.



In the Next Issue

THE FLYING LEGION

By George Allan England



Thirty reckless, war-tried flyers—a Master stern and grim of purpose—and all the world their helpless toy as they streaked across the heavens to tear the veil from Earth's last mysteries. . . . Never was there more dangerous venture, never more fabulous quest, than the voyage of the winged New World argonauts, pledged to each other to the end by a mystic bond as old as time itself. . . .

This powerful story, one of the great milestones of classic fantasy, will feature the January issue of this magazine! Look for your copy on the newsstands November 18th. Or reserve your copy now, so you will not miss it!



THE ELF- TRAP

By
Francis
Stevens

*Deadly and destructive, it waited in a
woodland glen, baited with dreams to
tempt . . . the strange lost company that
time had forgot. . . .*

IN THIS our well-advertised, modern world, crammed with engines, death-dealing shells, life-dealing serums, and science, he who listens to "old wives' tales" is counted idle. He who believes them, a superstitious fool. Yet there are some legends which have a strange, deathless habit of recrudescence in many languages and lands.

Of one such I have a story to tell. It was related to me by a well-known specialist in nervous diseases, not as an instance of the possible truth behind fable, but as a curious case in which—I quote his words—"the delusions of a diseased brain were reflected by a second and otherwise sound mentality."

No doubt his view was the right one. And yet, at the finish, I had the strangest flash of feeling. As if, somewhere, some time, I, like young Wharton, had stood and seen against blue sky—Elva, of the sky-hued scarf and the yellow honeysuckles.

But my part is neither to feel nor surmise. I will tell the story as I heard it, save for substitution of fictitious names for the real ones. My quotations from the red note-book are verbatim.

Theron Tademus, A.A.S., F.E.S., D.S., *et cetera*, occupied the chair of biology in a not-unfamed university. He was the author of a treatise on cytology, since widely used as a text-book, and of sev-

eral important brochures on the more obscure infusoria. As a boy he had been—in appearance—a romantically charming person. The age of thirty-seven found him still handsome in a cold, fine-drawn manner, but almost inhumanly detached from any save scientific interests.

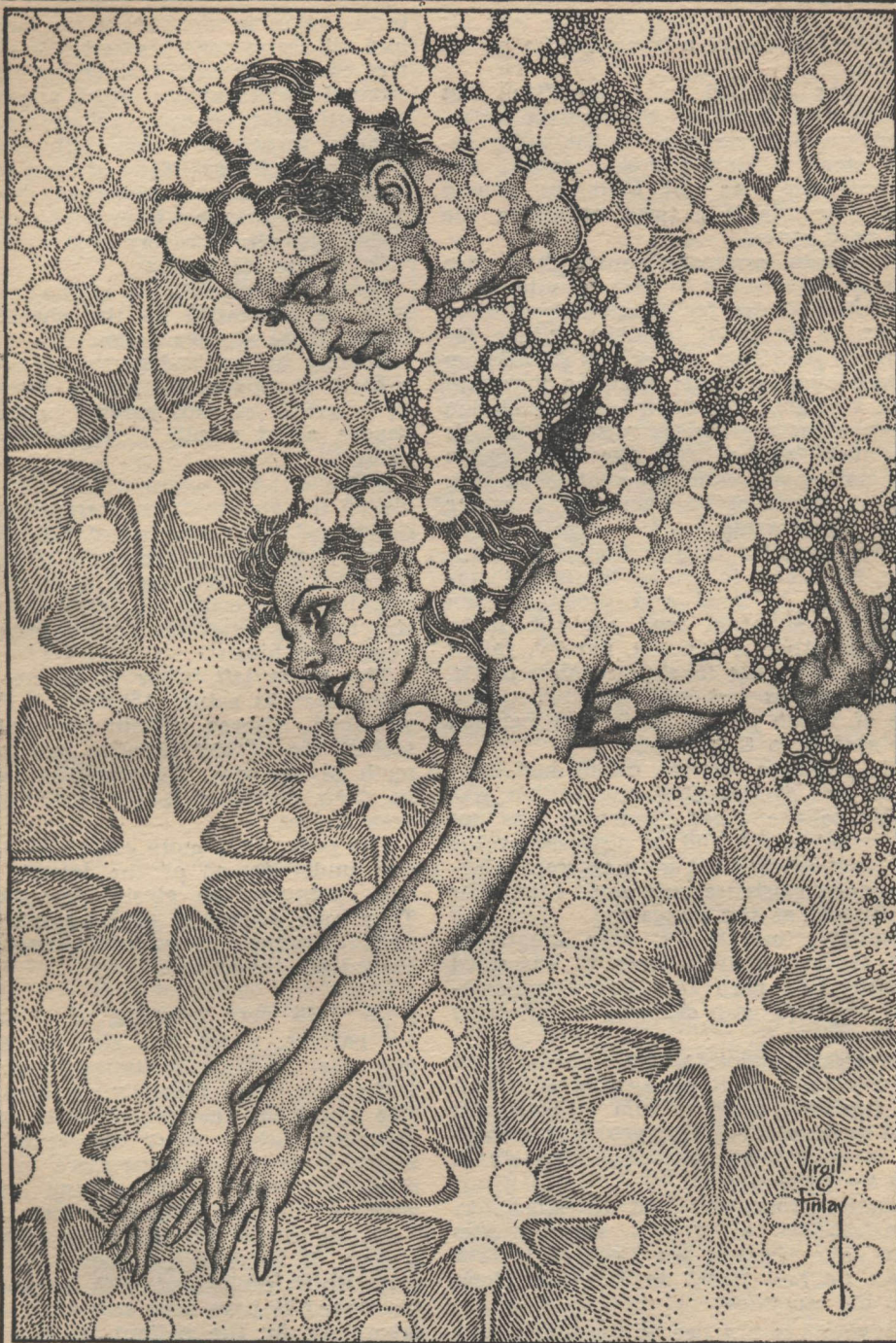
Then, at the height of his career, he died. Having entered his class-room with intent to deliver the first lecture of the fall term, he walked to his desk, laid down a small, red note-book, turned, opened his mouth, went ghastly white and subsided. His assistant, young Wharton, was first to reach him and first to discover the shocking truth.

Tademus was unmarried, and his will bequeathed all he possessed to the university.

The little red book was not at first regarded as important. Supposed to contain notes for his lecture, it was laid aside. On being at last read, however, by his assistant in course of arranging his papers, the book was found to contain not notes, but a diary covering the summer just passed.

Barring the circumstances of one peculiar incident, Wharton already knew the main facts of that summer.

Tademus, at the insistence of his physician—the specialist aforesaid—had spent July and August in the Carolina Mountains not far north from the famous



All the light, swift things of the air were in that music. It lifted and carried one with it. . . .

resort, Asheville. Dr. Locke was friend as well as medical adviser, and he lent his patient the use of a bungalow he owned there.

It was situated in a beautiful, but lonely spot, to which the nearest settlement was Carcassonne. In the valley below stood a tiny railroad station, but Carcassonne was not built up around this, nor was it a town at all in the ordinary sense.

A certain landscape painter had once raised him a house on that mountainside, at a place chosen for its magnificent view. Later, he was wont to invite thither, for summer sketching, one or two of his more favored pupils. Later still, he increased this number. For their accommodation other structures were raised near his mountain studio, and the Blue Ridge summer class became an established fact, with a name of its own and a rather large membership.

Two roads led thither from the valley. One, that most in use by the artist colonists, was as good and broad as any Carolina mountain road could hope to be. The other, a winding, narrow, yellow track, passed the lonely bungalow of Dr. Locke, and at last split into two paths, one of which led on to further heights, the second to Carcassonne.

The distance between colony and bungalow was considerable, and neither was visible to the other. Tademus was not interested in art, and, as disclosed by the red book, he was not even aware of Carcassonne's existence until some days after his arrival at the bungalow.

Solitude, long walks, deep breathing, and abstinence from work or sustained thought had been Dr. Locke's prescription, accepted with seeming meekness by Tademus.

Nevertheless, but a short time passed till Wharton received a telegram from the professor ordering him to pack and send by express certain apparatus, including a microscope and dissecting stand. The assistant obeyed.

Another fortnight, and Dr. Locke in turn received an urgent wire. It was from Jake Higgins, the Negro caretaker whom he had "lent" to Tademus along with the bungalow.

Leaving his practice to another man's care, Dr. Locke fled for the Carolina Blue Ridge.

He found his caretaker and his bungalow, but no Tademus.

By Jake's story, the professor had gone

to walk one afternoon and had not returned. Having wired Locke, the caretaker had otherwise done his best. He notified the county sheriff, and search parties scoured the mountains. At his appeal, too, the entire Carcassonnian colony, male and female, turned out with enthusiasm to hunt for Tademus. Many of them carried easel and sketch-box along, and for such it is to be feared that their humane search ended with the discovery of any tempting "bit" in the scenic line.

However, the colony's efforts were at least as successful as the sheriff's, or indeed those of anyone else.

Shortly before Tademus's vanishment, a band of gipsies had settled themselves in a group of old, empty, half-ruined shacks, about a mile from Locke's bungalow.

Suspicion fell upon them. A posse visited the encampment, searched it, and questioned every member of the migrant band. They were a peculiarly ill-favored set, dirty and villainous of feature. Nothing, however, could be found of either the missing professor or anything belonging to him.

The posse left, after a quarrel that came near to actual fighting. A dog—a wretched, starved yellow cur—had attacked one of the deputies and set its teeth in his boot. He promptly shot it. In their resentment, the dog's owners drew knives.

The posse were more efficiently armed, and under threat of the latter's rifles and shotguns, the gipsies reconsidered. They were warned to pack up and leave, and following a few days' delay, they obeyed the mandate.

ON THE very morning of their departure, which was also the eighth day after Tademus's disappearance, Dr. Locke sat down gloomily to breakfast. The search, he thought, must be further extended. Let it cover the whole Blue Ridge, if need be. Somewhere in those mountains was a friend and patient whom he did not propose to lose.

At one side of the breakfast room was a door. It led into the cleared-out bedroom which Locke had, with indignation, discovered to have been converted into a laboratory by the patient he had sent here to "rest."

Suddenly this door opened. Out walked Theron Tademus.

He seemed greatly amazed to find Locke there, and said that he had come in shortly

after midnight and been in his laboratory ever since.

Questioned as to his whereabouts before that, he replied, surprisingly that throughout the week he had been visiting with friends in Carcassonne.

Dr. Locke doubted his statement, and reasonably.

Artists are not necessarily liars, and every artist and near-artist in the Carcassonne colony had not only denied knowledge of the professor, but spent a good part of the week helping hunt for him.

Later, after insisting that Locke accompany him to Carcassonne and meet his friends there, Tademus suddenly admitted that he had not previously been near the place. He declined, however, either to explain his untruthful first statement, or give any other account of his mysterious absence.

One week ago Tademus had left the bungalow, carrying nothing but a light cane, and wearing a white flannel suit, canvas shoes, and a Panama. That was his idea of a tramping costume. He had returned, dressed in the same suit, hat and shoes. Moreover, though white, they looked neat as when he started, save for a few grass stains and the road's inevitable yellow clay about his shoe-soles.

If he had spent the week vagrant-wise, he had been remarkably successful in keeping his clothes clean.

"Asheville," thought the doctor. "He went by train, stopped at a hotel, and has returned without the faintest memory of his real doings. Lame, overtaxed nerves can play that sort of trick with a man's brain."

But he kept the opinion to himself. Like a good doctor, he soon dropped the whole subject, particularly because he saw that Tademus was deeply distressed and trying to conceal the fact.

On plea of taking a long-delayed vacation of his own, Locke remained some time at the bungalow, guarded his friend from the curiosity of those who had combed the hills for him, and did all in his power to restore him to health and a clear brain.

He was so far successful that Tademus returned to his classes in the fall, with Locke's consent.

To his classes—and death.

Wharton had known all this. He knew that Tademus's whereabouts during that mysterious week had never been learned. But the diary in the red book purported to cover the summer, *including that week.*

To Wharton, the record seemed so supremely curious that he took a liberty with what was now the university's property. He carried the book to Dr. Locke.

It was evening, and the latter was about to retire after a day's work that began before dawn.

"Personal, you say?" Locke handled the book, frowning slightly.

"Personal. But I feel—when you've finished reading that, I have a rather queer thing to tell you in addition. You can't understand till you've read it. I am almost sure that what is described here has a secret bearing on Professor Tademus's death."

"His heart failed. Overwork. There was no mystery in that."

"Maybe not, doctor. And yet—won't you please read?"

"Run through it aloud for me," said the doctor. "I couldn't read one of my own prescriptions tonight, and you are more familiar with that microscopic writing of his."

Wharton complied.

Monday, July 3.

Arrived yesterday. Not worse than expected, but bad enough. If Locke were here, he should be satisfied. I have absolutely no occupation. Walked and climbed for two hours, as prescribed. Spent the rest of day pacing up and down indoors. Enough walking, at least. I can't sit idle. I can't stop thinking. Locke is a fool!

Thursday, July 6.

Telegraphed Wharton today. He will express me the Swift binocular, some slides, cover-glasses, and a very little other apparatus. Locke is a fool. I shall follow his advice, but within reason. There is a room here lighted by five windows. Old Jake has cleared the bedroom furniture out. It has qualities as a laboratory. Not, of course, that I intend doing any real work. An hour or so a day of micrological observation will only make "resting" tolerable.

Tuesday, July 11.

Jake hitched up his "ol' gray mule" and has brought my three cases from the station. I unpacked the old Stephenson-Swift and set it up. The mere touch of it brought tears to my eyes. Locke's "rest-cure" has done that to my nerves!

After unpacking, though, I resolutely let the microscope and other things be. Walked ten miles up-hill and down. Tried

to admire the landscape, as Locke advised, but can't see much in it. Rocks, trees, lumpy hills, yellow roads, sky, clouds, buzzards. Beauty! What beauty is there in this vast, clumsy world that is the outer husk for nature's real and delicate triumphs?

I saw a man painting today. He was swabbing at a canvas with huge, clumsy brushes. He had his easel set up by the road, and I stopped to see what any human being could find hereabout worth picturing.

And what had this painter, this artist, this lover of beauty chosen for a subject? Why, about a mile from here there is a clump of ugly, dark trees. A stream runs between them and the road. It is yellow with clay, and too swift. The more interesting micro-organisms could not exist in it. A ram-shackle, plank bridge crosses it, leading to the grove, and there, between the trees, stand and lean some dreary, half ruined huts.

That scene was the one which my "artist" had chosen for his subject.

For sheer curiosity I got into conversation with the fellow.

Unusual gibberish of chiaroscuro, flat tones, masses, *et cetera*. Not a definite thought in his head as to *why* he wished to paint those shacks. I learned one thing, though. He wasn't the isolated specimen of his kind I had thought him. Locke failed to tell me about Carcassonne. Think of it! Nearly a hundred of these insane pursuers of "beauty" are spending the summer within walking distance of the house I have promised to live in!

And the one who was painting the grove actually invited me to call on him! I smiled non-committally, and came home. On the way I passed the branch road that leads to the place. I had always avoided that road, but I didn't know why until today. Imagine it! Nearly a hundred. Some of them women, I suppose. No, I shall keep discreetly away from Carcassonne.

Saturday, July 15.

Jake informs me that a band of gipsies have settled themselves in the grove which my Carcassonnian acquaintance chose to paint. They are living in the ruined huts. Now I shall avoid that road, too. Talk of solitude! Why, the hills are fairly swarming with artists, gipsies, and Lord knows who else. One might as well try to rest in a beehive!

Found some interesting variations of the ciliara living in a near-by pond. Wonder-

ful! Have recorded over a dozen specimens in which the macronucleus is unquestionably double. Not lobed, not pulverate, as in *Oxytricha*, but *double*! My summer has not, after all, been wasted.

Felt singularly slack and tired this morning, and realized that I have hardly been out of the house in three days. Shall certainly take a long tramp tomorrow.

Monday, July 17.

Absent-mindedness betrayed me today. I had a very unpleasant experience. Resolutely keeping my promise to Locke, I sallied forth this afternoon and walked briskly for some distance. I had, however, forgotten the gipsies and took my old route.

Soon I met a woman, or rather a girl. She was arrayed in the tattered, brilliantly colored garments which women of these wandering tribes affect. There was a scarf about her head. I noticed, because its blue was exactly the same brilliant hue of the sky over the mountains behind her. There was a stripe of yellow in it, too, and thrust in her sash she carried a great bunch of yellow flowers—wild honeysuckle, I think.

Her face was not dark, like the swart faces of most gipsies. On the contrary, the skin of it had a smooth, firm whiteness. Her features were fine and delicate.

Passing, we looked at one another, and I saw her eyes brighten in the strangest, most beautiful manner. I am sure that there was nothing bold or immodest in her glance. It was rather like the look of a person who recognizes an old acquaintance, and is glad of it. Yet we never met before. Had we met, I could not have forgotten her.

We passed without speaking, of course, and I walked on.

Meeting the girl, I had hardly thought of her as a gipsy, or indeed tried to classify her in any way. The impression she left was new in my experience. It was only on reaching the grove that I came to myself, as it were, and remembered Jake's story of the gipsies who are camping there.

Then I very quickly emerged from the vague, absurd happiness which sight of the girl had brought.

While talking with my Carcassonnian, I had observed that grove rather carefully. I had thought it perfect—that nothing added could increase the somber ugliness of its trees, nor the desolation of its gray, ruined, tumbledown old huts.

Today I learned better. To be perfect,

ugliness must include sordid humanity.

The shacks, dreary in themselves, were hideous now. In their doorways lounged fat, unclean women nursing their filthy offspring. Older children, clothed in rags, caked with dirt, sprawled and fought among themselves. Their voices were the snarls of animals.

I realized that the girl with the sky-like scarf had come from here—out of this filth unspeakable!

A yellow cur, the mere, starved skeleton of a dog, came tearing down to the bridge. A rusty, jangling bell was tied about its neck with a string. The beast stopped on the far side and crouched there, yapping. Its anger seemed to surpass mere canine savagery. The lean jaws fairly writhed in maniacal but loathsomely feeble ferocity.

A few men, whiskered, dirty-faced, were gathered about a sort of forge erected in the grove. They were making something, beating it with hammers in the midst of showers of sparks. As the dog yapped, one of the men turned and saw me. He spoke to his mates, and to my dismay they stopped work and transferred their attention to me.

I was afraid that they would cross the bridge, and the idea of having to talk to them was for some reason inexpressibly revolting.

They stayed where they were, but one of them suddenly laughed out loudly, and held up to my view the thing upon which they had been hammering.

It was a great, clumsy, rough, *iron trap*. Even at that distance I could see the huge, jagged teeth, fit to maim a bear—or a man. It was the ugliest instrument I have ever seen.

I turned away and began walking toward home, and when I looked back they were at work again.

The sun shone brightly, but about the grove there seemed to be a queer darkness. It was like a place alone and aloof from the world. The trees, even, were different from the other mountain trees. Their heavy branches did not stir at all in the wind. They had a strange, dark, flat look against the sky, as though they had been cut from dark paper, or rather like the flat trees woven in a tapestry. That was it. The whole scene was like a flat, dark, unreal picture in tapestry.

I came straight home. My nerves are undoubtedly in bad shape, and I think I shall write Locke and ask him to prescribe medicine that will straighten me up. So

far, his "rest-cure" has not been notably successful.

Wednesday, July 19.

I have met her again.

Last night I could not sleep at all. Round midnight I ceased trying, rose, dressed, and spent the rest of the night with the good old Stephenson-Swift. My light for night-work—a common oil lamp—is not very brilliant. This morning I suffered considerable pain behind the eyes, and determined to give Locke's "walking and open air" treatment another trial, though discouraged by previous results.

This time I remembered to turn my back on the road which leads to that hideous grove. The sunlight seemed to increase the pain I was already suffering. The air was hot, full of dust, and I had to walk slowly. At the slightest increase of pace my heart would set up a kind of fluttering, very unpleasant and giving me a sense of suffocation.

Then I came to the girl.

She was seated on a rock, her lap heaped with wild honeysuckle, and she was weaving the flower stems together.

Seeing me, she smiled.

"I have your garland finished," she said, "and mine soon will be."

One would have thought the rock a trysting place at which we had for a long time been accustomed to meet! In her hand she was extending to me a wreath, made of the honeysuckle flowers.

I can't imagine what made me act as I did. Weariness and the pain behind my eyes may have robbed me of my usual good sense.

Anyway, rather to my own surprise, I took her absurd wreath and sat down where she made room for me on the boulder.

After that we talked.

At this moment, only a few hours later, I couldn't say whether or not the girl's English was correct, nor exactly what she said. But I can remember the very sound of her voice.

I recall, too, that she told me her name, Elva, and that when I asked for the rest of it, she informed me that one good name was enough for one good person.

That struck me as a charmingly humorous sally. I laughed like a boy—or a fool, God knows which!

Soon she had finished her second garland, and laughingly insisted that we each crown the other with flowers.

Imagine it! Had one of my students

come by then, I am sure he would have been greatly startled. Professor Theron Tademus, seated on a rock with a gipsy girl, crowned with wild honeysuckle and adjusting a similar wreath to the girl's blue-scarfed head!

Luckily, neither the student nor anyone else passed, and in a few minutes she said something that brought me to my senses. Due to that inexplicable dimness of memory, I quote the sense, not her words.

"My father is a ruler among our people. You must visit us. For my sake, the people and my father will make you welcome."

She spoke with the gracious air of a princess, but I rose hastily from beside her. A vision of the grove had returned—dark—oppressive—like an old, dark tapestry, woven with the ugly forms and foliage. I remembered the horrible, filthy tribe from which this girl had sprung.

Without a word of farewell, I left her there on the rock. I did not look back, nor did she call after me. Not until reaching home, when I met old Jake at the door and saw him stare, did I remember the honeysuckle wreath. I was still wearing it, and carrying my hat.

Snatching at the flowers, I flung them in the ditch and retreated with what dignity I might into the bungalow's seclusion.

It is night now, and, a little while since, I went out again. The wreath is here in the room with me. The flowers were unsoiled by the ditch, and seem fresh as when she gave them to me. They are more fragrant than I had thought even wild honeysuckle could be.

Elva. Elva of the sky-blue scarf and the yellow honeysuckle!

My eyes are heavy, but the pain behind them is gone. I think I shall sleep tonight.

Friday, July 21.

Is there any man so gullible as he who prides himself on his accuracy of observation?

I ask this in humility, for I am that man.

Yesterday I rose, feeling fresher than for weeks past. After all, Locke's treatment seemed worthy of respect. With that in mind, I put in only a few hours staining some of my binucleate cilia and finishing the slides.

All the last part of the afternoon I faithfully tramped the roads. There is undoubtedly a sort of broad, coarse charm in mere landscape, with its reaches of green, its distant purples, and the sky like

a blue scarf flung over it all. Had the pain of my eyes not returned, I could almost have enjoyed those vistas.

Having walked farther than usual, it was deep dusk when I reached home. As if from ambush, a little figure dashed out from behind some rhododendrons. It seemed to be a child, a boy, though I couldn't see him clearly, nor how he was dressed.

He thrust something into my hand. To my astonishment, the thing was a spray of wild honeysuckle.

"Elva—Elva—Elva!"

The strange youngster was fairly dancing up and down before me, repeating the girl's name and nothing else.

Recovering myself, I surmised that Elva must have sent this boy, and sure enough, at my insistence he managed to stop prancing long enough to deliver her message.

Elva's grandmother, he said, was very ill. She had been ailing for days, but tonight the sickness was worse—much worse. Elva feared that her grandmother would die, and, "of course," the boy said, "no doctor will come for our sending!" She had remembered me, as the only friend she knew among the "outside people." Wouldn't I come and look at her poor, sick grandmother? And if I had any of the outside people's medicine in my house, would I please bring that with me?

Well, yes, I did hesitate. Aside from practical and obvious suspicions, I was possessed with a senseless horror for not only the gipsy tribe, but the grove itself.

But there was the spray of honeysuckle. In her need, she had sent that for a token—and sent it to me! Elva, of the sky-like scarf and laughing mouth.

"Wait here," I said to the boy, rather brusquely, and entered the house. I had remembered a pocket-case of simple remedies, none of which I had ever used, but there was a direction pamphlet with them. If I must play amateur physician, that might help. I looked for Jake, meaning to inform him of my proposed expedition. Though he had left a chicken broiling on the kitchen range, he was not about. He might have gone to the spring for water.

Passing out again, I called the boy, but received no answer. It was very dark. Toward sunset, the sky had clouded over, so that now I had not even the benefit of starlight.

I was angry with the boy for not waiting, but the road was familiar enough, even in the dark. At least, I thought it was,

till, colliding with a clump of holly I realized that I must have strayed off and across a bare stretch of yellow clay which defaces the mountainside above Locke's bungalow.

I looked back for the guiding lights of its windows, but the trees hid them. However, the road couldn't be far off. After some stumbling about, I was sure that my feet were in the right track again. Somewhat later I perceived a faint, ruddy point of light, to the left and ahead of me.

As I walked toward it, the rapid rush and gurgle of water soon apprized me that I had reached the stream with the plank bridge across it.

There I stood for several minutes, staring toward the ruddy light. That was all I could see. It seemed, somehow, to cast no illumination about it.

There came a scamper of paws, the tinkle of a bell, and then a wild yapping broke out on the stream's far side. That vile, yellow cur, I thought. Elva, having imposed on my kindness to the extent of sending for me, might at least have arranged a better welcome than this.

Then I pictured her, crouched in her bright, summer-colored garments, tending the dreadful old hag that her grandmother must be. The rest of the tribe were probably indifferent. She could not desert her sick—and there stood I, hesitant as any other coward!

For the dog's sake I took a firm grip on my cane. Feeling about with it, I found the bridge and crossed over.

Instantly something flung itself against my legs and was gone before I could hit out. I heard the dog leaping and barking all around me. It suddenly struck me that the beast's voice was not like that of the yellow cur. There was nothing savage in it. This was the cheerful, excited bark of a well-bred dog that welcomes its master, or its master's friend. And the bell that tinkled to every leap had a sweet, silvery note, different from the cracked jangle of the cur's bell.

I had hated and loathed that yellow brute, and to think that I need not combat the creature was a relief. The huts, as I recalled them, weren't fifty yards beyond the stream. There was no sign of a campfire. Just that one ruddy point of light.

I advanced—

WHARTON paused suddenly in his reading. "Here," he interpolated, "begins that part of the diary which passed from

commonplace to amazing. And the queer part is that in writing it, Professor Tademus seems to have been unaware that he was describing anything but an unusually pleasant experience."

Dr. Locke's heavy brows knit in a frown. "Pleasant!" he snapped. "The date of that entry?"

"July twenty-one."

"The day he disappeared. I see. Pleasant! And that gipsy girl—faugh! What an adventure for such a man! No wonder he tried to lie out of it. I don't think I care to hear the rest, Wharton. Whatever it is, my friend is dead. Let him rest."

"Oh, but wait," cried the young man, with startled earnestness. "Good Lord, doctor, do you believe I would bring this book even to you if it contained *that* kind of story—about Professor Tademus? No. It's amazing quality is along different lines than you can possibly suspect."

"Get on, then," grumbled Locke, and Wharton continued.

Suddenly, as though at a signal, not one, but a myriad of lights blazed into existence.

It was like walking out of a dark closet into broad day. The first dazzlement passing, I perceived that instead of the somber grove and ruined huts, I was facing a group of very beautiful houses.

It is curious how a previous and false assumption will rule a man. Having believed myself at the gipsy encampment, several minutes passed before I could overcome my bewilderment and realize that after losing my road I had not actually regained it.

That I had somehow wandered into the other branch road, and reached, not the grove, but Carcassonne!

I had no idea, either, that this artists' colony could be such a really beautiful place. It is cut by no streets. The houses are set here and there over the surface of such green lawns as I have never seen in these mountains of rock and yellow clay.

(Dr. Locke started slightly in his chair. Carcassonne, as he had himself seen it, flashed before his memory. He did not interrupt, but from that moment his attention was alertly set, like a man who listens for the key word of a riddle.)

Everywhere were lights, hung in the flowering branches of trees, glowing upward from the grass, blazing from every door and window. Why they should have

been turned on so abruptly, after that first darkness, I do not yet know.

Out of the nearest house a girl came walking. She was dressed charmingly, in thin, bright-colored silks. A bunch of wild honeysuckle was thrust in the girdle, and over her hair was flung a scarf of sky-like blue. I knew her instantly, and began to see a glimmering of the joke that had been played on me.

The dog bounded toward the girl. He was a magnificent collie. A tiny silver bell was attached to his neck by a broad ribbon.

I take credit for considerable aplomb in my immediate behavior. The girl had stopped a little way off. She was laughing, but I had certainly allowed myself to be victimized.

On my accusation, she at once admitted to having deceived me. She explained that, perceiving me to be misled by her appearance into thinking her one of the gipsies, she could not resist carrying out the joke. She had sent her small brother with the token and message.

I replied that the boy deserted me, and that I had nearly invaded the camp of real gipsies while looking for her and the fictitious dying grandmother.

At this she appeared even more greatly amused. Elva's mirth has a peculiarly contagious quality. Instead of being angry, I found myself laughing with her.

By this time quite a throng of people had emerged on the lawns, and leading me to a dignified, fine-looking old man who she said was her father, she presented me. In the moment, I hardly noticed that she used my first name only, Theron, which I had told her when we sat on the roadside boulder. I have observed since that all these people use the single name only, in presentation and intercourse. Though lacking personal experience with artists, I have heard that they are inclined to peculiar "fads" of unconventionality. I had never, however, imagined that they could be attractive to a man like myself, or pleasant to know.

I am enlightened. These Carcassonnian "colonists" are the only charming, altogether delightful people whom I have ever met.

One and all, they seemed acquainted with Elva's amusing jest at my expense. They laughed with us, but in recompense have made me one of themselves in the pleasantest manner.

I dined in the house of Elva's father. The dining-room, or rather hall, is a wonderful place. Due to much microscopic work,

I am inclined to see only clumsiness—*largeness*—in what other people characterize as beauty. Carcassonne is different. There is a minute perfection about the architecture of these artists' houses, the texture of their clothes, and even the delicate contour of their faces, which I find amazingly agreeable.

There is no conventionality of costume among them. Both men and women dress as they please. Their individual taste is exquisite, and the result is an array of soft fabrics, and bright colors, flowerlike, rather than garish.

Till last night I never learned the charm of what is called "fancy dress," nor the genial effect it may exert on even a rather somber nature, such as I admit mine to be.

Elva, full of good-natured mischief, insisted that I must "dress for dinner." Her demand was instantly backed by the whole laughing throng. Carried off my feet in a way to which I am not at all used, I let them drape me in white robes, laced with silver embroideries like the delicate crystallization of hoar-frost. Dragged hilariously before a mirror, I was amazed at the change in my appearance.

Unlike the black, scarlet-hooded gown of my university, these glittering robes lent me not dignity, but a kind of—I can only call it a noble youthfulness. I looked younger, and at the same time *keener*—more alive. And either the contagious spirit of my companions, or some resurgence of boyishness filled me with a sudden desire to please; to be merry with the merry-makers, and—I must be frank—particularly to keep Elva's attention where it seemed temporarily fixed—on myself.

My success was unexpectedly brilliant. There is something in the very atmosphere of Carcassonne which, once yielded to, exhilarates like wine. I have never danced, nor desired to learn. Last night, after a banquet so perfect that I hardly recall its details, I danced. I danced with Elva—and with Elva—and always with Elva. She laughed aside all other partners. We danced on no polished floors, but out on the green lawns, under white, laughing stars. Our music was not orchestral. Wherever the light-footed couples chose to circle, there followed a young flutist, piping on his flute of white ivory.

Fluttering wings, driving clouds, wind-tossed leaves—all the light, swift things of the air were in that music. It lifted and carried one with it. One did not need to learn. One danced! It seems, as I write, that the flute's piping is still in my ears,

and that its echoes will never cease. Elva's voice is like the ivory flute's. Last night I was mad with the music and her voice. We danced—I know not how long, nor when we ceased.

This morning I awakened in a gold-and-ivory room, with round windows that were full of blue sky and crossed by blossoming branches. Dimly I recalled that Elva's father had urged me to accept his hospitality for the night.

Too much of such new happiness may have gone to my head, I'm afraid. At least, it was nothing stronger. At dinner I drank only one glass of wine—sparkling, golden stuff, but mild and with a taste like the fragrance of Elva's wild honeysuckle blooms.

It is midmorning now, and I am writing this seated on a marble bench beside a pool in the central court of my host's house. I am waiting for Elva, who excused herself to attend to some duty or other. I found this book in my pocket, and thought best to make an immediate record of not only a good joke on myself, but the only really pleasant social experience I have ever enjoyed.

I must lay aside these fanciful white robes, bid Elva good-by, and return to my lonely bungalow and Jake. The poor old man is probably tearing his hair over my unexplained absence. But I hope for another invitation to Carcassonne!

Saturday, July 22.

I seem to be "staying on" indefinitely. This won't do. I spoke to Elva of my extended visit, and she laughingly informed me that people who have drunk the wine and worn the woven robes of Carcassonne seldom wish to leave. She suggested that I give up trying to "escape" and spend my life here. Jest, of course; but I half wished her words were earnest. She and her people are spoiling me for the common, workaday world.

Not that they are idle, but their occupations as well as pleasures are of a delicate, fascinating beauty.

Whole families are stopping here, including the children. I don't care for children, as a rule, but these are harmless as butterflies. I met Elva's messenger, her brother. He is a funny, dear little elf. How even in the dark I fancied him one of those gipsy brats is hard to conceive. But then I took Elva herself for a gipsy!

My new friends engage in many pursuits besides painting. "Crafts," I believe they are called. This morning Elva took me

around the "shops." Shops like architectural blossoms, carved out of the finest marble!

They make jewelry, weave fabrics, tool leather, and follow many other interesting occupations. Set in the midst of the lawns is a forge. Every part of it, even to the iron anvil, is embellished with a fernlike inlay of other metals. Several amateur silversmiths were at work there, but Elva hurried me away before I could see what they were about.

I have inquired for the young painter who first told me of Carcassonne and invited me to visit him there. I can't recall his name, but on describing him to Elva she replied vaguely that not every "outsider" was permanently welcome among her people.

I didn't press the question. Remembering the ugliness which that same painter had been committing to canvas, I could understand that his welcome among these exquisite workers might be short-lived. He was probably banished, or banished himself, soon after our interview on the road.

I must be careful, lest I wear out my own welcome. Yet the very thought of that old, rough, husk of a world that I *must* return to, brings back the sickness, and the pain behind my eyes that I had almost forgotten.

Sunday, July 23.

Elva! Her presence alone is delight. The sky is not bluer than her scarf and eyes. Sunlight is a duller gold than the wild honeysuckle she weaves in garlands for our heads.

Today, like child sweethearts, we carved our names on the smooth trunk of a tree. "Elva—Theron." And a wreath to shut them in. I am happy. Why—why, indeed should I leave Carcassonne?

Monday, July 24.

Still here, but this is the last night that I shall impose upon these regally hospitable people. An incident occurred today, pathetic from one viewpoint, outrageous from another. I was asleep when it happened, and only woke up at the sound of the gunshot.

Some rough young mountaineers rode into Carcassonne and wantonly killed Elva's collie dog. They claimed, I believe, that the unlucky animal attacked one of their number. A lie! The dog was gentle as a kitten. He probably leaped and barked around their horses and annoyed the

young brutes. They had ridden off before I reached the scene.

Elva was crying, and no wonder. They had blown her pet's head clean off with a shotgun. Don't know what will be done about it. I wanted to go straight to the county sheriff, but Elva wouldn't have that. I pretended to give in, but if her father doesn't see to the punishment of those men, I will. Murderous devils! Elva is too forgiving.

Wednesday, July 26.

I watched the silversmiths today. Elva was not with me. I had no idea that silver was worked like iron. They must use some peculiar amalgam, or it would melt in the furnace, instead of emerging white-hot, to be beaten with tiny, delicate hammers.

They were making a strange looking contraption. It was all silver, beaten into floral patterns, but the general shape was a riddle to me. Finally I asked one of the smiths what they were about. He is a tall fellow, with a merry, dark face.

"Guess!" he demanded.

"Can't. To my ignorance, it resembles a Chinese puzzle."

"Something more curious than that."

"What?"

"An—elf-trap!" He laughed mischievously.

"Please!"

"Well, it's a trap, anyway. See this?" The others had stepped back good naturedly. With his hammer he pressed on a lever. Instantly two slender, jawlike parts of the queer machine opened wide. They were set with needlelike points, or teeth. It was all red-hot, and when he removed his hammer the jaws clashed in a shower of sparks.

"It's a trap, of course." I was still puzzled.

"Yes, and a very remarkable one. This trap will not only catch, but it will recatch."

"I don't understand."

"If any creature—a man, say—" he was laughing again—"walks into this trap, he may escape it. But sooner or later—soon, I should think—it will catch him again. That is why we call it an elf-trap!"

I perceived suddenly that he was making pure game of me. His mates were all laughing at the nonsense. I moved off, not offended, but perturbed in another way.

He and his absurd, silver trap-toy had reminded me of the gipsies. What a hor-

rible, rough iron thing that was which they had held up to me from their forge! Men capable of creating such an uncouthly cruel instrument as that jag-toothed trap would be terrible to meet in the night. And I had come near blundering in among them—at night!

This won't do. I have been happy. Don't let me drop back into the morbidly nervous condition which invested those gipsies with more than human horror. Elva is calling me. I have been too long alone.

Friday, July 28.

Home again. I am writing this in my bungalow-laboratory. Gray dawn is breaking, and I have been at work here since midnight. Feel strangely depressed. Need breakfast, probably.

Last night Elva and I were together in the court of her father's house. The pool in the center of it is lighted from below to a golden glow. We were watching the goldfish, with their wide, filmy tails of living lace.

Suddenly I gave a sharp cry. I had seen a thing in the water more important than goldfish. Snatching out the small collecting bottle, without which I never go abroad, I made a quick pass at the pool's glowing surface.

Elva had started back, rather frightened. "What is it?"

I held the bottle up and peered closely. There was no mistake.

"Dysteria," I said triumphantly. "Dysteria ciliata. Dysterius giganticus, to give a unique specimen the separate name he deserves. Why, Elva, this enormous creature will give me a new insight on his entire species!"

"What enormous creature?"

For the first time I saw Elva nearly petulant. But I was filled with enthusiasm. I let her look in the bottle.

"There!" I ejaculated. "See him?"

"Where? I can't see anything but water—and a tiny speck in it."

"That," I explained proudly, "is dysterius giganticus! Large enough to be seen by the naked eye. Why, child, he's a monster of his kind. A fresh-water variety, too!"

I thrust the bottle in my pocket.

"Where are you going?"

"Home, of course. I can't get this fellow under the microscope any too quickly."

I had forgotten how wide apart are the scientific and artistic temperaments. No explanation I could make would persuade Elva that my remarkable capture was worth walking a mile to examine properly.

"You are all alike!" she cried. "All! You talk of love, but your love is for gold, or freedom, or some pitiful foolish nothingness like that speck of life you call by a long name—and leave *me* for!"

"But," I protested, "only for a little while. I shall come back."

She shook her head. This was Elva in a new mood, dark brows drawn, laughing mouth drooped to a sullen curve. I felt sorry to leave her angry, but my visit had already been preposterously long. Besides, a rush of desire had swept me to get back to my natural surroundings. I wanted the feel of the micrometer adjuster in my fingers, and to see the round, speckled white field under the lens pass from blurred chaos to perfect definition.

She let me go at last. I promised solemnly to come to her whenever she should send or call. Foolish child! Why, I can walk over to Carcassonne every day, if she likes.

I hear Jake rattling about in the breakfast-room. Conscience informs me that I have treated him rather badly. Wonder where he thought I was? Couldn't have been much worried, or he would have hunted me up in Carcassonne.

August 30.

I shall not make any further entries in this book. My day for the making of records is over, I think. Any sort of records. I go back to my classes next month. God knows what I shall say to them! Elva.

I may as well finish the story here.

Every day I find it harder to recall the details. If I hadn't this book, with what I wrote in it when I was—when I was *there*, I should believe that my brain had failed in earnest.

Locke said I couldn't have been in Carcassonne. He stood in the breakfast-room, with the sunlight striking across him. I saw him clearly. I saw the huge, coarse, ugly creature that he was. And in that minute, I *knew*.

But I wouldn't admit it, even to myself. I made him go with me to Carcassonne. There was no stream. There was no bridge.

The houses were wretched bungalows, set about on the bare, flat, yellow clay of the mountainside. The people—artists, save the mark!—were a common, carelessly dressed, painting-aproned crowd who fulfilled my original idea of an artists' colony.

Their coarse features and thick skins sickened me. Locke walked home beside me, very silent. I could hardly bear his company.

He was gross—coarse—*human*!

Toward evening, managing to escape his company, I stole up the road to the gipsy's grove. The huts were empty. That queer look, as of a flat, dark tapestry, was gone from the grove.

I crossed the plank bridge. Among the trees I found ashes, and a depression where the forge had stood. Something else, too. A dog, or rather its unburied remains. The yellow cur. Its head had been blown



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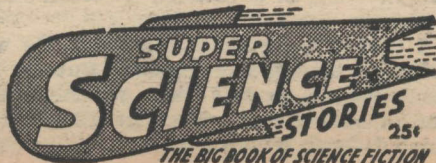
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off by a shot-gun. An ugly little bell lay in the mess, tied to a piece of string.

One of the trees—it had a smooth trunk—and carved in the bark—I can't write it. I went away and left those two names carved there.

The wild honeysuckle has almost ceased to bloom. I can leave now. Locke says I am well, and that I can return to my classes.

I have not entered my laboratory since that morning. Locke admires my "will-power" for dropping all that till physical health should have returned. Will-power! I shall never, as long as I live, look into a microscope again.

Perhaps she will know that somehow, and send or call for me quickly.

I have drunk the wine and worn the woven robes of her people. They made me one of them. Is it right that they should cast me out, because I did not understand what I have since guessed the meaning of so well?

I can't bear the *human* folk about me. They are clumsy, revolting. And I can't work.

God only knows what I shall say to my classes.

Here is the end of my last record—till she calls!

THERE was silence in Locke's private study. At last the doctor expelled his breath in a long sigh. He might have been holding it all the time.

"Great—Heavens!" he ejaculated. "Poor old Tademus! And I thought his trouble in the summer there was a temporary lapse. But he talked like a sane man. Acted like one, too, by Jove! With his mind in that condition! And in spite of the posse, he must have been with the gipsies all that week. You can see it. Even through his delusions, you catch occasional notes of reality.

"I heard of that dog-shooting, and he speaks of being asleep when it happened. Where was he concealed that the posse didn't find him? Drugged and hidden under some filthy heap of rags in one of the huts, do you think? And why hide him at all, and then let him go? He returned the very day they left."

At the volley of questions, Wharton shook his head.

"I can't even guess about that. He was certainly among the gipsies. But as for his delusions, to call them so, there is a kind of beauty and coherence about them which I—well, which I don't like!"

The doctor eyed him sharply.

"You can't mean that you—"

"Doctor," said Wharton softly, "do you recall what he wrote of the silversmiths and their work? They were making an elf-trap. Well, I think the elf-trap—caught him!"

"What?"

Locke's tired eyes opened wide. A look of alarm flashed into them. The alarm was for Wharton, not himself.

"Wait!" said the latter. "I haven't finished. You know that I was in the classroom at the moment when Professor Tademus died?"

"Yes?"

Yes! I was the first to reach him. But before that, I stood near the desk. There are three windows at the foot of that room. Every other man there faced the desk. I faced the windows. The professor entered, laid down his book and turned to the class. As he did so, a head appeared in one of those windows. They are close to the ground, and a person standing outside could easily look in.

"The head was a woman's. No, I am not inventing this. I saw her head, draped in a blue scarf. I noticed, because the scarf's blueness gave me the strangest thrill of delight. It was the exact blue of the sky behind it. Then she had raised her hand. I saw it. In her fingers was a spray of yellow flowers—yellow as sunshine. She waved them in a beckoning motion. Like this.

"Then Tademus dropped.

"And there are legends, you know, of strange people, either more or less than human, who appear as gipsies, but are not the real gipsies, that possess queer powers. Their outer appearance is rough and vile, but behind that, as a veil, they live a wonderful hidden life of their own.

"And a man who has been with them once is caught—caught in the real elf-trap, which the smiths' work only symbolized. He may escape, but he can't forget nor be joined again with his own race, while to return among *them*, he must walk the dark road that Tademus had taken when she called.

"Oh, I've scoffed at 'old wives' tales' with the rest of our overeducated, modern kind. I can't ever scoff again, you see, because—

"What's that? A prescription? For me? Why, doctor, you don't yet understand. I saw her, I tell you. Elva! Elva! Elva, of the wild honeysuckle and the sky-like scarf!"

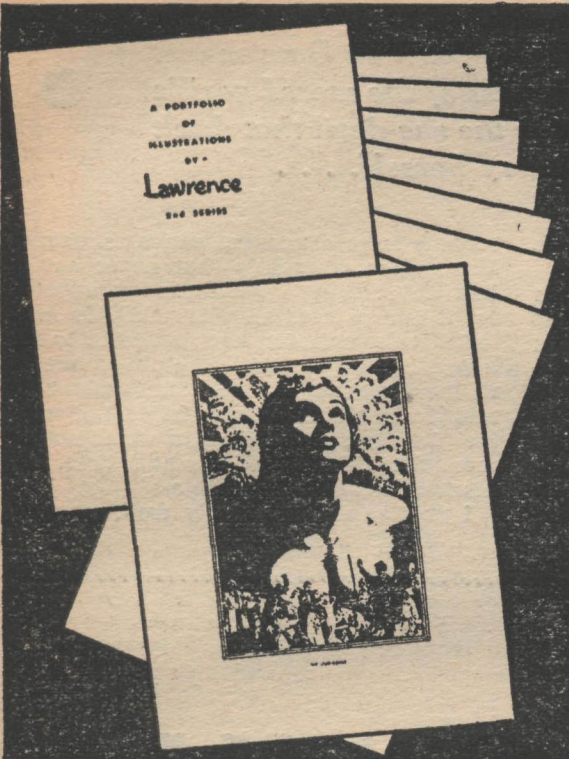


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Murder, madness, death, were in the jungle tom-toms' warning beat—but Van Dam meant to have the gigantic carcass of the sacred gorilla in spite of witchcraft or the she-devil that dwelt within his quarry herself. . . .

FOR eight months no word came from my friend Van Dam.

Those of us in his debt virtuously assured ourselves that we had intended to pay him back at once, and tried to bear up; others who wished to borrow were naturally somewhat resentful at his absence. As usual, he had given no intimation of his fitting, and all who called at his diggings—so he designated the enormous top-story apartment where he dwelt among his countless trophies and collections—were

forte is large allegorical canvases, though Van thinks differently—but never having had any money, I developed an appetite for it and painted all who paid. My most lucrative commission had just come to me, a portrait for a political club of one of its most prominent—and worst—members, and it was giving me a great deal of trouble. To begin with, the man would not sit more than fifteen minutes at a time, and his face was simply horrible.

I painted it first, nearly from memory,

THE WHITE GORILLA

By Elmer Brown Mason

met by the always smiling Jap with the information, "Mr. Van Dam, he will be back—oh, quite soon some day."

This same phrase had excused a two years' disappearance of his master in the interior of Borneo. Gradually we ceased to think of him, and each little life traveled around its own restricted orbit as though the absentee had ceased to exist.

My own affairs were going rather well and orders simply poured in. This halcyon state was due to a Hercules, for which Van had provided me with an extraordinary model, and a Pittsburgh millionaire bought because it was the image of a fellow steel worker he had known in his undollared youth.

These orders, however, were entirely for portraits, which I do not like doing—my

in all its brutal reality of low forehead, eyes set far back, and enormous jaw development—a positively bestial thing. And it looked not the slightest like the original.

Then I conceived the idea that a soul was shining through this fleshy mask and put the light of holiness in the eyes, the curve of renunciation at the corner of the lips. When my man called, his own face made its painted counterpart look like the delineation of some kindly saint. That day I devoted myself solely to the hands—veritable Gargantuan paws they were—and after he had left, very discouraged, started to scrape and turn the face. Just as I had eliminated all but chin and forehead the phone rang.

"Hello!" I said crisply into the transmitter with the intonation I have adopted



The girl swayed, as people do in a cataleptic state,
at the same time raising her arms. . . .

since I consider myself a successful artist.

"Come to dinner, painter-man," drawled Van's voice over the wire. "I have something to show you."

"I'm very busy," I answered loftily, "but I'll try to manage it if you'll tell me beforehand what we are eating."

Van has one idiosyncrasy that is positively ghastly. He is always cooking the most awful, uncivilized dishes concealed in such delectable sauces that you can't help liking them till you find out what they are. At his table I have eaten a lizard creature tasting exactly like delicate chicken, and a savory dish of what appeared to be roasted oysters and was really the larvae of the black palm weevil.

"What are you busy with?" came over the wire. "If it's a Vulcan, I have a good model for you."

"I'm trying to paint a baboon," I snapped, "and no model will do."

"Surprising," he answered in really animated tones. "I can furnish you with a gorilla, and I have a young cannibal here to go with it."

"Am I to act as a meal for your guests?" I began, but he had hung up.

VAN and I dined luxuriously on what I took to be very young lamb and afterward adjourned to the den, on the walls of which are ranged the cases containing his albino collection; the traditional white blackbird, the enormous, glittering, white toucan, the snowy raccoon, the white panther, and that last acquisition in a huge case by itself. There was a roaring wood fire, and before it, partially covered by a snow-leopard's skin, twitched, while he slept, the coffee-colored slim cannibal boy. Once he reached up a long, bare foot and scratched his ear exactly as a dog attends to a flea.

There was a livid, five-inch scar on Van's cheek, and while he talked the blood would pulse to its top, run down underneath the skin, and disappear exactly as an electric advertising sign lights and flashes out.

"Of course you know, painter-man," he began, "that I am in touch with people throughout the world whom I pay to keep their eyes open for the albino phase in animals and birds. The mail daily brings me offers of specimens or word where they may be procured, but, for the most part, they are of species I already have or else out-and-out fakes—I have been offered scores of white elephants. You see, among savages, the abnormal in nature is very often an object of direct worship.

"Contrary to our ideas of religion, the untutored savage has the delicacy not to inflict his beliefs on strangers, and does not, so to speak, wear his god on his sleeve. It is, therefore, hard to get reliable information regarding animals that are white when they normally should be quite a different color.

"It was, as a matter of fact, the very indefinitiveness of the data that sent me on this last expedition. From Libreville, in the French Congo, an Englishman wrote me it was common talk among the Mpangwe, who had recently been driven out of the region at the headquarters of the Gabun River, that their conquerors worshiped and sacrificed to a white woman who walked on her knees and elbows and was covered with long hair. A Dutch trader sent word from Booue that the Fan tribe of cannibals had an old, old man for chief who walked on all fours and was fed entirely on human flesh. A French rubber exploiter in the Sierra de Crystal told one of my agents that there was a large, white monkey in the Ogowé division of the Fan cannibals which was held sacred and accompanied them to war.

"The very meagerness of this information and the improbability of collusion between its widely separated sources gave me something on which to theorize, and I sailed for Libreville. The building of my theory was simplicity itself. The third informant had distinctly stated that the creature was a white monkey. Monkeys are regarded by many tribes in Africa as only slightly modified human beings.

"The final link in my reasoning came from the statement that it walked on its elbows and knees. The gorilla walks, or rather swings itself along, on the backs of its hands—and often turns the toes of its feet under. In short, I hoped for an albino gorilla, and my theory was strengthened by the knowledge that gorillas, when caught young, are docile and easily tamed, in spite of the unquestioned ferocity of the wild, old males. As a matter of fact, we know little more about this largest of all primates than has been vouched us from the fertile imagination of Paul de Chaillu.

"There are current, in Africa, tales of men snatched from the ground to die a horrible death in the tree-tops; of an African tribe that kept a huge, old male for executioner until it was killed by an Englishman about to be sacrificed, who noticed a swelling over its heart and struck it in this vulnerable spot. At any rate, I had never seen a gorilla in the wild state,

and the adventure promised many thrills.

"From Libreville I made a short expedition among the Mpangwe whom the more warlike Fans had driven from the interior. Savages, I have found, Mr. Painter-man, belong to two categories; those that are honest, trust-worthy, and truthful, and those that are the exact opposite.

"The Mpangwe belong to the latter class. They were the worst liars I have ever met, and told me only what they thought I wanted to hear. The hairy woman was endowed with wings and made to lay eggs that hatched into serpents, and when they found it was a monkey I was after, they agreed to a man that she always assumed that form at night.

"There was nothing to be learned from these swindling natives, and I made up my mind to follow rumor to its source and go up the Gabun River into the gorilla country where dwelt the Ogowé Fans. The local French government, not without a warning against its unsettled state and the absolute lack of positive knowledge of the region into which I proposed to penetrate, finally gave me a permit for a scientific exploring expedition.

"They even went further and provided me with a guard of twenty soldiers—so, you see, I traveled rather *en prince*—and helped to collect the rather large caravan which I required.

"A trip of this nature to one who has been through the same kind of thing before, contrary to the general idea of you city dwellers, is remarkable only for the length of time it takes to reach a given point. There was, of course, the usual revolt of the porters for higher pay, which had to be summarily quelled; the leopard that blundered into my tent-ropes one night, and the killing of a man by a wounded buffalo; also an ill-advised attempt to assassinate me. These are only the incidents one expects in jungle travel, however, and, on the whole, it was rather a dull journey, and a very hot one.

"As we neared our destination the country became rugged with open but shady and damp forests, and there were interminable thickets of scitamines and tree-ferns, on the fruits of which the gorilla feeds. All along the route I made guarded inquiries about my quest, and, from what I could not learn, fully made up my mind that a white gorilla, or at least some extraordinary animal, its existence well known to the natives, was in possession of the Fans. I came to this conclusion because every approach to the subject, no

matter how indirect, instantly inspired fear, and those interrogated either became dumb or lied wildly.

"ONE day's journey from our destination I sent ahead runners with gifts to the sorcer (so is designated the local priest) and to the chief. Of course word of my coming had long ago preceded me, and, partially through curiosity, partially through respect for my guard and my large caravan, they sent back friendly messages.

"The next evening, to the monotonous beat of tom-toms, I pitched camp on the edge of the valley in which dwelt the Ogowé Fans. These savages were quite different from any I had met in Africa. They were not black, but coffee-colored, well made, with thin lips, intelligent faces, and were tall and, according to our standards, excessively slim.

"Best of all, their language was a slight variation of the great Bantu tongue, as spoken by the Zulu Kafirs, and with which I am thoroughly familiar. The women, who were quite handsome, worked in the manioc-fields, while the existence of the men was made up of war and hunting. To a high degree they were both truthful and honorable.

"Savages love ceremony, and our mutual greetings took up all of three days, on the last of which there was a feast with wild dances and much palm-wine. I was not at all sure of the bill of fare, and, in order to be on the safe side, pretexted a vow of fasting, an expiatory rite which they practise, and so understood. My rôle was that of a sorcer who had come to study their birds and beasts, but most to consort with my brother priests to our mutual advantage, and I was accepted at my own valuation.

"A liberal gift insured me the privilege of dwelling in their country as long as I pleased, and so well did I get on with my hosts that finally, with the chief, I went through that not unpoetic ceremony of mysterious origin which they call blood-brotherhood. This practical adoption into the tribe so reassured me as to my safety that I sent back my guard of soldiers, much to their horror, and in spite of their protestations, and with them the greater part of my porters, retaining only a few in whom I had implicit confidence.

"I've lived with savages before, Mr. Painter-man, and I must say there is no pleasanter or easier life. To a very great extent every man does exactly as he

pleases. Food is the only real necessity, and is largely furnished by the labor of the women.

"Moral and ethical considerations are never personal, but the affair of the high priest (better called sorcer), and are left entirely in his hands.

"In spite of ideal conditions for happiness, it was distinctly wanting among the Ogowé Fans. There was an undercurrent of dissatisfaction running through the tribe, and an atmosphere of mental discomfort. Quarrels were frequent, and there were several cases of absolute insanity, the victims of which were promptly put to death, tribal law permitting of no mental or physical deficient.

"In my assumed character it was naturally the sorcer that I saw the most of, and we found much in common. As a matter of fact, the priest among savages represents not only the highest mental, but what we must characterize for want of a better definition, as scientific attainments of the race. My confrère of the Ogowé Fans was a shrewd, middle-aged man, leaning toward asceticism, and a real fanatic in his beliefs.

"He had one daughter, and if you can imagine such a thing as a soft, brown rose glowing in the tropical jungle you will have a fairly accurate picture of her. The Fan faith was a kind of Pan-deism with just a dash of sun worship, interwoven with superstition, its manifestation interpreted by the sorcer from the actions of various sacred animals. There was also an additional and very unusual way of learning the wishes of their deity.

"The priest was master of a crude but nonetheless effective form of hypnotism, which he practised on members of the tribe, but principally on his daughter. Through her, while she was 'possessed of the spirit,' otherwise in a cataleptic state, he unconsciously impressed his own will on the tribe.

"I give him absolute credit for attributing divine origin to the words that she uttered, which made him only the more determined in his purposes, in the same way that a man with an honest belief is much more likely to be successful than one who must admit in his own heart that he is a faker.

"The girl was so completely under his mental control that a few moments' gazing into a large crystal, which had been roughly rounded and held a thousand lights, made her mind blank and instantly receptive of any impression from him. This

crystal was a very sacred thing, and it was the duty of a different warrior each day to rub at the inequalities with fine sand with the purpose of finally bringing it to a perfect roundness.

"The sorcer was enough of a man of the world to appreciate the awe he might inspire by means of a few chemicals I gave him and the—to savages—startling tricks I was able to teach him. As a matter of fact, he ruled these frankly cannibal warriors through fear alone, and so great was his mental dominance that, at times, it seemed to me, he held half the tribe in a semihypnotic state. There was a bitter feud between him and the temporal chief.

"The latter wished to move on to new conquests; the priest held firm that they remain where they were for a year until expiation had been made by endless religious ceremonies for the 'blinding of the eyes of piety,' a phrase which meant nothing to me then, but which I now understand.

"**I** WAS, of course, more or less affiliated with the chief, since, with him, I had gone through the blood-brotherhood rite, but my closest friend was his son. He was a youth of some twenty summers, and the most marvelous hunter and tracker I have ever known. Ikstu—that is as near as I can Anglicize his name—accompanied me on all my collecting expeditions, and, what was of the greatest importance, since I was supposed to know them instinctively, told me the birds and animals that were sacred and not to be molested.

"Chief among those tabu were the gorillas, and they thrive and were quite unafraid under such treatment, though naturally retiring beasts. In the manioc-fields, which the women cultivated, toward evening I have literally seen dozens of them. The males would wander out from the jungle with their two or three mates and family, or sometimes I would come upon a solitary old bachelor, grayish-white, and a very dangerous animal to approach.

"Some would run away, screaming with fright, in a tryingly human manner, but there was one old fellow who never gave a step until I myself retired.

"He was fully six feet tall when standing braced against a tree-trunk, his hands hanging below his knees, the hair on his neck and head erect with rage, and the ruff under his chin quivering. Two great canine teeth protruded from each side of his snarling mouth, and beneath their enormous protuberances his little eyes

blazed red in his coal-black face. I learned to hate that animal, and, as he hopped away on all fours, his legs swinging out beyond his arms, I longed to turn and put an explosive bullet in him.

"Policy, that was even a question of personal safety, held me in check, however, and I wisely refrained. Ikstu, who feared nothing else in the world, was deadly afraid of these old males, but, even more than he feared them, he hated the sorcer.

"As we became better acquainted and I gained his confidence, the reason for this was apparent. I noticed that on several occasions we found two purple orchids, their stems crossed, lying in the narrow trails through the scitamines thickets, and each time this sign appeared I lost my companion for the rest of the day. The connection was obvious.

"The daughter of the sorcer-priest always wore these orchids in her hair and as a garland—in fact, they formed by far the greater part of her wardrobe.

"Always, however, she was back from these love rambles at her father's hut before sunset, and, after he had made her gaze for a few moments into the sacred crystal, she would hurry off into the jungle with a basket of manioc and fruit of the scitamines on her arm. You may well believe I was curious in regard to these expeditions, but I kept this curiosity to myself. Once I tried to pick up her trail in the morning, and was very nearly impaled in a leopard-trap. That afternoon I received a warning from the sorcer of the presence of a very sacred and awful spirit in the direction I had gone.

"My excuse for lingering in the neighborhood was wearing thin, and the priest was beginning to look on me with unconcealed suspicion. Meantime, there was no hint of what I sought, and the whole tribe was humming with an undercurrent of politics that would have done credit to Tammany Hall during election.

"My time had not been entirely wasted, however, for I had the skin of an albino thrush (it proved new to science), and also a large, white spider of the trap-door variety, the first absolute case of albinism I had ever found among the *Arachnida*. My camp was ready to be abandoned and my porters to travel, and I made up my mind to start for the coast the moment I had solved the problem of the girl's night-ly trip.

The crisis came sooner than I expected. In spite of the objections of the spiritual power, the chief made a raid toward the

sea and returned with heavy spoil and ten captives. There was much rejoicing in the tribe, though the sorcer was very angry, and the captives were closely guarded and well fed, so that their ultimate, gruesome disposal was only too obvious. The war party gained in strength, and it was decided the matter of moving on to new conquests be finally decided at the Feast of the Gorillas, when the moon was full.

"My position was now not only very uncomfortable, but positively dangerous, and I kept exclusively to my own camp, my only connection with the Fan village being through Ikstu. Time hanging heavy on my hands, I hit on an expedient that I should have thought of long before.

"Through a pair of powerful field-glasses I spied the girl's route each evening until I finally traced her down to her destination, a rocky amphitheater hardly a mile distant from the village.

"That night darkness came so quickly I could not see what she did, but the next evening the secret of her expeditions and, at the same time, the end of my quest were revealed to me. From the crotch of a great rubber tree I watched her set down her basket and, swaying slightly as people do in the cataleptic state, raised her arms above her orchid-crowned head evidently calling. Twice she did this, and then, from a cleft in the rocks, an unbelievable object swung slowly out to meet her.

"Never have I seen so beautiful and so repulsive an animal. It was an enormous female gorilla with fur long and white as that of an Angora goat. Even in a crouched position, practically on all fours, its jet-black face was above the girl on whom it looked down from eyes that seemed, through my field-glasses, milk white.

"One mighty arm rose and rested on the girl, the other groping in the basket at her feet, and thus the two figures stood while the fruits were crammed into an enormous mouth. Then the girl lifted, with both hands, the great paw from her bare shoulder, and before the quick tropical darkness shut them from my sight, I saw her catch the wreath of purple orchids from her own neck and throw it over the brute's head.

"At camp, with his chest bleeding from a knife wound, I found Ikstu waiting for me. Without giving him time to explain his own errand I told quickly what I had seen. He was in no way astonished, and I doubt even if he heard half I said, so full was he of his own troubles.

"The sorcer had somehow learned of the meetings with his daughter and was keeping her in a continual hypnotic state, so that, quite unconscious of what she was doing or saying, she had actually stabbed him at their last rendezvous and even threatened him with 'the blind eyes of plety.'

"His simple request was that I should take him and the girl away with me after he had killed the sorcer during the coming feast. I consented without the slightest hesitation, bargaining only that he should tell me, in return, all he knew of the white gorilla.

"Gradually, though, it was apparent he feared a celestial thunderbolt. I dragged the story from him. The beast, under the care of the sorcer, had been the fetish of the tribe ever since he could remember, and figured in every religious ceremony. At the beginning of the Fans' march toward the coast the gorilla had always gone into battle with them, and, maddened by a great beaker of the potent palm wine, proved a terror to their enemies. Then, to the lasting grief of the sorcer, during a night attack it had lost the sight of both eyes from a firebrand.

"Formerly it had been a docile and friendly animal (when not inflamed by the palm liquor), with the unrestrained freedom of the village, but this accident changed it into a she-devil that dwelt morosely alone and could only be approached by the sorcer's daughter, and that only when under her father's hypnotic influence.

"**I**T'S a wild tale, painter-man, and sitting here before the fire one can hardly believe it actually happened. In the jungle, though, with the blackness of the tropical night wrapped around us like velvet ribbons, the squeak of the vampire bats, the far-away roar of a male gorilla, and the cough of a leopard circling the camp, it seemed perfectly natural and fitting for me to be conniving, with a cannibal, at what was nothing but a cold-blooded murder.

"Besides, I wanted the skin of that albino primate, and I was going to have it at any cost. I believed every word of Ikstu's story, even to divine attributes with which he credited the brute and of which I have not told you—you see, I had seen it, and alive."

Van Dam snapped on the electric lights and turned in his chair to face the glass cabinet which contained his latest acquisi-

tion. My eyes followed his and I shuddered to the very depths of my city-swaddled soul. The great monkey had been mounted bending slightly forward, its hands swinging between and far below its knees. In its immense paws it held a pear-shaped crystal larger than an ostrich's egg, which caught and imprisoned the light.

Beautiful, long, silky fur, white as silver, clothed the enormously powerful body, and beneath the low forehead, deep in the black face, were set, in lieu of eyes, two round milky-white agates. The mouth was curled back in a fixed grin revealing the broken, yellow, doglike fangs, repulsive beyond belief by contrast with the beauty and power of the rest of the animal.

"Go on, Van," I said, "you couldn't make me disbelieve anything about that thing. For Heaven's sake, out with the lights, though. I don't want to look at it."

The blood showed at the top of the scar on Van Dam's cheek, slithered down its ragged length, and winked out leaving it livid white. He switched off the electric current and we were left again with only the light of the fire.

"I gave Ikstu no advice as to his killing," Van Dam continued, "because I felt that he was quite competent to carry out his private vendetta in his own way. However, since the next evening was to see the beginning of the Feast of the Gorillas, I moved my camp a mile toward the coast and prepared everything for immediate flight. In the afternoon I made Ikstu guide me by a roundabout route, to the very edge of the rocky amphitheater above the beast's den, and ensconced myself, within easy hearing and seeing distance, in the thick top of a scitamines bush.

"Hardly was I comfortably settled when the sorcer and his daughter, both heavily laden with baskets, appeared beneath me.

"I don't think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the girl. Of actual clothes she wore only a white loin-cloth, but her hair was braided full of the purple orchids and garland on garland of the same flower hung from her neck and covered her lithe, brown body.

"The sorcer was hideously painted in crimson and white and his face was made up to simulate a gorilla, the hair drawn far back and two extra, white eyes daubed on the forehead.

"Immediately the girl, sitting with crossed legs, began to beat a tiny tom-tom, while the sorcer built a small fire and busied himself with the baskets and three other articles. I recognized them as a

leopard skin worn by one of the under chiefs, a mat from a hut, and Ikstu's favorite spear.

"When the fire was going well the girl stood up and called. The third time her voice rose the white gorilla emerged slowly from its den and hesitatingly hopped and swung down to her. Then, before my eyes, took place the most remarkable performance I have witnessed.

"The man cast some herb into the fire and the girl led the animal into the thick, scented smoke. Time and again it broke from her and rushed to its rocky refuge, time and again it came back to her call. Herb after herb, each with a different odor, went into the flames, and gradually the movements of the great beast became slower, lethargic, till it finally stood swaying, its blind agate eyes turned to the sorcer.

"Once the girl faltered and seemed to be awakening from a trance, but her father held the crystal to her eyes till they went blank and she again mechanically did his bidding. Now he transferred the sacred stone to the gorilla's paws and began a chant. The words were not of the Bantu tongue but from some language older than the hills. I don't know what they mean, but I remember the sound, mixed with the beat of the tom-tom, as well as though I were now hearing it.

"Nala (*bong*) Nala (*bong*)
Nala impi (*bong, bong, bong.*)
Nala (*bong*) Nala (*bong*)
Nala impi (*bong, bong, bong.*)
Nala (*bong*) Nala (*bong*)
Nala impi (*bong, bong, bong.*)"

Intoned to the sullen beat of the drum till the world seemed to go to sleep and the brain reach forward for the next repetition.

"The great brute began to move slowly in a swaying dance, keeping time with the rhythm. One by one the girl held the leopard skin, mat and spear against its flat nostrils while, for each separate article, the sorcer pressed a hot coal to the slowly shuffling feet. At every burn the beast reared, and raising the glittering crystal, to which its paws seemed glued, dashed it down on the object before it.

"Extraordinary as was the idea, I recognized at once that, for the usual passes and crystal gazing used in hypnotism, the sorcer had first substituted the scent of herbs and then the chant, and actually held the frightful beast in control by that thin thread of sound.

"Still beating on her tom-tom with measured strokes the voice of the girl took up the mysterious words, and the sorcer grew silent crouched over the fire. Night was coming fast. I slipped from my hiding place as the forest shadows blackened the cliff and silently slid down to the very cleft whence had come the gorilla. There I lay in the darkness peering at the three figures before the fire.

"First one tom-tom, another, a third, till their number seemed countless, awoke in the village. There was a high, shrill scream of agony from far away, then the voice of the whole tribe raised in a great chorus, the words growing distinguishable as they grew nearer.

"In English they would go like this:

"The sun, oh, the sun, from the rising of the sun,
We go through the jungle aisles until the moon is high.
There's blood within our footsteps, and every warrior one
Lifts up a limp, dead body unto the bleeding sky.

"Always before goes the white one.
(Piety, Piety thou!)
Leads us in the path of the sun.
(Piety, Piety thou!)
Judge at the feast when the red blood runs free
Leading the Fans to hot, cruel victory,
We come for thy judgment, again come to thee.
(Piety, Piety thou!)

"MEANWHILE, under the roar of voices the girl sang her monotonous strain and beat her tiny drum.

"The whole tribe defiled into the amphitheater, chiefs first with the leopard skins, which they alone are privileged to wear—a custom that links them with the Zulus—then the warriors with the prisoners in their midst, now significantly reduced to nine, and last the women and children.

"These bore fagots which they piled in the center and a large fire was soon blazing. The ceremonies began, to the music of the inevitable tom-toms, with a furious dance by the warriors.

"It was a wild scene, the nearly naked savages brandishing their spears and whirling around the fire; the prisoners conscious of the horrible fate awaiting them, cowering in the background; the crouching figures of the great, white gorilla, the hideously painted sorcer, and the exquisite brown girl intoning her endless chant.

"As a proper stage setting the heavens

began to grumble, lightning flashed across the sky, and a few, big, hot drops of rain fell.

"The dance and the tom-toms ceased with such startling suddenness that the voice of the girl cut sharp as a knife through the murmur of the multitude. The priest faced the great white brute and spoke:

"Piety, against whom the Ogowé Fans have sinned, before we ask thy judgement for the tribe, select from us in expiation. Let the sacred crystal gleam red in thy honor."

"He raised a close-woven basket full of palm wine to its nostrils, and, while it still held the crystal pendant in its paws, tipped it till it was drained of the last drop.

For a moment the white gorilla staggered, then hopping forward balanced at its full height before the chief. While the girl's song and the beat of the tiny drum alone broke the silence, it circled to the right, bent with distended nostrils above the chief whose leopard skin was in the sorcer's possession, and, quicker than I can tell it, the great paws rose and the crystal came crashing down on the doomed man's skull. Resolved to end the scene then and there, cost what it might, I raised my rifle to my shoulder and then lowered it again at what I saw

"Sinuous as a snake, stealthy as a leopard, Ikstu, a knife in his hand, was creeping up behind the sorcer. Warned by some subtle instinct the priest turned barely before the spring. One hand shot out, the finger pointing straight at the boy, and their eyes locked with nearly an audible snap. It seemed as though invisible bonds held the would-be murderer. He struggled in vain to raise the knife, to go forward.

"The pointed finger described a slow circle, Ikstu's head followed it. Faster it swung and faster. With a great burst of strength the sorcer snatched the sacred crystal from between the gorilla's paws and held it in the boy's face. For a breath Ikstu swayed away from the glittering lights, then his head went forward, and, eyes glued to the shining thing, he sank with it to the ground.

"The sorcer silently faced the breathless multitude, then deliberately picked up Ikstu's own spear and turned toward him. There was a great crash of thunder and the gorilla, still swaying to the girl's music, groped blindly forward. The priest raised the spear. The girl broke off in the middle

of a note, and quicker than light, covered her lover's body with her own.

"Released from the spell of the chant, though suddenly animate, the white gorilla tore the priest into his terrible arms and bore him to the ground. A blinding flash of lightning split the heavens as I fired.

"Catching the outline of the gorilla I pulled the trigger again, and sprang down into the arena. Every savage had fled save the chief, who stood, spear poised, between the lovers and the struggling man and brute. With a back-hand sweep of his long arm the gorilla ripped open my cheek at the very moment I sent a final bullet through its forehead.

"The sorcer was quite dead, practically every bone in his body broken by the awful clutch of those hairy arms. The white gorilla still feebly moved though the mushroom bullet had carried away practically the entire back of its head. The girl, the chief, and I alone were alive and sane and until morning, in the hot rain, we labored to strip the skin from that great carcass.

"Then, the girl leading Ikstu by the hand, and the skin swinging between us on a pole, we struck out for my camp. The chief, in silence, watched his son depart, and did not do anything to hinder us.

"Perhaps he was thinking of the fate of those among the Fans who were found mentally wanting, and, in addition, there was the sacrilege of the attack on the priest."

Van Dam lay back in his chair and carefully lit a cigarette.

"That isn't all?" I asked after a moment's silence.

"That's all," he answered.

"But what's the end of it? What became of the girl and Ikstu?"

"The girl died on the way out. Ikstu lies there before the fire; his mind never came back to him. I have hopes, however; he has taken to worshiping the beast in the case and bowing down to the crystal. Interest in anything is an encouraging thing."

"You have a pleasant way of entertaining your guests," I said, for want of something better. "Cannibalism, murder, madness, everything but starvation."

"We had about come to that, too," Van answered carelessly. "On the way back, when we ran into a great migration of spider monkeys. They make very good eating, we just had one for dinner."

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

(Continued from page 8)
Answering Mr. LaNier

Although we receive all magazines over here (with Occupation Forces in Germany) at some considerable time after their publication, I hope I may be in time to answer, partly at any rate, the query of James E. R. LaNier of Chicago, Ill. in the May issue of F. N. in which he states "I have never come across the name of Aton in connection with the (Egyptian) deities, or deification of the sun".

A. G. K. Hayter, Cambridge University Extension Lecturer in Egyptology states in his article "Tell-el-Amarna, City of Akhnaton and Tutankhamen":

"Under Amenhotep III (1411-1375 BC) the priesthood of Ammon (Amen) at Thebes had grown dangerously powerful. On his death, Queen Tiye, a remarkable woman of non-royal birth, encouraged her twelve-year old son, now Amenhotep IV, to give precedence to the sun god Ra, who after being paramount in earlier times had now been ousted by Ammon. The boy king accordingly erected a temple at Thebes to Ra under the form of Aton or Aten "The Sun's Disk" by which he intended to symbolize the deity behind the sun who gives heat and life to the world. He founded a new city Akhetaton "The Brilliance of the Sun's Disk" and changed his name from Amenhotep "Ammon is at rest" to Akhnaton "The Aton is Satisfied". This took place in 1370 B.C. Reaction set in after Akhnaton's death, and finally the old cult won, backed by the army under Horemheb. Tutankhaton (Akhnaton's successor) abandoned the new city for Thebes, and changed his name to Tutankhamen to emphasize his reversion to the old state religion. The city was officially evacuated about 1355 B.C. when the court and dependents left".

Also, Sir W. M. Flinders Petrie, Professor of Egyptology at University College, London, in an article entitled "The Gods of Ancient Egypt" speaks of: "Ra, the most dominant, also Khepera or Khefere the morning sun, and Aton or Atum the setting sun." He also goes on to say "This worship of the sun as Aton certainly began in the life of Akhnaton's mother; the name was known still earlier in the sun worship of Heliopolis, and it is reasonably supposed to be the Syrian 'Adon'—the Lord."

I would like to say how pleased I am to be able to get these mags. over here. It is refreshing to be able to lose oneself in the world of fantasy, life is so grim and earnest these days.

Keep 'em coming, and keep 'em as fantastic as you can.

RITA KING.

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Likes Our Novels

I have been reading your magazine ever since early last year, and also read Famous

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FANTASTIC NOVELS

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I have a number of science and fantasy mags which I can offer for sale to anyone interested at 25c per copy. A stamped, self-addressed envelope will bring you the list.

I would like to obtain the following two mags: *Astounding Science Fiction*, Jan. 1949; *Fantastic Adventures*, July 1949.

In some manner I missed them on the news-stands, and each has a serial conclusion in it. I would be happy to swap with someone for copies I may have that he might want.

I am not selling any of my copies of *Fantastic Novels* or F.F.M. I like them so much that they are being added to my library collections. I hope to have some more excellent reading in the future in your magazines.

ALICE F. WINSLOW.
(MRS. GEORGE A. WINSLOW.)

78 Broadview Heights,
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J. T. OLIVER.

712 32nd St.,
 Columbus, Ga.

To the Point

"Between Worlds" was super, and much better than last issue's novel. However, Garret Smith touched off many sour points.

No more comments this time except to say keep up the good work.

JAMES W. AYERS.

609 1st St.,
 Attalla, Ala.

Liked July Short Stories

I am afraid that the July *Fantastic Novels* is inferior to the past several issues. To begin with, the cover is reminiscent of blood and thunder covers on "low-brow" science-fiction magazines. Lawrence was away off form when he ground out that one.

As for "Between Worlds", it had some possibilities, but is chock full of inconsistencies. And yet Finlay did some of his best work for that story! I feel that the story was edited many times. It seems that Garret Smith has written some of the most uninteresting science fiction ever written, for this is science fiction, not Fantasy.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Garret Smith was evidently trying to write of a kind of modern Columbus. Or to reverse the conception, just try to imagine how Columbus would have reacted if he had sailed a "space-going flying duck"! But it was not a beautifully written story.

"The Throw-Back" and "The Albino Otter" rescued the issue. Let me add my voice to the chorus who long for an "editor's page." And maybe I am alone in this second request, but I want the little stripe restored to the "lightning flash" banner.

Bing Clark has noted something in "The Golden Blight" which I have noted in many other novels you have printed of late. That is, "the note of irony", he mentioned. To me, many novels in the past year which were over twenty years of age, such as "Nordenholt's Million," etc., have held a sense of "fate". I mean a kind of feeling all through the story that some mocking Fate is liable to upset all the well laid plans of poor struggling humanity. It is an atmosphere I find only in F.N. and F.F.M.

I request that you go monthly soon. I don't see why it would lower the quality of the magazines at all, as Bill Calabrese fears. Someone else wrote in defending the idea of re-re-publishing the classics re-published in the past ten years by Munsey and Popular Publications. I feel that they have a right to them as we felt once, but bring them out in a separate magazine.

BOB BARNETT.

1107 Lyon,
Carthage, Mo.

Thanks for Merritt Story

I have been a constant reader of F.F.M. since 1945 and have read each issue of *Super Science* and F.N. since they were revived. It seems that F.N. is more suited to my taste, for I feel that the F.F.M. stories are too dry and long; and the *Super Science* stories too short and common.

The stories in the July F.N. were very good. "The Throwback" was excellently written, though somewhat lacking in plot. "Between Worlds" was the best novel you have given us since "Conquest of the Moon Pool", which is to date my favorite of Merritt's work. Incidentally, I'm glad to see "Dwellers in the Mirage" coming up next issue. I've heard a lot about it, but as yet have not been able to obtain it—thanks very much.

How about giving us some real, exciting, original, and classic planet adventures in the future—some real space epics? Perhaps "Against the Stars", by E. North; "Prison Planet" by R. F. Starzl; "Spawn of the Comet", by O. A. Kline; "Beyond the Dark Nebula" by Vincent, "The Phantom of the Rainbow" by LaMaster.

"World's End" by Rousseau, might fit in F.F.M. since the majority of stories there are just that—world's end.

In case you haven't already guessed it, this is my first letter to any fantasy magazine. I

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FANTASTIC NOVELS

just had to break the silence to let you know that I think F.N. is doing great work bringing us fans the classics of the past. "May F.N. live forever, and may I never die." I hope John Hawkins doesn't mind if I steal his quotation to express the thought that as long as F.N. is published, and as long as I'm able, I'll read it.

Any fantasy fans in the neighborhood?

DON MACLEOD.

Box 181,
Pictou, N. S.,
Canada.

Wants To Hear From You

I am very glad to be able via F.F.M. and F.N. to collect some of the really great and most interesting stories I've ever had the pleasure of reading. But I missed one of the best tales of them all—namely A. Merritt's "Ship of Ishtar." I read it once—or part of it, but then some so-and-so (I dare not give vent to my true feeling toward the blighter) walked off with it. (I had the book.) Now, I would like to hear from some kind lad who has two copies of the issue of *Fantastic Novels* which has "The Ship of Ishtar" by A. Merritt in it. I'd surely appreciate it a great deal if he'd write me. In fact, I'd certainly welcome any and all correspondence—I'll answer each and every letter, too.

I'd also like to get hold of a copy of Edgar Rice Burroughs' "Mars" story and "The Living Dead" and the issues of F.F.M. which appeared during '38 to '44 when I was aboard ship and only got hold of science fiction stories once in a great while. Which brings me back to your swell magazine. Oh, yes, I've also gotten your other companion magazine, *Super Science Stories*, "The Big Book of Science Fiction". It also rates tops with me. I certainly wish F.F.M., F.N. and S.S.S. would all come out once every month! Gee! that sure would be super!

I, too, with Mr. James Ellis, think it would be fine to investigate and print the Merritt poems that he and Capt. Stroh speak of. Being a poetry collector (along with my many other collecting hobbies) I'd sure like them for my collection.

GLEN WRIGHT.

R.F.D. No. 2, Lake Rd.,
LeRoy, N. Y.

Letter Section Superb

To start off, I think I may safely say that a good majority of the fans enjoyed "Between Worlds" by Garret Smith, and will express their approval in the ensuing letters.

Even though I did enjoy it, I have a complaint to voice. The hero was superficial. In fact, he was no hero, at least according to my standards.

Smith succeeds too well in bringing his hero's supposed Venus beliefs to light, as the major

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

point of the yarn. The yarn becomes dull and rather aimless at times, which only succeeds in aggravating the reader. Venus atmosphere, I suppose. The fact that it was probably written for war propaganda also spoils it as a story.

Coming down to the two short stories—"The Throw-Back" by L. R. Sherman, and "The Albino Otter" by E. M. Brown, I find it hard to express an accurate opinion of these two. They were interesting, of course, (every F.N. yarn is) and were probably novel in their respective printing dates. It does bring the fact up that stories (in this field) have changed very little in their basic pattern, with age.

Finlay's illustrations, although well drawn, did not fit the general mood of the story.

The book review column adds up with F.N.'s other top features to make a near-perfect magazine.

The letter section was as superb in contents as ever. In fact, I sometimes think I extract more enjoyment out of this than from the yarns.

I have a few yarns that I would be deeply interested in seeing in type (F.N. type, that is). "A Year in A Day" by Erle Stanley Gardner; "The Absolute At Large" by Karel Capek; "The Island of Captain Sparrow", and "The World Below" by S. Fowler Wright; "The Twenty-Fifth Hour" by Herbert Best; and "The Brain Blight" by Jack Harrower.

Now, I await Merritt.

LARRY "BING" CLARKE.

Stamford, Conn.

Editor's Note: We have had "The Island of Captain Sparrow" and "The Twenty-Fifth Hour" in F.F.M.

Likes the Old Stories Best

Ha-ha! So two females from pore ole Venus caused all the trouble stirring up this so-called planet. Oh, boy, ohboyohboy! I congratulate you, Miss Gnaedinger, for selecting this wonderful bit of satire from the Munsey treasure-house. I have no complaints about this superb novel! It is the one chosen for next time that I am worried about.

H'm. Let's see. This'll make the fifth—or is it the sixth?—Merrittale since F.N.'s revival last year. I'm not averse to Merritt's presence in F.N., but why so much? And why stories which can be obtained for the same price as your zine? Why use Merritt so much?

There. Now, getting back to the July F.N., the shorts. . .

I see that both of them are old ones. Remember what I said about there being multitudes of excellent old stories? Well, here is the proof. Or rather, here are the proofs. I'll take them up one at a time.

It was quite refreshing to read an original copy, rather than the resultant of a long line of copies. Sherman's "The Throw-Back" was very well written, in fact that mainly accounts for its being in second place this issue. The

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FANTASTIC NOVELS

plot wasn't too new, probably not even when it was written (as I hinted above), but who cares? Excellent.

As for "The Albino Otter"—that, too, was a very good one. It was—well—cute, I guess is the word. Interesting, but a duller style.

W. PAUL GANLEY.

119 Ward Road,
North Tonawanda, N. Y.

F.N. Worth Collecting

Just wanted to write and tell you how much I enjoy your two magazines. I have only been reading F.N. a few months and think the issues are really worth collecting. Let's have more Merritt stories!

This year makes about fifteen years I have been reading fantasy and science fiction and although I have a family of four I still find time to keep up with most magazines of this type.

I would appreciate it very much if you could print my letter as I have numerous back issues of most of the science fiction and fantasy magazines. I am anxious to sell or trade for those I missed. Some of these run back to 1930.

MRS. BETTY FAULKNER.

2205 West 19th St.,
Long Beach 10,
California.

Wants Letters

In this my first letter to you I want to accomplish several things:

First: to invite readers to correspond with me, be they young or old, for the purpose of comparing notes on collections of fantasy literature, interest in various authors, or anything they please in order to keep alive this neglected body of literature.

Second: To start an epistolary argument with those misguided people who continually write in to you ranting and raving about the various works they would like to see published. In itself there is, of course, nothing wrong with the idea. But these unidea-ed characters are always asking for those stories which can easily (and I can prove it) be found in second-hand bookstores in book form with a minimum of effort.

Third: Apropos of the above statement, I recommend your printing only those stories which have never appeared in book form at all.

Fourth: I have for sale a complete run of F.F.M. from the first issue to the current one. Those who are interested in this please write me. Also other magazines such as *Weird Tales* in various separate issues.

Fifth: To say that I think your magazines are the only intelligent effort in the world today to perpetuate a form of literature which is almost as old as the spoken word itself.

HENRY KOLBE.

52 Putnam Ave.,
Detroit 2, Mich.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

No Brickbats

I have read just about every issue of F.N. and F.F.M. and have found practically all of them enjoyable—in part at least. So—no brickbats!—but I would like to add my voice to those who want to see “The End of the World”, and “Back to Nature or The Cave Man Era” themes discontinued.

Please, if anyone has any *Unknown* or *Unknown Worlds* for sale or trade, I wish they would contact me. Lost the whole set through accident—so here I am starting from scratch again.

Best wishes for continued success with your two fine mags.

NEIL S. DOWNEY.

Neil Beauty Salon,
Howard & Fayette Sts.,
Baltimore, Md.

Liked “Eye of Balamok”

The July issue of ye fine magge, *Fantastic Novels*, was eagerly read by yours truly. Garret Smith's novel was super excellent, but I can't say quite as much for the short stories in this issue.

In “Between Worlds”, the author used an idea that is difficult to work with, and hence one which few authors use—the idea of the story being told by an extra-terrestrial being. I think Mr. Smith handled it quite well and convincingly. (I might mention that this idea has been used by some authors, such as E. R. Burroughs, Otis A. Kline, and a few of the pulp writers. Of these, I'd say that Burroughs has used it more successfully).

As it seems to be the custom for those who write to fantasy magazines to get their two cents in concerning what stories should appear in future issues, I have a few suggestions. How about some of Sax Rohmer's rarer stories, like “She Who Sleeps”, “The Golden Scorpion”, “Moon of Madness” or “Devil Doctor”, which, as far as I know, are obtainable only in second-hand book shops and (from what experience I've had) at fabulous prices.

Other suggestions (I'm just full of those things!) are Taine's “Green Fire” and “The Forbidden Garden”; Rousseau's “Sea Demons”, Stapledon's “The Flames”, the two remaining stories in Stilson's “Polaris” trilogy; some of Van Vogt's novelettes. . . .

Of the issues of F. N. that I've read, the stories I liked best were “The Second Deluge”, “The Terrible Three”, “The Mad Planet” and its sequel, and “The Eye of Balamok.”

This latter, by Victor Rousseau, was a truly wonderful story.

I will welcome all correspondence from fans around my age (15), especially those interested in Burroughs, Rohmer or Lovecraft!

Yours in Fantasy,

BOB BRINEY.

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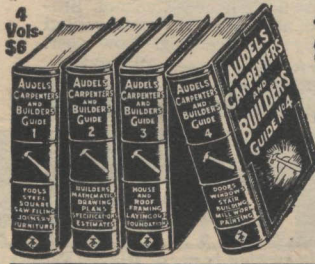
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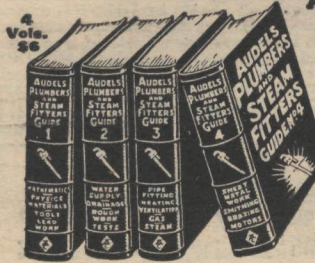
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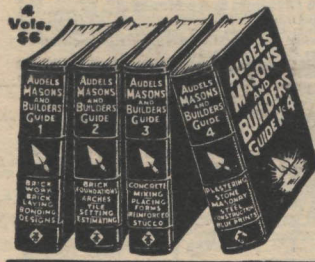
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