

JULY 1919—HUTCHINSON'S STORY MAGAZINE



"She"

JULY 1919

Hutchinson's Story Magazine

Then great Authors contribute to this No

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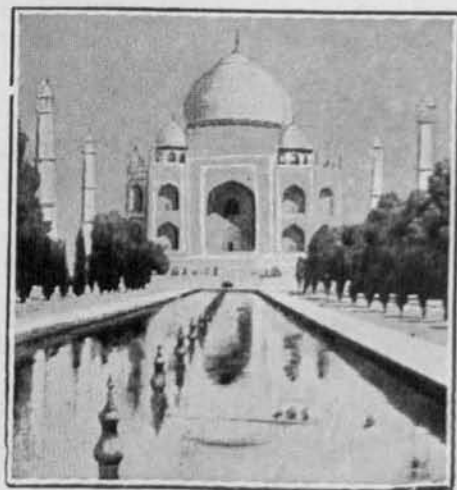
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THE SUPPORTS



This poem has been written by Mr. Rudyard Kipling specially for the first number of "Hutchinson's Story Magazine."

TO Him Who made the Heavens abide and gave the stars
their motion,
To Him Who tames the moonstruck tide twice a day round
ocean—
Let His Name be magnified in all poor folks' devotion!
Not for Prophecies and Powers, Visions, Gifts or Graces,
But the weighed and counted hours that drive us to our places
With the burden on our backs, the weather in our faces.
Not for any Miracle of Easy Loaves and Fishes,
But for standing 'gainst our will at work against our wishes—
Such as finding food to fill daily-emptied dishes.

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Not for Voices, Harps or Wings or rapt Illumination,
But the grosser Self that springs of use and occupation,
Unto which the Spirit clings as her last salvation.

*(He Who launched our Ship of Fools many anchors gave us,
Lest one gale should start them all or one groundswell slave us.*

Praise Him for the petty creeds

That prescribe, in paltry needs,

Solemn rites to trivial deeds and, by small things, save us!)

Heart may fail and Strength outwear and Purpose turn to loathing,
But the everyday affair of toilette, meals and clothing,
Builds a bulkhead 'twixt despair and the edge of nothing.

(Praise Him, then, Who orders it that, though Earth be flaring

And the crazy skies are lit

By the searchlights of the Pit,

Man should not depart a whit from his wonted bearing.)

They that sip from every glass lose their heads the faster.
They that skip from thought to thought suffer like disaster,
And in all adversity,
Having nothing orderly,
Let the accepted time go by till Panic is their master!

Rudyard Kipling

He Who bids the wild-swans' host still maintain their flight on
Air-roads over islands lost—

Ages since 'neath ocean lost—

Beaches of some sunken coast their fathers would alight on,

He shall guide us through this dark, not by new-shown glories,

But by every ancient mark our fathers used before us,

Till our children ground their ark where the proper shore is.

And He Who makes the Mountains smoke and rives the Hills
asunder,

And to-morrow leads the grass—

Mere unconquerable grass—

Where the blazing crater was, to heal and hide it under,

Shall not lay on us the yoke of too long fear and wonder.

Rudyard Kipling..

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"I want to open a road, Zikali, that which runs across the River of Death."

"SHE" MEETS ALLAN

By

H. RIDER HAGGARD

Author of "She," "Allan Quatermain," etc.

Illustrated by MAURICE GREIFFENHAGEN

Several of the famous characters which have made Sir Rider Haggard one of the most widely read of living authors appears in this powerful new serial, which takes us again into the secret heart of Africa and brings together at last Allan Quatermain and the mysterious, elusive "SHE."

CHAPTER I THE TALISMAN

I THINK it was the old Egyptians, a very wise people, probably indeed much wiser than we know, for in the leisure of their ample centuries they had time to think out things, who declared that each individual personality was made up of six or seven different elements, although I think the Bible only allows us three—namely, body, soul, and spirit. The body that the man or woman wore, if I understand their theory aright, which perhaps I, an ignorant person, do not, was but a kind of sack or fleshy covering containing these different principles. Or mayhap it did not contain them at all, but was simply a house, as it were, in which they lived from time to time and seldom all together, although one or more of them was present continually, as though to keep the place warmed and aired.

This is but a casual illustrative suggestion, for what right have I, Allan Quatermain, out of my little reading and probably erroneous deductions, to form any judgment as to the theories of the old Egyptians? Still these, as I understand them, suffice to furnish me with a text that man is not one, but many, in which connection it may be remembered that

often in Scripture he is spoken of as being the home of many demons, seven, I think, and, to come to a far different example, that the Zulus talk of their witch-doctors as being inhabited by "a multitude of spirits."

Now, the reason of all this homily is that I, Allan, the most practical and unimaginative of persons, just a homely, half-educated hunter and trader, who chanced to have seen a good deal of the particular little world in which my lot was cast, at one period of my life became the victim of spiritual longings. I am a man who has suffered great bereavements in my time, such as have seared my soul, since, perhaps because of my rather primitive and simple nature, my affections are very strong. I can never forget those whom I have loved and whom I believe to have loved me.

For some years of my lonely existence these problems haunted me day by day, till at length I desired above everything on earth to lay them at rest in one way or another.

I was in Zululand about this time, and being near the Black Kloof where he dwelt, I paid a visit to my acquaintance of whom I have written elsewhere, the wonderful and ancient dwarf, Zikali, known as "The

This story has been abbreviated for serial purposes.

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Thing-that-should-never-have-been-born," also more commonly among the Zulus as "Opener of Roads." When we had talked of many things connected with the state of Zululand and its politics, I decided to consult him on the problems that had been troubling me.

"You are named 'Opener of Roads,' are you not, Zikali?" I said.

"Yes, the Zulus have always called me that, since before the days of Chaka. But what of names, which often enough mean nothing at all?"

"Only that I want to open a road, Zikali, that which runs across the River of Death."

"Oho!" he laughed, "it is very easy," and snatching up a little assegai that lay beside him, he proffered it to me, adding, "Be brave now and fall on that. Then before I have counted sixty the road will be wide open, but whether you will see anything on it I cannot tell you."

Again I shook my head and answered, "It is against our law. Also while I still live I desire to know whether I shall meet certain others on that road after my time has come to cross the River. Perhaps you, who deal with spirits, can prove the matter to me, which no one else seems able to do."

"Oho!" laughed Zikali again, "What do my ears hear? Am I, the poor Zulu cheat, asked to show that which is hidden from all the wisdom of the great White People?"

"The question is," I answered, with irritation, "not what you are asked to do, but what you can do."

"That I do not know yet, Macumazahn. What spirits do you desire to see? If that of a woman called Mameena* is one of them, I think that perhaps I whom she loved——"

"She is *not* one of them, Zikali. Moreover, if she loved you, you paid back her love with death."

"Which perhaps was the kindest thing I could do, Macumazahn, for reasons that you may be able to guess, and others with which I will not trouble you. But if not hers, whose? Let me look!—let me look! I will tell you a secret. All seers who live at the same time, if they are great, commune with each other because they are akin and their spirits meet in sleep or dreams. Therefore I know of a certain mistress of our craft, a very lioness among jackals, who for thousands of years has lain sleeping in the northern caves, and, humble though I am, she knows of me."

* For the history of Mameena, see the book called *Child of Storm*.

"Quite so," I said, yawning, "but perhaps, Zikali, you will come to the point of the spear. What of her? How is she named, and if she exists will she help me?"

"I will answer your questions backwards, Macumazahn. I think that she will help you if you help her; in what way I do not know, because although witch doctors sometimes work without pay, as I am doing now, Macumazahn, witch-doctresses never do. As for her name, the only one that she has among our company is 'Queen,' because she is the first of all of them and the most beautiful among women. For the rest I can tell you nothing, except that she has always been, and I suppose, in this shape or in that, will always be while the world lasts, because she has found the secret of life unending."

"You mean that she is an immortal, Zikali," I answered, with a smile.

"I do not say that, Macumazahn, because my little mind cannot shape the thought of immortality. But when I was a babe, which is far ago, she had lived so long that scarce would she know the difference between then and now, and already in her breast was all wisdom gathered. I know it, because although, as I have said, we have never seen each other, at times we talk together in our sleep, for thus she shares her loneliness, and I think, though this may be but a dream, that last night she told me to send you on to her to seek an answer to certain questions which you would put to me to-day."

Now I grew angry, and asked, "Why does it please you to fool me, Zikali, with such talk as this? If there is any truth in it, show me where the woman called *Queen* lives, and how I am to come to her."

The old wizard took up the little assegai which he had offered to me, and with its blade raked out ashes from the fire that always burnt in front of him. While he did so he went on talking to me, as I thought, in a random fashion, perhaps to distract my attention, of a certain white man whom he said I should meet upon my journey and of his affairs, also of other matters, none of which interested me much at the time. These ashes he patted down flat, and then on them drew a map with the point of his spear, making grooves for streams, certain marks for bush and forest, wavy lines for water or swamps, and little heaps for hills. When he had finished it all, he bade me come round the fire and study the picture, across which, by an afterthought, he drew

a wavering furrow with the edge of the assegai to represent a river, and gathered the ashes in a lump at the northern end to signify a large mountain.

"Look at it well, Macumazahn," he said, "and forget nothing, since if you make this journey and forget, you die. No, no need to copy it in that book of yours, for see, I will stamp it on your mind."

Then suddenly he gathered up the hot ashes in a double handful and threw them into my face, muttering something as he did so and adding aloud,

"There, now you will remember."

"Certainly I shall," I answered, coughing, "and I beg that you will not play such a joke upon me again."

As a matter of fact, whatever may have been the reason, I never forgot any detail of that extremely intricate map.

"That big river must be the Zambesi," I stuttered, "and even then the mountain of your Queen, if it be her mountain, is far away, and how can I come there alone?"

"I don't know, Macumazahn, though perhaps you might do so in company. At least I believe that in the old days people used to travel to the place, since once I have heard a great city stood there which was the heart of a mighty empire."

Now I pricked up my ears, for though I believed nothing of Zikali's story of a wonderful Queen, I was always intensely interested in past civilisations and their relics. Also I knew that old Zikali's knowledge was extensive and peculiar, however he came by it, and I did not think that he would lie to me in this matter. Indeed, to tell the truth, then and there I made up my mind that if it were in any way possible, I would attempt this journey.

"How did people get to the city, Zikali?"

"By sea, I suppose, Macumazahn, but I think that you will be wise not to try that road, since I believe that on the seaside the marshes are now impassable, and I think you will be safer on your feet."

"You want me to go on this adventure, Zikali. Why? For I know you never do anything without motive."

"Oho! Macumazahn, you are clever, and see deeper into the trunk of a tree than most. Yes, I want you to go for three reasons. First, that you may satisfy your soul on certain matters, and I would help you; secondly, because I want to satisfy mine; and thirdly, because I know that you will come back safe to be a prop to me in things that will happen in days unborn. Otherwise I would have told you nothing of this story, since it is necessary

to me that you should remain living beneath the sun."

"Have done, Zikali. What is it that you desire?"

"Oh! a great deal that I shall get, but chiefly two things, so with the rest I will not trouble you. First I desire to know whether these dreams of mine of a wonderful white witch-doctress, or witch, and of my converse with her, are indeed more than dreams. Next I would learn whether certain plots of mine, at which I have worked for years, will succeed."

"What plots, Zikali?—and how can my taking a distant journey tell you anything about them?"

"You know them well enough, Macumazahn; they have to do with the overthrow of a royal house that has worked me bitter wrong. As to how your journey can help me, why, thus. You shall promise to me to ask of this Queen whether Zikali, Opener of Roads, shall triumph or be overthrown in that on which he has set his heart."

"As you seem to know this witch so well, why do you not ask her yourself, Zikali?"

"To ask is one thing, Macumazahn. To get an answer is another. I have asked in the watches of the night, and the reply was, 'Come hither, and perchance I will tell you.' 'Queen,' I said, 'how can I come save in the spirit, who am an ancient and a crippled dwarf scarcely able to stand upon my feet?'"

"Then send a messenger, Wizard, and be sure that he is white, for of black savages I have seen more than enough. Let him bear a token also that he comes from you, and tell me of it in your sleep. Moreover, let that token be something of power which will protect him on the journey."

"Such is the answer that comes to me in my dreams, Macumazahn."

"Well, what token will you give me, Zikali?"

He groped about in his robe and produced a piece of ivory of the size of a large chessman that had a hole in it, through which ran a plaited cord of the stiff hairs from an elephant's tail. On this article, which was of a rusty brown colour, he breathed, then having whispered to it for a while, handed it to me.

I took the talisman, for such I guessed it to be, idly enough, held it to the light to examine it, and started back so violently that almost I let it fall. I do not quite know why I started, but I think it was because some influence seemed to leap from it to me. Zikali started also, and cried out,

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"Have a care, Macumazahn. Am I young that I can bear being dashed to the ground?"

"What do you mean?" I asked, still staring at the thing which I perceived to be a most wonderfully fashioned likeness of the old dwarf himself as he appeared before me crouched upon the ground. There were the deepset eyes, the great head, the toad-like shape, the long hair, all.

"When that ivory is hung over your heart, Macumazahn, where you must always wear it, learn that with it goes the strength of Zikali; the thought that would have been his thought and the wisdom that is his wisdom will be your companions, as much as though he walked at your side and could instruct you in every peril. Moreover, north and south and east and west, this image is known to men who, when they see it, will bow down and obey, opening a road to him who wears the Medicine of the Opener of Roads."

"Indeed," I said, smiling, "and what is this colour on the ivory?"

"I forget, Macumazahn, who have had it a great number of years, ever since it descended to me from a forefather of mine who was fashioned in the same mould as I am. It looks like blood, does it not? It is a pity that Mameena is not still alive, since she whose memory was so excellent might have been able to tell you," and, as he spoke, with a motion that was at once sure and swift, he threw the loop of elephant hair over my head.

Hastily I changed the subject, feeling that, after his wont, this old wizard, the most terrible man whom ever I knew, who had been so much concerned with the tragic death of Mameena, was stabbing at me in some hidden fashion.

"You tell me to go on this journey," I said, "and not alone, and yet for companion you give me only an ugly piece of ivory shaped as no man ever was," here I got one back at Zikali, "and from the look of it steeped in blood, which ivory, if I had my way, I would throw into the camp fire. Who, then, am I to take with me?"

"Don't do that, Macumazahn—I mean throw the ivory into the fire, since I have no wish to burn before my time, and if you do, you who have worn it might burn with me. At least certainly you would die with the magic thing and go to acquire knowledge more quickly than you desire. No, no, do not try to take it off your neck, or rather try if you will."

I did try, but something seemed to pre-

vent me from accomplishing my purpose of giving the carving back to Zikali as I wished to do. First my pipe got in the way of my hand, then the elephant hairs caught in the collar of my coat; then a pang of rheumatism, to which I was accustomed from an old injury, developed of a sudden in my left arm, and lastly I seemed to grow tired of bothering about the thing.

Zikali, who had been watching my movements, burst out into one of his terrible laughs that seemed to fill the whole kloof and re-echo from its rocky walls. It died away, and he went on, without further reference to the talisman or image,

"You asked who you were to take with you, Macumazahn. Well, as to this I must make inquiry of those who know. Man, my medicines!"

From the shadows in the hut behind darted out a tall figure carrying a great spear in one hand and in the other a cat-skin bag, which with a salute he laid down at the feet of his master. This salute, by the way, was that of a Zulu word which means "Lord," or "Home of Ghosts."

Zikali groped in the bag and produced from it certain knucklebones.

"A common method," he muttered, "such as every vulgar wizard uses, but one that is quick, and, as the matter concerned is small, will serve my turn. Let us set now, whom you shall take with you, Macumazahn."

He breathed upon the bones, shook them up in his thin hands, and with a quick turn of the wrist threw them into the air. Then he studied them carefully, where they lay among the ashes he had raked out of the fire, those which he had used for the drawing of his map.

"Do you know a man named Umslopogaas, Macumazahn, the chief of a tribe that is called the People of the Axe, whose titles of praise are Bulalio, or the Slaughterer and Woodpecker, the latter from the way he handles his axe? He is a savage fellow, but one of high blood and higher courage, a great captain in his way, though he will never come to anything, save a glorious death—in your company, I think, Macumazahn." (Here he studied the bones again for a while.) "Yes, I am sure, in your company, though not upon this journey. I think that this wolf-man, this axeman, this warrior, Umslopogaas, would be a good fellow to you on your journey to visit the white witch Queen."

"I have heard of him," I answered cautiously. "It is said in the land that he is a son of Chaka. Is there any one else?"

Zikali glanced at the bones again, poking them about in the ashes with his toe, then replied, with a yawn,

"You seem to have a little yellow man in your service, a clever snake who knows how to creep through grass, and when to strike and when to lie hidden. I should take him too, if I were you."

"You know well that I have such a man, Zikali, a Hottentot named Hans, able in his way, but drunken, very faithful too, since he loved my father before me. He is cooking my supper at the wagon now. Are there to be any others?"

"No, I think you three will be enough, with a guard of soldiers from the People of the Axe, for you will meet with fighting, and a ghost or two."

Here of a sudden he shivered violently and cried: "Slave, bring me my blanket, it grows cold, and my medicine also, that which protects me from the ghosts, who are thick to-night. Macumazahn brings them, I think. *Oho-ho!*"

Then he waved his hand to dismiss me, and I went, wondering.

CHAPTER II

THE MESSENGERS

I DID not rest as I should that night; somehow I was never able to sleep well in the neighbourhood of the Black Kloof. I suppose that Zikali's constant talk about ghosts, with his hints and innuendoes concerning those who were dead, always affected my nerves, till in a subconscious way I began to believe that such things existed and were hanging about me. Many people are open to the power of suggestion, and I am afraid that I am one of them. However, the sun, which has such strength to kill noxious things, puts an end to ghosts more quickly even than it does to other evil vapours and emanations, and when I woke up to find it shining brilliantly in a pure heaven, I laughed with much heartiness over the whole affair.

Going to the spring near which we were outspanned, I took off my shirt to have a good wash, still chuckling at the memory of all the hocus-pocus of my old friend, the Opener of Roads.

While engaged in this matutinal operation, I struck my hand against something, and looking, observed that it was the hideous little ivory image of Zikali, which he had set about my neck. The sight of the thing, and the memory of his ridiculous talk about it, especially of his assertion that it had come down to him through

the ages, which it could not have done, seeing that it was a likeness of himself, irritated me so much that I proceeded to take it off with the full intention of throwing it into the spring. As I was in the act of doing this, from a clump of reeds mixed with bushes quite close to me, there came a sound of hissing, and suddenly above them appeared the head of a great black mamba, perhaps the deadliest of all our African snakes, and the only one I know which will attack man without provocation.

Leaving go of the image, I sprang back in a great hurry towards where my gun lay. Then the snake vanished, and making sure that it had departed to its hole, which probably was at a distance, I returned to the pool, and once more began to take off the talisman in order to consign it to the bottom of the pool.

After all, I reflected, it was a hideous, and probably a blood-stained thing which I did not in the least wish to wear about my neck like a lady's love-token.

Just as it was coming over my head, suddenly from the other side of the bush that infernal snake popped up again, this time, it was clear, really intent on business. It began to move towards me in the lightning-like way mambas have, hissing and flicking its tongue. I was too quick for my friend, however, for snatching up the gun that I had laid down beside me, I let it have a charge of buckshot in the neck which nearly cut it in two, so that it fell down and expired with hideous, convulsive writhings.

Hearing the shot, Hans came running from the wagon to see what was the matter. Hans, I should say, was that same Hottentot who had been the companion of most of my journeyings since my father's day. He was with me when as a young fellow I accompanied Retief to Dingaan's kraal, and, like myself, escaped the massacre.* Also we shared many other adventures, including the great one in the Land of the Ivory Child, where he slew the huge elephant god, Jana, and himself was slain. But of this journey we did not dream in those days.

For the rest Hans was a most entirely unprincipled person, but, as the Boers say, "as clever as a wagonload of monkeys." Also he drank when he got the chance. One good quality he had, however; no man was ever more faithful, and perhaps it would be true to say that neither man nor woman ever loved me, unworthy, quite so well. In appearance he rather resembled

* See the book called *Marie*.

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an antique and dilapidated baboon; his face was wrinkled like a dried nut, and his quick little eyes were bloodshot. I never knew what his age was, any more than he did himself, but years had left him tough as whipcord and absolutely untiring. Lastly he was perhaps the best hand at following a spoor that ever I knew, and, up to a hundred and fifty yards or so, a very deadly shot with a rifle, especially when he used a little single-barrelled, muzzle-loading gun of mine made by Purdey, which he named *Intombi*, or Maiden. Of that gun, however, I have written in *The Holy Flower* and elsewhere.

"What is it, Baas?" he asked. "Here there are no lions, nor any game."

"Look the other side of the bush, Hans."

He slipped round it, making a wide circle with his usual caution, then, seeing the snake—which, by the way, was, I think, the biggest mamba I ever killed—suddenly froze as it were in a stiff attitude that reminded me of a pointer when he scents game. Having made sure that it was dead, he nodded, and said,

"Black mamba, or so you would call it, though I know it for something else."

"What else, Hans?"

"One of the old witch-doctor Zikali's spirits which he set at the mouth of this kloof to warn him who comes or goes. I know it well, and so do others. I saw it listening behind a stone when you were up the kloof last evening talking with the Opener of Roads."

"Then Zikali will lack a spirit," I answered, laughing, "which perhaps he will not miss amongst so many. It serves him right for setting the brute on me."

"Quite so, Baas. He will be angry. I wonder why he did it?" he added suspiciously, "seeing that he is such a friend of yours."

"He didn't do it at all, Hans. These snakes are very fierce and give battle, that is all."

Hans paid no attention to my remark, which probably he thought only worthy of a white man who does not understand, but rolled his yellow, bloodshot eyes about, as though in search of explanations. Presently they fell upon the ivory that hung about my neck, and he started.

"Why do you wear that pretty likeness of the Great One yonder over your heart, as I have known you do with things that belonged to women in past days, Baas? Do you not know that it is Zikali's Great Medicine, as every one does throughout the land? When Zikali sends an order far

away, he always sends that image with it, for then he who receives the order knows that he must obey or die. Also the messenger knows that he will come to no harm if he does not take it off, because, Baas, the image is Zikali himself, and Zikali is the image. They are one and the same. Also it is the image of his father's father's father—or so he says."

"That is an odd story," I said. Then I told Hans as much as I thought advisable of how this horrid little talisman came into my possession.

Hans nodded without showing any surprise.

"So we are going on a long journey," he said. "Well, Baas, I thought it was time that we did something more than wander about these tame countries selling blankets to stinking old women and so forth."

To myself I determined, however, not only that I would not travel north to seek that which no living man will ever find, certainly as to the future, but also, to show my independence of Zikali, that I would not visit this chief, Umslopogaas. So, having traded all my goods and made a fair profit, on paper, I set myself to return to Natal, proposing to rest awhile in my little house at Durban, and told Hans my mind.

"Very good, Baas," he said. "I, too, should like to go to Durban. There are lots of things there that we cannot get here," and he fixed his roving eye upon a square-face gin bottle, which as it happened was filled with nothing stronger than water, because all the gin was drunk. "Yet, Baas, we shall not see the Berea for a long while."

"Why do you say that?" I asked sharply.

"Oh! Baas, I don't know, but you went to visit the Opener of Roads, did you not, and he told you to go north, and lent you the Great Medicine, did he not?" and Hans proceeded to light his corn-cob pipe with an ash from the fire, all the time keeping his beady eyes fixed upon that part of me where he knew the talisman was hanging.

"Quite true, Hans, but now I mean to show Zikali that I am not his messenger, for South or North or East or West. So to-morrow morning we cross the river and trek for Natal."

"Yes, Baas, but then why not cross it this evening? There will still be light."

"I have said that we cross it to-morrow morning," I answered, with that firmness which I have read always indicates a man of character, "and I do not change my word."

"No, Baas, but sometimes other things change besides words. Will the Baas have that buck's leg for supper, or the stuff out of a tin with a dint in it, which we bought at a store two years ago? The flies have got at the buck's leg, but I cut out the bit with the maggots on it and ate it myself."

Hans was right, things do change, especially for the weather. That night, unexpectedly, for when I turned in the sky seemed quite serene, there came a terrible rain long before it was due, which lasted off and on for three whole days, and continued intermittently for an indefinite period. Needless to say, the river, which it would have been so easy to cross on this particular evening, by the morning was a raging torrent, and so remained for several weeks. In despair at length I trekked south, where a ford was reported, which, when reached, proved impracticable. I tried another dozen miles farther on, which was very hard to come to over boggy land. It looked all right, and we were getting across finely, when suddenly one of the wheels sank in an unsuspected hole and there we stuck. Indeed, I believe the wagon, or bits of it, would have remained in the neighbourhood of that ford to this day, had I not managed to borrow some extra oxen belonging to a Christian Kaffir, and with their help to drag it back to the bank whence we had started.

As it happened, I was only just in time, since a new storm which had burst farther up the river brought it down in flood again, a very heavy flood.

After this I confessed myself beaten, and gave up until such time as it should please Providence to turn off the water-tap. Trekking out of sight of that infernal river, which annoyed me with its constant gurgling, I camped on a comparatively dry spot that overlooked a beautiful stretch of rolling veld. Towards sunset the clouds lifted, and I saw a mile or two away a most extraordinary mountain, on the lower slopes of which grew a dense forest. The upper part, which was of bare rock, looked exactly like a seated figure of a grotesque person with the chin resting on the breast. There was the head, there were the arms, there were the knees. Indeed, the whole mass of it reminded me strongly of the effigy of Zikali which was tied about my neck, or rather, of Zikali himself.

"What is that called?" I said to Hans, pointing to this strange hill, now blazing with the angry fire of the setting sun that had burst out between the storm clouds and made it appear more ominous even than before.

"That is the Witch Mountain, Baas, where the Chief Umslopogaas and a blood brother of his who carried a great club used to hunt with the wolves. It is haunted, and in a cave at the top of it lie the bones of Nada the Lily, the fair woman whose name is a song, she who was the love of Umslopogaas."

"Rubbish," I said, though I had heard something of all that story, and remembered that Zikali had mentioned this Nada, comparing her in beauty to another whom once I knew.

"Where then lives the Chief Umslopogaas?"

"They say his town is yonder on the plain, Baas. It is called the Place of the Axe, and strongly fortified with a river round most of it, and his people are the People of the Axe. They are a fierce people, and all the country round here is so uninhabited because Umslopogaas has cleaned out the tribes who used to live in it, first with his wolves and afterwards in war. He is so strong a chief and so terrible in battle that even Chaka himself was afraid of him, and Dingaan the king they say he brought to his end because of a quarrel about this Nada. Cetywayo, the present king, too, leaves him alone, and to him he pays no tribute."

Whilst I was about to ask Hans from whom he had collected all this information, suddenly I heard sounds, and, looking up, saw three tall men, clad in full herald's dress, rushing towards us at great speed.

"Here come some chips from the Axe," said Hans, and promptly bolted into the wagon.

I did not bolt because there was no time to do so without loss of dignity, but, although I wished I had my rifle with me, just sat still upon my stool and with great deliberation lighted my pipe, taking not the slightest notice of the three savage-looking fellows. These men, that I noted carried axes instead of assegais, rushed straight at me with the axes raised in such a fashion that any one unacquainted with the habits of Zulu warriors of the old school might have thought that they intended nothing short of murder. As I expected, however, within about six feet of me they halted suddenly and stood there still as statues. For my part I went on lighting my pipe as though I did not see them, and when at length I was obliged to lift my head, surveyed them with an air of mild interest. Then I took a little book out of my pocket, it was my favourite copy of the *Ingoldsbys Legends*, and began to read.

This proceeding astonished them a good deal, who felt that they had, so to speak, missed fire. At last the soldier in the middle said,

"Are you blind, White Man?"

"No, Black Fellow," I answered, "but I am short-sighted. Would you be so good as to stand out of my light?" a remark which puzzled them so much that all three drew back a few paces.

When I had read a little farther, I shut up the book, and remarked,

"If you are wanderers who want food, as I judge by your being so thin, I am sorry that I have little meat, but my servants will give you what they can."

"Ow!" said the spokesman, "he calls us wanderers! Either he must be a very great man or he is mad."

"You are right. I am a great man," I answered, yawning, "and if you trouble me too much, you will see that I can be mad also. Now, what do you want?"

"We are messengers from the great Chief Umslopogaas, Captain of the People of the Axe and we want tribute," answered the man in a somewhat changed tone.

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"Do you? Then you won't get it. I thought that only the King of Zululand had a right to tribute, and your Captain's name is not Cetywayo, is it?"

"Our Captain is King here," said the man still more uncertainly.

"Is he indeed? Then away with you back to him and tell this king of whom I never heard, though I have a message for a certain Umslopogaas, that Macumazahn, Watcher by Night, will visit him to-morrow, if he will send a guide at the first light to show the best path for the wagon."

"Hearken," said the man to his companions, "this is Macumazahn himself. Well, we thought it, for no other would have dared—"

Then they saluted with their axes, calling me Chief and other fine names, and departed as they had come, at a run, calling out that my message should be delivered, and that doubtless the Chief would send the guide.

So it came about that, quite contrary to my intention, after all circumstances brought me to the Town of the Axe. Even at the last moment I had not meant to go there, but when the tribute was demanded, I saw that it was best to do so, and, having once passed my word, it could not be altered; indeed, I felt sure that in this event there would be trouble, and that my oxen would be stolen, or worse.

So Fate having issued its decree, of which Hans's version was that Zikali, or his Great Medicine, had so arranged things, I shrugged my shoulders and waited.

CHAPTER III

UMSLOPOGAAS OF THE AXE

NEXT morning at the dawn guides arrived from the Town of the Axe, bringing with them a yoke of spare oxen, which showed that its Chief was really anxious to see me. So in due course we inspanned and started, the guides leading us by a rough but practicable road down the steep hillside to the saucerlike plain beneath, where I saw many cattle grazing. Travelling some miles across this plain, we came at last to a river of no great breadth that encircled a considerable Kafir town on three sides, the fourth being protected by a little line of koppies which were joined together with walls. Also the place was strongly fortified with fences and in every other way known to the native mind.

With the help of the spare oxen we crossed the river safely at the ford, although it was very full, and on the farther side were received by a guard of men, tall, soldier-like fellows, all of them armed with axes, as the messengers had been. They led us up to the cattle enclosure in the centre of the town, which, although it could be used to protect beasts in case of emergency, also served the practical purpose of a public square.

Here some ceremony was in progress, for soldiers stood round the kraal while heralds pranced and shouted. At the head of the

place in front of the chief's big hut was a little group of people, among whom a big gaunt man sat upon a stool clad in a warrior's dress with a great and very long axe, hafted with wire-lashed rhinoceros horn, laid across his knees. Our guides led me, with Hans sneaking after me like a dejected and low-bred dog (for the wagon had stopped outside the gate), across the kraal to where the heralds shouted and the big man sat yawning. At once I noted that he was a very remarkable person, broad and tall and spare of frame, with long tough-looking arms, a fierce face which reminded me of that of the late king, Dingaan, a great hole in his head above the temple where the skull had been driven in by some blow, and keen, royal-looking eyes. He looked up and seeing me, cried,

"What! Has a white man come to fight me for the chieftainship of the People of the Axe? Well, he is a small one."

"No," I answered quietly, "but Macumazahn, Watcher by Night, has come to visit you in answer to your request, O Umslopogaas—Macumazahn, whose name was known in this land before yours was told of, O Umslopogaas."

The Chief heard, and rising from his seat lifted the big axe in salute.

"I greet you, O Macumazahn," he said, "who, although you are small in stature, are very great indeed in fame. Have I not heard how you conquered Bangu, although Saduko slew him, and of how you gave up the six hundred head of cattle to Tshoza and the men of the Amangwane who fought with you, the cattle that were your own? Have I not heard how you led the Amawombe against the Usutu and stamped flat three of Cetywayo's regiments in the days of Panda, although, alas, because of an oath of mine I lifted no steel in that battle, I who will have nothing to do with those who spring from the blood of Senzangacona, perhaps because I smell too strongly of it, Macumazahn. Oh! yes, I have heard these and many other things concerning you, though until now it has never been my fortune to look upon your face, O Watcher by Night, and therefore I greet you well, Bold one, Cunning one, Upright one, Friend of us Black People."

"Thank you," I answered, "but you say something about fighting. If there is to be anything of the sort, let us get it over. If you want to fight, I am quite ready," and I tapped the rifle which I carried.

The grim Chief broke into a laugh, and said, "Listen. By an ancient law any man on a certain day in each year may fight me for this Chieftainship as I fought him who held it before me, and take it from me with my life and the Axe, though of late none seem to like the business. But that law was made before there were guns, or men like Macumazahn who, it is said, can hit a grasshopper on a wall at fifty paces. Therefore I tell you that if you wish to fight me, O Macumazahn, I give in and you may have the chieftainship, and he laughed again in his fierce fashion.

"I think it is too hot for fighting, either

with guns or axes, and chieftainships are honey that is full of stinging bees," I answered.

Then I took my seat on a stool that had been brought for me and placed by the side of Umslopogaas, after which the ceremony went on.

The heralds, having cried out the challenge to all and sundry to come and fight the Holder of the Axe for the Chieftainship of the Axe without the slightest result, since nobody seemed to desire to do anything of the sort, Umslopogaas, after a pause, rose, swinging his formidable weapon round his head, and declared that by right of conquest he was Chief of the People for the ensuing year, an announcement that everybody accepted without surprise.

After a pause he said,

"Why do you come to visit me, Macumazahn, who have never done so before?"

"I do not come to visit you, Umslopogaas. That was not my intention. You brought me, or rather, the flooded rivers and you together brought me, for I was on my way to Natal and could not cross the drifts."

"Yet I think you have a message for me, White Man, for not long ago a certain wandering witch-doctor who came here told me to expect you, and that you had words to say to me."

"Did he, Umslopogaas? Well, it is true that I have a message, though it is one that I did not mean to deliver."

"Yet being here, perchance you will deliver it, Macumazahn, for those who have messages and will not speak them sometimes come to trouble."

"Yes, being here, I will deliver it, seeing that so it seems to be fated, but on one condition only, that what the ears hear, the heart shall keep to itself alone."

Umslopogaas laid his hand upon the broad edge of the weapon beside him, and said,

"By the Axe I swear it. If I break the oath, be the Axe my doom."

Then I told him the tale, as I have set it down already, thinking to myself that of it he would understand little, being but a wild warrior-man. As it chanced, however, I was mistaken, for he seemed to understand a great deal, perchance because such primitive natures are in closer touch with high and secret things than we imagine, perchance for other reasons with which I became acquainted later.

"Well, White Man," he said at length, "now how am I to know that all this is not but a trap for my feet which already seem to feel cords between the toes of both of them? What token do you bring, O Watcher by Night? How am I to know that the Opener of Roads really sent me this message which has been delivered so strangely by one who wished to travel on another path?"

"I can't say," I answered, "at least in words. But," I added after reflection, "as you ask for a token, perhaps I might be able to show you something that would bring proof to your heart, if there were any secret place—"

Umslopogaas walked to the gateway of the

fence and saw that the sentry was at his post. Then he walked round the hut, casting an eye upon its roof, and muttered to me as he returned,

"Once I was caught thus. There lived a certain woman who set her ear to the smoke-hole and so brought about the death of many, and among them of herself and of our children. Enter. All is safe. Yet if you talk, speak low."

So we went into the hut, taking the stools with us, and seated ourselves by the fire that burned there, on to which Umslopogaas threw chips of resinous wood.

"Now," he said,

I opened my shirt, and by the bright light of the flame showed him the image of Zikali which hung about my neck. He stared at it, though touch it he would not. Then he stood up, and lifting his great axe, he saluted the image with the word, "*Mukosi!*" the salute that is given to great wizards because they are supposed to be the home of many spirits.

"It is the big Medicine, the Medicine itself," he said, "that which has been known in the land since the time of Senzangaona, the father of the Zulu royal house, and as it is said before him."

He sat down again and was silent for a long time. At last he spoke, slowly,

"You wish to consult a white witch-doctor, Macumazahn, who, according to Zikali, lives far to the north, as to the dead. Now I, too, though perchance you will not think it of a black man, desire to learn of the dead; yes, of a certain wife of my youth who was sister and friend as well as wife, whom, too, I loved better than all the world; also of a brother of mine whose name I do not speak, who ruled the wolves with me and who died at my side on yonder Witch-Mountain, having made him a mat of men to lie on in a great and glorious fight. For of him as of the woman I think all day and dream all night, and I would learn if they still live anywhere, and I may look to see them again when I have died as a warrior should, and as I hope to do. Do you understand, Watcher by Night?"

I answered that I understood very well, as his case seemed to be like my own.

"It may happen," went on Umslopogaas, "that all this talk of the dead, who are supposed to live after they are dead, is but as the sound of wind whispering in the reeds at night, that comes from nowhere and goes nowhere and means nothing. But at least it will be a great journey in which we shall find adventure and fighting, since it is well known in the land that wherever Macumazahn goes there is a plenty of both. Also, I think that we shall agree well together, though my temper is rough at times, and that neither of us will desert the other in trouble, though of that little yellow dog of yours I am not so sure."

"I answer for him," I replied. "He is a true man and a cunning when once he is away from drink."

Then we spoke of plans for our journey,

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and of where we should meet to make it, talking till it was late, after which I went to sleep in the guest hut.

CHAPTER IV

THE LION AND THE AXE

NEXT day early I left the town of the People of the Axe, having bid a formal farewell to Umslopogaas, saying, in a voice which all could hear, that as the rivers were still flooded, I proposed to trek to the northern parts of Zululand and trade there until the weather was better. Our private arrangement, however, was that on the night of the next full moon, which happened four weeks later, we should meet at the eastern foot of a certain great, flat-topped mountain known to both of us, which stands to the north of Zululand, but well beyond its borders.

So northward I trekked, slowly to spare my oxen, trading as I went. The details do not matter, but, as it happened, I met with more luck upon that journey than had come my way for many a long year. Although I worked on credit, since nearly all my goods were sold, as owing to my repute I could always do in Zululand, I made some excellent bargains in cattle, and, to top up with, bought a large lot of ivory so cheap that really I think it must have been stolen. All of this, cattle and ivory together, I sent to Natal in charge of a white friend of mine whom I could trust, where the stuff was duly sold very well indeed, and the proceeds paid to my account, the "trade" equivalents being duly remitted to the native vendors. In fact, my good fortune was such that if I had been superstitious like Hans, I should have been inclined to attribute it to the influence of Zikali's "Great Medicine." As it was, I knew it to be one of the chances of a trader's life, and accepted it with a shrug, as often I had been accustomed to do in the alternative of losses.

In due course and without accident, for the weather, which had been so wet, had now turned beautifully fine and dry, we came to the great, flat-topped hill where Umslopogaas and I had agreed to meet, trekking thither over high, sparsely timbered veld that offered few difficulties to the wagon. This hill, which was known to such natives as lived in those parts by a long word that means "Hut-with-a-flat-roof," is surrounded by forests, for here trees grow wonderfully well, perhaps because of the water that flows from its slopes. Forcing our way through this forest, which was full of game, I reached its eastern foot, and there camped five days before that night of full moon on which I had arranged to meet Umslopogaas.

At some time or other there had been a native village at this spot; probably the Zulus had cleaned it out in long-past years, for I found human bones black with age lying in the long grass. Indeed the cattle kraal still remained, and in such good condition that, by piling up a few stones here and there on the walls and closing the narrow entrance with thorn bushes,

we could still use it to enclose our oxen at night. This I did for fear lest there should be lions about, though I had neither seen nor heard any.

The days went by pleasantly enough with lots to eat, since whenever we wanted meat I had only to go a few yards to shoot a fat buck at a spot whither they trekked to drink in the evening.

The moon came up in silver glory, and after had taken a good look at her for luck, also at all the veld within sight, I turned in. An hour or two later some noise from the direction of the cattle kraal woke me up. As it did not recur, I thought that I would go to sleep again. Then an uneasy thought came to me that I could not remember having looked to see whether the entrance was properly closed, as it was my habit to do. It was the same sort of troublesome doubt which in a civilised house makes one get out of bed and go up the cold passages to the sitting-room to see whether one has put out the lamp. It always proves that one *has* put it out, but that does not prevent a repetition of the performance next time the perplexity arises. I reflected that perhaps the noise was caused by the oxen pushing their way through the carelessly closed entrance, and at any rate that I had better go to see. So I slipped on my boots and a coat and went without waking Hans or the boys, only taking with me a light, single-barrelled rifle which I used for shooting small buck, but no spare cartridges.

Now in front of the gateway of the cattle-kraal, shading it, grew a single big tree of the wild fig order. Passing under this tree I looked and saw that the gateway was quite securely closed, as now I remembered. I had noted at sunset. Then I started to go back, but had not stepped more than two or three paces when, in the bright moonlight, I saw the head of my smallest ox, a beast of the Zulu breed, suddenly appear over the top of the wall. About this there would have been nothing particularly astonishing, had it not been for the fact that, as I could tell from the closed eyes and the hanging tongue, this head belonged to a dead animal.

"What in the name of goodness—" I began to myself, when my reflections were cut short by the appearance of another head, that of one of the biggest lions I ever saw, which had the ox by the throat and, with the enormous strength that is given to these creatures, by getting its back beneath the body, was deliberately hoisting it over the wall, to drag it away to devour at its leisure.

There was the brute within twelve feet of me, and, what is more, it saw me as I saw it, and stopped, still holding the ox by the throat.

"What a chance for Allan Quatermain! Of course he shot it dead," I can fancy any one saying who knows me by repute, also that by the gift of God I am handy with a rifle.

Well, so it should have been, for even with the small-bore piece that I carried, a bullet ought to have pierced through the soft parts of the throat to the brain and killed that lion as dead as Julius Caesar. Theoretically



Then there was a most awful noise of roaring, and wheeing round I saw such a fray as never I shall see again. A tall, grim black man was fighting the great lion, that now lacked one paw, but still stood upon its hind legs, striking at him with the other.

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the thing was easy enough; indeed, although naturally I was startled for a moment, by the time that I had the rifle to my shoulder I had little fear of the issue, unless indeed there was a miss-fire, especially as the beast was so astonished that it remained quite still.

Then the unexpected happened, as it generally does in life, particularly in hunting, which, in my case, is a part of life. I fired, but by misfortune the bullet struck the tip of the horn of that confounded ox, which tip either was or at that moment fell in front of the spot on the lion's throat whereat half-unconsciously I had aimed. Result, the ball was turned, and, departing at an angle, just cut through the skin of the lion's neck, deeply enough to hurt it very much and to make it madder than all the hatters in the world.

Dropping the ox, with a most terrific roar, it came over the wall at me; I remember that there seemed to be yards of it—I mean of the lion—in front of which there appeared a cavern full of gleaming teeth.

I skipped back with much agility, also slightly to one side, because there was nothing else to do, reflecting in a kind of inconsequent way that Zikali's Great Medicine was after all not worth a curse. The lion landed on my side of the wall and reared itself upon its hind legs before getting to business, towering high above me but a little to my left. Then I saw a strange thing. A shadow thrown by the moon flitted past me—all I noted of it was the distorted shape of a great lifted axe, probably because the axe came first. This shadow fell, and with it another shadow, that of a lion's paw dropping to the ground. Then there was a most awful noise of roaring, and wheeling round I saw such a fray as never I shall see again. A tall, grim black man was fighting the great lion, that now lacked one paw, but still stood upon its hind legs, striking at him with the other.

The man, who was absolutely silent, dodged the blow and hit back with the axe, catching the beast upon the breast with such weight that it came to the ground in a lopsided fashion, since it had only one paw on which to light.

The axe flashed up again, and before the lion could recover itself, or do anything else, fell with a crash upon its skull, sinking deep into the head, after which all was over, for the beast's brain was cut in two.

"I am here at the appointed time, Macumazah," said Umslopogaas, for it was, he, as with difficulty he dragged the axe from the lion's severed skull, "to find you watching by night as it is reported that you always do."

"No," I retorted, for his tone irritated me, "you are late, Bulalio, the moon has been up some hours."

"I said, O Macumazah, that I would meet you on the *night* of the full moon, not at the rising of the moon."

"That is true," I replied, mollified, "and at any rate you came at a good moment."

"Yes," he answered, "though, as it happens, in this light the thing was easy to any

one who can handle an axe. Had it been darker, the end might have been different. But, Macumazah, you are not so clever as I thought, since otherwise you would not have come out against a lion with a toy like that, and he pointed to the little rifle in my hand.

"I did not know that there was a lion Umslopogaas."

"That is why you are not so clever as I thought, since of one sort or another there is always a lion which wise men should be prepared to meet, Macumazah."

Then he turned and whistled, and behold out of the long grass that grew at a little distance, emerged twelve great men, all of them bearing axes and wearing cloaks of hyena skins, who saluted me by raising their axes.

"Set a watch and skin me this beast by dawn. It will make us a mat," said Umslopogaas, whereon again they saluted silently and melted away.

"Who are these?" I asked.

"A few picked warriors whom I brought with me, Macumazah. There were one or two more, but they got lost on the way."

Then we went to the wagon, and spoke no more that night.

Next morning we started on our journey.

Now, while he was preparing to draw his map in the ashes, or afterwards, I forget which, Zikali had told me that when we drew near to the great river, we should come to a place on the edge of bush-veld that ran down to the river where a white man lived, adding that he thought this white man was a "trek-Boer."

This, I should explain, means a Dutchman who has travelled away from wherever he lives and made a home for himself in the wilderness, as some wandering spirit and the desire to be free of authority often prompts these people to do. Also, after an inspection of his enchanted knuckle-bones, he had declared that something remarkable would happen to this man or his family, while I was visiting him. Lastly, in that map he drew in the ashes, the details of which were so indelibly impressed upon my memory, he had shown me where I should find the dwelling of this white man, of whom and of whose habitation doubtless he knew through the many spies who seem to be at the service of all witch-doctors, and more especially of Zikali, the greatest among them.

Travelling by the sun and the compass, I had trekked steadily in the exact direction that he indicated, to find that in this useful particular he was well named the "Opener of Roads," since always before me I found a practicable path, although to the right or the left there was none. Thus when we came to mountains, it was at a spot where we discovered a pass; when we came to swamps, it was where a ridge of high ground ran between them, and so forth. Also such tribes as we met upon our journey always proved of a friendly character, although perhaps the aspect of Umslopogaas and his fierce band, whom, rather irreverently, I named the twelve Apostles, had some share in inducing this peaceful attitude.

So smooth was our progress, and so well marked by water at certain intervals, that at last I came to the conclusion that we must be following some ancient road which, at a forgotten period of history, had run from south to north, or *vice versa*. Or rather, to be honest, it was the observant Hans who made this discovery from various indications which had escaped my notice. I need not stop to detail them, but one of these was that at certain places the water-holes on high, rather barren land had been dug out, and in one or more instances lined with stones, after the fashion of an ancient well. Evidently we were following some old trade route, made perhaps in forgotten ages when Africa was more civilised than it is now.

For seven days we trekked, till at length we saw far away a vast sea of bush-veld which, as I guessed correctly, must fringe the great Zambesi River. Moreover we, or rather Hans, whose eyes were those of a hawk, saw something else—namely, buildings of a more or less civilised kind, which stood among trees by the side of a stream a mile or two on this side of the great belt of bush.

"Look, Baas," said Hans, "those wanderers did not lie; there is the house of the white man. I wonder if he drinks anything stronger than water," he added, with a sigh, and a kind of reminiscent contraction of his yellow throat.

CHAPTER V

INEZ

We had sighted the house from far away shortly after sunrise, and by midday we were there. As we approached it, I saw that it stood almost immediately beneath two great baobab trees—*banyan* trees we call them in South Africa, perhaps because monkeys eat their fruit. It was a thatched house, with whitewashed walls, and a *sloep*, or veranda, round it, apparently of the ordinary Dutch type. Moreover, beyond it, at a little distance, were other houses, or rather shanties, with wagon sheds, etc.; and mixed up with these a number of native huts. Farther on were considerable fields with springing corn; also we saw herds of cattle grazing on the slopes. Evidently our white man was rich.

Umslopogaas surveyed the place with a soldier's eye, and said to me,

"This must be a peaceful country, Macumazahn, where no attack is feared, since of defences I see none."

"Yes," I answered, "why not, with a wilderness behind it and bush-veld and a great river in front."

"Men can cross rivers and travel through bush-veld," he answered, and was silent.

Up to this time we had seen no one, although it might have been presumed that a wagon trekking towards the house was a sufficiently unusual sight to have attracted attention.

"Where can they be?" I asked.

"Asleep, Baas, I think," said Hans, and as a matter of fact he was right. The whole

population of the place was indulging in a noonday siesta.

At last we got so near to the house that I halted the wagon and descended from the driving-box in order to investigate. At this moment some one did appear, the sight of whom astonished me not a little—namely, a very striking-looking young woman. She was tall, handsome, with large dark eyes, good features, a rather pale complexion, and, I think, the saddest face that I ever saw. Evidently she had heard the noise of the wagon and had come out to see what it was, for she had nothing on her head, which was covered with thick hair of a raven blackness. Catching sight of the great Umslopogaas, with his gleaming axe, and of his savage-looking bodyguard, she uttered an exclamation and, not unnaturally, turned to fly.

"It's all right," I sang out, emerging from behind the oxen, and in English, though before the words had left my lips I reflected that there was not the slightest reason to suppose that she would understand them. Probably she was Dutch, or Portuguese, although by some instinct I had addressed her in English.

To my surprise she answered me in the same tongue, spoken, it is true, with a peculiar accent which I could not place, as it was neither Scotch nor Irish.

"Thank you," she said, "I, sir, was frightened. Your friends look—" here she stumbled for a word, then added, "terrocious."

I laughed at this composite adjective, and answered,

"Well, so they are in a way, though they will not harm you or me. But, young lady, tell me, can we outspan here? Perhaps your husband—"

"I have no husband; I have only a father, sir," and she sighed.

"Well, then, could I speak to your father? My name is Allan Quatermain, and I am making a journey of exploration, to find out about the country beyond, you know."

"Yes, I will go and wake him. He is asleep. Every one sleeps here at midday—except me," she said, with another sigh.

"Why do you not follow their example?" I asked jocosely, for this young woman puzzled me, and I wanted to find out about her.

"Because I sleep little, sir, who think too much. There will be plenty of time to sleep soon for all of us, will there not?"

I stared at her, and then inquired her name, because I did not know what else to say.

"My name is Inez Robertson," she answered. "I will go to wake my father. Meanwhile, please unyoke your oxen. They can feed with the others; they look as though they want rest, poor things," she added and went into the house.

"Inez Robertson," I thought to myself; "that's a queer combination. English father and Portuguese mother, I suppose. But what can an Englishman be doing in a place like this? If it had been a trek-Boer, I should not have been surprised." Then I began to give directions about outspanning.

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We had just got the oxen out of the yokes, when a big, raw-boned, red-bearded, blue-eyed, roughly-clad man of about fifty years of age appeared from the house, yawning. I threw my eye over him as he advanced with a peculiar rolling gait, and formed certain conclusions. A drunkard who has once been a gentleman, I reflected to myself, for there was something particularly dissolute in his appearance, also one who has had to do with the sea; a diagnosis which proved very accurate.

"How do you do, Mr. Allan Quatermain?—which I think my daughter said is your name, unless I dreamed it, for it is one that I seem to have heard before," he exclaimed, with a broad Scotch accent which I do not attempt to reproduce. "What in the name of blazes brings you here, where no real white man has been for years? Well, I am glad enough to see you, anyway, for I am sick of half-breed Portuguese and niggers, and snuff-and-butter girls, and gin and bad whisky. Leave your people to attend to those oxen and come in and have a drink."

"Thank you, Mr. Robertson——"

"Captain Robertson," he interrupted. "Man, don't look astonished. You mightn't guess it, but I commanded a mail steamer once, and should like to hear myself called rightly again before I die."

He led the way into the sitting-room—there was but one in the house. It proved a queer kind of place, with rade furniture seated with strips of hide after the Boer fashion, and yet bearing a certain air of refinement which was doubtless due to Inez, who, with the assistance of a native girl, was already engaged in setting the table. Thus there was a shelf with books, Shakespeare was one of these, I noticed, over which hung an ivory crucifix, suggesting that Inez was a Catholic. On the walls, too, were two good portraits, and on the window-ledge a jar full of flowers. Also the forks and spoons were of silver, as were the mugs, and engraved with a tremendous coat-of-arms and a Portuguese motto.

Presently the food appeared, which was excellent and plentiful, and the Captain, his daughter and I sat down and ate. Also I noted that he drank gin and water, an innocent-looking beverage, but strong as he took it. It was offered to me, but, like Miss Inez, I preferred coffee.

During the meal and afterwards, while we smoked upon the veranda, I told them as much as I thought desirable of my plans. I said that I was engaged on a journey of exploration of the country beyond the Zambesi, and that having heard of this settlement, which by the way was called Strathmuir, as I gathered, after a place in far-away Scotland where the Captain had been born and passed his childhood, I had come here to inquire as to how to cross the great river, and about other things. The Captain was interested, especially when I informed him that I was that same "Hunter Quatermain" of whom he had heard in past years, but told me that it would be impossible to take the wagon down into the

low bush-veld, which we could see on the horizon, as there all the oxen would die of the bite of the tsetse fly. I answered that I was aware of this, and proposed to try to make an arrangement to leave it in his charge till I returned.

"That might be managed, Mr. Quatermain," he answered. "But, man, will you ever return? They say there are queer folk living on the other side of the Zambesi, savage men who are cannibals—Amabagger, I think they call them. It was they who in past years cleaned out all this country, except a few river tribes who live in floating huts or on islands among the reeds, and that's why it is so empty. But this happened long ago, much before my time, and I don't suppose they will ever cross the river again."

"If I might ask, what brought you here, Captain?" I said, for the point was one of which I felt curious.

"That which brings most men to wild places, Mr. Quatermain—trouble. If you want to know, I had a misfortune and piled up my ship. Some lives were lost, and rightly or wrongly I got the sack. Then I started as a trader in a God-forsaken hole named Chinde, one of the Zambesi mouths, you know, and did very well, as we Scotchmen have a way of doing. There I married a Portuguese lady, a real lady of high blood, one of the old sort. When my girl, Inez, was about twelve years old I got into more trouble, for my wife died, and it pleased a certain relative of hers to say that it was because I had neglected her. This ended in a row, and the truth is that I killed him—in fair fight, mind you. Still, kill him I did, though I scarcely knew that I had done it at the time, after which the place grew too hot to hold me. So I sold up and swore that I would have no more to do with what they choose to call civilisation on the East Coast. During my trading I had heard that there was fine country up this way, and here I came and settled years ago, bringing my girl and Thomaso, who was one of my managers, also a few other people with me. And here I have been ever since, doing very well as before, for I trade a lot in ivory and other things, and grow stuff and cattle, which I sell to the river natives. Yes, I am a rich man now, and could go and live on my means in Scotland, or anywhere."

"Why don't you?" I asked. "It would surely be better for Miss Inez!"

"Ah!" he said, with a quiver in his voice. "There you touch it. She ought to go away. There is no one for her to marry here, where we haven't seen a white man for years, and she's a lady right enough, like her mother. But who is she to go to? Moreover, she loves me in her own fashion, as I love her, and she wouldn't leave me because she thinks it her duty to stay, and knows that if she did I should go to the devil altogether. Still, perhaps you might help me about her, Mr. Quatermain—that is, if you live to come back from your journey," he added doubtfully.

I felt inclined to ask how I could possibly

help in such a matter, but thought it wisest to say nothing. This, however, he did not notice, for he went on.

"Now I think I will have a nap, for I do my work in the early morning, and sometimes late at night when my brain seems to clear up again, for you see I was a sailor for many years, and accustomed to keeping watches. You'll look after yourself, won't you, and treat the place as your own?" Then he vanished into the house to lie down.

When I had finished my pipe I went for a walk. First I visited the wagon, where I found Umslopogaas and his company engaged in cooking the beast that had been given them, Zulu fashion. Hans, with his usual cunning, had already secured a meal, probably from the servants, or from Inez herself, at least he left them and followed me. First we went down to the huts, where we saw a number of good-looking women of mixed blood, all decently dressed and engaged about their household duties. Also we saw four or five boys and girls, to say nothing of a baby in arms, fine young people, one or two of whom were more white than coloured.

"These children are very like the Baas with the red beard," remarked Hans reflectively.

"Yes," I said, and shivered, for now I understood the awfulness of this poor man's case. He was the father of a number of half-breeds who tied him to this spot as anchors tie a ship!

CHAPTER VI

THE SEA-COW HUNT

It had been my intention to push forward across the river at once, but here luck or our old friend, Fate, was against me. To begin with, several of Umslopogaas' men fell sick with a kind of stomach trouble, arising no doubt from something they had eaten, and there were many preparations to be made about the loads, and so forth, since the wagon must be left behind. Also, and this was another complication, Hans had a sore upon his foot resulting from the prick of a poisonous thorn, and it was desirable that this should be quite healed before we marched.

So it came about that I was really glad when Captain Robertson suggested that we should go down to a certain swamp, formed, I gathered, by some small tributary of the Zambesi, to take part in a kind of hippopotamus battue.

I fell in with the idea readily enough, since in all my hunting life I had never seen anything of the sort, especially as I was told that the expedition could not take more than a week, and I reckoned that the sick men and Hans would not be fit to travel sooner. So great preparations were made. The riverside natives, whose share of the spoil was to be the carcasses of the slain sea-cows, were summoned by hundreds and sent off to their appointed stations to beat the swamps at a signal given by the firing of a great pile of reeds. Also many other things were done upon which I need not enter.

Then came the time for us to depart to the

appointed spot about twenty miles away, most of which distance it seemed we could trek in the wagon. Captain Robertson, who for the time had cut off his gin, was as active about the affair as though he were once more in command of a mail steamer. Nothing escaped his attention; indeed, in the care which he gave to details he reminded me of the captain of a great ship that was leaving port, and from it I learned how able a man he must once have been.

"Does your daughter accompany us?" I asked on the night before we started.

"Oh! no," he answered, "she would only be in the way. She will be quite safe here, especially as Thomaso, who is no hunter, remains in charge of the place, with a few of the older natives to look after the women and children.

Later I saw Inez herself, who said that she would have liked to come, although she hated to see great beasts killed, but that her father was against it because he thought she might catch fever, so she supposed that she had better remain where she was.

I agreed, though in my heart I was doubtful, and said that I was leaving Hans, whose foot was not as yet quite well, and with whom she had made friends, as she had done with Umslopogaas, to look after her. Also there would be with him the two great Zulus who were now recovering from their attack of stomach sickness, so that she had nothing to fear. She answered with her slow smile that she feared nothing, still she should have liked to come with us. Then we parted, as it proved for a long time.

It was quite a ceremony. Umslopogaas, "in the name of the Axe," solemnly gave over Inez to the charge of his two followers, bidding them guard her with so much earnestness that I began to suspect he feared something which he did not choose to mention. I also gave Hans instructions to keep a sharp eye on Inez, and generally to watch the place, and if he saw anything suspicious, to communicate with us at once.

"Yes, Baas," said Hans, "I will look after 'Sad Eyes'—for so, with their usual quickness of observation, our Zulus had named Inez—" as though she were my grandmother, though what there is to fear for her, I do not know. But, Baas, I would much rather come and look after you, as your reverend father, the Predikant, told me to do always, which is my duty, not girl-herding, Baas. Also my foot is now quite well and—I want to shoot sea-cows, and—"

"You will stop here, Hans, look after the young lady, and nurse your foot," I said sternly, whereon he collapsed with a sigh and asked for some tobacco.

So off we went, about twenty of the village natives, a motley crew armed with every kind of gun, marching ahead and singing songs. Then came the wagon, with Captain Robertson and myself seated on the driving-box, and lastly Umslopogaas and his Zulus, except the two who had been left behind.

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Before nightfall we came to a ridge where this bush-veld turned south, fringing that tributary of the great river in the swamps of which we were to hunt for sea-cows. Here we camped, and next morning, leaving the wagon in charge of my voorlooper and a couple of the Strathmuir natives, for the driver was to act as my gun-bearer, we marched down into the sea of bush-veld. It proved to be full of game, but at this we dared not fire, for fear of disturbing the hippopotami in the swamps beneath, whence in that event they might escape us back to the river.

About midday we passed out of the bush-veld and reached the place where the drive was to be. Here, bordered by steep banks covered with bush, was a swamp not more than three hundred yards wide, down the centre of which ran a narrow channel of rather deep water, draining a vast expanse of morass above. It was up this channel that the sea-cows travelled to the feeding-ground, where they loved to collect at this season of the year.

Here, with the assistance of some of the riverside natives—the rest, to the number of several hundreds, had made a wide détour to the head of the swamps, miles away, whence we were to advance at a certain signal—we made our preparations under the direction of Captain Robertson. These were simple. A quantity of thorn-trees were cut down, and, by means of heavy stones tied to their trunks, anchored in the narrow channel of deep water, while to their tops, which floated on the placid surface, were tied a variety of rags which we had brought with us, such as old red flannel shirts, gay-coloured but worn-out blankets, and I know not what besides. Some of these fragments, too, were attached to the anchored ropes under water. Also we selected places for the guns upon the steep banks that I have mentioned, between which this channel ran. Foreseeing what would happen, I chose one for myself behind a particularly sound rock, and, what is more, built a stone wall to the height of several feet on the landward side of it, as I guessed that the natives posted above me would prove wild in their shooting.

These labours occupied the rest of that day, and at night we retired to higher ground to sleep. Before dawn on the following morning we returned and took up our stations, some on one side of the channel and some on the other, which we had to reach in a canoe bought for the purpose from the river natives.

Then, before the sun rose, Captain Robertson fired a huge pile of dried reeds and bushes, which was to give the signal to the river natives far away to begin their beat. This done, we sat down and waited, after making sure that every gun had plenty of ammunition ready.

As the dawn broke, by climbing a tree near my *schanse*, or shelter, I saw a good many miles away to the south a wide circle of little fires, and guessed that the natives were beginning to burn the dry reeds of the swamp in response to our signals. Presently these fires drew together into a thin wall of flame. Then I

knew that it was time to return to the *schanse* and prepare. It was full daylight, however, before anything happened.

Watching the still channel of water, I saw ripples on it and bubbles of air rising. Suddenly appeared the head of a great bull-hippopotamus, which, having caught sight of our barricade, either above or below water, had risen to the surface to see what it might be. I put a bullet from an eight-bore rifle through its brain, whereon it sank, as I guessed, stone dead to the bottom of the channel, thus helping to increase the barricade by the bulk of its great body. Also it had another effect. I have observed that sea-cows cannot bear the smell and taint of blood, which frightens them horribly, so that they will expose themselves to almost any risk rather than get it into their nostrils. Now, in this still water, where there was no perceptible current, the blood from the dead bull soon spread all about, so that when the herd began to arrive, following their leader, they were terribly frightened. Indeed, the first of them, on winding or tasting it, turned and tried to get back up the channel, where, however, they met others following, and there ensued a tremendous confusion. They rose to the surface, blowing, snorting, bellowing, and scrambling over each other in the water, while continually more and more arrived behind them, till there was a perfect pandemonium in that narrow place.

All our guns opened fire wildly upon the mass; it was like a battle, and through the smoke I caught sight of the riverside natives who were acting as beaters, advancing far away, fantastically dressed, screaming with excitement and waving spears, or sometimes torches of flaming reeds. Most of these men were scrambling along the banks, but some of the bolder spirits advanced over the lagoon in canoes, driving the hippopotami towards the mouth of the channel by which alone they could escape into the great swamps below and so on to the river. In all my hunting experience I do not think I ever saw a more remarkable scene. Still, in a way to me it was unpleasant, for I flatter myself that I am a sportsman, and a battue of this sort is not sport as I understand the term.

At length it came to this; the channel for quite a long way was literally full of hippopotami—I should think there must have been a hundred of them or more of all sorts and sizes, from great bulls down to little calves. Some of these were killed, not many, for the shooting of our gallant company was execrable and almost at hazard, though for every sea-cow that died, of which number I think that Captain Robertson and myself accounted for most, many were only wounded.

Still the unhappy beasts, crazed with noise and fire and blood, did not seem to dare to face our frail barricade, probably for the reason that I have given. For a while they remained massed together in the water, or under it, making a most horrible noise. Then of a sudden they seemed to take a resolution. A few of them broke back towards the burnt

ing reeds, the screaming beaters, and the advancing canoes. One of these, indeed, a wounded bull, charged a canoe, crushed it in its huge jaws, and killed the rower, how exactly I do not know, for his body was never found. The majority of them, however, took another counsel, for, emerging from the water on either side, they began to scramble towards us along the steep banks, or even to climb up them with surprising agility. It was at this point in the proceedings that I congratulated myself earnestly upon the solid character of the water-worn rock which I had selected as a shelter.

Behind this rock, together with my gun-bearer and Umslopogaas, who, as he did not shoot, had elected to be my companion, I crouched and banged away at the unwieldy creatures as they advanced. But fire fast as I might with two rifles, I could not stop the half of them, and they were drawing unpleasantly near. I glanced at Umslopogaas, and even then was amused to see that probably for the first time in his life that redoubtable warrior was in a genuine fright.

"This is madness, Macumazahn," he shouted above the din. "Are we to stop here and be stamped flat by a horde of water-pigs?"

"It seems so," I answered, "unless you prefer to be stamped flat outside, or eaten." I added, pointing to a great crocodile that had also emerged from the channel and was coming along towards us with open jaws.

"By the Axe!" shouted Umslopogaas again, "I will not die thus, trodden on like a slug by an ox."

Now, I have mentioned a tree which I climbed. In his extremity Umslopogaas rushed for that tree and went up it like a lamp-lighter, just as the crocodile wriggled past its trunk snapping at his retreating legs. After this I took no more note of him, partly because of the advancing sea-cows, and more for the reason that one of the village natives posted above me, firing wildly, put a large round bullet through the sleeve of my coat. Indeed, had it not been for the wall which I built that protected us, I am certain that both my bearer and I would have been killed, for afterwards I found it splashed over with lead from bullets which had struck the stones.

Well, thanks to the strength of my rock and to the wall, or, as Hans said afterwards, to Zikali's "Great Medicine," we escaped unhurt. The rush went by me; indeed, I killed one sea-cow so close that the powder from the rifle actually burned its hide. But it did go by, leaving us untouched. All, however, were not so fortunate, since of the village natives two were trampled to death, while a third had his leg broken. Also, and this was really amusing, a bewildered bull, charging at full speed, crashed into the trunk of Umslopogaas' tree, and as it was not very thick, snapped it in two. Down came the top, in which the dignified chief was ensconced like a bird in a nest, though at that moment there was precious little dignity about him. However, except for scratches, he was not hurt, as the hippo-

tamus had other business in urgent need of attention, and did not stop to settle with him.

"Such are the things which happen to a man who mixes himself up with matters of which he knows nothing," said Umslopogaas sententiously to me afterwards. But all the same he could never bear any allusion to this tree-climbing episode in his martial career, which, as it happened, had taken place in full view of his retainers, among whom it remained the greatest of jokes. Indeed, he wanted to kill a man, the wag of the party, who gave him a slang name which, being translated, means "He-who-is-so-brave-that-he-dared-to-ride-a-water-horse-up-a-tree."

It was all over at last, for which I thanked Providence devoutly. A good many of the sea-cows were dead, I think twenty-one was our exact bag, but the great majority of them had escaped in one way or another, many, as I fear, wounded. I imagine that at the last the bulk of the herd overcame its fears, and, swimming through our screen, passed away down the channel. At any rate they were gone, and, having ascertained that there was nothing to be done for the man who had been trampled on my side of the channel, I crossed it in the canoe with the object of returning quietly to our camp to rest.

But as yet there was to be no quiet for me, for there I found Captain Robertson, who I think had been refreshing himself out of a bottle, and was in a great state of excitement about a man who had been killed near him who was a favourite of his, and another whose leg was broken. He declared vehemently that the hippopotamus that had done this had been wounded and rushed into some bushes a few hundred yards away, and that he meant to take vengeance upon it. Indeed he was just setting off to do so.

Seeing his agitated state, I thought it wisest to follow him. What happened need not be set out in detail. It is sufficient to say that he found that hippopotamus, and blazed both barrels at it in the bushes, hitting it, but not seriously. Out lumbered the creature with its mouth open, wishing to escape. Robertson turned to fly, as he was in its path, but from one cause or another tripped and fell down. Certainly he would have been crushed beneath its huge feet had I not stepped in front of him and sent two solid eight-bore bullets down that yawning throat, killing it dead within three feet of where Robertson was trying to rise, and I may add of myself.

This narrow escape sobered him, and I am bound to say that his gratitude was profuse.

"You are a brave man," he said, "and had it not been for you, by now I should be wherever bad people go. I'll not forget it, Mr. Quatermain, and if ever you want anything that John Robertson can give, why, it's yours."

"Very well," I answered, being seized by an inspiration, "I do want something that you can give easily enough."

"Give it a name and it's yours—half my place, if you like."

"I want," I went on, as I slipped new car-

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tridges into the rifle—"I want you to promise to give up drink for your daughter's sake. That's what nearly did for you just now, you know."

"Man, you ask a hard thing," he said slowly, "but, by God, I'll try for her sake and yours too."

Then I went to help to set the leg of the injured man, which was all the rest I got that morning.

CHAPTER VII

THE OATH

We spent three more days at that place. First it was necessary to allow time to elapse before the gases which generated in their great bodies caused those of the sea-cows which had been killed in the water to float. Then they must be skinned and their thick hides cut into strips and pieces to be traded for sjamboks, or to make small native shields, for which some of the East Coast tribes will pay heavily. All this took a long while, during which I amused, or disgusted myself in watching those river natives devouring the flesh of the beasts. The lean, what there was of it, they dried and smoked into a kind of "biltong," but a great deal of the fat they ate at once. I had the curiosity to weigh a lump which was given to one thin, hungry-looking fellow. It scaled quite twenty-five pounds. Within four hours he had eaten it to the last ounce, and lay there, a distended and torpid log. What would not we white people give for such a digestion!

At last all was over, and we started homewards, the man with a broken leg being carried in a kind of litter. On the edge of the bushveld we found the wagon quite safe, also one of Captain Robertson's that had followed us from Strathmuir in order to carry the expected load of hippopotamus hides and ivory. I asked my voorlooper if anything had happened during our absence. He answered nothing, but that on the previous evening, after dark, he had seen a glow in the direction of Strathmuir, which lay on somewhat lower ground about twenty miles away, as though numerous fires had been lighted there. It struck him so much, he added, that he had climbed a tree to observe it better. He did not think, however, that any building had been burned there, as the glow was not strong enough for that.

I suggested that it was caused by some grass fire or reed-burning, to which he replied indifferently that he did not think so, as the line of glow was not sufficiently continuous.

There the matter ended, though I confess that the story made me anxious, for what exact reason I could not say. Umslopogaas also, who had listened to it, for the talk was in Zulu, looked grave, but made no remark. But as since his tree-climbing experience he had been singularly silent, of this I thought little.

We had trekked at a time which we calculated would bring us to Strathmuir about an hour before sundown, allowing for a short outspan half-way. As my oxen were got in

more quickly than those of the other wagon after this outspan, I was the first away, followed at a little distance by Umslopogaas, who preferred to walk with his Zulus. The truth was, that I could not get that story about the glow of fires out of my mind, and was anxious to push on, which had caused me to hurry up the inspanning.

Perhaps we had covered a couple of miles of the ten or twelve which lay between us and Strathmuir, when, far off on the crest of one of the waves of the veld which much resembled those of a swelling sea frozen while in motion, I saw a small figure approaching us at a rapid trot. Somehow that figure suggested Hans to my mind, so much so that I got my glasses to examine it more closely. A short scrutiny through them convinced me that Hans it was, Hans and no other, advancing at a great pace.

Filled with uneasiness, I ordered the driver to flog up the oxen, with the result that in a little over five minutes we met. Halting the wagon, I leapt from the wagon-box, and, calling to Umslopogaas, who had kept up with us at a slow, swinging trot, went to Hans, who, when he saw me, stood still at a little distance, swinging his apology for a hat in his hand, as was his fashion when ashamed or perplexed.

"What is the matter, Hans?" I asked, when we were within speaking distance.

"Oh! Baas, everything," he answered, and I noticed that he kept his eyes fixed upon the ground, and that his lips twitched.

"Speak, you fool, and in Zulu," I said, for by now Umslopogaas had joined me.

"Baas," he answered in that tongue, "a terrible thing has come about at the farm of Red-Beard yonder. Yesterday afternoon, at the time when people are in the habit of sleeping there till the sun grows less hot, a body of great men with fierce faces, who carried big spears—perhaps there were fifty of them, Baas—crept up to the place through the long grass and growing crops and attacked it."

"Did you see them come?" I asked.

"No, Baas. I was watching at a little distance, as you bade me do, and the sun being hot I shut my eyes to keep out the glare of it, so that I did not see them until they had passed me and heard the noise."

"You mean that you were asleep or drunk?" Hans, but go on."

"Baas, I do not know," he answered shamefacedly, "but after that I climbed a tall tree with a kind of bush at the top of it" (I ascertained afterwards that this was a sort of leafy-crowned palm), "and from it I saw everything without being seen."

"What did you see, Hans?" I asked him.

"I saw the big men run up and make a kind of circle round the village. Then they shouted, and the people in the village came out to see what was the matter. Thomaso and some of the men caught sight of them first and ran away fast up the hill-side at the back where the trees grow, before the circle was complete. Then the women and the children came out, and the big men killed them with their spears—all, all!"



The lady Sad-Eyes came out on to the stoep, and with her came the two Zulus of the Axe who had been left sick, but were now quite recovered. A number of the big men ran as though to take her, but the two Zulus made a great fight in front of the little steps to the stoep, having their backs protected by the stoep, and killed six of them before they themselves were killed. Also Sad-Eyes shot one with a pistol she carried, and wounded another so that the spear dropped out of his hand.

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"Good God!" I exclaimed. "And what happened at the house and to the lady?"

"Baas, some of the men had surrounded that also, and when she heard the noise, the lady Sad-Eyes came out on to the stoep, and with her came the two Zulus of the Axe who had been left sick, but were now quite recovered. A number of the big men ran as though to take her, but the two Zulus made a great fight in front of the little steps to the stoep, having their backs protected by the stoep, and killed six of them before they themselves were killed. Also Sad-Eyes shot one with a pistol she carried, and wounded another so that the spear dropped out of his hand. Then the rest fell on her and tied her up, setting her in a chair on the stoep where two remained to watch her. They did her no hurt, Baas; indeed, they seemed to treat her as gently as they could. Also they went into the house, and there they caught that tall yellow girl who always smiles and is called Janee, she who waits upon the Lady Sad-Eyes, and brought her out to her. I think they told her, Baas, that she must look after her mistress, and that if she tried to run away she would be killed, for afterwards I saw Janee bring her food and other things."

"And then, Hans?"

"Then, Baas, most of the great men rested a while, though some of them went through the store gathering such things as they liked, blankets, knives, and iron cooking-pots, but they set fire to nothing, nor did they try to catch the cattle. Also they took dry wood from the pile and lit big fires, eight or nine of them, and when the sun set they began to feast."

"What did they feast on, Hans, if they took no cattle?" I asked with a shiver, for I was afraid of I knew not what.

"Baas," answered Hans, turning his head away and looking at the ground, "they feasted on the children whom they had killed, also on some of the young women. These tall soldiers are men-eaters, Baas!"

At this horrible intelligence I turned faint, and felt as though I was going to fall, but, recovering myself, signed to him to go on with his story.

"They feasted quite quietly, Baas," he continued, "making no noise. Then some of them slept while others watched, and that went on all night. As soon as it was dark, but before the moon rose, I slid down the tree and crept round to the back of the house without being seen or heard, as I can, Baas. I got into the house by the back door and crawled to the window of the sitting-room. It was open, and peeping through I saw Sad-Eyes still tied to the seat on the stoep not more than a pace away, while the girl Janee crouched on the floor at her feet—I think she was asleep or fainting.

"I made a little noise, like a night-adder hissing, and kept on making it, till at last Sad-Eyes turned her head. Then I spoke in a very low whisper, for fear lest I should wake the two guards who were dozing on either side

of her wrapped in their blankets, saying: 'It is I, Hans, come to help you.' 'You cannot,' she answered, also speaking very low. 'Get to your master, and tell him and my father to follow. These men are called Amahagger, and live far away across the river. They are going to take me to their home, as I understand, to rule over them, because they want a white woman to be their queen who have always been ruled by a white Queen, against whom they have rebelled. I do not think they mean to do me any harm, unless perhaps they want to marry me to their chief, but of this I am not sure from their talk, which I understand badly. Now go, before they catch you.'

"I think you might get away," I whispered back. "I will cut your bonds. When you are free, slip through the window and I will guide you."

"Very well, try it," she said. "So I drew my knife and stretched out my arm. But then, Baas, I showed myself a fool—if the Great Medicine had still been there I should have known better. I forgot the moonlight, which shone upon the blade of the knife. That girl Janee came out of her sleep or swoon, lifted her head, and saw the knife. She screamed once, then at a word from her mistress was silent. But it was enough, for it woke up the guards, who glared about them and threatened Janee with their great spears, also they went to sleep no more, but began to talk together, though what they said I could not hear, for I was hiding on the floor of the room. After this, knowing that I could do no good and might do harm and get myself killed, I crept out of the house as I had crept in, and got back to my tree."

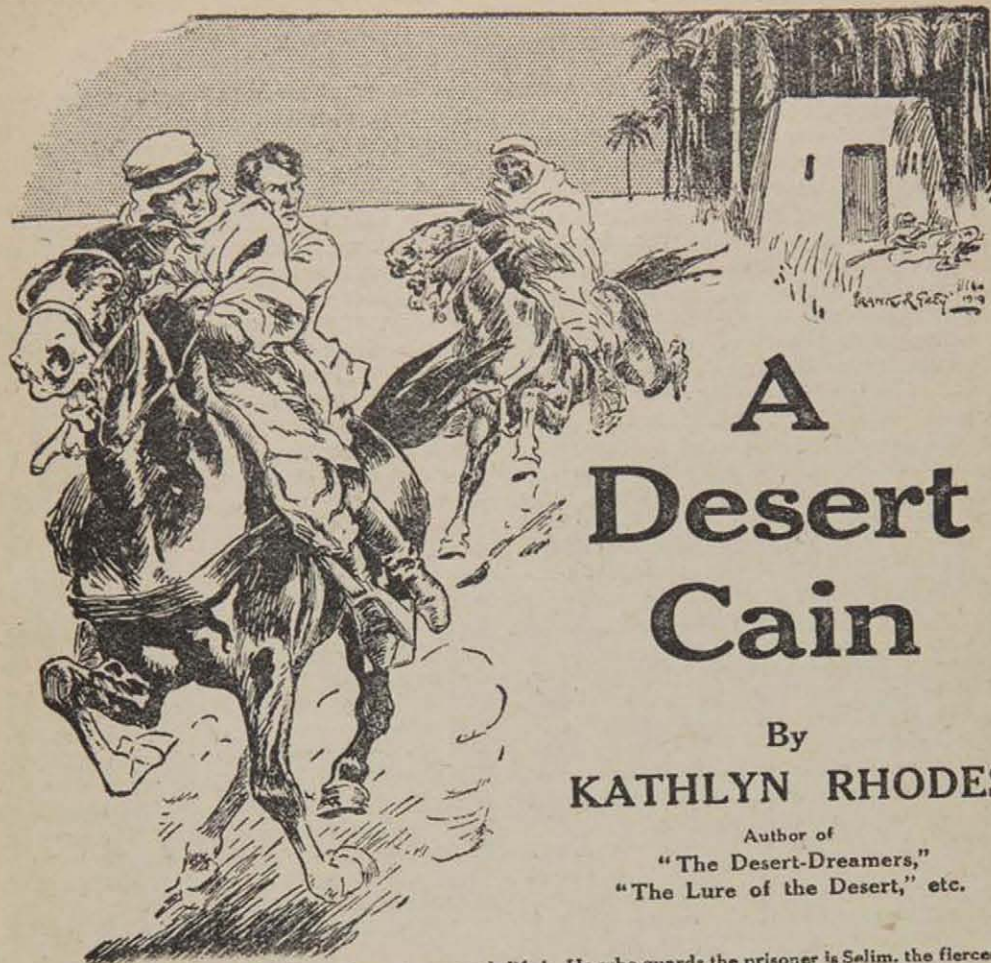
"Why did you not come to me?" I asked.

"Because I still hoped I might be able to help Sad-Eyes, Baas. Also I wanted to see what happened, and I knew that I could not bring you here in time to be any good, though it is true I thought of coming."

"Perhaps you were right."

"At the first dawn," continued Hans, "the great men who are called Amahagger rose and ate what was left over from the night before. Then they gathered themselves together and went to the house. Here they found a large chair, that seated with rimpis in which the Baas Red-Beard sits, and lashed two poles to the chair. Beneath the chair they tied the garments and other things of the Lady Sad-Eyes, which they made Janee gather as Sad-Eyes directed her. This done, very gently they sat Sad-Eyes herself in the chair, bowing while they made her fast. After this eight of them set the poles upon their shoulders, and they all went away at a trot, heading for the bush-veld, driving a herd of goats which they had stolen from the farm, and making Janee run by the chair. I saw everything, Baas, for they passed just beneath my tree. Then I came to seek you, following the outward spoor of the wagons. That is all, Baas."

(To be continued in the next number of "Hutchinson's Story Magazine.")



A Desert Cain

By
KATHLYN RHODES

Author of
"The Desert-Dreamers,"
"The Lure of the Desert," etc.

"But—Effendi, it were folly to throw away one's life! He who guards the prisoner is Salim, the fiercest and strongest of all the guards—"

"I don't care if Shaitan himself guards the prisoner, I'm going to get him out of that hell—somehow!"

"SO you played Cain to your brother Abel, eh, Achmed? Well, murder seems to sit pretty lightly on your soul, you brown rascal!"

The man addressed, who squatted, cross-legged, on the sand outside the tent, grinned cheerfully, and answered the indictment with an insouciance which was out of keeping with its gravity.

"My brother, he one big size villain, Effendi. He steal my money, he steal my land, he take my wife. So I kill him. But I take care, the village think he die by accident. And now he sorry for his wickedness, no?"

"Can't say, Achmed. Depends on what particular hell or heaven he's got to. But tell me, did the act of killing give you satisfaction? You got your 'land back? And your wife?"

Over the rascally brown face there fell, on the instant, a veil of reserve, the reserve in which an Arab wraps himself at mention of his womenkind. And Amory, regretting

his indiscretion, made haste to change the subject.

"By the way, didn't I see the runner here to-night? Letters for me, I suppose?"

Immediately the brown face shed its unaccustomed reticence, and became a chuckling mask once more.

"Letters—*aiwa*, Effendi—many letters for Mistaire h'Amory h'esquire!"

"Well, where are they? Look sharp, you brown image, or I shall have to liven your wits with my riding whip!"

Quite unmoved by the threat, Achmed produced a bundle of letters from some mysterious hiding-place in his voluminous robe, and handed them gaily to his master.

"Here they be, Effendi. Is it the Effendi's pleasure that I now take my evening meal?"

Amory's eyes were on his letters.

"Yes. Clear out and leave me in peace."

"*Aiwa*, Effendi." Achmed sprang agilely

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to his feet. "There is much talk in the village to-night. One has just come in from yonder"—he waved vaguely over the desert—"with a tale of strange doings in the *harim* of Moussa Bey. . . ."

Amory paid no heed to the tentative remark, and with a shrug of the shoulders Achmed departed serenely in quest of the *cous-cous* and the gossip which awaited him in the huddle of mud huts known as the village of El-Khatum.

Evening was falling gently over the desert. The sky was softly afire with pale green and paler violet hues, in the midst of which the round ball of gold which was the sun trod delicately, his steps veiled in a mist of tender, floating cloud. A little breeze wandered fitfully over the face of the desert, whispering faint promises of the joys of the starlit night to come, and indeed above the sandhills in the east one silver star already trembled in the pale firmament.

Amory's white tent looked strange, almost eerie, in the silent space which surrounded it. True, the mud village was only a quarter of a mile away, and to the north, looking, in the clear desert light, but a stone's throw distant, stood the great Villa of the powerful Moussa Bey, the mansion of delight to which the owner was wont to resort when the cares of business had pressed too closely upon his shoulders. Yet the little white tent seemed a symbol of some strange solitude, a challenge flung in the face of that civilisation which insists that man shall herd with his fellow men, shall build houses and streets of houses, and avoid, as it were a plague, the wide and open spaces of the earth.

And the little tent spoke truly; for in it there dwelt a soul in rebellion, in revolt against the treachery of man, the weakness of woman, against the double betrayal which had driven a trusting fool into the wilderness in a vain attempt to forget his too confident folly.

Yet as he bent over his letters to-night Christopher Amory's face was not altogether hard. It was as though in the slow atrophy of his affections one small area were left untouched; as though in a heart devastated by the great fires of hatred and contempt and lust for vengeance there yet dwelt some softer emotion, some tiny flicker of that warm humanity which had been well-nigh extirpated by a ruthless hand.

Such, at least, would have been the conclusion of a psychologist watching him to-night; and the diagnosis would have

been correct; for in his hand Amory held a letter from the one person in the world for whom he knew a real and very powerful affection—his brother Ivor.

He read the letter eagerly, until he came to the hated name of his supplanter; and then his face changed from a half-wistful protectiveness to a rancour which was not assumed.

"... they say—the doctors—that Joan's chest is weak, and so Dorrien is taking her out to Egypt. Some people have all the luck—I've had a cold all the winter, but no one thinks of taking me out there! Thought I'd warn you, in case you ran against them in one of your visits to Cairo. I know, of course, they treated you abominably, but still—I suppose they couldn't help it, could they? It would have been worse if she had married you and then bolted with him—and he's really quite a decent chap when you know him."

With an impatient exclamation Amory crushed the letter in his hand. The peace of the desert had been rudely disturbed by this chattering echo of a sordid tragedy; and he would read no farther. Yet after a moment he felt remorse for the way he had treated the letter of the brother he loved; and he smoothed out the crumpled sheet and read it, grimly, to the end.

At the bottom of the last sheet came a scribbled postscript.

"Since writing the above something rather jolly has happened. No time for more, but prepare for a surprise when next you hear from me!"

"A rise in screw, or maybe he's sold a picture—at last!" His smile was half-amused, half-bitter. "Well, I've never had any luck—perhaps it's coming his way instead!"

Rising abruptly, he went into the tent, and dispatched the frugal meal which awaited him. Then, filling his pipe, he came out again to wait for Achmed, who would presently bring the horses for the usual evening ride.

The swift twilight had come and passed while he sat eating, and now night lay, mysterious, silver, star-lit, upon the face of the desert. In the sky the great bright stars hung in clusters, and the moon was rising, sliding into view like a huge plate of gold behind a clump of ragged palms.

It was very still, very tranquil, very peaceful. Yet in the heart of the tent-dweller there reigned no peace, only a chaotic welter of emotion in which, strangely, for he was no egoist, self-pity had its place.

True, he loved the desert, loved to feel the sand slipping between his horse's hoofs as they thundered along in the opal dawn, or in the velvety moonlight; loved to sit by the camp fires of the nomads, to listen to their songs, to sleep, later, to the throbbing lullaby of their little drums. He loved the solitude, the complete, unbroken isolation.

And yet there were times, too, when he yearned for his kind, when the home-loving instinct which was implanted in the breasts of the first primitive cave-dwellers rose and threatened to overwhelm him with a vain vision of a home . . . not merely a house, but some dwelling sanctified by the presence of a woman, with tender eyes and sunny hair, eyes and hair reproduced in exquisite miniature in the child who crept, clinging, to her side.

And this home might have been his, would have been his if a woman had been true to her promise, if a man had shown himself worthy of a life-long friendship. . . .

"The horses, Effendi! You are ready, eh? The moon is up and the desert calls!"

Achmed's cheerful face grinned up at his master in the moonlight, and in spite of himself Amory's facial muscles relaxed.

"For a fratricide you're a remarkably cheery soul, Achmed! I'm sure if I had a brother's murder on my conscience I couldn't grin like that!"

"Yes, sare, no, sare," returned the rascal gaily. "Where will the Effendi choose to ride? The stars shine, our horses' feet are shod with silver."

"I know . . . yes. But—" Amory hesitated—"somehow I feel to-night as though I wanted company. Come, Achmed, you're a gregarious fellow. Can't you take me to some entertainment in the village yonder? Or are there any nomads camping within easy distance of us? I'm in the humour for adventure, not contemplation, to-night!"

Over Achmed's face stole an extraordinary expression. It was as though two emotions, eagerness and caution, warred within him, as though he wished, yet hesitated to make some proposal to the Effendi. Looking at him closely, Amory saw signs of an excitement which had hitherto escaped his notice; and marking the shining eyes, the nervous gestures of the brown hands, he guessed that the Arab was aflame with some secret which he longed, yet feared, to disclose.

"What's up, Achmed?" His own

eyes began to shine. "Is there some *tomasha* in the village, or what is it that's making you so fey? Out with it, man, and if it's allowable for a stranger to participate, why, I'll join in with all my heart!"

Suddenly the Arab's expressive face grew serious, almost solemn. It was evident that in his dark soul he was debating some weighty matter, and Amory stood, motionless, schooling himself to patience until the decision should be made.

"Effendi"—his voice was hurried—"there is much talk in the village to-night. It is said, by one who knows, that there will be a tragedy in the *harim* of Moussa Bey ere dawn treads the eastern sky with rosy feet!"

"A tragedy—in the *harim*?"
"Awwa, Effendi. For it is said that my Lord the Bey, returning from a journey into the Fayum, discovered that a thief had sought to rob him of his choicest treasure, had laid plans to cull from his garden the fairest rose!"

"Which, being interpreted, means that some inmate of the *harim* has been giving the glad eye to an outsider, I suppose!" He laughed cynically. "Well, seeing what an old swine the Bey is, I wouldn't blame any of his beauties casting looks at a handsome gardener!"

"I do not understand your words, Effendi." Achmed was affronted at this light treatment of a serious subject. "The glad-i . . . I know not what it means. Yet it is like to be an unlucky matter for the Roumi who was discovered in the gardens of the *harim* by my Lord the Bey."

"Hold on a minute, Achmed!" His voice was startled. "What's that you say—the Roumi? D'you mean an Englishman's been playing the fool with the Bey's women? But there isn't an Englishman nearer than Cairo!"

"Yet is it so, Effendi. The man was discovered, in the moment of the Bey's return, by Selim, the keeper of the *harim*, in the act of dallying with the beautiful Fatma; and was dragged before the Bey, who cast him into the hut at the entrance to the gardens while he debated what fate should be meted out to the wretched dealer of the *harim*."

"But, I say, Achmed, this can't go on!" At the hint of danger to a countryman Amory was another person, as quick and alert as he had before been indifferent, uninterested. "Why, God only knows what will happen to the fellow if he's left to the Bey's tender mercies!"

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"Allah truly may know, but the mercies of Shaitan will be more tender than those of my lord," returned the Arab calmly. "It is said that already Selim has begun to sharpen his knife, for flesh is tough, and it would tarnish the pride of the fellow should he fail to slice off the Roumi's ears neatly at a blow!"

"For God's sake shut up, you callous brute!" Amory felt physical nausea at the words. "D'you mean to say the Bey will be devil enough to cut off the chap's ears?"

"Even so, Effendi." Achmed spoke sullenly, not relishing the other's epithets. "First the ears, then perchance the fingers and the toes. If my lord's thirst for vengeance be then sated, it may be he will let the Roumi go, but if not—who knows? There are hot irons which gouge out the eyes, and it is possible for a clever man to slice off the nose at one stroke. The tongue, too, it is easily torn from the mouth. . . ."

"Good God, Achmed, do you want to drive me mad! You stand there and coolly tell me a white man is to be tortured to death by that devil incarnate, the Bey—"

"The Roumi would have outraged the Bey's honour, have defiled the pride of the *harim*." Achmed was still sullen. "It is but justice that the lord of the household should avenge himself on the robber. . . ."

"But not with hot irons!" Amory's whole being was aflame at the thought of his compatriot's danger. "Oh, you can't see it, of course! I expect if the truth be known you murdered your unfortunate brother in some pretty devilish fashion! But this thing has got to be stopped. There's no time for the authorities to take a hand if the entertainment is to come off at dawn. *We've* jolly well got to stop it, but how!"

The Arab stared, aghast.

"Effendi, what is the meaning of these words? It is madness, surely, which speaks in them!"

"Madness—no, rather sheer horse sense!" Amory's previous languor had dropped from him like an ill-fitting garment, he was a man of action once more. "You may do as you please, but I'm going over yonder"—he waved towards the Villa—"to have a shot at rescuing the poor brute."

"But—Effendi, it were folly to throw away one's life! He who guards the prisoner is Selim, the fiercest and strongest of all the guards—"

"I don't care if Shaitan himself guards

the prisoner, I'm going to get him out of that hell—somehow!" He spoke resolutely, and Achmed realised he meant to do this thing.

"Effendi, it is madness!" He spoke earnestly. "Selim will never permit the Effendi to approach the hut where he guards the captive. He will fight, Effendi to the death, lest worse befall him at the hands of the Bey his lord. And he is strong; one blow from his fist . . . crrrc!" He made a feint of collapsing on the sand.

"Strong, eh? Then we must oppose strength with cunning." He meditated a moment. "See here, you know the fellow. Is he fond of money—would it be possible to bribe him?"

Achmed shook his head.

"He is doubtless a thief, as are all the *harim* guards, scum that they are!" He spat virtuously into the sand. "Yet he would be afraid to take a bribe. . . ."

"Well, for God's sake suggest something! Would it be possible to make him drunk? I have a drug which easily puts a man to sleep for an hour or two—"

Achmed looked dubious.

"That might be done, Effendi, for Selim is no true follower of the Prophet, and hath a fondness for wine. But he would not drink with the Effendi, for even his thick wits would suspect a trick—"

"Listen, Achmed!" A light had sprung into Amory's eyes. "What's to prevent me dressing up in that Arab rig of mine and posing as a date-merchant, or something of the sort? It would be natural for a stranger passing by to stop and speak—ask the way maybe, and offer a drink in return for the information."

Very slowly a grin began to spread over Achmed's brown face, for the plan, with all its risks, suited his bold nature; and indeed the whole adventure was more to his liking than he chose to admit.

"Effendi, it is a good plan. In truth this Selim is a vain fellow, for ever boasting of his strength, and it would be a pious act to lay his pride in the dust."

"Quite so." Amory guessed shrewdly that Achmed bore the boastful Selim some grudge. "That's settled, then. You know the man, so you must keep in the background, and I'll do the palaver. Savvy?"

"Truly the Effendi is a great leader. Secure in his own immunity, Achmed hastened to pour forth flattery. "The plan is good; and it were wise to set a bout it without delay. Indeed it is a great

enterprise—and Allah, they say, loves ever a bold and courageous spirit!"

Half an hour later two riders drew rein on the outskirts of the Bey's gardens. The hut in which the captive languished, guarded by the mighty Selim, was just without the confines of the great domain, and was a strongly constructed place, built of stone, with a massive door and slits in the windowless walls.

A long, dense belt of palms had hidden the approach of the horsemen from the guardian of the hut, and from behind a convenient tree the riders were able to spy out the land, noting how the giant Selim squatted on the sand, a box of dominoes before him, while he made shift, single-handed, to play a travesty of the "ladies' game" beloved of the Arabs.

Now that the goal was in sight Achmed seemed suddenly to grow apprehensive. He shifted uneasily in his saddle, moistened his lips, and shot queer, restless glances at his master out of the corners of his eyes. Truth to tell, something was tormenting the by no means unduly sensitive conscience of Achmed ben Hassan; and he was wondering whether it were wiser to keep silence still, or to make a clean breast of the matter which troubled him.

Presently Amory noticed his palpable uneasiness, and his voice was a trifle sharp as he questioned the man.

"What's the matter—got a fit of nerves? I'll do the job alone if you're funking it!"

"Effendi, I fear nothing." Physically he was no coward. "Yet there is that in this matter which troubleth me, and I would fain take counsel with myself as to the wisdom of speech."

"Well, hurry up and decide. Sure you don't want me to go on alone?"

"Nay, my lord. Yet I would not that the Effendi go forward without due knowledge of what awaiteth him in the person of the miserable prisoner."

"What's that?" He spoke quickly. "I don't know the man—"

"Yet methinks he hath acquaintance with my lord. It was said—in the village—that he had inquired, earlier, for the Effendi's dwelling place. . . ."

"Inquired for me? Why, there's not a soul I know in Egypt—except—"

Suddenly a passage from Ivor's letter floated in front of his eyes.

" . . . Joan's chest is weak, and so Dorrien is taking her out to Egypt—"

"Did you learn the name of the Roumi,

Achmed ben Hassan?" His manner was stern.

"Even that, my lord, since inadvertently the Roumi dropped an envelope upon which was written his direction—"

"The name—quick, for Allah's sake, the name!"

Very slowly, debating within himself whether he acted wisely, the Arab produced a torn and dirty envelope, which he yielded to the snatching hand held out for it.

The other man took it, looked at it fastidiously, read the name—and his blood ran like fire in his veins. For the name on the envelope was that of his supplanter Gerald Dorrien.

The night was passing all too rapidly for the work which had yet to be done.

In the stone house a couple of hundred yards away a man crouched, waiting in blank terror for the dawn which should bring him a horrible death; and ere long the stars would begin to wane before the light of day.

Yet Christopher Amory sat motionless on his horse, with God knows what thoughts passing through his brain.

Here, at last, was an opportunity to get even with his supplanter. He had but to simulate a sudden cowardice, to throw up the game, and Dorrien would go to his death, helpless as a stricken animal. Vengeance for his treachery had been slow but sure. He who had betrayed his friend should in his turn be betrayed; and the mental torture he had inflicted on a living man's soul should be expiated by the pangs of physical anguish.

Yet, as he sat on his horse, an ominously still figure in the moonlight, Amory's brow was wet. For he knew well enough that this was a shameful thing which he proposed to do. To allow a man to die, horribly, at the hands of a coloured torturer in order that a thirst for revenge might be slaked—it was a crime at which the lowest criminal might well shudder. . . .

And yet—this man had done him the worst injury a man could do, had done it, moreover, under the guise of friendship; and no death could be too vile for the traitor.

That the woman would suffer did he allow this man to die he knew well enough; but in his present mood he could look even on her prospective sufferings unmoved.

On every hand he felt his inaction to be justified. And yet—Dorrien was a compatriot, they were brothers in the midst of an alien people, and it was not according

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to the standards of English chivalry to allow an Englishman to be tortured to death at the hands of an inferior race. . . .

Half a dozen yards away Achmed, the cheerful slayer of the brother who had betrayed him, waited silently, aware that some conflict whose nature he could not determine was being waged beneath the Effendi's passive exterior. For his part he was anxious to get the matter done with, since every moment's delay increased the probability of detection; yet something, a force which he felt, but could not analyse, kept him silent as the minutes sped.

Suddenly Amory raised his head. The battle was over, and he had lost. His personal vengeance must wait, while common humanity rescued the hated prisoner from the death no Englishman should die; but the emotion with which he set about his risky task was very different from the spirit of high adventure in which the risk had been so joyfully undertaken.

The rescue was simple enough after all. To Selim the presence of the supposed date-merchant was easily accountable; and he gave the required directions glibly, pleased, possibly, by the welcome break in the monotony of his watch; while an invitation to a cup of wine was equally welcome. Amory had made no mistake in his preparation of the draught; and ten minutes later the giant lay in a slumber so deep that the further proceedings of the night held no interest for him.

The key of the hut abstracted from his clothing, the door readily yielded to pressure; and a minute afterwards Amory entered the noisome place, his heart no longer beating with excitement, but throbbing heavily with resentment against the fate which had placed him in the position of saviour to his enemy.

The man who crouched in the darkest corner of the hut, muttering wild prayers, did not look up at the entry of the supposed Arab. Rather he shrank farther back into the shadow, certain, poor wretch, that his doom was upon him, and lacking the courage to face that dreadful doom as a man should do.

Even in the midst of his distaste Amory felt a cold contempt for the cowardly shrinking; and in spite of himself his voice vibrated with hatred as he said, bending over the dimly-seen, huddled form:

"Come, Dorrien, you needn't stop here

shivering. The door is open and you can get outside as fast as you like."

There was no reply; only a sort of instantaneous stiffening came over the trembling form, as though the captive were struck, suddenly, to a petrified attention; and Amory, feeling his dislike for the job increasing momentarily, made no attempt to disguise the harshness of his tone as he condescended to further urgings.

"You'd better clear out if you don't want that black devil to interfere. Pull yourself together, man! You're safe, I tell you, if you'll only take a brace on yourself and get out while there's time!"

Still the man made no effort to obey; and losing all patience, Amory shook him roughly by the shoulder and turned him round to face his deliverer.

The next moment a great cry rang through the hut; but it was the rescuer, not the rescued, who shrank back, appalled at the realisation of the thing he had so nearly done.

The man who, but for his intervention, would have died, shamefully, at dawn, was his brother Ivor.

"Chris! Oh my God, you! Get me out of this hole, for Christ's sake! Quick—don't stand staring at me! I'll explain—everything—afterwards!"

As one in a dream Amory pointed to the open door, and as one in a dream the boy stumbled through it. Ordered by a gesture to mount behind his brother, he obeyed; and a moment later three rode back across the desert whence only two had come.

As the dawn began to break in the eastern sky Amory stood before his tent watching half a dozen Arabs riding towards Cairo. One of them was strangely fair, his eyes oddly blue for an Arab, but his dress was that of a native, and few would challenge him or his hardy escort.

Explanations between the brothers had been brief. The surprise of which Ivor had written was the invitation of Dorrien to accompany him and his wife to Cairo; and he had ridden out to El-Khatum meaning to take his brother unawares. That he had turned aside, lured by a pair of dark eyes taking a forbidden peep over the *harim* wall was merely an accident—which had been like to end in a tragedy. And as for the envelope bearing Dorrien's name, had Amory turned it over he would have

seen, on the reverse side, a rough sketch of the route from Cairo.

Thoroughly sobered by his narrow escape from death, Ivor had bidden his brother a shamefaced good-bye, stammering out broken words of gratitude, cut short roughly by the older man; and now Amory stood alone, his whole being still vibrating with the thrill which had come when he realised that but for the grace of God he would have been the slayer of his brother.

Mind and body shuddered alike at the contemplation of the black abyss into which his soul, misled by thoughts of vengeance, had so nearly slipped; and when at length he turned away and called Achmed to him, even that light-hearted villain noted, though without comprehension, the look of something akin to awe in the Effendi's eyes.

"Strike the tent, Achmed, and let us be off to the south." He spoke curtly. "The sooner we are out of El-Khatum the better, so look sharp about it."

"It shall be done, Effendi." The Arab was well pleased

with the prospect of change. "An hour for coffee, and we may go our way."

"You can get your coffee and come after me. The horses are rested, and I start at once."

The Arab, startled, opened his lips to protest; but a further look at his master's face sealed even his ever-ready tongue; and he stood by while Amory vaulted into the saddle and turned his horse's head towards the south.

"Au revoir for a little while, Achmed ben Hassan." His voice held a hint of cynicism. "We shall meet again presently. We are fit companions, you and I. You slew your brother and I saved mine; but Allah knows there is precious little difference between us after all!"

And while the Arab stood, looking after him in perplexity, and the sun rose joyously over the empty sands, he waved his hand in ironical farewell, and cantered southwards into the desert.

Kathlyn Rhodes

MARU

I

THE night was filled with vanilla and frangipanni odours and the endless sound of the rollers on the reef. Somewhere away back amidst the trees a woman was singing, the tide was out, and from the verandah of Lygon's house, across the star-shot waters of the lagoon, moving yellow points of light caught the eye. They were spearing fish by torch-light in the reef pools.

It had been a shell lagoon once, and in the old days men had come to Tokahoe for sandal wood; now there was only copra to be had, and just enough for one man to deal with. Tokahoe is only a little island where one cannot make a fortune, but where you may live fortunately enough if your tastes are simple and beyond the lure of whisky and civilisation.

The last trader had died in this paradise, of whisky, or gin—I forget which—and his ghost was supposed to walk the beach on moonlight nights, and it was

A Dream of the Sea

By H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

Author of "The Blue Lagoon," "The Pearl Fishers," etc., etc.

apropos of this that Lygon suddenly put the question to me "Do you believe in ghosts?"

"Do you?" replied I.

"I don't know," said Lygon. "I almost think I do, because every one does. Oh, I know, a handful of hard-headed super-civilised people say they don't, but the mass of humanity does. The Polynesians and Micronesians do; go to Japan, go to Ireland, go anywhere, and everywhere you will find ghost believers."

"Lombrosso has written something like that," said I.

"Has he? Well, it's a fact, but all the same it's not evidence, the universality of a belief seems to hint at reality in the thing believed in—yet what is more wanting in real reason than *tabu*? Yet *tabu* is universal. You find men here who daren't touch an artu tree because artu trees are *tabu* to them, or eat turtle or touch a dead body. Well, look at the Jews; a dead body is *tabu* to a Cohen. India is riddled with the business, so's

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English society—it's all the same thing under different disguises.

"Funny that talking of ghosts we should have touched on this, for when I asked you did you believe in ghosts I had a ghost story in mind and *tabu* comes into it. This is it."

And this is the story somewhat as told by Lygon.

Some fifty years back when Pease was a pirate bold, and Hayes in his bloom, and the topsails of the *Leonora* a terror to all dusky beholders, Maru was a young man of twenty. He was son of Malemake, King of Fukariva, a kingdom the size of a soup plate, nearly as round and without a middle—an atoll island, in short; just a ring of coral, sea beaten and circling, like a bezel, a sapphire lagoon.

Fukariva lies in the Paumotus or Dangerous Archipelago where the currents run every way and the trades are unaccountable. The underwriters to this day fight shy of a Paumotus trader, and in the '60's few ships came here and the few that came were on questionable business. Maru up to the time he was twenty years of age only remembered three.

There was the Spanish ship that came into the lagoon when he was seven. The picture of her remained with him, burning and brilliant, yet tinged with the atmosphere of nightmare, a big top-sail schooner that lay for a week mirroring herself on the lagoon water whilst she refitted, fellows with red handkerchiefs tied round their heads crawling aloft and laying out on the spars. They came ashore for water and what they could find in the way of taro and nuts, and made hay on the beach, insulting the island women till the men drove them off. Then when she was clearing the lagoon a brass gun was run out and fired, leaving a score of dead and wounded on that salt white strand.

That was the Spaniard. Then came a whaler who took what she wanted and cut down trees for fuel and departed, leaving behind the smell of her as an enduring recollection, and lastly, when Maru was about eighteen, a little old schooner slunk in one early morning.

She lay in the lagoon like a mangy dog, a humble ship, very unlike the Spaniard or the blustering whaleman. She only wanted water and a few vegetables, and her men gave no trouble; then, one evening, she slunk out again with the ebb, but she left something behind her—smallpox. It cleared the island, and of the hundred and fifty subjects of King Malemake only ten were left—twelve people in all, counting the king and Maru.

The king died of a broken heart and age, and of the eleven people left three were women, widows of men who had died of the smallpox.

Maru was unmarried, and as the king of the community he might have collected the women for his own household. But he had no thought of anything but grief for his father and the people who were gone. He drew apart from the others, and the seven widowers began to arrange matters as to the distribution of the three widows. They began with arguments and ended with clubs: three men were killed, and one of the women killed another man because he had brained the man of her fancy.

Then the dead were buried in the lagoon—Maru refusing to help because of his *tabu*—and the three newly married couples settled down to live their lives, leaving Maru out in the cold. He was no longer king. The women despised him because he hadn't fought for one of them, and the men because he had failed in brutality and leadership. They were a hard lot, true survivors of the fittest, and Maru, straight as a palm tree, dark-eyed, gentle, and a dreamer, seemed, amongst them, like a man of another tribe and time.

He lived alone, and sometimes in the sun blaze on that great ring of coral he fancied he saw the spirits of the departed walking as they had walked in life, and sometimes at night he thought he heard the voice of his father chiding him.

When the old man died Maru had refused to touch the body or help in its burial. Filial love, his own salvation, nothing would have induced Maru to break his *tabu*.

It was part of him, an iron reef in his character beyond the touch of will.

II

One morning some six weeks after all this marrying and settling down a brig came into the lagoon. She was a black-birder, the *Portsoy*, owned and captained by Colin Robertson, a Banffshire man, hence the name of his brig. Robertson and his men landed, took off water, coconuts, bananas, and everything else they could find worth taking. Then they turned their attention to the population. Four men were not a great find, but Robertson was not above trifles. He recruited them; that is to say, he kicked them into his boat and took them on board the *Portsoy*, leaving the three widows—grass widows now—wailing



In the canoe was a girl, naked as the new moon. Paddle in hand and half crouching, she drove the canoe towards him, the sail loose and flapping in the wind.

the shore. He had no fine feelings about the marriage tie and he reckoned they would make out somehow. They were no use to him as labour and they were ill-favoured; all the same, being a man of gallantry and some humour, he dipped his flag to them as the *Portsoy* cleared the lagoon and breasted the tumble at the break.

Maru standing aft saw the island with the white foam fighting the coral and the gulls thrashing around the break, saw the palms cut against the pale aquamarine of the skyline that swept up the burning blue of noon, heard the long rumble and boom of the surf on the following wind, and watched and listened till the sound of the surf died to nothingness and of the island nothing remained but

the palm tops, like pinheads above the sea dazzle.

He felt no grief, but there came to him a new and strange thing, a silence that the shipboard sounds could not break. Since birth the eternal boom of the waves on coral had been in his ears, night and day and day and night—louder in storms, but always there. It was gone. That was why, despite the sound of the bow wash and boost of the waves and the creak of cordage and block, the brig seemed to have carried Maru into the silence of a new world.

They worked free of the Paumotus into the region of settled winds and accountable currents, passing atolls, and reefs that showed like the thrashing of a shark's tail in the blue, heading north-west in

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a world of wind and waves and sky, desolate of life and, for Maru, the land of Nowhere.

So it went on from week to week, and, as far as he was concerned, so it might have gone on for ever. He knew nothing of the world into which he had been suddenly snatched, and land which was not a ring of coral surrounding a lagoon was for him unthinkable.

He knew nothing of navigation, and the brass-bound wheel at which a sailor was always standing with his hands on the spokes, now twirling it this way, now that, had for him a fascination beyond words, the fascination of a strange toy for a little child, and something more. It was the first wheel he had ever seen and its movements about its axis seemed magical, and it was never left without some one to hold it and move it—why? The mystery of the binnacle into which the wheel-mover was always staring, as a man stares into a rock pool after fish, was almost as fascinating.

Maru peeped into the binnacle one day and saw the fish, like a star-fish, yet trembling and moving like a frightened thing. Then some one kicked him away and he ran forward and hid, feeling that he had pried into the secrets of the white men's gods and fearing the consequences.

But the white men's gods were not confined to the wheel and binnacle; down below they had a god that could warn them of the weather, for that day at noon, and for no apparent reason, the sailors began to strip the brig of her canvas. Then the sea rose, and two hours later the cyclone seized them. It blew everything away and then took them into its calm heart, where, dancing like giants in dead still air, and with the sea for a ball-room floor, the hundred-foot-high waves broke the *Portsoy* to pieces.

Maru alone was saved, clinging to a piece of hatch cover, half stunned, confused, yet unafraid and feeling vaguely that the magic wheel and the trembling fish god had somehow betrayed the white men. He knew that he was not to die, because this strange world that had taken him from his island had not done with him yet, and the sea, in touch with him like this, and half washing over him at times, had no terror for him, for he had learned to swim before he had learned to walk. Also his stomach was full, he had been eating biscuits whilst the *Portsoy's* canvas was being stripped away and

though the wind was strong enough almost to whip the food from his hands.

The peaceful swell that followed the cyclone was a thing enough to have driven an ordinary man mad with terror. No lifted hill high on a glassy slope, the whole wheel of the horizon came to view under the breezing wind and blazing sun, then gently down-sliding the hatch cover would sink to a valley bottom only to climb again a glassy slope and rise again high into the wind and sun. Foam flecks passed on the surface and in the green sun-dazzled crystal of the valley floor he glimpsed strips of fucus floating far down, torn by the storm from their rock attachments, and through the sloping wall of glass up which the hatch cover was climbing he once glimpsed a shark lifted and cradled in a ridge of the great swell, strange to see as a fly in amber or a fish in ice.

The hatch cover was sweeping with a four-knot current, moving with a whole world of things concealed or half-seen or hinted at. A sea current is a street, it is more, it is a moving pavement for the people of the sea; jelly-fish were being carried with Maru on the great swell running with the current, a turtle broke the water close to him and plunged again, and once a white roaring reef passed by only a few cable lengths. He could see the rock exposed for a moment and the water closing on it in a tumble of foam.

III

For a day and a night and a day and a night the voyage continued, the swell falling to a gentle heave, and then in the dawn came a sail, the mat sail of a canoe like a brown wing cut against the haliois shell coloured sky.

In the canoe was a girl, naked as the new moon. Paddle in hand and half crouching, she drove the canoe towards him, the sail loose and flapping in the wind. Then he was on board the canoe, but how he got there he scarcely knew, the whole thing was like a dream within a dream.

In the canoe there was nothing, neither food nor water, only some fishing lines, and as he lay exhausted, consumed with thirst, and faint with hunger, he saw the girl resetting the sail. She had been fishing last evening from an island up north, and blown out to sea by a squall had failed to make the land again, but she had sighted an island in the south-west and was making for it when she saw the

hatch cover and the brown, clinging form of Maru.

As he lay half dead in the bottom of the canoe he watched her as she crouched with eyes fixed on the island and the steering paddle in hand; but before they could reach it a squall took them, half filling the canoe with rain water, and Maru drank and drank till his ribs stood out, and then, renewed, half rose as the canoe steered by the girl rushed past tumbling green seas and a broken reef to a beach white as salt, towards which the great trees came down with the bread fruits dripping with the new-fallen rain and the palms bending like whips in the wind.

IV

Talia, that was her name, and though her language was different from the tongue of Maru, it had a likeness of a sort. In those days that little island was uncharted and entirely desolate but for the gulls of the reef and the birds of the woods, and it was a wonderland to Maru, whose idea of land as a sea-beaten ring of coral was shattered by woods that bloomed green as a sea cave to the moonlight, high ground where rivulets danced amidst the fern, and a beach protected from the outer seas by a far-flung line of reefs. Talia to him was as wonderful as the island; she had come to him out of the sea, she had saved his life, she was as different from the women of the Pantomus as day from night. A European would have called her beautiful, but Maru had no thought of her beauty or her sex; she was just a being, beneficent, almost divorced from earth, the strangest thing in the strange world that Fate had seized him into, part with the great heaving swell he had ridden so long, the turtle that had broken up to look at him, the spouting reef, the sunsets over wastes of water and the stars spread over the wastes of sky.

He worshipped her in his way, and he might have worshipped her at a greater distance only for the common bond of youth between them and the incessant call of the world around them. Talia was practical, she seemed to have forgotten her people and that island up north and to live entirely in the moment. They made two shacks in the bushes and she taught him island wood-craft and the uses of berries and fruit that he had never seen before, also when to fish in the lagoon; for, a month after they reached the island

the poisonous season arrived and Talia knew it, how, who can tell? She knew many things by instinct—the approach of storms, and when the poisonous season had passed, the times for fishing; and little by little their tongues, that had almost been divided at first, became almost one so that they could chatter together on all sorts of things and she could tell him that her name was Talia the daughter of Tepairu, that her island was named Makea, that her people had twenty canoes, big ones, and many little ones, and that Tepairu was not the name of a man, but a woman. That Tepairu was queen or chief woman of her people now that her husband was dead.

And Maru was able to tell her by degrees of what he could remember, of the old Spanish ship and how she spouted smoke and thunder and killed the beach people, of his island, and its shape—he drew it on the sand, and Talia, who knew nothing of atolls at first, refused to believe in it, thinking he was jesting. Of his father, who was chief man or king of Fukariva, and of the destruction of the tribe. Then he told of the ship with the little wheel—he drew it on the sand—and the little fish god, of the centre of the cyclone where the waves were like white dancing men, and of his journey on the hatch cover across the blue heaving sea.

They would swim in the lagoon together right out to the reefs where the great rollers were always breaking, and out there Talia always seemed to remember her island, pointing north with her eyes fixed across the sea dazzle, as though she could see it, and her people and the twenty canoes beached on the spume-white beach beneath the palms.

"Some day they will come," said Talia. She knew her people, those sea rovers, inconsequent as the gulls; some day, for some reason or none, one of the fishing canoes would fish as far as this island, or be blown there by some squall; she would take Maru back with her. She told him this.

The thought began to trouble Maru. Then he grew gloomy. He was in love. Love had hit him suddenly. Somehow and in some mysterious manner she had changed from a beneficent being and part of a dream to a girl of flesh and blood. She knew it, and at the same moment he turned for her into a man.

Up to this she had had no thought of him except as an individual, for all her dreams about him he might as well have been a

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palm tree; but now it was different, and in a flash he was everything. The surf on the reef said Maru, and the wind in the trees, Maru, and the gulls fishing and crying at the break had one word, Maru, Maru, Maru.

Then one day, swimming out near the bigger break in the reefs, a current drove them together, their shoulders touched and Maru's arm went round her, and amidst the blue laughing sea and the shouting of the gulls he told her that the whole world was Talia, and as he told her and as she listened the current of the ebb like a treacherous hand was drawing them through the break towards the devouring sea.

They had to fight their way back; the ebb just beginning would soon be a mill race, and they knew, and neither could help the other. It was a hard struggle for love and life against the enmity against life and love that hides in all things, from the heart of man to the heart of the sea, but they won. They had reached calm waters and were within twenty strokes of the beach when Talia cried out suddenly and sank.

Maru, who was slightly in front, turned and found her gone. She had been seized with cramp, the cramp that comes from over-exertion, but he did not know that. The lagoon was free of sharks, but, despite that fact and the fact that he did not fear them, he fancied for one fearful moment that a shark had taken her.

Then he saw her below, a dusky form on the coral floor, and he dived.

He brought her to the surface, reached the sandy beach, and carrying her in his arms ran with her to the higher level of the sands and placed her beneath the shade of the trees; she moved in his arms as he carried her, and when he laid her down her breast heaved in one great sigh, water ran from her mouth, her limbs stiffened, and she moved no more.

Then all the world became black for Maru; he knew nothing of the art of resuscitating the drowned. Talia was dead.

He ran amongst the trees crying out that Talia was dead, he struck himself against tree boles and was tripped by ground lianas; the things of the forest seemed trying to kill him too. Then he hid amongst the ferns, lying on his face and telling the earth that Talia was dead. Then came sundown and after that the green moonlight of the woods, and suddenly sleep, with a vision of blue laughing sea and Talia swimming beside him, and

then day again, and with the day the vision of Talia lying dead beneath the trees. He could not bury her. He could not touch her. The iron reef of his *tabu* held firm, indestructible, unalterable as the main currents of the sea.

He picked fruits and ate them like an animal and without knowing that he ate, torn towards the beach by the passionate desire to embrace once more the form that he loved, but held from the act by a grip ten thousand years old and immutable as gravity or the spirit that lives in religions.

He must not handle the dead. Through all his grief came a weird touch of comfort, she had not been dead when he carried her ashore. He had not touched the dead.

Then terrible thoughts came to him of what would happen to Talia if he left her lying there. Of what predatory gulls might do. He had some knowledge of these matters, and past visions of what had happened on Fukariva when the dead were too numerous for burial came to him, making him shiver like a whipped dog. He could, at all events, drive the birds away, without touching her, without even looking at her; his presence on the beach would keep the birds away. It was near noon when this thought came to him. He had been lying on the ground, but he sat up now, as though listening to this thought. Then he rose up and came along cautiously amongst the trees. As he came the rumble of the reef grew louder and the sea wind began to reach him through the leaves, then the light of the day grew stronger, and slipping between the palm boles he pushed a great bread-fruit leaf aside and peeped, and there on the blinding beach under the forenoon sun, more clearly even than he had seen the ghosts of men on Fukariva, he saw the ghost of Talia walking by the sea and wringing its hands.

Then the forest took him again, mad, this time, with terror.

When on Fukariva he had seen the ghosts of men walking in the sun blaze on the coral he had felt no terror; he had never seen them except on waking from sleep beneath some tree, and the sight of them had never lasted for more than a moment. He had said to himself, "they are the spirits of the departed," and they had seemed to him part of the scheme of things, like reflections cast on the lagoon, or the spirit voices heard in the wind, or dreams, or the ships that had come from Nowhere and departed Nowhere.



Then all the world became black for Maru; he knew nothing of the art of reusci-
tating the drowned. Talia was dead.

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But the ghost of Talia was different from these. It was in some tremendous way real, and it wept because the body of Talia lay unburied.

He had made it weep.

He alone could give it rest.

Away, deep in the woods, hiding amongst the bushes, springing alive with alarm at the slightest sound, he debated this matter with himself; and curiously, now, love did not move him at all or urge him—it was as though the ghost of Talia had stepped between him and his love for Talia, not destroying it, but obscuring it. Talia for him had become two things, the body he had left lying on the sand under the trees and the ghost he had seen walking on the beach; the real Talia no longer existed for him except as the vaguest wraith. He lay in the bushes facing the fact that so long as the body lay unburied the ghost would walk. It might even leave the beach and come to him.

This thought brought him from his hiding-place—he could not lie alone with it amongst the bushes; and then he found that he could not stand alone with it amongst the trees, for at any moment she might appear wringing her hands in one of the glades, or glide to his side from behind one of the tree boles.

He made for the southern beach.

Although unused to woods till he reached this island, he had the instinct for direction, a brain compass more mysterious than the trembling star-fish that had directed the movements of the wheel on board the *Portsoy*. Making due south amidst the gloom of the trees, he reached the beach, where the sun was blazing on the sands and the birds flying and calling over the lagoon. The reef lay far out, a continuous line unlike the reefs to the north, continuous but for a single break through which the last of the ebb was flowing out oilily, mirroring a palm tree that stood like the warden of the lagoon. The sound of the surf was low, the wind had died away, and as Maru stood watching and listening, peace came to his distracted soul.

He felt safe here. Even when Talia had been with him the woods had always seemed to him peopled with lurking things, unused as he was to trees in great masses; and now released from them and touched again by the warmth of the sun he felt safe. It seemed to him that the ghost could not come here. The gulls said it to him and the flashing water, and as he lay down on the sands the surf on the reef

said it to him. It was too far away for the ghost to come. It seemed to him that he had travelled many thousand miles from a country remote as his extreme youth, losing everything on the way but a weariness greater than time could hold or thought take recognition of.

Then he fell asleep, and he slept whilst the sun went down into the west and the flood swept into the lagoon and the stars broke out above. That tremendous sleep, unstirred by the vaguest dream, lasted till the dawn was full.

Then he sat up, renewed, as though God had remade him in mind and body.

A gull was strutting on the sands by the water's edge, its long shadow strutting after it, and the shadow of the gull flew straight as a javelin into the renewed mind of Maru. Talia was not dead. He had not seen her ghost. She had come to life and had been walking by the sea wringing her hands for him, thinking him drowned. For the form he had seen walking on the sands had cast a shadow. He remembered that now. Ghosts do not cast shadows.

And instantly his mind, made reasonable by rest and sleep, revisualised the picture that had terrified his mind distraught by grief. That was a real form—what folly could have made him doubt it! Talia was alive—alive, warm, and waiting for him on the northern beach, and the love for her that fear had veiled rushed in upon him and seized him with a great joy that made him shout aloud as he sprang to his feet, yet with a pain at his heart like the pain of a ranking spear wound as he broke through the trees shouting as he ran, "Talia! Talia! Talia!"

He passed the bushes where he had hidden, and the ferns; he heard the sound of the surf coming to meet him, he saw the veils of the leaves divide and the blaze of light and morning splendour on the northern sands and lagoon and sea.

He stood and looked.

Nothing.

He ran to the place where he had laid her beneath the trees; there was still faintly visible the slight depression made by her body, and close by, strangely and clearly cut, the imprint of a little foot.

Nothing else.

He stood and called and called, and no answer came but the wood echo and the sound of the morning wind, then he ran to the sea edge. Then he knew.

The sand was trodden up, and on the sand, clear cut and fresh, lay the mark

H. de Vere Stacpoole

left by a beached canoe and the marks left by the feet of the men who had beached her and floated her again.

They had come—perhaps her own people—come, maybe, yesterday whilst he was hiding from his fears debating with his *tabu*—come, and found her, and taken her away.

He plunged into the lagoon and, swimming like an otter and helped by the outgoing tide, reached the reef. Scrambling on to the rough coral, bleeding from cuts but feeling nothing of his wounds, he stood with wrinkled eyes facing the sea blaze and with the land breeze blowing past him out beyond the thundering foam of the reef to the blue and heaving sea.

Away to the north, like a brown wing tip, showed the sail of a canoe. He watched it. Tossed by the lilt of the swell it seemed beckoning to him. Now it vanished in the sea dazzle, now reappeared, dwindling to a point, to vanish at last like a dream of the sea, gone, never to be recaptured.

"And Maru?" I asked of Lygon, "did he ever—"

"Never," said Lygon. "The islands of the sea are many. Wait." He struck a gong that stood close to his chair, struck it three times, and the sounds passing into the night mixed with the voices of the canoe men returning from fishing on the reef.

Then a servant came on to the verandah, an old, old man, half bent like a withered tree.

"Maru," said Lygon, "you can take away these glasses—but, one moment, Maru, tell this gentleman your story."

"The islands of the sea are many," said Maru, like a child repeating a lesson. He paused for a moment as though trying to remember some more, then he passed out of the lamplight with the glasses.

"A year ago he remembered the whole story," said Lygon.

But for me the whole story lay in those words, that voice, those trembling hands that seemed still searching for what the eyes could see no more.

H. de Vere Stacpoole.

"ESCAPE impossible!
Of course

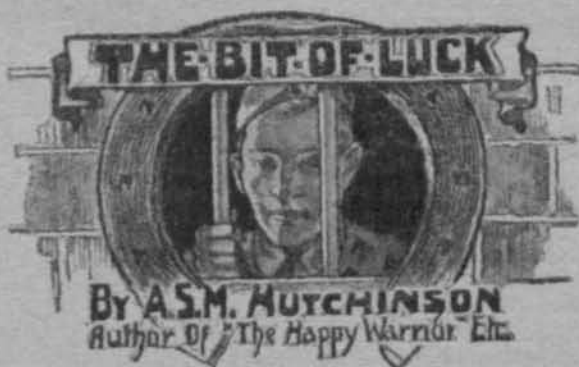
it's not impossible. Nothing's impossible in this life; and though that's a canting platitude, and generally a lie on the part of the kind of person who says it, it's darn true. Take my word.

"Those chaps"

—he pointed with his pipe towards the gang of convicts working in two long lines at the foot of the tor below us—"those chaps can escape all right, as man can do anything anywhere provided he sets his mind to it."

"And provided," I said drowsily—I was three parts asleep—"provided he's the right sort of man with the right sort of mind."

"Well, you needn't worry about that either. If he's not the right sort with the right sort of mind he won't start on one of your impossible stunts—prison-breaking or flying or any other. No, there's only one thing you've got to make provision for in these 'impossible' jobs, and that's luck—



"There's only one thing that you've got to make provision for in these 'impossible' jobs, and that's luck—the little bit of luck that always cuts in one side or the other in every risky thing a chap lays out for."

about getting away from that place"—I indicated the distant prison—"that we're arguing."

He had been lying (as was I) flat on his back, his hands beneath his head, his voice coming sepulchraly from beneath his hat, pulled (like mine) over his face against the sun.

He sat up with a jerk, that brought his hands to his toes, and turned his head towards me. "Don't you worry. That's what I'm talking about. That's just a case in point for you. And a pretty hot one. I don't mind telling you. You're the first man outside of me and another that'll hear it.

the little bit of luck that always cuts in one side or the other in every risky thing a chap lays out for. Good luck, and he pulls out a heaven-sent miracle; bad luck, and the whole bottom rips right out of the miracle he's made on his own."

I said, "That's all right. But you're getting away from it. It's

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Look here, you're one of these writing chaps. Make a story out of this."

I said "Good enough," and snuggled my head and adjusted my hat against the sun a bit more comfortably to doze off. In my capacity as one of those writing chaps I had been given stories before. "Good enough. Go ahead."

"What'll you call it?"

"Call it? Man alive, how the devil do I know?"

This was the rottenest way of being pleasantly lulled to sleep by a story—the way of the man who keeps digging you in the ribs with questions all the time. So I spoke irritably and finished, "How do I know? I don't even know what it's about."

"I tell you"—he had assumed an annoyingly deep voice as though he really had something big to tell—"I tell you, it's about what I was saying. About how a bit of luck always cuts in when a man's up against it. Cuts in this side or that. And about a case in point right here in breaking out of this prison."

Infernally annoying. Getting much too near to be pleasantly drowsifying. I couldn't help saying in surprise—and how can you sleep if you're going to be surprised?—

"Here, was it? This prison?"

It seemed to annoy him. But how was I to know?

"Here? Of course it was here! Darn it, it was right there on that very road where those chaps are working now."

I echoed his "darn it." "What was?"

"Why, the breakaway. This breakaway from that prison that I'm going to tell you about. Look, there's the very spot. See those two boulders on the left of the road and how the moor gets up into a bit of an embankment on the right? See?"

I could tell he was pointing and waiting for me, and I have suffered all my life from an infernal politeness which makes brusqueness almost impossible in me. Moreover, the story was starting with an annoying realism that I knew would prove delusive—they always do—but which insisted on attention. So I groaned, and struggled up to sitting position, and squinted at his beastly boulders and embankment, and grunted, and lay down again.

No peace. "Well, what'll you call it, then?" he demanded.

Oh, h—! I cast back to what he had said when he first put the question. Something about the bit of luck in everything, wasn't it? "What about 'The Bit of Luck'?" I grunted into my hat.

Couldn't see him, but could feel he was

mentally visualising this suggestion in print. Apparently he found a dramatic look about it—imagined it in the sprawling great headline capitals of a cheap illustrated magazine, I suppose. "Yes, that's good," he said. "That's what it was, anyway. It sure was. Right. Now I'll start."

He started, and I went to sleep. . . .

He droned (I suppose; Heaven knows how long) and I slept. A question aroused me. One of his fatuous questions about names. "What'll I call him?" he was saying. "Eh?"

How on earth was I to know? I didn't even know who he was talking about, let alone whether it was an adjective or a surname he wanted to apply to the chap. I raised my heavy lids. The sun reflecting through my hat showed me the maker's name. "Call him Tabor," I suggested.

He commented doubtfully. "Tabor? Rum name."

"Makes rum hats," I muttered. It was a poor hat.

"What?"

"I say he was a rum chap."

The wild shot was obviously good and obviously pleased him. The suggestion of an attentive listener. He said pleasedly. "He was, wasn't he? Rum! He sure was. Yes, that's good. A rum name for a rum chap. Clever that. I suppose you writing chaps get into the knack of it. Right, we'll call him Tabor. Not a scrap like his real name; and that's right too, isn't it?"

"Saves trouble," I agreed, "libels and all that."

"Well, there he was, you see," he went on (presumably where he had left off). "There he was, this chap Ta—what was it?"

"Tabor. F. F. Tabor, Hatt—"

"What? Tabor. F. F. Tabor, that's good. There he was, this Tabor—F. for Fred, eh?—this. Fred Tabor, in about as bad a hole as man could be in. Wasn't he, eh?"

I hadn't the remotest. So I agreed, "Rather!"

"Absolute black ruin in front of him unless he could meet this bill right there, and a sporting chance of setting the whole business plumb on its feet again if only he could lay his hands on the ready to tide over. Say, you can imagine him sitting there in his office—darn well-furnished office, luxurious, all the latest fittings and contrivances, two clerks in the outer room, slap-up girl stenographer—nice girl she was. Took her to the theatre one night. Supper and all. Cost me seven poun' ten. Absolutely straight, you know. Nothing in it—slap-up girl stenographer in little room

alongside. Every sign and mark of prosperity. Whole thing built up by his own hands—head rather. Respected by every one he traded with. Liked above a bit by every one who knew him. Stenographer used to keep a photo of him in her desk—showed it to me. And there was this poor devil hunched up at his big writing-table, elbows on the crimson leather, fists at his temples, black ruin hanging up its hat in the lobby and just about to walk in.

"All for want of the ready just to tide over with. You get that, don't you? Stick that in your story because that's vital, if you're going to make a job of it. Right; well, at that very darn moment the opportunity comes. Trust funds. Tide him over slick. Absolutely. Him and his wife and kid—mutual idolisation society those three—and his good name and his old mother and his young brother (never saw brothers so thick as those two) and the slap-up stenographer and the two clerks and the whole caboodle of them. What a brute of a temptation to come at a chap, eh? Like a darn lifebelt popping up under the nose of a drowning man—and about as likely to be let float by, what? Don't care who the chap might be. This chap—this Ta—what was it—?"

"Tabor."
 "This Tabor was as clean white as the Archbishop of Canterbury. No more idea of playing it down than the Pope till that moment. Idea—opportunity—plumped into his hands while he sat there. Trust funds. Misappropriation. Embezzlement. Took a chance on it. Lost. By George, he was at the Old Bailey and falling down the dock stairs with seven years' penal before he darn well had time to realise he'd done it."

This was a dramatic touch and had me more awake than I had been so far. But now he tided off into a long ramble in which came to me incoherent references to the man Tabor's first bitter years in prison, and the slap-up stenographer, and his wife, and one thing and another, and on the tide of which I dozed off again. I might fill in the blank, perhaps, while he talked and I most comfortably slept, by saying that I had run into him casually a week before while doing a holiday in a bit of a cottage on the moor. I was walking and fishing. He appeared to spend his time—whenever I happened upon him—in sitting motionless on some upland like a statue of the moor's own granite and brooding over the prison. What he was and what his job was I never knew—or troubled to conjecture till he gave me this story. In the course of it—when he

got me interested—I guessed once or twice, but wrongly, I think. At its conclusion I guessed again, and not far off I imagine. I thought first he was the man Tabor himself; but he clearly wasn't—the stuff about the stenographer, and later his own part in the business dished that. I thought last—and I suspicion it still—that he had taken on Tabor's job: the odd job you shall hear in a minute. Tabor dead perhaps (or, by Jove, it comes to me, in prison again perhaps!), and his money and his enthusiasm left to this chap. He'd have been a good man for it, anyway. A biggish chap, taller than he looked because of his perfectly enormous chest and shoulders. Arms to match. Brown as mahogany and about as hard—he seemed to wear a singlet and no shirt, and the sleeves of his flannel jacket, slipping back, disclosed the terrific limbs they covered. Hands to match. And face. Curiously kind of thrusting forward cheekbones and the skin stretched very tight, but without hollows or gauntness. Seemed to be from, or to have lived in, Canada or the States by some of his speech, but—well, what does it matter anyway? There he was and this is his story.

Next thing I heard him saying was one of the most painful questions a polite man—who knows he's guilty—can have addressed to him—

"You're not asleep, are you?"

I muttered into my hat, "Rather not," and found to my great discomfort of mind that the man Tabor was now out of prison again—"Well, there he was, a free man again"—and the story presumably ended without my having the faintest notion how he had effected this wonderful escape of his! Laid there, wide awake now, trying to catch a hint of how it had been done; and then suddenly realised that the story, far from being ended, was only just beginning; that this man Tabor hadn't escaped or tried to, but had served his time and been released, and that the prison-breaking, with the bit of luck that was to be the point of it all, was by Tabor contrived—for another man: to get another man out of the just short of seven years unthinkable hell he'd been through himself. Sat up and began to take notice.

Was invited at the outset to imagine this poor devil Tabor free again and come back to wife dead, kid dead, mother dead (he didn't mention if the stenographer was dead also)—all his world but his young brother dead as ashes; and in the place where his heart used to be a live coal of scorching, flaming hate against the laws that had taken such toll of him for his one mad slip; that and

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an appalling horror of the thought that other men, clean as he, blameless, but for that accursed juxtaposition of trial and temptation, as he, were going through what he had been through—"down there."

"Look, it's this way. Down there, and in all the long-sentence convict prisons, there's two classes of convicts. Different as chalk and cheese. One's the born criminal. Ready-made for the job just as much as the born poet. You know the type. Born in crime, dragged up in crime, lives in crime and dies in crime. Born in a filthy slum room. Three or four other families living in it. Filthy slum mother. Never knew his father. Mother probably didn't either. Has a drop of gin to keep him quiet as often as a drop of milk. Blasphemes fluently before he's cut all his teeth. Grows up true to type. Can't you see him? Sloping forehead, sloping chin, sloping shoulders, thick ears sticking straight out, rotten teeth, pigeon chest, arms like an ape, reaching to his knees, goes to prison on long sentence as soon as he's old enough and lives there permanently for the rest of his life in intervals of ticket of leave.

"The other type! Ah, by darn! Other type's the man like Tabor. Clean. Honest. Gentle. Sudden impulse. Sudden necessity and opportunity. Finds himself down there. Warders all know his sort. Always see it go the same way. Starts with the old habits. Says, 'Thank you,' and 'Please.' Stands upright. Moves briskly. Keeps his eyes wide open. Bit by bit, day by day, month by month—ah, man alive! eternal grinding year by eternal grinding year, the prison shuts down on him and crushes him down, down, just as if the roof and walls of his cell were contracting on him. Down he goes, bit by bit. The 'Thank you's' go, and the 'Pleases' go, and the straight back goes, and the brisk walk goes, and the wide eyes go. Everything that was in him goes, and they let him loose, and he shuffles out, and he finds everything that was of him gone. Just hate left in him and horror. Like Tabor.

"Now look. Tabor, being the sort of chap he had been, had the horror of it all uppermost. He'd not been out a week when a forgotten relative in Australia or some darn place died in—just like they do in stories, in—what is it?"

"Intestate."

"Sure. Intestate and left him quite a respectable little pot of money. Wouldn't you think he'd clear off somewhere strange and quiet and start in to sit down and get back to life and enjoy it? Wouldn't you?"

I nodded assent.

"Do you know, he set up right there in London, and set down to the darn odd idea ever. Prison snatcher. Convict snatcher. Had the craze—and by darn it was right, he sure was—that escape could be worked from outside if a word could get to the chap before he went in—"

I interposed: "But how could that be done?"

"Right when the chap was sentenced. Listen to me. Tabor set himself to sit in court every criminal sessions and if he saw a clean chap, like he had been, brought there by sudden chance and impulse, like he'd been brought there, to get in touch with the chap's relatives—old father, poor wife or some such—and say to 'em

"Look. When you go down to the cells to say good-bye to that boy of yours, tell him

"Hope. There's a sport going to escape you. Hope. Never give up hope, boy. Soon or late, he says, he'll get you out, and he sure will. He says you're never to give up hoping. Get up every morning saying, 'It will sure be to-day; and go to bed every night saying, 'It will sure be to-morrow.' He says: Watch for it. Keep bright for it. Jump right at it when it comes. Always be ready to jump right at it when it comes. It'll come, boy. It sure will. Hope."

"That was Tabor's idea—to keep a good man from going down, down, down, as prison crushes him down, by giving him Hope. To keep the 'Thank you's' and the 'Pleases' and the straight back and the brisk walk and the wide eye in him by Hope and to yank him out before ever the Hope began to crumple."

He leant forward and tapped me impressively on the knee.

"By darn! d'you know who was the very first case of the sort Tabor was looking for that came up into the dock under him sitting watching in the gallery? It was his own young brother."

He certainly had me surprised by the development. I suppose another man in my place would have remarked cynically that these sudden, these guiltless lapses, seemed rather to run in the Tabor family; but I never can say that sort of thing, and sometimes I'm glad I can't. I was here. He made a pretty good, at least a humanly natural, case for Tabor the younger. This was sudden and unpremeditated crime of another kind. In three words "shooting with intent," and in half a dozen a girl who was no better than she might have been, and another man, and young Tabor drawing on him with the man's own gun (in the man's own flat), and leaving him for dead and pretty well never coming to his

senses again until his brother, down in the cells below the court, tears running down his face, was whispering to him the words he had meant to communicate to a prisoner, unthinkable pain to have to say to his own idolised young brother:

"Hope, old man. Never lose Hope. You know I was going to get other chaps out of where you're going. My God, I never thought it'd be you. Dear old man, it'll be all the more sure, all the quicker. Watch for it, old man. Day and night, Watch, Hope. Good-bye, old man."

It was just over a year that he had to hope and to watch for it, as things turned out. The end of that time found Tabor the younger, after brief sojournings in various jails, lodged at the prison that lay in our view; and now at last I was given the straight story of the escape, and began to look out for the "bit of luck" which had been promised as the pith of the adventure.

"Tabor came and lived down here, spent hours watching from this very rise where we sit, and worked out his plan. Then was when I came into it. I'd arranged to help him. He came up to town to me. 'Going to get young Bill'—that was his brother's name—'out of it this month,' he told me. 'You're on?' 'Sure.' 'You can drive a car?' 'Sure thing. Most any make.' 'Come and look at one I've bought.'

"By darn, that was a car. Last thing off the market in autos and left the rest like bassinettes. Six-cylinder Pelham-Flyte. But what made me wince was her colour. Bright scarlet. Bright!—it made every red I'd ever seen look like tinned salmon.

"Going to rush him away in that," says Tabor.

"By darn! you're going to advertise the journey," I said. "That colour would shout loud enough for a vaudeville star or a coloured boxer. I reckon a blind man would remember that car."

"That's right," says Tabor. "That's what it's for. Now look. Stand away a bit and look."

"With that he steps to her and round her and flicks down cunningly rolled-up things, buttoning under her on studs, and by George! in two ticks she was a dun-coloured old craft solemn enough to take the chief mourner to a funeral. Arrangement of canvas covers, it was, that hooked down all over her paint-work. Cute. Give you my word.

"Now you can get the idea," says Tabor, and he starts in and tells it me. Simple as falling off a house. His brother was in a

gang working on a road—that road down there—and likely to be on it quite a piece of time. We'd rush that road in the scarlet car—twice. First time we'd have a breakdown right alongside where the boy was working and whisper him the word: 'Next time we come, jump for it.' Next day we'd come again. Breakdown again. Young Bill'd jump for it. Us off like hell behind us. Stop in a few miles. Pull down the covers on the car. Double on our tracks; and while they were wiring all over the country to hold up a flaming scarlet auto, amble the boy leisurely to safety in our solemn old mourning coach."

"By Jove, it was a scheme," I said. "Go on."

"It sure was. Dandy. And there's not much more go on to go. We ran it slick. I tuned that auto up a day or two till I got to know her so I could run her blind-fold into hell an' out again. Then I fetched her down here. We ran round a bit so the warders should get the idea of us—wealthy tourist doing the moor in his swell red streak. Then one day we let out down that road. Young Bill we'd fixed with field-glasses from this knoll here. The convicts were working about ten yards apart each side the route. Opening up the drainage ditching was the job. Warders pacing about. Young Bill fortunately working within twenty yards of the head of the line. If he'd been midway—they stretched a quarter mile, I daresay—we'd have stood a risk of some one jumping into the road in the hullabaloo when we got off and getting tangled up in the wheels and stopping us. As it was we ran into the road from this end—see? up towards those boulders—and ran up through the two lines of the poor devils—they all glad of an excuse to stop their digging and have a stare and a scowl or a grin. Ran up slow till we were close upon young Bill. Then I put the auto almost on top of him and pulled up. He was on my side. I saw his face go white and red, but he stood steady and rested on his spade, one foot in the ditch and one on the roadside. Tabor stepped out and came round my side against where young Bill stood. Opened the bonnet and put his head in and tinkered a bit. Then he said low and clear, 'To-morrow, Bill. Jump in the minute I shout.' Got back alongside me and we pulled out and got away.

"Next day we fixed her ready. A big fur rug we lashed across to cover the back seat so that a man sitting there would only show his head above it. On the seat was roomy trousers, shooting jacket, and a big leather coat that young Bill could wriggle into

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over his broad-arrow suit. Tabor got in behind this time. Plan of it was for him to step out alongside young Bill and leave the door open and the side of the rug turned up so young Bill'd make just one dive and be in the seat. Tabor was to walk round the front of the car, came to the seat alongside me as if for a spanner or such, get his hand on the door, and then shout 'Now,' and the two of 'em would jump for it, Tabor next me and young Bill behind.

"By darn! I felt like I'd got a cold fish down that road to lift our passenger. Tabor was breathing through his nose so I could hear him above the engine. It was sure jumpy work until we got something to jump for, which was when we re-started and the shouting and the shooting began."

I said, "Shooting! By Gad! the warders fired at you, did they?"

"They sure did. Three of 'em were standing with their carbines on that bit of an embankment right above young Bill's head and where we pulled up. Tabor slips out from behind according to programme, leaves the door on the swing and comes steady round the front of the car. Young Bill standing resting on his spade pretty much as he'd been the day before.

"Then something switched in we hadn't figured on. A warder above young Bill bends over and sings out, 'Two-forty! Get on with your work there! Standing staring!'

"The shout staggered Tabor a bit. Non-plussed him. That's the word you'd use, eh? He stops and has a squint inside the bonnet to collect himself and to watch out of the back of his eye what young Bill would do. Young Bill took a wrong turn. 'Stead of making a show of getting on with his digging, he remained as he was, resting on his spade, ready to jump at the shout. Tabor fetches round from the bonnet and comes to the door. Puts his fist on the handle and his foot on the step and opens his mouth to shout.

"By darn, things got tight then. The darn warder that had sung out to young Bill sings out again. 'Damn you, two-forty,' he sings out, 'get on with it,' and as if their tongues had been pulled with the same string Tabor chooses the very same moment to let fly. 'Now!' he shouts, an' out of every second in the whole blamed year couldn't have chosen a worse one. The warder with his 'Get on with it!' jumps down into the trench alongside young Bill and just about hit the earth with Tabor's 'Now!'

"Bill slugged him with the spade. Drove the handle into the pit of his stomach good and hard and jumped for the car, and in, and I slipped home the clutch, and, by darn! the twenty seconds that auto took to pick up her stride taught me more about eternity than a churchful of bishops could explain in twenty years. It sure did."

He paused as if to reflect again upon those age-long moments while the car crawled into her speed, then went on again.

"Shouts—hell's own shouting—and shots,

I took a squint round as she began to rip. Young Bill sitting bolt upright, dead pale, darn grim, his chin just above the hitched-up rug. The two warders on the embankment down on one knee letting fly, and the one with the stomach-ache stooping for his gun.

"They're shooting to hit the tyres," says Tabor.

"They're darn near hitting me," I says, and one comes *pee-whit* between our darn heads and slick through the windscreen in front of us. By darn! we lit out after that bullet till I reckon we came mighty near catching it. Trust me for that. I sure shook up that car. We were round a bend and greasing up the miles, and I think I'd never have stopped from then to now if Tabor hadn't hollered to me about getting the disguise covers down over the paint-work. So I stopped her and he nipped down and pulled the canvases over her.

"He'd practised that till he could do it in sixteen seconds, and I reckon he did it nearer six. Never stopped even for a word with young Bill. I took a look at young Bill while we waited. Just got his chin above the rug just like I'd first seen him. I reckon he was frozen stiff with the strain and the reaction. Dead pale still. Eyes half shut. Little blue bruise middle of his forehead where I reckoned he'd hit his head jumping in. I gave him a grin and Tabor sings out to him, 'Get those clothes on, Bill. Over your things. On the seat beside you,' and drops in next me and I ripped her off again.

"We'd got the route figured out plumb. Another four miles and we swung left to double back and let out all we knew. At the turn Tabor put his hand on my arm. 'I'll go behind now to Bill,' he said. 'We're safe. By God! we've done it.'"

And my narrator struck a match and put it to his pipe. "We were," he said. "By darn! we had."

I got out my own pipe. "Yes, by Jove, that's a story," I said. "A swift business, my word, it was. I say, there's one thing, though. Where exactly did the bit of luck come in? You started out to show how a bit of luck always just turns the scale in these things, one side—"

"Or the other. Sure. The bit of luck comes into the story right here. It came into the prison-snatching lay right at the very moment we got young Bill aboard and pulled away."

"Ah! How?"

He inhaled a long breath from his pipe and blew it away to the full of his lungs.

"When Tabor went round at the turn to join young Bill behind, he found him what he'd been from the start—stone dead."

I gave an exclamation.


"Yep. That little blue bruise on his forehead was where the bullet lit out. . . . You've got to count on luck. You sure have."

As the car was going.

HER MAN

By Gertrude
Page

Author of
"The Edge o' Beyond,"
"Paddy the Next Best
Thing," etc.



THE siren gave a noisy blast, with an impatient note, as if to say—"Now all you people, get on with your good-byes and leave-taking, because the ship is about to be off, whether you have finished or not!" Then there was a scurrying down the gangway, a pulsing sensation under the decks, and the big liner, very slowly, moved away from the wharf. Along the wharf itself stood a crowd of people waving ineffectual handkerchiefs, giving a somewhat bizarre effect to the tremendous business of leaving one land for another. A cathedral organ playing the Old Hundredth would have been more in keeping with the feelings of many passengers, but certainly not with an up-to-date steamship company, bent chiefly upon scurrying across the ocean with one load of human beings and bringing another load back.

Ailsa Foy thought some of these things for herself, and looked on with a thoughtful, humorous air, relieved that no unit in the good-speeders was waving an ineffectual handkerchief at her: her father, who had run down to Southampton to see her safely on board, and put her in the care of the

captain, as a sort of formality, having departed immediately by her wish.

On the other hand she would rather have liked the Old Hundredth. At a parting of the ways, as decided as hers, something a little more impressive than a bellowing siren and fluttering handkerchiefs would have been welcome.

Well, the strip between the ship and the shore was growing wider, and she felt that, like the ship, she was under way for new waters, not so turbulent perhaps as the old ones, but sure to be plentifully sprinkled with shoals and quicksands. At the moment, however, it was the old things that claimed her attention, the things she was cutting herself adrift from; and with that contrariness of the heart which defies control, while the ship carried her out over the ocean to marry one man she looked back at the cliffs of England thinking of another. Perhaps it had much to do with the portion of England on view, for it was near the Needles, in those far-off days, that she and Dick Frewen-St. Austin had met, and entered the magic portals of love, only, alas! to end in a sudden and inexplicable parting. To Ailsa it always

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seemed that there had been a brilliant, blinding shaft of light upon one little period of her life—and over all the rest just neutral tints of blue and grey blended.

At first she had minded terribly. She could assign no reason for Dick's sudden change of front, and when a few months later he had married a girl he had known before ever he met Ailsa, it had been a great blow to her.

Afterwards she buried her disappointment deep in her own heart, told no one about it, and never went to the Isle of Wight again. But in spite of all her efforts, he seemed to command her senses, and no other man found favour. She took up work, and led a busy, active life, and the old sore died away, but still in the background was a memory that would never die; and dearly as she loved that beautiful corner of the sunny isle, she returned no more. Twelve years passed, bringing many changes, and notably to her father an accession of wealth, with which he had to change his name from Thompson to Foy. So Ailsa Thompson became Ailsa Foy, and found herself at thirty-four still unattached, and with no necessity to work any more unless she chose. And then the wave of Colonial Emigration caught her, and, tired of many things in the old world, she decided to begin a fresh life in a new.

She became engaged to Wilfred Stamford, who was farming in Natal, and who was described by all his friends as a "thundering good fellow." Finally Ailsa said her "good-byes" in London, because she preferred it, and stood on the deck of the liner, slipping out to sea past the Needles, taking a last farewell of a dream that had been "passing sweet" while it lasted. "I suppose I was lucky really," ran her thought, "for if Dick could behave like that, he must have made a most unsatisfactory husband, and I should have had a wearing, difficult time with him. He was always eccentric, and though eccentric men make charming companions, they are generally very difficult to live with—". But all the time that she admonished herself thus, she knew that early love had had a freshness of abandonment that was very beautiful, whereas this later one was very calm and prosaic and practical. To have a "thundering good fellow" for a husband was perhaps a happy ending, but she knew in her heart there was a vague regret for that old careless rapture; that old, unmeasured, freshness of the dawn.

Finally she turned away and paced the

deck a little, before going down to her cabin to unpack.

When she entered the dining-saloon a little later, she found most of the tables were empty, and evidently numbers of passengers preferred the privacy of the cabins. The steward took her to a seat at the captain's table, near the end, and she sat down with empty seats all about her. Her name-card was propped against her glass, and she noticed listlessly that on her right hand was the name-card of a well-known soldier, and she felt glad to be seated next to him.

It was not until she was half-way through her soup that she noticed the card on her left, for the end seat. And then she dropped her spoon with something of a clatter, and stared at it momentarily transfixed, while she read—Richard R. Frewen-St. Austin.

For a breathless moment it seemed as if the world stood still, and everything in it. Then she managed to get a grip again, and felt angry with herself for being moved at all. Of course it was Dick himself, there was only one R. R. Frewen-St. Austin, and probably his wife would be taking the seat opposite to him—some travellers liked the seats arranged thus. She tried to see the card, but it had fallen on its face, and she felt shy of reaching across for it. Then, with swift relief she remembered that in all probability Dick would not recognise her. Twelve years are a long time, and different hair-dressings make a face unfamiliar. Moreover the changed name would put him off the scent altogether, and no doubt she could easily hide her identity with a little care and forethought.

But she hoped they would not come in to dinner that evening, while she had no one to speak to on her right. And even while she hoped it, a tall, lean, well-dressed man, Frewen-St. Austin himself, entered the saloon with a leisurely air, and inquired for his seat. For a moment Ailsa was relieved, for she believed that without the name-card she would not have recognised him. He, with a changed name to baffle him, would easily be kept unenlightened. She felt sure the old tale of the "double" would serve well enough if necessary.

As he came down the saloon she noted the grey on his temples, the clean-shaven mouth, the leisurely stoop, which were all new to her.

Apparently life had not been all sunshine for him, although he had snatched at the thing he wanted, careless of who was hurt. And yet, faintly, she discerned that he was

even more attractive now than of old, with a certain humorous, philosophical air, as if he had so trained himself to treat life as a joke, that nothing could ruffle him very seriously again.

She knew that he gave her a quick scrutiny as he passed, and was aware that it revealed nothing to him. Then he sat down.

"I seem to be rather late," he remarked. "I'm not sure whether one is supposed to apologise or not on a ship; will you be very kind and consider I have done the correct thing."

"I'm in doubt whether I ought to apologise for being here at all," she answered him lightly—"apparently it is more fashionable to be absent."

She observed a shade of puzzled hesitation cross his face. Evidently her voice had struck a vague note of reminiscence. Then she saw him glance surreptitiously at her name-card, and seem to rest satisfied.

"But a decided relief—what? I know I shall have an unmitigated bore opposite to me, who will want to talk politics, and Free Trade, and probably a girl next to him who will talk jazz and two-steps. I insisted upon the end seat anyhow, so that I had no left-hand neighbour."

She noted at once that his wife could not be travelling with him, the while she remarked pleasantly, "Perhaps you would like to neutralise things by having a silent neighbour on your right?"

"No . . ." he said thoughtfully. "No. Women occasionally have tact. Your voice—which, by the way, reminds me curiously of some one else's—has the sound of a tactful personality. Perhaps we might enter upon a mutual compact to resist being bored by our table companions, what do you think?"

"Except that, as it happens, I am to have General M— on my right, and I anticipate a restrained, but interesting, meals-partner."

He shrugged his shoulders slightly, and then added: "Odd about your voice! If I address any unusually idiotic-sounding remark to you, you must please forgive me, and grapple with the fact that I am imagining you to be some one else."

"Is it permitted to ask who else?" helping herself casually to a piece of bread.

"Some one nice, I hope?"

"Some one very exceptionally nice," frankly. "If it interests you to know, her name is Ailsa Thompson—at least it was."

"I knew a girl named Ailsa Thompson. She lived near Tunbridge Wells." Ailsa

had never guessed before that she could act so well. Her voice betrayed no tremor.

"Really! Then it must be the same. The Ailsa Thompson I knew lived near Tunbridge Wells." There was a pause. Frewen-St. Austin seemed lost in thought, and Ailsa felt a little overcome by the fact that he should remember her with this evident interest. It set her pulses tingling, and for the moment she almost forgot that she was angry with him. She stole a glance at his face, on pretence of looking down the saloon, and observed that, besides the greyness on the temples, there were fine lines of care about his eyes and mouth. Undoubtedly life had gone none too smoothly for him, and yet on the surface was the same imperturbable air, with its lurking humour, though with a new hint of strong traits controlled.

Twelve years ago he had been an æsthetic, realistic youth, with a pronounced artistic vein.

Now he appeared a calm man of strong character, whose æstheticism had taken a different turn.

She wondered a little how the change was most noticeable in herself? For she too had been full of headstrong enthusiasms in those days, and had grown out of them into a more knowledgeable calm.

He appeared to be eating his dinner methodically with his thoughts far away, and she left him undisturbed, until he asked suddenly—"Is she married?"

"Is who married?" with a little laugh.

"Ailsa Thompson."

"I think not—only engaged."

"Engaged? . . . who to?"

"A man in South Africa."

"Oh well," carelessly—"he's a nice long way off."

She felt herself change colour, and turned away, raising her glass to hide her momentary confusion. But as soon as she could command her voice, she said lightly—"What difference does that make?"

"I don't know that it makes any," going on stolidly with his dinner.

"Are you going to South Africa?" she inquired presently, "or to Madeira?"

"Why on earth should I go to Madeira? Do I look an invalid?"

She was obliged to admit he looked far from it.

"If it interests you I'm going to have the most glorious draught of freedom a man ever had in his life. I'm going to wallow in sunshine and don't-care-ness. No letters, no bills, no tiresome companions, no neighbours, no appointments,

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no telephone, no plans, no damn ties of any sort or kind beyond the immediate obligations of the law."

She could not help smiling. Twelve years slipped away—it was the Dick of old. Then, carelessly, she remarked—"You don't appear to be a married man! such joys are not for Benedicts."

"Nor for bachelors. They are for released prisoners."

"Prisoners . . . ?" with curiosity.

"Yes. Prepare to be shocked. My wife died three months ago."

She caught her breath with a gulp. For a moment the saloon swam. He seemed to notice her sudden discomfort, for he said with kindly humour—"An extra big wave, I'm afraid? . . ." She forced herself to laugh.

"I think I'll choose the side of discretion and retire,"—rising a little unsteadily.

"But it was valour to come," he told her, "and will carry the usual reward,—you'll get better much quicker for having had your dinner."

Then she left him, and passed down the saloon to her cabin, glad she had so good an excuse to go.

Under the best of circumstances a cabin on an ocean liner is a confined space. To Ailsa, that night, her cabin felt like a tiny pigeon-hole, with no exit—almost a trap. Most certainly, had she known beforehand, she would not have chosen to voyage to South Africa with Dick Frewen-St. Austin, and now there was no possible means of escape. She must even for seventeen days sit next to him at meals. But she rallied herself firmly. What difference could it make? She took Wilfred Stamford's photograph into her hand and gazed into his fine, honest face. The action steadied her. It was quite all right. Frewen-St. Austin would make an entertaining meals-partner, and perhaps, in the end, he would even give her away at her wedding, as her oldest friend. She went to sleep comforted.

It was a whole week before he found out. Ailsa played her part well, avoiding him inconspicuously, and chatting to her right-hand neighbour as much as possible. But she felt that Dick was puzzled. She foresaw that very soon she would have to resort to the subterfuge of the "double." It would have been easier if he had been more changed. But now she saw him frequently he seemed to have slipped a load of years off his shoulders, and to be the same unaccountable, eccentric boy of

old. And the old attraction was there in force. On the ship he was greatly run after. It would have been easy enough to avoid him, if he had not persistently sought her company. And then at last he cornered her. In his usual out-spoken way he remarked: "Now don't get up and go away just because I have come to talk to you. Any one would think you had a guilty conscience, the way you avoid me." To her dismay she blushed scarlet, and felt suddenly covered with confusion.

"By Jove . . . !" he remarked slowly, "you *have* got a guilty conscience," and stared hard into her face.

She tried to laugh it off, but he paid no attention.

"It is time for your heat in the deck quoits," she said. "They will be waiting for you."

"Let them wait. I'm going to get to the bottom of this." And after another close scrutiny—"Ah! I see now, you are not Miss Foy at all—you are Ailsa Thompson."

She opened her lips to prevaricate, but he cut her short. "Don't trouble to deny it. I'm amazed I've been blind so long." He got up. "God! this is a funny business," he said, "I'd better go and play that game of quoits to steady myself," and he went away and left her.

Ailsa sat quite still staring at the sea for a long time. She saw now where she had made a mistake. By attempting to hide her identity, she had tacitly admitted that he mattered in her life. It gave a wrong impression. She ought to have been quite open and callous, and not risked such a situation as this. She did not see him again until dinner-time, and then he contented himself with teasing her.

"I suppose you were going to argue a 'double,'" he finished. "But why this mystery? . . . Was it a game? . . ." She told him "yes"—she thought the voyage would be boring, and this little harmless subterfuge would amuse her. "Of course it has," she finished in a sprightly fashion. The last diner left the table as she said it, and they were alone. He looked full and deep into her eyes. "Rot! . . ." he said, "you were afraid."

"Nonsense!" she answered sharply, but the tell-tale colour mounted again, and as she beat a hasty retreat she knew that he was smiling to himself.

After that he became neutral. Treated her as an old friend. Chatted and laughed frankly of the old days, and was altogether

a delightful companion. Then one day, sitting together on deck, he spoke of his marriage.

"It was an awful failure," he said. "We almost hated each other within a few months."

"Then why did you marry . . . ?" broke from her, almost against her will.

He looked at her with a curious expression.

"It was your doing."

"*Mine . . . !* How could it be!"

"Your outlook on life was so idealistic. You overdid it. You inspired me beyond reason."

"What did I ever say to inspire you to marry without love?" she asked with scorn.

"A good many things about duty. I knew my wife before I knew you, and there had been a girl-and-boy engagement between us. I thought it was just that, and no more. She thought differently. After I saw you that last time, she wrote a passionate sort of love letter, claiming my promise. We met, and I told her I loved some one else . . ."

Ailsa moved restlessly. She had turned very pale. She felt he was watching her intently.

"She said it made no difference. That she could not live without me, and if I failed her she would finish herself. I was young and a fool. I listened. The things you had said about ideals and loyalty and all that haunted me. Finally I married her—"

He was silent for some moments, and Ailsa could not trust herself to speak. Then suddenly he laughed.

"God! it was an awful failure! . . . She didn't really love me at all. She just wanted to be married because some one else had let her down badly. It was to be her revenge." He laughed again, staring at the skyline. "It's really immense, you know—I can't help laughing. To take a man's life and squeeze it dry—and perhaps a woman's as well—just for a puny revenge for outraged vanity!"

Ailsa closed her eyes and fought to maintain her composure. To her it seemed a tragedy. Her best years robbed of their true joy. His fine possibilities warped and trampled on. And for such a motive!

And now! . . .

"However, the lane had a turning . . ."

she heard him saying jauntily. "She died of influenza three months ago—God rest her soul!"

"You must blot it all out," she told him calmly. "Don't let it make you bitter.

Take up your writing again. Go on as if it had not happened."

"Yes," with quiet significance, "that is what I mean to do. Blot it all out, as if it had not happened."

She played with her work-bag nervously, and suddenly, in quite a changed voice, he said, "So you are going to marry a man farming in Natal? Stamford, I think you called him?"

"Yes, Wilfred Stamford. He's such a fine fellow," warmly. "I should like you to meet him. Every one loves him."

"Is that why you are going to marry him?"

She bit her lip. "I don't know what you mean."

"Oh yes you do! . . . Ailsa. I mean are you going to marry him because you're just a bit of the 'every one' who loves him because he's such a fine fellow?"

"It's a matter I don't care to discuss with you," she said coldly, and moved away. He watched her quite placidly, but she felt that behind the calm exterior he was smiling again.

The climax did not come until they were two days from Cape Town. All the time she fought his influence steadily; and all the time he assumed a nonchalant air, teasing her one moment, enlarging upon his glorious bout of freedom the next. She did not know what was in his thoughts. She shrank from analysing her own. She remembered only that Wilfred was such a good fellow—they all loved him, and he would be waiting at Durban, to marry her the day the ship arrived.

One moment she prayed it to go faster. Another she could have prayed it to stand still. Her eyes looked strained and restless. It needed all her will to appear normally calm and happy.

And behind it all she felt that Frewen-St. Austin read her like a book. He had always done so. Love had given him insight to know her through and through of old. What if it did still!

She avoided him more assiduously. He pretended not to notice, and made himself more attractive than ever at meals, when she was obliged to meet him.

And then, all in a moment, on that last evening but one, came the hour that she could not escape from. A concert was in progress, and because of the heat of the saloon she slipped out to the cool, deserted deck, hoping none had observed. But almost immediately he followed her, and found her standing in a shadowy corner

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forward, leaning on the ship's rail, gazing into the star-lit dark.

"I was afraid it was too hot for you," he said, with a tenderness in his voice that thrilled her ungovernably. He leaned beside her, and their arms touched. Some unknown force prevented her moving away. He was like a powerful magnet drawing—drawing her.

After a short pulsing silence he spoke.

"Ailsa, I let myself be guided by Don Quixote motives once, and I lost badly. I don't propose to do it again. . . ."

She clutched at the rail hard. Why, oh why, could she not walk resolutely away, and lock herself in her cabin.

"You understand—don't you?"

"You are going to have a glorious bout of freedom," she said, a little hoarsely, "and it will help you to forget."

"Not alone," boldly—"I am going to take you with me."

"Oh no—no—" thrusting out her hands as if warding something off.

"Yes," doggedly. "I will not let you escape me. No one shall come between us again."

"You forget—I am engaged."

"I don't do anything of the kind. What is an engagement without love. . . .?" She buried her face in her hands. "And you can't keep up the fiction of loving him with me. As if I didn't—know! You've been in my heart every hour since we parted twelve years ago. You belonged there. You were my one love. How could any church ritual make any difference to that?" He gave a low laugh. "It may have made Maud and me man and wife, but it did not make us lovers. God does that, without the help of the church. And now you cannot commit the crime that I committed—if it was a crime. Anyhow I've paid dearly enough, with my

life a hell for nearly twelve years. I'm not going to let you run the risk. I can't help it if he is such a good man! He isn't your man, and you're not his woman. You've got to listen to your heart. And your heart is clamouring for me. . . . isn't it. . . .?" In the shadowy dark he put his arm round her, and drew her to him. Far away sounded the strains of the concert. A deserted deck stretched behind them.

He kissed her, and the whole world was blotted out—and all the starry worlds above—and all the heaving waters round. They stood alone, in ether, while the universe passed on.

No one noticed that when she went ashore at Cape Town she took all her luggage with her. To the stewardess she merely remarked that she had received a wireless message changing her plans. In the evening the captain received a short note. When the ship was under way again, and the two end seats at his table were empty, he remarked to his immediate neighbours:

"You wouldn't believe the number of girls who come out to South Africa engaged to one man and end by getting off the ship and marrying another!" He smiled. "It's one of our great responsibilities to see a prospective bride steered safely into the right pair of arms!"

"But I've been done brown this time," he finished. "I don't remember even noticing that Miss Foy and Frewen-St. Austin were particularly friendly."

"Nor any one else," snapped the lady on his right, who had ferreted out every possible bit of gossip and scandal she could throughout the voyage, and was obviously full of righteous indignation that for once two people had been too clever even for her.

"Gertude Sage"

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for a Splendid New "Dodo" Story by
E. F. BENSON

The PRINCIPAL WITNESS



An Adventure
of the
SCARLET PIMPERNEL
by
BARONESS ORCZY

I

THOSE who knew the widow Lesueur declared that she was quite incapable of the villainous and spiteful action which landed poor Joséphine Palmier in the dock for theft. This may or may not be so. Citoyenne Lesueur had many friends, seeing that she was well-to-do and in good odour with all the Committees and Sections that tyrannised over humble folk in a manner which recalled the very worst days of the old régime, to the advantage of the latter. Moreover, Achille Lesueur was a fine man, with a distinct way with him with the women. He had a glossy black moustache, and flashing dark eyes, since he was a true son of the South; rather inclined to be quarrelsome; and he had very decided views on politics, had Achille. You should hear him singing the Carmagnole: "Ça ira! ça ira!" and "Les aristos à la lanterne!" He did it so lustily; it verily sent a thrill all down your spine.

He was for destroying everything that pertained to the old order: titles of course, and private ownership of every sort and kind, and the lives of all those who did not agree with him. Land must belong to the nation, and all that grew on the land, and was produced under the earth, or brought

out of the sea. Everything must belong to the people; that was Achille's creed. Houses and fields and cattle and trees and women! Oh! above all, women! Women were the property of the nation.

That was the grand new creed, which had lately been propounded at Achille's club—the Cordeliers. And everybody knows that what the Cordeliers discuss to-day, becomes law by decree of the National Assembly the day after to-morrow.

Now, there were many who averred that Achille Lesueur became a devotee of that creed only after Joséphine Palmier—his mother's maid-of-all-work—disdained his amorous advances. Joséphine was pretty and had the dainty appearance which, in these grand days of perfect Equality, proclaimed past sojourn in the house of a whilom aristocrat.

As a menial probably. Bah! Achille, whenever he tried to question Joséphine about the past and received no satisfactory answer, would spit and jeer, for he had a wholesome contempt for all aristocrats, and bourgeois, and capitalists, and people of all sorts who had more money than he, Achille Lesueur, the only son of his mother, happened to have at the moment.

Did I mention the fact that the widow Lesueur was very well-to-do? that she owned an excellent little business for the

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sale of wines, both wholesale and retail? and that Achille's creed that everything should belong to the people did not go to the length of allowing, say, Hector and Alcibiade to help themselves to a stray bottle or so of best Roussillon which happened to be standing invitingly on his mother's counter?

How he explained this seeming discrepancy in his profession of faith I do not pretend to say. Perhaps he did not consider it a discrepancy, and drew a firm line between the ownership of the people and the dishonesty of individuals.

Be that as it may, Achille Lesueur had made up his mind that he was in love with Joséphine Palmier and that he would honour her by asking her to become his wife.

She refused; refused categorically and firmly, gave as an excuse that she could give him no love in return. No love, to him, Achille, with the flashing eyes, the long maternal purse, and the irresistible ways? It was unthinkable. The wench was shy, ignorant, stupid, despite her airs and graces of an out-at-elbows aristocrat. Achille persevered in his suit, enlisted his mother's help, who indeed could not imagine how any girl in her five senses could throw away such a splendid chance. Joséphine Palmier had looked half-starved when first she applied for the situation of maid-of-all-work in the widow Lesueur's house; she had great purple rings under her eyes, and hands almost transparently thin; her lips looked pinched with cold and her hair was lank and lustreless.

Now she still looked pale and was not over-plump, but the citizeness Lesueur told all her neighbours that the wench had a voracious appetite, very difficult to satisfy, and that in accordance with the national decree she was being treated as a friend of the house.

And now this wanton ingratitude! Joséphine Palmier, a waif out of the gutter, refusing the hand of Achille—his mother's only son—in marriage!

Ah ça! was the baggage perchance an aristocrat in disguise? One never knew these days! Half-starved aristocrats were glad enough to share the bread of honest citizens, in any capacity; and it was a well-known fact that the *ci-devant* Comtesse d'Aurillac had been cook to citizen Louvet before she was sent as a traitor and a spy to the guillotine.

II

Achille was persistent, and Joséphine obstinate. Citoyenne veuve Lesueur, whilst

watching the growth of her son's passion waxed exasperated.

Then the crisis came.

Achille's passion reached its climax and the widow Lesueur's anger no longer knew bounds. The baggage must be had! Had any one ever seen such wanton wickedness? First to encourage Achille's attractions—oh yes! the whilom aristocrat had first made eyes at the rich and had some son of the house; now, no doubt, he had some traitor waiting for her somewhere, or even perhaps one of those abominable English spies who literally infested Paris these days, intriguing and suborning traitors, and seducing the daughters of honest patriots so as to point with cynical finger afterwards at the so-called immoral tendencies of this glorious Revolution.

Oh, no! citoyenne Lesueur did not mind matters.

"Take your rags and chattels with you, my wench, and go!"

And Joséphine, tearful, humiliated, anxious for the future of pauvre maman who was quietly starving in a garret whilst her daughter earned a precarious livelihood for both as a household drudge, put together her few tiny possessions—mere relics of former happy times—and went out of the citoyenne Lesueur's inhospitable door, followed by the latter's curses and jeers. Achille having been got safely out of the way for the occasion.

This had occurred in the late afternoon of the 6th Floréal, which corresponds with the 25th day of April of more ordinary calendars.

On the morning of the 7th—which was Saturday—citoyenne Lesueur came downstairs to the shop as usual, a little after six, took down the shutters and started to put the place tidy for the day's work, when, chancing to look on the drawer which contained the takings of the week, she saw at once that it had been tampered with: the lock forced, the woodwork scratched.

With hands trembling with anxiety, the worthy widow fumbled for her keys; found them; opened the drawer, and there was confronted with the full evidence of her misfortune.

Two hundred francs had been abstracted from the till; oh! the citoyenne was quite positive as to that, for she had tied that money up separately with a piece of string and set it in a special corner of the drawer. As for the baggage, eh! was not her guilt patent to every one?

To begin with, she had been dismissed for

bad conduct the evening before, turned out of the house for immoral ways with which citoyenne Lesueur had only put up all this while out of pity, and because the girl was so poor and so friendless. Then there was the testimony of Achille. He had returned from his club at ten o'clock that evening. He was positive as to the time because the clock of the Hôtel de Ville was striking the hour at the very moment when he saw Joséphine Palmier outside his mother's shop. She was wrapped in a dark cloak and carried a bundle under her arm. He—Achille—could not understand what the girl might be doing there, out in the streets at that hour, for he knew nothing of the quarrel between her and his mother.

He spoke to her, it seems, called her by name, but she did not respond, and hurried by in the direction of the river. Achille was very much puzzled at this incident, but the hour being so late he did not think of waking his mother and telling her of this strange rencontre; nor did he think of going into the shop to see if everything was in order. What would you? One does not always think of everything!

But there the matter stood, and the money was gone. And citoyenne veuve Lesueur called in the Chief Commissary of the Section and gave her testimony: and attested as a patriot and a citizen against Joséphine known to her as Palmier. That this was an assumed name, the worthy widow was now quite positive. That Joséphine was naught but an aristo in disguise looked more and more likely every moment.

The citoyenne recalled many an incident; name of a name, what a terrible affair! If only she had not been possessed of such a commiserating heart, she would have turned the baggage out into the street long ago.

But now what further testimony did any Commissary want, who is set at his post by the Committee of Public Safety for the protection of the life and property of honest citizens and for the punishment of bourgeois and aristos—traitors all—who are for ever intriguing against both?

As for Achille, he attested and deposed, fumed, raged, and swore: would have struck the Citizen Commissary had he dared, when the latter cast doubt upon his—Achille's—testimony: suggested that the Club of the Cordeliers was known for its generous libations and that at that hour of the night any of its members might be pardoned for not recognising even a pretty wench in the dark. And the rue des

Enfers was always a very dark street, the citizen Commissary concluded indulgently.

Achille was beside himself with rage. Imagine his word being doubted! What was this glorious Revolution coming to, he desired to know? In the end he vowed that Joséphine Palmier was both a thief and an aristocrat, but that he—Achille Lesueur—the most soulful and selfless patriot the Republic had ever known, was ready to exercise the rights conferred upon him by the recent decree of the National Convention, and take the wench for wife: whereupon she would automatically become his property, and as the property of the aforesaid soulful and selfless patriot, be no longer amenable to the guillotine.

Achille had inherited that commiserating heart from his mother apparently; and the Chief Commissary of the Section—himself a humane and a just man, if somewhat weak—greatly approved of this solution to his difficulties. Between ourselves he did not believe very firmly in Joséphine's guilt, but would not have dared to dismiss her without sending her before the Tribunal, lest this indulgence on his part be construed into trafficking with aristos.

III

All then would have been well, but that Joséphine Palmier, from the depths of the prison where she had been incarcerated for three days, absolutely refused to be a party to this accommodating arrangement.

She refused to be white-washed by the amorous hands of Achille Lesueur, declared that she was innocent and the victim of an abominable conspiracy, hatched by mother and son in order to inveigle her into a hated marriage.

Thus the matter became very serious. From a mere question of theft the charge had grown into one of false accusation of conspiracy against two well-known and highly-respected citizens. The citizen Chief Commissary scratched his head in uttermost perplexity. The trouble was that he did not believe that the accusation was a false one. In his own mind he was quite certain that the widow and her precious son had adopted this abominable means of bringing the recalcitrant girl to the arms of a hated lover.

But name of a name! what is a Commissary to do? Being a wise man, citizen Commissary Bourgoïn referred the whole matter to a higher authority: in other words, he sent the prisoner to be tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal, the *Tribunal*

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Extraordinaire, where five judges and a standing jury would pronounce whether Joséphine Palmier was a traitor, an aristocrat as well as a thief, and one who has trafficked with English spies for the destruction of the Republic.

And here the unfortunate girl is presently arraigned, charged with a multiplicity of crimes, any one of which will inevitably lead her to the guillotine.

Citizen Fouquier-Tinville, the Attorney-General, has the case in hand. Citizen Dumas, the Judge-President, fixes the accused with his pale, threatening eye. The narrow court is crowded to the ceiling; somehow the affair has excited public interest, and Achille Lesueur and his widowed mother, being well-to-do sellers of good wine, have many friends.

Attorney-General Fouquier-Tinville has read the indictment. The accused stands in the dock facing the five judges, with a set, determined look on her face. She wears a plain grey frock, with long, narrow sleeves down to her pale white hands, which accentuate the slimmness of her appearance. The white kerchief round her shoulders and the cap which conceals her fair hair are spotlessly clean. Maman has carefully washed and ironed them herself and brought them to Joséphine, in the prison, so that the child should look neat before her judges.

"Accused, what answer do you give to the indictment?" the Judge-President questions sternly.

"I am innocent," the girl replies firmly. "I was not in the rue des Enfers at the hour when yonder false witness declares that he spoke with me."

Achille, who sits on a bench immediately below the jury, devours the girl with his eyes. Every now and again he sighs and his red, spatulated hands are clasped convulsively together. At Joséphine's last words, spoken in a tone of unutterable contempt, a crimson flush spreads over his face and his teeth—white and sharp as those of some wild, feline creature—bury themselves in his fleshy, lower lip. His mother, who sits beside him, demure and consequential in sober black, with open-work mittens on her thin, wrinkled hands, gives Achille a warning look and a scarce-perceptible nudge. It were not wise to betray before these judges feelings of which they might disapprove.

"I am innocent!" the girl insists. "I do not know why the citizeness Lesueur should try to fasten such an abominable crime on me."

Here the Attorney-General takes her sharply.

"The citizeness Lesueur cannot be accused of trying to make you out a thief since her only son is prepared to make you his wife."

"I would rather die accused of the vilest crimes known upon this earth," she retorts firmly, "than wed a miserable liar and a former."

Achille utters a cry of rage not unlike that of a wild beast. Again his mother has to restrain him. But the public is in sympathy with him. Imagine that pitiful aristocrat scorning the love of so fine a patriot!

The Attorney-General is waxing impatient.

"If you are innocent," he says tartly, "prove it. The revolutionary Committee of your section has declared you to be a Suspect and ordered your arrestment as such. The onus to prove your innocence now rests with you."

"At ten o'clock on the night of the 10th Floréal I was with my mother," the girl insists calmly, "in the rue Christine, at the opposite end of the city to where the rue des Enfers is situated."

"Prove it," reiterates the Attorney-General imperturbably.

"My mother can testify——" the girl retorts.

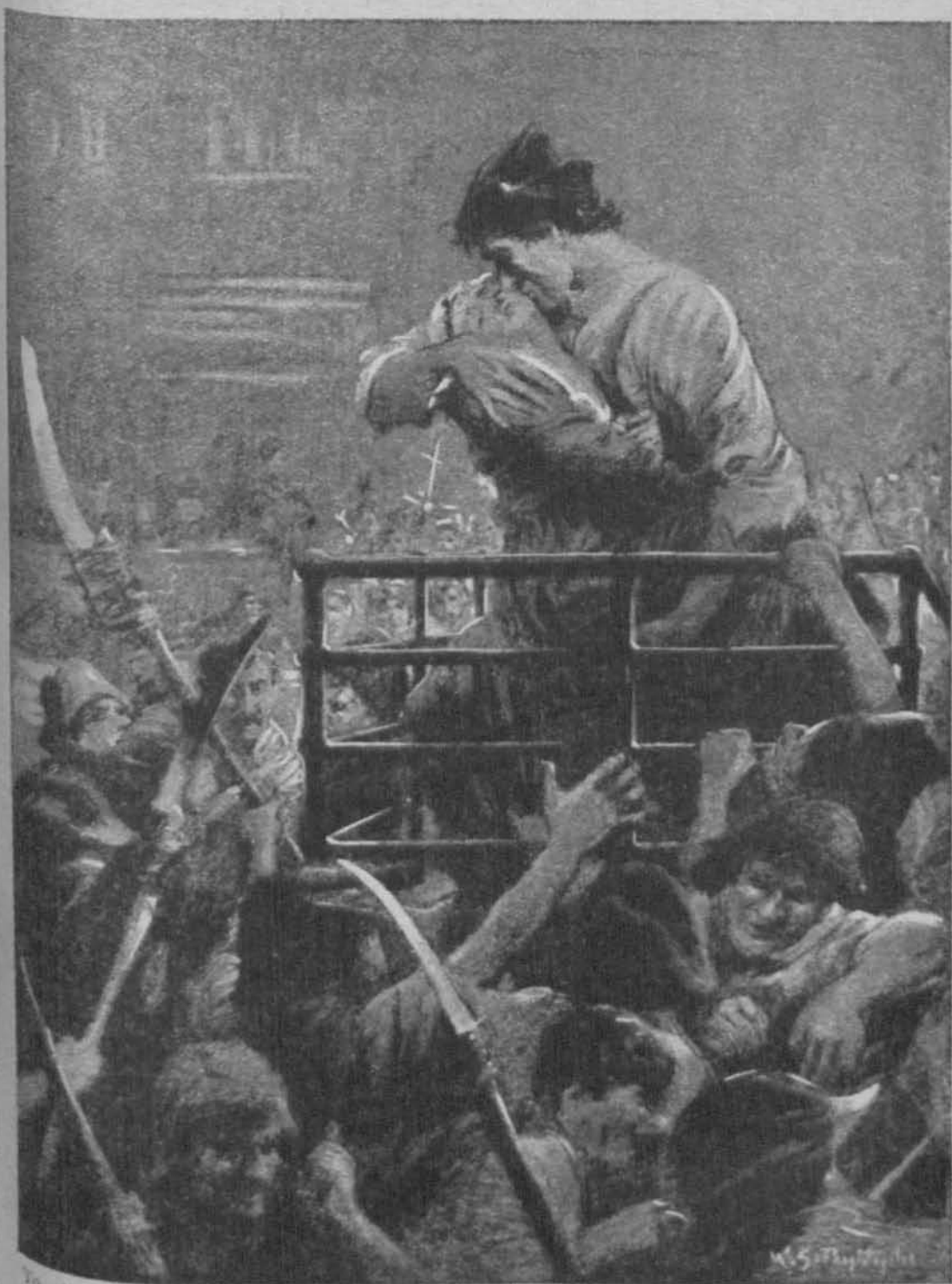
But citizen Fouquier-Tinville shrugs his shoulders.

"A mother is not a witness," he says curtly. "Mothers have been known to condone their children's crimes. The law does not admit the testimony of a mother, a father, a husband, or a wife. Was any one else at the rue Christine that night? Who saw you, and can swear that you could not possibly have been at the rue des Enfers at the hour to which the principal witness hath attested?"

But this time the girl is dumb. Her sensitive lips are drawn closely together as if they would guard a secret which must remain inviolate.

"Well!" the Attorney-General goes on with a sneer, "you do not reply. Where is the witness who can testify that you were in the rue Christine, at the other end of Paris, at the hour when the principal witness swears that he saw you in the rue des Enfers?"

Again the accused gives no reply. Now it is the turn of the five judges to become insistent first, then impatient, and finally very angry. Every one of them has in turn put the same proposition to the accused:



To clinch the bargain he imprints a smacking kiss upon her cheek. Josephine Palmier's head rolls almost inert upon her shoulders, white and death-like save for the crimson glow on one side of her face, there where her conquering captor has set his seal of possession.

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"You say that the principal witness could not have seen you in the rue des Enfers at ten o'clock of the 6th Floréal, because at that hour you were in the rue Christine. Well! prove it."

And every one of them hath received the same mute answer: an obstinate silence, the sight of a face pale and drawn, and a glance from large, purple-rimmed eyes that have a haunting, terrified look in them now.

In the end the Judge-President sums up the case and orders the jury to "get themselves convinced." And this they must do by deliberating and voting audibly in full hearing of the Public, for such is the Law to-day.

For awhile thereupon nothing is heard in the court save that audible murmur from the stand where the jury are "getting themselves convinced." The murmur itself is confused; only from time to time a word, a broken phrase penetrates to the ear of the public or to that of the unfortunate girl who is awaiting her doom. Such words as "obvious guilt," or "no doubt a traitor," "naught but an aristo," "the guillotine," occur most frequently: especially "the guillotine!" It is such a simple solver of problems, such an easy way to set all doubts at rest.

The accused stands in the dock facing the judges; she does not glance once in the direction of the jury. She seems like a statue fashioned of alabaster, a ghostlike harmony in grey and white, her kerchief scarce whiter than her cheeks.

Then suddenly there is a sensation. Through the hum of the jury "debating audibly," a raucous voice is raised from out the body of the public, immediately behind the dock.

"Name of a dog! Why, Cyrano lodges at No. 12 rue Christine. He was there on the evening of the 6th. Eh, Cyrano? En avant, mon ancient!"

"Cyrano, en avant!" The chorus is taken up by several men in ragged shirts and blouses, to the accompaniment of ribald laughter and one or two coarse jokes.

The jury cease their "audible" deliberation. Remember that this *Tribunal Extraordinaire* is subject to no Law-forms. Judges and jury are here to administer justice as they understand it, not as tradition—the hatred traditions of the old régime—had it in the past. They are here principally in order to see that the Republic suffers no detriment through the actions of her citizens, and there is no one to interfere with them as to how they accomplish this laudable end.

This time, all of them being puzzled by the strangeness of the affair—the singular death of witnesses in such a complicated case—they listen to the voice of the public: vox populi suits their purpose for the nonce.

So at an order from the Judge-President some one is hauled out of the crowd, pushed forward into the witness-box, hustled and bundled like a bale of goods: a great, hulking fellow with muscular arms, and lank fair hair covered with grime. He is a cobbler by trade, apparently, for he wears a leather apron and generally exhales an odour of tanned leather. He has a huge nose, tip-tilted and of a rosy-purple hue; a perpetual tiny drop of moisture hangs on his left nostril, whilst another glistens unceasingly in his right eye.

His appearance in the witness-box is greeted by a round of applause from his friends:

"Cyrano!" they shout gaily, and clap their hands. "Vivat Cyrano!"

He draws his hand slowly across his nose and smiles—a shy, self-deprecating smile which sits quaintly on one so powerfully built.

"They call me Cyrano, the comrades," he says in a gentle, indulgent voice, addressing the Judge-President, "because of my nose. It seems there was once a great citizen of France called Cyrano who had a very large nose and . . ."

"Never mind about that," the Judge-President breaks in impatiently. "Tell us what you know."

"I don't know much, citizen," the man replies with a doleful sigh; "the comrades they will have their little game."

"What is your name? and where do you lodge?"

"My name is Georges Gradin and I lodge at No. 12 rue Christine."

He fumbles with one hand inside his shirt, for he wears no coat, and out of that mysterious receptacle he presently produces his certificatory "Carte de Civisme"—his identity card, what?—which the sergeant of the Revolutionary Guard, who stands beside the witness-box, snatches away from him and hands up to the Judge-President.

Apparently the document is all in order, for the judge returns it to the witness, then demands curtly:

"You know the widow Palmier?"

"Yes, citizen Judge," replies the witness; "she lives on the top floor and my shop is down below. On the night of the 6th I was in the lodge of the citizen concierge at ten

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o'clock when some one rang the front-door bell. The concierge pulled the communicating cord, and a man came in and walked very quickly past the lodge on his way to the back staircase; but not before I had seen his face and recognised him as one who has frequently visited the widow Palmier."

"Who was it?" queries the Judge-President.

"I don't know his name, citizen Judge," Gradin replies slowly, "but I know him for a cursed aristocrat, one who, if I and the comrades had our way, would have been shorter by a head long ago."

He still speaks in that same shy, self-deprecating way, and there is no responsive glitter in his blue eyes as he voices this cold-blooded, ferocious sentiment. The judges sit up straight in their chairs as if moved by a common spring. They had not expected these ultra-revolutionary terrorist opinions from the meek-looking cobbler with the watery eyes and the huge, damp nose. But the Judge-President figuratively smacks his lips, as does also Attorney-General Fouquier-Tinville. They both have already recognised the type of man with whom they have to deal; one of your ferocious felines, gentle in speech, timid in manner and self-deprecating, but one who has sucked blood-thirsty Marat's theories of vengeance and of murder in by every pore of his grimy skin, and hath remained more vengeful far than Danton, more relentless than Robespierre.

"So the principal witness in this mysterious case is an aristo?" the Judge-President puts in thoughtfully. "Where does he live?"

"That I do not know, citizen Judge," Gradin replies in his meek, simple way.

"But I can find him," he adds, and solemnly wipes his nose on his shirt-sleeve.

"How?" queries the judge.

"That is my affair, citizen," says Gradin imperturbably, "mine and the comrades!"

Then he turns to the body of the court, there where in a compact mass of humanity a number of grimy faces are seen, craned upwards in order to catch full sight of the man in the witness-box. "Eh, comrades,"

he says to them, "we can find the aristo, what?"

There is a murmur of assent, and a repetition of the ribald joke of a while ago.

The Judge-President raps upon his desk with the palm of his hand, demands silence peremptorily. When order is restored, he turns once more to the witness.

"Your affair!" he says curtly—"your affair! That is not enough. The Law cannot accept the word of all and sundry who may wish to help in its administration, however well-intentioned they may be; and it is the work of the Committee of Public Safety to find such traitors and aristos as are a danger to the State. You and your comrades are not competent to deal with so serious a matter."

"Not competent, citizen Judge?" Georges Gradin queries meekly. "Then I pray you look at the accused and see if we are not competent to find the aristo whom she is trying to shield."

He gave a short, dry laugh and pointed a long, stained finger at the unfortunate girl in the dock. All eyes were immediately turned to her. Indeed it required no deep knowledge of psychology to interpret accurately the look of horror and of genuine fear which literally distorted Joséphine Palmier's pale, emaciated face. And now when she saw the eyes of the five judges fixed sternly upon her, a hoarse cry escaped her trembling lips.

"It is false!" she cried, and clung to the bar of the dock with both hands as if she were about to fall. "The man is lying! No one came that evening to maman's lodgings; there was no one there but maman and I."

"Give me and the comrades till tomorrow, citizen Judge," Gradin interposed meekly, "and we'll have the aristo here, to prove who it is that is lying now!"

The *Moniteur* of the 10th Floréal, year 1, which gives a detailed account of that memorable sitting of the *Tribunal Extraordinaire*, tells us that after this episode there was a good deal of confusion in the Court. The jury, once more ordered by the judges to deliberate and to vote audibly, decided that the principal witness on behalf of the accused must appear before the court on the morrow at three o'clock of the afternoon, failing which Joséphine Palmier would be convicted of perjury and conspiracy directed against the persons of citizenship veuve Lesueur and her son Achille, a crime which entailed the death-sentence.

Gradin stepped down from the witness-box a hero before the public. He was soon surrounded by his friends and led away in triumph.

As for Achille and his mother, they had listened to Georges Gradin's evidence with derision rather than with wrath: no doubt they felt that whichever way the affair turned now, they would have ample revenge

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for all the disdain which they had suffered at the hands of the unfortunate Joséphine.

The *Moniteur* concludes its account of the episode by the bald statement that the accused was taken back to the cells in a state of unconsciousness.

IV

The public was on tenterhooks about the whole affair. The latter had the inestimable charm which pertains to the unusual. Here was something new! something different from the usual tableau of the bourgeois or the aristocrat arraigned for spying, or malpractices against the safety of the Republic; from the usual proud speech from the accused defying the judges who condemned; from the usual brief indictment and swift sentence, followed by the daily spectacle of the tumbrel dragging a few more victims to the guillotine.

Here there was mystery; a secret jealously guarded by the accused, who apparently preferred to risk her neck rather than drag some unknown individual—an aristo evidently and her lover—before the tribunal, even in the mere capacity of witness.

The court was crowded on this second day of Joséphine's trial with working-men and shopmen, with women and some children. A sight, what? this girl, half aristocrat, half maid-of-all-work! And the handsome Achille! how would he take the whole affair? He had been madly in love with the accused, so they say.

And would Cyrano produce the principal witness he had promised he would do? A fine fellow that Cyrano, and hater of aristos! Name of a name, how he hated them!

The court was crowded. The Judges waiting. The accused, more composed than yesterday, stands in the dock, grasping the rail with her thin, white hands, her whole slender body slightly bent forward, as if in an attitude of tense expectancy.

Anon Georges Gradin appears upon the scene, is greeted with loud guffaws and calls of "Vivat Cyrano!" He is pushed along, jostled, bundled forward, till he finds himself once more in the witness-box confronting the Judge-President, who demands sternly:

"The witness you promised to find—the aristocrat—where is he?"

"Gone, citizen Judge!" Gradin exclaims and throws up his arms with a gesture of desperation. "Gone! the canaille! the scoundrel! the traitor!"

"Gone? Name of a dog, what do you mean?"

It is Fouquier-Tinville who actually voices the question; but the Judge-President has echoed it by bringing his heavy fist down with a crash upon his desk; the other judges, too, have asked the question by gesture, exclamation, every token of wrath. And the same query has been re-echoed by an hundred throats, rendered dry and raucous with excitement.

"Gone? Where? How? What do you mean?"

And Gradin, meek, ferocious, with great hairy hands clawing the rail of the witness-box, explains:

"We scoured Paris all last night, the comrades and I," he begins in short, halting sentences, "we knew one or two places the aristo was wont to haunt—the Café de la Montagne—the Club Républicain—the Bibliothèque de la Nation—that is how we meant to find him. We went in bands—two and three of us at a time—we did not know where he lodged—but we knew we should find him at one of those places—then we would tell him that his sweetheart was in peril—we knew we could get him here. But he has gone—gone, the scoundrel! the canaille! They told us at the Club Républicain he had been gone five days—got a forged passport through the agency of those abominable English spies—the Scarlet Pimpernel, what? It was all arranged the night of the 6th when he went to the rue Christine, and the accused and her mother were to have joined him the next day. But the accusation was launched by that time and the Palmiers, mother and daughter, were detained in the city. But he has gone! the thief, the coward!"

He turned to the crowd, amongst whom his friends were still conspicuous, stretched out his long, hairy arm and shook his fist at an imaginary foe.

"But me and the comrades will be even with him yet! Aye, even!" he reiterated with that sleek and ferocious accent which had gained him the confidence of the judges. "And in a manner that will punish him worse than even the guillotine could have done. Eh, comrades?"

The Judge-President shrugs his shoulders. The whole thing has been a failure. The accused might just as well have been condemned the day before and much trouble would have been saved.

Attorney-General Fouquier-Tinville alone rejoices. His indictment of the accused would now stand in its pristine simplicity: "Joséphine Palmier accused

of conspiring against the property and good name of citizeness Lesueur and her son! "A crime against the safety of the Republic. The death-sentence to follow as a natural sequence. Fouquier-Tinville cares nothing about a witness who cannot be found. He is not sure that he ever believed in the latter's existence, and hardly listens to Georges Gradin still muttering with sleek ferocity:

"I'll be even with the aristo."

The Judge-President, weary, impatient, murmurs mechanically: "How?"

Georges Gradin thoughtfully wipes his nose, looks across at the accused with a leer on his face, and a sickly smile upon his lips.

"I'll marry the accused myself," he says with a shy, self-deprecating shrug of his broad shoulders. "I must be even with the aristo."

Every one looks at the accused. She appears ready to swoon. Achille Lesueur has pushed his way forward from out the crowd at the back.

"You fool!" he shouts, in a voice half-strangled with rage. "She has refused to marry me."

"The Law takes no count of a woman's whim," Gradin rejoins simply. "She is the property of the State. Is that not so, comrades?"

He is fond of appealing to his friends: does so at every turn of events, and they stand by him with moral support, which consists in making a great deal of noise and in shouting "Vivat Cyrano!" at every opportunity. They are a rough-looking crowd, these comrades of Gradin; mechanics, artisans, citizens with or without employment, of the kind that are not safely tampered with these days. They are the rulers of France.

Now they have ranged themselves against Achille Lesueur: call him "bourgeois" to his face and "capitalist."

"The aristo shall wed Cyrano, not Achille! Vivat Cyrano!" they shout.

Georges Gradin is within his rights. By decree of the Convention a female aristocrat becomes the property of the State. Is Josephine Palmier an aristocrat?

"Yes!" asserts Gradin. "Her name is de Lamoignon; her father was a *ci-devant*—an aristo—of the worst type."

"If she marries any one, she marries me," asserts Achille.

"We'll see about that!" comes in quick response from Gradin. "A moi, comrades!"

And before judge or jury—or any one

there for that matter—can recover from the sudden shock of surprise, Gradin, with three strides of his long legs, is over the bar of the dock; in the dock itself the next moment, and has seized Josephine Palmier and thrown her across his broad shoulders as if she were a bale of goods.

To clinch the bargain he imprints a smacking kiss upon her cheek. Josephine Palmier's head rolls almost inert upon her shoulders, white and death-like save for the crimson glow on one side of her face, there where her conquering captor has set his seal of possession.

Gradin gives a long, coarse laugh:

"She does not care for me, it seems," he says in his usual self-deprecating way. "But it will come!"

The comrades laugh. "Vivat Cyrano!" and they close in around their friend, who once more with one stride of his long limbs is over the bar of the dock, at the back of it this time, and is at once surrounded by a yelling, gesticulating crowd.

There is indescribable confusion. Vainly does the Attorney-General shout himself hoarse, vainly does the Judge-President rap with a wooden mallet against his desk; every one shouts, every one gesticulates, most people laugh. Such a droll fellow that Cyrano with his big nose. There he is just by the doorway now, still surrounded by "the comrades"; but his huge frame towers above the crowd, and across his broad shoulder, still slung like a bale of goods, lies the unconscious body of Josephine Palmier.

In the doorway he turns, his glance sweeps over the court, above the massed heads of the throng.

"And if you want me at any time, citizen Judge," he calls out in a ringing voice which has no sound of timidity or meekness in it now, "you know where to find me—the Scarlet Pimpernel at your service!"

With this he flings something white and weighty across the court. It lands on the desk of the Judge-President. Then using the inert body of the girl as a battering-ram wherewith to forge himself a way through the fringe of the crowd, he begins to move. His strength, his swiftness, above all his audacity and total unconsciousness of danger, carry him through. In less than ten seconds he has scattered the crowd and has gained ten paces on the foremost amongst them. The five judges and the jury are still gasping; the Judge-President's trembling hands mechanically finger the missile, which contains a scrap of paper

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scrawled over with a doggerel rhyme and a signature done in red—just a small, five-petalled flower.

But with every second the pseudo-Gradin has forged ahead, striding with long limbs that know neither hesitation nor slackness. He knows his way about this Palace of Justice as no one else does probably in the whole of Paris. In and out of corridors, through guarded doors and down winding stairs, he goes with an easy-swinging stride, never breaking into a run. To those who stare at him with astonishment or who try to stop him he merely shouts over his shoulder:

"A female aristocrat! the spoils of the Nation. The Judge-President has just given her to me! A fine wife, what?"

Some of them know Gradin the cobbler by sight. A ferocious fellow with whom it is not safe to interfere; and name of a name, what a patriot!

As for "the comrades," they have been merged with the crowd, swallowed up, disappeared, who shall recognise them amongst so many? And there were those amongst them who had never suspected "Cyrano" of being an English spy.

Less than five minutes later there is a coming and a going and a rushing, orders given, shouts and curses, flying from end to end, from court to corridor. The whole machinery of the executive of the Committee of Public Safety is set in motion to find traces of a giant cobbler carrying a fainting aristocrat upon his shoulders. But of him there is not a trace, nor yet of half a dozen of his "comrades" who had been most conspicuous in the court, when first the

abominable English spy snatched the aristocrat Joséphine Palmier from the dock.

V

Maitre Rochet, the distinguished advocate who emigrated to England in the year 1793, has left some interesting memoirs wherein he gives an account of the last days which he spent in Paris, when his fiancée, Mademoiselle Joséphine de Lamoignon, driven by extreme poverty to do the roughest kitchen work for a spiteful employer, was accused by the latter of petty theft, and stood in the dock under the charge. He knew nothing of her plight—for she had never told him that she had been driven to work under an assumed name—until one evening he received the visit of a magnificent English milor' whom he subsequently knew in England as Sir Percy Blakeney.

In a few very brief words Sir Percy told him the history of the past two days and of the iniquitous accusation and trial which had ended so fortunately for Mademoiselle de Lamoignon and for her mother. The two ladies were now quite safe under the protection of a band of English gentlemen who would see them safely across France and thence to England.

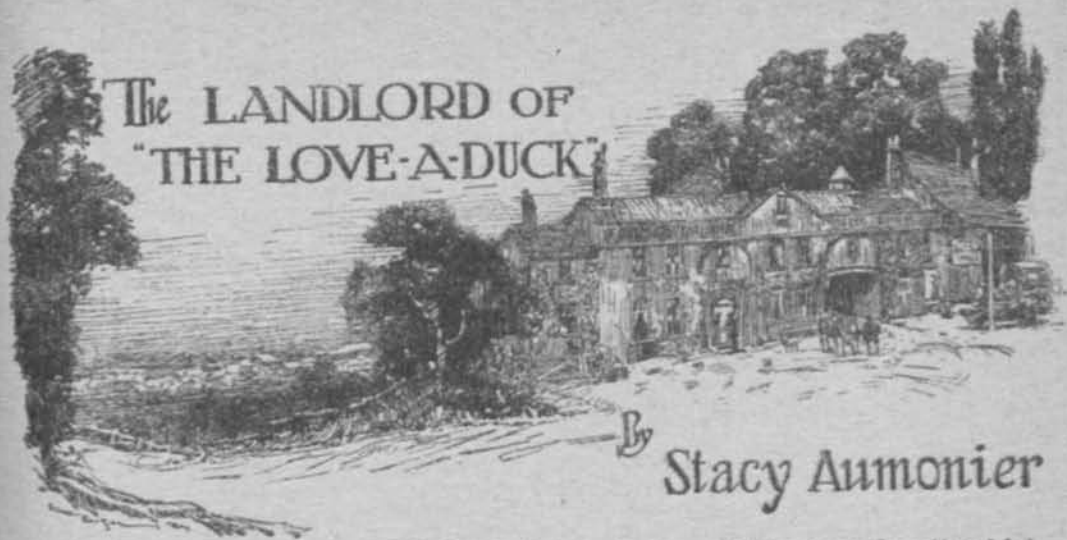
Sir Percy had come to propose that Maitre Rochet should accompany them.

It was not until the distinguished advocate met his fiancée again that he heard the full and detailed account of her sufferings and of the heroism and audacity of the English adventurer who had brought her and her mother safely through perils innumerable to the happy haven of a home in England.

Baroness Orczy

This is the first story of an entirely new series of "Scarlet Pimpernel" adventures which Baroness Orczy has written *exclusively* for "Hutchinson's Story Magazine." Look out for another thrilling adventure story shortly

The LANDLORD OF "THE LOVE-A-DUCK"



By Stacy Aumonier

"I only have to creep into the bar of 'The Love-a-duck' and whisper 'Rotten cotton gloves!' and lo! all these forbidden luxuries are placed at my disposal."

I FORGET the name of the wag in our town who first called him Mr. Seldom Right, but the name caught on. His proper name was James Sekden Wright, and the inference of this obvious misnomer was too good to drop. James was invariably wrong, but so lavishly, outrageously, magnificently wrong that he invariably carried the thing through with flying colours. He was a kind of Tartarin of Tibbelsford, which was the name of our town.

Everything about Mr. Seldom Right was big, impressive, expansive. He himself was an enormous person with fat, puffy cheeks with no determinate line between them and his innumerable chins. His large grey eyes with their tiny pupils seemed to embrace the whole universe in a glance. Upon his pendulous front there dangled thick gold chains with signets and seals like miniature flat-irons. His fingers were ribbed with gold bands like curtain-rings. His wife was big; his daughter was big; the great shire horses which worked on his adjoining farm seemed quite normal creatures in this Gargantuan scheme of things.

Above all "The Love-a-duck" was big. It appeared to dominate the town. It was built at the top of the hill, with great rambling corridors, bars, coffee-rooms, dilapidated ball-rooms, staircases of creaking deal, bedrooms where a four-post bed was difficult to find, a cobbled courtyard with a covered entrance-drive where two brewer's drays could have driven through abreast. There was no social function, no town council, no committee of importance

that was not driven to meet at "The Love-a-duck." But the biggest thing in Tibbelsford was the voice of the landlord. At night amidst the glittering taps and tankards he would "preside." By this you must understand that the word be taken literally. He was no ordinary potman to hand mugs of ale across the bar to thirsty carters, or nips of gin to thin-lipped clerks.

He would not appear till the evening was well advanced, and then he would stroll in and lean against the bar, his sleepy eyes adjusting the various phenomena of his perspective to a comfortable focus.

And then the old cronies and characters of Tibbelsford would touch their hats and say:

"Evening, Mr. Wright"

And he would nod gravely, like an Emperor receiving the fealty of his serfs. And a stranger might whisper:

"Who is this fat old guy?"

And the answer would be "H'sh!" for the eyes of Mr. Seldom Right missed nothing. Bumptious strangers were treated with complete indifference. If they addressed him, he looked right through them, and breathed heavily. But for the cronies and characters there was a finely adjusted scale of treatment, a subtle under-current of masonry. To get into favour with Mr. Seldom Right one had to work one's way up, and any bad mistake would land one back among the strangers. In which case one would be served fairly and squarely, but there the matter would end. For it should be stated at this point that everything about "The Love-a-duck" was good in quality, and lavish in quantity, and the

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rooms, in spite of their great size, were always spotlessly clean. Having carefully considered the relative values of this human panorama, the landlord would single out some individual fortunate enough to catch his momentary favour, and in a voice which seemed to make the glasses tremble, and the little Chelsea figures on the high mantel-shelf gasp with surprise, he would exclaim:

"Well, Mr. Topsmith, and how are we? Right on the top o' life? Full of beans, bone, blood, and benevolence, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

And the laugh would clatter among the tankards, twist the gas-bracket, go rolling down the corridors, and make the dogs bark in the kennels beyond the stables.

And Mr. Topsmith would naturally blush, and spill his beer, and say:

"Oh, thank you, sir, nothin' to grumble about; pretty good goin' altogether."

"That's right! that's right!"

There were plenty of waitresses and attendants at "The Love-a-duck," but however busy the bars might be, the landlord himself always dined at seven-thirty precisely, with his wife and daughter, in the oblong parlour at the back of the saloon bar. And they dined simply and prodigiously. A large steaming leg of mutton would be carried in, and in twenty minutes' time would return a forlorn white fragment of bone. Great dishes of fried potatoes, cabbages, and marrow would all vanish. A Stilton cheese would come back like an over-explored ruin of some ancient Assyrian town. And Mine Host would mellow these simple delicacies with three or four tankards of old ale. Occasionally some of the cronies and characters were invited to join the repast, but whoever was there, the shouts and laughter of the landlord rang out above everything, only seconded by the breezy giggles of Mrs. Wright, whose voice would be constantly heard exclaiming: "Oh, Jim, you are a fule!"

It was when the dinner was finished that the landlord merged into the president. He produced a long churchwarden, and ambled hither and thither with a pompous, benevolent, consciously proprietary air. The somewhat stilted formality of his first appearance expanded into a genial but autocratic courtliness. He was an Edwardian of Edwardians. He could be surprisingly gracious, tactful, and charming, and he also had that Hanoverian faculty of seeing right through one—a perfectly crushing mannerism.

By slow degrees he would gently shepherd his favourite flock around the fire in the large bar parlour, decorated with stags' heads, pewter and old Chelsea. Then he would settle himself in the corner of the ingle-nook by the right side of the fire. Perhaps at this time I may be allowed to enumerate a few of the unbreakable rules which the novice had to learn by degrees. They were as follows:

You must always address the landlord as "sir."

You must never interrupt him in the course of a story.

You must never appear to disbelieve him.

You must never tell a bigger lie than he has just told.

If he offers you a drink you must accept it.

You must never under any circumstances offer to stand him a drink in return.

You may ask his opinion about anything, but never any question about his personal affairs.

You may disagree with him, but you must not let him think that you're not taking him seriously.

You must not get drunk.

These were the broad abstract rules. There were other by-laws and covenants allowing for variable degrees of interpretation. That, for instance, which governed the improper story. A story could be suggestive but must never be flagrantly vulgar or profane. Also one might have had enough to drink to make one garrulous, but not enough to be boisterous, or maudlin, or even over-familiar.

I have stated that the quality of fare supplied at "The Love-a-duck" was excellent, and so it was. Beyond that, however, our landlord had his own special reserves. There was a little closet just off the central bar where, on occasions, he would suddenly disappear, and when in the humour produce some special bottle of old port or liqueur. He would come toddling with it back to his seat and exclaim:

"Gentlemen, this is the birthday of Her Imperial Highness the Princess Eulalie of Spain. I must ask you to drink her good health and prosperity!"

And the bar, who had never heard of the Princess Eulalie of Spain, would naturally do so with acclamation.

Over the little glasses he would tell most impressive and incredible stories. He had hunted lions with the King of Abyssinia. He had dined with the Czar of Russia. He had been a drummer-boy during the North and South war in America. He had

travelled all over Africa, Spain, India, China and Japan. There was no crowned head in either of the hemispheres with whom he was not familiar. He knew everything there was to know about diamonds, oil, finance, horses, politics, Eastern religions, ratting, dogs, geology, women, political economy, tobacco, corn, or rubber. He was a prolific talker, but he did not object to listening, and he enjoyed an argument. In every way he was a difficult man to place. Perhaps in thinking of him one was apt not to make due allowance for the rather drab background against which his personality stood out so vividly. One must first visualise the company of "The Love-a-duck."

There was old Hargreaves, the local estate agent, a snuffy, gingery, pinched old ruffian, with a pretty bar-side manner, an infinite capacity for listening politely; one whose nature had been completely bowdlerised by years of showing unlikely tenants over empty houses, and keeping cheerful in draughty passages. There was Mr. Bean, the corn-merchant, with a polished, red-blue face and no voice. He would sit leaning forward on a gold-knobbed cane, and as the evening advanced he seemed to melt into one vast ingratiating smile. One dreaded every moment that the stick would give way and that he would fall forward on his face. There was an argumentative chemist, whose name I have forgotten; he was a keen-faced man, and he wore gold-rimmed spectacles which made him look much cleverer than he really was. There was old Phene Sparfitt. Nobody knew how he lived. He was very old, much too old to be allowed out at night, but quite the most regular and persistent customer. He drank quantities of gin-and-water, his lower lip was always moist, and he professed an intimate knowledge of the life of birds. Dick Toom, the owner of the local livery-stables, was a spasmodic visitor. He generally came accompanied by several horsey-looking gentlemen. He always talked breezily about some distressing illness he was suffering from, and would want to make a bet with anyone present about some quite ridiculous proposition: for instance—that the distance from the cross-roads to the stone wall by Jenkins's black-pig farm was greater than the distance from the fountain in the middle of Piccadilly Circus to the tube station in Dover Street. A great number of these bets took place in the bar, and the fact that the landlord always lost was one of the reasons of his nickname.

It cannot be said that the general standard of intelligence reached a very high level, and against it it was difficult to tell quite how intelligent the landlord was. If he was not a well-educated man, he certainly had more than a veneer of education. In an argument he was seldom extended. Sometimes he talked brilliantly for a moment, and then seemed to talk out of his hat. He had an extravagant theatrical way of suddenly declaiming a statement, and then sinking his voice and repeating it. Sometimes he would be moodish and not talk at all. But at his best he was very good company.

It would be idle to pretend that the frequenters of the bar believed the landlord's stories. On the contrary, I'm afraid we were a very sceptical lot. Most of us had never been farther than London or the sea-side, and our imagination shied at episodes in Rajahs' palaces, and receptions in Spanish courts. It became a byword in the town: "Have you heard old Seldom Right's latest?" Nevertheless, he was extremely popular. At the time of which I write the landlord must have been well over sixty years of age, and his wife was possibly forty-five. They appeared to be an extremely happy and united family.

And then Septimus Stourway appeared on the scene. He was an acid, angular, middle-aged man, with sharp features, a heavy black moustache, and eyes too close together. He was a chartered accountant, and he came to the town to audit the books of a large brewery near-by, and one or two other concerns. He brought his wife and his son, who was eleven years old. He was a man whom everybody disliked from the very beginning and never got over it. He was probably clever at his job, quick-thinking, self-opinionative, aggressively assertive, and altogether objectionable.

The very first occasion on which he visited "The Love-a-duck" he broke every rule of the masonic ring except the one which concerned getting drunk. The company was in session under its president, and he bounced into the circle and joined in the conversation. He interrupted the landlord in the middle of a story and plainly hinted that he didn't believe him. He called him "old chap" and offered to stand him a drink. He then told a long, boring story about some obscure episode in his own life. The effect of this intrusion was that the landlord, who never replied to him at all, rose heavily from his seat and disappeared. The rest of the company tried to show by their chilling unresponsive-

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ness that they disapproved of him. But Mr. Stourway was not the kind of person to be sensitive to this. He rattled on, occasionally taking tiny sips of his brandy-and-water. He even had the audacity to ask old Hargreaves who the fat, disagreeable old buffer was! And poor old Hargreaves was so upset he nearly cried. He could only murmur feebly: "He's the landlord."

"H'm! a nice sort of landlord! Now I knew a landlord at——"

The company gradually melted away and left the stranger to sip his brandy-and-water alone.

Everybody hoped, of course, that this first visit would also be the last. But oh, no! the next evening at the same time in bounced Mr. Septimus Stourway, quite uncrushed. Again the landlord disappeared, and the company melted away. The third night some of them tried snubbing him and being rude, but it had no effect at all. At every attempt of this sort he merely laughed in his empty way, and exclaimed:

"My dear fellow, just listen to me——"

Before a week was out Mr. Septimus Stourway began to get on the nerves of the town. He swaggered about the streets as though he was doing us a great honour by being there at all. His wife and son were also seen. His wife was a tall, vinegary-looking woman in a semi-fashionable, semi-sporting get-up. She wore a monocle and a short skirt, and carried a cane. The boy was a spectacled, round-shouldered, unattractive-looking youth, more like the mother than the father in appearance. He never seemed to leave his mother's side for an instant.

It appeared that his name was Nick, and that he was the most remarkable boy for his age who had ever lived. He knew Latin, and Greek, and French, and history, and mathematics, and philosophy, and science. Also he had a beautiful nature. Mr. Stourway spent hours boring any one he could get to listen with the narration of his son's marvellous attributes. If the habitués of "The Love-a-duck" tired of Mr. Stourway, they became thoroughly fed up with his son.

It was on the following Wednesday evening that the dramatic incident happened in the bar-parlour of the famous inn. The landlord had continued his attitude of utter indifference to the interloper. He had been just as cheerful and entertaining; only when Mr. Stourway entered the bar he simply dried up. But during the last two days he appeared to be thinking ab-

stractedly about something. He was annoyed.

On this Wednesday evening the usual company had again assembled and the landlord appeared anxious to resume his former position of genial host, when in came Mr. Stourway again. He had not been in the previous evening, and every one was hoping that at last he had realised that he was not wanted. Up rose the landlord at once and went away. There was an almost uncontrolled groan from the rest. Mr. Stourway took his seat, and began to talk affably.

It was then observed that the landlord, instead of going right away, was hovering about behind the bar. I don't know how the conversation got round to poetry, but after a time Mr. Stourway started talking about his son's marvellous memory for poetry.

"That boy of mine, you know," he said, "he would simply astound you. He remembers everything. The poetry he's learnt off by heart! miles and miles of it! I don't suppose there's another boy of his age in the country who could quote half as much."

It was then the bomb-shell fell. The landlord was leaning across the bar and suddenly his enormous voice rang out:

"I'll bet you five pounds to one that I know a little boy of five who could quote twice as much poetry as your son!"

There was a dead silence, and everybody looked from the landlord to Mr. Stourway. That gentleman grinned superciliously, then he rubbed his hands together and said:

"Well, well, that's interesting. I can't believe it. My son's eleven. A boy of five? Ha, ha! I'd like to get a wager like that!"

The landlord's voice, louder than ever, exclaimed:

"I'll bet you a hundred pounds to five!"

Mr. Stourway looked slightly alarmed, but his eyes glittered.

"A hundred pounds to five! I'm not a betting man, but by God! I'd take that."

"Is your son shy?"

"Oh, no; he enjoys reciting poetry."

"Would he come here and have an open competition?"

"H'm! well, well, I don't know. He might. I should have to ask his mother."

"Who is this wonderful boy you speak of?"

"My nephew over at Chagham. They could drive him over in the dog-cart."

It need hardly be said that the members

of "The Love-a-duck" fraternity were worked up to a great state of excitement over this sudden challenge. What did it mean? No one knew that old Seldom Right had any relations in the county. But then, he was always such a secretive old boy about his own affairs. Could a little boy of five possibly remember and repeat more poetry—twice as much more!—than this phenomenal Nick Stourway? How was it all to be arranged?

It became evident, however, that the landlord was very much in earnest. He had apparently thought out all the details. It should be an open competition. It could take place in the ball-room of the hotel. The two boys should stand on the platform with their parents and should recite poems or blank verse in turn. A small committee of judges should count the lines. When one had exhausted his complete repertoire, the other of course would have won; but it would be necessary for Stephen—that was the name of old Wright's nephew—to go on for double the number of lines that Nick had spoken to win the wager.

When it was first put to him Mr. Stourway looked startled, but on going into the details he soon became eager. It was the easiest way of making a hundred pounds he had ever encountered. Of course the little boy might be clever and have a good memory, but that he could possibly recite twice as much as the wonderful Nick was unthinkable. Moreover his back was up, and he hated the landlord. He knew that he snubbed him on every occasion, and this would be an opportunity to score. There was just the mild risk of losing a fiver, and his wife to be talked over, but—he thought he could persuade her.

The rumour of the competition spread like wild-fire all over the town.

It was not only the chief topic of conversation at "The Love-a-duck," but at all places where men met and talked. It cannot be denied that a considerable number of bets were made. Seldom Right's tremendous optimism found him many supporters, but the great odds and the fact that he invariably lost in wagers of this sort drove many into the opposing camp of backers.

A committee of ways and means was appointed the following night after Mrs. Septimus Stourway had given her consent, and Nick had signified his willingness to display his histrionic abilities to a crowd of admirers.

Old Hargreaves, Mr. Bean, and a school-

master named McFarlane were appointed the judges. The ball-room was to be open to any one, and there was to be no charge for admission. The date of the competition was fixed for the following Saturday afternoon, at five o'clock.

I must now apologise for intruding my own personality into this narrative. I would rather not do so, but it is inevitable. It is true, my part in the proceedings was only that of a spectator, but from your point of view—and from mine—it was an exceedingly important part. I must begin with the obvious confession that I had visited "The Love-a-duck" on occasions, and that is the kind of adventure that one naturally doesn't make too much of. Nevertheless I can say with a clear conscience that I was not one of the inner ring. I had so far only made the most tentative efforts to get into the good graces of the landlord. But every one in Tibbelsford was talking of the forthcoming remarkable competition, and I naturally made a point of turning up in good time.

I managed to get a seat in the fourth row, and I was very fortunate, for the ball-room was packed, and a more remarkable competition I have never attended. The three judges sat in the front row, facing the platform. The Stourway party occupied the right side of the platform and the Wrights the left. The landlord sat with his party, but in the centre, so that he could act as a kind of chairman. He appeared to be in high good-humour, and he came on first and made a few facetious remarks before the performance began. In the first place, he apologised for the lighting. It was certainly very bad. There originally had been footlights, but it was so long since they had been used that they were out of repair. The large room was only lighted by a gas chandelier in the centre, so that the stage was somewhat dim, but, as he explained, this would only help to obscure the blushes of the performers when they received the plaudits of such a distinguished gathering.

The Stourway party entered first. They came in from a door at the back of the platform. Mr. Stourway noisily nonchalant, talking to every one at random, in a tail-coat, with grey spats; his wife in a sports skirt and a small hat, looking rather bored and disgusted; and the boy in an Eton jacket and collar, with a bunchy tie, and his hair neatly brushed. He looked very much at home and confident. It was obvious that he was out to enjoy himself. Numerous prize-distributions at which he

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had played a conspicuous part had evidently inured him to such an ordeal.

And then the other party entered, and the proceedings seemed likely to end before they had begun. Mrs. Wright came on first, followed by a lady dressed in black leading a most diminutive boy. They only reached the door when apparently the sight of this large audience frightened the small person and he began to cry. The landlord and his wife rushed up and with the mother tried to encourage him, and after a few minutes they succeeded in doing so. The lady in black, however—who was presumably the widowed mother—picked him up and carried him in and sat him on her knee.

The audience became keenly excited, and every one was laughing and discussing whether the affair would materialise or not. At length things seemed to be arranged, and the landlord came forward and said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce you to the competitors—Master Nick Stourway, Master Stephen Wright. Good gracious! It sounds as though I were announcing the competitors in a prize-ring. But this is to be a very peaceful competition—at least, I hope so! I think you all know the particulars. We're simply going to enjoy ourselves, aren't we, Nick? Aren't we, Stephen?"

Nick smiled indulgently and said, "Yes, sir."

Stephen glanced up at him for a second, and then buried his face in his mother's lap. "Well, well," said the landlord. "I will now call on Master Nick to open the ball."

Master Nick was nothing loath. He stood up and bowed; and holding his right arm stiffly and twiddling a button of his waistcoat with his left, he declaimed in ringing tones:

*"It was the schooner 'Hesperus'
That sailed the wintry sea;
And the skipper had taken his little
daughter
To bear him company."*

There were twenty-two verses of this, of four lines each, and the audience were somewhat impatient, because they had not come there to hear Master Nick recite. They had come for the competition, and it was still an open question whether there would be any competition. They were anxiously watching Master Stephen. He spent most of the period of his rival's recitation of this long poem with his face buried in his mother's lap, in the dark

corner of the platform. His mother stroked his hair and kept on whispering a word to him, and occasionally he would peer round at Nick and watch him for a few seconds; then he glanced at the audience and immediately ducked out of sight again.

When Nick had finished he bowed and sat down, and there was a mild round of applause. The judges consulted, and agreed that he had scored 88 lines.

Now what was going to happen?

The small boy seemed to be shaking his head and stamping his feet, and his mother was talking to him. The landlord coughed. He was obviously a little nervous. He went over to the group and said in a cheerful voice:

"Now, Stephen, tell us a poem."

A little piping voice said "No!" and there were all the wriggles and shakes of the recalcitrant youngster. Murmurs ran round the room, and a lot of people were laughing. The Stourway party was extremely amused. At length the landlord took a chair near him, and produced a long stick of barley-sugar.

"Now, Stephen," he said, "if you won't talk to these naughty people, tell me a poem. Tell me that beautiful 'Hymn to Apollo' you told me last winter."

The little boy looked up at him and grinned; then he looked at his mother. Her widow's veil covered the upper part of her face. She kissed him and said:

"Go on, dear. Tell Uncle Jim!"

There was a pause; the small boy looked up and down, and then, fixing his eyes solemnly on the landlord's face, he suddenly began in a queer little lisping voice:

*"God of the golden bow,
And of the golden lyre,
And of the golden hair
And of the golden fire;
Charioteer
Round the patient year,
Where—where slept thine ire?"*

It was a short poem, but its rendering was received with vociferous applause. There was going to be a competition, after all! People who had money at stake were laughing and slapping their legs, and people who hadn't were doing the same. Every one was on the best of terms with each other. There was a certain amount of trouble with the judges, as they didn't know the poem, and they didn't grasp the length of the lines. Fortunately the schoolmaster had come armed with books,

and after some discussion the poem was found to have been written by Keats, and Master Stephen was awarded 36 lines. He was cheered, clapped, and kissed by the landlord, and his aunt, and his mother.

Master Nick's reply to this was to recite "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," a performance which bored every one to tears, especially as he would persist in gesticulating, and doing it in a manner as though he thought that the people had simply come to hear his performance. "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" is 195 lines. This made his score 283.

The small boy was still very shy, and seemed disinclined to continue, but the landlord said:

"Now, come on, Stephen, I'm sure you remember some more beautiful poetry."

At last, to every one's surprise, he began to lisp:

*"Once more unto the breach, dear friends,
once more . . ."*

It was screamingly funny. He went right through the speech, and when he got to:

*"Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint
George!'"*

the applause was deafening. People were calling out, and some of the barrackers had to be rebuked by the landlord. King Henry's speech was only 35 lines, so Master Stephen's total was 71. Nick then retaliated with an appalling poem, which commenced:

*"She stood at the bar of justice,
A creature wan and wild,
In form too small for a woman,
In feature too old for a child."*

Fortunately it was not quite so long as the other two, and only brought him 60 lines, making a total of 131.

Stephen, who seemed to be gaining a little more confidence and entering into the spirit of the thing, replied with Robert Herrick's "Ode to a Daffodil," a charming little effort, although it only brought in 20 lines.

Master Nick now broke into Shakespeare, and let himself go on:

*"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me
your ears."*

He only did 23 lines, however, before he

broke down and forgot. The committee had arranged for this. It was agreed that in the event of either competitor breaking down, he should still score the lines up to where he broke down, and at the end he should be allowed to quote odd lines, provided there were more than one.

At this point there was a very amusing incident. Master Stephen hesitated for some time, and then he began, "Friends, Romans, countrymen," etc., and he went right through the same speech without a slip! It was the first distinct score for the landlord's party, and Master Stephen was credited with 128 lines. The scores, however, were still 366 to 219 in Nick's favour, and he proceeded to pile on the agony by reciting "Beth Gelert." However, at the end of the twelfth verse he again forgot, and only amassed 48 lines.

Balanced against his mother's knee, and looking unutterably solemn—as far as one could see in the dim light—and only occasionally glancing at the audience, Stephen then recited a charming poem by William Blake, called "Night," which also contained 48 lines.

Nick then collected 40 lines with "Somebody's Darling," and as a contrast to this sentimental twaddle Stephen attempted Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." Unfortunately, it was his turn to break down, but not till he had notched 92 lines. It was quite a feature of the afternoon that whereas Nick's contributions for the most part were the utmost trash, Stephen only did good things.

It would perhaps be tedious to chronicle the full details of the poems attempted and the exact number of lines scored, although, as a matter of fact, at the time I did keep a careful record. But on that afternoon it did not appear tedious, except when Nick let himself go rather freely over some quite commonplace verse. Even then there was always the excitement as to whether he would break down. The audience indeed found it thrilling, and it became more and more exciting as it went on, for it became apparent that both boys were getting to the end of their tether. They both began to forget, and the judges were kept very busy, and the parents were as occupied as seconds in a prize-ring. It must have been nearly half-past six when Master Nick eventually gave out. He started odds and ends, and forgot, and his parents were pulled up for prompting. He collected a few odd lines, and amassed a total of 822, a very considerable amount for a boy of his age.

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At this point he was leading by 106 lines. So for Stephen to win the wager for the landlord he would not only have to score that odd 106, but he would have to remember an additional 822 lines! And he already gave evidence of forgetting! There was a fresh burst of betting in odd parts of the hall, and Dick Toom was offering ten to one against the landlord's protégé and not getting many takers. The great thing in his favour was that he seemed to have quite lost his nervousness. He was keen on the job, and he seemed to realise that it was a competition, and that he had got to do his utmost. The landlord's party were allowed to talk to him and to make suggestions, but not to prompt if he forgot. There was a short interval, in which milk and other drinks were handed round. The landlord had one of the other drinks, and then he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to ask your indulgence, to be as quiet as possible. My small nephew has to recall 928 lines to win the competition, and he is going to try and do it."

The announcement was received with cheers. And then Stephen started again. He began excellently with Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," and scored 80 lines, and without any pause went on to Milton's "L'Allegro," of which he delivered 126 lines before breaking down. He paused a little and then did odds and ends of verses, some complete, and some not. Thomas Hood's "Departure of Summer" (14 lines), Shelley's "To-Night" (35), and a song by Shelley commencing:

*"Rarely, rarely comest thou,
Spirit of Delight!"* (48 lines)

I will not enumerate all these poems, but he amassed altogether 378 lines in this way. Then he had another brief rest, and reverted once more to Shakespeare. In his little sing-song voice, without any attempt at dramatic expression, he reeled off 160 lines of the Balcony Scene from *Romeo and Juliet*; 96 lines of the scene between Hamlet and the Queen; 44 lines of the Brutus and Cassius quarrel; 31 of Jaques's speech on "All the world's a stage." It need hardly be said that by this time the good burghers of Tibbelsford were in a state of the wildest excitement.

The schoolmaster announced that Master Stephen had now scored 689 of the requisite 928, so that he only wanted 240 more to win. Mr. Stourway was biting his nails and looking green. Mrs. Stourway looked

as though she was disgusted with her husband for having brought her among these common people. Nick sneered superciliously.

But in the meantime there was no question but that Master Stephen himself was getting distressed. His small voice was getting huskier and huskier, and tears seemed not far off. I heard Mrs. Rushbridger, sitting behind me, remark:

"Poor little mite! I calls it a shime!"

It was also evident that he was getting seriously to the end of his quoting repertoire. He had no other long speeches. The landlord's party gathered round him and whispered.

He tried again, short stanzas and odd verses, sometimes unfinished. He kept the schoolmaster very busy; but he blundered on. By these uncertain stages he managed to add another 127 lines, and then he suddenly brought off a veritable *tour de force*. It was quite uncanny. He quoted 109 lines of Spenser's "Faerie Queene"! The matter was quite unintelligible to the audience, and they were whispering to each other and asking what it was. When he broke down, the schoolmaster announced that it was quite in order, and that Master Stephen's total lines quoted now amounted to 1640, and that therefore he only required four lines to win!

Even then the battle was apparently not over. Every one was cheering and making such a noise that the small boy could not understand it, and he began crying. A lot of people in the audience were calling out "Shame!" and there was all the appearance of a disturbance. The landlord's party was very occupied. It was several minutes before order was restored, and then the landlord rapped on the table and called out, "Order! order!"

He drank a glass of water, and there was a dead silence. Stephen's mother held the little boy very tight, and smiled at him. At last, raising his voice for this last despairing effort, he declaimed quite loudly:

*"Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the two Worlds so wisely—they are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth: their
Words to Scorn,
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stop't
with Dust."*

The cheers which greeted this triumphant climax were split by various disturbances, the most distressing coming from Stephen

himself, for almost as he uttered the last word he gave a yell, and burst into sobs. And he sobbed, and sobbed, and sobbed. And his mother picked him up and rocked him, and the landlord and his wife did what they could. But it was quite hopeless. Stephen was finished. His mother picked him up and hurried out of the door at the back with him. The Stourway party melted away. There were no more speeches, but people crowded on to the platform, and a lot of the women wanted just to kiss Stephen before he went away; but Mrs. Wright came back and said the poor child was very upset. She was afraid they ought not to have let him do it. His mother was putting him to bed in one of the rooms, and they were giving him some sal volatile. He would be all right soon. Of course, it was a tremendous effort; such a tiny person too!

Some one offered to go for the doctor, but Mrs. Wright said they would see how he was, and if he wasn't better in half an hour's time they'd send over to Doctor Winch.

Every one was congratulating the landlord, and he was clasping hands and saying: "A marvellous boy! a marvellous boy! I knew he would do it!"

The party gradually broke up. I must now again revert to myself. I was enormously impressed by what I had seen and heard, and for the rest of the evening I could think of nothing else. After dinner I went out for a stroll. It was early March, and unseasonably cold. When I got down to the bridge, over which the high-road runs across the open country to Titchurst, large snowflakes were falling. I stood there for some time, looking at our dim little river, and thinking of the landlord and Stephen. And as I gazed around me I began to wonder what it was about the snow-flakes which seemed to dovetail with certain subconscious movements going on within me.

And suddenly a phrase leapt into my mind. It was:

"Rotten cotton gloves!"

Rotten cotton gloves! What was the connection? The snow, the mood, something about Stephen's voice quoting "The Faerie Queene." Very slowly the thing began to unfold itself. And when I began to realise it all, I said to myself, "Yes, my friend; it was the Faerie Queene which gave the show away. The rest might have been possible. You were getting rather hard put to it!"

The snow was falling heavily. It was

Christmas-time—good lord! I did not like to think how long ago! Thirty years? Forty years? My sister and I at Drury Lane pantomime. "Rotten cotton gloves"! Yes, that was it! I could remember nothing at all of the performance. But who was that great man they spoke of? the Star attraction?—some name like "the great Borodin," the world's most famous humorist and ventriloquist. We were very excited, Phyllis and I, very small people then, surely not much older than Stephen himself. I could not remember the great Borodin, but I remembered that one phrase. There was a small lay figure which said most amusing things. It was called—no, I have forgotten. It was dressed in an Eton suit and it wore rather dilapidated-looking white cotton gloves. And every now and then, in the middle of a dialogue or discourse, it broke off, looked at its hands, and muttered:

"Rotten cotton gloves!"

It became a sort of catch-phrase in London in those days. On buses and trains people would murmur, "Rotten cotton gloves!" A certain vague something about the way that Stephen recited Spenser's "Faerie Queene". . . . Was it possible?

And then certain very definite aspects of the competition presented themselves to my mind's eye. It had all been very cleverly stage-managed. It must be observed that Stephen neither walked on nor walked off. He did not even stand. He hardly looked at the audience. And then, the lighting was inexcusably bad. Even some of the lights in the central chandelier had unaccountably failed. And the landlord's party had chosen the darkest side of the stage. No one had spoken to the boy. No one had seen him arrive, and immediately after the competition he had gone straight to bed.

I tried to probe my memory for knowledge of "the great Borodin," but at eight or nine one does not take great interest in these details. I know there was something . . . I remember hearing my parents talking about it—some great scandal soon after I had seen him. He was disgraced, I am sure. I have a vague idea he was in some way well-connected. He was to marry a great lady, and then perhaps he eloped with a young barmaid? I cannot be certain. It was something like that. I know he disappeared from public life, for in after years, when people had been to similar performances, I had heard our parents say:

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" Ah, but you should have seen 'The Great Borodin.' "

These memories, the peculiar thrill of the competition, the cold air, the lazy snow-flakes drifting hither and thither, all excited me. I walked on farther and farther into the country, trying to piece it all together. I liked the landlord, and I shared the popular dislike of Mr. Stourway.

After a time I returned, and making my way towards the north of the town, I started to walk quickly in the direction of "The Love-a-duck." If I hurried, I should be there ten minutes or so before closing-time.

When I entered the large bar-parlour the place was very crowded. I met old Hargreaves by the door. I'm afraid a good many rules of the society had been broken that evening. Old Hargreaves was not the only one who had had quite enough liquid refreshment. Everybody was in high spirits, and they were still all talking about the competition. I met Mr. Bean near the fireplace, and I said:

" Well, Mr. Bean, and have you heard how the boy is? "

" Oh, ay," he replied. " He soon got all right. Mrs. Wright says he were just a bit upset. He went off home not an hour since. "

" Did you see him? "

" Eh? Oh, no, I didn't see 'm. Mrs. Wright says he looked quite hisself. "

The landlord was moving ponderously up and down behind the bar. I thought he looked tired, and there were dark rims round his eyes. I moved up towards the bar, and he didn't notice me. The noise of talking was so loud that one could speak in a normal voice without being heard. Everything had apparently gone off quite successfully. Mr. Stourway had sent along his cheque for five pounds, and it was reckoned that he would never show his face in "The Love-a-duck" again. I waited.

At last I noticed that the landlord was quite alone. He was leaning against the serving-hatch, flicking some crumbs from his waistcoat, as though waiting for the moment of release. I took my glass and sidled up to him. I leant forward as though to speak. He glanced at me, and inclined his head with a bored movement. When his ear was within a reasonable distance I said quietly:

" Rotten cotton gloves! "

I shall never forget the expression on the face of the landlord as he slowly raised his head. I was conscious of being a pin-point in a vast perspective. His large, rather colourless eyes appeared to sweep the whole room. They were moreover charged with a perfectly controlled expression of surprise and a kind of uncontrolled lustre of ironic humour. I had a feeling that if he laughed it would be the end of all things. He did not laugh; he looked lugubriously right through my face, and breathed heavily. Then he swayed slightly from side to side and looked at my hat, and said:

" I've got some cherry-brandy here you'd like. You must have a glass Mr. — "

Now I do not wish to appear to you either as a prig, a traitor or a profiteer. I am indeed a very ordinary, perhaps over-human member of Tibbelsford society. If I have taken certain advantages of the landlord, you must at any rate give me the credit of being the only member of a large audience who had the right intuitions at the right moment. In all other respects you must acknowledge that I have treated him rather well. In any case, I became prominent in the inner circle without undergoing the tortuous novitiateship of the casual stranger.

The landlord and I are the best of friends to this day, although we exchange no confidences. I can break all the rules of the masonic understanding without getting into trouble. Some of the others are amazed at the liberties I take.

And in these days, when licensing restrictions are so severe, when certain things are not to be got (officially), and when I see my friends stealing home to a bone-dry supper, I only have to creep into the bar of "The Love-a-duck" and whisper "Rotten cotton gloves!" and lo! all these forbidden luxuries are placed at my disposal. Can you blame me?

I have said that we exchange no confidences, and indeed I feel that that would be going too far, taking too great an advantage of my position. There is only one small point I would love to clear up, and I dare not ask. Presuming my theory to be right about "The Great Borodin" — which was he?

The landlord? Or the widow?

Stacy. Anon.



THE DOWNWARD SMILE

By Berta Ruck

Author of "His Official Fiancée," etc.

I

THE young man of this story was called Dick, for a reason.

"'Dicks,' 'Jacks' and 'Bills' always get on with women. Which is a gift. And so important in a boy's career," declared his pretty, ambitious little mother, who imagined herself a woman of the world. "Let him choose the right woman, let them look up to him. 'Make your peace with the woman, and the man will make you L.G.!' Oh, yes: he must be Dick if he's a boy."

When he was born, in a Simla nursing-home, she gathered her last half-ounce of strength together to point to the trousseau-chemise of nainsook and torchon hanging over the brass rail of her bed.

"In that, nurse," she whispered. "Wrap him in his mother's shift, and the girls will love him." Old superstition, but so important—

It was her last gasp; she left the child with the young soldier-father who, a year later, paid his own toll to the Empire in a frontier skirmish. Baby Dick was sent home to a Mr. Stubbs, the family lawyer, and the trustee in charge of what money remained.

This was extremely little. But into the quite comfortable Stubbs household, near Manchester, tiny Dick was taken to become "one of themselves."

Homely Mrs. Stubbs he learnt to call "Ma." For the puny bottle-reared Anglo-Indian baby was first laid in her lap at the age which would have been that of her third child had he lived; and by some obscure feminine miracle that sometimes happens to foster-mothers, she took the

soldier's orphan more closely to her bosom than the two sons of her own blood. It was a labour of love with Mrs. Stubbs to see that this waif ("Look at his bonnie eyes, dad!") had everything "as nice as his own poor mother could have wished."

I am afraid his own poor mother would have been rather distressed at many things in his upbringing among these kindly folk who taught him to call a table-napkin a "servyette." She would have "minded"—and so would his father!—that there was no chance of Dick's being sent to the kind of preparatory school which—well, in his family it had always been followed (as the night the day) by public-school, Sandhurst, and one or two regiments or so. She would have taken as a tragedy what the Stubbses took as a great blessing—namely, that at sixteen, young Dick had his start in life—a stool in the Manchester office with his foster-brothers Cecil and Herbert Stubbs.

Generations of soldier-blood in the boy's veins clamoured for a very different sort of life. He read Kipling, and wished he knew somebody who could have talked to him about his father in India. There seemed no chance of his ever getting to do so. . . . It seemed as if his life-lines were pretty definitely laid down, when he was sixteen.

At sixteen, too, he was in love—and beloved. Now his mother (who had realised early the importance of women to a son's career) would have felt that her last words had been gasped out in vain. She had not wished him to be loved by a girl like little Connie Stubbs.

This was Dick's first sweetheart. It is

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not true that boys never fall in love with the girls with whom they are brought up. The apple falls at the foot of the tree. Again and again boys fall in love with the girl who is there.

Little Connie was born two years after Dick's arrival from India. The only girl in a household of boys! But Dick was Her small Majesty's favourite slave. When she was "a terror" for any one else, she would be "good" for Dick, she would "laugh for Dick" out of her bassinette. Dick taught her to walk. They learnt to read together, Dick's dusky cropped head bent above the alphabet close to her pale gold ringlets filleted with pale blue. She had a funny little way of smiling down at the "Royal Reader" in delight when she had put a word together quicker than the boy. Dick thought her lovely, and at six brought all the pennies of his money-box to buy her a birthday present of an india-rubber duck.

After that it was an institution, "our Connie's birthday present." For weeks every year Dick saved up for (I put them in order) the rag-doll; the Teddies, one, two, and three; the paint-box; the glass-lidded box of beads; the sailor-dolly; the doll's tea-set; and the doll's pram.

Then came the birthday on which Connie came home from the holidays from a school more expensive than that to which the three boys had been sent. Her gold ringlets were no longer filleted, but tied at the nape of her neck by a big sky-blue bow, and her dancing shoes had Louis heels "like lots of the girls." Dick, who was now going to the office, had already bought her a pink satin hat for the biggest doll. Quite suddenly he saw this would never do. The woman at the toy-shop (usually disobliging on principle) took it back without a murmur, from Dick. He bought instead a large bottle of White Rose in a case.

From this moment little Connie realised that she loved Dick as a man. She ceased to kiss him, and began to smile at him, a provocative downward smile, without looking at him. She knew before he did that he would, for this, give her anything that she asked. She was not a thinker or she might have given thought to the strangeness of the little, little things whereby one woman becomes different from others in a man's eyes.

Upon her next birthday Dick's gift was a silver bangle with cowbells dangling; the birthday after, a brooch composed of two swallows in turquoises, wings outspread and beaks together. (She had now

begun to let him kiss her.) Her seventeenth birthday saw her exclaiming over a slender gold chain to which there was attached as a pendant a fat little gold heart.

"That's mine," Dick muttered to her. "It's all yours, you know."

"Oh, goodness," ejaculated little Connie. She didn't know what else to say. She was not a sayer. But all was said as she turned upon this treasure her downward smile of shyness and ecstasy. . . .

Her people said there was plenty of time to think about that sort of thing one way or the other. But on Connie's eighteenth birthday it seemed as if there might not be so much time any more. Dick's present was a brooch made of the badge of his regiment and he came to deliver it in khaki and on draft leave, for this was in August, Nineteen-Fourteen, and he was for France the next week. He and Cecil and Herbert had enlisted together the day that war broke out.

The picture that he carried away with him was of Connie's small face up in the window of her bedroom, looking after him and smiling, smiling pluckily, though he knew how those long lashes of hers were wet above her tender, troubling, downward smile.

II

In the new life he forgot her.

That is he scribbled pencil-letters on field postcards with great regularity from the Front. But the home to which he sent them seemed to loom more and more shadowy through the smoke of war. The home people whom he summed up in his "love to all" became also shadowy. Connie was not a writer. "Ma," Mr. Stubbs, and little Connie grew, as time went on, less real to him than fellows in his company, bound to him now by countless ties of the common existence. . . .

Every household in Britain possesses descriptions by letter or memory of what that existence was; so why paraphrase them? One incident of that time Dick never put in any letter.

It was when he, with a gathering of a mud-coloured scallawags in charge of a stripling officer were straggling wearily down the chocolate-brown stream that had been a road. Beside that stream another officer, less war-worn, cast a glance and asked curiously, "What mob are you?"

The stripling set in command of Dick and his comrades broke out passionately from over-strain:

"Who are you calling a mob? This is all that's left of the —s, and the"—his voice shook—"the absolute Best that ever went up the line." His eyes as he turned aside met the understanding eyes of the private soldier nearest to him—Dick.

Shortly after this, the stripling officer became to Dick the firmest reality in the phantasmagoria of the new life. In billets he asked Dick his name.

"What?" he exclaimed when Dick gave it. It was not a usual sort of name, for which reason I omit it. "Was your governor by any chance an Indian Army man? Wasn't he killed in 'ninety-six?"

"Yes, sir," said Private Dick. The stripling officer, whose name was Captain le Breton, held out his hand. "My governor was with him. He was his great pal; I've often heard him talk of him. Ram, isn't it?"

"Rather," agreed Dick, shaking hands, with the feeling that a curtain was going up on some fresh new act of his life.

It was. Presently young le Breton was urging Dick to try for his commission. When a month or so later Dick won it on the field, he received congratulations not only from the jubilant household in the North, but also a charming letter from Mrs. le Breton, and a note from her husband the General, from their pleasant home near Maidenhead. They had heard so much from their Harry about the son of their old friend that they seemed to know him quite well. At the very first opportunity he must come and spend his leave with them and they would have long talks about old times in India.

So his leave, long anticipated saw Second Lieutenant Dick not at Manchester at all, but in a house that seemed incredibly familiar. The General and his wife were returning to the son of their long-lost friend, told him it was "his father over again" as he came into the Hall, told him he must always look upon this as the house of call. . . . At once he loved it with its atmosphere of Indian associations, its mounted heads, its coloured nummahs and the sketches by the General's wife of a bungalow that she had shared, one hot summer, with his own mother. . . . He felt at home, at home. . . .

And so it was that Herbert Stubbs, who had also got his commission, came back to the house in Manchester without his foster-brother. Dick's letter of explanation arrived just as the war-fatted calf was being prepared for the arrival of both the boys. Mr. and Mrs. Stubbs repeated several

times that it was natural after all that Dick should want to go and look up these new people who could tell him something about his father and that pretty young mother of his that the boy had never seen—"or her him, really," as Mrs. Stubbs added blowing her nose on her husband's handkerchief, and concluding that there was nothing for anybody to mind.

As for little Connie, she said nothing and seemed absorbed in the humours of Herbert's new mess as related by her brother.

Not even her mother knew that when (after a leave-organie at the theatre with Herbert and some of his pals) the girl went to her room, she did not undress quickly and slip into bed.

Instead, she opened a drawer and took from it a cardboard-box containing some battered-looking dolls, part of a doll's tea-set, and an ornate glass bottle that had contained White Rose. The cow-bell bangle, the swallow brooch, the plump golden heart on its chain, and the regimental badge she was wearing as usual. The other things she set on the bed. She smiled, an uncertain, brooding downward smile, upon them, once. Then dressed as she was in her bright frock, the little creature lay down. Without sobbing, without sound or movement, she lay rigid under the eiderdown, her sentimental relics close beside her. Until the chill spring dawn she lay, staring with an intensity into the darkness, her inward eyes seeing the face of Dick.

Dick, who could already see nothing but the face of another girl!—the proud and sweet young face of his friend's sister, Sybil le Breton.

Sybil was a revelation to Dick because . . .

Well, every young man in love tells you that the girl has "opened a new world" to him. Sybil, tall, slim, and a pearly-skinned brunette, opened to this worshipper the world of his mother. That pretty and ambitious and prejudiced woman would have summed up the situation by saying that Sybil was the first "lady" he had ever known.

Whereas Dick told himself that it was because she was "just Sybil" that her voice and ways and looks were different from those of any other girl he had met. He realised at once and hopelessly that he loved her. The way she spoke to her father; the way she called the dogs; her gesture as she touched, in passing, a bowl of hyacinths set in fibre; the feel of her long

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slender hand in his when she said good-night; the queenly little lift of her chin; her sweet direct eyes; a tag of public-school slang sounding quaintly on her lips . . . all these he adored.

Just as dear to him were her outlook on all the things for which he cared, her pride in her men-folk, her inclusion of himself among her own people; he felt that. . .

Her father, smoking after dinner, told him casually that it was jolly here in the summer when there would be tennis and punting, even if it were a bit dull just now.

"Dull, sir!" echoed poor Dick.

For six nights of his leave the boy reminded himself that he hadn't an earthly, hadn't a brown, or any prospects, and that as soon as he went away it "must be Good-bye—ee!" to these hopeless dreams as well as to the Princess of them.

Still there were four precious days left in which he might look at Sybil, might talk and walk with Sybil, dance with Sybil to the gramophone in the evening, run up to town and do a matinée with Sybil. He need not bother Sybil by letting her suspect that he had made a young ass of himself. That he determined.

The boy proposed to her on the seventh day of his leave.

Immediately afterwards he admitted that he had been mad, that he'd no right to say a word, but that she was so lovely he couldn't help it, and that if she could give him a little hope to go away with, he would do his absolute dashedness to make good.

Sybil gave him her direct gaze and said quite simply and royally, "But I wished you to. I care for you!"

Her people took it in the same spirit; her mother just saying, "Poor Mabel's boy; how delightful!" and her father, "In these days one is quite thankful for us to keep together a bit . . ." and Dick was caught up so high into the seventh heaven that he almost forgot to write and tell them about it in the North.

Manchester, which had become shadowy before ever he met Sybil, was now a dream. "Home" was Sybil—if only he could grow worthy of her! As for little Connie, he forgot her with the completeness of which a young man is master at these moments. At the beginning of his visit, memories had occasionally come to him of the little foster-sister, memories that showed her so changed! For in the light of the revelation of Sybil he saw Connie as a pretty little thing who dressed as if she came from behind the glove counter at Bollingsworth's and who put on rather too much scent and

rather too many bits of cheap jewellery and who said "Lay down!" instead of "Lie down" to the kitten, who exclaimed "Oh, goodness!" too often, and who called a table-napkin a "servyette."

The Manchester people wrote promptly and conventionally, but kindly about news. Connie didn't write, but then she never had been a writer; he never had anything but postcards and parcels from Connie. She sent her love and very best wishes in her mother's letter. And, thank goodness, there was nothing in that, after all, about "shock" or "losing him" or "forgetting poor old Ma." He'd been a little afraid of that. And now—Oh no, he wasn't hurt, far from it! because there wasn't anything. The Stubbses were not a family to put anything in letters. Dick concluded that the war, which changes everything, had got the Stubbses accustomed to the idea that a foster-sister is no relation and that he, Dick, had definitely left their nest.

It might have been a war-wedding before he went back, but for leave being suddenly cut short. Sybil's fiancé returned to France and Duty, with intervals of scribbling love-letters—Sybil's letters were wonderful—and of longing. . . .

He got no more leave until the following July. It was sick-leave after being mildly gassed. For once Dick blessed the Home and from his Board he rushed off joyously to Maidenhead and to Sybil, whom love had made queenier, and to the preparations for their wedding. Everybody had agreed upon the wedding being at once. The house was full of wedding-presents and new clothes. Dick, with Sybil, who had taken leave from her hospital, spent most of the last hours of their engagement in the green garden that sloped down to the willows at the water's edge. It was a halcyon time indeed. Sybil wondered how such delight could last as this did.

Then, one day, came a cloud. It was so slight, so carefully concealed, that nobody would have noticed anything, except a woman in love.

Sybil, looking at the handsome face opposite her in the rocking punt, asked her lover that morning what the matter was.

He came out of the reverie to smile at his Princess, in her fresh green gown. "Matter, darling? Nothing. How could there be anything?"

"Something is worrying you," she perceived gently in the exquisitely clear, soft voice that sometimes found him hoping she didn't think that he'd any Lancashire

accent. "Dick, there is something on your mind. Is it money? You know that will be all right. Father is going to work that berth for you the moment the war's over. And, anyhow——"

"Oh! I know. I'm not worrying about money," he declared. "The money's bound to come, if I want it for You!"

She smiled, reassured at his tone. "Then it isn't, Dick, that you don't care for me as much as you thought you did when you left?"

He said, seriously and adoringly, "I seem to care for you a thousand times more."

"Then," she said in her delicious voice, "you'll tell me exactly what it is that's gone wrong this morning. For I know there is something. What is it?"

At this he made a movement as if he were throwing off some light burden and laying it before her to see.

"It's just this," he confessed. "To-day when I was looking at the calendar again, just to see for myself how many dates I'd struck off (you know now how I've been crossing out the days till our wedding), I saw it was the third of August. Well, you know that's little Connie's birthday—Connie Stubbs, my foster-sister."

"Oh yes," said Sybil very gently. She had heard a little about Connie and she had guessed a good deal more.

Dick said, "Every year up to now I've given a present to the kid. Last August I sent a souvenir shell-case. This year I clean forgot about everything, of course. And somehow, when I remembered, I seemed to see her little face—she's such a kid—all blank and disappointed because I hadn't thought of her."

"My dear boy!" said Sybil quickly, "if that's all——! Of course she must have a present. Isn't the house full of presents? We'll go in now and choose something for her out of our wedding-presents; and you can give it her on her birthday after all. Go up to Manchester this afternoon—you'll be there for dinner—and come back to-morrow morning. It's the simplest thing in the world!"

Dick said, "It is to you. There's nobody like you, Sybil, in the world."

"Come and choose," she smiled. They left the punt and went into the house to rummage in the drifts of tissue paper and leather cases. Dick's first choice was of a silver heart-shaped photograph frame that he said "looked" rather like Connie.

Sybil said quickly, "You can't give her that; my dear thing, she sent it to us! Look, here's this little Indian hand mirror; this is rather sweet, and besides they always say that the gift of a mirror that a woman has had brings luck to the next owner. Take her this, Dick."

Dick said, "It's topping, but can you spare it?" "But of course," said Sybil, and she added inwardly, "If I can spare him for all those hours! But I owe her this one last time—poor little child!"

Taking the wedding-present that was to be a birthday-gift, Dick went off to Manchester. His last look back at Sybil showed her standing on the white steps of her home; her green gown suiting the delicate dignity of her figure as its foliage suits the birch. A gracious sight she was. . . . Her last look gave his salute and the worshipping turn towards her of his handsome eyes.

It was the last time she was to see them.

He went, with her offering to the girl who was ten times less than she in beauty, brain, breeding, and all else but one thing.

That one thing, what was it? Was it part of the temperament that could let little Connie lie tense and tearless, fully dressed, through the night to ache for him? Was it the single-mindedness that knew no pride in anything but him, no interest, no delight? What spell of years past lent magic to her bodily presence as soon as he was in her sight once more?

For Dick did not return next morning as he had arranged. That evening Sybil le Breton got his expressed letter, curt with the curtness of a man profoundly agitated.

"I can never ask you to forgive me," Dick wrote. "As soon as I got back home and saw her little face I knew it would have to be Her and not you, and so we were married this morning."

As Sybil guessed, he had shown this letter to his wife.

Little Connie had read it silently, seriously. Only as she turned away—and how should Sybil guess this?—there had crossed her face the expression with which she had greeted Dick's sudden appearance the day before. It was her child's look of triumph, her young-girl's look of shyness and rapture, her woman's look—that haunting, withheld, mysterious, secret, and stirring Downward Smile.

BERTA RUCK

PAK of PENNYFIELDS

By DOROTA
FLAT

Author of "YELLOW"
now in its 11th year

ENGLISH
edition



"Zia was a Jewess, therefore her moral standpoint was hi, h, but Zia was a woman and therefore to be tempted. Lung Hi went carefully and systematically to work."

I

PAK had never made warm friends, therefore no one was sorry for Pak. "Pak of Pennyfields" was how he was known in the East of London, where he had lived ever since landing in England some eight years ago.

How nervously happy he had been, how important and excited! Both emotions had been hidden to the best of Pak's ability, for did not Zia, his wonderful bride, look up and depend absolutely on her man.

Zia was then a little young thing of sixteen, Pak was a man in his twentieth year, so of course it behoved him to show Zia what a pillar of strength she had to lean on in this new country where he had brought her, so far, far from Poland.

Poland, where Jews were not human beings, but merely cumberers of the earth.

Now, here in England Pak was a man, and Zia a woman.

And as a man, Pak was to die in a few hours' time.

It was not of his approaching end that he thought, rather his mind dwelt on the only true comrade he had ever known, his little son, Jacob.

The father's heart swelled as he recalled the beauty and cleverness of small Jacob.

"That little one would have been a great

man," he smiled, and then the smile died, the softness left Pak's eyes, his diminutive frame stiffened, involuntarily his hands tensed as he held them crooked before him, his lips drew back baring his teeth in a snarl. Pak, alone in his prison cell, lived again the last minutes of his freedom, before the police—! Ah well, Jacob would have been eight years of age had he lived.

"My son is a English little fellar, he been born here," Pak had been proud of introducing Jacob to all and sundry with these remarks.

It was true enough, the babe had come to rejoice the lives of his parents just six months from the time they left Poland and had settled in Crutch Walk, Whitechapel, in a room (a whole room to themselves) that had been rented to the husband and wife by Nicolas Markovitch (second cousin to Pak) in Nicolas's own house, over his own shop.

Nicolas was a big man. Pak was proud of him. He was not only large of build, a great broad chap, with huge shoulders and enormous head, but he was rich as well; in fact the only things that were small about Nicolas were his eyes, his mind, and his moral sense, but the rest of his make-up compensated for lack of greatness in eyes, mind, and morality.

Nicolas not only rented Pak and Zia a

room, but paid Pak as much as twelve English shillings a week to work for him, only extracting three of these shillings back in payment for the six by-eight attic in which the happy husband and wife lived as contentedly as though the panes in the windows were unbroken, the paper did not hang in damp strips from the narrow walls, or the ceiling did not sag menacingly in many spots.

They looked into one another's eyes and smiled: they had a room, a home to themselves, and the large Nicolas had personally conducted them to the attic, and after expounding on his generosity to this poor cousin of his from Poland, had left them and their two neat bundles (which contained all their worldly goods) in this Paradise, furnished with a three-legged chair, a candle box, and on the floor a straw mattress.

Pak's gratitude had been supreme; he worked from sun-up till midnight, and sometimes later, in order to give Nicolas the full worth of the generous wage he paid for the stitching of men's suits, which were sold to great advantage in the shop.

In those early days, before the coming of baby Jacob, Zia too had helped with her needle, sitting very close to her little husband where they could whisper words of love and hope to one another. Nicolas had not been pleased at the arrival of the baby, it might interfere with work.

"A baby! I did not tell you I let you have a baby live in my room," he growled, when the happy father told of the great event.

"E a nice baby, 'e very quiet, just 'im go goo goo," no cry," pleaded Pak.

"Well, you pay me a 'alf shilling more, and 'im can stay," consented the generous landlord.

With tears in his eyes Pak called down blessings on the head of his relative, and begging the tiny morsel of humanity from his mother, proudly carried it to gladden the eyes of Nicolas.

"E got a fenny mark on 'e's 'ead," was Markovitch's only comment as he gazed curiously at the baby.

"That a good lucky mark; 'e be a clever one this fellar," asserted Pak stoutly, softly stroking the large brown mole that showed so distinctly just above the child's left temple.

Now Pak worked harder than ever, his fingers simply flew over the work, as he dreamed dreams of a future when little Jacob would become big Jacob, and show the world what a really clever man could do.

Sometimes Pak became almost frightened at the grandiloquence of his own ambitions

for this son of his; he pictured Jacob as even owning a shop of his own, similar to that of the great Markovitch. But these romantic thoughts were told to no one but Zia, and even to her only in the lowest of whispers.

Little Jacob inherited his mother's great soft eyes, which had so thrilled Pak when he first met his Zia—large, brown, appealing eyes that, set in Zia's lovely oval face, called to all who saw them. Even Nicolas himself was not impervious to their allure, nor indeed to the girl-wife's whole beauty, for beautiful Zia certainly was. Her clear skin of olive tint, with the very scarlet lips that go with such a complexion, the masses of soft hair, black as the wing of a raven, growing low down on a smooth, broad forehead, the sensitive nostrils of a perfectly shaped nose, tiny ears and hands, all helped make Zia the lovely woman she was. There would come into the narrow eyes of Nicolas an evil gleam when he encountered Zia; her slender figure with its gently swelling bust and hips did not escape his notice.

Zia was a Polish Jewess, therefore from cruel necessity she was not innocent; she knew the meaning of such expression as she saw in the coarse, voluptuous face of Nicolas Markovitch; but she loved her little husband and adored her precious babe, and held her peace, whilst she skilfully endeavoured to avoid their landlord as much as possible.

"You stay up in the room too much, you be ill, you come out for walking," Nicolas invited one day on meeting Zia as she came into the shop to bring back some work Pak had just completed.

"I no sick, t'ank you, Nicolas," she replied timidly.

"You come." It was half invitation, half command.

"I no leave my baby." Zia placed the work on the counter, and edged nervously back towards the rickety stairs.

"That brat!" Nicolas was irritated.

"You leave 'im, 'e sleep."

"E wake up, cry for me, 'is muma," explained Zia.

"Pak attend to 'im, you come," scowled Nicolas.

"Pak must be busy with 'is work."

"Just like I knew, a big fool was I, a soft-hearted big fool, to 'ave Pak in my work with a baby. Childrens is no good for work."

Nicolas was really annoyed, and Zia trembled.

What if she and Pak were turned out into the street with baby Jacob!

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"Me, I go ask Pak," she soothed, and Nicolas nodded assent.

"I mind the little fellar, it do you good, my Zia, to go out nice walkin' with Nicolas," smiled Pak, pausing for the fraction of a precious minute to look lovingly at his wife and to steal a glance at the child, who lay peacefully sleeping on the coarse mattress, close to where Pak sat cross-legged with a pile of clothing ready to be stitched alongside him.

Several times during the hour that followed the father indulged in the luxury of an adoring gaze at the head of black silken curls, and each time his eyes fell on the curious brown mole over his son's left temple he smiled; that distinctive mark pleased him, he never failed to kiss it when he held the child in his arms. "Ah ah, that Nicolas is a good fellar, 'e 'ave a big 'eart. God is good, even 'elp the Jew," communed Pak, and his simple heart sent up a prayer of thanksgiving.

The babe was awake when Zia returned flushed and excited from her unusual excursion.

"We been a long walk, up the Commercial Road," rushing to pick up her baby, smothering him with kisses, as she scanned him with anxious eyes, for this was the first time she had left little Jacob for more than a few minutes.

"Nicolas 'e make me 'ave some wine in a nice glass, 'e say it do me good." And sitting down on the mattress, with her babe in her arms, "It make me feel all fenny and giddy," she explained.

"That Nicolas is a wise one, 'e is a good chap," applauded Pak. Then a most phenomenal thing occurred. Pak dropped his work!

"Zia, my Zia, 'ow beautiful you are!" he breathed.

"What! Oh, you grow silly, my little 'usband," but Zia laughed well pleased at the praise.

"Your eyes they shine like great stars, and you 'ave pink in your cheeks like the new sun that come up through the window in the morning. Oh, my Zia, my wonderful darling."

Pak worked until after midnight, to atone for the five minutes' spell he had given himself in which to worship the mother and child—his whole world.

II

The first tiny black spot appeared on the horizon of Pak's happiness when he found Zia crying on the stairs one day. He insisted on knowing the cause. Zia had completely

broken down and confessed that Nicolas was making her life unbearable by his undesired attentions.

Small as he was, Pak faced the large Nicolas in a fury of rage, commanding that his wife be left in peace.

"That is the way. Always one sees a begger on 'orseback, 'e get too saucy for 'is place. You get out of 'ere. You go quick, or I kick you out. See. I 'ate you and I 'ate your kid with 'is bad mark on 'is 'ead. See?"

Pak's fury increased to blind rage at this insult to his son; he grew livid and shook with the strength of his emotion as he hurled insults and threats at the equally angry Markovitch.

"I put you before the door. You go, or I send for policemen," had been the last words Pak heard from his cousin, before he rushed up the crazy stairs, and gathering together the family belongings along with Jacob and the frightened Zia, had carried them all out into Crutch Walk, along Commercial Road, eventually landing up in Sydney Street, where he found lodgings in the house of a Lascar, who kept a lodging house mainly for his own country people.

Pak soon found work, but he was forced to go out to his tailoring, and that meant leaving Zia and Jacob alone for sixteen or eighteen hours out of every twenty-four.

Zia's beauty had increased with years, until now she was too dangerously attractive to be left alone.

With a heavy heart Pak had been forced to abandon his job in order to guard his wife. The next few years were trying ones for the Polish Jew; he grew more and more nervous, and looked ten years older than he really was.

Farther and farther East drifted the trio, until they landed up in Castor Street, then on to Pennyfields.

Here, Pak got work in a Chinese laundry, where the fat and suave owner, Lung Hi, was gracious enough to accord them lodgings, plus a small remuneration, on the premises of the laundry itself. Lung Hi was large and slow moving, his slant eyes appeared to see nothing, he wore a long chin beard and drooping moustaches. Unlike his compatriots who had drifted to Pennyfields, he had not altogether discarded the dress of his country, nor was he ever to be seen without a close-fitting black skull cap, and an orange cord which he wore round his neck—an orange cord that hung far down, reaching to the fat paunch. His stoutness in China would have

been greatly esteemed as adding to his manly beauty.

Lung Hi did a thriving trade, both with his laundry and devious tradings.

He seldom spoke, and never showed excitement, not even when he got the big prize in Pak-a-pue by hitting on the whole ten marks which gamblers were allowed to choose for the sum of one shilling. Lung Hi was not an individual to be overlooked; his personality, allied to his success at making money, gave him quite a standing in Pennyfields.

Pak had accepted this employment in the laundry as a desperate means to ward off the starvation that threatened his small family, and at the same time keep them close under his protection.

"Only for a little short time, my Zia," he assured his wife; "soon, oh very soon I will find me another job with the tailoring, and will work 'ard and make much, much money for you and that big clever rascal Jacob."

"I think me it would 'ave been better if me—I 'ad not been such a fool with that pig Nicolas," grumbled Zia, for the bitter years had been full of hardships.

"Not that, Zia my heart," pleaded Pak. "Nicolas is one devil dog, 'e would 'ave take you from me, and from our Jacob."

"Not any one in the world could take me from my baby," declared Zia fiercely, picking her son up in her arms and holding him tightly.

"My mummie stop with daddy and me," said Jacob, patting her cheeks with his tiny hands.

With a tender smile Pak leaned over and kissed the "lucky mark" on the boy's left temple.

At first Zia worked with Pak at the ironing board. It was here she made friends with Beela, the fair-haired girl-woman of about her own age who, having drifted into Pennyfields, no one quite knew or cared how, had married a Chinaman. She spoke like a cockney, and doubtless was one, but though expansive enough on most subjects Beela retained a careful reticence as to her antecedents.

"The Chinks is all right if you treat them all right," she confided to Zia as the two worked side by side with a dozen or so young Chinamen. "I am married to one and I 'ave been married to a white man, so I ought ter know," she asserted with reason.

"Which be 'ave best to you, Beela?" asked Zia curiously.

"Ain't much to choose; a white will

black your eye, while a Chink will cut your b— throat," stated Beela calmly.

"You no frighten of Chinaman, Beela?" "I ain't frightened of man nor monkey,"

bragged Beela; "you only got to know 'ow to manage 'em, and they're simple as drinkin' gin. If you've took up with a white, keep out of 'is way when 'e's in drink. If you've took up with a Chink, there's some things you got to remember if you don't want 'is knife acrost your throat. One thing is, don't talk to a Chink before twelve o'clock, 'specially if 'e's goin' to 'ave a flutter at Fan-Tan; if you're 'is own bloomin' wife, and you're bein' murdered, 'e won't come to your 'elp if it's before twelve o'clock, not 'im; let you die, 'e will. Them silly Chinks thinks it's bad luck for a woman to speak to 'em before midday." And so Beela imparted wisdom as she had learned it in the East End, whilst Zia listened spell-bound.

Pak did not approve of the sudden friendship that had sprung up between his wife and Beela, but it would have been difficult to stop it on account of their enforced propinquity; he consoled himself continually by asserting that he "would soon find another job."

But month after month crept by, and still found him in the employ of Lung Hi.

At first Lung Hi appeared to disregard Pak and his family; they were good workers, so he paid them as he did any other toiler in his laundry. Then gradually he began to pay some attention to Jacob: many a time he would slip a copper into the tiny hands for sweets. But in spite of his generosity, the boy was too like his father in character to readily make friends; he would stand off and stare, with large, brown, fascinated eyes, at the fat Chinaman, and most of all at the bright orange cord. Perhaps it was the gaudy colour that caught the baby eye and held it; but whatever it was, little Jacob could not keep his gaze from the cord whenever he was in Lung Hi's vicinity.

"You like it, eh?" Lung Hi asked the boy one day, touching the cord that hung on his chest.

"Yes," nodded Jacob.

"Maybe I give it you one day, bime-by," and Lung Hi smiled.

Now Lung Hi's smile was something to be feared; it was a very slow widening of his mouth, his eyes never smiled.

With a terrified shriek of "Daddie!" Jacob took to his heels, and rushed to his father's side.

"What the matter with you?" asked

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Pak, placing his iron carefully on the stand, before stooping down to his son.

"N-nothing," confessed Jacob.

"Nothing! Then why you cry out, why you all tremble, tell me that?" Pak looked anxiously at the little chap, who only shook his head as he clung close to his father.

"Where is mummie?" he asked.

"Mummie gone with Beela for walking," and Pak sighed, Zia was often away with Beela these days. "You be good boy, sit here, and I give you ha'penny," he coaxed, pushing back the silky black curls in order to caress the "lucky mark."

"Tell me about the garden with the flowers, daddie," begged the child, seating himself obediently out of the way of the ironers. As Pak worked, he spoke of the garden he had conjured out of his vivid imagination to please little Jacob, whose eyes and soul were starved for the softness and colour he loved from hearsay alone, for Jacob had never seen a garden, excepting through his father's eyes.

Whenever the highly strung boy was wakeful or feverish, he could always be soothed to rest, and sleep, by word painting of beauty and colour.

Now he listened intently, as his parent told him of magic fields covered with soft green grasses, all damp with dewdrops, of little blue flowers, the colour of stars, of big red roses, pink roses, white roses, as soft as his own mummie's satiny cheek.

"And could I touch them, daddie?" pleaded Jacob breathlessly.

"Touch them! Why, you pick, one, two, t'ree, many as you like, they all yours. And small yellar flowers like gold——"

"Like Lung Hi's cord?"

"Yes, like 'e's cord, and you make a lot of them in a necklace, one for you, and one for your mother, and they smell so sweet, they send you bye-bye, and when you wake up—hi! you see a lot new flowers the good God drop down for you to play with. Then you walk over a small hill, and you come to the big blue sea——"

"Like the canal, daddie?" Jacob shrank a little, for the dark, turgid water at Duke's Wharf, through Limehouse Hole, where he so often played, both fascinated and terrified him.

"Yes, but more beautifuller," Pak assured him.

"No, no, I like the garden best.

Smilingly Pak abandoned the sea, and reverted to glowing descriptions of such a garden as has never been seen outside of heaven, while the beauty-loving child hung on his every word.

As Pak talked, his thoughts were with Zia. Where was she? Where was Beela leading her? The little Jew's heart was heavy.

"You go and ask the old blighter to let us 'ave 'alf an hour off, Zia," Beela would suggest; "'e likes you all right, 'e 'll let us go."

"Why you not ask 'im?" Zia had at first objected.

"I ain't 'is first fav'rite 'ere; you're that all right," the astute Beela assured her.

"I not want to leave my Jacob."

"You're fair balmy about that kid. Pak 'll look after 'im." And gradually Zia had allowed herself to be persuaded into begging for half-hours off with her friend.

At first Lung Hi scarcely seemed to have heard Zia's timid requests; a mere nod of his head was the only answer he gave, his eyes, as they looked at Zia, appeared sleepier and duller than ever. These half-hours grew into hours, then into half-days, and sometimes whole ones. Still Lung Hi said nothing. Perhaps he did not notice the girls' absence; at any rate Pak hoped he did not, for he became increasingly fearful of losing his job.

On her return from these jaunts abroad, Pak noticed, with a strong feeling of uneasiness, that Zia appeared changed; she would be either wildly excited, or so tired and irritable that it would be unwise to even speak to her.

But in whatever condition she came back, her first thought was always for her child, whom she would pet and fondle and croon over, telling him that "whatever happened, his mummie would always love him, and never, no never, leave him."

"When daddie get rich I go to a garden, and make you a yellow necklace with flowers, and one for me, and one for daddie," promised Jacob.

Zia laughed as she kissed the "lucky mark."

"You looking very fashion in that new blouse, my Zia; where you get it?"

"Beela give it me; she got a good 'cart, that Beela," Zia assured her husband.

"Where you go so much with Beela?"

"We go look at shops, and go walkin', that's all," frowned Zia. "If I not go with her, I not see any life; you work, work all the time, not take me nowhere. Sue Doe take Beela to see the pictures." Sue Doe was the Chinaman on whom Beela had chosen to bestow her favours.

"I soon find another job, then I make more money, and take you to see pictures," Pak promised bravely. "I frightened Lung

Hi give us the sack when you always out," he apologised timidly.

"Not 'im, 'e never notice," scoffed Zia; and only that Pak was so intent on his ironing, he might have remarked his wife's conscious smile as she made this statement, and her knowing look at the fat Chinaman proprietor, who sat sphinx-like at the door of his laundry, as usual appearing to hear or see nothing.

III

It was a long time before Pak began to notice that Lung Hi was most often absent when Zia was not in the laundry. Then a whispered word drifted to his ears, coupling the name of his wife with that of Lung Hi's.

The two had been seen together entering a picture palace—at least, so it was said; but Pak knew that could not be true, for Zia herself had told him she had gone on the afternoon in question with Beela, a statement which Beela garrulously and firmly swore to, and so Pak's uneasiness was soothed.

The first quarrel between husband and wife came when he begged her not to accept so many expensive gifts from Beela.

Zia, while hotly refusing this request, had taunted him bitterly with his inability to give her presents himself.

"Some day I get a better job, then I give you everything, my Zia." The little man looked up at his beautiful wife, who had grown several inches taller since he had brought her to England, and now towered above her small husband.

"A better job!" she scoffed. "You say that for a long time, and you don't get 'im."

"I must keep this one till I find something else. I must pay for Jacob for 'is school, and for 'is clothes," he explained. The wistful pathos in Pak's eyes both hurt and irritated Zia; she flung herself out of the laundry, and up Pennyfields.

A hot resentment against life generally, and Pak in particular, filled her heart. Here she was twenty-three years of age now, and possessed of a fierce longing for excitement, for the good things of life, as judged by the standard of the women with whom she mixed—pretty clothes, bits of jewellery, visits to music-halls and cinema-shows, to sit in brilliantly lighted bar rooms, and laugh and talk with other pleasure-seekers. Well, if Pak could not give these things to her, others would, and did.

She held her head high, and unconsciously sniffed the curious, heavy, bitter odour that lung round the passage which she entered.

After roughly brushing aside two young Chinamen who lounged on the door-step, without a pause she ascended the short flight of steps, and opening a door passed into a poorly lighted, sparsely furnished room, where the several Chinamen who were seated tranquilly smoking did not even look up at her as she entered. It was Lung Hi who handed her a pipe, and after a whiff or so Zia's discontent and impatience left her, she sat as quietly and dreamily as the other occupants of the room.

Lung Hi, fingering his orange neck-cord, watched her with unfathomable eyes. He wanted this woman, he must have her, he would have her; his eyes were almost closed, the tip of his tongue licked his upper lip under the straggly moustaches, his hands opened and closed very slowly.

Lung Hi had demanded nothing from Zia when he presented her with money, clothes, jewellery, or took her to music-halls and other amusements, which Pak credited to Beela's generosity. No, Lung Hi was too thorough, too cunning to make a demand; he hinted, he requested, and took Zia's rebuffs good-naturedly, while he studied the question.

Zia was a Jewess, therefore her moral standpoint was high, but Zia was a woman and therefore to be tempted. Lung Hi went carefully and systematically to work.

Beela had quite unconsciously come to his assistance; Lung Hi gloated secretly when he saw the two girls going off arm-in-arm on their perfectly innocent jaunts.

The first time he allowed himself to meet them he merely spoke a few good-natured words and passed on. Gradually these seemingly accidental encounters happened more and still more often, and the few words grew into conversations. Then he took to accompanying them on their excursions, until Zia scarcely remarked the first time she and Lung Hi met with no Beela present.

Nowadays Zia seldom saw Beela, but it was seldom she did not spend an hour or so in Lung Hi's company, not out of any affection for the fat Chinaman, but because he had accustomed her to look to him for any little luxury she wished to possess; she had but to ask, Lung Hi gave willingly.

Lung Hi, squatting on the wooden bench in this silent, darkened room, watched Zia, who, seated on a low stool, sat with arms hanging listlessly by her sides, her head bent on her chest; and decided that such a prize was well worth all the time and thought he had given, although, so far,

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Zia had given him nothing but an occasional smile and many hours of her company.

It was not Pak who stood in Lung Hi's way, nor was it only Zia's rigid sense of morality. The real block in the path was Jacob. Zia would do nothing that might harm her son, or that might lead to her losing him. Then—Lung Hi's mouth widened in a slow grin—Jacob must be got rid of.

After this decision he took to studying the boy, and often Jacob would look up from his play, down at Duke's Wharf, where he spent much time in fishing up pieces of chalk and driftwood from the foul water, to see Lung Hi standing silently fingering the orange cord, and watching him.

The ugly whispers coupling Lung Hi's name with that of Zia's grew to loud contemptuous talk, until Pak was driven well-nigh crazy. He took to doing without some of his already too sparse meals, in order to save enough money to justify him in taking an hour off from the laundry, to hunt up another job. "Another job" would surely give him back his former happiness, would break down the wall that had imperceptibly grown between him and his wife. By living on a starvation diet, and working feverishly, he managed to save ten shillings; only then did he feel justified in leaving the ironing board late one afternoon, in order to seek new work. He told no one of his plans, but, waiting until the kindly dusk of five o'clock on an autumn afternoon, that would help to hide from a prospective employer his extreme shabbiness, Pak crammed an old one-time-black hat on his head and stealthily crept forth from the laundry.

It was the first time for many a day that he had gone more than half a dozen yards from the place of his toil. He felt a wild excitement take possession of him. He would succeed, he must succeed. He smiled as he pictured Zia's face when he informed her that her little husband had gained a more remunerative position. He felt very sure of himself, and planned that out of his very first new wages he would take Zia and Jacob on Saturday night to a picture-palace, a delight of which he had only heard, for so far he had not been in a position to afford the luxury of a visit to one of these halls of wonderful entertainment.

Keeping close to the wall, he trotted swiftly along, for all the world like a stray dog that fears a cuff or a kick.

It was to the shop of one Manievitch

that he was bound; he had heard that Mr. Aaron Manievitch was in need of extra hands, and surely he would not refuse to take so skilled a workman as Pak into his services.

Then he saw a sight that froze his very heart, that caused him to stand as though petrified. His mouth and eyes opened wide, his body sagged sideways, as he stared and stared at his wife, his Zia, coming laughing along, with Lung Hi.

He could not move, he could not think, his head shook back and forth as though he had been stricken with a palsy.

He stood rooted to the spot until long after the two had passed out of sight. Neither of the couple had seen him, so he thought, but Lung Hi's eyes missed nothing.

Pak felt his head turning round and round; he leaned against the wall, his eyes closed. How long he remained there he never knew, but it was almost dark when his errand forgotten, he turned to retrace his steps. His face was wet with the tears that in his weak state had rushed unchecked from his eyes.

All unconsciously he found his feet had carried him through Limehouse Hole, down to Duke's Wharf; of course he wanted his little comrade Jacob, and there he found the child, lying flat on his stomach, looking down into the thick yellow water of the canal, crooning softly to himself.

That night had marked the beginning of the end.

When he spoke to Zia of what he had seen, she did not even trouble to deny it.

"What about it? There is no 'arm in Lung Hi walkin' 'ome with me if we 'appens to meet, is there?" demanded Zia defiantly.

"I not like it, Zia my own; you are too beautiful, too good, to be with 'im. I will work 'ard and buy you nice things." His very soul was in his eyes as he spoke.

"Me, I am dead before that 'appens," sneered Zia.

"No, I get me a good job——"

Zia's raucous laughter interrupted Pak; he bowed his head in his hands and wept.

"You not a man, Pak, you cry. You always poor." Zia's brows met in a frown; she stood looking down at the crouched figure of her husband, with a sense of despair and discontent.

"I not poor—look, Zia, I got this." Tremblingly he displayed his sacrificed meals, in the shape of ten shining shillings.

"Ten bob." Zia's eyes opened greedily.

"Yes, you take it, you 'ave it for you, Zia my own," he begged. Then, as he poured the money into her willing palm, "You will

not let Lung Hi walkin' with you again, my Zia?" he begged.

"Oh, the fat old Chink's all right, 'e not do me no 'arm," evaded Zia.

From that moment Pak hated Lung Hi, and Lung Hi knew it. He smiled; it was not Pak, the miserable undersized ironer, he biased his thoughts over, but Jacob.

Lung Hi knew that Jacob was the link that kept the desirable Zia chained to respectability.

Then Jacob disappeared!
The child failed to put in an appearance one evening. With a feeling of growing uneasiness Pak waited for his son. All the time he worked, his ears listened, and his eyes watched for the coming of the boy.

It was not until ten o'clock that night, when Zia returned to the laundry, that Pak realised how he had been waiting for her coming, not for herself alone, but because he thought she would bring their child with her.

"Where is Jacob?" he asked.

"In bed I s'pose," replied Zia.

"No, 'e not come 'ome."

"Not 'ome? Where 'e go to?" she asked quickly.

"I not know."

"My God, that little fellar out this late time by 'imself!" Zia turned and rushed through the door, quickly followed by Pak.

Then began a mad search for the missing child.

All night long, and the whole of the succeeding days, the father and mother sought for their lost son. No one had seen him, no one could give them any news of him.

The whole of Pennyfields showered sympathy on the grief-stricken mother. Pak was too insignificant to trouble about.

For days at a time the father searched for his little Jacob without ever returning to the laundry, until at last the police, finding him lying unconscious on the pavement, carried him to the hospital.

Pak was twenty-eight years of age; he looked nearer fifty when he was discharged from the hospital. Creeping slowly along, his eyes alone seemed to live as they again began the search for his little comrade, his one friend in the world.

Towards evening his feet carried him back to the laundry, where Zia greeted him without enthusiasm. The loss of her son had left her morose and bitterly reckless. Now she went openly abroad with Lung Hi, and Pak made no comment. Listlessly he returned for a few hours a day to his ironing board, but most often he wandered the

streets, looking, looking, always looking for a tiny form with a mop of silky black curls. Most of all he haunted Duke's Wharf, for this had been the little chap's favourite playing-ground.

Then there came that evening when he found himself lying flat on his stomach, as he remembered having seeing Jacob doing, looking down into the sullen, thick water, trying to conjure up the sights that must have met the baby eyes.

"What is it you see, my little son? Tell your daddie," he coaxed softly, as though the child was really there, "and your daddie tell you about pretty garden. Sure you go to pretty garden, sure! You got lucky mark, you go soon to— Christ!"

The man's heart came up into his throat, the water ran unheeded from his mouth over his parched lips on to his chest, his breathing came in sibilant whispers, there was madness in his eyes, the whole of his flesh crept, for there gazing up at him from the muddy water was his little son's face.

With a hoarse cry, his arms shot out; perhaps he fell into the canal, he did not know what happened until he found himself seated on the bank holding the corpse of his Jacob.

In spite of the state of the tiny form, Pak clung to it, raining kisses on the cold face, carefully drying away the water with a portion of his own clothing. "The lucky mark, the lucky mark," he was muttering, when his fingers became entangled in a cord, an orange cord, that was wound tightly round the baby neck.

After that, Pak became very still.

Towards the small hours of the morning he laid the lifeless form in a corner, covering it gently with his coat, as he crooned words of promise to return very soon.

When he had found the box for which he went in search, he kept his promise to his son.

Removing his own shirt, he wrapped it round the corpse; with amazingly steady fingers he removed the tell-tale orange cord. He kissed his little Jacob for the last time, before putting him into the candle box which he had purloined from a near-by yard, filling the box with flowers he had climbed a balcony to steal from their earthenware pots. Jacob loved flowers; he must not go to God without them—Pak saw to that.

The dawn was breaking as he finished burying the box in a corner of the yard at the back of the laundry.

Then creeping out into the narrow street, he slunk away.

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Towards noon fatigue overcame him. Entering a public square, he sat down on a seat and slept, but even though he slept his hand never relaxed its grip on that orange cord.

When he awakened, he felt no pain of grief in his heart, only a grim hate, a determination to avenge the death of his treasure. That accomplished, he would join his Jacob, kindly death would aid him.

Three days later he returned to the laundry.

The laundry was singularly quiet, for it was the Chinese New Year, and therefore a holiday.

Pak seated himself at the back of the dark shop and waited.

Towards midnight Lung Hi came in accompanied by Zia.

As Lung Hi struck a match and lighted a candle, Pak noticed that Zia's usually pale cheeks were scarlet, her eyes seemed abnormally large, they blazed with excitement, and on her breast hung a wonderful ornament of fine green jade, suspended there by a bright orange cord.

Pak burst out laughing, it was the first time he had laughed for years. Perhaps his power of laughter had grown rusty with long disuse; that may have been why Zia cried aloud in fright, and why even the usually imperturbable Lung Hi started alarmedly.

"Pak!" Zia's voice rose in a shrill scream.

"Yes, Pak," laughed the owner of that name.

"Why you laugh? what the matter? You find Jacob?" A blend of fear and excitement sounded in Zia's voice.

"Yes. Me, I find the little fellow," and one would have thought Pak had a great joke in his heart. "I laugh, my beautiful Zia, because one time I tell that little Jacob we go to a garden and 'e make a necklace of yallar flowers for you, 'is mummie, and one for 'im, and now you got your yallar necklace, and Jacob 'e 'ave 'is ' Now Lung Hi must 'ave 'is necklace."

With incredible swiftness, and the strength of a maniac, Pak threw himself on the form of the fat Lung Hi, as the latter, fearful of what might happen, was fumbling clumsily with the fastenings of the laundry door, which he had only just a moment ago securely locked.

Lung Hi had a large, fat neck, Pak's hands were not very big. Without the aid of the strong orange cord he could never have strangled Lung Hi.

It may have been true that Zia had thrown herself on her husband, and tried to tear him from his victim, as she told the police she had done. Pak did not know, nor did he care.

He had avenged the death of his baby. Now, in a few hours he was to be hanged. Well, that fitted in with his programme, he would soon see his little Jacob.

Pak smiled dreamily as he heard a key grate in the lock of his cell; he wondered whether the "lucky mark" would still be on his son's temple when he met him after death.

Dorota Flatau

The next Issue of "Hutchinson's Story Magazine" will contain fine new stories by—

A. E. W. Mason
Frank Swinnerton
"Sapper"
Kathlyn Rhodes
W. L. George
Wm. Le Queux

E. F. Benson
C. N. and A. M. Williamson
May Sinclair
Alice Perrin
Stacy Aumonier
Ruby M. Ayres



SEARCHING FOR WILLIAM

By

MABEL BARNES-GRUNDY

Author of

*"Hilary on Her Own," "Candytuft—I mean
Veronica," "Her Mad Month," etc., etc.*

"As the clock strikes, the necklace will be yours or the motor car mine."
"I accept the challenge," said Mary.

THEY were in the midst of their first quarrel, and she, though thoroughly aggrieved, was, after the manner of women, rather enjoying herself; but he wasn't.

Recently "demobbed," and very tired, though he wouldn't have admitted it for a kingdom, his nerves were a bit on edge; and so were hers after a bad attack of influenza. They loved each other devotedly, and yet here they were wrangling about nothing at all—at least nothing of the slightest importance.

"I know it's ridiculous of us," she thought, "but I'm not going to give in," and she whipped herself up to take fresh umbrage at his next word, whatever it might be.

"What a couple of idiots we are!" William Chevening told himself, his nice-looking face quite red with temper, "but

she was distinctly rude to me." He repeated this to himself twice over to make absolutely sure she had been.

She, with an assumed air of nonchalance, waved a big white feather fan in front of her flushed face; he expelled rings of smoke from his lips, and negligently crossed one well-pumped foot and leg over the other. Strains of music were borne to them from the distant ball-room.

"I repeat," said he presently, "my proposition, that there are far more Marys in the world than there are Williams."

"Repetition of a statement does not convert that statement into a fact, and, again, I entirely disagree with you."

"And a repetition of such disagreement leaves me equally unconvinced that you are right and I am wrong," said Captain William Chevening, hitting out somewhat viciously at an innocent palm leaf which,

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through no fault of its own, was tickling the top of his well-brushed head.

She tapped a pretty satin-shod foot on the tessellated floor of the conservatory and suppressed a smile at his boyish anger. . . . She thought he looked quite as nice when he was cross as when he was pleased, the pucker on his forehead was most attractive; but she didn't tell him so.

"Some years back in our fathers' and grandfathers' times there might have been as many Williams as Marys, but not now. William is almost as extinct as the dodo, while Mary has stuck."

"I have known," said she, "and do know twenty Williams. Can you produce the same number of Marys?"

"Certainly I can, and a jolly sight more." He fished out a pencil and an old envelope from his pockets and began to scribble. "I'll write down every d—ahem—blessed Mary I've ever met—"

"But how shall I know you are not inventing them?" she demanded a little aggravatingly.

"Oh, of course if I'm a liar—" He jumped up with such force that his chair toppled back among the palms, and she had much ado to restrain her laughter.

"Don't be stupid, Bill. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that." She laid a soothing hand on his irate arm. "Please forgive me."

For an instant he stood with all his heckles erect, then, gradually they relaxed, and, after a cautious survey of the conservatory, he stooped a little shamefacedly and kissed her.

"Don't you think we are rather asses to quarrel about such a trifle, darling?" He picked up the chair and placed it close to hers.

"I'm sure of it."

"It's all that damned—excuse me, Mary, but it is damned *Daily Mail*. That wretched rag is responsible for more trouble—"

"Not on this occasion," she interrupted.

"For the first time in my life I feel really grateful to it. But for that 'A to Z' article written by, I forget whom, and inserted by the *Daily Mail*, I don't believe I should be alive now to tell the tale. Insomnia was playing havoc with me—reaction, I suppose, after all the hideous welter I had been in over there; a white little bed in a peaceful room was too much for me!"

"Don't, dearest," he whispered, "don't let's think of those unspeakable days. I try only to dwell on my extraordinary

luck to be here at all, with life before me and you. . . ." His big hand closed over hers as though he meant never to let go of it. "And do you mean to tell me," he said presently, "that this name business has really helped you to sleep?"

She nodded. "Never failed. I bless the writer of the 'A to Z' article every night of my life. I feel wide awake when I go to bed, and as though I should be wide awake for the remainder of my life, so I begin on—say—Alfred. As a matter of fact I know very few Alfreds, for which I'm grateful. I dislike the name, so I soon leave him and jump, perhaps, to the letter J—"

"John, I suppose, or Jane?"

"Both, but chiefly John. John has proved almost as fruitful as William. I'm generally sound asleep before I'm half through him. I know heaps of Johns, Johnnies, and Jacks. I go back to my childish days in the country, and old Jack the fisherman jumps to my mind, or Johnnie the swearing blacksmith. Last night a new John joined the old ones—young Lieutenant Judson—I heard his sister, when I was at the Baxters', call him: Jacky dear. I felt quite excited, and before I could stop myself I said aloud: 'That makes nineteen'; and everybody stared at me, and, of course I couldn't explain."

Bill chuckled.

"Then Percy is rather a good name. You wouldn't think it, but I know twelve, and eight Archies, and seven Herberts, and eleven Dorothys, and seventeen Annies; but, of course, no name comes anywhere near William. It's just as common as dirt—oh, I'm sorry, dear, I forgot."

"Don't apologise, I don't mind now. Besides, I still stick to it: it is a unique and aristocratic name compared with yours, and I'll prove it. Now, I'll have a bet with you. If you can prove you know more Williams than I know Marys, I—I'll give you a pearl necklace. What do you think of that?"

"A very pleasing offer."

"And if I can prove I know more Marys than you know Williams, you must give me—let me see, a motor car."

"Why not a yacht while you're about it?"

"No use for one. But if you insisted I'd try and make a handsome profit by selling it to Lipton."

"My balance at the bank is £2 17s. 6d."

"Then it would have to be a second-hand Ford."

Mary smiled.

"I love pearls," she said, "they will look nice with my new black tulle frock."
 "And I rather enjoy tinkering with a Ford."

They laughed like a couple of children.
 "Now to business," he said; "we mustn't waste time, the hour is late. Certain conditions must be laid down and strictly carried out before we concede that the bet has been won by one or the other."
 "And the conditions?"

"We will give ourselves a week slowly, solemnly, and exhaustively to conjure up to our memories every single Mary and William we have ever known; and if during the week we should come across and meet fresh Marys and Williams, so much to the good, but we must solemnly swear to refrain from deliberately asking our friends to introduce us to their Marys and Williams. That would not be fair. This day week at"—he drew out his watch and examined it—"at twelve o'clock the bet will be up. We shall be at my Aunt Jane Willoughby's dance, shan't we?"

Mary nodded.
 "And as the clock strikes, the necklace will be yours or the motor car mine."

"I accept the challenge," said Mary.
 "Right oh." Bill got up. "Shall we have one more dance, darling? It's rather a nice old world, isn't it? And behind her fan he once again kissed her.

II

During the week that followed, many of Mary Oakover's friends were of the definite opinion she had temporarily gone off her head—the result, they feared, of the two long years of strain in France, in conjunction with the joy of having her fiancé Captain Chevening safely home, and the eminence of their marriage.

They shook their heads sadly. They had always predicted this or something equally dreadful. Beneath the calm of Mary's manner, which was only too obviously assumed to those who knew her, but which had cheated the authorities, was a temperament highly excitable, always ready to seethe and simmer and boil over on the slightest provocation. . . . And now she had, so to speak, and to put it mildly, "boiled over." They pitied her, and they pitied her parents, though the said parents had been fools to allow their only child to 'stick it' so long; and above all they pitied Bill Chevening, lovely and sweet and charming though Mary undoubtedly was.

Her old friends the Buckmasters were most affected by what they called her sudden strange and inexplicable behaviour.

Helen, the eldest girl and Mary's special friend, was really distressed. They met at a bridge tournament a few days after the bet had been made, a tournament organised by a Lady Rowther in aid of St. Dunstan's hostel, and run on the lines of the old-fashioned whist drive where a hand is played at each table and the winning couple moves either up or down.

Mary played bridge well. Her father, a fine player himself, had insisted upon her learning young. A girl must be useful besides ornamental, he opined; and when an attack of gout or some other unfortunate contingent prevented him from going to his club for his usual game she would prove useful at home to make up a four. She was a dashing and at the same time a cautious and reliable player, and won a good deal more than she lost. But to-day . . . One choleric old gentleman nearly threw his cards at her on her letting him down five tricks doubled by their opponents, and redoubled by herself.

When she entered the large room and saw the vast array of tables (play was to be for three hours with an extra half-hour for tea) she commented to Helen with delight on the size of the tournament.

"What a splendid lot of tables," she whispered with a suppressed air of excitement, "and what a lovely lot of men! I am glad."

Helen stared at her. Mary, though most attractive to the opposite sex, had never been very keen on men—said they were always too full of themselves; old men were too prosy and held forth, young men appeared to regard themselves as the perpetual hope of the daughters and despair of the mothers, and all of them went bald.

"I hope we shall play very quickly and I shall meet heaps of different ones. I wonder if any of them are called Wil—I mean," she stammered, catching sight of Helen's amazed face, "are—are good players."

"I expect so," said Helen a little coldly, while suddenly feeling sorry for Bill.

"I like men, you know, who play well," said Mary a trifle vacuously.

"Naturally," returned Helen, but Mary did not seem to hear her. With eagerness she was examining all the male competitors in the room, and Helen wished she wouldn't. Several were returning her gaze with interest and unconcealed pleasure, for she was looking unusually lovely with her

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flushed cheeks and eyes dark with excitement.

The two girls started at the same table. Mary's partner was a stoutish elderly man with a weather-beaten look, an Admiral Bently, and Helen's a young artillery officer.

Mary won the cut. She started off with a "two no trumps." Her partner, who had been informed by Lady Rowther he had drawn one of the finest lady players in the room, felt his heart give a little pleasurable thump mingled with admiration for her dash and beauty; but his own hand containing seven diamonds to the queen ten, and the rest rubbish, he took her out into three of his suit. Promptly she took him back into "three no trumps," was doubled on the left, and when he firmly announced "five diamonds," he nearly had a stroke when she proclaimed calmly: "four no trumps" and was again doubled. Had he been on his late ship the paint around would undoubtedly have blistered when she went down four tricks and he discovered she'd had but one diamond in her own hand, and the ace at that; but he controlled his temper, and on her repeating absent-mindedly—she seemed wholly engaged in watching the initialing of her score by the young captain—that she'd held four aces, he merely called her attention to the fact that four aces could by no possible means or chicanery yield more than four tricks, and she must agree with him, which she promptly did whilst leaning across the table and entreating the young captain to tell her for what his initials F. W. stood as she was intensely interested in names. And when he replied: "Frank Wilmot," she merely sighed with a little air of disappointment whilst utterly ignoring the amazed looks of Helen.

"Indeed," as Helen said afterwards when relating the story to her sisters Stella and Elizabeth, "she entirely ignored me for the rest of the afternoon. I never met her again, but was often near enough to see her extraordinary play, which was so rapid you could scarcely follow the cards, and hear what she said to both her partners and opponents. Always was she on the same tack, her interest in Christian names, and always with the same charming and disarming smile. No one could resist her. She looked so lovely too, I'm sure half the men in the room—her opponents—were in love with her, especially as she presented, through her careless and rapid play, two out of every three of them with hundreds above the line, while the other

half, her partners, regarded her as simply crazy.

"Once her voice came ringing across the room to me: 'Your name is William, really? How interesting! I always think it one of the finest and manliest of names since—since William the Conqueror landed and took possession of our dear island—don't you?' And the man who owned the name of William seemed simply too astonished to speak."

"I don't wonder. She must be mad." Stella, who spoke, was the most practical of the Buckmaster sisters, a nice plain girl who always aired her clothes separately on different chairs when she went to bed.

"Go on," said Elizabeth. "Tell us some more."

"At tea I heard her say to a young man who was sitting by her and drinking in her every word with his own innocuous lukewarm beverage: 'so you are really called Bill? I—I know a man named Bill.' Could you imagine anything more banal and from our clever Mary? She might have been announcing the extraordinary coincidence of their nomenclature being Caesar!"

"And what did he say?"

"Oh, he just giggled and went pink. He was very young, newly demobilised, and you could see regarded every pretty girl as an angel straight from heaven."

"Of course it stands for William?" she inquired next, and when he replied no, it was but a nickname, and his real name was Harold, she suddenly quite changed, went sort of cold and indifferent, edged away from him, and I actually heard her say with a queer far away look in her eyes—I don't believe she knew she was speaking aloud—she'd no use for Harolds, and she got up and left him."

Stella and Elizabeth gasped. "What can it mean?"

"Of course, an aunt of hers went off her head," ruminated Helen. "I always think General Oakover rather eccentric. Look at the tempers he flies into. The other day he flung a toast rack on to the floor because there was no honey on the table. I often think violent temper is another name for a form of madness."

"But poor dear Mary has been so almost brilliant," observed Elizabeth.

"I know," agreed Helen, "but she's certainly not brilliant now. She's simply queer, absent-minded and restless. She never sits still, always wears the air of being in search of something or some-
body—"

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ing higher up found him prepared to fill ably.

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But remember this: Mr. X was not an exceptional man by any means. He was just *average* to begin with. When I first knew him he was making £3 a week. To-day he is probably without a rival in his chosen field—and his name is known throughout the business world. You can do the same or better.

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Mabel Barnes-Grundy

"I've noticed that," said Stella—"a sort of expectant eager look in her eyes when she meets people, especially men."

"And she goes rushing about from place to place, house to house, to luncheons, teas, dinners, balls, suppers. She makes me think of a midge spinning in the evening air, or a waltzing mouse with its cage on fire—" Helen broke off abruptly as Mary herself suddenly opened the door.

"You have been talking about me." She stood at the threshold of the room whilst she scanned each guilty face.

They said nothing.

"And—if I did not know you loved me I should surmise you were saying nasty things about me."

"Never!" they cried together.

Mary sat down in a big chair and surveyed them with quizzical eyes; a bright spot of colour burnt on each cheek and she looked wonderfully pretty in spite of traces of fatigue beneath her eyes.

"What was it? You've known me all my life. I love you, Helen—you're one of the dearest things I know, and I'm quite fond of you, Stella and Elizabeth," laughingly she blew them all a kiss—"so out with it, I can bear it."

"We've been talking about your—your restlessness of the last few days," said Helen, taking the bull by the horns. "You never sit still."

"Time is short," said Mary.

"You mean before your wedding?"

"No, time generally."

"And you've been so excitable, almost hectic," said Stella.

"Really?" said Mary.

"And we've been feeling rather sorry for Bill," stammered Elizabeth.

"Oh," said Mary, "why?"

"Your sudden extraordinary interest in other men," blurted out Helen. "You positively rush at them, Mary."

"I rush at men?"

"Yes," said Helen, with some heat.

"The other day at the bridge tournament—"

"But I was only trying to meet Wil—I mean, I mean—oh, I can't explain. . . ."

Then suddenly she fell into laughter at the expressions on their faces, and she laughed so much that not only did she weep, but she complained of severe internal pain and implored them to help her. And the more she laughed, the more convinced were they of her serious derangement. It was sad, pitifully sad, with her wedding day so close at hand, but it had to be faced, and they must help her all they could. Of

course it was the result of the last two years' terrible experience . . . but there were good doctors, fine brain specialists, hypnotists whose aid . . .

Mary with a tremendous effort pulled herself together and sat up straight whilst she wiped her eyes.

"You must trust me, girls," she said. "I'm quite sane, though I may not appear to be. I believe you are going to the Willoughbys' dance to-morrow night?"

They nodded.

"Well, at twelve o'clock, just as Cinderella reverted to her drab little life and her place by the fire, I shall revert to my usual well-behaved manner, and no longer be—what was it?—restless, excitable, hectic, and keen upon any man but Bill. Meanwhile, I want your help. That's what I came for. I'm at a loose end. I've no engagement for to-day, and I want one. Can any of you help me, take me anywhere with you?"

Stella and Elizabeth shook their heads.

"I'm going to a bazaar, of all ante-diluvian, God-forsaken entertainments," said Helen.

"The one at the Empress rooms in which your aunt is interested?"

"Right, and it is to be enlivened with all sorts of up-to-date side shows: Jazz teas, a concert by Ruhleben prisoners, and the usual old-fashioned fortune telling, raffles—"

"The very thing!" Ecstatically Mary leapt to her feet and clapped her hands.

"It's absolutely providential—raffling. I'll raffle. What shall I wear? I know your aunt will let me raffle all her best sofa cushions and *objets d'art*. I must fly home to luncheon and to dress. Thank you so much for letting me go with you, Helen darling. I'll be there on the stroke of three. Ta-ta, dears!" and she was gone like a lightning whirlwind before the sisters could draw breath.

III

If Helen had been amazed and somewhat distressed at Mary's behaviour at the bridge tournament, it caused her real anguish at the bazaar; and a thousand times she wished she had never brought her.

For hours she watched her sitting about the rooms, a radiant figure in daffodil yellow, her eyes sparkling, her whole face alight with excitement as she raked in innumerable half-crowns, ten-shilling and one-pound notes for her raffles; and she

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was filled with shame when she noted that it was always the men who were her quarry.

That Mary, the well-bred, refined, and almost puritan Mary, should so behave! She was not common, Helen told herself, when once again, unknown to Mary, who was too absorbed in her task to observe her, Helen remained close at hand to listen to her remarks to a fresh victim. She was not vulgar, not cheap. She was not even coquettish. But in her bearing towards the men there was an eagerness, a delight at securing their patronage so noticeable that the least vain among them must have been secretly flattered.

"Two tickets? Thank you so much. It is a lovely cushion, isn't it?" (As a matter of fact it was a Cubist monstrosity.) "And your name and address, please, in case you should be gone when the raffle takes place. No, not your initials, your full name, please, so that there shall be no mistake. Aubrey——". Disappointment clearly discernible in the pretty voice. Or, occasionally, a sudden note of delight, of triumph, a look of gratitude flashed up into the fishy eyes of some podgy elderly man who was obviously much more interested in the attractive creature confronting him than in the cushion she carried. . . .

"Why this occasional pleasure and excitement?" Helen asked herself repeatedly. "What did it mean?" Then, in a flash, illumination came. It was the name of William. The joyousness and triumph appeared when some male creature answered to the name of William. Helen gasped at the realisation of this. Could it be possible? Mary was so much in love that, like a small child who adores the repetition of a story that pleases it, she was made happy by merely meeting a man of the same name as her fiancé.

"It's mania," said Helen to herself. "A bad form of mania. I must get her home. Poor, poor Mary."

She advanced with rapid steps to the girl, who was now smiling into the eyes of a bemused, bewitched young naval lieutenant as though he were the loveliest thing on earth; and taking her gently but firmly by the arm whispered that she must come home.

"Come home?"

"Yes, at once."

"But why?"

"Because I say it." Helen might have been addressing a naughty child.

"I shan't," said Mary.

"You won't?"

"No. I'm having a lovely time and I

shall remain till the bazaar closes. Your aunt says I'm the best raffler here. And, isn't it jolly, Helen?" she lowered her voice, "this young lieutenant is called William——"

Helen fled.

IV

The hands of the Willoughbys' fine Sèvres clock on the mantelshelf of the drawing-room which had been cleared for dancing pointed to 11.30.

The dance was in full swing. Dozens of couples performed queer antics with their legs and arms, sometimes together, sometimes opposite, sometimes at each other's side, or round the corner, or at opposite ends of the room, or back to back, which they called dancing.

Bill was performing with Helen, Stella with Bill's cousin Harry, the only son of the house. Mary was nowhere to be seen, and just because she was not there the room to Bill seemed a dull and lonely place.

"How topping Mary looks to-night! Never saw her look better." He voiced his conviction aloud.

"Yes," agreed Helen.

"She reminds me of Spring incarnate." Then, after the manner of the phlegmatic Briton, he blushed at his own enthusiasm.

"Mary has not seemed herself the last few days, though she appears better to-night," said Helen a little nervously.

"Oh!" Bill's voice contained surprise. "In what way?"

"Haven't you noticed it?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, I haven't seen much of her. I—I've been busy." He changed the subject, and Helen did not pursue it; but she wondered . . . and scented a mystery. . . .

Mary, as a matter of fact, had cut this dance with a very boring and pompous man with a monocle who remarked "Rear—ly!" in a tired voice to the most ordinary observation, and she was hidden away in a recess in the library with the small daughter of the house, aged ten, who graciously accepted her as a relation-to-be for the sake of her "dear, darling cousin Bill" who never treated her as a little girl or "talked down to her."

"You don't mind sitting out with me?" inquired the child. "You see, Mummy will never think of looking for me here to make me go to bed, and she'll forget me after a bit. She's a bad memory."

Mary smiled and assured her she was enjoying herself immensely. She was feeling a little tired, but very triumphant. She was

morally certain she had won the bet. Forty-two Williams stood to her credit. It was a wonderful record, she felt, and meticulously she had observed the conditions of the bet. Not once had she *ashed* to be introduced to a William. All her twenty-two new Williams she had achieved by fair and honest means. She glowed with quiet pride, and fell to picturing Bill's face when she handed to him her neatly tabulated list of the forty-two. . . .

She was aroused from her reverie by the child slipping a paper into her hand with the request she should read it out aloud. "I found it in the gentlemen's cloak-room on the floor, I was hiding from Mummy. It's so funny—all about Marys, and in Cousin Bill's writing. I can mostly read writing now, but his is so bad, far worse than mine. Do read it, Cousin Mary."

"Cousin Bill's writing!" Mary's eyes devoured the paper closely covered with Bill's almost illegible scrawl:

"24. Mary Jones—greengrocer in Covent Garden. Bought some topping apples.

"25. Mary Twigg—old newspaper woman with *Evening Stars* and whiskers.

"26. Mary Philby—little girl with nose requiring attention, who fell down in Fulham Road and howled. Picked her up and gave her a bob when I discovered she was a Mary.

"27. Mater's new maid, Mary Brett. Pretty girl. Had five minutes pow-wow with her. Mater jumped on me. Rointed out democratic age, and all of us equal. Mater said 'fiddlesticks!' Rude of Mater and no argument."

Every now and again a ripple of laughter broke from Mary as she read.

"36.—Saw the Queen going to open something or other, or to slum. Looked quite nice in a new-shaped hat and without her umbrella. On an impulse I yelled: 'Good old Queen Mary,' and she actually bowed and called out: 'Thank you.' Awfully decent of her. Wonder if my Mary is on speaking terms with George!"

Mary stopped. Suddenly it came to her it was not honest to be reading another person's private document. A wave of shame swept her from head to foot.

"Megan," she said, "you must take this back at once to where you found it. It is deceitful to read another person's private papers—"

"Oh, but not this. Cousin Bill wouldn't mind, and it's so funny, and—let me see," the child counted with her finger "37, 38,

39, 40, 41, 42—there are only six more. Cousin Mary—"

"Forty-two!" With a shout Mary was on her feet, examined the watch bracelet at her wrist and rushed to the ball-room as fast as her legs would carry her, leaving a most astonished little girl behind her.

"Forty-two! Forty-two! How extraordinary! All my work in vain and only ten minutes left," she said to herself over and over again. "It's too, too bad. Oh, where *are* the men? Are they *all* dancing? Is there not a William *anywhere* at large?" In her anguish she almost wrung her hands as she leant with her back to the wall, her eyes now searching the kaleidoscopic scene before her, and then the clock on the mantelshelf, while her cheeks flushed and paled as the minutes passed and the blood drummed in her ears. A charming figure she presented in her gown of exquisite jade green, her golden head pushed a little forward in her tense excitement, her hands clasped before her; and Bill, who was now performing a duty dance with a friend of the Buckmasters, and who, unknown to Mary, was devouring her with eyes of love and admiration, had much ado to restrain himself from abandoning his partner and finishing the dance with Mary.

Then—and in the maze of whirling, moving figures Bill had been swallowed up—a miracle occurred, as miracles *do* occur in spite of what all the practical, level-headed, stodgy people may say to the contrary, and a little shiver of exultation and delight ran up and down Mary's spine, for across the room a man's voice proclaimed in accents of pleasure: "Why, there's Willie! He's come after all!"

And so he had. He had arrived in time to save her. She knew it. She knew it as surely as she knew the sun would rise to-morrow.

He stood in the doorway, a fine, handsome, upstanding figure of a man, and as Mary looked at him he looked at her. She always emphatically denies that she gave him what Bill coarsely describes as "the glad eye," and we believe her; but the fact remains the stranger immediately crossed the room to where she stood, bowed low before her, and craved the honour of a dance.

"With pleasure," said she with a dazzling smile, "but first will you write your name on my programme. Will you be so kind? I like to know the name of the person with whom I am dancing." She spoke rapidly with her eyes on the clock. "Mine is Mary Oakover. . . . Not your initials, please, your full Christian name—and, oh,

be quick—we've only half a minute. Hurry, hurry! I—I'll explain afterwards. . . . She laughed a little hysterically. She was leaning over him watching his slowly moving pencil. "Ah! It is William. Thank heavens! And just in time! The clock is

striking. . . . Thank you so much for being—what you are. I am more than grateful to you. And here's Bill! Bill," with her hand on the astonished stranger's arm, "allow me to introduce to you my forty-third—William."

H. Barnes Grundy

A Partnership Memory

By ALICE HEGAN RICE

Author of "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch"

THERE was but one bond of sympathy that could exist between the two men, yet neither seemed willing to be the first to allude to the subject uppermost in the mind of each. They had been playing chess in the Captain's state-room the better part of a long, dull afternoon. Through the open door the sea stretched, grey and passive, and the decks were wet with an intermittent drizzle of rain.

It was Richards who first opened the way to mutual confidences:

"Do you remember the last time we played chess in this room, Captain?" he asked, replacing the pawns in the box with fastidious precision.

"On your last crossing I suppose," said the Captain casually, "ten, or was it eleven, years ago?"

"Eleven years in June. 'A white night full of stars' and the coast lights of China just glimmering on the horizon. A certain fair lady's last night on board and you and I playing for the privilege of sharing it with her."

"Oh! You mean Nina Starling?" The Captain looked up quizzically. "I ought to remember; I won."

"Yes, you won," admitted Richards.

"That sounds very much like a sigh of



regret. In the light of recent lurid events it ought to be a sigh of exultation."

"Recent events might not have occurred had I had that last inning."

The Captain laid a heavy, bronzed hand on his shoulder. "My dear fellow, if ever the Fates were kind to a man, they were to you that night. You and Nina Starling had met for your mutual destruction. I was shoved in for a buffer. I don't deny that I was as hard hit as you were, only I was used to it. I'd been hit before."

"Not by Mrs. Starling!"

"No, not by Nina Starling."

For some moments the two sat silent, smoking, the Captain a bluff, handsome man of forty-five, his companion a few years his junior, slender, austere, wearing the uniform of a Major in the United States Army. The ashes of an old romance, thus stirred, evidently revealed

some live embers, by the light of which each was travelling back through the years.

The Captain was the first to recover himself: "The difference between us was that you went into it blindfolded, and I went in with my eyes open. I'd known Nina ever since she was a youngster. They lived in Honolulu, you know, and I took her mother over the first trip I was in command. An awful fool she was too; neglected the girl shamefully until she discovered that she was a winning card, then she played her up for all she was worth."

"Did you know Starling?"

"Never saw him. He only lived a couple of years after they were married. In fact I never saw Nina again until she was on her way back to Honolulu with her small boy, on the very trip of which you speak."

"Poor little Bobby! You know his tragic end?"

"Oh, yes, the papers were full of it. Nina had about as much business with a son as Cleopatra."

"And yet she adored the boy."

"Oh, yes. He was her one permanent affair. The rest of us were transients. She entertained us royally when we came, and promptly forgot us when we departed. It was pretty rum that in the end she should have been Bob's undoing. But then she was everybody's undoing that she came in contact with."

"On the contrary," Richards said, "we were her undoing. We asked too much of her. We demanded the impossible, and she tried to give it!"

The Captain shook his head. "She is the female of the species," he contended. "She goes after what she wants, and if she cannot reach it by a straight course, she takes a crooked one. You would probably call it finesse."

Richards considered his slender, well-shaped hands gravely. "I think I should call it the instinct of acquiescence. She is a creature of sudden fire, with a passionate desire to do the thing required of her for the person she loves, regardless of circumstances. Life confuses and baffles her. I admit she is politic, and perhaps not always straightforward, but her motive is never self-interest; she is always trying to get something for somebody else. You must admit that she is the most exquisitely generous person you ever knew."

"Oh, I'll admit anything good you want to say about her! The Lord knows she was kind to me. When she came back to Honolulu to live after her second marriage,

she used to slip down to the dock whenever I made the port. I can see her now, as smart as a little white yacht under full sail, pretending to be interested in the arriving passengers, when all the time she was wirelessing me on the bridge to hurry up, that her motor was waiting, and that I was to take lunch with her. By George! that girl could say more with her eyes and one finger than most women can say with their tongues."

"Were you ever in her home?"

"Many a time. They had a wonderful place down below Waikiki—white beach, blue sea, and palms—you know, the kind of thing Honolulu specialises in. Well, she would treat me like a Grand Mogul. Nothing too good for me. She remembered the things I liked to eat, and the kind of cigars I liked to smoke. She gave me a taste of what a real home can be, and when my time was up, she'd run me down to the dock herself and give me a God-speed that would keep me warmed up for days to come. I tell you, a man has to live at sea half his life to know what a thing like that means."

"But the Baron?" asked Richards. "From what I have heard of the gentleman, he was not one to give his wife free rein."

"Oh, von Sternman liked men to admire Nina. It gave him the satisfaction of knowing that he possessed what others wanted. And Nina never teased him. She'd lie to him, to be sure, and get him out of the way at times, but that was only to bring about more comfortable results. She wanted him to be happy too. That was her religion; she wanted everybody to be happy."

"I suppose I was the exception that proved the rule," said Richards grimly. "The only cruel thing I ever knew her to do was to keep me dangling between heaven and hell from San Francisco to Hong-Kong, and then to marry the Baron as soon as she got to Germany."

"Well, von Sternman happened to be on the spot when she landed. You see, you and I had made it rather an exciting voyage for her ladyship. When we dropped out life became too dull. She could not bear to be out of a job."

"I did not drop out," Richards protested. "If I hadn't been under orders to report in the Philippines, the devil himself couldn't have stopped me. That was what I wanted to tell her that last night on board; as it was, I lost my chance. I had to catch a steamer early the next

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morning for Manila, our letters miscarried, and she married the Baron."

There was a long pause, while Richards lit a fresh cigarette and the Captain idly fingered the chessmen. It was not a pause of finality, however; it was but a halt on the brink of the subject during which each looked back on the past through his own particular vista.

"Did she seem to care about von Sternman?" Richards brought out at last.

"Well, it's hard to say. She made up to him, flattered him, spoiled him, and fooled him whenever it pleased her to. Of course she was inordinately proud of his position and his brains. He was a brilliant man, but hard as tacks. She spent a good part of her time explaining away his rudenesses."

"Yes," said Richards, with the absent eyes and slightly pursed lips, "I can see her in the rôle. She had a gift for interpreting her friends to the world. She accorded herself the privilege of making the translation not too literal, and the result was always more charming than the original."

"In this case it couldn't have been worse. The Baron, with all his good looks and grand air, was a boor. I think Nina secretly feared him."

"Feared him?" Richards looked up sharply.

"Yes, at heart I think she always feared him. He had all a German's ideas about women, and if he had ever caught her in one of her escapades it would have gone hard with her. In fact I think that was just what did happen in the end."

"What happened," said Richards bitterly, "was that he made her the tool for his dirty work. What the poor girl has suffered during these past few years is something I don't like to think of."

"Nor I," agreed the Captain. "I did all I could for her. When war was declared in 1914 she was all in a flutter to get back to the States. She offered a dozen excuses; von Sternman was ill with malaria and had to get away from the Islands; she wanted to see her people. Bob wanted to enter a military school, etc. There wasn't an extra stateroom on board, but I turned out of my cabin for them. I let that big scoundrel of a German have my bed, all because Nina asked me to. And ten days after he landed in San Francisco, he forged a passport and got away to Europe."

"Yes," said Richards, "it was not long after that that I saw Mrs. Starling—she

will always be 'Mrs. Starling' to me. We met in a New York hotel, in an elevator. It was the first time I'd seen her since we left this steamer seven years before, yet you would have thought we had not been parted twenty-four hours. She took me right into her confidence and poured out all her troubles."

"About the Baron?"

"No, about Bob. It seems he had set his heart on going to West Point. He had worked for years toward that end. His appointment was all but secured when the Baron's departure became known, and the whole affair was trembling in the balance. Bob was beside himself with rage and disappointment, and Mrs. Starling had been moving heaven and earth to get him his heart's desire. I went up to their apartment and thrashed out the whole matter with them. Bob was a stunning chap, built for the army, every inch of him. He was too loyal to his mother to express himself openly concerning the Baron, but I never saw more concentrated hatred than he showed in his face every time his name was mentioned. I remember how he paced the floor, declaring that it wasn't fair for his life to be smashed like that, that if he failed to get the appointment it would be a blot on his character he could never live down. And Mrs. Starling, white as a sheet, kept saying, 'You are going to get it, Bob. I got you into this and I am going to get you out of it. The Major and I will arrange some way.'"

"And Major did?" the Captain threw in sarcastically.

"No, she did it herself, though of course I pulled a few wires in the War Department, and introduced her to Senator Gray, upon whose decision the whole matter hinged. It was a difficult thing to arrange, for he refused point-blank to give a personal interview, as he was leaving town in a couple of hours."

"I'll wager Nina got the interview."

"Well, as a matter of fact, she did. He talked with her for an hour, then asked her to lunch with him. When I called at the apartment in the afternoon, Bob told me Senator Gray had thought it best for her to go down to Washington with him to clinch the matter."

"So that was how Bob got his commission!" The Captain leaned back in his chair and smiled. "There is nobody like her. She's so frail and yielding and yet so irresistible. It isn't merely her beauty. I've seen a dozen women I thought were prettier. It's something more, something

a blind man would feel. You say she has not changed much?"

"Well, I suppose she has," Richards admitted; "her figure perhaps more than her colouring."

"Naturally. A clever woman finds it easier to camouflage her complexion than to camouflage her figure."

"She can't change the colour of her eyes," said Richards coolly.

"Those ridiculously blue eyes!" The Captain laughed. "I used to get an electric shock every time I looked into them. After all, I think that is Nina's chief charm, she is so terrifically aware of you—that is, when she isn't aware of some one else."

"It is we who are aware," urged Richards.

"You know those lines, 'The innocent moon that nothing does but shine, moves all the slumbering surges of the world.' Mrs. Starling is like a radiant lighthouse against which poor befuddled gulls beat out their brains."

"Here's one wise old eagle that didn't!"

The Captain chuckled. "A lighthouse means keep off the rocks to me, and you bet I have. She is the only woman I was ever afraid of in my life. But you were telling me of her mission to Washington. Did you see her again?"

"No. I was down on the border that winter, but I heard of her. She took a house at West Point, to be near Bob, and I hear she had the whole Post crazy about her."

"Yes, I shouldn't wonder if that was the reason Bob got first honour; all the other cadets were probably wasting their time flirting with his mother."

"His mother was doing everything in her power for him," said Richards stiffly; "her ambition was as great as his."

"Oh, I wouldn't call it ambition on her part. She just wanted Bob to have what he wanted. If he had set his heart on being a burglar, she would have helped him to it just the same. What did the officers seem to think of Bob?"

"There was but one thing to think. I tell you, Bob Starling was everything a soldier ought to be. One of the instructors told me he was considered the most promising man that had passed through the Academy in years. That was the tragedy of it."

"And when did the complication with the Baron begin? He evidently lost no time in putting Nina to work as soon as he reached Berlin."

"I imagine the scoundrel was using her

from the first. The letters dated from 1915, but it was not until after we went into the war that things began to leak out. You see, the letters were not in code or anything of that kind; they would have passed without suspicion anywhere. All Mrs. Starling did was to forward them to the German Ambassador, who was an old friend of von Sternman's. How could she know that they contained secret information?"

"She probably didn't," agreed the Captain, "but it must have struck her as strange that her husband should ask her to send his private letters to her, containing nothing whatever of an official nature, to the German Embassy at Washington."

Richards' face flushed: "I did not realise that I was discussing Mrs. Starling with one of her enemies. I took it for granted that you shared my belief in her innocence."

"Nina innocent! Why, I can as soon think of Methuseiah being young!—My dear man, you do her an injustice."

"The Court evidently shared my opinion," said Richards. "No stones were left unturned by the Prosecuting Attorney to convict her of conspiracy. Everything was against her—the fact that we had just gone into the war; that public opinion was flaming against any evidence of pro-Germanism; that she did not deny having forwarded the letters. Yet she was completely exonerated."

"Do you wonder?" asked Captain Sherry. "I knew it was all up with the jury when I saw she was going to conduct her own case. 'The beautiful Baroness von Sternman, a loyal American citizen, made the tool of her unscrupulous German husband!' I can see the headlines now. I've got a copy of one of the papers around here somewhere. It had a picture of Nina pleading her cause, and the judge and jury in tears. I kept it because it was a rather good likeness of her. Perhaps I can find it."

He opened a desk drawer and, after some fumbling, took out a newspaper clipping carefully protected between cardboards.

The two men looked at the picture for some moments in silence, and one of them smiled with his eyes, and one of them smiled with his lips. The Captain was the first to speak:

"Perfect stage setting," he said. "Belasco could not have done better. And a situation worthy of Nina's genius. Can't you see her now, taking in the whole bunch right down to the case-hardened reporters?"

"And you alone refuse her even the

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benefit of a doubt!" exclaimed Richards hotly. "I should think the fact that she brought divorce proceedings against von Sternman the moment she discovered the truth would be sufficient guarantee of her innocence."

Captain Sherry's eyes twinkled: "A superb *coup de grâce*! Nothing could have climaxed the situation so dramatically and so convincingly. It satisfied everybody, apparently, but Uncle Sam. Unfortunately he is less susceptible to feminine charms than other men. Even though he let her off, he decided that he did not want an officer in his army whose step-father was on the Kaiser's staff, and whose mother had been tried for a German spy. I understand that everything possible was done at West Point to let Bob down easy, but you can't pitch a man out of a window without breaking something."

"In this case it was the boy's heart," said Richards. "It happened in May, you see, and he was to have been graduated in June. You would have needed to know him in recent years to understand just what it meant to him. An honour man for three consecutive years, and patriotic to his finger tips. I don't blame him for doing what he did. I'd have done it in his place."

"A rotten business," sighed the Captain. "I have forgotten the details. It was Nina who found him, wasn't it?"

"Yes. She got back to West Point the night it happened, went to his room and found him still in his uniform with a bullet through his heart, and beside him a small American flag on which was written 'For my country.'"

They sat silent, each closeted in his own reflections. Then Richards said:

"Such a tragedy would have crushed a woman of coarser fibre, but Mrs. Starling bent to it like a flower in a hurricane. She felt the beauty of his death, and the perfection of his sacrifice, just as she felt von Sternman's position and what he did for his country. Her letter to me at the time was one of the noblest things I ever read. She did not blame anybody. There was no bitterness nor rebellion nor re-primination, only the most exquisite understanding and acquiescence. She has a wonderful soul, a——"

Then realising how warmly he was speaking, he rose abruptly and pushed back his chair:

"After all, it's a subject upon which you and I could never agree. We have been foolish to discuss it."

"Not at all," said the Captain; "we have passed a very pleasant afternoon. By the way, I suppose of course you know that she has married again."

Richards stopped abruptly in the doorway. "Mrs. Starling, married?" he repeated dully.

"Yes, I saw it in a German paper in Hong-Kong last month. She managed to get over to Berlin by way of South America, shipped as a stewardess on a German boat, and re-entered the ranks of the German nobility."

"You don't mean that she has married another baron?" asked Richards, aghast. Captain Sherry's bluff laugh rang out heartily. "Oh, Lord, no!" he said, "it's the same one!"

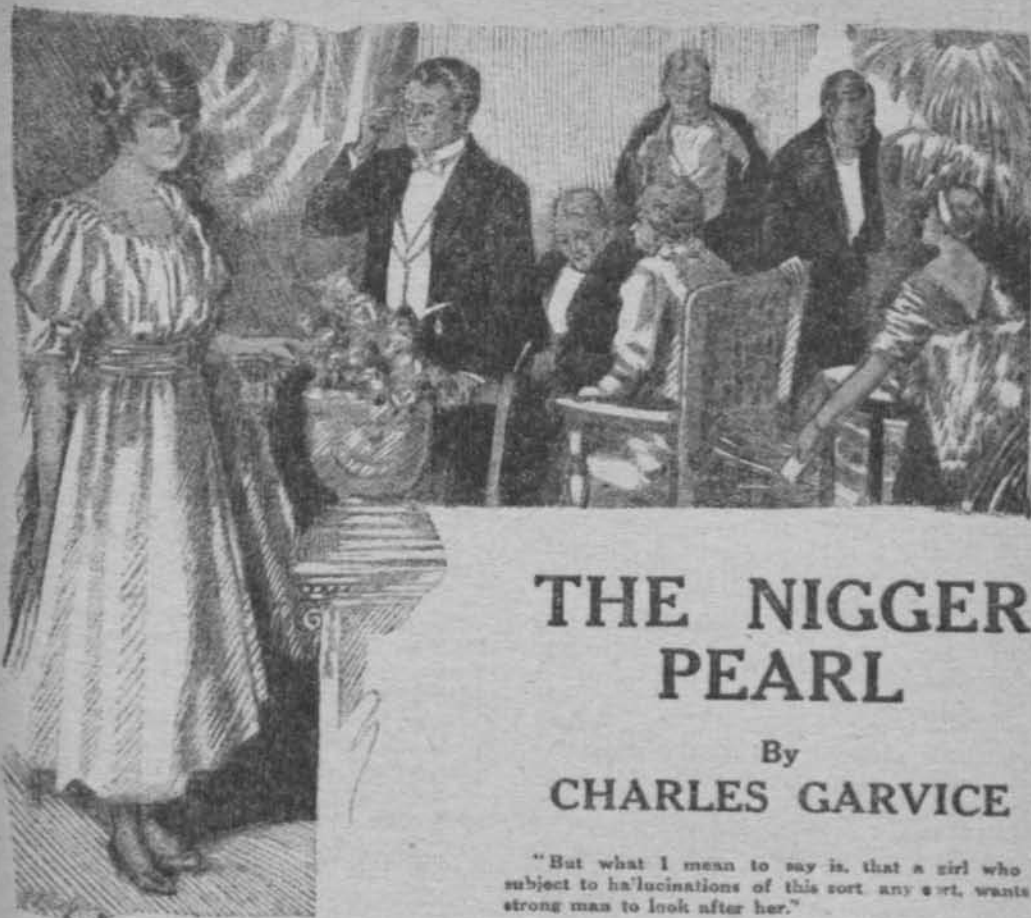
Oliver Morgan Rice

A great exclusive feature

in the August number of

HUTCHINSON'S STORY MAGAZINE

Every one knows of Mr. Herbert Jenkins' great creation in fiction, "Bindle." This popular Author is now engaged in writing a series of merry "Bindle" stories for "Hutchinson's Story Magazine." It is hoped that the first story may be finished in time for it to appear in next month's number.



THE NIGGER PEARL

By
CHARLES GARVICE

"But what I mean to say is, that a girl who is subject to hallucinations of this sort, any sort, wants a strong man to look after her."

MRS. ARMYTAGE was famous for three things—her late husband's immense wealth (he was the inventor of the wondrous "step-ladder, ironing-table, bedstead combination"), her jewels, and her hospitality: the plump, good-natured soul was never happier than when her house in Loamshire was crammed with contented guests. The huge place, which had been the late inventor's pride, was called The Grange, but, I regret to say, was better known amongst her friends as The Menagerie, by reason of the curious specimens of humanity to be met there. Mrs. Armytage said that she liked to have "interesting" people about her; and she got them, because there is quite a large number of people in the world nowadays who may be called interesting. There are persons who do all sorts of marvellous things, propound startling theories, wear strange clothes, start quaint religions, discover a new country, and in many other ways become notorious. Some call them freaks. Mrs. Armytage, whose brain was not as clear as her heart was warm, would

have been considerably intrigued in her management of The Menagerie and her guests, had it not been for a certain discovery of her own—that is, of her secretary, Miriam Grey.

She had found Miss Grey in a hotel in one of the foreign watering-places which Mrs. Armytage frequented; the girl had become suddenly an orphan, and, like many another orphan, had been left penniless by her father, one of those charming parents who demonstrate their complete confidence in Providence by leaving their children entirely to its care. It was the sort of case to appeal to Mrs. Armytage, who, when Miriam Grey declined to accept charity, promptly suggested that the girl should come to her as her secretary. The arrangement proved eminently satisfactory; and Miss Grey soon got The Menagerie in hand and ran it with a tact and skill which astonished her employer—and herself.

Miss Grey managed the vast household as if by magic; the servants—that superior class which, for mysterious reasons best known to itself, regards secretaries and

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governesses with ill-veiled contempt—not only liked, but actually obeyed, her. Moreover, the guests "took to" and confided in her; for she was well posted up in their respective claims to fame. She could talk to the poet about his little book of verse which was a matter of confidence between him and his publishers; the inventor of a wonderful gun which an incredulous War Office refused to believe was capable of destroying an immense army by one shot, found in her a sympathetic though momentarily horrified listener; while to the soul-stirring revelations of the explorer she lent an ever-ready and pretty ear. Children and dogs adored her; so did the young men guests, who displayed great ingenuity in contriving excuses for approaching her; she was a very pretty girl, with dark hair, beautiful grey eyes, and a smile which had won more hearts than Mrs. Armytage's.

Notwithstanding her popularity, Miss Grey "kept her place," as the butler said approvingly; although she was always on hand when she was wanted, at other times she sought the seclusion of the pretty, indeed, luxurious, bedroom and sitting-room which Mrs. Armytage had insisted upon allotting to her; they were two of the best rooms in the house, and the sitting-room opened on the south end of the terrace.

On a certain morning in June, Mrs. Armytage, having knocked first—it was noteworthy that something about Miss Grey induced almost a punctilious courtesy in everybody's treatment of her; though neither by word, look, nor manner did the girl make any claim to such regard—Mrs. Armytage, having knocked, bustled into the room with a sheaf of letters in her hand.

"Oh, good morning, my dear," she said, kissing Miriam affectionately. "How well you're looking this morning! And as cool as a—a—"

"Cucumber is the usual word," said Miriam, with a smile, the little smile which transformed the usual gravity of her face bewitchingly.

"Nothing of the sort, my dear. You look like a beautiful lily in that pretty white dress of yours." Miriam laughed and held out her hands for the letters. "Nothing particular this morning, my dear; most of 'em begging letters as usual. Oh, yes; I am forgetting; there is one. It's from Reggie Davenant." Miriam had been glancing at the letters, and she looked up quickly and as quickly down again, a faint colour rising to her face

which was of that complexion we liken to old ivory, for lack of a better comparison. "He writes and asks if he may come down. The letter is dated four days ago; I suppose he had forgotten to post it, which would be just like Reggie. He's the wildest harum-scarum, careless young man I know; but he's a dear boy and I'm awfully fond of him. Perhaps it's because he's so good-looking; no, it's his taking ways. He'd wheedle a bird off a tree. He's Lord Davenant's second son; but quite unlike his father, who, you know, got his peerage by— There now! I've forgotten what it was; but it was something extraordinarily clever. I'm afraid Reggie doesn't get on very well with his father and his brother—you see, he's so wild, and has given them such a lot of trouble."

"I understand," murmured Miss Grey, her eyes still fixed on the letter.

"You always do, my dear," said Mrs. Armytage, giving the girl's arm a loving little pat. "He's a naughty boy; but, as I say, I am very fond of him; everybody is, and I should like him to come down; but we are quite full up, aren't we? That man who killed four lions with a walking-stick ought to have gone; but he hasn't."

"There is the little room next to mine," said Miss Grey reluctantly.

"Oh, but my dear, I couldn't think of letting him have that! He'd be an awful nuisance to you, sitting up half the night smoking; and he's always singing or whistling. No; I won't have you disturbed, not even for Reggie."

"I don't think Mr. Davenant will disturb me," said Miriam. "Besides," with a tiny flush, "it's too late for consideration; he is on his way down now. He says that he will come if you don't say he must not."

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Armytage. "How like him! What is it to be done?"

"Get his room ready," said Miss Grey. "I will see Mrs. Hudson, the housekeeper, at once."

"I really think you are the sweetest, most unselfish—! Oh, there's Mr. Toombly in the garden. I promised to hear his last poem; and I had forgotten all about it!"

When she had bustled out, Miriam Grey sank into her chair, her hands clasped before her, her shapely head bent. She sat thus for a minute or two, then, with a gesture of resignation, she went in search of the housekeeper. Just before lunch she heard voices outside her open window, Mrs. Armytage's and the new visitor's, and presently those two persons entered the room.

"Here's Reggie—Mr. Davenant—my dear. I've just been warning him that he's to keep as quiet as a mouse and not be a nuisance to you." She turned as she spoke to set the curtain straight, and therefore did not see the expression of stupefied amazement and fleeting joy which sat upon the good-looking countenance of the gentleman, who opened his mouth to exclaim, but shut it again in obedience to a slight movement of the hand made by Miss Grey.

"How—how do you do, Miss Grey?" he got out with difficulty. "I have promised Mrs. Armytage that the proverbial mouse will be a tornado of noise compared with me. I'll be as good as gold; and I think it's awfully nice of you—"

At this moment Mrs. Armytage was hailed from the terrace by one of her numerous and exacting guests; and the instant she had gone out of ear-shot, the young man's manner changed to one of feverish eagerness. "My dear Miriam! Who would have thought—!"

"Miss Grey" would be more appropriate," she said in a low voice.

"Oh, of course; all right!" he responded. "But look here, you know—this is so sudden! I'm knocked all of a heap. When we last met, at Trouville—I say, what's happened?" He glanced at the black sash on her dainty frock, the black bow on her blouse.

"My father died soon after you left. I found that I should have to earn my living. I am earning it very pleasantly. In a word, Mr. Davenant, naturally I do not wish to be reminded of a past which has gone for ever."

"But—" he began pleadingly.

"No, no," she said earnestly. "Please let us forget it. Everything has altered. Besides—"

"I know what you mean," he said quickly, ruefully. "You mean that there is nothing between us; that I have no right to presume on a mere friendship. I'd hoped that it would have been more—but you wouldn't let me speak—"

"I am glad I did not," she said. "We won't say any more. You will be just one of the visitors; I—I cannot permit one of Mrs. Armytage's guests to—propose to me." She flushed painfully. "I am sure I can rely on you—"

"If you mean that I am not to make love to you," he said, with a shake of his head, "well, I'll try; but it will be precious hard. There! Don't look at me like that. Haven't I said I will be good? But look

here, dash it all, you're not going to treat me as if I were one of the 'menagerie,' one of the dear old lady's freaks! You'll let me talk to you—well, not exactly as I used to try to do; but just let me tell you about my troubles and scrapes and the rest of it. Do you remember how I used to bore you? There's something about you, Miri—Miss Grey—which makes a man run to you for help and advice, as a bear makes for honey. You're got a sympathetic nature, and—well, you understand. Angels are always beautiful, and I've an idea that the general run of them are not what you'd call clever, while you—beg pardon!—I'd forgotten for the moment—"

"Oh, yes; you can tell me anything you want to," conceded Miriam resignedly. "I hope things are going well with you?"

"Rotten," he said laconically. "They always are. My people still regard me as a black sheep, and not a prize one at that. I've tried my hand at one or two things, but muffed them, as usual. You see, I hadn't you at hand to advise me—"

A neat and demure housemaid put in an appearance, and Miss Grey said in her best secretarial manner,

"The maid will show you your room, Mr. Davenant. Lunch is at one-thirty."

Regarding the servant more in sorrow than in anger, the young man took his departure. On entering the crowded dining-room, at lunch time, he observed that Miss Grey was seated at the bottom of the table, and was cheerfully marching towards the chair next hers when a footman intercepted and guided him to a seat beside his hostess; and it says much for this good-for-nothing's command of countenance and temper that he displayed no sign of disappointment or chagrin, but, his face wearing its pleasant smile, at once set out to charm and amuse his hostess. His repeated attempts during the afternoon to approach Miss Grey proved as futile as that at lunch. And it was with rather a rueful countenance that, when he went into the drawing-room after dinner, clad in what the old-fashioned novelist loved to call "immaculate evening dress," he found Miss Grey seated in a corner and heavily barricaded by several of the freaks, who appeared to be all talking at once to her. Perforce he had to turn to his hostess, who, blazing in rare and costly gems of various colours, was seated in an arm-chair and, like a keeper, surveying her collection of curious animals with bland complacency.

"I say, got 'em all on to-night, auntie!" he said, running his eyes over her plump

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and scintillating figure with a kind of impudence which, goodness knows why, no woman ever seemed to resent. Mrs. Armytage, who liked him to call her "auntie," though they were in no way related, patted him on the arm and laughed as she replied,

"Oh, not all, my dear. I think it's very bad taste to wear too much jewellery. It makes one conspicuous."

"The Court is with you," he said gravely. "The few things you've got on to-night just show 'em what you could do if you liked. Is there anything new, anything I haven't seen?"

"I'm sure I don't know, my dear," she said, looking down upon her begemmed bosom and arms. "No, I don't think so. Oh, yes, I fancy this black pearl is new since you were down last." She touched with her fat finger a perfect and matchless pearl which hung as a pendant to a thin chain. "I call it my nigger pearl. A nice one, isn't it?"

"Stunning!" he responded. "Far and away the best I have seen. George! It glows like a—like a hot coal. Where did you pick that up? It must be worth quite a pot of money; sort of 'king's ransom' they used to talk about."

"Yes; it did cost a great deal, my dear," she admitted with a sigh of satisfaction. "I got it at that Maharajah's sale—I never can pronounce the man's name. It is supposed to be unique."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Reggie. "By the way, isn't that rather a flimsy chain you've got it on? Looks to me as if the slightest thing would break it. If that pearl were mine, I should have it fixed to a ship's cable—until I'd pawned it."

"Do you know I was saying to Melsham, my maid, only this morning that this chain was scarcely safe. I'll get a thicker one. It would be a pity to lose the pearl," she said.

"Rather," responded Reggie absently, for at that moment the human barrier in front of Miss Grey had thinned somewhat, and he sprang up and hurried towards the breach; but before he could reach her, a little boy, the child of a political Polish lady who had been banished from her native country, probably for that country's good, ran across the room and flung himself at Miss Grey, who immediately lifted him to her lap and appeared to be so absorbed in fondling him that she had no attention to bestow on Mr. Reggie Davenant.

"Look here," he said at last in a low and aggrieved voice, "the kid's had his innings. I've listened to his innocent prattle; I've let him crease my shirt-

front; I've answered one hundred and fifteen questions; also, he's ruined my watch for life and pulled half the hairs out of my moustache: don't you think it's my turn now? Try, for a few precious moments, to regard me as a little beast with long curls and a blue velvet frock with mother-of-pearl buttons."

"What do you want?" asked Miriam, still engrossed with the child.

"If I were to tell you all I wanted," he said slowly and solemnly, "it would take about two days and a half. No, it wouldn't! It would take about one minute.—All right, all right, I'll behave!" he declared hastily, in deprecation of the drawing together of her brows, which he recognised as a danger-signal. "But I want to tell you something, something important. I've got a letter to-night—" At this inauspicious moment a gentleman who had invented an ingeniously smoked glass for viewing eclipses waddled towards them and was greeted with Miss Grey's usual smile of tolerance, if not encouragement.

"Oh, da—dash—it all!" groaned Reggie. "Look here, I'll be on the terrace at half-past ten to-morrow—don't say you won't come. How do you know I haven't invented a way of getting to the moon, or shot a double-headed elephant? You have to be a freak in this infern—blessed house to receive decent attention."

"Good evening," bleated the inventor of quaint astronomical instruments. "May I ask if you take any interest in solar phenomena, Mr. Davenant?"

"No," said Reggie bluntly. "I tasted it once and I didn't like it."

"Ah," said the confused gentleman. "Pity, pity!—But I know Miss Grey does, and I should like to show her—"

Reggie walked off, with a frown on his generally smooth forehead, and rage in his usually blithesome heart.

The next morning at the appointed hour he was on the terrace outside Miriam's window; and after he had paced up and down half a dozen times, she appeared like a vision of youth and beauty and, better still, womanly charm—so exquisite a vision that Reggie was able only to stand and gaze at her speechlessly for a full minute.

"I can't work while you pace up and down like a wild beast—" she began.

"What else can you do in a menagerie?" he demanded. "And let me tell you that if you hadn't shown up, you would have heard me roaring and clawing at the window."

"I can give you five minutes," she said, glancing at her wrist-watch.

Little Signs That Reveal Character at a Glance

The Simple Knack of Knowing All About a Person at Sight

EVERY one knows that a high forehead indicates the intellectual type, that a receding denotes weakness, while a pronounced chin means determination—these things and a few other signs are understood by all. But often these signs are counterbalanced by others which are just as apparent, but which the average person doesn't know how to diagnose.

As a consequence, we often jump to conclusions about people, which prove incorrect because we don't carry our observations far enough. It's like trying to read a sentence by looking at the first one or two words. We might guess the sense, but more likely than not we'd go wrong. Yet once you have the secret you can understand what all the little signs mean and get at a glance a complete picture of the characteristics of every person you meet, as easily as you read this page.

I know this to be true, for I used to be about the poorest judge of character that I know. I was always making friends, only to find that they were the wrong kind, or saying the wrong thing to my customers because I had failed to "size them up" correctly, or lending money to people who never intended to pay me back. I even made a costly mistake by giving up a good job to go into partnership with a man who turned out to be little short of a thief.

I was pretty much discouraged by this time, and I determined that the thing for me to do was to learn to read character, if such a thing as that was possible, for I felt that unless I did know whom I could trust and whom I couldn't, I never would get very far.

It was about this time that I read an article about Dr. Blackford, one of the foremost character-analysts, who was employed by a big company at a record fee to select their employees. I thought then that if hard headed business men paid such a salary as this in order to insure their getting the right kind of workers, there surely must be something in character reading for me.

One day my eye was attracted to an

announcement of a lecture on Character Analysis by Dr. Blackford, and I decided to go and see if I could learn anything.

That lecture was an eye opener! Not only did Dr. Blackford show how easy it is to read at a glance the little signs that reveal a person's character, but after the lecture she gave a remarkable demonstration of character reading that amazed the audience.

She asked the audience to select two people in the hall to come up and be analysed. Several men, all of them entirely unknown to her, were suggested, and finally two were chosen. As they came upon the platform Dr. Blackford looked them over keenly, and, after a moment's thought, began to analyse both of them at once. As she mentioned the characteristics of one, she described the corresponding characteristics in the other.

Beginning with generalities, she told the audience, every one of whom seemed to know both men, that one was sociable, active, bold and determined, while the other was more or less of a recluse, very self-contained, quiet and gentle.

The first, she said, was brilliant, clever, quick-witted, and resourceful; the second, a silent man, slow and deliberate when he spoke, and relied upon calm, mature judgment rather than brilliant strokes of ingenuity and wit.

The first man, according to Dr. Blackford, was active, restless, always on the go, impatient, and able to express himself only in some resolute, aggressive manner. The second man was studious, plodding, and constant, and expressed himself after prolonged concentration and careful thought. The first man, the doctor said, was therefore especially equipped to execute plans, to carry to success any course of action, but was not particularly qualified to make plans or to map out a course of action—he could make practical use of many different kinds of knowledge, but did not have the patience or the power of concentration to search out and classify the knowledge so that it could be used. While he was a brilliant speaker, a resourceful and effective debater, he lacked the power

to dig out and assemble the material for orations and debates. The second man, she continued, being shy and self-conscious, could not speak in public, but was a master of study and research, and strong in his ability to classify and correlate all kinds of knowledge.

"The first gentleman," said Dr. Blackford, "would be a remarkable success as a lawyer, especially in court practice. The second would also be a remarkable success as a lawyer, but his particular field would be the preparation of cases and the giving of advice to clients. Therefore," she went on, "they would be particularly fitted to work together as partners, not only because they complement each other professionally, but because their dispositions are such that they would naturally admire and respect each other."

As she said this the audience broke into a storm of applause, and upon inquiry I learned that the two men were indeed lawyers and partners, that they had been partners for twenty years, and were well known for their intense affection for each other, and for the fact that during their twenty years' partnership they had never had a disagreement. One was the brilliant court lawyer, the other the student and adviser, and as a team they were remarkably successful.

* * * * *

When the lecture was over, it didn't take me long to get up to the platform and inquire as to how I could learn more about character reading, and I found that Dr. Blackford had just completed a popular Course that explained the whole thing and which would be sent on approval, without charge, for examination. I immediately wrote the publishers, and received the Course by return post.

And when it came I was never so amazed in my life—for here was the whole secret in seven fascinating lessons. No hard study, no tiresome drudgery, just interesting pictures and simple directions that I couldn't go wrong on.

Why, the very first lesson gave me hints I could use right away, and it was only a matter of a few weeks before I was able at one quick but careful survey to tell just what a man was like by what he looked like.

And what a revelation it was! For the first time I really *knew* people whom I *thought* I had known for years. It was all

so simple now that it hardly seemed possible that I could have made such mistakes as I did before I heard of Dr. Blackford.

People took on a new interest. Instead of just "ciphers," each one became a definite personality, with qualities, tastes, and traits which I was always able to "spot." Why the very act of meeting people became the most fascinating pastime in the world. And how much more clearly my own character loomed up to me. I know as never before my limitations and my capabilities.

But it has been in contact with people in business that my new faculty has helped me most—to say that it has been worth hundreds of pounds to me is to put it mildly. It has enabled me to select a new partner who has proved the best help a man ever had—it has made it possible for us to build up probably the most efficient "frictionless" organization in our line of business, with every man in the right job—it has been the means of my securing thousands of pounds' worth of business from men I had never been able to deal with because I hadn't judged them correctly, for after all, business relations depend more on knowing the man you're dealing with than any one thing else—and what I've learned from Dr. Blackford's lessons enables me to know as much about a man the first time I meet him as his best friend—sometimes more.

Is it any wonder that many of the greatest enterprises have solicited Dr. Blackford's advice; or that thousands of heads of large corporations, salesmen, engineers, physicians, bankers, and educators have studied her Course, and say that the benefit derived is worth thousands of pounds to them?

Send No Money

The biggest surprise about Dr. Blackford's Course you haven't read yet—and that is the price. If, after examining the seven lessons in your own home, you decide to keep the Course, you need only send 30/- in full payment. If you are not entirely satisfied with the Course, send it back within three days and you will owe nothing.

Merely send a postcard or letter—not enclosing any money—and the Course will be sent to you post free.

You take no risk, and you have everything to gain, so write at once, before this remarkable offer is withdrawn.

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"I'd rather have five minutes from you— Here, don't go!" She had turned towards the room. "Beg pardon! O Lord, don't you see I can't help it?"

"Nearly one minute gone," observed Miriam in a businesslike way.

"Righto! Let's sit down on this seat, I'm worn out. In a nutshell, I've just had a chance offered me of joining this expedition to Nairobi. Read about it? Of course you have! Is there anything you don't know? It's a good thing. There's money in it."

"And are you going? I'm glad, very glad," she said, just a trifle too fervently.

"Oh, are you?" he said, eyeing her gloomily. "Well, I'm sorry to abate your transports of joy at the prospect of getting rid of me, but there's a little obstacle. I've got to find a thousand pounds. It's like one of those stories with a 'catch' in it, isn't it? My only way of getting that colossal sum of money is by committing burglary or highway robbery; and, by George, I'm almost ready for either plan, for something tells me that this expedition is going to turn out a winner; and if it should and I'm in it, I should be in a position to—to—"

There was no need for him to finish the sentence. The colour rose faintly to Miriam's face, she averted her eyes; but, startled, she turned them again at a new note in his voice, and saw that his face had suddenly become haggard with the terrible stress of a man's passion.

"Oh, my dear, you force me to make a joke of it," he said hoarsely; "but if you knew, if you *knew*, how much I love you, how badly I want you—! Miriam, tell me that if I can join this Nairobi thing and prove myself—well, not worthy of you, but just worthy to kiss those little feet of yours, you'd—you'd give yourself to me, and I'll get that thousand pounds if—I had to commit murder."

"Hush!" she said, and her voice trembled. "That's one reason why I mustn't say it. No, no!"

But her heart clamoured "Yes, yes." And Reggie would have won this wonderful girl there and then, if the Polish kid had not appeared at that moment and ran at them, at once engrossing Miriam's attention and so saving—or spoiling—the situation. Strangely enough, though one would have thought an intelligent child would have been aware that he had not made a favourable impression, little Paulo displayed a great liking for the unsatisfied and irritated lover, and Reggie, who at ordinary times

was fond of children, was compelled to reciprocate the infant's advances. Indeed, so fascinated was Paulo on this occasion that he deserted Miss Grey and insisted upon his new friend accompanying him to view the tomb of a kitten at whose obsequies the infant had assisted in the early morning.

All things come to him who waits, and after dinner that evening Reggie managed to lure Miriam into one of the ante-rooms. He looked as if he were suffering from suppressed excitement; his face was pale, his eyes, bright at most times, were unduly brilliant, and unconsciously he gripped her arm as he whispered,

"Miriam, I think I see a way of getting that thousand. It will be unpleasant, it will be dangerous, but I'll try it. Too much depends—hold on! I'm not going to talk to you again as I did this morning—too much *may* depend on my getting it, for me to hesitate at the means. Oh, dash my hat," he groaned, "here comes that woman who says we ought to eat the shell with the egg.—No, Mrs. Boggles, I always leave the shell. Seems to me as if it would look greedy to eat the whole caboose. And if the egg-shells, why not the egg-cup? What?" And so, with a despairing glance at Miriam, he made his escape.

Miriam sat up in her bedroom quite late that night, her hair falling over her shoulders, her hands clasped in her lap. She was not asking herself whether she loved Reggie Davenant or not, because she knew the answer. Indeed, she loved him very dearly; but she was not blind to the fact that he was not perfect: she wouldn't have loved him if he had been. She knew that there were weaknesses in that charming character; but she told herself, as most women do, that she could help to get rid of them. Yes, he needed her; and a woman loves to think that she is necessary to the well-being of the man to whom she has given her heart. And, oh! she had given the whole of it to Reggie; there was not a little scrap left in her bosom, in which there would be a lamentable vacancy, unless she filled it with that heart of his. She spent a sleepless night.

In the morning, at breakfast time, Reggie announced, with a cheerfulness highly creditable to him, that he had promised to go for a drive with Mrs. Armytage, who was anxious that he should confirm her decision to purchase a large property in the neighbourhood; and he was still smiling as they were starting, until he managed to catch Miriam's eye, when the smile was replaced by a look of

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such entreaty and longing that her hand trembled as she arranged the light rug over her patron's knees.

Soon after the carriage had gone, the maid who attended on Reggie's bedroom met Miriam on the terrace.

"Oh, Miss Grey," she said, "I wanted to speak to you about Mr. Davenant's room."

"What is the matter, Mary?" asked Miriam with a smile. "Has he been breaking up the furniture? He has been very quiet."

"Oh, no, miss," replied Mary promptly, and with a rather shocked air, for, like most of her sex, she had given her heart, in a strictly proper sense in her case, be it understood, to that ingratiating young man, who, she declared in the servants' hall, was a perfect gentleman and as handsome as any man had a right to be. "Oh, no, indeed, miss; but he will drop his cigar and cigarette ash all over the place; and I thought if you would be so good as to let me have an ash tray—not one of the usual small ones, but something as he couldn't help seeing—Oh, thank you, miss," she added as she turned away, "and would you mind locking his door as you come out? Master Paulo is always running in and out, trying to find Mr. Davenant—so fond he is of him. And no wonder, he's got such a taking way with him."

"Yes; he has, Mary," said Miss Grey meekly.

She found a silver bowl in her room and carried it in to Mr. Davenant's. She was there only a moment, so to speak, but when she came out her face was deathly white, and as she turned the key in the door, she clung to the handle, as if she had been overtaken by a sudden weakness. She had scarcely reached her own room, when, to her surprise, she saw Mrs. Armytage's pony phaeton driving up to the terrace.

"Oh, my dear!" cried that lady, "we have had to come back. I've remembered—that is to say, I've forgotten, something. I won't be a minute, Reggie."

"Can't I get it, whatever it is?" asked Miriam, in a dulled voice.

"No, no. I won't trouble you, dear," replied Mrs. Armytage, and she hurried into the house.

"Miriam," said Reggie in a low voice, "this is a special mercy. I want to tell you that I feel sure now that I can get that money. I shall go up to town to-night. Promise me that when I come back to say good-bye you will give me five minutes.—What is the matter? You look pale—actually white!"

Before she could reply, they were both startled by shrill cries of "Miriam!—Miriam!"

"That is Mrs. Armytage! What has happened?" murmured Miriam.

"One moment," he pleaded.

"No, no," she said agitatedly. "She wants me—I must go."

She hurried into the house. Mrs. Armytage was standing on the top of the great staircase, her face red, her hands clutching the bannister rail.

"Oh, Miriam, come up at once!" she cried agitatedly.

Miriam ran up the stairs and followed Mrs. Armytage into her dressing-room.

"My dear, something has happened," said the old lady. "I've had a serious loss. There now! I'm frightening you. How stupid of me! Don't look so scared, my child; it's not a death, but—but—my nigger, my black pearl." Miss Grey, usually so calm and self-possessed, felt behind her for a chair and dropped into it. "It's all right, my dear. There, there! for goodness sake—! You'll upset me, if you break down."

"The pearl?" said Miriam, moistening her dry lips. "Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, my dear," replied Mrs. Armytage, with a portentous nod. "I took it out of the jewel-case this morning, intending to pack it up and send it to London to get a stronger chain—Reggie advised me to do so. I left it on the table here," she placed her fat hand on the table, "and forgot it."

"The safe——" suggested Miriam, whose face had lost something of its recent pallor.

"My dear, of course, I've looked! And in my bag, everywhere; though I am perfectly sure and certain and could swear it in a Court of Justice that I left the thing just here."

"What—what is to be done?" asked Miriam. She spoke quite steadily now, and her eyes, though they had a preoccupied expression in them, met Mrs. Armytage's unwaveringly.

"That's what I'm asking myself. Of course, I don't want to lose my pearl—you know what a beauty and how valuable it is—but I should hate to call in the police and make a newspaper affair of it. Some person—ahem! Reggie is always teasing me about what he calls my freaks and the folly of making friends with people I know nothing about, just because they're interesting; and it is just possible that someone has yielded to a sudden temptation. But there, again, none of the visitors ever comes

The Secret

of being a

Convincing Talker

How I learned it in one evening

By GEORGE RAYMOND

"HAVE you heard the news about Frank Jordan?"

This question quickly brought to me the little group which had gathered in the centre of the office. Jordan and I had started with the Great Eastern Machinery Co., within a month of each other, four years ago. A year ago Jordan was taken into the accountants' department, and I was sent out as traveller. Neither of us was blessed with an unusual degree of brilliancy, but we made good in our new jobs well enough to keep them.

Imagine my amazement, then, when I heard:

"Jordan's just been made secretary of the company!"

I could hardly believe my ears. But there was the "Notice to Employees" on the notice board, telling about Jordan's good fortune.

Now I knew that Jordan was a capable fellow, quiet and unassuming, but I never would have selected him for any such sudden rise. I knew, too, that the Secretary of the Great Eastern had to be a big man, and I wondered how in the world Jordan secured the position.

The first chance I got I walked into Jordan's new office, and after congratulating him warmly, I asked him to give me the details of how he jumped ahead so quickly. His story is so intensely interesting that I am going to repeat it as closely as I remember.

"I'll tell you just how it happened, George, because you may pick up a point or two that will help you."

"You remember how scared I used to be whenever I had to talk to the chief? You remember how you used to tell me that every time I opened my mouth I put my foot into it, meaning, of course, that

every time I spoke I got into trouble? You remember when Ralph Sinton left to take charge of the Western office and I was asked to present him with the silver cup the boys gave him, how flustered I was and how I couldn't say a word because there were people around? You remember how confused I used to be every time I met new people? I couldn't say what I wanted to say when I wanted to say it; and I determined that if there was any possible chance to learn how to talk, I was going to do it.

"The first thing I did was to buy a number of books on public speaking, but they seemed to be meant for those who wanted to become orators, whereas what I wanted to learn was not only how to speak in public, but how to speak to individuals under various conditions in business and social life.

"A few weeks later, just as I was about to give up hope of ever learning how to talk interestingly, I read an announcement stating that Dr. Frederick Law had just completed a new course in business talking and public speaking entitled 'Mastery of Speech.' The course was offered on approval without money in advance, so since I had nothing whatever to lose by examining the lessons, I sent for them, and in a few days they arrived. I glanced through the entire eight lessons, reading the headings and a few paragraphs here and there, and in about an hour the whole secret of effective speaking was opened to me.

"For example, I learned why I had always lacked confidence, why talking had always seemed something to be dreaded, whereas it is really the simplest thing in the world to 'get up and talk.' I learned how to secure complete attention to what I was saying, and how to make everything I said interesting, forceful, and convincing. I

learned the art of listening, the value of silence, and the power of brevity. Instead of being funny at the wrong time, I learned how and when to use humour with telling effect.

"But perhaps the most wonderful part of the lessons were the actual examples of what things to say and when to say them to meet every condition. I found that there was a knack in making oral reports to my superiors. I found that there was a right way and a wrong way to present complaints, to give estimates, and to issue orders.

"I picked up some wonderful points about how to give my opinions, about how to answer complaints, about how to ask the bank for a loan, about how to ask for extensions. Another thing that struck me forcibly was that, instead of antagonising people when I didn't agree with them, I learned how to bring them round to my way of thinking in the most pleasant sort of way. Then, of course, along with those lessons there were chapters on speaking before large audiences, how to find material for talking and speaking, how to talk to friends, how to talk to servants, and how to talk to children.

"Why, I got the secret the very first evening, and it was only a short time before I was able to apply all of the principles, and found that my words were beginning to have an almost magical effect upon everybody to whom I spoke. It seemed that I got things done instantly, whereas formerly, as you know, what I said went 'in one ear and out the other.' I began to acquire an executive ability that surprised me. I smoothed out difficulties like a true diplomat. In my talks with the chief I spoke clearly, simply, convincingly. Then came my first promotion since I entered the accounting department. I was given the job of answering complaints, and I made good. From that I was given the job of making collections. When Mr. Buckley joined the Officers' Training Corps I was made secretary. Between you and me, George, my salary is now £1,500 a year, and I expect it will be more from the first of the year.

"And I want to tell you honestly that I

attribute my success solely to the fact that I learned how to talk to people."

When Jordan finished, I asked him for the address of the publishers of Dr. Law's Course, and he gave it to me. I sent for it and found it to be exactly as he had stated. After studying the eight simple lessons, I began to sell to people who had previously refused to listen to me at all. After four months of record-breaking sales during the dull season of the year I received a word from the chief asking me to return to the city office. We had quite a long talk, in which I explained how I was able to break sales records—and I was appointed Sales Manager at almost twice my former salary. I know that there was nothing in me that had changed except that I had acquired the ability to talk where formerly I simply used "words without reason." I can never thank Jordan enough for telling me about Dr. Law's Course in Business Talking and Public Speaking. Jordan and I are both spending all our spare time in making public speeches on political subjects, and Jordan is being talked about now as Mayor of our town.

SEND NO MONEY

So confident is the Standard Art Book Co., Ltd., publishers of "Mastery of Speech," Dr. Law's Course in Business Talking and Public Speaking, that once you have an opportunity to see in your own home how you can, in one hour, learn the secret of speaking, and how you can apply the principles of effective speech under all conditions, that they are willing to send you the Course for free examination.

Don't send any money. Merely write a letter and the complete Course will be sent, all charges prepaid, at once. If you are not entirely satisfied, send it back any time within three days after you receive it and you will owe nothing.

On the other hand, if you are as pleased as are the thousands of other men and women who have taken the Course, send only 30s. in full payment. You take no risk, and you have everything to gain, so write now before this remarkable offer is withdrawn. 35,000 men and women have ordered Dr. Law's Course during the last three months.

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to my room; I'm not one of those women who like to have another woman chattering and pottering about while I'm doing my hair. There's no one, excepting Melsham; and it's ridiculous to suspect Melsham, because she could have taken the whole swag—as Reggie calls it—ever so many times, if she had wanted to. And there is you; but of course, that is ridiculous—” The good lady broke off with a laugh. “I was thinking,” she resumed thoughtfully, “that perhaps, after all, I might send for a private detective. Yes, I've read that it is the right thing to leave everything untouched in your rooms and to lock your doors so that the detective may find everything just as it was when the crime was committed. And that's what I shall do, my dear.”

“Yes,” assented Miriam with a sigh. “And yet—” She stopped, her head on one side, as if she were considering. “No, I don't think I will. I shall go for my drive, and we'll see if anything happens while I'm away. Turn the key, dear, but leave it in the lock. You still look very pale and upset. Now, go and lie down and bathe your forehead with that lotion Professor Wilkins discovered. You know he says that it never fails to cure the Red Indians of their terrible headaches.”

Miss Grey went down the stairs slowly, touching the rail now and again, as if she needed its support. Mrs. Armytage followed her as far as the head of the stairs, then she paused, and going to the open window overlooking the terrace, called softly and beckoned to Reggie, who was pacing up and down, impatiently awaiting Miriam's return.

“Now what is it?” he muttered, but he obeyed the signal, entered the house by the nearest door, and reached the corridor by the second staircase. Mrs. Armytage seized him by the arm with the gesture of a conspirator and drew him into the room opposite her own.

“Reggie,” she said in a stage whisper, “I've lost my nigger.”

“Lost your *what*?” he exclaimed.

“My black pearl.”

“The deuce you have!” he said, induced by her example to whisper also. “Not you! You've mislaid it, auntie. Have you looked—?”

“I've searched everywhere. Now, don't look as if you didn't believe me. I left it on the table here, and it's been stolen.”

“Whom do you suspect?” he asked.

“Nobody.”

“Same here,” he said confidently. “I

bet you five to one in Bradburys that you'll find it at the bottom of your knitting-basket or in one of the silly bags you lug about with you everywhere. Will you take my bet?”

“Reggie, besensible, I tell you— Hush! What's that? Someone is coming to put it back! Quick!!” She drew him further into the room, partly closed the door, and beckoned him to look through the narrow opening. They saw Miriam Grey coming along the corridor, not with her usual light, firm step and erect head, but hurriedly, stealthily, her head bent, her face white to the very lips. Reggie would have cried out, called to her, but Mrs. Armytage clutched his arm and warned him to silence. They saw Miriam stop before her patron's door, unlock it, and enter the room.

“Oh, in God's name, what does it mean?” asked Mrs. Armytage in a kind of horror.

“What does what mean?” demanded Reggie fiercely, and as he spoke, he flung open the door and crossed the corridor, Mrs. Armytage faltering fearfully behind him. Miss Grey heard their footsteps and turned. With a cry she confronted them, then she flung her hands before her face. From one of her hands fell a slight, small object. Reggie flew to her, and Mrs. Armytage stooped and picked up the object. It was the black pearl. She gazed at it as it lay in her open palm, her face working, then she burst into tears.

“It's the nigger,” she sobbed. “Oh, my dear, how could you? You! You!”

Reggie had half led, half carried Miriam Grey to a sofa, and he turned an angry and fiercely indignant face on Mrs. Armytage.

“What on earth are you saying?” he demanded. Then he went white and stood for a moment, silent. “Do you mean to charge Miriam—Miss Grey with stealing the beastly thing? You must be out of your mind.”

“I suppose I must be,” quavered Mrs. Armytage. “But it dropped—she *did*—drop it. Oh, my dear! how *could* you! And me so fond of you!”

“Stop that!” said Reggie sternly. “The thing is impossible. She could no more steal your blessed jewellery than I could kill a baby in cold blood. Tell her so, Miriam, and let's put an end to this nonsense.” He turned to her; and she met his eyes with a sad, a curious look in hers. The other two waited, hung breathlessly on her silence; she broke it at last.

“I took it,” she said in a toneless, leaden voice.

Hutchinson's Story Magazine

"You took——!" he gasped. Then he burst into a harsh laugh. "Oh, come off it, you two!" he said derisively. "Is this bit of spoof got up for my benefit? Is it a sort of charade——?" He stopped suddenly, for there was no responsive smile on the face of either woman, and Miriam stood motionless as a statue, her face set, impassive.

"Oh, say you found it, my dear!" wailed Mrs. Armytage. "Say something—anything!"

"I took it," repeated Miriam. "There is nothing more to be said." She looked for one instant at Reggie's haggard face. "I will never say anything else; you may do with me whatever you please. I—I stole it."

"That's all right!" said Reggie, through his clenched teeth. "We'll let it go at that. You've got your pearl back, auntie, so you're all serene. I don't suppose you want to make a fuss, but if you do, make it. We don't care. My wife and I are going out to Nairobi——"

"Your wife!" gasped Mrs. Armytage.

"Yes," he said. "Miriam knows I love her; here and now I beg her to marry me——"

"No, no!" Miriam panted. "Never!"

"Yes; I think you will," he said quietly.

"Oh, no, I'm not taking advantage of this affair. But what I mean to say is, that a girl who is subject to hallucinations of this sort, any sort, wants a strong man to look after her. Up to date, it is you who, very properly, ought to have looked after me; but that's changed—I was going to say 'thank goodness'! I'm going to marry you, dear, if I have to carry you to church in my arms. As to Nairobi, I shall take you there. Don't you be afraid that I shan't make you happy: I love you too much to fail. See?"

Miriam sank on to the sofa, and covering her face with her hands, sobbed softly. He went to her and put his arm round her and kept it round her, though she strove to push it away.

"You're going to Nairobi?" stammered Mrs. Armytage.

"Yes, auntie," he said cheerfully, though he was still pale and his lips twitched. "I wanted a thousand quid for my share in the expedition, and I've got it—What's the matter, dearest?" he asked gently, soothingly, for Miriam had started and was gazing at him in a startled, horrified fashion. "I've just sold my reversion. There'll be a devil of a row when the governor and Edward hear of it, and I daresay the old

man will cut me out of his will. Never mind that, I'm going to make my fortune.—Dearest, dearest, what is it?"

Miriam had torn herself from him and was staring at him with amazement—and relief now—in her eyes. At this dramatic moment there came the sound of childish weeping and wailing from the corridor, the door was kicked violently, and when Mrs. Armytage pulled herself together sufficiently to open it, Paulo waddled in, his fists to his eyes, his face red and swollen, and his mouth extended by howls of lamentation.

"Oh dear! oh dear! What is the matter now?" wailed Mrs. Armytage, as she drew the child to her.

"Boo-hoo! boo-hoo!" sobbed Paulo. "I've lost my pretty ickle egg."

"He means he's swallowed it," said Reggie impatiently. "For goodness' sake give him something, anything, and get rid of him."

"I hasn't 'wallowed it," blubbered Paulo indignantly. "I tooked it into Misser Weggie's woom, and now it's gorned. Mawy and me has looked cweywhere."

At this moment Mrs. Armytage happened to open her hand, which all this time had been closed on the pearl; and the moment Master Paulo caught sight of that costly but troublesome gem, he pounced on it as a hawk pounces on a mouse.

"Why, you'se dot it!" he exclaimed resentfully. "You went and stole it. Wot a shame; 'cause it was mine; I founded it on that table there. Mawy says nobody's been in Misser Weggie's room but Miss Miwiam. Did you stole it?" he demanded severely of Miriam, as he toddled off.

The three grown-up persons regarded the infant with feelings which it would be futile to attempt to describe. Then suddenly Reggie looked into Miriam's eyes, read the whole story there, and as she hid her face on his breast, he bent and kissed her head and murmured brokenly:

"Oh, my dear! And you thought I was worth it! You were going to sacrifice yourself for me! Why? Dearest, you've given yourself away!" He laughed—but brokenly again. "See?"

Then, over the bowed head he turned a grave and yet, if it be possible, a radiant face, to the dumbfounded Mrs. Armytage. "How would next Thursday suit you and Miriam, Auntie? Just a plain wedding, with four bridesmaids, a bishop, and a spread for half the county! No hole-and-corner business for me! It will cost a

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CHAPTER III

When to marry:—C. H. Spurgeon's advice and St. Paul's teaching from God—Haste and disaster—Boy and girl marriages—Danger in delay—The laggard lover—Single selfishness—Growing old together—A family of comrades.

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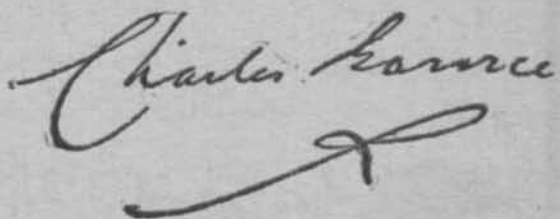


lot of money; but you'll have to pay. And serve you right, for being such an old silly as to think Miriam capable——"

"Oh, of course I will," said Mrs. Armytage eagerly. "Money! You shall both of you have as much as ever you want, always.

And Miriam, here's the pearl! Oh, my dear, you must take it, you *must*! Every time I wore it I should remember—— There! there! don't cry!"

But she was crying much harder than Miriam was.



A new magazine should not apologise for its existence, or exist for apologies, for there is only one excuse the public will allow—that there is always room at the top for anything that can get there. If HUTCHINSON'S STORY MAGAZINE cannot "get there" with its motto of "ALL the best ALL the time," it will gladly retire and make room for others.

"The best," we must explain, means primarily the work of world-renowned authors. The subscribers to HUTCHINSON'S STORY MAGAZINE may rest assured that this category has already been well provided for. Arrangements have been made with the following leading authors whose stories will appear, in many cases exclusively, in early issues of this Magazine:

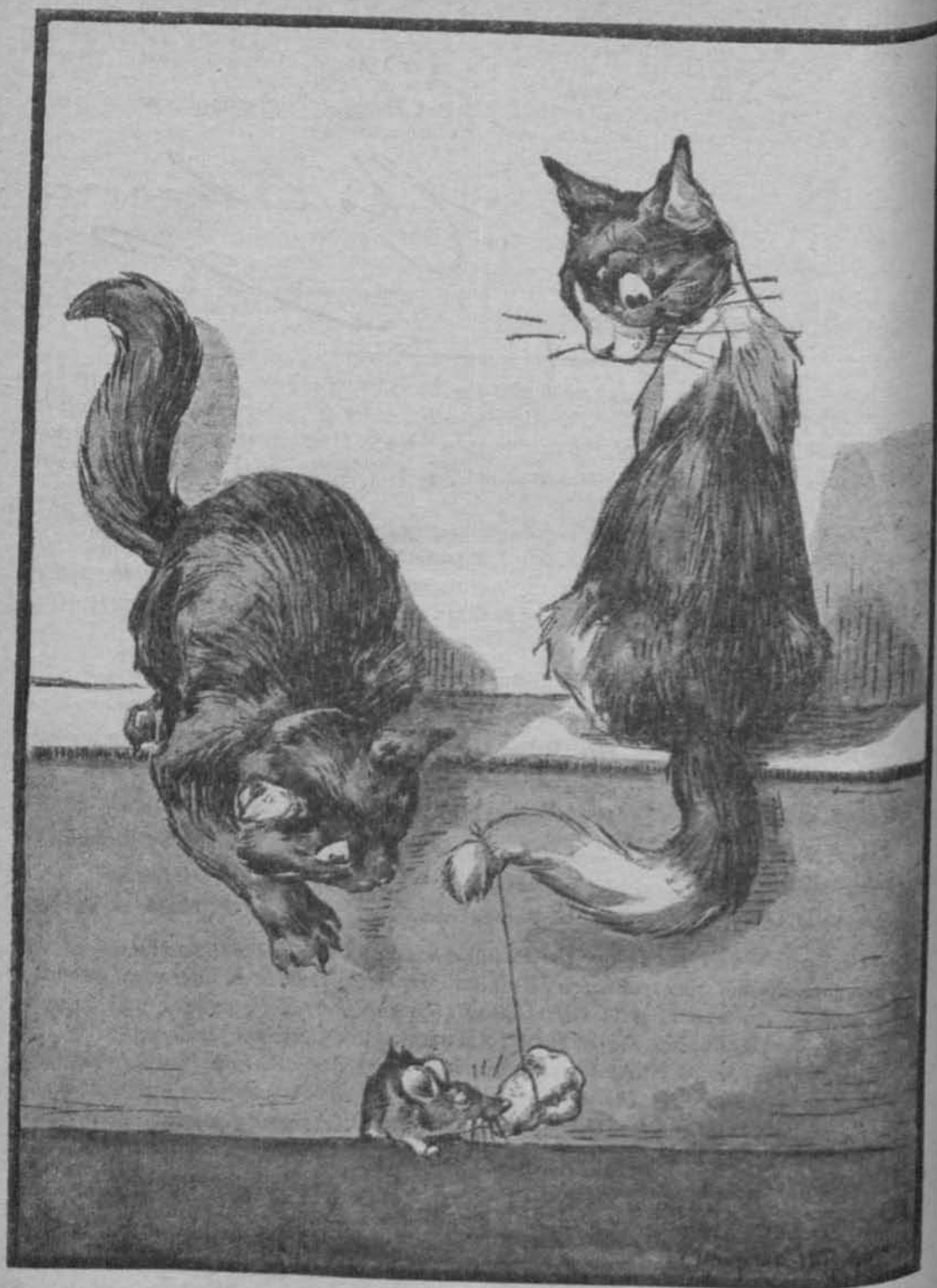
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Berta Ruck.	E. F. Benson	Marjory Bowen.
May Sinclair.	Mabel Barnes-Grundy.	J. E. Buckrose, etc., etc.

As regards the other category, the Editor's hope and wish is that no real talent shall go undiscovered and unrewarded. Merit will be recognised in whatever quarter it is found, and several writers with outstanding gifts for short-story writing will be introduced to the public through the medium of HUTCHINSON'S STORY MAGAZINE.

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As we went into the banquet-room the host was introducing a long line of the guests to Mr. Roth. I got in line, and when it came my turn, Mr. Roth asked, "What are your initials, Mr. Jones, and your business and telephone number?" Why he asked this I learned later, when he picked out from the crowd the 60 men he had met two hours before and called each by name without a mistake. What is more, he named each man's business and telephone number accurately.

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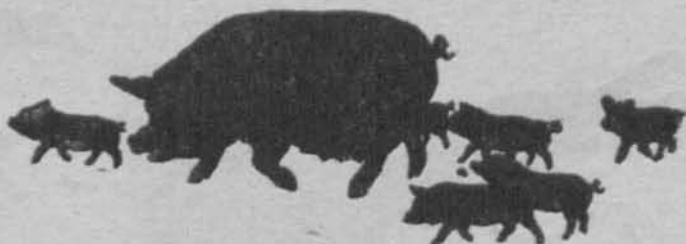
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