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Spring No. 4

STARTLING MYSTERY

STORIES 50c

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SECRET OF LOST VALLEY

New Story By

ROBERT E. HOWARD

Solar Pons
in

THE TOTTENHAM WEREWOLF

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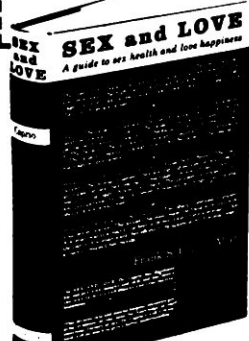
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STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

Volume 1

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor

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The Editor's Page

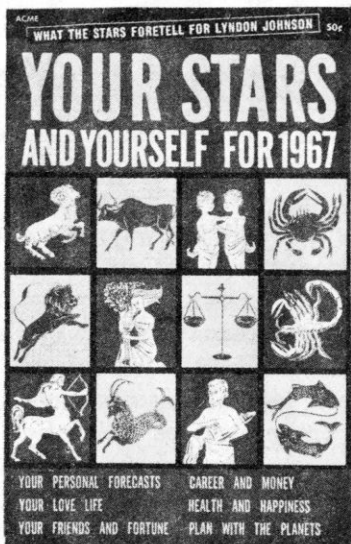
A LETTER from Alec B. Kowalczyk, addressed to **MAGAZINE OF HORROR**, can just as appropriately be discussed here, as it would apply equally to **SMS**. He writes: "What I am proposing is a new department in your magazine for the budding writers of today. I know other readers want more and more stories by established writers to fill your pages, but let's face it: There is always one (and I hope you'll forgive me) story by an experienced author which just isn't up to par. So why not replace it by a story by a new writer? It's been done in **ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE** and the **ATLANTIC MONTHLY**. Why can't it be done in **MAGAZINE OF HORROR**? I say it can, and I think it would be a valuable asset not only to this particular magazine, but to the entire field of weird fiction. Horror story writers are few, and the markets available to them are even fewer. What is needed is a stimulus for the weird tale writer. Too many of the masters are gone, and someone has to take their place. This department could be the stimulus they need."

At first glance, this sounds like a good idea; and, of course, I cannot forget that the first story to be published professionally under the name of Robert W. Lowndes, that was actually written by him, appeared in the short-short story department of F. Orlin Tremaine's **COMET** — a department exclusively for the new writer.

The department didn't last very long — not as long as the magazine, which ran less than a dozen issues.

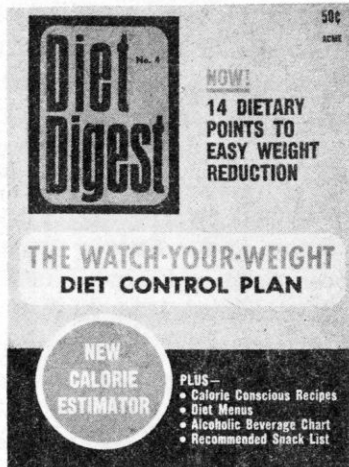
The "there's usually one story by an established name that isn't up to par, so why not replace it with a story by a newcomer" argument also sounds reasonable — until you take a close look at it? *Who* decides that *which* story wasn't up to par? Reader Kowalczyk, who marked an "X" beside it on his voting coupon? Or some other reader who rated that story "O" and thought Reader K's favorite

(Turn To Page 7)



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(continued from page 5)

was pretty sad? Or should the editor put the issue together as it were, decide which story is the least good and withdraw that one, replacing it with . . .

With a story by a newcomer which is no better? Or perhaps still less good? If we were going to have this department in every issue, there would be times when the best we received was considerably below professional standards — even those to be seen in a rather routine story.

But what if there *is* a better story by a newcomer on hand?

It there is, then it's there in the issue — unless, due to the requirements of putting the magazine together, it couldn't be fitted in. But we do not require established names on the new fiction we use.

And we receive mss. from unknown writers nearly every day, a very large percentage of them in the short or short-short lengths. Most of these, in one way or another, just are not professional; some show a fair amount of skill in putting words together and making a story — but like the others, no awareness of what has been not only done before in weird fiction, but done to death in exactly the same way that the novice is doing it. In other words, we have bad imitations of a shoddy "original". A few have been both professional and fresh; we have used most of these. (Some we had to return because of their length, being overstocked in the longer short stories.)

Our reader does not suggest what others who have made similar suggestions have urged: that the editor "rework" the most promising selections into professional shape. Uh-huh — in other words, do the writer's homework for him. (This is not to be confused with copy editing, which is done on all accepted mss.; hardly any writer is a perfect typist or speller, etc., all the time.) . . . Well, we're not running a writer's school, and the editor hasn't time even if he were willing; and if I were willing, the fee would be considerable. Assistance you get for nothing, or practically nothing, in this line is usually worth just that and often less.

I'm not 100% opposed to the proposal, but you'll have to show me how either the magazine or the new writers really would be any better off for it first. RAWL

The Adventure Of The Tottenham Werewolf

by August Derleth

(author of *Ferguson's Capsules*)

VERY FEW OF the problems which occupied the attention of my friend, Solar Pons, came to him through sources close to him, but at least one

of them, the singular adventure of Septimus Grayle, the Tottenham Werewolf, I myself brought to his notice, however unwittingly. During Pons' absence on

All the crimes took place on just such nights as Septimus Grayle had his seizures — when he imagined himself a dog, and went out to bay at the moon.

From *The Memoirs Of Solar Pons*, copyright 1951 by August Derleth; by permission of Mycroft & Moran.

the Continent one summer, I had got into the habit of taking dinner at the Diogenes Club, and had observed there from time to time a porcine, well-muscled individual of middle-age, who made me uncomfortable by the forthright manner in which he examined me. In turn, I found myself wondering about him, and I determined to ask Pons to join me at dinner as soon as he returned from Prague.

Accordingly, one evening I ushered Pons to my table at the Club. "Ah, we are in luck, Pons," I said. "He is here."

I placed Pons so that he might obtain an excellent view of our fellow-diner in one of the mirrors which reflected the room beyond our table, and the keen grey eyes of my companion fixed upon the reflection in the glass, though his lean face was ostensibly turned toward me. The object of Pons' scrutiny was leisurely engaged in eating his meal, but he had observed our entrance and his expression had unquestionably quickened; yet he had returned to his meal with the assurance of a man who knows he will complete his dinner before you and be well on his way before you can take leave of your table. He was somewhat warmly clad this evening, but as always, he bore no evident clues about himself, and I was thus all the more interested in Pons' reaction.

"What do you make of him?" I asked presently.

"There is not much to be said," replied Pons, much to my satisfaction. "Though it is evident by his colour that he is an ex-colonial — Egypt, I should say, if the scarab ring he wears is any indication — that he has not long been back in England, that he is very probably not a member of the Diogenes Club but has a guest-card, that he is at present living outside London, since his visits here are periodic compared to yours, which are hardly regular, that he is a man of approximately fifty-five years of age, very clearly accustomed to administrative work — work, I submit, dealing in a large measure with native labor, that his interest in the Diogenes Club lies in something other than its cuisine, which is not exceptional."

"My dear fellow!" I protested. "I can follow most of your deductions with ease . . ."

"Dear me! how familiarity does breed contempt," murmured Pons.

"But how in the world do you arrive at the conclusion that his visits here have an ulterior motive?"

"You have not mentioned his interest in anything apart from yourself, Parker. I submit, therefore, that you are the object of his attentions."

"My dear Pons!"

"Because the gentleman has

been observing you with a most definite purpose. Consider — he comes in from the country at regular intervals; you do not recall his interest in anyone else.”

“You flatter me.”

“Ah, do not say so, Parker. I fancy his interest in you is dictated by my absence from London.”

“You, Pons!”

“I submit that our fellow-diner sought me some time ago, failed to find me — you will recall that Mrs. Johnson, too, spent these past weeks with her sister in Edinburgh, and then discovered your whereabouts either through the medical directory or by accident. He concluded that my return to London would be marked either by your absence from the Diogenes Club or by my appearance in your company. And now, if I am not mistaken, we shall have corroboration.”

OUR FELLOW-DINER had finished his dinner, and was now coming to his feet. But instead of leaving the dining-room, he turned purposefully and came over to our table, beside which he stood in a few moments, a short, compact figure, bowing slightly.

“I beg your pardon,” he said in a low, husky voice, “I believe I have the privilege of addressing Mr. Solar Pons, the private enquiry agent. I am Octavius Grayle, of Tottenham vil-

lage, near Northallerton in Yorkshire.”

“Pray be seated, Mr. Grayle,” said Pons. “I believe you know Dr. Parker.”

“By sight, yes. I fear I have been making a nuisance of myself by watching for your company. I could rouse no one at 73 Praed Street; so I concluded that sooner or later Dr. Parker’s movements would give me some indication of your whereabouts.”

“I have been out of London,” said Pons. “But you are not interested in my itinerary.”

“I have no doubt that you have already exercised those powers of yours which are so remarkable and correctly concluded that I am an ex-Colonial from Egypt, not too long — a year — back in England, and that I am not a member of the Club, but a guest on my brother’s card. It is about my brother that I would like to consult you.”

“By all means,” answered Pons with a mirthful gleam in his eyes. “Your brother is Septimus Grayle . . .”

“The Tottenham Werewolf,” finished our client, for manifestly such he had become. “I am afraid, Mr. Pons,” he continued dryly, “that we must concede so much — my brother at least is convinced that he is a werewolf, very probably because he has certain extremely distressing compulsions, the most

startling of which is a habit of loping about on all fours on moonlit nights and baying at the moon."

"Incredible!" I cried.

"But you apparently have some familiarity with the case, Mr. Pons," continued Grayle, as if oblivious to my exclamation. "You will then know that in the course of the past year a young man, William Gilton; a girl, Miss Miranda Choate; and our own uncle, Alexander Grayle, have been mysteriously slain, all discovered with their throats literally torn out. The last death, our uncle's, occurred only a month ago, and now my brother has been placed under what is called 'protective custody'. In short, he has been arrested, he has been all but charged and removed from the house. Mr. Pons, my brother may have the compulsion to believe that he is, and even in part to act like, a werewolf, but he is no murderer."

"What are your brother's circumstances, Mr. Grayle?"

"The three of us — my brother, my sister Regina, and I — live together. Each of us is independently wealthy, in a modest way, of course, and each of us lives rather independently of the other, though my sister and brother have naturally grown closer together during my long absence in Egypt. My brother, I should hasten to add, is aware

of his affliction, but he is not more than ordinarily depressed by it from time to time, and he does not permit his knowledge of it to cloud his small pleasures. He is somewhat younger than I am, and our sister is younger than he. It is she who manages the servants and runs our household. My brother's situation is such that the mere fact of his arrest would precipitate a local scandal of great proportions, since our family is perhaps the oldest in Tottenham — and perhaps also the wealthiest. My late uncle was the largest land-owner in the country, and his death has been widely chronicled, as you know. It is therefore implicit in the situation that the real murderer must be found. Detective - Sergeant Brinton is dogged and persistent, but he lacks any genuine acumen, and the county police are far more accustomed to dealing with traffic regulations infringements than with matters of this kind. Can I prevail upon you to join us at Grayle Old Place in Tottenham as soon as it is convenient for you to do so?"

"You may expect us in the morning, Mr. Grayle," said Pons.

Thereupon our client came at once to his feet, bowed with almost military precision, thanked Pons, and took formal leave of us.

PONS, HIS EYES twinkling,

turned to me. "There is an engaging fellow as I have laid eyes upon for some time."

"A man like that would be capable of anything," I said.

"Precisely. You have done me a good turn, Parker; I have been interested in the case ever since first I saw it in the papers. Indeed, I am carrying it with me."

So saying, he reached into his pocket and came forth with a neatly folded batch of clippings, through which he riffled without delay, selecting one finally, and drawing it forth.

"Ah, here we are. 'Murder of Prominent Landlord,'" he read. "'Alexander Grayle, sixty-seven, of Tottenham, near Northallerton, Yorkshire, was found dead on a country lane not far from his home . . .' And so on. 'His death is the third in a series. Two previous victims were discovered in similar circumstances . . .' A curious, if somewhat gruesome, business, this. And clearly, I should venture to guess, intended to point to Septimus Grayle."

"The torn throat, yes," I agreed. "It would suggest the werewolf concept. Doubtless all the villagers are fully aware of Grayle's aberration."

"Unquestionably. All the deaths have been nocturnal; all have taken place on moonlit nights, when Grayle is known to yield to his strange compul-

sion. I submit, Parker, that this is no mere coincidence, but rather evidence of a design, which, if the facts are as Octavius Grayle has presented them, has already had the desired effect upon the local police who have proceeded, however deferentially, against Septimus. I fear there is devil's work afoot, Parker. Something dark and devious that troubles our client more than he has confided."

He looked up speculatively. "Can you go, Parker? Or is your practise too demanding?"

"I have a *locum tenens*," I answered. "You know I would be delighted."

"And your wife?"

"Constance is visiting her mother in Kent. She would urge me to go."

"Capital!" exclaimed Pons. "Wifely concurrence in these little adventures is always advisable. I have not looked up the railway timetable, but I believe we can entrain in the morning and arrive in good time. Let us have breakfast together and set out after."

ACCORDINGLY, early the following morning we met at 7B Praed Street in the familiar quarters which we had shared for so many years prior to my marriage, and partook of a hearty breakfast prepared by Mrs. Johnson, who served us

with many assurances of her delight at seeing us together once again. Pons had already gone through the morning papers, and at the time of my arrival he sat in the midst of a host of newspapers scattered around his chair.

"There is nothing further on the Tottenham puzzle," he said when at last Mrs. Johnson had left us. "The local police sergeant has given out the customary statements — fortunately in nothing like the volubility of his American counterparts. This time, however, I have no doubt that an arrest is imminent. There are delicate hints that the culprit is to be found in a high place, which presumably has reference to people of the Grayles' position in a village like Tottenham. Yet there has been no further outbreak."

"Do you expect one, then?"

"There will certainly be a fourth victim — possibly even a fifth," he said enigmatically.

"You sound very positive."

"Ah, Parker — how it used to annoy you! But it is not so. The speculation takes its rise in a logical deduction. Septimus Grayle either is guilty or he is not. Octavius does not believe him to be guilty. Supposing that he is correct, then I venture to guess that a fourth victim is inevitably meant to follow — obviously, that is Septimus himself. If he is not correct, there

may well be another crime. And, remotely, yet one more beyond that. Contrary to the official position, there is very definitely a pattern in the crimes at Tottenham."

We set out directly after breakfast and were soon on the train en route Yorkshire. It was a fine summer morning, with an early fog lifting rapidly before the sun, and the landscape, green and rolling, beyond the cars. But Pons was unaware of it: he sat throughout the journey with his hawk-like face turned away from the window, his chin sunk upon his chest, his eyes half-closed in an attitude of cogitation into which I did not break.

On our arrival at Tottenham, we sought rooms at the Boar's Head, the only local inn of any size. There we paused only long enough to enable Pons to set down and dispatch to the local sergeant of police a note informing him that Pons would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Tottenham murders with him. Then we ventured forth in search of Grayle Old Place. We found our objective within a short time and without difficulty, for it was one of the two most imposing houses in the village, the other being the abode, until recently, of the third victim of the Tottenham murderer, Alexander Grayle. It was a house set well back into

its grounds, with a gate at the driveway, and a sweep of lawns reaching to the Victorian building in which our client lived. Beyond the house lay gently rolling fields and woods. Its setting at the edge of the village was so idyllic that the very thought of the crime which Pons had come to look into seemed alien.

The massive door was opened to us by a dignified butler, hard upon whose heels came our client himself. He walked down a wide hall, the walls of which bore portraits of Grayle ancestors, his hands extended in welcome.

"You are just in time for tea, Gentlemen." To the butler he added, "Crandon, rooms for our guests."

"No," said Pons at once. "We have put up at the Boar's Head. It will give us greater freedom of movement."

AN EXPRESSION of disappointment crossed our client's face, but he said nothing. He turned on his heel and led the way into the drawing-room, where we were introduced to the other members of the family — Miss Regina Grayle, a woman whose dark, melancholy eyes belied her youth, a woman who clearly existed on a precarious line between youth and middle-age, and whose austerity of dress, black with a high collar relieved only by a cameo, and

coiffure, her hair drawn tightly about her head, accentuated rather middle-age than youth; Randall Grayle, a brash young man, not long back from Canada, the son of yet another brother to our client's father; and Septimus Grayle, a tall, hawk-nosed man, lean almost to gauntness, who viewed us with frankly hostile eyes, in which brooded an unconcealed torment. Septimus wore his hair long; it was greying now, but his face was still young, save for the scars of what appeared to be a fencing accident along his right cheek near his ear.

It was not readily evident whether our client had informed the household that he had retained Pons. Miss Regina made an inquiry as to whether Pons was assisting Sergeant Brinton to which Pons made an oblique reply; he was accustomed, he said, to lend the police all assistance within his modest power. This reply seemed to satisfy her. Not so Septimus, however; he continued to glower at Pons above the specious conversation which took place before the subject of the crimes in Tottenham was introduced.

"This terrible, terrible sequence of events," said Miss Regina passionately, clenching her hand about a handsome, old-fashioned back-scratcher she carried, "is all the more shocking when one considers that the police are actually concerned

about our own Septimus, who would not harm a soul."

Septimus favored his sister with a wan smile.

"Our dear uncle was an almost saintly man," continued the lady, "and I could not imagine who would have wished him harm. And little Miranda Choate, while she has been known for sauciness, could hardly have inspired so heinous a crime. And Mr. Gilton, a young man of estimable character — indeed, it is not so many years since I went about in his company quite often — who could have desired his death? Oh, it is madness, Mr. Pons, madness."

At the mention of madness, Septimus Grayle underwent a ghastly alteration. His face greyed, became chalk-like, his lantern-jaw fell, and he drew his breath with a rushing sound through his quivering lips. But this transformation was soon again masked, though the unpleasant impression it had given us could not be concealed so easily. I observed Pons watching him surreptitiously, and, beyond him, young Randall Grayle, whose singular brawniness found no complements even in his cousin Octavius's manifest strength. The expression on Randall Grayle's features was puzzling; I could not determine whether he hid disgust or triumph, cunning or naivete.

"Forgive me, Septimus," said his sister quietly.

Our client looked over at Pons judiciously, as if to make certain that he had caught the interchange.

"Surely the police have not exhausted the avenues of inquiry," said Pons thoughtfully. "The press has set forth the lack of connection among the victims of the Tottenham murderer."

"There is none, Mr. Pons," said Octavius Grayle decisively.

"I submit that the choice of the victims may have a pattern."

"Homicidal mania reveals no pattern, Mr. Pons," said Miss Regina primly, reaching behind her to claw her back with the back-scratcher she was holding.

Pons inclined his head. Then he turned to Septimus Grayle. "Tell me, Mr. Grayle, did your late uncle leave a family?"

SEPTIMUS, who had hitherto not been directly addressed by Pons, was disagreeably startled. He gazed reproachfully at his brother, imploringly at his sister, and finally looked reluctantly at his inquisitor, who had not removed his eyes from him.

"No, no," he said hastily, with a marked uneasiness in his manner, "Uncle Alexander was not married. He was the one who wasn't, of the three brothers. Like us — none of us is married — except Randall; he's going to

be. I think?" He looked to Randall for confirmation; the young man nodded and smiled. "We are all who are left. All the Grayles. We were never a large family. We have none of us married." A fine dew of perspiration made its appearance on his high forehead. Quite suddenly his voice changed. "And you know why, don't you, Mr. Pons? You know it. Everybody knows it!" he almost shouted. Then, biting his lip until it bled, he added almost in a whisper, "Madness! Madness! Madness!"

Abruptly he sprang to his feet and ran from the room.

Miss Regina rose, shot a punishing glance at her remaining brother, excused herself, and followed Septimus Grayle from the room.

"It was not what I would call a successful interview," said Randall Grayle dryly. "In Canada we do things differently — and perhaps more effectively."

Octavius looked angrily at his cousin. "May I remind you, Randall, that a gentleman always maintains the proper attitude toward guests?" He turned to Pons. "Pray excuse my impetuous cousin, Mr. Pons."

Pons lifted himself from the depths of his chair. "I fear we have exhausted our welcome, Mr. Grayle."

"Not at all, let me assure you," protested our client.

Randall Grayle said nothing at all. He had lit a cigarette

and was watching curiously to see what Pons would do.

Pons began to walk from the room. "I am at your service at the Boar's Head, Mr. Grayle. Pray call on me there."

With this, we took our departure.

"What do you make of it, Pons?" I asked once we had got clear of the gate.

"A most interesting family, did you not think, Parker?"

"Oh, yes. But the murders?"

"Everything in good time, Parker. Do not be impatient. Let us just hurry along; unless I am greatly in error, Sergeant Brinton will be waiting for us."

SERGEANT BRINTON was indeed waiting for us at the Boar's Head. He was a young man, still, tall, big-boned, and sturdy in appearance. His manner was frank and co-operative, yet neither deferential nor condescending, though it was impossible for him to conceal entirely the impressiveness of this association with Solar Pons, whose reputation had long since spread the length and breadth of the British Isles.

"I was happy to have your note, Mr. Pons," he said without preamble. "I had learned from Mr. Octavius Grayle that he contemplated asking you to step into the case, rather than intercede with Scotland Yard. I am afraid, though, that there is little to be discovered."

"You are convinced it is Septimus Grayle?"

"I can conceive of no other solution. The crimes are very obviously the work of a homicidal maniac. All have taken place on moonlight nights, just such nights as those on which Septimus has his seizures. He imagines himself a dog, he bays at the moon . . ."

"Pray enlighten me," interrupted Pons. "For how long a time has Septimus Grayle been the victim of this strange compulsion?"

"For most of his life, I believe."

"It does not occur to you that this additional, shall we say, pastime, of his nocturnal repertoire — the tearing out of throats — is comparatively recent?"

"Obviously."

"You do not think it strange that this proclivity did not manifest itself before this?"

"Insanity, Mr. Pons, is unpredictable."

"Is it not, indeed? I should not have thought so would you, Parker?"

"Certain forms, of course," I agreed. "But the majority of cases follow a fairly well-defined pattern. It is perfectly possible to predict a course of action."

The sergeant gazed at me thoughtfully and, I thought, a trifle impatiently, as if he thought I did not know what

I was talking about. He forbore to say so, however.

"I submit that it is suggestive that this series of crimes took place within a relatively short time after the return of two of the Grayles from foreign parts," continued Pons.

Brinton gazed at him in candid astonishment. "You refer to Mr. Octavius and Mr. Randall." He did not wait for Pons' confirming nod. "But, of course, you do not mean to be serious. The suggestion is patently absurd — neither of them is a homicidal maniac."

"Ah, it is one of the characteristics of homicidal mania that it reveals no distinctive traits, such as those clearly associated with Septimus," said Pons. "But let us put aside this question for the moment. I would like to know something of the victims."

"I brought along photographs, Mr. Pons. If there is anything you would like to know, you have only to ask."

"Thank you, Sergeant. Let us just look at the photographs."

The sergeant opened a large manilla envelope and offered Pons a sheaf of pictures, the majority of which had been taken of the bodies at the scene of the crime. I bent over Pons' shoulder and looked, too, as he went rapidly through the prints, which had an unpleasantly harsh reality afforded by the glaring light which had

been thrown upon the brutally slain victims.

THEY WERE NOT inspiring to look upon. The unhappy victims of this fiendish attack were sprawled out beside rustic paths. Pictures taken at close range indicated that each had had his throat torn out, plainly as the amount of blood revealed while he still lived. The little girl was most pathetic, and I could hardly bear to look upon the horrible scene so mercilessly revealed by the photographer.

Pons, however, appeared to have no such qualms. "Ah," he murmured, "Stunned, then slain."

"Exactly, Mr. Pons. The marks on the neck emphatically suggest some animal. May I point out that Mr. Septimus Grayle wears his nails unusually long?"

"I observed it," replied Pons grimly.

"The tears are deep, severing the jugular in each case. Death took place in a matter of minutes; the loss of blood was very great. In no case was any sound heard, though the victims were found on bypaths away from the better-illuminated thoroughfares. Only mania could explain such insensate and brutal slayings, Mr. Pons."

Pons had not lifted his eyes from the photographs. "Repeated attempts to sever the jugu-

lar, not just one gash," he said. He looked up at last. "Was this man Gilton married?"

"No, Mr. Pons. He was betrothed."

"His age?"

"Thirty-seven."

"He is financially comfortable?"

"Quite. He leaves only a sister, who inherits." Brinton paused and added, "I believe she is to be married to young Mr. Randall Grayle."

Pons closed his eyes and sat for a moment in silence. "And Mr. Alexander Grayle?" he asked presently.

"He was single, and wealthy. The four Grayles are his only heirs; they will divide his estate. But I must in duty point out to you that each of the Grayles is independently wealthy."

Pons turned this over in his mind. He did not comment on the wealth of the Grayles. "Let us return for a moment to Mr. Gilton," he said. "Was he not approximately of the same age as the youngest of the three Grayles?"

"I believe so, yes. He kept company with Miss Regina for some time. He was at that time rather indigent, but soon came into money through a series of fortunate investments."

"He was not favored by Miss Regina Grayle?"

The sergeant shrugged. "I would not say precisely that,

Mr. Pons. It was only that they simply drifted apart; perhaps they had been keeping company too long. They remained close friends, though I believe the brothers did not particularly fancy him." He cleared his throat uncertainly. "But I assure you, Mr. Pons, it is Septimus Grayle who holds the key to the riddle."

"And the child," continued Pons imperturbably.

"Poor Miranda Choate. She had been at a children's party and was returning home. She had been escorted for most of the way to her door by a party of young people with an older person who was their chaperone. There was a short distance just before her gate — by a coincidence, in the vicinity of the lane in which Gilton's body had been found; they had not walked that far, but stood at the other end until she had time to reach the gate. She was heard to call out a last goodnight. Evidence shows that she was struck down then, though her body was not found there, but down on a pasture path which led her away to one side of her home."

"An only child?"

"No, sir. One of a large family. She was a pert little thing."

The sergeant stood patiently waiting on Pons' next question. He seemed somewhat puzzled by the tenor and direction of

Pons' inquiry, and quite clearly could not conceive what end Pons' pursued. He was no more mystified than I.

But Pons had no further inquiries. He gathered the photographs together and handed them to Brinton. "I am indebted to you, Sergeant. If I should need to send for you in some haste, I daresay you could be reached at the station?"

"Certainly, Mr. Pons, at any time. My home is in the same building."

"Capital, capital"

AFTER Sergeant Brinton had gone, Pons sat musing for some little time. I waited patiently on his cogitation, and presently found his eyes dwelling on me in sardonic amusement.

"Is it not remarkable, Parker, how readily the human mind is blinded by the obvious?" he asked.

"I suppose it is the obverse of being too eager to shunt aside the obvious for the obscure."

"Well spoken, Parker," rejoined Pons, smiling. "But is there not something about this curious sequence of events which gives you the pause?"

"Nothing but the obvious," I replied firmly. "Here is the work of someone who is definitely unstable."

"Indeed," said Pons with heavy irony. "I submit that

there is far more here than meets the eye. It does not seem to you that there is a pattern in these events?"

"None."

"Mr. Gilton was indigent; he became wealthy. His sister, who is to inherit his wealth, is engaged to marry Mr. Randall Grayle. The little Choate girl lived in the vicinity of the scene of Gilton's death. Alexander Grayle left no other heirs but the Grayles, who are wealthy and are now destined to become more so. Either these events are totally without connection, or they are the setting of a stage, and the return of Mr. Randall Grayle or our client served as the catalytic agent to precipitate them."

I could not help smiling. "I am afraid there is such a thing as looking too far afield for the solution of any puzzle," I said.

"I am delighted to hear you say so, Parker," said Pons, his eyes twinkling mischievously. "I am habitually distrustful of the obvious."

"But one need not be insistent on ignoring it. It is not beyond Septimus Grayle's malady to have led him to murder. There is an old adage that where there is smoke, there must be some fire."

"Ah, yes, but the fire may be of incendiary origin," retorted Pons. He looked at his watch and added, "I fancy we had better have a little supper, for, un-

less I am greatly mistaken, we shall need to return to Grayle Old Place before the night is far along."

"Why do you say so?"

"Is there not a moon tonight? I believe it is near the full. With both the moon and ourselves in Tottenham, the werewolf could scarcely resist the challenge. Moreover, it is past time for the final act of this gruesome little drama."

With this enigmatic statement, Pons led the way to the dining-room and we partook of a spare meal of beef and cabbage, Pons discoursing meanwhile on the lore of lycanthropy, with its roots in ancient beliefs of mankind, recalling many of the highly successful fictions in the genre as a parallel to references involving obscure and authenticated cases of diabolic cannibalistic acts associated with certain obscure crimes which bore at least a superficial resemblance to lycanthropic practises.

Our supper hour over, we retired to our quarters, where for some time Pons sat deep in thought, occasionally turning to the newspaper accounts of the Tottenham murders, which he had brought along from London. From time to time he glanced at the clock, always with increasing restlessness.

"You are expecting someone?" I ventured at last.

"Now that darkness has fallen and the moon has risen, yes.

I hope he will not disappoint me, or we may be too late to prevent another crime."

"Surely not!" I cried. "Who is it, then?"

"Our client. Who else? I submit that his next move must be to introduce us to Septimus by night."

HE HAD NO SOONER spoken than there was a discreet, yet urgent tap on the door. Pons sprang at once to open it, disclosing Octavius Grayle.

"Mr. Pons, can you come?" he asked in a hushed voice.

"We are at your service, Mr. Grayle. I take it your brother has had a seizure?"

Our client nodded. "He has just left the house. I know the paths he will take. For the time being he will confine himself to the grounds and to the woods and byways outside the village; he seldom ventures the village itself until past midnight — and he does not always remain away from the house for more than an hour, so that he seldom invades Tottenham."

Octavius Grayle led the way rapidly to Grayle Old Place, where he entered the grounds not by the central gate, but by means of a small garden gate which opened through a hedge out of sight of the principal entrance. At once the perfumes of flowers and herbs invaded our nostrils, rising with cloying insistence in the humid evening.

The moon shone high overhead, now near the full, a great luminous satellite laving all the earth in its unterrestrial radiance. Beyond the garden, the house loomed spectrally, with but little light showing in its windows, save where the moon reflected from the panes.

Our client made his way by a devious route around the house and plunged into the shadowed paths on the far side. It was patent presently that his goal was a small eminence not far ahead and yet a considerable distance from the house. Octavius Grayle moved with an agility which was remarkable in one of his years, for soon we were mounting the slope through a glade toward an open place beyond.

At that instant there burst upon our ears a weird and horrible sound—the simulated howling of a wolf or baying of a dog in human voice. Before me, our client, who had reached the top of the knoll, turned and caught hold of Pons' arm as my companion came up.

"You hear?" he whispered harshly. "Now watch — over there."

Below, the moonlit landscape rolled gently away in grassy valleys and dark woods. Our client pointed to a valley not far distant, plainly part of the Grayle estate. Even as he spoke, a shadowy figure loped on all fours across the moonlit glade,

out of one dark wood into another, and through it to emerge on the far side, once again in the moonlight, where it rose half way and once again gave voice to that horribly suggestive ululation which so closely resembled the howling of some wild beast.

"He began it as a child," whispered Octavius Grayle. "Will he ever cease, I wonder?"

"That is in Parker's department," murmured Pons.

"If one finds the cause," I said. "There is a reason hidden deep in his subconscious for compulsions such as this."

"I hope you are right, Doctor," said our client fervently. "I do not relish living out my life to this, every moonlit night. Now mark him; he has begun to move again; he will follow the line of that valley, plunge into the wood over there, and when he emerges from it he will begin an arc which will bring him either through the copse at the foot of this knoll, or on this other slope and across part of the knoll itself. We shall watch both courses; if you, Mr. Pons, will watch the slope itself, with Dr. Parker, I will descend to the copse."

"And by what signal shall we communicate?" asked Pons.

"If his baying does not suffice, let us say the crying of a screech owl to signify that he has passed."

"Agreed," murmured Pons.

Thereupon Octavius Grayle vanished into the shadows on the far side of the slope, leaving Pons and myself in possession of the knoll. But Pons had no intention of remaining; he paused only long enough to instruct me.

"Pray hold the fort, Parker," he whispered. "I am not interested in that afflicted man. Guard yourself; we have been followed."

Then he was gone on the path taken by our client.

I LOOKED UNEASILY around, but was reassured by the expanse of unbroken moonlight holding to the top of the knoll. No one could creep upon me unseen without the protection of shadows, which did not begin for some distance down the slope on all sides. I gazed once more along the route defined by our client as that customarily taken by his unfortunate brother; but Septimus Grayle was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps he had varied his route; perhaps he lingered on the edge of a wood out of range of my vision.

Suddenly his voice sounded once more, raised in that eerie crying. Small wonder that Tottenham looked upon him with fear and suspicion! Even as I thought so, even while the echoes of that fearful cry still resounded in the valleys, I heard and recognized another voice.

"Parker! Parker! Here — at once."

It was Pons. Casting discretion to the winds, I sped down the slope in the direction of his voice as fast as I could run through that unfamiliar country. Down out of the moonlight into the dense trees of the slope; through one grove and past another patch of moonlight, finding a dim, winding path; and, at the foot of the slope, into another, even denser, copse. In my headlong rush, I almost fell over Pons.

He was crouched on the ground in deep shadow. In a moment I saw that he held our client in his arms. Octavius Grayle lay ominously still.

"For God's sake!" I cried. "What has happened?"

"My flashlight is in the grass beside me, just out of my reach," said Pons. "It fell from my hand. His throat has been cut; I cannot determine how badly, but his pulse is still strong."

It was the work of but a few moments to recover Pons' flashlight, to turn it upon our client, and to ascertain that, though he was unconscious from the blow which had struck him down and bleeding profusely from his throat, his jugular vein had not been severed, no important artery had sustained any injury, and, unless the blow were more serious than it appeared, he would recover.

"What happened?" I asked again.

An exclamation of disgust escaped Pons. "I was only just too late," he said bitterly.

"I should have said you were just in time," I answered. "Was it an animal?"

"The Tottenham werewolf," murmured Pons. "It is unforgiveable; I anticipated this and was not fast enough to prevent it. Our pursurer was closer than I thought."

"The attack perhaps you did not prevent; his death you certainly did prevent. Come, let us get him to the house. I can staunch this wound here."

"We shall want Sergeant Brinton," said Pons. "There is still time for us to catch a late train back to London."

"Poor Septimus," I murmured.

"Oh, it was not Septimus," said Pons lightly. "But no less obvious, for all that."

He did not explain this cryptic announcement.

THE GRAYLE FAMILY, with Pons and myself, were gathered about our client's bedside, when Detective - Sergeant Brinton came into the room from an examination of the house and grounds. He carried the blood-stained back-scratcher which had belonged to Miss Regina Grayle.

"Just as you thought, Mr. Pons — it was in Septimus's quarters," he said.

"Oh, no, not Septimus!" cried Miss Regina in anguish.

Randall Grayle looked at Pons with distrust plain on his handsome features.

Octavius Grayle opened his eyes and regarded the tableau before him. He met Pons' steady gaze.

"You know now, Mr. Pons?" he whispered.

"Indeed, sir. I knew from the time of our initial visit here."

The sergeant stepped reluctantly toward Septimus.

"But, no, Sergeant," interposed Pons. "Miss Regina is right. It is not Septimus. The charge must be placed against Miss Regina herself."

For a moment there was an arresting silence.

Then Miss Regina Grayle's placidity dropped from her; her prim face underwent an awesome transformation, glowing with the agility and speed of a cat, she leaped forward, snatched the back-scratcher from the sergeant's hands, and struck at Pons, who caught her arm and twisted it unceremoniously behind her back. In this manner he held her.

"Your prisoner, Sergeant."

"Mr. Pons, I am afraid . . ." began the sergeant uncertainly, looking on with dismay.

"I think, if you will examine into the status of the family fortunes, you will find ample evidence, Sergeant," said Pons crisply. "Mr. Gilton should have

repaid the money she lent him, unsecured though it was; it would have saved his life; it would have saved the life of the little girl who witnessed something which might have trapped Miss Regina; it would have saved the life of Alexander Grayle, whose bequest was necessary to conceal the loss of the money in her care she took from Septimus. Except for the bequest from Alexander, Miss Regina and Septimus are both without more than the most vitally necessary funds. If Octavius had not begun to suspect something amiss, her diabolic plan might well have carried through — he would have been the fourth victim, and Septimus, as the planned and perfect suspect, the fifth."

"THE PROBLEM turned on an elementary factor," said Pons out of the darkness of our compartment, as the late train sped toward London and the welcome security of our respective quarters. "There was no obvious motive, as the puzzle was presented to us, and there were too many suggestions of homicidal mania, which would rule out motive. However, of the three victims, two were possessed of means, the younger man having come by wealth somewhat recently, the older wealthy by long standing. Now, Parker, I submit that when a man of wealth is slain,

the motive which at once presents itself is gain. The primary consideration at Tottenham which obscured every other was the curious behavior of Septimus Grayle; yet to the observer untroubled by the affliction of the so-called Tottenham werewolf, the motive for gain immediately appeared."

"Ah, but it was generally believed that the Grayles were themselves wealthy," I put in.

"It is elementary that a premise is either true or not true. No one had any question but that Miss Regina Grayle was independently wealthy, and that she had therefore no need of a bequest such as her uncle left. You know my methods, Parker; I could not accept the assumption, and proceeded on the precise opposite. Though everyone stated without equivocation that the Grayles were wealthy, there was no evidence to support the premise, apart from the specious fact of their ownership of Grayle Old Place. On the hypothetical assumption that the generally accepted belief was unfounded, I could conceive of the reasonable motive and its instant application to one of the four who stood to gain by Alexander Grayle's death.

"Proceeding in this fashion, then, it followed that there was a reason for each crime. If the motive for Alexander

Grayle's death were gain, then the young man and the girl might have been slain solely to confuse any investigation with the suggestion of homicidal mania. Yet a secondary motive was not inadmissible, and I had to look for it. It was perfectly plain at our meeting in the Diogenes Club that Octavius Grayle had certain apprehensions he did not reveal. Clearly, too, he was both observant and intelligent, and it was patent from the beginning even as he had hinted that the murderer was deliberately planning for the arrest and imprisonment of Septimus Grayle as the climax to the events which had taken place at Tottenham. This implied a secondary motive.

"I had to ask myself who but some member of his own family could possibly have motive for desiring Septimus to be found guilty. I confess that for a short time I was thrown off the track by the fact that both Octavius and Randall had but recently returned to England; there was thus presumptive evidence that their return was connected with the events at Tottenham, and the primary assumption, of course, was that one or the other of them was guilty. And yet I could not deny that anyone encountering the problem could be expected to reason in this manner. If

neither were guilty, only Miss Regina remained. Therefore, either one of the prodigals, was guilty, or the return of one or both set in motion a chain of events which culminated in the wanton crimes at Tottenham.

"Our brief visit at Grayle Old Place this afternoon confirmed my suspicion of Miss Regina. She spoke of the first victim, you will remember, with passing regret and carefully concealed animosity, which was surely nothing more than the hatred of a woman scorned — she had kept company with him, but he was now betrothed to someone else. She spoke of Miranda Choate as naughty and saucy, as if to salve her conscience. She spoke of her murdered uncle with something akin to remorse, which was as genuine as her conviction of the necessity of his death. Finally, she herself leveled at her brother Septimus by suggestion as the only possible explanation for the crimes the charge of homicidal mania.

"I had my murderer; I had then to find the motive. Sergeant Brinton supplied it. He said of Gilton, if you recall, that at the time he was keeping company with Miss Regina, he 'rather indigent, but soon came into money with a series of fortunate investments.' Now, I submit, Parker, that in order for young Gilton to have made investments he must have re-

ceived money from some source. What source more obvious than Miss Regina, who in her infatuation showered him with all the money he demanded, using not only her own funds but also those of her brother, Septimus, which were in her care? Indeed, one feels bound to ask whether Gilton's fortunate investments were an actuality or whether they were simply his canny accumulation of the money he had obtained from that infatuated woman.

"Surely, then, the obvious first victim of her counterfeiting homicidal mania might as well be the young man who had spurned as well as robbed her. The selection of the child was purely happenstance; a little girl had seen her in the vicinity at the time Gilton had been slain. Miss Regina accordingly feared her, and she became the second victim. The stage was then set for Alexander Grayle's death, and he, too, died as the others — stunned by a blow from the leaded handle of her back-scratcher, and calmly dispatched while unconscious by what must certainly be regarded as one of the most unusual lethal weapons in a long roster of adventures.

"Having proceeded thus far, it was only logical to assume that if Octavius had not already arrived at the same con-

clusion, he must soon do so. It followed, therefore, that his death must occur with as little delay as possible, in order that Miss Regina's purpose might be accomplished. I had only to wait upon events. Our entrance on the scene would surely precipitate her violence, even as Octavius's arrival in

England and his subsequent inquiry into the state of Septimus's finances set in motion the events which were the final acts in the concealed tragedy which was Miss Regina's life.

"All in all, an interesting if gruesome diversion. I am indebted to you, Parker."

The Reckoning

When the first ballot came in, rating *The Blood-Flower* as "outstanding", we wondered if Jules de Grandin was due for another landslide. Well, the second ballot showed that the vote would not be unanimous, for *The Inn of Terror* went into first place then. And, except for a brief spell when de Grandin recaptured his lead, the Leroux story maintained its position; but no other story even momentarily threatened Seabury Quinn's beloved occult detective. We know that de Grandin would bow gracefully and without rancor at defeat from a fellow-countryman.

Here is how you rated the stories in the Winter issue: (1) *The Inn of Terror*, by Gaston Leroux; (2) *The Blood-Flower*, by Seabury Quinn; (3) *A Matter Of Breeding*, by Ralph Hayes; (4) *The Door Of Doom*, by Hugh B. Cave; (5) *The Other*, by Robert A. W. Lowndes; (6) *Esmeralda*, by Rama Wells; (7) *The Trial For Murder* by Chas. Dickens & Chas. Collins.

The Secret Of Lost Valley

by Robert E. Howard

AS A WOLF spies upon its hunters, John Reynolds watched his pursuers. He lay close in a thicket on the slope, an inferno of hate seething in his heart. He had ridden hard; up the slope behind him, where the dim path wound up out of Lost

Valley, his crank-eyed mustang stood, head drooping, trembling, after the long run. Below him, not more than eighty yards away, stood his enemies, fresh come from the slaughter of his kinsmen.

In the clearing fronting Ghost

There in the depths of Ghost Cave, he heard the dragging footsteps of the man he had just killed . . .

Cave they had dismounted and were arguing among themselves. John Reynolds knew them all with an old, bitter hate. The black shadow of feud lay between them and himself.

The feuds of early Texas have been neglected by chroniclers who have sung the feuds of the Kentucky mountains, though the men who first settled the Southwest were of the same breed as those mountaineers. But there was a difference; in the mountain country feuds dragged on for generations; on the Texas frontier they were short, fierce, and appallingly bloody.

The Reynolds-McCrill feud was long, as Texas feuds went: fifteen years had passed since old Esau Reynolds stabbed young Braxton McCrill to death with his bowie knife in the saloon at Antelope Wells, in a quarrel over range rights. For fifteen years the Reynoldses and their kin — the Brills, Allisons, and Donnellys — had been at open war with the McCrills and their kin — the Killihers, the Fletchers, and the Ords. There had been ambushes in the hills, murders on the open range, and gun-fights on the streets of the little cowtowns. Each clan had rustled the other's cattle wholesale. Gunmen and outlaws called in by both sides to participate for pay, had spread a reign of terror and lawlessness throughout

the vicinity. Settlers shunned the war-torn range; the feud became a red obstacle in the way of progress and development, a savage retrogression which was demoralizing the whole countryside.

Little John Reynolds cared. He had grown up in the atmosphere of the feud, and it had become a burning obsession with him. The war had taken fearful toll on both clans, but the Reynolds clan had suffered most. John was the last of the fighting Reynoldses, for Esau, the grim old patriarch who ruled the clan, would never again walk or sit in a saddle, with his legs paralyzed by McCrill bullets. John had seen his brothers shot down from ambush or killed in pitched battles.

Now the last stroke had nearly wiped out the waning clan. John Reynolds cursed as he thought of the trap into which they had walked in the saloon at Antelope Wells; the hidden foes had opened their murderous fire without warning. There had fallen his cousin, Bill Donnelly; his sister's son, young Jonathon Brill; his brother-in-law, Job Allison; and Steve Kerney, the hired gunman. How he himself had shot his way through and gained the hitching rack, untouched by that blasting hail of lead, John Reynolds hardly knew. They had pressed him so closely he had not had

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NEW YORK,
October 4, 1938

Mr. Robert E. Howard,
Box 115,
Cross Plains, Tex.

Dear Mr. Howard:

I am now faced by one of the most odious tasks I have ever had in my experience as an editor. Mr. Clayton the other day instructed me to discontinue *STARTLING TITLES*, and as a result I have to return your story, "The Valley of the Lost," even marked up as it is with the editorial pencillings. I started to rub out the pencillings but that did not seem to improve the looks of the manuscript much, so I left off.

I need not say that I am very sorry about this turn of events — not only for my own sake and the sake of the magazine, of which I had grown very fond, but because of the undoubted embarrassment it must put you to to find a story you have already "sold," and for which you may already have spent the money that was to come, being returned to you in the mail.

Perhaps you and I will again do business in some other editor-author combination. I hope so. The thing has often happened to me before.

Sincerely yours,

Harry Bates, Editor
ASTOUNDING STORIES

ED:HEB
Enc.

time to mount his long-limbed rangy bay, but had been forced to take the first horse he came to — the crank-eyed, speedy, but short-winded mustang of the dead Jonathon Brill.

He had distanced his pursuers for awhile; had gained the uninhabited hills, and swung

back into mysterious Lost Valley, with its silent thickets and crumbling stone columns, where he intended to double back over the hills and gain the country of the Reynolds. But the mustang had failed him. He had tied it up the slope, out of sight of the valley floor, and crept

His Valley Of The Gods

By Robert A. Howard

He was a ghost (and an old friend) of the dead.

By a tall apex upon its hunters, John Reynolds watched his pursuers. He lay close in a thicket on the slope, ~~and~~ in the inferno of hate seething in his heart. He had ridden hard; up the slope behind him, where the dim path wound up out of Lost Valley, his crank-eyed mustang stood, head drooping, trembling, after the long run. Below him, not more than eighty yards away, stood his enemies, iron come from the slaughter of his kinsmen.

In the clearing, fronting most have they had dismounted and were arguing among themselves. John Reynolds knew them all with an old, bitter hate. The black shadow of feud lay between them and himself.

The feuds of early Texas have been neglected by chroniclers who have sung the feuds of the Kentucky mountains, yet the men who first settled the Southwest were of the same breed as those mountaineers. But there was a difference; in the mountain country feuds dragged on for generations; on the Texas frontier they were short, fierce and apallingly bloody.

The Reynolds-McCrill feud was long, as Texas feuds went; fifteen years had passed since old Asa Reynolds stabbed young Araxton McCrill to death with his own knife in the saloon at Antelope Wells, in a quarrel over range rights. For fifteen years the Reynolds and their kin, the Grills, Allisons and Wonnelys, had been at open war with the McCrills and their kin, the Millifers, the Zwickers and the Urds. There had been ambushes in the hills, murders on the open range and gunfights on the streets of the little cowtowns. Each clan had rustled the other's cattle whole-sale. Women and outlaws called in by both sides to participate for pay, had spread a reign of terror and lawlessness throughout the vicinity. Settlers shunned the war-torn range; the feud was a red obstacle in the way of progress and development, a savage

retrogression which was demoralizing the whole country-side.

Little John Reynolds cared. He had grown up in the atmosphere of the feud, and it had become a burning obsession with him. The war had taken its toll on both clans, but the Reynolds had suffered most. He was the last of

back — to see his enemies ride into the valley. There were five of them: old Jonas McCrill, with the perpetual snarl twisting his wolfish lips; Saul Fletcher, with his black beard and the limping, dragging gait that a fall in his youth from a wild mustang had left him; Bill Ord

and Peter Ord, brothers; and the outlaw Jack Solomon.

JONAS MCCRILL'S voice came up to the silent watcher. "And I tell yuh he's a-hidin' somewhere in this valley. He was a-ridin' that mustang and it didn't never have no guts. I'm

bettin' it give plumb out on him time he got this far."

"Well," came the voice of Saul Fletcher, "what're we a-standin' 'round pow-wowin' for? Why don't we start huntin' him?"

"Not so fast," growled old Jonas. "Remember it's John Reynolds we're a-chasin'. We got plenty time."

John Reynolds' fingers hardened on the stock of his single-action .45. There were two cartridges unfired in the cylinder. He pushed the muzzle through the stems of the thicket in front of him, his thumb drawing back the wicked fanged hammer. His gray eyes narrowed and became opaque as ice as he sighted down the long blue barrel. An instant he weighed his hatred, and chose Saul Fletcher. All the hate in his soul centered for an instant on that brutal, black-bearded face, and the limping tread he had heard that night he lay wounded in a besieged corral, with his brother's riddled corpse beside him, and fought off Saul and his brothers.

John Reynolds' finger crooked and the crash of the shot broke the echoes in the sleeping hills. Saul Fletcher swayed, flinging his black beard drunkenly upward, and crashed face-down and headlong. The others, with the quickness of men accustomed to frontier warfare, dropped behind rocks, and their

answering shots roared back as they combed the slope blindly. The bullets tore through the thickets, whistling over the unseen killer's head. High up on the slope the mustang, out of sight of the men in the valley but frightened by the noise, screamed shrilly, and, rearing, snapped the reins that held him and fled away up the hill path. The drum of his hoofs on the stones dwindled in the distance.

Silence reigned for an instant, then came Jonas McGrill's wrathful voice: "I told yuh he was a-ridin' here! Come outa there; he's got clean away."

The old fighter's rangy frame rose up from behind the rock where he had taken refuge. Reynolds, grinning fiercely, took steady aim; then some instinct of self-preservation held his hand. The others came out into the open.

"What are we a-waitin' on?" yelled young Bill Ord, tears of rage in his eyes. "Here that coyote's done shot Saul and's ridin' hell-for-leather away from here, and we're a-standin' 'round jawin'. I'm a-goin' to . . ." he started for his horse.

"Yuh're a-goin' to listen to mel" roared old Jonas. "I warned yuh-all to go slow, but yuh would come lickety-split along like a bunch of blind buzzards, and now Saul's layin' there dead. If we ain't careful, John Reynolds'll kill all of us. Didn't I tell

yuh-all he was here? Likely stopped to rest his horse. He can't go far. This here's a long hunt, like I told yuh at first. Let him git a good start. Long as he's ahead of us, we got to watch for ambushes. He'll try to git back onto the Reynolds' range. Well, we're a-goin' after him slow and easy and keep him hazed back all the time. We'll be a-ridin' the inside of a big half-circle and he can't git by us — not on that short-winded mustang. We'll just fol-ler him and gather him in when his horse can't do no more. And I purty well know where he'll come to bay at — Blind Horse Canyon."

"We'll have to starve him out, then," growled Jack Solomon.

"No, we won't," grinned old Jonas. "Bill, you high-tail it back to Antelope and git five or six sticks of dynamite. Then you git a fresh horse and follow our trail. If we catch him before he gits to the canyon, all right. If he beats us there and holes up, we'll wait for yuh, and then blast him out."

"What about Saul?" growled Peter Ord.

"He's dead," grunted Jonas. "Nothin' we can do for him now. No time to take him back." He glanced up at the sky, where already black dots wheeled against the blue. His gaze drifted to the walled-up mouth of the cavern in the steep cliff which rose at right angles to

the slope up which the path wandered.

"We'll break open that cave

and put him in it," he said. "We'll pile up the rocks again and the wolves and buzzards can't git to him. May be several days before we git back."

"That cave's ha'nted," muttered Bill Ord, uneasily. "The Injuns always said if yuh put a dead man in there, he'd come walkin' out at midnight."

"Shet up and help pick up pore Saul," snapped Jonas. "Here's your own kin a-layin' dead, and his murderer a-ridin' further away every second, and you talk about ha'nts."

As they lifted the corpse, Jonas drew the long-barreled six-shooter from the holster and shoved the weapon into his own waistband.

"Pore Saul," he grunted. "He's shore dead. Shot plumb through the heart. Dead before he hit the ground, I reckon. Well, we'll make that damned Reynolds pay for it."

THEY CARRIED the dead man to the cave, and, laying him down, attacked the rocks which blocked the entrance. These were soon torn aside, and Reynolds saw the men carry the body inside. They emerged almost immediately, minus their burden, and mounted their horses. Young Bill Ord swung away down the valley and vanished among the trees;

the rest cantered along the winding trail that led up into the hills. They passed within a hundred feet of his refuge and John Reynolds hugged the earth, fearing discovery. But they did not glance in his direction. He heard the dwindling of their hoofs over the rocky path; then silence settled again over the ancient valley.

John Reynolds rose cautiously, looked about him as a hunted wolf looks, then made his way quickly down the slope. He had a very definite purpose in mind. A single unfired cartridge was all his ammunition; but about the dead body of Saul Fletcher was a belt well filled with .45 caliber cartridges.

As he attacked the rocks heaped in the cave's mouth, there hovered in his mind the curious dim speculations which the cave and the valley itself always roused in him. Why had the Indians named it the Valley of the Lost — which white men shortened to Lost Valley? Why had the red men shunned it? Once in the memory of white men, a band of Kiowas, fleeing the vengeance of Bigfoot Wallace and his rangers, had taken up their abode there and had fallen on evil times. The survivors of the tribe had fled, telling wild tales in which murder, fratricide, insanity, vampirism, slaughter, and cannibalism had played grim parts. Then six white men, brothers—Stark,

by name — had settled in Lost Valley. They had re-opened the cave which the Kiowas had blocked up. Horror had fallen on them and in one night five died by one another's hands. The survivor had walled up the cave mouth again and departed, where none knew. Word had drifted through the settlements of a man named Stark who had come among the remnants of those Kiowas who had once lived in Lost Valley, and, after a long talk with them, had cut his own throat with his bowie knife.

What was the mystery of Lost Valley, if not a web of lies and legends? What the meaning of those crumbling stones, which, scattered all over the valley, half hidden in the climbing growth, bore a curious symmetry, especially in the moonlight, so that some people believed when the Indians swore they were the half destroyed columns of a prehistoric city which once stood in Lost Valley? Before it crumbled into a heap of gray dust, Reynolds himself had seen a skull unearthed at the base of a cliff by a wandering prospector. It seemed neither Caucasian nor Indian — a curious, peaked skull, which but for the formation of the jaw bones might have been that of some unknown antediluvian animal.

Such thoughts flitted vaguely and momentarily through John

Reynolds' mind as he dislodged the boulders, which the Mc-Crills had put back loosely — just firmly enough to keep a wolf or buzzard from squeezing through. In the main his thoughts were engrossed with the cartridges in dead Saul Fletcher's belt. A fighting chance! A lease on life! He would fight his way out of the hills yet; would bring in more gunmen and cut-throats for striking back. He would flood the whole range with blood, and bring the countryside to ruin, if by those means he might be avenged. For years he had been the moving factor in the feud. When even old Esau had weakened and wished for peace, John Reynolds had kept the flame of hate blazing. The feud had become his one driving motive, his one interest in life and reason for existence. The last boulders fell aside.

JOHN REYNOLDS stepped into the semi-gloom of the cavern. It was not large, but the shadows seemed to cluster there in almost tangible substance. Slowly his eyes accustomed themselves, and an involuntary exclamation broke from his lips — the cave was empty! He swore in bewilderment. He had seen men carry Saul Fletcher's corpse into the cave and come out again, empty handed. Yet no corpse lay on the dusty cavern floor. He went to the back of the cave, glanced

at the straight, even wall, bent and examined the smooth rock floor. His keen eyes, straining in the gloom, made out a dull smear of blood on the stone. It ended abruptly at the back wall, and there was no stain on the wall.

Reynolds leaned closer, supporting himself by a hand propped against the stone wall. And suddenly, shockingly, the sensation of solidity and stability vanished. The wall gave way beneath his propping hand; a section swung inward, precipitating him headlong through a black gaping opening. His cat-like quickness could not save him. It was as if the yawning shadows reached tenuous and invisible hands to jerk him headlong into the darkness.

He did not fall far. His out-flung hands struck what seemed to be steps carved in the stone, and on them he scrambled and floundered for an instant. Then he righted himself and turned back to the opening through which he had fallen. But the secret door had closed, and only a smooth stone wall met his groping fingers. He fought down a rising panic. How the Mc-Crills had come to know of this secret chamber he could not say, but quite evidently they had placed Saul Fletcher's body in it. And there, trapped like a rat, they would find John Reynolds when they returned. Then

a grim smile curled Reynolds' thin lips. When they opened the secret door, he would be hidden in the darkness, while they would be etched against the dim light of the outer cave. Where could he find a more perfect ambush? But first he must find the body and secure the cartridges.

He turned to grope his way down the steps and his first stride brought him to a level floor. It was a sort of narrow tunnel, he decided, for though he could not touch the roof, a stride to the right or the left and his outstretched hand encountered a wall, seemingly too even and symmetrical to have been the work of nature. He went slowly, groping in the darkness, keeping in touch with the walls and momentarily expecting to stumble on Saul Fletcher's body. And as he did not, a dim horror began to grow in his soul. The McCrills had not been in the cavern long enough to carry the body so far back into the darkness. A feeling was rising in John Reynolds that the McCrills had not entered the tunnel at all — that they were not aware of its existence. Then where in the name of sanity was Saul Fletcher's corpse?

He stopped short, jerking out his six-shooter. Something was coming up the dark tunnel — something that walked upright and lumbering.

JOHN REYNOLDS knew it was a man, wearing high-heeled riding boots; no other footwear makes the same stilted sound. He caught the jingle of the spurs. And a dark tide of nameless horror moved sluggishly in John Reynolds' mind as he heard that halting tread approach, and remembered the night when he had lain at bay in the old corral, with his younger brother dying beside him, and heard a limping, dragging footstep endlessly circle his refuge, out in the night where Saul Fletcher led his wolves and sought for a way to come upon his back.

Had the man only been wounded? These steps sounded stiff and blundering, such as a wounded man might make. No — John Reynolds had seen too many men die; he knew that his bullet had gone straight through Saul Fletcher's heart, possibly tearing the heart clear out, certainly killing him instantly. Besides, he had heard old Jonas McCrill declare the man was dead. No — Saul Fletcher lay lifeless somewhere in this black cavern. It was some other lame man who was coming up that silent tunnel.

Now the tread ceased. The man was fronting him, separated only by a few feet of utter blackness. What was there in that to quicken the iron pulse of John Reynolds, who had unflinchingly faced death times without number? — what to

make his flesh crawl and his tongue freeze to his palate? — to awake sleeping instincts of fear as a man senses the presence of an unseen serpent, and make him feel that somehow the other was aware of his presence with eyes that pierced the darkness?

In the silence John Reynolds heard the staccato pounding of his own heart. And with shocking suddenness the man lunged. Reynolds' straining ears caught the first movement of that lunge and he fired pointblank. And he screamed — a terrible animal-like scream. Heavy arms locked upon him and unseen teeth worried at his flesh; but in the frothing frenzy of his fear, his own strength was superhuman. For in the flash of the shot he had seen a bearded face with slack hanging mouth and staring dead eyes. *Saul Fletcher!* The dead, come back from hell!

As in a nightmare, Reynolds entered a fiendish battle in the dark, where the dead sought to drag down the living. He felt himself hurled to and fro in the grip of the clammy hands. He was flung with bone-shattering force against the stone walls. Dashed to the floor, the silent horror squatted ghoul-like upon him, its horrid fingers sinking deep into his throat.

In that nightmare, John Reynolds had no time to doubt his own sanity. He knew that he

was battling a dead man. The flesh of his foe was cold with a charnel-house clamminess. Under the torn shirt he had felt the round bullet-hole, caked with clotted blood. No single sound came from the loose lips.

Choking and gasping, John Reynolds tore the strangling hands aside and flung the thing off. For an instant the darkness again separated them; then the horror came hurtling toward him again. As the thing lunged, Reynolds caught blindly and gained the wrestling hold he wished; and hurling all his power behind the attack, he dashed the horror headlong, falling upon it with his full weight. Saul Fletcher's spine snapped like a rotten branch and the tearing hands went limp, the straining limbs relaxed. Something flowed from the lax body and whispered away through the darkness like a ghostly wind, and John Reynolds instinctively knew that at last Saul Fletcher was truly dead.

PANTING AND SHAKEN, Reynolds rose. The tunnel remained in utter darkness. But down it, in the direction from which the walking corpse had come stalking, there whispered a faint throbbing that was hardly sound at all, yet had in its pulsing a dark weird music. Reynolds shuddered and the sweat froze on his body. The dead man lay at his feet in the

thick darkness, and faintly to his ears came that unbearably sweet, unbearably evil echo, like devil-drums beating faint and far in the dim caverns of hell.

Reason urged him to turn back — to fight against that blind door until he burst its stone, if human power could burst it; but he realized that reason and sanity had been left behind him. A single step had plunged him from a normal world of material realities into a realm of nightmare and lunacy. He decided that he was mad, or else dead and in hell. Those dim tom-toms drew him; they tugged at his heart-strings eerily. They repelled him and filled his soul with shadowy and monstrous conjectures, yet their call was irresistible. He fought the mad impulse to shriek and fling his arms wildly aloft, and run down the black tunnel as a rabbit runs down the prairie dog's burrow into the jaws of the waiting rattler.

Fumbling in the dark, he found his revolver, and still fumbling he loaded it with cartridges from Saul Fletcher's belt. He felt no more aversion now, at touching the body, than he would have felt at handling any dead flesh. Whatever unholy power had animated the corpse, it had left it when the snapping of the spine had unraveled the nerve centers and

disrupted the roots of the muscular system.

Then, revolver in hand, John Reynolds went down the tunnel, drawn by a power he could not fathom, toward a doom he could not guess.

The throb of the tom-toms grew only slightly in volume as he advanced. How far below the hills he was, he could not know, but the tunnel slanted downward and he had gone a long way. Often his groping hands encountered doorways — corridors leading off the main tunnel, he believed. At last he was aware that he had left the tunnel and had come out into a vast open space. He could see nothing, but he somehow felt the vastness of the place. And in the darkness a faint light began. It throbbed as the drums throbbed, waning and waxing in time to their pulsing, but it grew slowly, casting a weird glow that was more like green than any color Reynolds had ever seen — but was not really green, nor any other sane or earthly color.

Reynolds approached it. It widened. It cast a shimmering radiance over the smooth stone floor, illuminating fantastic mosaics. It cast its sheen high in the hovering shadows, but he could see no roof. Now he stood bathed in its weird glow, so that his flesh looked like a dead man's. Now he saw the roof, high and vaulted, brooding far

above him like a dusky midnight sky, and towering walls, gleaming and dark, sweeping up to tremendous heights, their bases fringed with squat shadows from which glittered other lights, small and scintillant.

He saw the source of the illumination, a strange carved stone altar on which burned what appeared to be a giant jewel of an unearthly hue, like the light it emitted. Greenish flame jetted from it; it burned as a bit of coal might burn, but it was not consumed. Just behind it a feathered serpent reared from its coils, a fantasy carved of some clear crystalline substance, the tints of which in the weird light were never the same, but which pulsed and shimmered and changed as the drums — now on all sides of him — pulsed and throbbed.

Abruptly something alive moved beside the altar and John Reynolds, though he was expecting anything, recoiled. At first he thought it was a huge reptile which slithered about the altar, then he saw that it stood upright as a man stands. As he met the menacing glitter of its eyes, he fired pointblank and the thing went down like a slaughtered ox, its skull shattered. Reynolds wheeled as a sinister rustling rose on his ears — at least these beings could be killed — then checked the lifted muzzle. The fringing shadows had moved out from the dark-

ness at the base of the walls, and drawn about him in a wide ring. And though at first glance they possessed the semblance of men, he knew they were not human.

The weird light flickered and danced over them, and back in the deeper darkness the soft, evil drums whispered their accompanying undertone everlastingly. John Reynolds stood aghast at what he saw.

IT WAS NOT their dwarfish figures which caused his shudder, nor even the unnaturally made hands and feet — it was their heads. He knew, now, of what race was the skull found by the prospector. Like it, these heads were peaked and malformed, curiously flattened at the sides. There was no sign of ears, as if their organs of hearing, like a serpent's, were beneath the skin. The noses were like a python's snout, the mouth and jaws much less human in appearance than his recollection of the skull would have led him to suppose. The eyes were small, glittering, and reptilian. The squamous lips writhed back, showing pointed fangs, and John Reynolds felt that their bite would be as deadly as a rattlesnake's. Garments they wore none, nor did they bear any weapons.

He tensed himself for the death struggle, but no rush came. The snake-people sat

down cross-legged about him in a great circle, and beyond the circle he saw them massed thick. And now he felt a stirring in his consciousness, an almost tangible beating of wills upon his senses. He was distinctly aware of a concentrated invasion of his innermost mind, and realized that these fantastic beings were seeking to convey their commands or wishes to him by medium of thought. On what common plane could he meet these inhuman creatures? Yet in some dim, strange, telepathic way they made him understand some of their meaning; and he realized with a grisly shock that, whatever these things were now, they had once been at least partly human, else they had never been able to so bridge the gulf between the completely human and the completely bestial.

He understood that he was the first living man to come into their innermost realm, the first to look on the shining serpent, the Terrible Nameless One who was older than the world; that before he died, he was to know all which had been denied to the sons of men concerning the mysterious valley, that he might take this knowledge into Eternity with him, and discuss these matters with those who had gone before him.

The drums rustled, the strange light leaped and shimmered, and before the altar came one

who seemed in authority — an ancient monstrosity whose skin was like the whitish hide of an old serpent, and who wore on his peaked skull a golden circlet, set with weird gems. He bent and made suppliance to the feathered snake. Then with a sharp implement of some sort which left a phosphorescent mark, he drew a cryptic triangular figure on the floor before the altar, and in the figure he strewed some sort of glimmering dust. From it reared up a thin spiral which grew to a gigantic shadowy serpent, feathered and horrific, and then changed and faded and became a cloud of greenish smoke. This smoke billowed out before John Reynolds' eyes and hid the serpent-eyed ring, and the altar, and the cavern itself. All the universe dissolved into the green smoke, in which titanic scenes and alien landscapes rose and shifted and faded, and monstrous shapes lumbered and leered.

Abruptly the chaos crystallized. He was looking into a valley which he did not recognize. Somehow he knew it was Lost Valley, but in it towered a gigantic city of dully gleaming stone. John Reynolds was a man of the outlands and the waste places. He had never seen the great cities of the world; but he knew that nowhere in the world today such a city reared up to the sky.

ITS TOWERS AND battlements were those of an alien age. Its outline baffled his gaze with its unnatural aspects; it was a city of lunacy to the normal human eye, with its hints of alien dimensions and abnormal principles of architecture. Through it moved strange figures — human, yet of a humanity definitely different from his own. They were clad in robes; their hands and feet were less abnormal, their ears and mouths more like those of normal humans: yet there was an undoubted kinship between them and the monsters of the cavern. It showed in the curious peaked skull, though this was less pronounced and bestial in the people of the city.

He saw them in the twisting streets, and in their colossal buildings, and he shuddered at the inhumanness of their lives. Much they did was beyond his ken; he could understand their actions and motives no more than a Zulu savage might understand the events of modern London. But he did understand these people were very ancient and very evil. He saw them enact rituals that froze his blood with horror, obscenities and blasphemies beyond his understanding. He grew sick with a sensation of contamination. Somehow he knew that this city was the remnant of an outworn age —

that this people represented the survival of an epoch lost and forgotten.

Then a new people came upon the scene. Over the hills came wild men clad in hides and feathers, armed with bows and flint-tipped weapons. They were, Reynolds knew, Indians — and yet not Indians as he knew them. They were slant-eyed, and their skins were yellowish rather than copper-colored. Somehow he knew that these were the nomadic ancestors of the Toltecs, wandering and conquering on their long trek before they settled in upland valleys far to the south and evolved their own special type and civilization. These were still close to the primal Mongolian root-stock, and he gasped at the gigantic vistas of time this realization evoked.

Reynolds saw the warriors move like a giant wave on the towering walls. He saw the defenders man the towers and deal death in strange and grisly forms to them. He saw the invaders reel back again and again, then come on once more with the blind ferocity of the primitive. This strange evil city, filled with mysterious people of a different order, was in their path, and they could not pass until they had stamped it out.

Reynolds marveled at the fury of the invaders, who wasted their lives like water, match-

ing the cruel and terrible science of an unknown civilization with sheer courage and the might of manpower. Their bodies littered the plateau, but not all the forces of hell could keep them back. They rolled like a wave to the foot of the towers. They scaled the walls in the teeth of sword and arrow and death in ghastly forms; they gained the parapets; they met their enemies hand-to-hand. Bludgeons and axes beat down the lunging spears, the thrusting swords. The tall figures of the barbarians towered over the smaller forms of the defenders.

Red hell raged in the city. The siege became a street battle, the battle a rout, the rout a slaughter. Smoke rose and hung in clouds over the doomed city.

The scene changed. Reynolds looked on charred and ruined walls from which smoke still rose. The conquerors had passed on; the survivors gathered in the red-stained temple before their curious god, a crystalline serpent on a fantastic stone altar. Their age had ended; their world crumbled suddenly. They were the remnants of an otherwise extinct race. They could not rebuild their marvelous city and they feared to remain within its broken walls, a prey to every passing tribe. Reynolds saw them take up their altar and

its god and follow an ancient man clad in a mantle of feathers and wearing on his head a gem-set circlet of gold. He led them across the valley to a hidden cave. They entered and squeezing through a narrow rift in the back wall, came into a vast network of caverns honeycombing the hills. Reynolds saw them at work exploring these labyrinths, excavating and enlarging, hewing the walls and floors smooth, enlarging the rift that let into the outer cavern and setting therein a cunningly hung door, so that it seemed part of the solid wall.

Then an ever-shifting panorama denoted the passing of many centuries. The people lived in the caverns, and as time passed they adapted themselves more and more to their surroundings, each generation going less frequently into the outer sunlight. They learned to obtain their food in shuddersome ways from the earth. Their ears grew smaller, their bodies more dwarfish, their eyes more catlike. John Reynolds stood aghast as he watched the race changing through the ages.

OUTSIDE IN the valley the deserted city crumbled and fell into ruins, becoming prey to lichen and weed and tree. Men came and briefly meditated among these ruins — tall Mongolian warriors, and dark in-

scrutable little people men call the Mound Builders. And as the centuries passed, the visitors conformed more and more to the type of Indian as he knew it, until at last the only men who came were painted red men with stealthy feet and feathered scalp-locks. None ever tarried long in that haunted place with its cryptic ruins.

Meanwhile, in the caverns, the Old People abode and grew strange and terrible. They fell lower and lower in the scale of humanity, forgetting first their written language, and gradually their human speech. But in other ways they extended the boundaries of life. In their nighted kingdom they discovered other, older caverns, which led them into the very bowels of the earth. They learned lost secrets, long-forgotten or never known by men, sleeping in the blackness far below the hills. Darkness is conducive to silence, so they gradually lost the power of speech, a sort of telepathy taking its place. And with each grisly gain they lost more of their human attributes: Their ears vanished; their noses grew snoutlike; their eyes became unable to bear the light of the sun, and even of the stars. They had long abandoned the use of fire, and the only light they used was the weird gleams evoked from their gigantic jewel on the altar, and even this

they did not need. They changed in other ways. John Reynolds, watching, felt the cold sweat bead his body. For the slow transmutation of the Old People was horrible to behold, and many and hideous were the shapes which moved among them before their ultimate mold and nature were evolved.

Yet they remembered the sorcery of their ancestors and added to this their own black wizardry developed far below the hills. And at last they attained the peak of that necromancy. John Reynolds had had horrific inklings of it in fragmentary glimpses of the olden times, when the wizards of the Old People had sent forth their spirits from their sleeping bodies to whisper evil things in the ears of their enemies.

A tribe of tall painted warriors came into the valley, bearing the body of a great chief, slain in tribal warfare.

Long eons had passed. Of the ancient city only scattered columns stood among the trees. A landslide had laid bare the entrance of the outer cavern. This the Indians found and therein they placed the body of their chief with his weapons broken beside him. Then they blocked up the cave mouth with stones, and took up their journey, but night caught them in the valley.

Through all the ages, the Old People had found no oth-

er entrance or exit to or from the pits, save the small outer cave; it was the one doorway between their grim realm and the world they had so long abandoned. Now they came through the secret door into the outer cavern, whose dim light they could endure, and John Reynolds' hair stood up at what he saw. For they took the corpse and laid it before the altar of the feathered serpent, and an ancient wizard lay upon it, his mouth against the mouth of the dead. Above them tom-toms pulsed and strange fires flickered, and the voiceless votaries with soundless chants invoked gods forgotten before the birth of Egypt, until unhuman voices bellowed in the outer darkness and the sweep of monstrous wings filled the shadows. And slowly life ebbed from the sorcerer and stirred the limbs of the dead chief. The body of the wizard rolled limply aside and the corpse of the chief stood up stiffly; and with puppet-like steps and glassy staring eyes it went up the dark tunnel and through the secret door into the outer cave. Its dead hands tore aside the stones, and into the starlight stalked the Horror.

REYNOLDS SAW IT walk stiffly under the shuddering trees while the night things fled gibbering. He saw it come into the camp of the warriors. The

rest was horror and madness, as the dead thing pursued its former companions and tore them limb from limb. The valley became a shambles before one of the braves, conquering his terror, turned on his pursuer and hewed through its spine with a stone axe.

And even as the twice-slain corpse crumpled, Reynolds saw, on the floor of the cavern before the carved serpent, the form of the wizard quicken and live as his spirit returned to him from the corpse he had caused it to animate.

The soundless glee of incarnate demons shook the crawling blackness of the pits, and Reynolds shrank before the verminous fiends gloating over their new-found power to deal horror and death to the sons of men, their ancient enemies.

But the word spread from clan to clan, and men came not to the Valley of the Lost. For many a century it lay dreaming and deserted beneath the sky. Then came mounted braves with trailing war-bonnets, painted with the colors of the Kiowas, warriors of the north, who knew nothing of the mysterious valley. They pitched their camps in the very shadows of those sinister monoliths which were now no more than shapeless stones.

They placed their dead in the cavern. And Reynolds saw the

horrors that took place when the dead came ravening by night among the living to slay and devour — and to drag screaming victims into the nighted caverns and the demoniac doom that awaited them. The legions of hell were loosed in the Valley of the Lost, where chaos reigned and nightmare and madness stalked. Those who were left alive and sane walled up the cavern and rode out of the hills like men riding from hell.

Once more Lost Valley lay gaunt and naked to the stars. Then again the coming of men broke the primal solitude, and smoke rose among the trees. And John Reynolds caught his breath with a start of horror as he saw these were white men, clad in the buckskins of an earlier day — six of them, so much alike that he knew they were brothers.

He saw them fell trees and build a cabin in the clearing. He saw them hunt game in the mountains and begin clearing a field for corn. And all the time he saw the vermin of the hills waiting with ghoulish lust in the darkness. They could not look from their caverns with their nighted eyes, but by their godless sorcery they were aware of all that took place in the valley. They could not come forth in their own bodies in the light, but they waited

with the patience of night and the still places.

Reynolds saw one of the brothers find the cavern and open it. He entered and the secret door hung open. The man went into the tunnel. He could not see, in the darkness, the shapes of horror that stole slaving about him, but in sudden panic he lifted his muzzle-loading rifle and fired blindly, screaming as the flash showed him the hellish forms that ringed him in. In the utter blackness following the vain shot they rushed, overthrowing him by the power of their numbers, sinking their snaky fangs into his flesh. As he died, he slashed half a dozen of them to pieces with his bowie knife, but the poison did its work quickly.

Reynolds saw them drag the corpse before the altar; he saw of the dead, which rose grin-again the horrible transmutation ning vacantly and stalked forth. The sun had set in a welter of dull crimson. Night had fallen. To the cabin where his brothers slept, wrapped in their blankets, stalked the dead. Silently the groping hands swung open the door. The horror crouched in the gloom, its bared teeth shining, its dead eyes gleaming glassily in the starlight. One of the brothers stirred and mumbled, then sat up and stared at the motionless shape in the doorway. He called the dead

man's name — then he shrieked hideously — the horror sprang . . .

FROM JOHN REYNOLDS' throat burst a cry of intolerable horror. Abruptly the pictures vanished, with the smoke. He stood in the weird glow before the altar, the tom-toms throbbing softly and evilly, the fiendish faces hemming him in. And now from among them crept, on his belly like the serpent he was, the one which wore the gemmed circlet, venom dripping from his bared fangs. Loathsomely he slithered toward John Reynolds, who fought the inclination to leap upon the foul thing and stamp out its life. There was no escape; he could send his bullets crashing through the swarm and mow down all in front of the muzzle, but those would be as nothing beside the hundreds which hemmed him in. He would die there in the waning light, and they would send his corpse blundering forth, lent a travesty of life by the spirit of the wizard, just as they had sent Saul Fletcher. John Reynolds grew tense as steel as his wolf-like instinct to live rose above the maze of horror into which he had fallen.

And suddenly his human mind rose above the vermin who threatened him, as he was electrified by a swift thought that was like an inspiration.

With a fierce inarticulate cry of triumph, he bounded sideways just as the crawling monstrosity lunged. It missed him, sprawling headlong, and Reynolds snatched from the altar the carven serpent, and, holding it on high, thrust against it the muzzle of his cocked pistol. He did not need to speak. In the dying light his eyes blazed madly! The Old People wavered back. Before them lay he whose peaked skull Reynolds' pistol had shattered. They knew a crook of his trigger-finger would splinter their fantastic god into shining bits.

For a tense space the tableau held. Then Reynolds felt their silent surrender. Freedom in exchange for their god. It was again borne on him that these beings were not truly bestial, since true beasts know no gods. And this knowledge was the more terrible, for it meant that these creatures had evolved into a type neither bestial nor human, a type outside of nature and sanity.

The snakish figures gave back on each side, and the waning light sprang up again. As he went up the tunnel they were close at his heels, and in the dancing uncertain glow he could not be sure whether they walked as a man walks or crawled as a snake crawls. He had a vague impression that their gait was hideously compounded of both. He swerved

far aside to avoid the sprawling bulk that had been Saul Fletcher, and so, with his gun muzzle pressed hard against the shining brittle image borne in his left hand, he came to the short flight of steps which led up to the secret door. There they came to a standstill. He turned to face them. They ringed him in a close half-circle, and he understood that they feared to open the secret door lest he dash, with their image, through the cavern into the sunlight, where they could not follow. Nor would he set down the god until the door was opened.

At last they withdrew several yards, and he cautiously set the image on the floor at his feet where he could snatch it up in an instant. How they opened the door he never knew, but it swung wide, and he backed slowly up the steps, his gun trained on the glittering god. He had almost reached the door — one back-thrown hand gripped the edge — when the light went out suddenly and the rush came. A volcanic burst of effort shot him backward through the door, which was already rushing shut. As he leaped he emptied his gun full into the fiendish faces that suddenly filled the dark opening. They dissolved in red ruin, and as he raced madly from the outer cavern he heard the soft closing of the secret door, shutting that realm of

horror from the human world.

In the glow of the westering sun, John Reynolds staggered drunkenly, clutching at stones and trees as a madman clutches at realities. The keen tenseness that had held him when he fought for his life fell from him and left him a quivering shell of disrupted nerves. An insane titter broke through his lips, and he rocked to and fro in ghastly laughter he could not check.

Then the clink of hoofs on stone sent him leaping behind a cluster of boulders. It was some hidden instinct which led him to take refuge; his conscious mind was too dazed and chaotic for thought or action.

INTO THE CLEARING rode Jonas McCrill and his followers — and a sob tore through Reynolds' throat. At first he did not recognize them — did not realize that he had ever seen them before. The feud, with all other sane and normal things, lay lost and forgotten far back in dim vistas beyond the black tunnels of madness.

Two figures rode from the other side of the clearing — Bill Ord and one of the outlaw followers of the McCrills. Strapped to Ord's saddle were several sticks of dynamite, done into a compact package.

"Well, gee whiz," hailed young Ord, "I shore didn't ex-

pect to meet yuh-all here. Did yuh git him?"

"Naw," snapped old Jonas, "he's done fooled us again. We come up with his horse, but he wasn't on it. The rein was snapped like he'd had it tied and it'd broke away. I dunno where he is, but we'll git him. I'm a-goin' on to Antelope to git some more of the boys. Yuh-all git Saul's body outa that cave and foller me as fast as yuh can."

He reined away and vanished through the trees, and Reynolds, his heart in his mouth, saw the other four approach the cavern.

"Well, by God!" exclaimed Jack Solomon fiercely, "somebody's done been here! Look! Them rocks are torn down!"

John Reynolds watched as one paralyzed. If he sprang up and called to them they would shoot him down before he could voice his warning. Yet it was not that which held him as in a vise; it was sheer horror which robbed him of thought and action, and froze his tongue to the roof of his mouth. His lips parted but no sound came forth. As in a nightmare he saw his enemies disappear into the cavern. Their voices, muffled, came back to him.

"By golly, Saul's gone!"

"Look here, boys, here's a door in the back wall!"

"By thunder, it's open!"

"Let's take a look!"

Suddenly from within the bowels of the hills crashed a fusillade of shots — a burst of hideous screams. Then silence closed like a clammy fog over the Valley of the Lost.

John Reynolds, finding voice at last, cried out as a wounded beast cries, and beat his temples with his clenched fists. He brandished them to the heavens, shrieking wordless blasphemies.

Then he ran staggeringly to Bill Ord's horse which grazed tranquilly with the others beneath the trees. With clammy hands he tore away the package of dynamite, and without separating the sticks he punched a hole in the end of the middle stick with a twig. Then he cut a short — a very short — piece of fuse, and slipped a cap over one end which he inserted into the hole in the dynamite. In a pocket of the rolled-up slicker bound behind the saddle he found a match, and lighting the fuse he hurled the bundle into the cavern. Hardly had it struck the back wall when with an earthquake roar it exploded.

The concussion nearly hurled him off his feet. The whole mountain rocked, and with a thunderous crash the cave roof fell. Tons and tons of shattered rock crashed down to obliterate all marks of Ghost Cave, and to shut the door to the pits forever.

JOHN REYNOLDS walked slowly away; and suddenly the whole horror swept upon him. The earth seemed hideously alive under his feet, the sun foul and blasphemous over his head. The light was sickly, yellowish and evil, and all things were polluted by the unholy knowledge locked in his skull, like hidden drums beating ceaselessly in the blackness beneath the hills.

He had closed one Door forever, but what other nightmare shapes might lurk in hidden places and the dark pits of the earth, gloating over the souls of men? His knowledge was a reeking blasphemy which would never let him rest; forever in his soul would whisper the drums that throbbed in those dark pits where lurked demons that had once been men. He had looked on ultimate foulness, and his knowledge was a taint which would never let him stand clean before men again, or touch the flesh of any living thing without a shudder. If man, molded of divinity, could

sink to such verminous obscenities, who could contemplate his eventual destiny unshaken? And if such beings as the Old People existed, what other horrors might not lurk beneath the visible surface of the universe? He was suddenly aware that he had glimpsed the grinning skull beneath the mask of life, and that that glimpse made life intolerable. All certainty and stability had been swept away, leaving a mad welter of unacy, nightmare and stalking horror.

John Reynolds drew his gun and his horny thumb drew back the heavy hammer. Thrusting the muzzle against his temple, he pulled the trigger. The shot crashed echoing through the hills, and the last of the fighting Reynoldses pitched headlong.

Old Jonas McCrill, galloning back at the sound of the blast, found him where he lay, and wondered that his face should be that of an old, old man, his hair white as hoar-frost.

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Medium For Justice

by Victor Rousseau

IT WAS AS Research Officer for the S. I. P. P. — the Society for the Investigation of Psychological Phenomena — that I met Rinaldi. I may say that my first impressions were frankly hostile. The Society had found some genuine psychics; now we were after frauds and miracle-mongers, and some of Rinaldi's exploits had looked a little too miraculous.

Then, his bored, amused smile when I requested to be permitted to investigate him, savored too much of the professional conjurer. He seemed too sure of his ability to outwit me. A clever Italian sleight-of-hand

performer, I thought him, though later I learned he was a Swiss. Besides, that expensive New York apartment of his, the golf sticks, strangely out of place in one of his profession, as it seemed to me — and above all, his man, Potter!

Potter, sleek, deferential, and always half-asleep; Potter with his queer monkey-gestures, his disconcerting power of mind-reading; Potter, valet by day and *apport* medium by night!

That was what had really got under the Society's skin. I should say four-fifths of our members had been forced, step by step, to the belief in spirit

Only the recovery of the dead woman's body
could shake her husband's story — and the
body was in Switzerland.

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survival and communication. But we still had doubts about spirit photography and *apports*.

An *apport* medium, as is probably well known, is one who claims the power of physically transporting some object or article from a distance, through intervening houses, walls, ceilings, and floors.

What brought down Society upon Rinaldi was Mrs. Van Dittmeyer's claim that, seated in Rinaldi's seance-room, she had seen the very body of her son, who had been killed in France ten years before — in 1918. Not the spirit, but John Gaffrey Van Dittmeyer, Lieutenant, killed leading a charge against the German line, and — *just as he had been at the moment of death!*

That a human body could be transported more than three thousand miles was sufficiently dubious, but that the intervening ten years of disintegration could be obliterated, so that the mother was able to wipe the death sweat from the tortured features — well, that drove our President, old Jerrold, frantic.

"Get after this Rinaldi, Matthews," he said to me. "Don't spare the money. Unmask him for the fake he is, and drive him from New York."

And Rinaldi had received me with his bored, tolerant smile, and invited me to be present at all his seances with Potter.

Little by little, I saw that the

date of Rinaldi's showing-up would have to be considerably postponed; gradually, without realizing it, I was reaching the stage of conviction.

Of course, cases of *apports* were few and far between, but a few weeks had been sufficient to convince me that Potter was a man of genuine psychic powers. I was no novice. After I had seen, and spoken with my own dead sister in front of the cabinet, with Potter visible within, grimacing in his monkey way, I began to draw in my horns.

Still, those *apports* — conjuring tricks! Certainly I did not see how those bunches of roses, with the dew still on them, could appear upon the little table within our circle. And there was the disconcerting little dog that barked and wagged his tail, ran to the mistress who had left him in the Florida kennel, then disappeared as quickly as he had materialized. But I am no conjurer, and I flattered myself that it took more than that to convince me.

POTTER'S *apports* were reserved for grand occasions, though one never knew when they were coming. For the rest, Potter was simply a materializing medium, and I have seen better ones. His figures were generally indistinct and hazy, with nothing but a face visible

in the cloud of nebulous ectoplasm that is called "draperies". And as for the voices — well, Potter might have been a better ventriloquist.

Still, there were dramatic episodes, as on the occasion when quite a little crowd had assembled in the big room with its velvet hangings. People came to Rinaldi by introduction, and they had to show serious reasons before he would admit them to his circles. On this occasion nothing much happened. Potter had been writhing and muttering and making his monkey gestures inside the cabinet with its half-drawn curtains. And suddenly there came a voice, a woman's voice, so awful in its fear and spiritual agony that it thrilled me with horror:

"Johann! Don't hurt me, Johann! Johann, I love you!"

Potter was talking, too, in his mumbling way, all the time the voice went on. "Poor woman! Ah, the beast! She never suspected! Water! Deep, deep water!" I heard him saying. And at the same time the woman's voice:

"Johann, let me come back — the boat — I'll go away! You can divorce me! I didn't know! I thought you loved me! I love you, Johann!" The voice was shrill with abject terror.

And then the dreadful, bubbling sound of a person choking to death in water! It was so

indescribably awful that all the gathering were upon their feet in an instant, and huddling together in front of the cabinet.

Someone turned up the light. There was nothing visible except Potter, squirming and grimacing, and blinking as he began to come back to consciousness. Rinaldi took his stand in front of him, to shield him from interference. One woman leaped to her feet and advanced, as if to attack Rinaldi.

"It's too much! It's too much! You ought to be sent to jail!" the woman was screaming. "I didn't come here to listen to things like that!"

"Oh, no, Madam!" answered Rinaldi, in his ironical way. "You prefer pretty talk about the spirits' doings in the spheres? Unfortunately, it is as hard to suppress them on that side as on this, particularly when they are ladies."

That caused an uneasy laugh, and relieved the tension. The session being clearly at an end, the guests prepared to depart, buzzing volubly, and for the most part, indignantly.

"Well, sir?" One man had stayed behind, with the evident intention of addressing himself to Rinaldi.

"Who — who was that spirit?" he asked in a half-whisper. He was a man approaching middle age, well-dressed, a gentleman and quite obviously badly shaken by the occurrence.

"That, sir, I cannot tell you" Rinaldi answered. "We do not register our visitors, nor are they always in a mental condition to give their pedigrees."

He turned away, but the man still lingered. The last of the guests were now buzzing in the hall. Potter was staggering out of the cabinet. He jerked his thumb toward the man.

"He's got her photo in his waistcoat pocket," he mumbled. Potter was still in a daze. As he made his way out of the room toward his bedroom, the man turned to Rinaldi again.

"Could you give me a private interview?" he asked. "I — it's too awful, but I believe I know who that was. I think she was my sister. I recognized the voice."

HE PULLED a small photograph out of his waistcoat pocket and handed it to Rinaldi, who glanced at it, and then gave it to me. It showed a young and rather pretty woman, with a pleasant, simple, trustful face.

"I've carried this for eleven years," the man went on, "always in the hope that some day I should be able to solve the mystery of her disappearance. I know she's dead. We were too close to one another in childhood for me not to know that. But never until tonight — it's too horrible!"

"Pray sit down," said Rinaldi,

immediately all sympathy. He indicated a chair at the farther end of the room, switched on two or three more lights, and himself sat down beside the man. "If there's anything at all I can do to help you . . ." he began. "You say your sister disappeared many years ago? Perhaps you would care to give me the details?"

"If you can help me, I'll tell you everything. I don't mind saying I came to you tonight because I had heard of the wonderful things you have done in the way of locating missing persons. My name's Goodrich."

"I remember you, Mr. Goodrich," answered Rinaldi, "but I understood from Mr. Taylor who introduced you to me, that you merely hoped to get into communication with a friend who had crossed the line."

"That's the truth," replied Goodrich. "I want to find the man who was responsible for my sister's murder."

It was a sad and sordid story to which I listened as Goodrich facing Rinaldi, and gripping the arms of his chair tensely in his excitement, gradually rose to impassioned, bitter denunciation.

Thirteen or fourteen years before, Goodrich's sister, Amy had married Johann Minzner, a real estate man in their home town. The family had been bitterly opposed to the match on account of Minzner's character.

He was known to have served a term in State's prison, and he was then engaged in some shady real estate speculations which netted him a large fortune. But the girl had been infatuated with the man, and had refused to listen to warnings.

They had married, and about this time Minzner had left the town, with the half-million dollars that his speculations had brought him. Nothing had been heard of the couple for a year or two. Then had come a brief communication from Minzner, written from a village near Prague, in what was then Austrian territory. He enclosed a newspaper clipping, from which it appeared that Amy Minzner had been drowned in a lake on which the couple were sailing, in spite of her husband's heroic attempt to rescue her.

"I was not a rich man," cried Goodrich, "but I placed the matter in the hands of the Paar Detective Agency, which has a reputation for running down difficult cases. Since then I have made a sizeable fortune, and I have retained the Parr people with a standing fee to keep in touch with the case. But the War broke out, and of course . . ." Goodrich shrugged . . . "it was impossible to follow up any clues. After the Armistice I ascertained that Minzner had not been heard of since the beginning of the conflict. He

had sold his property near Prague and disappeared."

"And what is your purpose, supposing you can find Minzner?" asked Rinaldi.

"To send him to the electric chair as my sister's murderer!"

"What is your reason for supposing that Minzner murdered your sister?"

"I know it!" shouted Goodrich. "I've always felt it and I can't be mistaken. But tonight's evidence clinches the matter!"

"I don't want to discourage you, Mr. Goodrich," replied Rinaldi, "but communications from beyond are not quite so simple as you might be inclined to suppose. It is quite likely that that was your sister's voice. On the other hand, it may have been some malicious spirit that realized your state of mind and wished to take advantage of it to play a prank upon you. Again, it is possible that your ardent desire, continued for so many years, actually created what we call an elemental, to play the part. Thoughts create things, you know, Mr. Goodrich, though they cannot create souls, which is the prerogative of the Almighty."

GOODRICH'S FACE fell. "Then — then how can I ever know?"

"Let me ask you, first, how you propose to send Minzner to the chair, granting that all your inferences are correct. The

event took place in a foreign land. The lapse of years, the War, the change of government would certainly make the production of adequate evidence improbable. No jury would convict. And, even if they did, it would be in Czechoslovakia, and not in America, that the case would be tried." Rinaldi paused, and the other stared at him.

"Then you mean to say nothing can be done? I'll swear that was my sister. I am resolved that her death shall not remain unretributed. What can be done, Professor Rinaldi?"

"The first thing," answered Rinaldi, "is to get in touch with your sister, and learn whether it was she tonight. The second is to find Minzner." He turned toward the closed door.

As if the summons had been telegraphically conveyed to him, Potter came out of the bedroom, slipping on his coat. He was once more the smooth, sleek valet.

Potter, do you feel able to give us another private sitting tonight?" Rinaldi asked.

Potter looked dubiously at Goodrich. "What's he want?" he demanded. "He makes me feel sick in my lungs. It's something about water."

"He wants you to go on a little journey and find somebody," said Rinaldi. "Are you willing to make the trip?"

Potter. "No, sir! The only person I'm going to find is myself in bed. He gives me a pain here. I don't like the looks of this fellow. How do we know he ain't a dick?" he continued to Rinaldi in a whisper.

I was used to Potter's ways by now. I knew that the man, being wholly ignorant of what he did while entranced, believed the whole business to be a fake, and Rinaldi a slick conjurer.

"Now, I won't do it, sir. I tell you it ain't safe. I tell you . . ."

But Potter's mumbling died away, for Rinaldi had simply grabbed him by the shoulders and made a few passes over him. I saw the body stiffen. It began to sway like a falling tree. Rinaldi caught and supported it, for Potter was in the full rigidity of catalepsy.

Raising the valet over his shoulder exactly as if he had been a tailor's dummy, Rinaldi carried him into the cabinet and placed him on the chair. A pass or two and he had unbent the knees sufficiently to enable Potter to be seated. Then he beckoned to Goodrich and myself, and we three took our places in the middle of the front row of chairs before the cabinet. Rinaldi reached out and switched off the lights.

It was Rinaldi speaking: "Potter, bring back that woman who was here earlier in the

evening. Tell her that she is wanted badly."

A pause, then a high-pitched voice of Chong-Qua, the old Anamite guide, not Potter's. "She is not here. I go look some more, perhaps."

"Be quick about it, Chong," said Rinaldi. "We've got a few questions to ask her."

We waited — five minutes, perhaps. The only sound was Potter breathing stertorously in the cabinet. Then came the Chinaman's voice again, squeaky and breathless, as if the old man had been running:

"She not will come. She say it's a mistake. Her husband never mean to harm her, and she love him."

I heard a sharp, suppressed expletive from Goodrich. "That's Amy all over. The little fool! Anybody can get around her," he whispered.

"She think you mean to do him harm," the droning voice went on. "She not will come."

"She won't come, eh?" thundered Rinaldi, "*Then bring her husband!*"

I caught my breath. What did Rinaldi hope for? How could Chong-Qua bring Minzner, if he were still alive? But was he alive, or did Rinaldi mean in the spirit? If he were alive, how could he be bodily transported into the seance-room?

I had witnessed many *apports* by Potter, though never that of

a human body, as Mrs. Van Dittmeyer had claimed she had seen. If Minzner was still alive, and Potter or his guide could bring him there, into that room, in physical form — well, I should be in for a bad half-hour trying to convince old Jerrold, our President.

And now the room had grown as still as death. We had been silent before, but this was an uncanny, unnatural stillness. If there can be degrees of stillness, this was the superlative one, for in that awful quiet I seemed to hear all the natural processes of my bodily organism, the pulsing of the heart valves, the building of the tissues.

Then a deathly weakness seemed to overtake me. And I felt — somehow — smaller!

"Don't stir, don't speak, and on no account break the circle. No, it is not necessary to join hands, but for heaven's sake don't speak or move. And ignore that weakness! Potter is drawing on all of us. It's the hardest thing in the world."

Rinaldi's voice was very soft. I was barely conscious of it, for all my vitality seemed to be engaged in a struggle against some sapping force that was depleting it. Very softly Rinaldi leaned forward again to the switch in the wall and snapped a button. A faint red light began to glow immediately in front of the cabinet.

IT WAS NO brighter than that used in a photographer's dark room; for anything stronger would have dissipated the ectoplasm. But now there was no ectoplasm. There was visible only the face of the medium, thrown back over the rigid neck. The eyes were wide open, but only the whites showed. And Potter had ceased to breathe audibly. A cold wind seemed to emanate from the cabinet, slightly ruffling the thin curtains that hung in front of it.

I felt the approach of some tremendous climax. I gritted my teeth, trying to shake off that lethargy that gripped me. I was more afraid than I have ever been in my life, and yet it was of nothing tangible.

Then suddenly the climax came. There was a crash somewhere in the room, a chair beside me was overturned, and the body of a heavy man lay in the tiny space between us and the cabinet!

I heard the oath that trembled on Goodrich's lips. I saw him start forward; and then Rinaldi's hands were pressing like dead weights upon his shoulders, forcing him back into his place. In that instant I was aware that Goodrich had recognized the man as Minzner.

But the man on the floor was flesh and blood! I shall maintain that till my dying day. I have seen materializations so perfect that I could detect the

pulse in the wrist; I have seen an apparition breathe carbon dioxide into baryta water in proof that it had lungs; but I have never seen an apparition that did not conceal some imperfection in its physical organism by means of the usual cloudy draperies.

Not so this form. It was the complete body of a man in *evening clothes*. He was lying upon his back, sleeping noisily. I could even detect the fumes of alcohol upon his breath.

Inside the cabinet, still visible, was Potter, looking, for all his five feet eight, no bigger than a doll and moaning feebly.

What would have happened next, I do not know. Would Rinaldi have awakened Minzner and forced him to make a confession? Whatever would have happened was not what did occur, for, as Rinaldi removed his hands from Goodrich's shoulders, Goodrich suddenly bounded from his chair and flung himself upon the unconscious man.

I saw Rinaldi leap forward and snatch something from the floor as Goodrich precipitated himself upon Minzner. Next instant — how it came about I know not — the *apport* had disappeared, and it was the medium, Potter, with whom Goodrich was battling.

"Hold him! Hold Goodrich!" shouted Rinaldi to me. Then he pressed the electric button.

The regular lights went on.

Potter, with a bruised lip and a bloody nose, was struggling weakly in Goodrich's grasp. I was about to obey Rinaldi's orders when the latter plucked at my arm violently.

"Quick! Read that!" he gasped.

I saw, then, that he held a card-case in his hand, a card-case of some fabric so unsubstantial that it was slowly crumbling away. Rinaldi had half-detached a card from it, and the edge of the card, as he withdrew it, was crumbling too, into what seemed a fine, invisible powder.

Interpreting Rinaldi's wish, I jerked the card from the pocket. On it I read:

*John Wentworth Saunders
Boggs Ferry
Crossgills, N. Y.*

The next instant, I was holding nothing. Card-case and card had simply become dissipated into thin air!

THREE DAYS LATER Rinaldi and I were seated in the apartment when the bell rang. Potter ushered in two men, one of them Goodrich, the other a short, alert, middle-aged man who regarded us both with quick, suspicious glances.

"Professor Rinaldi, let me introduce Mr. James Regan, of the Parr Agency," said Goodrich.

Rinaldi bowed and presented me. Then we drew up our chairs

and fell to a discussion of the case.

"Mr. Regan has been to Boggs Ferry," began Goodrich. "He has ascertained that John Wentworth Saunders is beyond all doubt Johann Minzner. He has, with the aid of information previously gathered, been able to trace Minzner's life fairly comprehensively during the past twelve years."

He glanced at Regan, as if inviting him to take up the discussion, but Regan sat motionless, still eyeing Rinaldi distrustfully.

"It appears that Minzner and my sister lived at Boggs Ferry for a year after their marriage," Goodrich resumed, "that year when none of us knew where she had gone. Then the house was closed, and they went abroad. Evidently they resided at that place near Prague where my poor sister was murdered by that unspeakable scoundrel.

"At the outbreak of the War, Minzner, who was a naturalized American, returned to this country. He took up his residence at Boggs Ferry again, and assumed the role of a country gentleman. He married again, but three years ago his wife left him and secured a divorce in Reno, Nevada.

"In spite of his money, he is extremely unpopular in the vicinity. The neighbors distrust him, and his only social life

seems to be enjoyed with a dubious crowd of fast-livers from New York, who spend the weekend with him occasionally."

"What sort of place is that Boggs Ferry?" asked Rinaldi.

Regan spoke for the first time: "A lonely spot in the mountains. Mr. Saunders has an estate of several hundred acres, bordering on the Adirondacks. There is a lake in front of his house, the other side of which is State land. He has had trouble with campers. He spends his winters in New York and Boston.

"I may as well add," continued the detective, "that I am frankly sceptical as to the means Mr. Goodrich tells me were employed in running down Minzner. I do not believe in the supernatural at all."

But Rinaldi's suave, mocking bow seemed to disconcert him. He shifted his feet irritably. "Of course, I'm willing to be shown," he said.

"You see," he went on, after we had discussed the matter a little further, "the Parr people are of the belief that Mr. Goodrich is simply throwing his money away. Of course, it was a stroke, finding that this Saunders fellow was Minzner, no matter how it was done." He glanced at Rinaldi with the same expression of disbelief. "But that don't carry us anywhere.

"First, the fact of a man changing his name doesn't

amount to a hill of beans. A man has the common law right to change his name, even without recourse to the courts. Suppose he changed it at the time of the War because Austrian names were unpopular? Well — that's that.

"Second, there isn't a particle of evidence to prove he murdered his first wife. You can't drag a ghost into court to testify, nor a medium either. That don't go down with juries; and, if it did, there's the higher court would step in.

"Third, even if Minzner did murder his wife, there's no jurisdiction in America. The Austrian Government, or the Czechoslovak authorities would have to apply for extradition. That's that. Now, what can you do?"

"You are sure that Minzner lived with his wife at Boggs Ferry before taking her to Austria?" asked Rinaldi.

"Yeh, but he didn't murder her at Boggs Ferry."

"What actual evidence is there that he ever took her abroad at all? That newspaper clipping, Goodrich?"

"Nope, the records of the Red Star Line show that a Mr. and Mrs. Minzner sailed for Antwerp on — I haven't got the date with me, but it was a year or so before the War," said Regan. "What are you driving at, Mr. Rinaldi?"

Rinaldi smiled enigmatically. "You gentlemen can accompany

me to Boggs Ferry tomorrow morning?" he asked. "There's a train leaving the Grand Central at eight o'clock which will enable us to make our connections so as to arrive in the afternoon." He ignored our surprised looks.

"Aiming to pay Mr. Minzner a visit?" inquired Regan.

"Not immediately," said Rinaldi. "We're going to camp on the State lands opposite his property. I've ordered tents and a complete outfit. We'll get a little fishing, I hope. Those Adirondack lakes are not quite so fished out as some people think they are."

I didn't see, any more than Regan, what Rinaldi was driving at, and Rinaldi's confidences were few and far between. I did understand, though, that he had committed himself unreservedly to the task of sending Minzner to the electric chair, and I wondered how he proposed to do it on the word of a phantom — and an unwilling phantom at that.

REGAN AND Goodrich were waiting for us at the station. There was one tragicomic interlude. As soon as Potter saw Goodrich, he positively refused to get aboard. Rinaldi had refrained from telling him that Goodrich was to be one of our party.

"I won't go, sir, and that's flat," mumbled the medium,

nursing his swollen nose. "I don't mind getting my face took up and concreted in the line of duty, but that fellow with him's a dick. I tell you, Professor, they're just waiting their chance to send us up to the big house for a five-year stretch. I won't go, sir, I *won't go* . . ."

"No, never mind a cup of water, Conductor," said Rinaldi, as Potter stiffened out. "My friend's liable to slight attacks of this kind. Yes, a kind of fit, but he'll be over it in a few minutes."

Potter came around all right, to find himself wedged in among our crowd, and he sulkily accepted the inevitable.

Arrangements had been made for the hire of a flivver at Boggs Ferry, and, after a two hours' jouncing over a rough mountain trail, we found ourselves with our impedimenta on the border of the lake, with Minzner's house staring at us from among the trees on the opposite side.

"Now where's the State boundary post?" asked Rinaldi, examining the road. "Here, what's this? Here we are. All this side of this post is free camping ground. Looks like a good site just over there," he added, pointing.

"You got it wrong, Professor," said the detective. "This side is State land. That's Minzner's land."

"Had trouble with campers, didn't you say?" asked Rinaldi.

"Then we'll just set up our tents on Minzner's land and see if we can draw him."

We drew him quickly enough. Hardly were the tents pitched and the beds laid out, hardly had the bacon begun to grill over the fire before a heavy-bodied, irate man whom I had seen before under circumstances that he never dreamed of came walking into our camp.

"Hey, this is my land!" he shouted rudely. "If you fellows have got to camp on this lake, get back across the boundary!"

He strode right up to the fire, then paused to read the sign that hung in front of Rinaldi's tent:

EASTERN SPIRITUALISTS' CAMP

He turned about, interest and curiosity in his eyes. "So you fellows are Spiritualists, are you? Just what's the game?"

"This gentleman," I said, "is Professor Rinaldi, of whom you have doubtless heard. Professor Rinaldi is taking his vacation prior to going on to the annual convention at Lillydale. I am a representative of the Society for the Investigation of Physical Phenomena, and I may say that Professor Rinaldi's work in New York the last season is going to revolutionize a good many scientific conceptions. This gentleman" — I presented Potter — "is the most famous medium of the day, Mr. Potter."

I had drawn him again. Of

course, after Rinaldi had outlined his plan to me I was heart and soul with him. Goodrich remained in the background. I do not know whether Minzner would have recognized him after that lapse of years, but Goodrich understood that another false move on his part would mean the Professor's retiring from the case.

"Humph!" grunted Minzner. "Calls up the dead, and all that, I suppose, does he?"

"Pray don't let that disturb you," answered Rinaldi blandly. "I am not here on business. Besides, I never evoke the dead when their presence is likely to be disagreeable."

"What do you mean by that?" shouted Minzner.

"I have generally discovered in the course of my professional career," said Rinaldi, still more blandly, "that the evocation of the departed does not always prove an unmixed satisfaction to the living. Potter," he added, "this gentleman says we've got to move back to the State line."

"That don't apply to you," Minzner grunted. "Stay where you are, gentlemen. I'll see you again, I hope, and I trust you'll get good fishing and have an enjoyable time here."

"Hooked!" grinned Potter, with one of his inimitable gestures, as Minzner took his departure.

MINZNER WAS hooked all

right, as the next day's proceedings showed. He was back at our camp by the time we had breakfasted, and doing his best to make himself agreeable to all. As soon as we sighted him coming around the lake, Rinaldi intimated to Goodrich that he was to take himself out of sight, and he obeyed.

"Now, this spiritualist business — I'm asking you confidentially, Mr. Rinaldi, is it real, or is it just conjuring?" Minzner inquired, after beating about the bush a while.

"That's what we call a leading question," smiled Rinaldi. "Have you any particular reason for asking it, Mr. Saunders?"

"Well, of course, I've had folks that have passed over," Minzner admitted. "I'd like to know one or two things about them. Can you call up anybody that's dead?"

"You remember Shakespeare, Mr. Saunders? 'I can call spirits from the vastly deep,' says one of his characters. 'But will they come when you do call for them?' replies the other. No, Mr. Saunders, I have neither the power nor the purpose to evoke unwilling spirits. But as a matter of fact, I have very little to do with it. I regard all such meetings as sacred and confidential, and it is my assistant, Mr. Potter, who acts as intermediary. I am, so to say, merely the showman."

Potter favored Minzner with one of his inimitable facial contortions.

"You see," Rinaldi went on, "I sit some distance from the cabinet, and it is seldom that I overhear what transpires. Nor do I consider myself at liberty to do so. All such conversations are necessarily private and intimate. While as for Potter, he is in a state of complete trance, and remembers nothing when he awakens."

"Then, you mean to say, nobody knows anything about what's said at such a meeting?" blustered Minzner.

"No one except the inquirer and the departed spirit."

"And do you suppose — if I offered you a substantial fee — you could arrange a sitting for me?" Minzner queried eagerly.

"Hooked? Yes, he's swallowed line, hook, and sinker," said Rinaldi grimly, after Minzner had gone, with the seance arranged for the following evening.

"But still, I don't quite see what's going to happen," I rejoined.

"How's that, Mr. Matthews?" demanded Rinaldi.

"His wife — supposing she appears to him? She'll do everything in her power to shield him. She doesn't want him punished. She . . ."

"That is the reason why I intend to see that she shall not oppose us tomorrow night."

"But how can Potter control

her, if she chooses to come?" I protested.

"Matthews," answered Rinaldi earnestly, "vague and shadowy, and almost totally unmapped as the field of psychic phenomena is, there are certain laws that we have been able to deduce. One of these is that action and consciousness do not go together. At the one end of the scale, for instance, we have pure consciousness, manifesting itself through the voice or hand of the medium; at the other the rowdy Poltergeist, flinging crockery about haunted houses, yet mere action, and ignorant of its very identity. Matthews, I propose to impose such action upon Amy Minzner that she will lose all consciousness of her identity, and will be unable" — Rinaldi's voice grew stern — "to interfere with the course of justice."

And he added, as if speaking to himself, "Regan has authority to effect arrests in case of major crimes."

"But," I cried, "what can be done? What do you expect to accomplish tomorrow night?"

"To place Minzner under arrest for the murder of Amy Minzner. To take the first step that leads to the little green door and the burning chair. To teach the ever-forgotten lesson that God's arm extends even to the uttermost parts of the earth."

"But — but . . ." I stammered, and was silent. I knew Rinaldi's

whole soul was in this task, but I knew also that the difficulties were apparently insurmountable.

Regan was of that opinion too. He thought the contemplated seance a fake, by means of which it was proposed to entrap Minzner into a confession. "That's about all the Professor can do, I guess," he said. Regan's opinion of "the Professor" had, however, taken an upward turn, as the result of Rinaldi's masterly strategy in getting Minzner to our camp. "I'll have my notebook ready," he vouchsafed, "and I'll write down anything that Minzner says. But he's a deep one. I ain't building on tomorrow night. But I'd give a month's pay to send him to the chair. He's got the stamp of murder on his face, if I know what it looks like."

"SO THAT'S YOUR outfit!" Minzner looked curiously at the cabinet that Rinaldi and Potter had set up under the cluster of big pines. "But why are you holding this meeting right at the edge of the lake?"

"Deep water there!" Rinaldi laughed. "There's a channel runs in along this point. It's fifteen feet deep — right alongshore — if it's a foot. And water acts sometimes as a sort of transmitter, you know."

"You've got the patter of the trade all right," laughed Minzner, digging Rinaldi in the ribs. He had been drinking, and was

in a jovial mood. "I'll admit frankly I don't believe in Spiritualism, but I'm willing to be convinced."

"Is there anybody in particular whom you are anxious to see?" asked Rinaldi.

"Eh? What's that?" For an instant Minzner looked flabbergasted. "Why should there be anybody I want to see?"

"Usually there's somebody," suggested Rinaldi. "Or maybe there's somebody you don't want to see. As I told you, I cannot guarantee our visitors. Potter here is simply the open circuit, you understand."

"Let's cut that out," answered Minzner roughly. "If I get tired of the show, I'll quit. It's up to you to earn your money, Professor."

"Ah!" Rinaldi rubbed his sleek hands together. I could see that he was thoroughly enjoying himself. "I sincerely trust that I shall earn my money, Mr. Saunders. Yes, I believe I shall. Are you ready, Potter? Sit on this log, gentlemen, and pray keep silent. No, it is not necessary to hold hands."

Regan was on one side of Minzner, Rinaldi on the other. Goodrich, acting under instructions, was to remain in the background till the denouement, whatever it was to be, of the success of which Rinaldi seemed confident. There was a brilliant moon, but here, in the shadows of the pines, it was

just light enough for us to see the contorted face of Potter inside the cabinet. Despite his affectation of indifference, I could see that Minzner was livid with fear, and I marvelled at the impulse in him, akin to that which makes a murderer revisit the scene of his crime.

Perhaps he felt so secure that he was confident in his ability to brazen it out, whatever happened. That he could do so, Regan and I were in full agreement. That even a confession, should Minzner be scared into making one, would hold good in a court of law, I did not believe for a moment.

Potter was mumbling in the cabinet. The tense moment ought to have been at hand. I heard Goodrich behind me, creeping softly toward us. The moon shone on his face, disclosing a passion of hate that shocked me. What an orgy of passions rioted under the moon that night, I thought! But, however hot the hell in Goodrich's heart, it could not equal the medley in the heart of Minzner.

Muttering, mumbling, mumbling in the cabinet! The voice of Potter, entranced, and the shrill tones of old Chong-Qua, the guide, now reduced to mouse-like pipings! What were those two conferring about?

"Well, when's it going to begin?" asked Minzner uneasily.

"You must keep silence, please," came Rinaldi's voice.

Minzner subsided sulkily. The muttering went on, on, on; ceased abruptly. And suddenly that stark fear that I had felt before gripped me. There was the same deathly weakness, the same stillness. There had been a light breeze, but now the very leaves had ceased to rustle. Again the chill and horror of death! Silence, and something creeping over me, that sensation of an approaching awful climax!

"Oh, God!" screeched Potter suddenly, and, bursting out of the cabinet he dropped like a log before us.

Even as he fell, there came the sound of something hurtling through the trees. It dropped into the lake, deluging the cabinet and ourselves with a torrent of water.

In an instant, we were upon our feet and rushing to the water's edge. I heard a bellow of abject fear from Minzner, followed by a roar from Goodrich.

THERE, FLOATING face upward upon the glassy surface of the lake, with a heavy leaden weight chained about the neck, and another about the feet, yet floating, I say, was the body of a young and pretty woman, as fresh as if the life had only just left her. A stain of blood across the temple, and a swelling of the skin, told how her death had been accelerated, probably by the blow of an oar. And

there, at the lake's edge, Goodrich was raining blows upon Minzner's face, and bellowing like a madman, while Minzner howled and cringed, and made hardly any effort to defend himself.

"You murderer! You murderer!" panted Goodrich. "It's Amy! You killed her, sent her to her death here in this lake."

"It's a lie!" raved Minzner. "It was in Bohemia. She fell overboard. I tried to save her. I . . ."

I saw that the body was now beginning to sink. Regan put out his hand, caught it by the feet, and began hauling it to the beach. Then I saw him take out his pencil and begin to write in his notebook.

"It's Amy!" bellowed Goodrich again. "Her engagement ring! If I didn't know her face, I'd know that ring in a million. You boasted of that large blue diamond with the rubies. I'll kill you . . ."

"Leave him to a higher power than yours, Goodrich," interposed Rinaldi, laying his hand upon Goodrich's shoulder and forcing him away. "Come, get up, Minzner," he continued, addressing the prostrate figure. "The game's up. No don't try that . . ." as Minzner's hand went to his hip. Rinaldi wrenched away the revolver and flung it into the lake. "The game's up," he repeated. "This is your first wife's body, and it will be

for you to explain just how it got here."

"I took her to Austria!" bawled Minzner. "It's a trick to trap me. How could it be my wife, when she was drowned in the lake there . . ."

"Ah, can you prove that you took her to Austria?" Rinaldi asked him blandly.

"The steamship company . . ."

"Has record that you accompanied some lady, who was passing as Mrs. Minzner, on board an east-bound ship. If you can prove that the lady in question *was* Mrs. Minzner, by all means bring that proof forward. Otherwise . . ."

But Minzner was already cracking; he babbled incoherently, and all the while I saw Regan's pencil move briskly. And now I realized what had happened: Potter, in what I am sure was the supreme effort of his career, had made an *apport* of the body of the murdered woman, bringing it from the lake near Prague to the Adirondacks lake, and thus bringing Minzner within jurisdiction of an American court. Obviously! What court would believe that

the murder had taken place aboard, when the body was here?

Of course, the fact that Minzner and his first wife had lived together at Boggs Ferry damned him from the first. That *some* woman had accompanied him overseas as his wife was clear enough, but that she was Amy Minzner — true as this was — was something that Minzner's lawyer could not establish. He could not break the testimony of those who had seen the body in the Adirondacks.

It was by a ring and a broken wrist-bone that the identity of the dead woman was established, for in a short time the body had decomposed almost to a skeleton. Rinaldi explained to me afterward that, while a live *apport* will disintegrate rather soon, the body of a dead person will remain more or less intact. That, I believe, is one of the debatable points of metaphysics.

However, this much is not debatable: Fifteen years after the murder, Minzner expiated it in the electric chair.



Si Urag Of The Tail

by Oscar Cook

DENNIS SAT on the veranda of his bungalow, and gazed meditatively around him. He could not look at the view because there was none to speak of, since the house was built on an island in the middle of

the Luago River. On all sides of the island grew the tall rank elephant grass and nipa-palm. Here and there a stunted, beetle-ridden coconut tree just topped the dense vegetation, a relic of some clearing and plan-

One by one, then two by two, they disappeared, and the bizarre one who called himself "Si Urag" waited . . .

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tation commenced by some native, then left to desolation and the ever-encroaching jungle.

Dennis was bored. He was two years overdue for leave; also the day was unusually hot. The hour was about 4, but though the sun was beginning to slant there was no abatement in the fierceness of its rays. After lunch he had followed the immemorial custom and undressed for a short siesta, but sleep was denied him. The mechanical action of undressing had quickened his brain. The room seemed stifling; the bed felt warm. He bathed, dressed and betook himself to the veranda. Here he smoked and thought.

And his thoughts were none too pleasant, for there was much that was troubling him. Throughout the morning he had been listening to the endless intricacies of a native land case—a dispute over boundaries and ownership. He had reserved his judgment till the morrow, for the evidence had been involved and contradictory. He had meant to go over the salient points during the afternoon, and instead, here he was seated on his veranda, smoking and thinking of an entirely different matter. Try as he would, his mind would not keep on the subject of the land, but roamed ever and ever over the mystery that was fast setting its seal of terror and fear on the district.

From a village in the *ulu* (source) of the river strange rumors had come floating downstream. At first they were as light and airy as thistledown—just a passing whisper—a fairy story over which to smile;—then they passed, but came again, more substantial and insistent, stronger and sterner and not to be denied. Their very number compelled a hearing; their very sameness breathed a truth. Inhabitants from the village had gone forth and never returned; never a trace of them had been found. First a young girl, then her father. She had been absent six days and he had gone to look for her. But he looked in vain and in his turn disappeared. Then a young boy, and next an aged woman. Then, after a longer period, a tame ape and finally the headman's favorite wife.

Fear settled on the village; its inhabitants scarce dared leave their houses, save in batches to collect water and food. But Fear travels fast and the rumors reached Klagan and came to Dennis' ears. In the end the mystery caught him in its toils, weaved itself into his every waking moment and excited his interest beyond control.

An idle native story: the tale of a neighboring village with an ax of its own to grind. He was a fool to worry over it. Such mare's nests were of almost

daily occurrence, thus Dennis argued; and then from two other villages came similar tales. Two little girls had gone to bathe in the height of the noon-day sun. At moonrise they had not returned. Nor in the days that passed were they ever seen again. Two lovers met one moonlight night and waded to a boulder in midstream of the river. Here they sat oblivious of the world around them. They were seen by a couple of natives passing downstream in their boat and then — never again.

Down the river crept the cold, insidious Fear like a plague; taking toll of every village in its path. In their houses huddled the natives, while crops were unsown and pigs uprooted the plantations; while crocodiles devoured untended buffaloes, and squirrels and monkeys rifled the fruit trees. From source to mouth the Fear crept down and in the end forced Dennis' hand, compelling him to action.

Thus as he sat on his veranda and cursed the heat of the sun and the humidity of the tropics, unbidden and unsought the mystery filled his thoughts; and he began to wonder as to if and when his native sergeant and three police would return. For he had sent them to the *ulu* to probe and solve the meaning of the rumors. They had been gone three weeks, and through-

out this time no word had been heard of or come from them.

IN THE OFFICE a clock struck 5. Its notes came booming across to Dennis. Then silence — not complete and utter stillness; such is never possible in the tropics, but the silence of that hour when the toilers — man and animal — by day realize that night is approaching; when the toilers by night have not yet awakened.

Lower and lower sank the sun. In the sky a moon was faintly visible. Dennis rose, about to call for tea, then checked the desire. From afar upstream came the *chug, chug, chug* of a motorboat. Its beat just reached his ears. He looked at his wrist watch. In ten minutes he would go down to the floating wharf. That would give him plenty of time to watch the boat round the last bend of the river. In the meanwhile . . .

But he went at once to the wharf after all, for the mystery gripped him, making him pace feverishly up and down the tiny floating square. *Chug, chug, chug*, louder and louder came the noise; then fainter and fainter, and then was lost altogether as the dense jungle cut off the sound when the boat traversed another bend of the river. *Chug, chug, chug*, faintly, then louder and stronger. A long-drawn note from the horn of a buffalo smote the air and the

boat swung round the final bend. Only a quarter of a mile separated it now from Dennis.

As the boat drew nearer he saw that she was empty save for the serang (helmsman) and boatmen. Then the Fear gripped him, too, and he quickly returned to the house. With shaking hand he poured out a whisky and soda, flung himself into a chair and shouted for his "boy".

"*Tuan!*" The word, though quietly spoken, made him flinch, for the "boy" had approached him silently, as all well-trained servants do. Quickly, too, he had obeyed the summons, but in that brief space of time Dennis' mind had escaped his body and immediate wants, to roam the vast untrodden fields of speculation and fear.

With an effort he pulled himself together.

"The motorboat is returning. Tell the serang to come to me as soon as he has tied her up. See that no one is within ear-shot."

"*Tuan.*" And the boy departed.

SCARCELY HAD the boy left than the serang stood in front of Dennis. His story was brief, though harrowing, but it threw no light upon the mystery. For two days, till they reached the rapids, they had used the motorboat. Then they

trans-shipped into a native dugout, leaving the motor in charge of a village headman. For three days they had paddled and poled upstream till they came to the mouth of the Buis River. Here the sergeant and police left them, telling them to wait for their return, and struck inland along a native track. For sixteen days they waited, though their food had given out and they had taken turns to search the jungle for edible roots. Then on the sixteenth day it happened — the horrible coming of Nuin. The boatmen had gone to look for roots. The serang was dozing in a dugout. Suddenly it shook and rocked. Something clutched the serang's arm. It was Nuin's hands. Startled into wakefulness, the serang sat up; then he screamed and covered his eyes with his hands. When he dared look again Nuin was lying on the river bank. His clothes were in rags. Round his chest and back ran a livid weal four inches wide. His left leg hung broken and twisted. His right arm was entirely missing. His face was caked in congealed blood.

As the serang looked, Nuin opened his lips to speak, but his voice was only a whisper. Tremblingly, haltingly, the serang went to him, and put his ear to his mouth. "Sergeant — others — dead — three days — west — man — with — big —

big —others." The whisper faded away; Nuin gave a shudder and was dead.

They buried him near the river and then left, paddling night and day till they reached the rapids. A night they spent in the village, for they were racked with sleeplessness, and they left the next morning, reaching Klagan the same day.

Such was the *serang's* report.

The Fear spread farther down the river till it reached the sea and spread along the coast.

In the barracks that night were two women who would never see their men again; was born a baby, who would never know his father; wept a maiden for the lover whose lips she would never kiss again.

AS THE earliest streaks of dawn came stealing across the sky, the chugging of a motorboat broke the stillness of the night. Dennis himself was at the wheel, for the *serang* was suffering with fever. With him were nine police and a corporal. They carried stores for twenty days.

The journey was a replica of the *serang's*, save that at the village by the rapids no friendly headman or villagers took charge of the motorboat. The village had fled before the Fear. On the fifth day Buis was reached as the setting sun shot the sky with blood-red streamers.

On the banks of the river the earth was uprooted; among the loosened earth were human bones and the marks of pigs' feet. Among the bones was a broken tusk, sure sign of some fierce conflict that had raged over Nuin's remains.

Dennis shuddered as he saw the scene; his Murut police, pagans from the interior of North Borneo, fingered their charms of monkeys' teeth and dried snake-skins that hung around their necks or were attached to the rotan belts around their waists, that carried their heavy *parangs* (swords).

Occasionally throughout the night the droning noise of myriad insects was broken by the shrill bark of deer or kijang. Sometimes the sentry, gazing into the vast blackness of the jungle, saw the beady eyes of a pig, lit up for a moment by the flames of the campfire. Sometimes a snake, attracted by the glare, glided through the undergrowth, then passed on. Once or twice a nightjar cried and an owl hooted — eery sounds in the pitchblack night. Otherwise a heavy brooding stillness, like an autumn mist, crept over the jungle and enveloped the camp. Hardly a policeman slept; but dozed and waked and dozed and waked again, only to wake once more and feel the Fear grow ever stronger. Dennis, on his camp-bed under a *kajang*

awning, tossed and tossed the long night through.

Dawn broke to a clap of thunder. Rain heralded in the new day.

"Three days — west." This was all Dennis knew; all he had to guide him. For this and the next two days the party followed a track that led steadily in a westerly direction. On the evening of the third day it came out into a glade. Here Dennis pitched his camp. The tiny space of open sky and glittering stars breathed a cooler air and purer fragrance than the camps roofed in by the canopy of mighty trees. Thus the tired and haunted police slept and Dennis ceased his tossing. Only the sentry was awake — or should have been. Perhaps he, too, dozed or fell fast asleep, for a few unconscious moments. If so he paid a heavy penalty.

DENNIS AWOKE the next morning at a quarter to 6 to see only the smoldering remains of the campfire.

"Sentry!" he called. But no answer was vouchsafed. "Sentry!" he cried again, but no one came. Aroused by his voice the sleeping camp stirred to wide and startled awakeness.

The corporal came across to Dennis, saluted, then stood at attention waiting.

"The fire's nearly out; where's the sentry?" Dennis queried.

The corporal looked around him, gazed at the smoldering fire, counted his men, then looked at Dennis with fear-stricken eyes.

"*Tuan!*" he gasped; "he is not — there are only eight men!"

"Is not? What d'you mean? Where's he gone?" As Dennis snapped his question cold fear gripped his heart. He knew; some inner sense told him that the man had disappeared in the same mysterious fashion as those early victims. Here, in the midst of his camp, the terrible, unseen thing had power!

"Where's he gone?" Dennis repeated his question fiercely to quench his rising fear. "What d'you mean?"

For answer the corporal only stood and trembled. His open twitching mouth produced no sound.

With an oath Dennis flung himself from his bed. "Search the glade, you fool," he cried, "and find his tracks! He can't be far away. No, stay," he added as the corporal was departing. "Who is it?"

"Bensaian, *Tuan*," gasped the terrified man.

Dennis' eyes narrowed and a frown spread over his face. "Bensaian!" he repeated. "He was Number three. His watch was from twelve till two."

"*Tuan!*"

"Then he's never been re-

lieved. From two o'clock at least, he's been missing!"

"*Tuan!* I must have slept. I saw Auraner relieve Si Tuah, but I was tired and . . ."

"Search for his tracks," Dennis cried, breaking in on his protestations, "but see no man enters the jungle."

In that tiny glade the search was no prolonged affair, but no traces of the missing man were found — save one. A brass button, torn from his tunic, lay at the foot of a mighty billian tree. But where and how he had gone remained a mystery. Only the regular footprints as he had walked to and fro on his beat were just discernible and these crossed and recrossed each other in hopeless confusion.

Over the tops of the trees the sun came stealing, bathing the glade in its warming light, but Dennis heeded it not.

"Three days — west." The words kept hammering in his brain, as he sat on the edge of his bed and smoked cigarette after cigarette. Up and down the glade a sentry walked. Round the fire the police were crouched cooking their rice; over another Dennis' boy prepared his *tuan's* breakfast.

At length, when ready, he brought it over to him, poured out his coffee and departed to join the whispering police. But though the coffee grew cold and flies settled on the food,

Dennis sat on, unmoved, deep in his distraction.

This was the fourth day! For three days they had journeyed west, following Nuin's almost last conscious words. The glade was hemmed in by the impenetrable jungle; no path led out of it save that along which they had come. It formed a *cul-de-sac* indeed! And Bensaian was missing!

As Dennis sat and pondered, this one great fact became predominant. Bensaian was missing. Then what did it mean? Only that here the thing had happened, lived or breathed or moved about. Here, then, would be found the answer to the riddle! In this little glade of sunlight must they watch and wait. Into the trackless jungle he dared not enter, even if his men could hack a path. To return the way they had come would make his errand worse than fruitless. Watching and waiting only remained.

So they waited. Day turned to evening and evening into night; the dawn of another day displaced the night; the sun again rode over the tops of the jungle. But nothing happened. Only the policemen grew more frightened; only Dennis' nerves grew more frayed. Then once again the night descended, but no one in the camp dared really sleep.

'UP AND DOWN walked the

sentry, resting every now and then, as he turned, against the billian tree. A gentle breeze stirred the branches of the encircling trees, bearing on the air a faint aromatic smell, that soothed the nervous senses of the resting camp, as a narcotic dispels pain. One by one the police ceased whispering and gently dozed, calmed by the sweet fragrance. Dennis ceased his endless smoking; stretched himself at ease upon his bed. The sense of mystery seemed forgotten by all; a sense of peace seemed brooding over them.

Midnight came and the wakeful sentry was relieved. His relief, but half awake, railed at his fate — the half-conscious dozing was so pleasant, and this marching up and down the glade, while others rested, so utterly to his distaste.

As for the fortieth time he turned about at the base of the great billian tree, he lowered his rifle, rested for a few seconds with his hands upon its barrel, then leaned against the dark ridged stem; just for a moment he would rest, his rifle in his hands — just for a moment only, then once again take up his beat.

The wind in the trees was gradually increasing; the fragrance on the air became more pronounced. The camp was almost wrapt in slumber. On his bed Dennis sleepily wondered

whence came the pleasing, soothing odor, that seemed to breathe so wondrous a peace. Against the billian tree the sentry still was leaning; his rifle slipped from the faint grasp of his hands, but he heeded not the rattle as it struck the ground.

Peace in the glade from whence came so much mystery! Peace while the dread, though unknown, agent drew near apace!

Down from the top of the billian tree It slowly descended, branch by branch; slowly, carefully, silently, till it rested on the lowest branch still thirty feet above the sentry.

The bark of a deer broke the stillness of the night. From afar came an answering note. Somehow the sound awakened the sentry. He looked around him, saw the fire was burning bright, picked up his fallen rifle and commenced to walk about.

Down the far side of the tree a bark rope descended till its weighted end just rested on the ground. Down the rope, a man naked, save for a bark-made loin-cloth, descended till he, too, reached the earth. Then, pressed flatly to the great tree's trunk, he waited.

Across the glade the sentry turned about. With listless, heavy steps he was returning. Nearer and nearer he approached. At the foot of the billian tree he halted, turned and

leaned against its trunk. The tension of his limbs relaxed. The rifle slipped from his grasp, but hung suspended by the strap that had become entangled over his arm. A light unconsciousness, hardly to be designated sleep, stole over him. From the camp there was no sign of wakefulness.

SLOWLY A FIGURE crept noiselessly round the tree and stodo gazing at the policeman. Naked indeed he was, save for the *chawat* (loin-cloth) of bark; his thick black hair hung over his neck and reached beyond his shoulders, framing a face out of which gleamed two fanatical shining eyes. His body to the waist was covered with tattoo. From each of his breasts the designs started, spreading to waist-line and round to the back. The nipple of each breast gleamed a fiery burnished gold, while from their fringe spread outward, like a full-blown flower, five oval petals of wondrous purple hue. From the golden center of each flower ten long pistils spread, curving downward and round his body. At their source they too were of a purple hue, but as they reached the petals their color turned to gleaming gold which slowly changed to glistening silver as their ridged ends were circular and their silver rims framed brilliant scarlet mouths,

shaped like the sucking orifice with which the huge and slimy horse-leech gluts its loathsome thirst for blood.

The man's arms were unusually long; his fingernails had never been clipped; the splay of his toes, especially between the big and the next one, uncommonly wide.

One hand still clutched the bark rope; the other hung loosely at his side. Though he was tall, standing five feet ten inches, and heavily built, he moved as lightly as a cat.

Lightly he let go the rope and extended his two long arms toward his unconscious prey. The cry of a nightjar sounded close at hand. The somnolent sentry stirred as the sound just reached his brain. With a spring the man was upon him. One hand upon his mouth; one arm around his chest pinioning his arms to his side. With a swiftness incredible he reached the far side of the tree, let go his grasp upon the sentry's mouth, and using the rope as a rail commenced to climb step over step with an amazing agility.

"*Tolong!*" (help). The cry laden with overwhelming fear rent the stillness of the night. "*Tol . . .*"

All further sound ended in a gurgle as the relentless pressure round the sentry's chest squeezed out all breath from his body. The camp at that sudden cry of human agony and fear awoke

to life. Instinctively the police seized their rifles: the corporal blew fiercely on his whistle; Dennis hurriedly pulled on his mosquito boots and picked up his revolver from under his pillow.

"Corporall"

"*Tuan!*"

"*Siapa itu?*" (who's that?)

The cries rent the air simultaneously. Then came silence for the fraction of a second, as everyone stared hopelessly at one another as they realized the glade was empty of the sentry.

"Si Tuah! Tuah!" Dennis' voice rose in a long cry, breaking the sudden silence that followed the camp's awakening. "Tu-ah," he called again.

Somewhere from among the trees came a sound — a kind of muffled sob—a choking, gurgling cry of fear. To the edge of the jungle close to the billian tree Dennis and the corporal darted.

"Look, *Tuan!* a ropel!" the latter gasped.

"My God!" Dennis whispered. "What does it mean?"

"It's made of bark and . . ." began the corporal, but the rest of his words were drowned by a loud report.

"*Jagal Tuan, Jagal!*" (look out!) he cried as a jumbled shape came hurtling down from the branches of the tree and the frayed ends of the rope came writhing about them. The snapping of a twig overhead,

and a smoking rifle fell at their feet.

AS THE SHAPE reached the ground with a sickening bump, two figures fell apart and then lay still.

"Seize that man and bind him!" Dennis cried, pointing to the naked form as he bent over the prostrate figure of Si Tuah. "Gently, men, gently," he added as four police picked him up and carried him over to their *kajang* shelter.

His left arm hung loosely by his side, two ribs were also broken, but his heart still faintly beat. Dennis poured a little brandy down his throat. Slowly Si Tuah came to. He tried to rise to sitting posture, but fell back with a groan of pain.

"He came upon me from behind the tree — I must have dozed," he muttered. "He picked me up — the pressure of his grasp was awful — and then commenced to climb the tree, holding the rope as a rail and walking up step by step. I struggled — just as we neared the branches his grip slackened — I could not cry — I had no breath — I only groaned, I struggled once again — my foot kicked the butt of my rifle — my toe found the trigger and I pressed and pressed — there came a report — we fell — and . . ."

Si Tuah had fainted again. Dennis' eyes met those of the corporal. "The shot must have

severed the rope," he whispered.

"*Tuan*, his *nasib* (fate) was good," the corporal answered, and they crossed to where the human vulture lay, one leg twisted under him, his *chawat* all awry. As the policemen rolled him over on his face to knot the ropes — they showed but little pity for his unconscious state — the *chawat* came undone and slipped from his waist.

"Look, *Tuan*, look!" the corporal gasped, and pointed with shaking finger. "Look, he has a tail — it's not a man — it has a tail!" And feverishly he fingered the charms that hung around his neck.

Dennis looked, following the pointing finger, then bending down, looked long and closely. It was as the corporal said. The man possessed a tail — a long hard protuberance that projected from his spine for about four inches.

"Bring him to the camp," he ordered. "Place two sentries: one over him, one on the camp. He is only stunned; there are no bones broken. In the morning when *Tuah's* better we'll learn some more."

DENNIS WALKED across to his bed. The Fear was gone, but the mystery was still unexplained. The campfire burnt brightly, giving out a smell of pungent wood smoke. The soothing aromatic scent of an hour ago was no more. From the po-

lice came intermittent whisperings; from the man with the tail nought but heavy breathing. On his bed Dennis tossed and wondered.

As the early dawn first faintly flooded the sky, shriek upon shriek rent the air. Si *Tuah* had become delirious. The man with the tail awoke and listened. From a group of police squatting over a fire their voices reached him. His eyes blinked in perplexity. Quietly as he lay, he dug with his nails a small round hole in the earth about five inches deep. Then gingerly he moved and in spite of his bonds sat up. From his bed Dennis watched him. Into the hole he fitted his tail, then looked at his bonds and the group of police. He opened his mouth, but no sound came forth. His tied hands he stretched out to them. His face expressed a yearning. It was as if their voices brought a comfort or recalled a past. Then tear after tear rolled down his cheeks.

Calling the corporal, Dennis crossed to the weeping man. At Dennis' approach he looked up, then with a cry buried his face in his bound hands and rocked his body to and fro. He was afraid — afraid of a white man, the like of which he had never seen before.

"Peace, fool!" the corporal said roughly, speaking unconsciously in Murut, "stop your

wailing, the *tuan* is no ghost but a man, albeit all-powerful."

Slowly the tailed being ceased his weeping and looked up. "A man!" he muttered. "A man and the color of the gods!" He spoke a bastard Murut and Malay that made Dennis start and the corporal frown in perplexity, for his meaning was clear, though many of the words, while akin to either language, were yet unlike either. But they understood him.

"And your name?" Dennis asked, in Malay, but the being only shook his head in fear, extending his hands in supplication.

"Loosen his bonds," Dennis commanded. "Ask him his name and tribe and village."

The corporal obeyed, and then translated.

THE MAN'S name was Si Urag. He came of a Murut race that years ago had captured some Malay traders. All had been killed except the women. These had been made to marry the headmen. Then came a plague and nearly all died. The remnants, according to custom, moved their village. For days and days they walked in the trackless jungle. Then from the trees they were attacked by a race of dwarfs who lived in houses in the branches. All save him were killed. He lay stunned; when he recovered consciousness he saw that the dwarfs

had tails and that they were disemboweling the dead and dying and hanging their entrails round their necks.

Fear seized him. He tried to rise and run away. He staggered to his feet, tottered a yard or two and then collapsed. Terrified, face downward, he waited for his foes. With a rush of feet they came. He waited for the blow. It never fell. Suddenly he felt a gentle pull upon his tail — the tail over which all his life he had been ridiculed; then came a muttering of voices. From the face of the moon a cloud passed by. He was in a glade and lying near a pool. Over the air a heavy scent was hanging. Suddenly the waters stirred. Out of their depths a flaming gold and purple flower arose. Ten tentacles spread out with gaping, wide-open, blood-red mouths. Shriek upon shriek of utter agony rent the air. Into the flaming golden center each tentacle, curving inward, dropped a dwarf. Into the depths of the pool the flower sank down. All was still. Si Urag was alone.

That night he slept in a house among the branches of a tree. The surviving dwarfs had fled.

In the morning he collected the corpses of his friends and placed them near the lake. That night from his tree-house he watched. The moon was one day off the full. When at its highest point in the sky, the waters of

the pool became disturbed. Again the golden-purple flower arose from its depths and the soothing scent spread over the jungle. Again the red-mouthed tentacles spread over the shore and sucked up the corpses, curved themselves in toward the golden center, dropped in its bell-shaped mouth the stiffened bodies. Once again the human-feeding flower sank beneath the waters. Once again all was still. Gradually the narcotic smell grew less; slowly the moon sank in the west. All was dark and silent.

On the next and two following nights the flower appeared. Each night the hungry tentacles sought for food — human or animal. Then with the waning of the moon the flower rose up no more. Still in his tree-house Si Urag watched and lived. Where else was he to go? His tribe was killed; the dwarfs had fled and of them he was afraid. Because of his tail he hesitated to intermingle with other humans, even if he knew where to find them. Here was his house, safe from wild beasts that roamed at night; in the pool were many fish, in the jungle many roots and fruit. Here was the wondrous flower that fed on men, that spread its wondrous scent, to which he felt he owed his life. Here, then, he would live and consecrate his life in a kind of priesthood to the flaming gold and purple orchid.

THE CORPORAL ceased and his eyes met those of Dennis. There was no need to answer the unspoken question in them. The mystery of those disappearances was explained.

"And that?" Dennis pointed to the tattooing on the prisoner's body.

Si Urag understood the gesture, if not the words.

"Is the picture of the Flower I serve," he answered, looking at the corporal. "Two nights ago I fed it with a man clothed like that" — and he pointed to the police. "A night ago I caught a pig and deer; last night I caught a man" — he pointed to where Si Tuah lay in his delirium — "but a magic spoke from out a tube that flashed fire and the rope was severed and . . ." He shrugged with a world of meaning, then, "I am hungry; give me some rice."

For a while he ate his fill. Then when the sun rose high over the little glade Dennis questioned him further, and from his gestures formed a great resolve.

The glade of the golden-purple flower was but few miles away. A little cutting of the jungle, and a hidden path — Si Urag's path — would be found. That night the moon would be but two days past its zenith, the wondrous flower would rise for the last time for a month — or rise never to rise again, hoped Dennis.

Si Urag was complacent. Was it fear or cunning? Who could tell? His face was like a mask as he agreed to lead the little party to the pool where dwelt the sacred flower.

THE HOUR was after midnight. In the camp three police watched the delirious Si Tuah. Along a narrow track that led from the jungle to a pool, silently stole eight men. In the west a clipped moon was slowly sinking. Out of the jungle crept the men, into a glade silvered by the light of the moon.

"To the right ten paces extend!" Dennis' whispered orders faded away, giving place to a breathless gasp of surprise. There in the middle of the pool was the great golden-purple flower, its center flaming gold, its petals deepest purple, its ten pistils curling and waving about—curling and waving toward the little group of men as they emerged from the track; the blood-red, silver-rimmed mouths opening and shutting in hungry expectation. Over the glade lay the heavy aromatic scent.

Speechless, spellbound, the little party looked at the wondrous, beautiful sight. The deadening spell of that narcotic scent was spreading through their veins. Lower and lower slowly sank the moon.

Si Urag fell upon his knees, covered his face with his hands and commenced to mumble a

prayer. His action jerked the rope with which he was attached to Dennis and the corporal. With a start the former awoke as from a trance. All the waving pistils were pointing and stretching toward the huddled group. The moon was nearly touching the farther edge of the sky. Soon—soon . . .

"To the right ten paces extend!" Like pistol shots Dennis' words broke in upon the night. Unconsciously, automatically, the police obeyed. Si Urag remained in prayer. "Load!" The one word cut the stillness like a knife. The waving pistils changed their curves—followed the extending men, stretched and strained their blood-red mouths.

"At point-blank—fire!" Six tongues of flame; one loud and slightly jagged report. Four pistils writhed and twisted in an agony of death. In the flaming golden center, a jagged hole. The heavy aromatic scent came stealing stronger and stronger from the maimed and riddled center. The moon just touched the far horizon. Slowly the wondrous flower began to sink, the waters became disturbed, the pistils seemed to shrink.

Si Urag rose from his knees and prayers; uncovered his ears, over which he had placed his hand at the sound of the report. From Dennis to the corporal he looked in mute and utter supplication. From head to foot he trembled.

Slowly the moon and flower were sinking. One pistil, bigger, stronger, fuller-mouthed than the rest, seemed reluctant to retreat, but pointed and waved at the silent three.

Into his *chawat* Si Urag dived his hand. Quick as lightning he withdrew it. A slash to the right, another to the left, and he was free. A mighty spring, a piercing cry and he hurled himself, as a devotee, into the great ravenous blood-red mouth. Slowly the pistil curved inward. Over the golden bell-shaped center it poised. Then it bent its head; its silver rim distended and then closed. Si Urag was no more.

The moon sank down out of sight; the wondrous flower with its maddened, fanatical victim slipped beneath the waters of the pool. The stillness of the jungle remained; the scent of dew-laden earth arose. Darkness — and a memory — surrounded the group of seven.

THE TROPIC sleepiness of 3 p. m. hung over Klagan. Suddenly the chugging of a motor-

boat was heard coming from afar upstream. Down to the tiny floating wharf the populace descended, headed by the serang. Round the last bend swung the motorboat, drew alongside the wharf and came to rest. Out of it silently stepped Dennis and the weary police. One of them carried two rifles, which told the wondering people of a death. Two of them supported Si Tuah, which told them a struggle had taken place. Over his features spread a smile as his hands met those of his wife. "Twas a near thing, Miang," he murmured, "and it happened at the dead of night. A man with a tail and a golden-purple orchid which he worshipped."

From the people rose a gasp of wonder and cries of disbelief. Then Dennis raised his hand.

"Si Tuah speaks the truth," he said, "but Si Urag of the Tail no longer lives, and the flower no more can blossom. The Fear is dead."

Then unsteadily he walked to his house.

The Temptation Of Harringay

by H. G. Wells

IT IS QUITE impossible to say whether this thing really happened. It depends entirely on the word of R. M. Harringay, who is an artist.

Following his version of the affair, the narrative deposes that Harringay went into his studio about ten o'clock to see what he could make of the head that he had been working at the day before. The head

in question was that of an Italian organ grinder, and Harringay thought — but was not quite sure — that the title would be the "Vigil". So far he is frank, and his narrative bears the stamp of truth. He had seen the man expectant for pennies, and with a promptness that suggested genius, had had him in at once.

"Kneel. Look up at that

Suddenly the face on the canvas shut both
eyes, and . . .

bracket," said Harringay. "As if you expected pennies."

"Don't grin!" said Harringay. "I don't want to paint your gums. Look as though you were unhappy."

Now, after a night's rest, the picture proved decidedly unsatisfactory. "It's good work," said Harringay. "That little bit in the neck . . . But."

He walked about the studio and looked at the thing from this point and from that. Then he said a wicked word. In the original the word is given.

"Painting," he says he said. "Just a painting of an organ-grinder — a mere portrait. If it were a live organ-grinder I wouldn't mind. But somehow I never make things alive. I wonder if my imagination is wrong." This, too, has a truthful air. His imagination is wrong.

"That creative touch! To take canvas and pigment and make a man — as Adam was made of red ochre! But this thing! If you met it walking about the streets you would know it was only a studio production. The little boys would tell it to 'Garnome and git frimed.' Some little touch . . . Well — it won't do as it is."

He went to the blinds and began to pull them down. They were made of blue holland with the rollers at the bottom of the window, so that you pull them down to get more light.

He gathered his palette, brushes, and mahl stick from his table. Then he turned to the picture and put a speck of brown in the corner of the mouth; and shifted his attention thence to the pupil of the eye. Then he decided that the chin was a trifle too impassive for a vigil.

Presently he put down his impedimenta, and lighting a pipe surveyed the progress of his work. "I'm hanged if the thing isn't sneering at me," said Harringay, and he still believes it sneered.

The animation of the figure had certainly increased, but scarcely in the direction he wished. There was no mistake about the sneer. "Vigil of the Unbeliever," said Harringay. "Rather subtle and clever that! But the left eyebrow isn't cynical enough."

He went and dabbed at the eyebrow, and added a little to the lobe of the ear to suggest materialism. Further consideration ensued. "Vigil's off, I'm afraid," said Harringay. "Why not Mephistopheles? But that's a bit *too* common. 'A Friend of the Doge' — not so seedy. The armour won't do, though. Too Camelot. How about a scarlet robe and call him 'One of the Sacred College'? Humor in that, and an appreciation of Middle Italian History."

"There's always Benvenuto Cellini," said Harringay; "with

a clever suggestion of a gold cup in one corner. But that would scarcely suit the complexion."

HE DESCRIBES himself as babbling in this way in order to keep down an unaccountably unpleasant sensation of fear. The thing was certainly acquiring anything but a pleasing expression. Yet it was as certainly becoming far more of a living thing than it had been — if a sinister one — far more alive than anything he had ever painted before. "Call it 'Portrait of a Gentleman,'" said Harringay; "A Certain Gentleman."

"Won't do," said Harringay, still keeping up his courage. "Kind of thing they call Bad Taste. That sneer will have to come out. That gone, and a little more fire in the eye — never noticed how warm his eye was before — and he might do for —? What price Passionate Pilgrim? But that devilish face won't do — *this* side of the channel.

"Some little inaccuracy does it," he said; "eyebrows probably too oblique" — therewith pulling the blind lower to get a better light, and resuming palette and brushes.

The face on the canvas seemed animated by a spirit of its own. Where the expression of diablerie came in he found impossible to discover. Exper-

iment was necessary. The eyebrows — it could scarcely be the eyebrows? But he altered them. No, that was no better; in fact, if anything, a trifle more satanic. The corner of the mouth? Pah! more than ever a leer — and now, retouched, it was ominously grim. The eye, then? Catastrophe! he had filled his brush with vermillion instead of brown, and yet he had felt sure it was brown! The eye seemed now to have rolled in its socket, and was glaring at him an eye of fire. In a flash of passion, possibly with something of the courage of panic, he struck the brush full of bright red athwart the picture; and then a very curious thing, a very strange thing indeed, occurred — if it *did* occur.

The daibolified Italian before him shut both his eyes, pursed his mouth, and wiped the color off his face with his hand.

Then the red eye opened again, with a sound like the opening of lips, and the face smiled. "That was rather hasty of you," said the picture.

HARRINGAY STATES that, now that the worst had happened, his self-possession returned. He had a saving persuasion that devils were reasonable creatures.

"Why do you keep moving about then," he said, "making faces and all that — sneering

and squinting, while I am painting you?"

"I don't," said the picture

"You *do*," said Harringay.

"It's yourself," said the picture.

"It's *not* myself," said Harringay.

"It is yourself," said the picture. "No! don't go hitting me with that paint again, because it's true. You *have* been trying to fluke an expression on my face all the morning. Really, you haven't an idea what your picture ought to look like."

"I have," said Harringay.

"You have *not*," said the picture: "You *never* have with your pictures. You always start with the vaguest presentiment of what you are going to do; it is to be something beautiful — you are sure of that — and devout, perhaps, or tragic; but beyond that it is all experiment and chance. My dear fellow! you don't think you can paint a picture like that?"

Now it must be remembered that for what follows we have only Harringay's word.

"I shall paint a picture exactly as I like," said Harringay, calmly.

This seemed to disconcert the picture a little. "You can't paint a picture without an inspiration," it remarked.

"But I *had* an inspiration — for this."

"Inspiration!" sneered the sardonic figure; "a fancy that

came from your seeing an organ-grinder looking up at a window! Vigil! Ha, ha! You just started painting on the chance of something coming — that's what you did. And when I saw you at it I came. I want a talk with you!"

"Art, with you," said the picture — "it's a poor business. You potter. I don't know how it is, but you don't seem able to throw your soul into it. You know too much. It hampers you. In the midst of your enthusiasms you ask yourself whether something like this has not been done before. And . . ."

"Look here," said Harringay, who had expected something better than criticism from the devil. "Are you going to talk studio to me?" He filled his number twelve hoghair with red paint.

"The true artist," said the picture, "is always an ignorant man. An artist who theorizes about his work is no longer artist but critic. Wagner . . . I say! — What's the red paint for?"

"I'm going to paint you out," said Harringay. "I don't want to hear all that Tommy Rot. If you think just because I'm an artist by trade I'm going to talk studio to you, you made a precious mistake."

"One minute," said the picture, evidently alarmed. "I want

to make you an offer — a genuine offer. It's right what I'm saying. You lack inspirations. Well, no doubt you've heard of the Cathedral of Cologne, and the Devil's Bridge, and . . .

"Rubbish," said Harringay. "Do you think I want to go to perdition simply for the pleasure of painting a good picture, and getting it slated. Take that."

His blood was up. His danger only nerved him to action, so he says. So he planted a dab of vermilion in his creature's mouth. The Italian spluttered and tried to wipe it off — evidently horribly surprised. And then — according to Harringay — there began a very remarkable struggle, Harringay splashing away with the red paint, and the picture wriggling about and wiping it off as fast as he put it on. "Two masterpieces," said the demon. "Two indubitable masterpieces for a Chelsea-artist's soul. It's a bargain?" Harringay replied with the paint brush.

FOR A FEW minutes nothing could be heard but the brush going and the spluttering and ejaculations of the Italian. A lot of the strokes he caught on his arm and hand, though Harringay got over his guard often enough. Presently the paint on the palette gave out and the two antagonists stood breathless, regarding

each other. The picture was so smeared with red that it looked as if it had been rolling about a slaughterhouse, and it was painfully out of breath and very uncomfortable with the wet paint trickling down its neck. Still, the first round was in its favor on the whole. "Think," it said, sticking pluckily to its point, "two supreme masterpieces — in different styles. Each equivalent to the Cathedral . . ."

"I know," said Harringay, and rushed out of the studio and along the passage towards his wife's boudoir.

In another minute he was back with a large tin of enamel — Hedge Sparrow's Egg Tint, it was, and a brush. At the sight of that the artistic devil with the red eye began to scream. "Three masterpieces — culminating masterpieces."

Harringay delivered cut two across the demon, and followed with a thrust in the eye. There was an indistinct rumbling. "Four masterpieces," and a spitting sound.

But Harringay had the upper hand now and meant to keep it. With rapid, bold strokes he continued to paint over the writhing canvas, until at last it was a uniform field of shining Hedge Sparrow tint. Once the mouth reappeared and got as far as "Five master . . ." before he filled it with enamel; and near the end the

red eye opened and glared at him indignantly. But at last nothing remained save a gleaming panel of drying enamel. For a little while a faint stirring beneath the surface puckered it slightly here and there, but presently even that died away and the thing was perfectly still.

Then Harringay — according to Harringay's account — lit his pipe and sat down and stared at the enamelled canvas, and tried to make out clearly what

had happened. Then he walked round behind it, to see if the back of it was at all remarkable. Then it was he began to regret he had not photographed the Devil before he painted him out.

This is Harringay's story — not mine. He supports it by a small canvas (24 by 30) enamelled a pale green, and by violent assertions. It is also true that never produced a masterpiece, and in the opinion of his intimate friends probably never will.

BOOKS

BLACK MEDICINE

by Arthur J. Burks

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With the single exception of *Gautemoxin, the Visitant*, which was the feature novelet in the November 1931 issue of *STRANGE TALES*, all the stories in this volume appeared in *WEIRD TALES* between 1924 and 1928. The author first appeared in the initial Farnsworth Wright issue of *WT* (November 1924) with *Thus Spake the Prophetess*; in the February 1925 issue there started a series of his stories "Strange Tales of Santo Domingo" under the pseudonym, Estil Critchie; they are: *A Broken Lamp-Chimney*, *Desert of the Dead*, *Daylight Shadows*, *The Sorrowful Sisterhood*, *The Phantom Chibo*, and *Faces*.

Black Medicine, and the rest of the contents of this collection appeared under his own name.

For my taste, the most durable items are the novelets, *The Ghosts of Steamboat Coulee* and *Gautemoxin, the Visitant*, and the short story, *Bells of Oceana*. I can admire the power in *Black Medicine* (and others in that milieu) without particularly liking it; and *When The Graves Were Opened* is not completely vitiated by bad writing. But none of the tales are dull: *Three Coffins*, *Vale of the Corbies*, *Voodoo*, *Lutsma's Return*, round out the list of contents,

If you enjoy Burks, you will probably find this well-made book worth the price; but I must warn you that with the exceptions noted, this does not contain the cream of the author's weird tales. RAWL

The Tenants

Broussac

by Seabury Quinn

(author of *The Mansion of Unholy Magic*, *The Blood-Flower*,
etc.)

THE Rue des Batailles was justifying its name. From my table on the narrow sidewalk before the Cafe de Liberte I could view three distinct fights alternately, or simultaneously. Two cock-sparrows contended noisily for possession of a wisp

of straw, a girl with unbelievably small feet and incredibly thick ankles addressed a flood of gamin abuse to an oily-haired youth who wore a dirty black-silk muffler in lieu of a collar. At the curb a spade-bearded patron, considerably the worse for

The victims displayed peculiar bruises . . .
then, later were found crushed . . .

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vin ordinaire, haggled volubly with an unshaven taxi chauffeur over an item of five francs.

I had dropped my cigar end into my empty coffee cup, motioned the waiter for my *addition* and shoved back my chair, when a light but commanding tap fell on my shoulder.

"Now for it," I muttered, feeling sure some passing bravo, aching for a fight, had chosen me for his attentions. Turning suddenly, I looked straight into a pair of light-blue eyes, round as a cat's, and just missing a humorous expression because of their challenging directness. Beneath the eyes was a straw-colored mustache, trimly waxed into a horizontal line and bristling so belligerently as to heighten its wearer's resemblance to a truculent tom-cat. Below the feline mustache was a grin wider and friendlier than any I'd seen in Paris.

"*Par la barbe d'un bouc vert!*" swore my accoster. "If it is not truly my friend, the good Dr. Trowbridge, then I am first cousin to the Emperor of China."

"Why, de Grandin," I exclaimed, grasping his small sinewy hand, "fancy meeting you this way! I called at the *Ecole de Medecine* the day after I arrived, but they told me you were off on one of your wild goose chases and only heaven knew when you'd be back."

He tweaked the points of his

mustache alternately as he answered with another grin. "But of course! Those dull-witted ones would term my researches in the domain of inexact science a wild goose hunt. *Pardieu!* They have no vision beyond their test tubes and retorts, those ones."

"What is it this time?" I asked as we caught step. "A criminal investigation or a ghost-breaking expedition?"

"*Morbleu!*" he answered with a chuckle; "I think, perhaps, it is a little of both. Listen, my friend, do you know the country about Rouen?"

"Not I," I replied. "This is my first trip to France, and I've been here only three days."

"Ah, yes," he returned, "your ignorance of our geography is truly deplorable; but it can be remedied. Have you an inflexible program mapped out?"

"No. This is my first vacation in ten years — since 1915 — and I've made no plans, except to get as far away from medicine as possible."

"Good!" he applauded. "I can promise you a complete change from your American practise, my friend, such a change as will banish all thoughts of patients, pills and prescriptions entirely from your head. Will you join me?"

"Hm, that depends," I temporized. "What sort of case are you working on?" Discretion was the better part of accept-

ance when talking with Jules de Grandin, I knew. Educated for the profession of medicine, one of the foremost anatomists and physiologists of his generation, and a shining light in the University of Paris faculty, this restless, energetic little scientist had chosen criminology and occult investigation as a recreation from his vocational work, and had gained almost as much fame in these activities as he had in the medical world. During the war he had been a prominent, though necessarily anonymous, member of the Allied Intelligence Service; since the Armistice he had penetrated nearly every quarter of the globe on special missions for the French Ministry of Justice. It behooved me to move cautiously when he invited me to share an exploit with him; the trail might lead to India, Greenland or Tierra del Fuego before the case was closed.

"*EH BIEN*," he laughed. "You are ever the old cautious one, Friend Trowbridge. Never will you commit yourself until you have seen blueprints and specifications of the enterprize. Very well, then, listen:

"Near Rouen stands the very ancient chateau of the de Broussac family. Parts of it were built as early as the Eleventh Century; none of it is less than two hundred years old. The family has dwindled steadily in wealth

and importance until the last two generations have been reduced to living on the income derived from renting the chateau to wealthy foreigners.

"A common story, *n'est-ce pas?* Very well, wait, comes now the uncommon part: Within the past year the Chateau Broussac has had no less than six tenants; no renter has remained in possession for more than two months, and each tenancy has terminated in a tragedy of some sort.

"Stories of this kind get about; houses acquire unsavory reputations, even as people do, and tenants are becoming hard to find for the chateau. Monsieur Bergeret, the de Broussac family's *avoue*, has commissioned me to discover the reason for these interrupted tenancies; he desires me to build a dam against the flood of ill fortune which makes tenants scarce at the chateau and threatens to pauperize one of the oldest and most useless families of France."

"You say the tenancies were terminated by tragedies?" I asked, more to make conversation than from interest.

"But yes," he answered. "The cases, as I have their histories, are like this:

"Monsieur Alvarez, a wealthy Argentine cattle raiser, rented the chateau last April. He moved in with his family, his servants and entirely too many cases of champagne. He had lived there

only about six weeks when, one night, such of the guests as retained enough soberness to walk to bed missed him at the good-night round of drinks. He was also missing the following morning, and the following night. Next day a search was instituted, and a servant found his body in the chapel of the oldest part of the chateau. *Morbleu*, all the doctors in France could not reassemble him! Literally, my friend, he was strewn about the sanctuary; his limbs torn off, his head severed most untidily at the neck, every bone in his trunk smashed like crockery in a china store struck by lightning. He was like a doll pulled to pieces by a peevish child. *Voilà*, the Alvarez family decamped the premises and the Van Brundt family moved in.

"That Monsieur Van Brundt had amassed a fortune selling supplies to the *sale Boche* during the war. *Eh bien*, I could not wish him the end he had. Too much food, too much wine, too little care of his body he took. One night he rose from his bed and wandered in the chateau grounds. In the place where the ancient moat formerly was they found him, his thick body thin at last, and almost twice its natural length — squeezed out like a tube of *creme* from a lady's dressing table trodden under foot by an awkward servant. He was not a pretty sight, my friend.

"The other tenants, too, all left when some member of their families or suites met a terrifying fate. There was Simpson, the Englishman, whose crippled son fell from the battlements to the old courtyard, and Biddle, the American, whose wife now shrieks and drools in a madhouse, and Muset, the banker from Montreal, who woke one night from a doze in his study chair to see Death staring him in the eye.

"Now Monsieur Luke Bixby, from Oklahoma, resides at Broussac with his wife and daughter, and — I wait to hear of a misfortune in their midst.

"You will come with me? You will help me avert peril for a fellow countryman?"

"Oh, I suppose so," I agreed. One part of France appealed to me as strongly as another, and de Grandin was never a dull companion.

"Ah, good," he exclaimed, offering his hand in token of our compact. "Together, *mon vieux*, we shall prove such a team as the curse of Broussac shall find hard to contend with."

2

THE SUN was well down toward the horizon when our funny little train puffed officiously into Rouen the following day. The long European twilight had dissolved into darkness, and oblique shadows slant-

ed from the trees in the nascent moonlight as our hired *moteur* entered the chateau park.

"Good evening, Monsieur Bixby," de Grandin greeted as we followed the servant into the great hallway. "I have taken the liberty to bring a compatriot of yours, Dr. Trowbridge, with me to aid in my researches." He shot me a meaning glance as he hurried on. "Your kindness in permitting me the facilities of the chateau library is greatly appreciated, I do assure you."

Bixby, a big, full-fleshed man with ruddy face and drooping mustache, smiled amiably. "Oh, that's all right, Monsoor," he answered. "There must be a couple o' million books stacked up in there, and I can't read a one of 'em. But I've got to pay rent on 'em, just the same, so I'm mighty glad you, or someone who savvies the lingo, can put 'em to use."

"And Madame Bixby, she is well, and the so charming *Mademoiselle*, she, too, is in good health, I trust?"

Our host looked worried. "To tell you the truth, she ain't," he replied. "Mother and I had reckoned a stay in one of these old houses here in France would be just the thing for her, but it seems like she ain't doin' so well as we'd hoped. Maybe we'd better try Switzerland for a spell; they say the mountain air there . . ."

De Grandin bent forward eagerly. "What is the nature of *Mademoiselle's* indisposition?" he asked. "Dr. Trowbridge is one of your America's most famous physicians, perhaps he . . ." He paused significantly.

"That so?" Bixby beamed on me. "I'd kind o' figured you was one of them doctors of philosophy we see so many of round here, 'stead of a regular doctor. Now, if you'd be so good as to look at Adrienne, Doc, I'd take it right kindly. Will you come this way? I'll see supper's ready by the time you get through with her."

He led us up a magnificent stairway of ancient carved oak, down a corridor paneled in priceless wainscot, and knocked gently at a high-arched door of age-blackened wood. "Adrienne, darlin'," he called in a huskily tender voice, "here's a doctor to see you — an American doctor, honey. Can you see him?"

"Yes," came the reply from beyond the door, and we entered a bedroom as large as a barrack, furnished with articles of antique design worth their weight in gold to any museum rich enough to buy them.

FAIR-HAIRED and violet-eyed, slender to the borderline of emaciation, and with too high flush on her cheeks, Bixby's daughter lay propped among a heap of real-lace pillows on the great carved bed,

the white of her thin throat and arms only a shade warmer than the white of her silk nightdress.

Her father tiptoed from the room with clumsy care and I began my examination, observing her heart and lung action by auscultation and palpation, taking her pulse and estimating her temperature as accurately as possible without my clinical thermometer. Though she appeared suffering from fatigue, there was no evidence of functional or organic weakness in any of her organs.

"Hm," I muttered, looking as professionally wise as possible, "just how long have you felt ill, Miss Bixby?"

The girl burst into a storm of tears. "I'm not ill," she denied hotly. "I'm not — oh, why won't you all go away and leave me alone? I don't know what's the matter with me. I — I just want to be let alone!" She buried her face in a pillow and her narrow shoulders shook with sobs.

"Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin whispered, "a tonic — something simple, like a glass of sherry with meals — is indicated, I think. Meantime, let us repair to the so excellent supper which waits below."

We repaired. There was nothing else to do. His advice was sound, I knew, for all the physician's skill is powerless to

cheer a young woman who craves the luxury of being miserable.

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FIND ANYTHING serious, Doc?" Bixby asked as de Grandin and I seated ourselves in the chateau's paneled dining hall.

"No," I reassured him. "She seems a little run down, but there's certainly nothing wrong which can't be corrected by a light tonic, some judicious exercise and plenty of rest."

"Uh-huh?" he nodded, brightening. "I've been right smart worried over her, lately."

"You know, we wasn't always rich. Up to a couple o' years ago we was poor as church mice — land poor, in the bargain. Then, when they begun findin' oil all round our place, Mother kept at me till I started some drillin', too, and darned if we didn't bring in a gusher first crack outa the box."

"Adrienne used to teach school when we was ranchin' it — tryin' to, rather — an' she an' a young lawyer, name o' Ray Keefer, had it all fixed up to get married."

"Ray was a good, upstandin' boy, too. Had a considerable practice worked up over Bartleville way, took his own company overseas durin' the war, an' would a' been run for the legislature in a little while, like

as not. But when we started takin' royalties on our leases at the rate of about three hundred dollars a week, Mother, she ups and says he warn't no fittin' match for our daughter.

"Then she and Adrienne had it hot an' heavy, with me stayin' outa the fuss an' bein' neutral, as far as possible. Mother was all for breakin' the engagement off short, Adrienne was set on gettin' married right away, an' they finally compromised by agreein' to call a truce for a year while Ray stayed home an' looked after his practice an' Adrienne come over here to Europe with Mother an' me to see the world an' 'have her mind broadened by travel,' as Mother says.

"She's been gettin' a letter from Ray at every stop we made since we left home, an' sendin' back answers just as regular, till we come here. Lately she ain't seemed to care nothin' about Ray, one way or the other. Don't answer his letters — half the time don't trouble to open 'em, even, an' goes around the place as if she was sleep-walkin'. Seems kind o' peaked an' run down, like, too. We've been right worried over her. You're sure it ain't consumption, or nothin' like that, Doc?" He looked anxiously at me again.

"Have no fear, *Monsieur*," de Grandin answered for me. "Dr.

Trowbridge and I will give the young lady our greatest care; rest assured, we shall effect a complete cure. We . . ."

Two shots, following each other in quick succession, sounded from the grounds outside, cutting short his words. We rushed to the entrance, meeting a breathless gamekeeper in the corridor. "*Le serpent, le serpent!*" he exclaimed excitedly, rushing up to Bixby. "*Ohe, Monsieur, un serpent monstrueux, dans le jardin!*"

"What is it you say?" de Grandin demanded. "A serpent in the garden? Where, when; how big?"

The fellow spread his arms to their fullest reach, extending his fingers to increase the space compassed. "A great, a tremendous serpent, *Monsieur*," he panted. "Greater than the boa constrictor in the Paris menagerie — ten meters long, at the shortest!"

"*Pardieu*, a snake thirty feet long?" de Grandin breathed incredulously. "Come, *mon enfant*, take us to the spot where you saw this so great zoological wonder."

"Here, 'twas here I saw him, with my own two eyes," the man almost screamed in his excitement, pointing to a small copse of evergreens growing close beside the chateau wall. "See, it's here the shots I fired at him cut the bushes" — he pointed to several broken

limbs where buckshot from his fowling piece had crashed through the shrubs.

"Here? *Mon Dieu!*" muttered de Grandin.

"Huh!" Bixby produced a plug of tobacco and bit off a generous mouthful. "If you don't lay off that brandy they sell down at the village you'll be seein' pink elephants roostin' in the trees pretty soon. A thirty-foot snake! In this country? Why, we don't grow 'em that big in Oklahoma! Come on, gentlemen, let's get to bed; this feller's snake didn't come out o' no hole in the wall, he came outa a bottle!"

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MRS. BIXBY, a buxom woman with pale eyes and tinted hair, had small courtesy to waste on us next morning at breakfast. A physician from America who obviously did not enjoy an ultra fashionable practise at home, and an undersized foreigner with a passion for old books, bulked of small importance in her price-marked world. Bixby was taciturn with the embarrassed silence of a wife-ridden man before strangers, and de Grandin and I went into the library immediately following the meal without any attempt at making table talk.

My work consisted, for the most part, of lugging ancient volumes in scuffed bindings

from the high shelves and piling them on the table before my colleague. After one or two attempts I gave over the effort to read them, since those not in archaic French were in monkish Latin, both of which were as unintelligible to me as Choctaw.

The little Frenchman, however, dived into the moldering tomes like a gourmet attacking a feast, making voluminous notes, nodding his head furiously as statement after statement in the books seemed to confirm some theory of his, or muttering an occasional approving "*Morbleu!*" or "*Pardieu!*"

"Friend Trowbridge," he looked up from the dusty book spread before him and fixed me with his unwinking stare, "is it not time you saw our fair patient? Go to her, my friend, and whether she approves or whether she objects, apply the stethoscope to her breast, and, while you do so, *examine her torso for bruises.*"

"Bruises?" I echoed.

"Precisely, exactly, quite so!" he shot back. "Bruises, I have said it. They may be of the significance, they may not, but if they are present I desire to know it. I have an hypothesis."

"Oh, very well," I agreed, and went to find my stethoscope.

Though she had not been present at breakfast, I scarcely expected to find Adrienne Bix-

by in bed, for it was nearly noon when I rapped at her door.

"S-s-s-sh, *Monsieur le Docteur*," cautioned the maid who answered my summons. "*Mademoiselle* is still asleep. She is exhausted, the poor, pretty one."

"Who is it, Roxanne?" Adrienne demanded in a sleepy, querulous voice. "Tell them to go away."

I inserted my foot in the door and spoke softly to the maid. "*Mademoiselle* is more seriously ill than she realizes; it is necessary that I make an examination."

"Oh, good morning, doctor," the girl said as I pushed past the maid and approached the bed. Her eyes widened with concern as she saw the stethoscope dangling from my hand. "Is — is there anything the matter — seriously the matter with me?" she asked. "My heart? My lungs?"

"We don't know yet," I evaded. "Very often, you know, symptoms which seem of no importance prove of the greatest importance; then, again, we often find that signs which seem serious at first mean nothing at all. That's it, just lie back, it will be over in a moment."

I PLACED the instrument against her thin chest, and, as I listened to the accelerated beating of her healthy young heart, glanced quickly down along the line of her ribs be-

neath the low neckband of her nightrobe.

"Oh, oh, doctor, what is it?" the girl cried in alarm, for I had started back so violently that one of the earphones was shaken from my head. Around the young girl's body, over the ribs, was *an ascending livid spiral*, definitely marked, as though a heavy rope had been wound about her, then drawn taut.

"How did you get that bruise?" I demanded, tucking my stethoscope into my pocket.

A quick flush mantled her neck and cheeks, but her eyes were honest as she answered simply, "I don't know, doctor. It's something I can't explain. When we first came here to Broussac I was as well as could be; we'd only been here about three weeks when I began to feel all used up in the morning. I'd go to bed early and sleep late and spend most of the day lying around, but I never seemed to get enough rest. I began to notice these bruises about that time, too. First they were on my arm, about the wrist or above the elbow — several times all the way up. Lately they've been around my waist and body, sometimes on my shoulders, too, and every morning I feel tireder than the day before. Then — then" — she turned her face from me and tears welled in her eyes — "I don't seem to be interested in

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th-things the way I used to be. Oh, doctor, I wish I were dead! I'm no earthly good, and . . ."

"Now, now," I soothed. "I know what you mean when you say you've lost interest in 'things'. There'll be plenty of interest when you get back to Oklahoma again, young lady."

"Oh, doctor, are we going back, really? I asked Mother if we mightn't yesterday and she said Dad had leased this place for a year and we'd have to stay until the lease expired. Do you mean she's changed her mind?"

"M'm, well," I temporized, "perhaps you won't leave Broussac right away; but you remember that old saying about Mohammed and the mountain? Suppose we were to import a little bit of Oklahoma to France, what then?"

"No!" She shook her head vigorously and her eyes filled with tears again. "I don't want Ray to come here. This is an evil place, doctor. It makes people forget all they ever loved and cherished. If he came here he might forget me as . . ." the sentence dissolved in a fresh flood of tears.

"Well, well," I comforted, "we'll see if we can't get Mother to listen to medical advice."

"Mother never listened to anybody's advice," she sobbed as I closed the door softly and hurried downstairs to tell de Grandin my discovery.

"*CORDIEU*" de Grandin swore excitedly as I concluded my recitation. "A bruise? A bruise about her so white body, and before that on her arms? *Non d'un nom!* My friend, this plot, it acquires the thickness. What do you think?"

"M'm." I searched my memory for long-forgotten articles in the *MEDICAL TIMES*. "I've read of these stigmata appearing on patients' bodies. They were usually connected with the presence of some wasting disease and an abnormal state of mind, such as extreme religious fervor, or . . ."

"Ah, bahl!" he cut in. "Friend Trowbridge, you can not measure the wind with a yardstick nor weigh a thought on the scales. We deal with something not referable to clinical experiments in this case, or I am much mistaken."

"Why, how do you mean . . .?" I began, but he turned away with an impatient shrug.

"I mean nothing, now," he answered. "The wise judge is he who gives no decision until he has heard all the testimony." Again he commenced reading from the huge volume open before him, making notations on a slip of paper as his eyes traveled rapidly down the lines of faded type.

Mrs. Bixby did not join us at dinner that evening, and, as a

consequence, the conversation was much less restrained. Coffee was served in the small corridor connecting the wide entrance hall with the library, and, under the influence of a hearty meal, three kinds of wine and several glasses of *liqueur*, our host expanded like a flower in the sun.

"They tell me Jo-an of Arch was burned to death in Ruin," he commented as he bit the end from a cigar and elevated one knee over the arm of his chair. "Queer way to treat a girl who'd done so much for 'em, seems to me. The guide told us she's been made a saint or somethin' since then, though."

"Yes," I assented idly, "having burned her body and anatomized her soul, the ecclesiastical authorities later decided the poor child's spirit was unjustly condemned. Too bad a little of their sense of justice wasn't felt by the court which tried her in Rouen."

De Grandin looked quizzically at me as he pulled his waxed mustaches alternately, for all the world like a tom-cat combing his whiskers. "Throw not too many stones, my friend," he cautioned. "Nearly five hundred years have passed since the Maid of Orleans was burned as a heretic. Today your American courts convict high school teachers for heresy far less grave than that charged against our Jeanne. We may yet see the bones of

your so estimable Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin exhumed from their graves and publicly burned by your heretic-baiters of this today. No, no, my friend, it is not for us of today to sneer at the heretic-burners of yesterday. Torquemada's body lies in the tomb these many years, but his spirit still lives. *Mon Dieu!* What is it that I say? 'His spirit still lives'? *Sacre nom d'une souris!* That may be the answer!" And, as if propelled by a spring, he bounded from his seat and rushed madly down the corridor into the library.

"De Grandin, what's the matter?" I asked as I followed him into the book-lined room.

"Non, non, go away, take a walk, go to the devil!" he shot back, staring wildly around the room, his eager eyes searching feverishly for a particular volume. "You vex me, you annoy me, you harass me; I would be alone at this time. Get out!"

Puzzled and angered by his brusqueness, I turned to leave, but he called over his shoulder as I reached the door: "Friend Trowbridge, please interview Monsieur Bixby's chef and obtain from him a sack of flour. Bring it here to me in not less than an hour, please."

6

"FORGIVE MY rudeness, Friend Trowbridge," he apolo-

gized when I re-entered the library an hour or so later, a parcel of flour from Bixby's pantry under my arm. "I had a thought which required all my concentration at the time, and any disturbing influence — even your own always welcome presence — would have distracted my attention. I am sorry and ashamed I spoke so."

"Oh, never mind that," I replied. "Did you find what you were looking for?"

He nodded emphatically. "*Mais oui*," he assured me. "All which I sought — and more. Now let us to work. First I would have you go with me into the garden where that game-keeper saw the serpent last night."

"But he couldn't have seen such a snake," I protested as we left the library. "We all agreed the fellow was drunk."

"Surely, exactly; of course," he conceded, nodding vigorously. "Undoubtedly the man had drunk brandy. Do you recall, by any chance, the wise old Latin proverb, '*In vino veritas*'?"

"In wine is truth?" I translated tentatively. "How could the fact that the man was drunk when he imagined he saw a thirty-foot snake in a French garden make the snake exist when we know perfectly well such a thing could not be?"

"*Oh la, la*," he chuckled. "What a sober-sided one you are, *cher ami*. It was here the

fellow declared *Monsieur le Serpent* emerged, was it not? See, here are the shot-marks on the shrubs."

He bent, parting the bushes carefully, and crawled toward the chateau's stone foundation. "Observe," he commanded in a whisper, "between these stones the cement has weathered away, the opening is great enough to permit passage of a sixty-foot serpent, did one desire to come this way. No?"

"True enough," I agreed, "but the driveway out there would give room for the great Atlantic sea serpent himself to crawl about. You don't contend he's making use of it, though, do you?"

He tapped his teeth thoughtfully with his forefinger, paying no attention to my sarcasm. "Let us go within," he suggested, brushing the leaf-mold carefully from his knees as he rose.

WE RE-ENTERED the house and he led the way through one winding passage after another, unlocking a succession of nail-studded doors with the bunch of jangling iron keys he obtained from Bixby's butler.

"And here is the chapel," he announced when half an hour's steady walk brought us to a final age-stained door. "It was here they found that so unfortunate Monsieur Alvarez. A gloomy place in which to die, truly."

It was, indeed. The little sanctuary lay dungeon - deep, without windows or, apparently, any means of external ventilation. Its vaulted roof was composed of a series of equilateral arches whose stringers rose a scant six feet above the floor and rested on great blocks of flint carved in hideous designs of dragons' and griffins' heads. The low altar stood against the farther wall, its silver crucifix blackened with age and all but eaten away with erosion. Row on row, about the low upright walls, were lined the crypts containing the coffins of long dead de Broussacs, each closed with a marble slab engraved with the name and title of its occupant. A pall of cobwebs, almost as heavy as woven fabrics, festooned from vaulted ceiling to floor, intensifying the air of ghostly gloom which hung about the chamber like the acrid odor of ancient incense.

My companion set the flickering candle-lantern upon the floor beside the doorway and broke open the package of flour. "See, Friend Trowbridge, do as I do," he directed, dipping his hand into the flour and sprinkling the white powder lightly over the flagstone pavement of the chapel. "Back away toward the door," he commanded, "and on no account leave a footprint in the meal. We must have a fair, unsoiled page for our records."

Wonderingly, but willingly, I helped him spread a film of flour over the chapel floor from altar-step to doorway, then turned upon him with a question: "What do you expect to find in this meal, de Grandin? Surely not footprints. No one who did not have to would come to this ghastly place."

He nodded seriously at me as he picked up his lantern and the remains of the package of flour. "Partly right and partly wrong you are, my friend. One may come who must, one may come who wants. Tomorrow, perhaps, we shall know more than we do today."

7

I WAS IN the midst of my toilet when he burst into my bedroom next morning, feline mustache bristling, his round eyes fairly snapping with excitement. "Come, *mon vieux*," he urged, tugging at my arm as a nervous terrier might have urged his master to go for a romp, "come and see; right away, quick, at once, immediately!"

We hastened through the chateau's modern wing, passed the doors blocking the corridors of the fifteenth century buildings and came at last to the eleventh century chapel. De Grandin paused before the oak-and-iron door like a showman about to raise the curtain from an exhib-

it as he lit the candle in his lantern, and I heard his small, even teeth clicking together in a chill of suppressed excitement. "Behold, *mon ami*," he commanded in a hoarse whisper more expressive of emotion than a shout, "behold what writings are on the page which we did prepare!"

I looked through the arched doorway, then turned to him, dumb with surprise.

Leading from the chapel entrance, and ending at the center of the floor, directly before the altar, was the unmistakable trail of little, naked feet. No woodcraft was needed to trace the walker's course. She had entered the sanctuary, marched straight and unswervingly to a spot about fifteen feet from the altar, but directly before it, then turned about slowly in a tiny circle, no more than two feet in diameter, for at that point the footprints were so superimposed on each other that all individual traces were lost.

But the other track which showed in the strewn flour was less easily explained. Beginning at a point directly opposite the place the footprints ceased, this other trail ran some three or four inches wide in a lazy zigzag, as though a single automobile wheel had been rolled in an uncertain course across the floor by someone staggeringly drunk. But no prints of feet followed the wheel-track.

The thing had apparently traversed the floor of its own volition.

"See," de Grandin whispered, "flour-prints lead away from the door" — he pointed to a series of white prints, plainly describing bare heels and toes, leading up the passage from the chapel floor, diminishing in clearness with each step until they faded out some ten paces toward the modern part of the chateau. "And see," he repeated, drawing me inside the chapel to the wall where the other, inexplicable, track began, "a trail leads outward here, too."

Following his pointing finger with my eye I saw what I had not noticed before, a cleft in the chapel wall some five inches wide, evidently the result of crumbling cement and gradually sinking foundation stones. At the entrance of the fissure a tiny pile of flour showed, as though some object previously dusted with the powder had been forced through the crevice.

I BLINKED stupidly at him. "Wh-what is this track?" I asked in bewilderment.

"Ah, bah!" he exclaimed disgustedly. "The blindest man is he who shuts his own eyes, my friend. Did you never, as a boy, come upon the trail of a serpent in the dusty road?"

"A snake track" — my mind refused the evidence of my eyes

— “but how can that be—here?”

“The gamekeeper *thought* he saw a serpent in the garden *exactly outside this chapel*,” de Grandin replied in a low voice, “and it was where that besotted gamekeeper *imagined* he beheld a serpent that the body of Mijneer Van Brundt was found crushed out of semblance to a human man. Tell me, Friend Trowbridge — you know something of zoology — what creature, besides the constrictor-snake, kills his prey by crushing each bone of his body till nothing but shapeless pulp remains? *Hein?*”

“Bu—but . . .” I began, when he cut me short.

“Go call on our patient,” he commanded. “If she sleeps, do not awaken her, but *observe the drugget on her floor!*”

I hastened to Adrienne Bixby's room, pushed unceremoniously past Roxanne, the maid, and tiptoed to the girl's bedside. She lay on her side, one cheek pillowed on her arm, sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion. I bent over her a moment, listening to her even breathing, then, nodding to the maid, turned and walked softly from the room, my eyes glued to the dark-red plush carpet which covered the chamber floor.

Five minutes later I met the little Frenchman in the library, my excitement now as high as his own. “De Grandin,” I whis-

pered, involuntarily lowering my voice, “I looked at her carpet. The thing's made of red velvet and shows a spot of dust ten feet away. A trail of faint white footprints leads right up to her bed!”

8

“*SACRE nom d'un petit bon-homme!*” He reached for his green felt hat and turned toward the door. “The trail becomes clear; even my good, skeptical friend Trowbridge can follow it, I think. Come *cher ami*, let us see what we can see.”

He led me through the cha-teau park, between the rows of tall, trembling poplar trees, to a spot where black-boughed evergreens cast perpetual shade above a stone-fenced area of a scant half acre. Rose bushes, long deteriorated from their cultivated state, ran riot over the ground, the whole enclosure had the gloomy aspect of a deserted cemetery. “Why,” I asked, “what place is this, de Grandin? It's as different from the rest of the park as . . .”

“As death is from life, *n'est-ce-pas?*” he interjected. “Yes, so it is, truly. Observe.” He parted a mass of intertwined brambles and pointed to a slab of stone, once white, but now brown and roughened with centuries of exposure. “Can you read the inscription?” he asked.

The letters, once deeply cut

in the stone, were almost obliterated, but I made out.

**Ci GIT TOUJOURS RAIMOND
SEIGNEUR DE BROUSSAC**

"What does it say?" he demanded.

"Here lies Raimond, Lord of Broussac," I replied, translating as well as I could.

"Non, non," he contradicted. "It does not say, '*Ci git*,' here lies; but '*Ci git toujours*' — here lies always, or forever. Eh, my friend, what do you make of that, if anything?"

"Dead men usually lie permanently," I countered.

"Ah, so? Have I not heard your countrymen sing:

*"John Brown's body lies a-moldering
in the grave,*

But his soul goes marching on."

"What of the poor Seigneur de Broussac, is he to lie buried here *toujours*, or shall he, too, not rise once again?"

"I'm not familiar with French idioms," I defended. "Perhaps the stonemason merely intended to say the Seigneur de Broussac lies here for his last long sleep."

"*Cher* Trowbridge," de Grandin replied, speaking with slow impressiveness, "when a man's monument is carved the words are not chosen without due consideration. Who chose Raimond de Broussac's epitaph thought long upon its wording,

and when he dictated those words his wish was father to his thought."

He stared thoughtfully at the crumbling stone a moment, repeating softly to himself, "And *Madame Tabesse* said, 'Snake thou art, and . . .'" he shook his shoulders in an impatient shrug as though to throw off some oppressive train of thought. "*Eh bien*, but we waste time here, my friend; let us make an experiment." Turning on his heel he led the way to the stables.

"I would have some boards, a hammer and some sharp nails, if you please," he informed the hostler who greeted us at the barn door. "My friend, the very learned *Docteur* Trowbridge, from America, and I desire to test an idea."

WHEN THE servant brought the desired materials, de Grandin sawed the boards into two lengths, one about eighteen inches, the other about three feet, and through these he drove the sharp-pointed horse-shoe nails at intervals of about three-quarters of an inch, so that, when he finished, he had what resembled two large combs of which the boards were the backs and the needle-pointed nails the teeth. "Now," he announced, surveying his work critically, "I think we are prepared to give a little surprise party."

Taking up the hammer and two short pieces of boards in addition to his "combs", he led the way to the spot outside the chateau walls where the tipsy gamekeeper claimed to have seen the great snake. Here he attached the two strips of wood at right angles to the shorter of the pieces of board through which he had driven the nails, then, using the lateral lengths of wood as staked, attached the comblike contrivance he had made firmly to the earth, its back resting levelly in the ground, its sharp spikes pointing upward before the crevice in the chateau foundations. Any animal larger than an earthworm desiring to make use of the crack in the wall as a passageway would have to jump or crawl over the sharp, lance-like points of the nails. "*Bien*," he commented, viewing his work with approval, "now to put your wise American maxim of 'Safety First' into practice."

We found our way to the ancient, gloomy chapel, and he wedged the longer of the nail-filled boards firmly between the jambs at the inner side of the doorway. "And now," he announced, as we turned once more toward the inhabited part of the house, "I have the splendid appetite for dinner, and for sleep, too, when bedtime arrives."

"What on earth does all this child's play mean, de Grandin?"

I demanded, my curiosity getting the better of me.

He winked roguishly by way of answer, whistled a snatch of tune, then remarked, irrelevantly, "If you have the desire to gamble, *cher ami*, I will lay you a wager of five francs that our fair patient will be improved tomorrow morning."

9

HE WON the bet. For the first time since we had been seen at Broussac, Adrienne Bixby was at the breakfast table the following day, and the healthy color in her cheeks and the clear sparkle of her lovely eyes told of a long, restful sleep.

Two more days passed, each seeing a marked improvement in her spirits and appearance. The purple semi-circles beneath her eyes faded to a wholesome pink, her laughter rippled like the sound of a purling brook among the shadows of the chateau's gloomy halls.

"I gotta hand it to you, Doc," Bixby complimented me. "You've shore brought my little girl round in great shape. Name your figger an' I'll pay the bill, an' never paid one with a better heart, neither."

"Dr. Trowbridge," Adrienne accosted me one morning as I was about to join de Grandin in the library. "Remember what you said about importing a

little bit of Oklahoma to France the other day? Well, I've just received a letter — the dearest letter — from Ray. He's coming over — he'll be here day after tomorrow, I think, and no matter what Mother says or does, we're going to be married, right away. I've been Mrs. Bixby's daughter long enough; now I'm going to be Mr. Keefer's wife. If Mother makes Dad refuse to give us any money, it won't make the least little bit of difference. I taught school before Father got his money, and I know how to live as a poor man's wife. I'm going to have my man — my own man — and no one — *no one at all* — shall keep him away from me one day longer!

"Good for you!" I applauded her rebellion. Without knowing young Keefer I was sure he must be a very desirable sort of person to have incurred the enmity of such a character as Bixby's wife.

But next morning Adrienne was not at breakfast, and the downcast expression of her father's face told his disappointment more eloquently than any words he could have summoned. "Reckon the girl's had a little set-back, Doc," he muttered, averting his eyes. His wife looked me fairly between the brows, and though she said never a word I felt she consid-

ered me a pretty poor specimen of medical practitioner.

"*Mais non, Monsieur le Docteur,*" Roxanne demurred when I knocked at Addrienne's door, "you shall not waken her. The poor lamb is sleeping, she exhaust this morning, and she shall have her sleep. I, Roxanne, say so."

Nevertheless, I shook Adrienne gently, rousing her from a sleep which seemed more stupor than slumber. "Come, come, my dear," I scolded, "this won't do, you know. You've got to brace up. You don't want Ray to find you in this condition, do you? Remember, he's due at Broussac tomorrow."

"Is he?" she answered indifferently. "I don't care. Oh, doctor, I'm — so — tired." She was asleep again, almost at the last word.

I TURNED BACK the covers and lifted the collar of her robe. About her body, purple as the marks of a whiplash, lay the wide, circular bruise, fresher and more extensive than it had been the day I first noticed it.

"Death of my life!" de Grandin swore when I found him in the library and told him what I had seen. "That *sacre* bruise again? Oh, it is too much! Come and see what else I have found this cursed day!" Seizing my hand he half led, half dragged me outdoors, halting at the clump of evergreens where he

had fixed his nail-studded board beside the chateau wall.

Ripped from its place and lying some ten feet away was the board, its nails turned upward in the morning sunlight and reminding me, somehow, of the malicious grin from a fleshless skull.

"Why, how did this happen?" I asked.

He pointed mutely to the moist earth in which the dwarf cedars grew, his hand shaking with excitement and rage. In the soft loam beside the place where the board had been fixed were the prints of two tiny, bare feet.

"What's it mean?" I demanded, exasperated at the way he withheld information from me, but his answer was no more enlightening than any of his former cryptic utterances.

"The battle is joined, my friend," he replied through set teeth. "Amuse yourself as you will — or can — this day. I go to Rouen right away, immediately, at once. There are weapons I must have for this fight besides those we now have. Eh, but it will be a fight to the death! Yes, *par la croix*, and we shall help Death reclaim his own too. *Pardieu!* Am I not Jules de Grandin? Am I to be made a monkey of by one who preys on women? *Morbleu*, we shall see!"

And with that he left me, striding toward the stables in

search of a motor car, his little yellow mustache bristling with fury, his blue eyes snapping, French oaths pouring from him like spray from a garden-sprinkler.

10

IT WAS DARK before he returned, his green hat set at a rakish angle over his right ear, a long, closely wrapped brown paper parcel under his arm. "*Eh bien*," he confided to me with an elfish grin, "it required much argument to secure this. That old priest, he is a stubborn one, and unbelieving, almost as skeptical as you, Friend Trowbridge."

"What on earth is it?" I demanded, looking curiously at the package. Except that it was too long, it might have been an umbrella, judging by its shape.

He winked mysteriously as he led the way to his room, where, having glanced about furtively, as though he apprehended some secret watcher, he laid the bundle on the bed and began cutting the strings securing its brown paper swaddling clothes with his pocket knife. Laying back the final layer of paper he uncovered a long sword, such a weapon as I had never beheld outside a museum. The blade was about three and a half feet in length, tapering from almost four inches and a half at the tip, where,

it terminated in a beveled point. Unlike modern weapons, this one was furnished with two sharpened edges, almost keen enough to do duty for a knife, and, instead of the usual groove found on the sides of sword blades, its center presented a distinct ridge where the steep bevels met at an obtuse angle as they sloped from the edges. The handle, made of ivory or some smoothly polished bone, was long enough to permit a two-handed grip, and the hilt which crossed the blade at a right angle turned downward toward the point, its ends terminating in rather clumsily carved cherubs' heads. Along the blade, apparently carved, rather than etched, marched a procession of miscellaneous angels, demons and men at arms with a mythological monster, such as a griffin or dragon, thrown in for occasional good measure. Between the crudely carved figures I made out the letters of the motto: *Dei Gratia* — by the grace of God. "Well?" I asked wonderingly as I viewed the ancient weapon.

"Well?" he repeated mockingly, then: "Had you as many blessings on your head as this old bit of carved metal has received, you would be a very holy man, indeed Friend Trowbridge. This sword, it was once strapped to the thigh of a saint — it matters not which

one — who fought the battles of France when France needed all the champions, saintly or otherwise, she could summon. For centuries it has reposed in a very ancient church at Rouen, not, indeed, as a relic, but as a souvenir scarcely less venerated. When I told the *cure* I proposed borrowing it for a day or more I thought he would die of the apoplexy forthwith, but" — he gave his diminutive mustache a complacent tweak — "such was my power of persuasion that you see before you the very sword."

"But what under heaven will you do with the thing, now you've got it?" I demanded.

"Much — perhaps," he responded, picking up the weapon, which must have weighed at least twenty pounds, and balancing it in both hands as a wood-chopper holds his ax before attacking a log.

"*Nom d'un bouc!*" he glanced suddenly at his wrist-watch and replaced the sword on his bed. "I do forget myself. Run, my friend, fly, fly like the swallow to Mademoiselle Adrienne's room and caution her to remain within — at all hazards. Bid her close her windows, too, for we know not what may be abroad or what can climb a wall this night. See that stubborn, pig-foolish maid of hers has instructions to lock her mistress' door on the inside and, should *Mademoiselle* rise

in the night and desire to leave, on no account permit her to pass. You understand?"

"No, I'll be hanged if I do," I replied. "What . . .?"

"*Non, non!*" he almost shrieked. "Waste not time nor words, my friend. I desire that you should do as I say. Hurry, I implore; it is of the importance, I do assure you."

I DID AS he requested, having less difficulty than I had expected concerning the windows, since Adrienne was already sunk in a heavy sleep and Roxanne possessed the French peasant's inborn hatred of fresh air.

"Good, very, very good," de Grandin commended when I rejoined him. "Now we shall wait until the second quarter of the night — then, ah, perhaps I show you something to think about in the after years, Friend Trowbridge."

He paced the floor like a caged animal for a quarter-hour, smoking one cigarette after another, then: "Let us go," he ordered curtly, picking up the giant sword and shouldering it as a soldier does his rifle. "*Aller au feu!*"

We tramped down the corridor toward the stairway, when he turned quickly, almost transfixing me with the sword blade, which projected two feet and more beyond his shoulder. "One more inspection, Friend Trow-

bridge," he urged. "Let us see how it goes with Mademoiselle Adrienne. *Eh bien*, do we not carry her colors into battle this night?"

"Never mind that monkey-business!" we heard a throaty feminine voice command as we approached Adrienne's room. "I've stood about all I intend to from you; tomorrow you pack your clothes, if you've any to pack, and get out of this house."

"Eh, what is this?" de Grandin demanded as we reached the chamber door and beheld Roxanne weeping bitterly, while Mrs. Bixby towered over her like a Cochin hen bullying a half-starved sparrow.

"I'll tell you what it is!" replied the irate mistress of the house. "I came to say good-night to my daughter a few minutes ago and this — this hussy! — refused to open the door for me. I soon settled her, I can tell you. I told her to open that door and get out. When I went into the room I found every window locked tight — in this weather, too.

"Now I catch her hanging around the door after I'd ordered her to her room. Insubordination; rank insubordination, it is. She leaves this house bright and early tomorrow morning, I can tell you!"

"Oh, Monsieur Trow-breege, Monsieur de Grandin," sobbed the trembling girl, "I did but

attempt to obey your orders, and — and she drove me from my duty. Oh, I am so sore!”

De Grandin’s small teeth shut with a snap like a miniature steel trap. “And you forced this girl to unbar the door?” he asked, almost incredulously, gazing sternly at Mrs. Bixby.

“I certainly did,” she bridled, “and I’d like to know what business is it of yours. If . . .”

He brushed by her, leaping into the bedroom with a bound which carried him nearly two yards beyond the doorsill.

We looked past him toward the bed. It was empty. Adrienne Bixby was gone.

“Why — why, where can she be?” Mrs. Bixby asked, her domineering manner temporarily stripped from her by surprise.

“I’ll tell you where she is!” de Grandin, white to the lips, shouted at her. “She is where you have sent her, you meddling old ignoramus, you, you — oh, *mon Dieu*, if you were a man how I should enjoy cutting your heart out!”

“Say, see here . . .” she began, her bewilderment sunk in anger, but he cut her short with a roar.

“Silence, you! To your room, foolish, criminally foolish one, and pray *le bon Dieu* on your bare knees that the pig-ignorance of her mother shall not have cost your daughter her life this night! Come, Trowbridge, my friend, come away;

the breath of this woman is a contamination, and we must hurry if we are to undo her fools work. Pray God we are not too late!”

WE RUSHED downstairs, traversed the corridors leading to the older wing of the house, wound our way down and down beneath the level of the ancient moat till we stood before the entrance of the chapel.

“Ah,” de Grandin breathed softly, lowering his sword point a moment as he dashed the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand, “no sound, Friend Trowbridge. Whatever happens, whatever you may see, do not cry out; ’tis death to one we seek to save if you waken her!”

Raising his hand, he signed himself quickly with the cross, muttering an indistinct *in nomine*, while I gaped in amazement to see the cynical, scoffing little man of science shedding his agnosticisms and reverting to a simple act of his childhood’s faith.

Lifting the sword in both hands, he gave the chapel door a push with his foot, whispering to me, “Hold high the lanterns, Friend Trowbridge; we need light for our work.”

The rays from my lamp streamed across the dark, vaulted chapel and I nearly let the lantern crash to the floor at what I beheld.

Standing before the ancient, tumbledown altar, her nude, white body gleaming in the semi-darkness like a lovely, slender statue of sun-stained marble, was Adrienne Bixby. Her long rippling hair, which had always reminded me of molten gold in the assayer's crucible, streamed over her shoulders to her waist; one arm was raised in a gesture of absolute abandon while her other hand caressed some object which swayed and undulated before her. Parted in a smile such as Circe, the enchantress, might have worn when she lured men to their ruin, her red lips were drawn back from her gleaming teeth, while she crooned a slow, sensuous melody the like of which I had never heard, nor wish to hear again.

My astounded eyes took this in at first glance, but it was my second look which sent the blood coursing through my arteries like river-water in zero weather. About her slender, virginal torso, ascending in a spiral from hips to shoulders, *was the spotted body of a gigantic snake.*

The monster's horrid, wedge-shaped head swung and swayed a scant half-inch before her face, and its darting, lambent tongue licked lightly at her parted lips.

But it was no ordinary serpent which held her, a laugh-

ing prisoner, in its coils. Its body shone with alternate spots of green and gold, almost as if the colors were laid on in luminous paint; its flickering tongue was red and glowing as a flame of fire, and in its head were eyes as large and blue as those of human kind, but set and terrible in their expression as only the eyes of a snake can be.

Scarcely audible, so low his whisper was, de Grandin hissed a challenge as he hurled himself into the chapel with one of his lithe, catlike leaps: "*Snake thou art, Raimond de Broussac, and snake thou shalt become! Garde a vous!*"

WITH A SLOW, sliding motion, the great serpent turned its head, gradually released its folds from the leering girl's body and slipped to the floor, coiled its length quickly, like a giant spring, and launched itself like a flash of green-and-gold lightning at de Grandin!

But quick as the monster's attack was, de Grandin was quicker. Like the shadow of a flying hawk, the little Frenchman slipped aside, and the reptile's darting head crashed against the granite wall with an impact like a wave slapping a ship's bow.

"One!" counted de Grandin in a mocking whisper, and swung his heavy sword, snipping a two-foot length from the

serpent's tail as neatly as a seamstress snips a thread with her scissors. "*En garde, fils du diable!*"

Writhing, twisting, turning like a spring from which the tension has been loosed, the serpent gathered itself for another onslaught, its malign, human-seeming eyes glaring implacable hatred at de Grandin.

Not this time did the giant reptile launch a battering-ram blow at its adversary. Instead, it reared itself six feet and more in the air and drove its wicked, scale armored head downward with a succession of quick, shifting jabs, seeking to take de Grandin off his guard and enfold him in its crushing coils.

But like a veritable *chevaux-de-frise* of points, de Grandin's sword was right, left, and in between. Each time the monster's head drove at the little man, the blade engraved with ancient battle-cry stood in its path, menacing the hateful blue eyes and flashing, backward-curving fangs with its sharp, tapering end.

"Ha, ha!" de Grandin mocked; "to fight a man is a greater task than to bewitch a woman, *n'est-ce-pas, M'sieur le Serpent?*"

"Ha! You have it!" Like a wheel of living flame, the sword circled through the air; there was a sharp, slapping impact, and the steel sheared

clean and clear through the reptile's body, six inches below the head.

"*Sa, ha; sa, ha!*" de Grandin's face was set in a look of incomparable fury; his small mouth was squared beneath his bristling mustache like that of a snarling wildcat, and the sword rose and fell in a quick succession of strokes, separating the writhing body of the serpent into a dozen, twenty, half a hundred sections.

"*S-s-h, no noise!*" he cautioned as I opened my lips to speak. "First clothe the poor child's nakedness; her gown lies yonder on the floor."

I looked behind me and saw Adrienne's silk nightrobe lying in a crumpled ring against the altar's lowest step. Turning toward the girl, revulsion and curiosity fighting for mastery of my emotions, I saw she still retained the same fixed, carnal smile; her right hand still moved mechanically in the air as though caressing the head of the loathsome thing yet quivering in delayed death at her white feet.

"Why, de Grandin," I exclaimed in wonder, "why, she's *asleep!*"

"*S-s-h, no sound!*" he cautioned again, laying his finger on his lips. "Slip the robe over her head, my friend, and pick her up gently. She will not know."

I draped the silken garment

about the unconscious girl, noticing as I did so, that a long, spiral bruise was already taking form on her tender flesh.

"Carefull Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin commanded, picking up the lantern and sword and leading the way from the chapel. "Carry her tenderly, the poor, sinned-against one. Do not waken her, I beseech you. *Pardieu*, if that scolding mother of hers does but open her shrewish lips within this poor lamb's hearing this night, I shall serve her as I did the serpent. *Mordieu*, may Satan burn me if I do not so!"

11

"TROWBRIDGE, Trowbridge, my friend, come and see!" de Grandin's voice sounded in my ear.

I sat up, sleepily staring about me. Daylight had just begun; the gray of early morning still mingled with the first faint rose of the new day, and outside my window the black-birds were singing.

"Eh, what's up?" I demanded, swinging my feet to the floor.

"Plenty, a very plenty, I do assure you," he answered, tugging delightedly first at one end of his mustache, then the other. "Arise, my friend, arise and pack your bags; we must go immediately, at once, right away."

He fairly pranced about the room while I shaved, washed, and made ready for the journey, meeting my bewildered demands for information only with renewed entreaties for haste. At last, as I accompanied him down the great stairway, my kit bags banging against my knees:

"Behold!" he cried, pointing dramatically to the hall below. "Is it not superb?"

On a couch before the great empty fireplace of the chateaux hall sat Adrienne Bixby, dressed and ready for a trip, her slender white hands securely held in a pair of bronzed ones, her fluffy golden head pillowed on a broad, homespun-clad shoulder.

"Monsieur Trowbridge," de Grandin almost purred in his elation, "permit that I present to you Monsieur Ray Keefer, of Oklahoma, who is to make happy our so dear Mademoiselle Adrienne at once, right away, immediately. Come, *mes enfants*, we must go away," he beamed on the pair of lovers. "The American consul at Rouen, he will unite you in the bonds of matrimony, then — away for that joyous wedding trip, and may your happiness never be less than it is this day. I have left a note of explanation for *Monsieur* your father, Mademoiselle; let us hope he gives you his blessing. However, be that as it may,

you have already the blessing of happiness."

A large motor was waiting outside, Roxanne seated beside the chauffeur, mounting guard over Adrienne's baggage.

"I did meet Monsieur Keefer as he entered the park this morning," de Grandin confided to me as the car gathered speed, "and I did compel him to wait while I rushed within and roused his sweetheart and Roxanne from their sleep. Ha, ha, what was it *Madame* the Scolding One did say to Roxanne last night, that she should pack her clothes and leave the house bright and 'early this morning? *Eh bien*, she has gone, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

SHEPHERDED BY de Grandin and me, the lovers entered the consulate, emerging a few minutes later with a certificate bearing the great seal of the United States of America and the information that they were man and wife.

De Grandin hunted feverishly in the gutters, finally discovered a tattered old boot, and shied it after them as, with the giggling Roxanne, they set out for Switzerland, Oklahoma, and happiness.

"Name of a little green man!" he swore, furtively flicking a drop of moisture from his eyes. "I am so happy to see her safe in the care of the good

young man who loves her that I could almost bring myself to kiss that so atrocious Madame Bixby!"

12

"NOW, de Grandin I threatened, as we seated ourselves in a compartment of the Paris express, "tell me all about it, or I'll choke the truth out of you!"

"*La, la,*" he exclaimed in mock terror, "he is a ferocious one, this *Americain!* Very well, then, *cher ami*, from the beginning:

"You will recall how I told you houses gather evil reputations, even as people do? They do more than that, my friend; they acquire character.

"Broussac is an old place; in it generations of men have been born and have lived, and met their deaths; and the record of their personalities — all they have dreamed and thought and loved and hated — is written fair upon the walls of the house for him who cares to read. These thoughts I had when first I went to Broussac to trace down the reason for these deaths which drove tenant after tenant from the chateau.

"But fortunately for me there was a more tangible record than the atmosphere of the house to read. There was the great library of the de

Broussac family, with the records of those who were good, those who were not so good, and those who were not good at all written down. Among those records did I find this story:

"In the years before your America was discovered, there dwelt at Broussac one *Sieur Raimond*, a man beside whom the wickedest of the Roman emperors was a mild-mannered gentleman. What he desired he took, this one, and as most of his desires leaned toward his neighbors' women folk, he was busy at robbery, murder, and rapine most of the time.

"*Eh bien*, he was a mighty man, this *Sieur Raimond*, but the Bishop of Rouen and the Pope at Rome were mightier. At last, the wicked gentleman came face-to-face with the reckoning of his sins, for where the civil authorities were fearful to act, the church stepped in and brought him to trial.

"Listen to this which I found among the chronicles at the chateau, my friend. Listen and marvel!" He drew a sheaf of papers from his portmanteau and began reading slowly, translating as he went along:

*Now when the day for the wicked *Sieur Raimond's* execution was come, a great procession issued from the church where the company of faithful people were gone to give thanks*

that Earth was to be ridded of a monster.

*Francois and Henri, the de Broussac's wicked accomplices in crime had become reconciled to Mother Church, and so were accorded the mercy of strangling before burning, but the *Sieur Raimond* would have none of repentence, but walked to his place of execution with the smile of a devil on his false, well-favored face.*

*And as he marched between the men at arms toward the stake set up for his burning, behold, the Lady Abbess of the convent of Our Lady of Mercy, together with the gentlewomen who were her nuns, came forth to weep and pray for the souls of the condemned, even the soul of the unrepentent sinner, *Raimond de Broussac*.*

*And when the *Sieur Raimond* was come over against the place where the abbess stood with all her company, he halted between his guards and taunted her, saying, "What now, old hen, dost seek the chicks of thy brood who are missing?" (For it was a fact that three novices of the convent of Our Lady had been ravished away from their vows by this vile man and great was the scandal thereof everywhere.)*

Then did the Lady Abbess pronounce these words to that

wicked man, "Snake thou art, Raimond de Broussac, snake thou shalt become and snake thou must remain until some good man and true shall cleave thy foul body into as many pieces as the year hath weeks."

And I, who beheld and heard all, do declare upon the rood that when the flames were kindled about that wicked man and his sinful body had been burned to ashes, a small snake of the colors of green and gold was seen by all to emerge from the fire and, maugre the efforts of the men at arms to slay it, did escape to the forest of the chateau of Broussac.

"Eh? What think you of that, Friend Trowbridge?" he asked as he laid the papers beside him on the car-seat.

"Rather an interesting medieval legend," I answered, "but hardly convincing today."

"TRULY," he conceded, "but as your English proverb has it, where there is much smoke there is apt to be a little flame. Other things I found in the records, my friend. For instance:

"The ashes of this Raimond de Broussac could not be buried in the chateau chapel among his ancestors and descendants, for the chapel is consecrated ground, and he died excommunicate. They buried him in what was then a

pine forest hard by the house where he lived his evil life, and on the stone which they set over him they did declare that he lay there forever.

"But one year from the day of his execution, as the de Broussac chaplain was reciting his office in the chapel, he did see a green-and-gold snake, something thicker than a monk's girdle but not so long as a man's forearm, enter the chapel, and the snake attacked the holy man so fiercely that he was much put to it to defend himself.

"Another year went by, and a servant bearing oil to refill the sanctuary lamp in the chapel did behold a similar snake, but now grown to the length of a man's arm, coiled above one of the tombs; and the snake also attacked that servant, and nearly slew him.

"From year to year the records go on. Often about Broussac was seen a snake, but each succeeding time it appeared larger than before.

"Too, there were strange stories current — stories of women of the locality who wandered off into the woods of Broussac, who displayed strange bruises upon their bodies, and who died eventually in a manner unexplained by any natural cause. One and all, *mon ami*, they were crushed to death.

"One was a member of the

de Broussac family, a distant kinswoman of Sieur Raimond himself, who had determined to take the veil. As she knelt in prayer in the chapel one day, a great sleep fell upon her, and after that, for many days, she seemed distraught — her interest in everything, even her religious vocation, seemed to wane to nothing. But it was thought that she was very saintly, for those who watched her did observe that she went often to the chapel by night. One morning she was found, like the others, crushed to death, and on her face was the look not of the agony of dying but the evil smile of an abandoned woman. Even in death she wore it.

These things I had already read when that gamekeeper brought us news of the great snake he had seen in the garden, and what I had noted down as idle legend appeared possible to me as a sober fact — if we could prove it.

"You recall how we spread flour on the chapel floor; you also recall the tracks we read in the flour next day.

"I remembered, too, how that poor Madame Biddle, who went mad in the chateau Broussac, did so when she wandered one day by chance into the chapel, and I remembered how she does continually cry out of a great snake which seems to kiss her. The doctor who first

attended her, too, when her reason departed, told me of a bruise not to be explained, a spiral bruise about the lady's arm.

"*Pardieu!* I think I will test these legends some more, and I search and search until I find this wicked Sieur Raimond's grave. It was even as the chronicler wrote, for, to prove it, I made you go with me and read the inscription on the tombstone. *Morbleu!* Against my reason I am convinced, so I make and place them so that their sharp nails would scratch the belly of any snake — if he were really a snake — who tried to crawl over them. *Voilà*, next she was better. Then I knew for a certainty that she was under the influence of this Sieur Raimond snake, even as that poor intending-nun lady who met so tragic a death in the days of long ago.

"Something else I learn, too. This demon snake, this relic of the accursed Raimond de Broussac, was like a natural snake. Material iron nails would keep him from the house his wickedness had so long held under a spell. If this was so, then a natural weapon could kill his body if one man was but brave enough to fight him. '*Cordieu*, I am that man!' says Jules de Grandin to Jules de Grandin.

"But in the meantime what do I see? *Helas!* That wicked

one has now so great an influence over poor *Mademoiselle* Adrienne that he can compel her, by his wicked will, to rise from her bed at night and go barefoot to the garden to tear away the barrier I have erected for her protection.

"*Nom d'un coq!* I am angered, I am furious. I decide this snake-devil have already lived too long; I shall do even as the lady abbess prescribes and slash his so loathly body into as many parts as the year has weeks.

"*Morbleu!* I go to Rouen and obtain that holy sword; I come back, thinking I shall catch that snake waiting alone in the chapel for his assignation, since

I shall bar *Mademoiselle's* way to him. And then her so stupid mother must needs upset all my plans, and I have to fight that snake almost in silence — I can not shout and curse at him as I would, for if I raise my voice I may waken that then, perhaps she goes mad, even as did Madame Biddle.

"*Eh bien*, perhaps it is for the best. Had I said all the foul curses I had in mind as I slew that blue-eyed snake, all the priests, clergymen, and rabbis in the world could scarce have shriven my soul of their weight.

"*Voila tout!* We are in Paris once more, my friend. Come, let us have a drink!"

the cauldron

The July 14th issue of *THE CANYON CRIER*, Hollywood, included a write-up of the opening meeting of the Praed Street Irregulars, which we mentioned in our last issue. The writeup states: "Many of the greats in the world of mystery, supernatural and science fiction writing became charter members when the Praed Street Irregulars held their founding meeting at Ivory Towers, the home of Sir Alvin and Lady Germeshausen, on Woodhaven Drive.

"The Irregulars is a group of crime fiction enthusiasts basing their ritual and observances on the Solar Pons detective stories by August Derleth, author of more than 100 volumes of verse, novels, short stories, and history.

"Derleth, guest of honor at the meeting, is head of Arkham House Publishers in Wisconsin. He is equally well known as an author of the weird and fantastic and as a distinguished novelist.

"The Solar Pons detective stories

are highly regarded pastiches of the Sherlock Holmes series, and the Praed Street Irregulars can be compared to the Holmesian Baker Street Irregulars, says Luther Norris, Culver City book collector, who headed arrangements for the meeting. . . ."

Mr. Norris himself wrote to state that it was quite an affair, ". . . with about sixty people on hand. Stuart Palmer, A. E. van Vogt, Robert Bloch, Forrest Ackerman, Roy Squires, and Karen Anderson (wife of Poul) were all on hand. The next item will be publication of *The Pontine Dossier*. We hope to make this a Christmas issue, with John Kohler publishing." Since these notes are being typed at the end of November, we do not know now what we will know by the time you read this — whether the project came through as planned. THE CANYON CRIER further listed as among the attendees at the founding meeting, Ray Bradbury, Fritz Leiber, E. Mayne Hull (Mrs. A. E. van Vogt), Rex Stout, Frederic Danay (Ellery Queen), Anthony Boucher, Vincent Starrett, and Poul Anderson.

In a later letter, Mr. Norris says, "I doubt that you would have the space to quote this, but it does rather explain things: 'If any ask of him why this Honor of Pontificality hath been conferred, he shall make answer: "I kept the Secrets of Pons as dark as a night of pea-souper fog in Praed-Street. I went about the Business of Pons as smoothly as runs Grand Union Canal at the back of the Junction Tavern. I lived up to the Principles of Pons with the regularity of the Number 7 bus which plies for hire along Praed-Street. Selah." ' If possible, this might fit in with the story of *The Tottenham Werewolf*. (Don Reed, President of the Count Dracula Society, has this title, by the way. Seabury Quinn is Consta-

ble Ronald Borrow in the PSI and holds scroll in that name.)"

You can get in touch with the Praed Street Irregulars by writing Luther L. Norris, 3844 Watseka Avenue, Culver City, California 90231. Here endeth the report of The Catalytic Agent.

Ted White writes from Brooklyn, New York: "It was with some surprise that I read of myself in the Fall issue of STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES, 'His own novel. *Warlord of Cor*, appears in Ace Double Book F177 . . . He, too, is currently an editor with Ace."

"There is something wrong with that statement," I said to myself. "'Kor" is spelled with a "K"; not a "C". But then, as I ruminated to myself over the gross malfeasance of this erroneous spelling, I was brought up short by a second thought:

"I didn't write that book! I researched my voluminous files. I found that I had written a variety of books, among them *Android Avenger* (Ace), *Captain America* (Bantam), *Invasion from 2500* (Monarch), in collaboration with some other fellow), *Phoenix Prime* and its sequel, *The Sorceress of Qar* (Lancer), *Secret of the Marauder Satellite* (Westminster), *The Jewels of Elsewhien* (Belmont), and another collaboration, with Dave van Arnham, for *Pyramid*, as yet untitled and unreleased — but no *Warlord of Kor*.

"I immediately telephoned my close friend and collaborator, Terry Carr (whose credits include co-authorship of *Invasion from 2500*, and co-editorship of *Ace Books' World's Best Science Fiction*: 1965 and: 1966, as well, no doubt, as: 1967 when the time comes, and editorship of *Science Fiction for People Who Hate Science Fiction* for Doubleday), and he immediately set me straight.

"He wrote *Warlord of Kor*.

"I must say that I am relieved. My next call was to Don Wollheim at Ace Books, to ask why I had not been receiving my pay checks as an Ace Books editor promptly. He was succinct and to the point. 'You don't work for us,' he told me.

" 'I demand severance pay!' I shouted.

" 'You never worked for us,' he replied imperturbably.

Recourse to my files showed me the error of my thinking. I was listed on the masthead of THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION as 'Assistant Editor'. And I had been depositing checks weekly from Lancer Books (arch-nemesis of Ace Books) as an assistant editor.

"I was, of course, dumbfounded by this information, and resolved never again to trust what I read in print. Not even such obviously inside stuff as that contained in your factual article, *Secret of the City*, in STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES #2."

Hmm, perhaps we should see if we can have our PSI title changed to Catastrophic Agent!

Glenn Lord writes: "Bertram Russell was the pen name of L. H. Hardingham, who, I believe, had some letters in *The Eyrie* under his own name."

The Eyrie referred to is, of course, the reader's department that ran in WEIRD TALES, from the very first issue. We acknowledge borrowing this title for the reader's department in our sister publication, EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN.

Gene D'Orsogna writes from Stony Brook, New York: "Once again, in my opinion, Jules de Grandin has triumphed. *The Blood-Flower*, although not up to many of the stories in this series, was superior to the

rest of the pieces in the issue. Seabury Quinn's style never ceases to amaze me; he was the easiest to read, ' slickest ' stylist in the old WEIRD TALES, and even today he is wonderfully literate, and Jules de Grandin is still 'believably unbelievable'. Tell me, though, does Mr. Quinn still write?"

Mr. D'Orsogna objects to our having run *The Trial for Murder*, which he says has been anthologized to death, and questions the desirability of our reprinting any of the Solar Pons stories, since "... nearly all of them have been printed by Arkham House, and all of these volumes are still in print."

The day after this communication arrived, we received a ballot and lengthy letter from another reader who found the Dickens story "... a joy to read", apparently not having encountered it before, despite frequent anthologization.

In reference to Solar Pons and the Arkham House editions, I wonder if our objector realizes that Arkham House editions exist only in very small printings — usually under 3,000 copies. *The Tottenham Werewolf* is from *The Memoirs of Solar Pons*, an edition of 2,038 copies being printed in 1951. So even if every person who owns, or has read, this book — which is now out of print — is a regular reader of STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES (unproven, to say the least), it would

don't miss
JULES de GRANDIN in
THE GODS OF
EAST AND WEST
coming next issue

still mean that only a small percentage of SMS readers had seen the story before. . . . There is, however, such a wealth of material in out-of-print Arkham House books, which would be suitable, or have been requested for *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* or *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, that we feel that these sources ought to be mined before getting to the contents of volumes still in print, or running stories which AH has further reprinted in editions still available. But we do not propose to fence ourselves in

with iron policy, so there may be an exception once in a while.

NOTE: A number of readers have suggested the *John Silence* stories as likely candidates for us. I have never been able to obtain a copy of this Algernon Blackwood collection. Would someone be willing to loan it to me?

Charles Hidley, who disliked *Esmeralda* with great enthusiasm, and cared very little for *The Door of Doom*, also chides us for running *A Matter of Breeding* in the same issue as *The Inn Of Terror*. ("... why two sets on cannibalism in the same issue? *A Matter Of Breeding* was hurt by its competitor and it needn't have been — it would have been a knockout in any other issue.") Reader Hidley also notes: "It takes an editor with real class to slip in an unannounced 1931 Wesso illustration with such savoir faire. I really got all choked up."

"The Quinn was 'vin ordinaire' in this issue, not up to the previous two. Here again the editor's breeding pops through — not one that you've reprinted has been obtainable for years and neither are they in the Arkham edition. . . .

"If Mr. Andrews hasn't heard about 'suspension of disbelief' I do think it is an editor's duty to set such on the track. Universality and even conformity are all very fine, but the major charm of much literature — and particularly the macabre genre — is its *time* as much as its place and characters. This particularly pertains to Jules de Grandin: the 20's environment is *his* milieu as it is Philo Vance's. Kipling's people belong in their time and Zola's in theirs. It is only we, the readers, who are stuck in the present. Part of our omnipotence is to be able to *forget* it and get with the *magic*."

Did You Miss These Back Issues Of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR*?

#1, August 1963: *The Man With a Thousand Legs*, Frank Belknap Long; *A Thing of Beauty*, Wallace West; *The Yellow Sign*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Maze and the Monster*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Death of Halpin Frayser*, Ambrose Bierce; *Babylon: 70 M.*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Inexperienced Ghost*, H. G. Wells; *The Unbeliever*, Robert Silverberg; *Fidel Bassin*, W. J. Stamper; *The Last Dawn*, Frank Lillie Pollock; *The Undying Head* Mark Twain.

#2, November 1963: *The Space-Eaters*, Frank Belknap Long; *The Faceless Thing*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Red Room*, H. G. Wells; *Hungary's Female Vampire*, Dean Lipton; *A Tough Tussle*, Ambrose Bierce; *Doorslammer*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Electric Chair*, George Waight; *The Other One*, Jerry L. Keane; *The Charmer*, Archie Binns; *Clarissa*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes*, Rudyard Kipling.

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The "cannibalism" element in *The Inn Of Terror* struck me as being so slight that I could not even after these many readings and re-reading, recall whether the servant claimed that they actually ate the soup — that resulted from boiling the flesh off the victims as part of disposal of evidence — or not. . . . On re-checking, I find that there is no specific reference to eating the victims; the author's word choices are such that the reader may easily infer cannibalism if he wishes to — but Leroux has been deliberately ambiguous, so that the reader may have the widest possible range of inference; a conclusion that the Scheffers were innocent of any actual crime is fully warranted. Everything which might imply their guilt is balanced by a counter-implication.

However, I was aware of the suggestion of cannibalism, and would not have run the two stories in the same issue when, after the final reading, the obvious finally came home to me, had not the exigencies of makeup made a substitution impossible. Error acknowledged.

It seems to me that Reader Andrews was complaining about something, which, for him, interfered with his suspension of disbelief. I did not make the point you make because I wanted to give the readers the chance to make it — or, if they did not, but agreed with Mr. Andrews, to learn something about how many readers feel which I might not learn if I spoke first. At the present writing, yours is the first comment received on the subject. RAWL

Now to our authors for this issue.

AUGUST DERLETH, we are told by Vincent Starrett in the introduction to *In Re: Sherlock Holmes* (The Adventures of Solar Pons), had read and re-read all the Sherlock Holmes tales then in print by

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the time he was nineteen. He wrote a letter to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, asking if there would be any more Holmes stories forthcoming. Doyle's reply was good-natured, but indefinite, so "... young Mr. Derleth determined to carry on the tradition himself. A desk calendar stood at his elbow; he stabbed a finger into its pages at random and scribbled a note to himself: 'In re - Sherlock Holmes'. On that day, when it should have arrived, he told himself, he would write a story in imitation of the Master."

And so was it written, and so

Did You Miss These Back Issues Of MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#3, February 1964: The Seeds of Death, David H. Keller; **The Seeking Thing**, Janet Hirsch; **A Vision of Judgment**, H. G. Wells; **The Place of the Pythons**, Arthur J. Burks; **Jean Bouchon**, S. Baring-Gould; **The Door**, Rachel Cosgrove Payes; **One Summer Night**, Ambrose Bierce; **Luella Miller**, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; **They That Wait**, H. S. W. Chibbett; **The Repairer of Reputations**, Robert W. Chambers.

#4, May 1964: Out of print.

#5, September 1964: Cassius, Henry S. Whitehead; **Love at First Sight**, J. L. Miller; **Five-Year Contract**, J. Vernon Shea; **The House of the Worm**, Merle Prout; **The Beautiful Suit**, H. G. Wells; **A Stranger Came to Reap**, Stephen Dentinger; **The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing**, Walt Liebscher; **Bones**, Donald A. Wollheim; **The Ghostly Rental**, Henry James.

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was it done. The date itself seems to have been lost — or at best mislaid — but whatever the day was, that was the day upon which he wrote, *The Adventure of the Black Narcissus*. The story was sold to Harold Hersey, on its first trip out for sale, and it appeared in the February 1929 issue of *THE DRAGONET MAGAZINE*. Of these and other worthy pastiches, Mr. Starrett says, "They are the work of affectionate minds and hands. There is no intention to deceive. These stories, and others in their field, are intended only to please. They are nostalgic reminders of vanished days and nights in Baker Street." As an expert on the "conan" of Sherlock Holmes, and himself author of a splendid pastiche, Mr. Starrett's recommendation of Solar Pons is not an idle one. You may or may not agree with him; but his judgment is worthy of respect in any case.

As of the present moment (November 1966) there are five collections of the Solar Pons stories: *In Re: Sherlock Holmes*, 1645 (12 stories); *The Memoirs of Solar Pons*, 1951 (11 stories — this volume is now out of print); *The Return of Solar Pons*, 1958 (13 stories — which include three adventures formerly issued in a small book from the same publishers, entitled *Three Problems For Solar Pons*, now out of print); *The Reminiscences of Solar Pons*, 1961 (8 stories, plus the first "chronology" of Solar Pons to be attempted, this one by Robert Patrick); and *The Casebook of Solar Pons*, 1965 (12 stories — plus a monograph on Dr. Parker by Michael Harrison and a London Map of Solar Pons, by Luther Norris, which serves as endpapers for both front and back of the book). Forthcoming is *The Chronicles of Solar Pons*; and earlier this year, I asked the author if it were not about time for at least one Solar Pons novel. He agreed that it was,

indeed, and said that he was working on it.

A number of the stories in the over-all series, which has now reached the exact number of short stories that Dr. Watson managed to tell of Sherlock Holmes cases, deal with cases mentioned or hinted at amidst Watson's often somewhat disorderly "conan". This is a time-honored tradition amongst those who write pastiches of the Master, and John Dickson Carr, in collaboration with Sir Adrian Conan Doyle, has written six which, along with another six by Sir Adrian alone, appear in Ace Book D-181, *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*. Estimates of their worth vary amongst Baker Street Irregulars and members of scion societies — I remember Fletcher Pratt's remark on the consensus of the BSI upon the publication of the first in this series in a slick magazine circa 1953 (COLLIERS? SATURDAY EVENING POST? — I have no memory at all for such publications.): it was a very good illustration. I can only say that I enjoyed all of them, finding the Carr offerings more ingenious and the Doyle ones closer to his father in atmosphere. And no doubt estimates of the worth of Solar Pons varies amongst lovers of Sherlock Holmes; again, I say only: *I enjoy them* — and since this was August Derleth's sole aim in making them available to me, for me, then, he has succeeded admirably in what he set out to do. I hope that you will find similarly.

VICTOR ROUSSEAU EMANUEL is probably remembered for having one of the cloudiest crystal balls of all when it came to writing imaginative stories of the near future. It was the very year of the Russian Revolution that *The Messiah of the Cylinder* appeared — that gripping story of England crushed in the wicked toils of Socialism, rising to

Did You Miss These

Back Issues Of MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#6, November 1964: *Caverns of Horror*, Laurence Manning; *Prodigy*, Walt Liebscher; *The Mask*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Life-After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Warde*, Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Feminine Fraction*, David Grinnell; *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment*, Nathaniel Hawthorne; *The Pacer*, August Derleth; *The Moth*, H. G. Wells; *The Door to Saturn*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#7, January 1965: *The Thing From — Outside*, George Allan England; *Black Thing at Midnight*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Shadows on the Wall*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *The Phantom Farmhouse*, Seabury Quinn; *The Oblong Box*, Edgar Allan Poe; *A Way With Kids*, Ed M. Clinton; *The Devil of the Marsh*, E. B. Marriott-Watson; *The Shattered Room*, H. P. Lovecraft & August Derleth.

#8, April 1965: *The Black Laugh*, William J. Makin; *The Hand of Glory*, R. H. D. Barham; *The Garrison*, David Grinnell; *Passeur*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Lady of the Velvet Collar*, Washington Irving; *Jack*, Reynold Junker; *The Burglar-Proof Vault*, Oliver Taylor; *The Dead Who Walk*, Ray Cummings.

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freedom again when the brave troops of Christian Russia come to rescue the oppressed of the Isle. However, he wrote other stories, and there is a series which might go very well, either here or in *MAGAZINE OF HOR-*

Did You Miss These

Back Issues Of

MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#8, June 1965: *The Night Wire*, H. F. Arnold; *Sacrilege*, Wallace West; *All the Stain of Long Delight*, Jerome Clark; *Skulls in the Stars*, Robert E. Howard; *The Photographs*, Richard Marsh; *The Distortion out of Space*, Francis Flagg; *Guarantee Period*, William M. Danner; *The Door in the Wall*, H. G. Wells; *The Three Low Masses*, Alphonse Daudet; *The Whistling Room*, William Hope Hodgson.

#10, August 1965: *The Girl at Heddon's*, Pauline Kappel Prilucik; *The Torture of Hope*, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam; *The Cloth of Madness*, Seabury Quinn; *The Tree*, Gerald W. Page; *In the Court of the Dragon*, Robert W. Chambers; *Placide's Wife*, Kirk Mashburn; *Come Closer*, Joanna Russ; *The Plague of the Living Dead*, A. Hyatt Verrill.

#11, November 1965: *The Empty Zoo*, Edward D. Hoch; *A Psychological Shipwreck*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Call of the Meek-Men*, Laurence Manning; *Was It a Dream?*, Guy de Maupassant; *Under the Hau Tree*, Katherine Yates; *The Head of Du Bois*, Dorothy Norman Cooke; *The Dweller in Dark Valley*, (verse), Robert E. Howard; *The Devil's Pool*, Greya la Spina.

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

The Man From Nowhere

by Edward D. Hoch

ROR — the cases of Dr. Brodsky, Surgeon of Souls. More on this anon. (In Shakespeare, and the Authorized — King James — Version of the Bible, the word means "immediately"; but since then the meaning has come to be "right away — tomorrow . . . next year . . .") .

A reader asks if SEABURY QUINN is still writing. We regret to tell you that Mr. Quinn is suffering from a condition which has affected his eyesight very severely, so that further creative work is hardly possible; and medical opinion is that there is very little chance of improvement. If any among you believe in the efficacy of healing prayers, pray put him on your list.

As you have probably seen, ROBERT E. HOWARD's *The Secret of Lost Valley* was originally entitled *Valley of the Lost*, and this is one of the stories which were announced as "coming next issue" in the January 1933 number of STRANGE TALES — the final issue, alas. I recall two other titles also announced for that never-to-appear 8th issue: *The Seed From the Sepulchre*, by Clark Ashton Smith (which was published in the October 1933 issue of WEIRD TALES), and *The Case of the Crusader's Hand*, by Gordon MacCreagh. This would have been the third in this author's "Dr. Muncing" series, the first of which we ran in MAGAZINE OF HORROR #12. A novelet by Mac Creagh, *The Hand of St. Ury*, did appear in the January 1951 issue of WEIRD TALES, and I have always assumed that he revised the STRANGE TALES novelet, eliminating Dr. Muncing, and put this new title on it for WT. However, having been proven wrong in my assumption, first that *Valley of the Lost* became *Valley of the Worm* (WEIRD TALES, February 1934) and second that it became *King of The Forgotten People* (MAGAZINE

OF HORROR #13, under the title of *Valley of the Lost*. — which is why we could not use the original title for the genuine story), I feel somewhat less certain about Mac-Creagh.

LESLIE JONES had a short story, *If The Soil Is Good*, in the third issue of CHASE magazine; and had the book continued publication, *Behind the Curtain* would have appeared in a later issue, as we had been thinking of running at least one eerie mystery tale in each issue.

As many of you know (but for some, this will be a first-encounter), SEABURY QUINN's famous weird detective character, Jules de Grandin, and his colleague, Dr. Samuel Trowbridge, made their debut in *The Horror on the Links*, which appeared in the October 1925 issue of WEIRD TALES. The little Frenchman, who was to become the favorite of WT readers throughout the '30's, and to appear now and then, after 1939, in WT up to the September 1951 issue, was introduced in this story as "Professor de Grandin". *The Horror on the Links* is what Farnsworth Wright used to call a weird-scientific story; but we will say no more about the plot, as the tale is presently available in a collection of 12 de Grandin stories gathered under the title of *The Phantom Fighter*, published by Mycroft & Moran, and is available from August Derleth, Sauk City, Wisconsin 53583 @ \$5 the copy. We have arranged with Mr. Quinn to reprint many of the de Grandin tales, but not any of the dozen which appear in the book. *The Horror on the Links* was reprinted in the May 1937 issue of WEIRD TALES, but that hardly constitutes what one would call availability.

The Tenants of Broussac is the second of the de Grandin stories,

Did You Miss These

Back Issues Of

MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#12, Winter 1965/66: *The Faceless God*, Robert Bloch; *Master Nicholas*, Seabury Quinn; *But Not the Herald*, Roger Zelazny; *Dr. Muncing, Exorcist*, Gordon Mac-Creagh; *The Affair at 7 Rue de M.*, John Steinbeck; *The Man in the Dark*, Irwin Ross; *The Abyss*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *Destination* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Memories of HPL*, Muriel E. Eddy; *The Black Beast*, Henry S. Whitehead.

#13, Summer 1966: *The Thing in the House*, H. F. Scotten; *Divine Madness*, Roger Zelazny; *Valley of the Lost*, Robert E. Howard; *Hereditry*, David H. Keller; *Dwelling of the Righteous*, Anna Hunger; *Almost Immortal*, Austin Hall.

#14, Winter 1966/67: *The Lair of Star-Spawn*, Derleth & Scherer; *The Vacant Lot*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *Proof*, S. Fowler Wright; *Comes Now the Power*, Roger Zelazny; *The Moth Message*, Laurence Manning; *The Friendly Demon*, Daniel DeFoe; *Dark Hollow*, Emil Petaja; *An Inhabitant of Carcosa*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Monster-God of Mamurth*, Edmond Hamilton.

#15, Spring 1967: *The Room of Shadows*, Arthur J. Burks; *Lilies*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Flaw*, J. Vernon Shea; *The Doom of London*, Robert Barr; *The Vale of Lost Women*, Robert E. Howard; *The Ghoul Gallery*, Hugh B. Cave.

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and the notice on the title page indicates when it appeared; it has never before been reprinted, so far as we know. In this story, we are told that de Grandin is also a doctor of medicine, and thereafter, he is allowed his equivalent medical standing with Trowbridge.

23 of the de Grandin stories were given cover illustrations when they first appeared in *WEIRD TALES*, but oddly enough, in only one of them do we see a portrayal of de Grandin himself — this was on the issue containing the present story, and it was the work of Joseph Doolin who (aside from Virgil Finlay, whose portraits of de Grandin and Trowbridge did not appear until 1937), for my taste was the only artist to give us an adequate rendering. He shows de Grandin from the rear, turned very slightly toward us so that we see his blond mustache; the scene was well chosen artistically, and rather well done — but, unfor-

tunately, gives too much away. Doolin's black and white double spread illustration for the first installment of *The Devil's Bride* (a six-part serial, genuine book-length: *WT* February - July 1932) offers a very fine full-face portrayal. Some of the other attempts to depict the little Frenchman are not too bad, but are best forgotten; and one, I hear, still haunts the unjustly-abused author. Having seen it, I can understand why: it is truly dreadful. It appeared in the September 1931 issue of *WT*, purportedly illustrating a scene from *Satan's Stenson*; the artist was C. C. Senf, who, in the same issue also managed to botch Solomon Kane in his illustration for *The Foothills Within*.

In our next issue, we hope to bring you another tale in the series, wherein we will meet a fascinating person who helps de Grandin and Trowbridge with the evil surrounding *The Gods of East and West*.

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#2, Fall 1966: **The House of Horror**, Seabury Quinn; **The Men in Black**, John Brunner; **The Strange Case of Pascal**, Roger Eugene Ulmer; **The Witch Is Dead**, Edward D. Hoch; **The Secret of the City**, Terry Carr and Ted White; **The Street (verse)**, Robert W. Lowndes; **The Scourge of B'Moth**, Betram Russell.

#3, Winter 1966/67: **The Inn of Terror**, Gaston Leroux; **The Other**, Robert A. W. Lowndes; **The Door of Doom**, Hugh B. Cave; **A Matter of Breeding**, Ralph Hayes; **Esmeralda**, Rama Wells; **The Trial for Murder**; Chas. Dickens & Chas. Collins; **The Blood-Flower**, Seabury Quinn.



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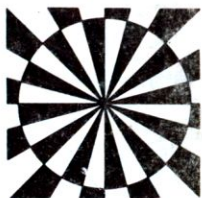
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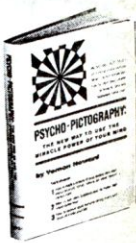
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