Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine

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Willis Knapp Jones — Bertram Russell — and Others

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Weird Tales

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VOLUME XII NUMBER 1

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Contents for July, 1928

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LETTERS are still coming in from enthusiastic readers of H. Warner Munn's torture-tale, *The Chain,* which appeared in the April issue of WEIRD TALES, telling us how they enjoyed the artistry of that unusual story. The following two letters are typical of the comment that Mr. Munn's tale has evoked:

"H. Warner Munn has written a weird tale that is real literature," writes Harvey W. Flink, of Centre Hall, Pennsylvania. "His story of torture, *The Chain,* is a masterpiece. It is as good as Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum* and Villiers de l'Isle Adam's *Torture by Hope.*"

Writes John Allen, of Minneapolis: "Permit me to say that *The Chain,* by H. Warner Munn, is one of the best pieces of writing you have published in three years. It is better than Poe at his best. For sheer horror, sustained to the end of the story, and for literary craftsmanship of the highest water, Munn takes first place. H. R.'s title sketch is exceptionally good. While on the subject of the artist who signs his sketches H. R. (Hugh Rankin is his name, I believe), I want to say that his illustration on the title page of Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu* was exceptional; the expression of evil spirituality on the face of the male devil-worshiper, and the lightly sketched anatomical outlines showing unmistakably a gross being of great bestial and evil strength, are the marks of an artist who has both imagination and exceptional ability in putting his thoughts on paper.

"*The Jewel of Seven Stones* is a typical Seabury Quinn story, well written, good plot, and interesting. Quinn has yet to write his first poor story. *The Strange People* by Murray Leinster is engrossing and 'different'; the characters behave as normal human beings, show clearly that they are controlled by normal human reactions and are entirely a credit to their author; in short, the illusion of reality is created throughout the yarn.

"*The Time-Raider,* recently concluded, and *The Giant World* are the kind of stories I pay two bits each new moon to read. Hamilton and Cummings are equal in every way, and in some respects superior to H. G. Wells,

(Continued on page 137)

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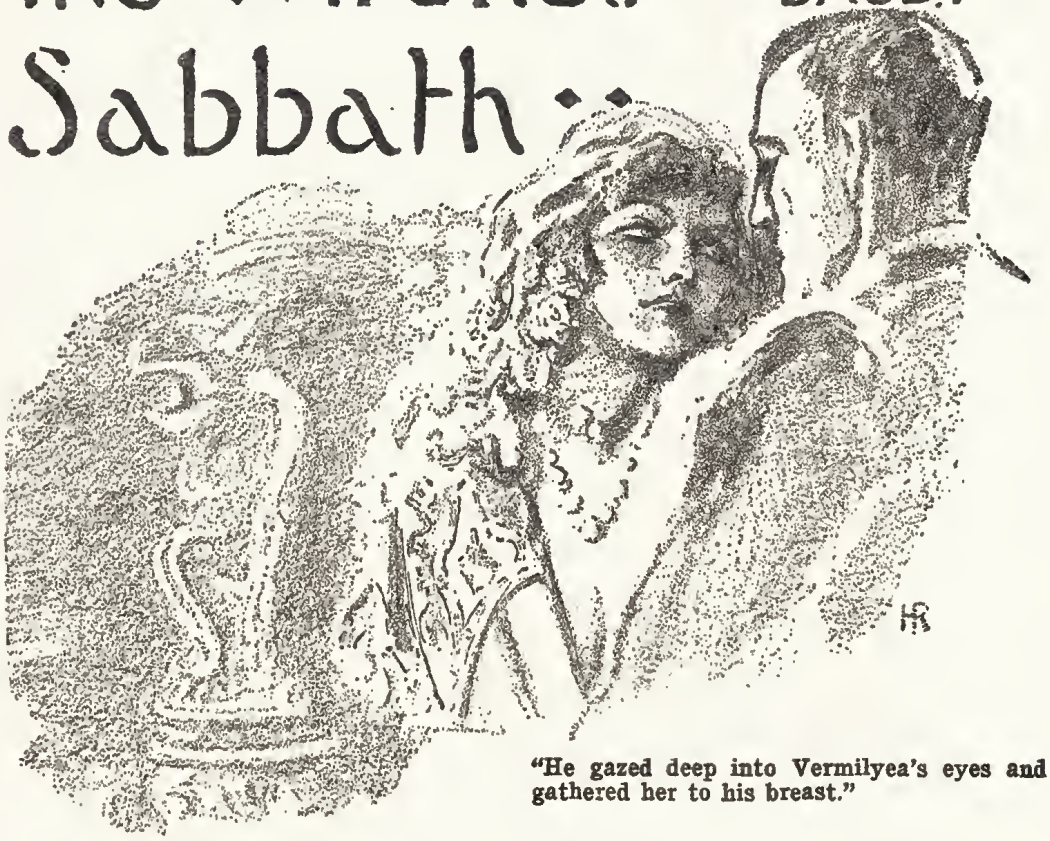
The Witches' Sabbath

BY STEPHEN BAGBY



"He gazed deep into Vermilyea's eyes and gathered her to his breast."

ALLAN KINCAID was homesick, insufferably bored with life in a foreign land. It had been very different in the beginning, when American chemical affairs precluded any thought of loneliness. But now that he had returned to London for a rest, life had lost its flavor. Depression conquered him. He sat watching the yellow fog outside of the San Carlo Club, until he could stand it no longer. Then he seized his hat and prepared to go out.

Across the foyer, the sight of newcomers stopped Kincaid in his tracks. He found himself staring, not at the figure of Jack Rutherford, his onetime classmate at Yale, but at something beyond. It was what he saw there in the shadows, half obscured by mist in the vestibule, that held him spellbound.

"It's Rutherford, all right," muttered the chemist to himself, "but what is that thing trailing him?"

An unaccountable sensation of alarm—of rising hair—gripped him as the oddly matched pair came well within the light. He stood there gaping, watching it approach.

Rutherford, a United States embassy man, carried himself with natural ease, but there was something unreal about his companion.

What Kincaid saw was a tall, slender man, with long, thin legs, dressed entirely in chocolate brown. His costume was unmistakably medieval; a close-fitting doublet under a monk's robe, with cowl drawn over the head,

and corded sash encircling the diaphragm, completed it.

The fellow's impish face was made weirder still by small, sharply pointed ears, rising on either side of the head. Moreover, there was an expression ages old in the birdlike countenance, and in the lidless, round eyes that snapped and kindled like green pools of flame.

His walk alone was enough to attract attention. Indeed, the "masquerader" strutted on tiptoe, with an odd jerk at every step he took, for all the world like an aged courtier simulating the buoyancy of youth.

Had it not been for these peculiar attributes, the thin stranger might well have passed for a youth in fancy-dress attire. But, as it was, the effect left the beholder in a state of eery suspense.

"Kincaid—of all persons!" exclaimed Rutherford's deep voice. "To think of seeing you here, in London!"

The chemist shifted his gaze from the silent figure behind the government man, and stammered a response.

"Suppose we go in there?" he suggested, nodding his head in the direction of the library. "No interruptions. We can talk."

He drew his former classmate inside. The soft pad-pad of pointed shoes told of the masquerader following at their heels.

"Why don't you introduce me?" demanded Kincaid, once they were seated.

Rutherford raised his keen gray eyes. "Introduce you—to whom?" he asked.

"Why—er, to your friend, standing behind you there; the young man in the fancy-dress attire!" The chemist pointed directly over the embassy man's shoulder.

"My God—you too!" gasped Rutherford, his finely molded face going pale. "It is visible, then! Oh, there isn't any use——!"

He lowered his crisp, dark head of hair, and gripped the chair arms fast.

"Of course it's visible!" exclaimed Kincaid, nettled. "But what's wrong about that? No disgrace in wearing a harlequin outfit, is there?"

Rutherford did not reply.

"Listen, Jack!" persisted the chemist. "Is this fellow annoying you? If so, tell him to leave—to clear out."

"I wish—to heaven—I could!" muttered Rutherford slowly, his tall frame drooping.

"What's to prevent you?" the chemist snapped. "Order him off! If you don't, I will! Can't he see he isn't wanted?"

The chemist's brown eyes took on a belligerent glint, as he half arose. The harlequin's steady stare angered him.

"No, no; not that—Allan! You don't understand! Please, sit down," urged Rutherford, grasping his friend's arm. "Why, man, you can't dispel it! The thing's a satyr!"

"A satyr? Not one of those old Greek figments of fancy? Why, Jack, you're spoofing!"

Rutherford smiled sadly, as he noted the incredulous expression on his friend's face.

"No, no! Let me explain! This thing's not flesh and blood! It's a 'familiar'—a disembodied intelligence—that I can't get rid of. We're as firmly attached as the Siamese twins. Black sorcery has seen to that."

"Sorcery?" burst out Kincaid, deprecatingly. "There isn't such a thing! Why can't you be serious?"

"I am serious. This satyr was attached to me at a festival of the damned—the Witches' Sabbath!"

Rutherford hid his face in his hands, and shuddered. He seemed fighting hard to rid himself of some memory, some somber nightmare that still rose up to haunt him.

"Stuff and nonsense!" insisted the chemist, eyeing the strange being dubiously.

It stood like a statue. Only the rolling eyes gave indication that it was alive.

RUTHERFORD did not speak at once. He raised his head slowly and turned his haunted eyes to his friend's.

"No, I didn't believe there were such things, either—until I visited the south of France last year. But, Kincaid, if you wish proof of what I say, try to touch it! You know what I mean—the satyr!"

Without a word, Kincaid arose and leaped for the thing. His arms clutched empty air. It was gone!

"Great Scott!" the chemist breathed. "It vanished into thin air! I'll swear to it!"

A low, taunting laugh answered him out of space. An invisible creature mocked and gibed him. Kincaid returned to his chair, perspiring and unnerved. When he looked a second later, he saw the satyr standing in the same place as before.

"Tell me about it, Jack!" he begged, recovering his wits. "This thing has gotten under my skin."

"It happened," said Rutherford, finally, "after I had mailed you that letter from Madrid, last April. I had completed a bit of government business in Spain, and was returning to Paris by automobile, in company with two Frenchmen; one a former army lieutenant, and the other the chauffeur.

"There was a breakdown in the mountains, a few miles over the French frontier, at sunset on the third day. A short distance toward the east rose the turrets of a fortress-like town. I suggested going there and arranging to have workmen repair the car on the following day.

"My companions were panic-stricken over the suggestion. They seemed trying to warn me of something. But you know, Allan, what a miserable French linguist I've always been.

"They talked so rapidly that I couldn't understand them. Both men crossed themselves repeatedly. Several times, I caught the expression:

"'*Il n'y a plus de Pyrenées; il sent du fagot et de la sorcellerie!*'

"I lost my temper. I told my companions I would go, with or without them. I started off, never dreaming they would abandon me. But after going some distance, I turned in time to see both men hurrying in the opposite direction. Once they stopped and gazed back at me, fearfully.

"I called to them; I shouted—but in vain. The thought of such perfidy made me angry enough. I would show them that I was not afraid.

"I strove hard to recall what the two excited Frenchmen had tried to impart in their rapid discourse and elaborate gestures. Why hadn't they spoken in English? Why had they said of this town something about its 'smelling of fagots, and being suspected of sorcery'? I couldn't figure it out. Try as I would, I couldn't throw off a rush of apprehension as I entered the place.

"The very stones of the town were ancient, towering in ivy-clad majesty above the narrow, winding streets, where the winds sighed, as if forever about to yield some secret of the dark and distant past.

"Somehow, I knew that all was not as it seemed; that beneath the serenity and quiet of surface life ran seething currents of another sort. I say I knew that beforehand, although I had not the slightest basis for such a conclusion at the time.

"A tall old peasant with strange eyes halted abruptly on sighting me. He let fall his pack and rushed over hastily. His eyes fixed themselves on mine with burning intensity, and he smiled, disclosing a toothless cavern.

"'Hola! Hola! Giles! Fanfarot!' he shouted. 'Come hither! Benedicte is here! Hither! Quickly!'

"Immediately there was a clattering of wooden shoes, as other persons poured into the streets, apparently from nowhere. They loomed up so suddenly, it seemed as if they had popped right out of the stones. They greeted me joyously, familiarly, as if I had been some honored burgomaster. Their conduct was that of homage and respect. Each of the peasants vied with the others for the privilege of touching my clothing, of fondling me, but were held back by the strong old fellow, who shielded my body with his.

"'See!' he called to the rest. 'It is Benedicte, who hath returned to the old life. Ah, he returned of his own volition, to assume the ties of the true faith! Our great prince hath come back to us! It is well!'

"He spoke in ancient Basque, Kincaid, and yet I understood him perfectly. A sensation of giddiness, a sickness of soul swept over me at the moment. It blurred those strange white faces turned toward mine. And then, to my horror and consternation, I saw it all.

"The old rustic had spoken the truth! Stranger that he was, I knew that he, these people, this town, had been a part of my past. All appeared about to be revealed as the curtain of memory stirred and promised to unroll.

"'I beg your pardon,' I began, 'but I am a stranger, an American, who is merely a visitor here.'

"I expostulated, bluffed and parried. Anything, rather than face the truth! Yet I realized that I failed miserably, for the protest died in my throat.

"'Come, Your Highness,' exclaimed the tall old man. 'The queen will welcome you. Let us be gone.'

"The old fellow started off at a brisk trot, holding my arm, and calling to the others, who followed behind. These villagers seemed half walking, half running on tiptoe, with curious, jerky leaps. To my astonishment and uneasiness, I found myself imitating them, joining in with their sharp cries, as the pace increased. It seemed as if we were flying like the wind. On through a courtyard we dashed, halting somewhere in the depth of a great feudal hall, where torches flared suddenly out of the dark.

"Through the shadows stepped a girl, whose wild rustic gown clung to her limbs.

"'The queen! The queen!' came the cry, as my warders knelt. 'Her Majesty, the queen!'

"I knew that regal carriage, those kindling dark eyes, the whiteness of her skin, and the curved, red lips. I say that I had known this beautiful girl for ages; had loved her, worshiped her, been her slave! She, and all of this ancient city, had been a part of my life in the long ago. And I felt she remembered it, too!

"She halted on sighting me, one slender hand involuntarily seeking her throat, her face going pale.

"'Benedicte!' she murmured, tensely. 'Benedicte! Is it thou? It is thou, who hath returned to claim thy heritage! Ah, Benedicte, thou hast returned to me!'

"Her voice sank to a whisper. She came close, placing her hands upon my shoulders, and stood there for a moment with her eyelids closed.

"'Vermilyea!' I heard myself exclaim. 'Daughter of the Dusk! She who is fairer than the harvest moon! Ay, thine own Benedicte hath returned to dwell in the sweetness of thy presence!'

"One by one they withdrew, those strange townsmen, whose very silence denoted gratification—of what? It was as if they had sensed our desire to be alone.

"I gazed deep into Vermilyea's eyes, and gathered her to my breast.

"'What, O Vermilyea, of the other; him to whom we did not yield; him whose vengeance cut short our lives in the long, long ago?'

"A troubled expression clouded Vermilyea's brow, as she answered me: 'Of thine ancient enemy—and mine—the fates disclose him not reborn. Though still discarnate, it is written he shall soon return. Beware, Benedicte, of J'Adon! Beware of the time when he shall reclothe himself in the flesh of man—and strike!'

"The young queen trembled, as if her own words had frightened her.

"'I fear nothing, Daughter of the Dusk! I fear not his return! Let him strike, if he but dare!' I answered, with the portrait of my age-old foe rising up in memory.

"'Silence, O Benedicte!' whispered Vermilyea. 'Thine enemy's counselor is here, again in flesh; the chief apostle, the high priest! His power is dwindled by mine, yet it is greater than thine own. Trust him not! I warn thee! Follow thou me.'

"VERMILYEA led me along a passage, the blackness of which seemed teeming with things invisible, and halted. She thrust open a great door and bade me enter. It was a tremendous hall, lit with numerous tongues of flame, and shrouded in blackness overhead. It was the alchemy!

"A moaning and shrieking filled the place, like lost souls in a cavern. The size of the chamber could be surmised from flashes of pale lightning that crackled in the air, but that was all.

"'Dumaine! Dumaine!' called Vermilyea. 'Come hither, thou apostle! Witness thou him, who hath returned through the ancient tie!'

"A tall, hooded figure suddenly straightened over the crimson glow of a retort as we entered. A hoarse cry escaped his lips. He sprang back, his gleaming eyes a-roll, his face pale in the blood-red glare.

"'Benedicte!' he cried, staggering back. 'The stars were right! Thou hast returned. Thy forgiveness, my liege lord! Thy pardon! It was not I who betrayed thee in the other life! It was another! Forgive and forget, sire!'

"The alchemist dropped to his knees and groveled. So his was the hand, then, that had, in the past, flaunted a death warrant in my stricken face; his the cruel smile upon which my dying eyes had gazed as the darkness came closing in!

"'Thou speakest well, apostle!' I cried, sternly. 'See that thou dost forgive and forget! See to it, lest thou shouldst find thine own death warrant, signed by him whose heart is more forgiving than thine own!'

"I turned and left him there, this cringing primate, with terror in his eyes.

"Vermilyea led me along a maze of corridors, emerging at length upon a silent balcony. The perfume of a dark garden below, and the sight of turrets afloat under a crescent moon, combined to overwhelm me like strong wine. I knew that strange forces gripped me, and yet I didn't care.

"Two peasant girls, treading the flags on tiptoe, darted about like wraiths, leaving silver viands on a table under the eaves. Vermilyea served me with her own hands, and to my own surprize I ate and drank as one famished.

"'Thou, O Benedicte, hast entered thy rightful sphere,' she whispered, leaning toward me, exquisite in her earnestness. 'It is in good time, so thou canst give praise to the Great One—the Master—on the Sabbath that nears.'

"Something of unutterable loathing—of vague horror—swept over me as I listened. I recoiled from her violently. I did not know why I did this, except that, at the moment, it seemed that her beauty was suddenly tinged with the fires of the damned.

My mind refused to yield a certain chapter of the past I knew it held.

"'Benedicte!' she cried, in despair; 'thou shrinkest from me! Thou lovest not me, but another! Ah, hast thou forgotten thine own Vermilyea?'

"'No,' I spoke, struggling to break the spell. 'It is not that, Vermilyea! I am entrusted with a mission for a great government that I can not forsake. A great responsibility is mine. I can not stay. I must leave on the morrow.'

"'Thou shalt not go, Benedicte,' declared Vermilyea, in a low, tense voice. 'There can be no escape from that which the Master hath written. The ancient tie binds, and thou must heed it!'

"'I challenge thy right to stand in the path of honor!' I answered, rising in alarm, determined to fly.

"Vermilyea had risen majestically, a strange power in her eyes. Her glance held mine like a vise. She seized an odd-shaped flagon from the table and poured forth a goblet of the contents.

"'Drink,' she commanded, thrusting forward the brimming vessel.

"I struggled against resistless force. My hand rose, as if impelled by another power, and took the goblet. My unwilling lips quaffed the potion to its very dregs.

"A forgetfulness followed; a blackness, except the faint memory of rites in some vast auditorium, the presence of an immense, blurred figure on a throne, whose eyes the spectator dared not rest his own upon.

"All that I can remember of my further wanderings in that grim, dark city came back in a confused haze of memory. Wandering dazed near the gates of the place one day, I fumbled in my pockets and drew forth a small book. I opened it. It was the Book of Common Prayer.

"My eyes fell upon the words: 'Save me, O God: for the waters are come in, even unto my soul. . . . I stick fast in the deep mire, where no ground is: I am come into deep waters, so that the floods run over me.'

"In the instant that I repeated them, I felt my vision clear and the spell unbind. I lifted my eyes in prayer, and then I knew that the chains had left my feet.

"I dashed from the town, as from a place accursed. Yet I was not free. When I felt master of myself again, I glanced back and saw the satyr. I could not drive it off. In blank despair, I made my way into a railway town, where I took the train to Tours.

"By accident, I reached into my pocket and drew out a folded paper. Strange, that I had no recollection of it! Yet, written in a peculiar hand, was this message:

Prince Benedicte,

Sire: Thou hast permission to leave the ancient domain. Settle thine affairs and return May Eve, one year hence, prepared to dwell here forever.

Verdelet, thy familiar, with whom thou hast been attached by rites of blood, is empowered to bring thee back by force, shouldst thou make this necessary. Thou hast signified thy choice. From this decision there can be no retrogression. Her Majesty hath willed it.

DUMAINE.

RUTHERFORD withdrew the mandate from his wallet and held it up to his friend's astonished gaze.

"Until I became aware that the satyr was invisible to four out of every five persons, I dreaded going to Paris, or any other place of large population. I feared the notoriety that would most certainly ensue, should it become known that I traveled with a familiar in my wake.

"Of course, there is the fifth person—such as yourself—whose perceptiveness is acute. For this reason I have avoided all crowds; above all, special functions of a social nature, where the fact would be discovered."

Kincaid, listening with troubled brow, suddenly lifted his eyes.

"What of Helen Leonard, Jack? You two have been engaged hardly more than a year. It is a case of making your choice between her and this strange Vermilyea, whose spell has been so closely woven about you, isn't it?"

"Don't misunderstand me, Allan!" said Rutherford, visibly affected. "Whatever I may have been in the past, whatever Vermilyea has been to me in the other life, I have no desire to go back. It may be that I can not evade the dark and dreadful destiny ordained by this spell.

"It is because I adore Helen, that I wish to offer her a release from our engagement. Do you believe I would willingly involve her in my misfortune, or expose her to the very real danger surrounding me, if there should be no way to offset it?"

Kincaid shook his head. He leaned forward in his chair, and cursed his helplessness.

"But you are rich, Jack," he suggested, hopefully. "Surely there is some way by which science can provide a remedy. Have you a plan?"

Rutherford nodded. He was calmer, now that he had told his story.

"I shall attempt to exorcise this entity, myself, within the next few days. Once that is accomplished, the curse is broken. For the past few months I have studied, under capable guidance, the process to be used. But, Allan, there is no certainty of success. I may fail. Should I talk it over with Helen, now, or should I wait?"

"Wait, by all means," urged Kincaid earnestly, thinking of the girl both had loved in college days, and whom he yet kept enshrined in his heart. "Helen loves you, old man; remember that. You must break this spell cast by the Daughter of the Dusk, and go back to Helen, free. I claim the right to help in your experiment."

"No, Allan; thanks, old chap," said Rutherford, gratefully. "It would place you, who know nothing of the psychic, in extreme danger. That is why I can not permit you to take such a risk. I must do the work alone."

Kincaid's eyes were worried as he half rose from his seat.

"So, there is risk, then? If there is danger to me, Jack, there certainly is to yourself, as well. I don't like this thing at all."

He eyed the satyr's evil visage, steadily, as Rutherford, complaining of fatigue, arose. The embassy man said that he would go to his quarters on King James Street. They parted at the club entrance.

"Telephone me tomorrow," Rutherford urged. "There may be further news."

Kincaid promised. He stood watching his friend, and the medieval satyr tagging along behind, until both were swallowed up by the fog.

The chemist would have given much, at that moment, for the possession of dark secrets that would prove of service to his old classmate in the latter's sore hours of trial. He paced the club lobby, nervously.

Swayed by a sudden impulse, he donned his hat and topcoat and hurried to Rutherford's apartment on King James Street.

SEDDONS, the frail cockney, who for the past six years had been his friend's valet, met him at the door.

" 'E's retired, sir," the little Englishman announced, "but seein' as 'ow it's you, Mister Kincaid, I'll wyke 'im, should you sye."

Kincaid hastily objected, stating his call as unimportant.

"But you'll watch him carefully, Seddons?" asked the chemist, anxiously. "You'll telephone me at noon, tomorrow, won't you, my lad?"

"Gladly, sir, gladly," promised Seddons, appearing to stifle something else he longed to say but did not dare.

Evidently Seddons, too, was anxious, thought Kincaid, strolling back to his club. He wondered whether the little valet had also seen the satyr.

"Good man, that Seddons," mused Kincaid to himself. "Won't discuss his master's affairs, and won't be frightened into it."

How faithfully the cockney valet kept his promise was shown the following day, when Kincaid's telephone bell rang violently. The chemist awoke with a start, and picked up the receiver.

"Something happened to Rutherford, you say?" he cried into the mouthpieee. "Found dying in the library? Good God, Seddons! The walls scorched by fire? Taken to a hospital? I'll be there, right away!"

Kincaid crashed the receiver back upon its hook, and donned his clothing with almost incredible speed. He hurried to King James Street in a cab, and almost fell over Seddons in the entrance of Rutherford's apartment. The little cockney could not hold back the tears.

" 'Orrible, sir! 'Orrible, indeed!" sniffed poor, grief-stricken Seddons. "Found 'im, sir, lyin' on 'is fyce. That 'orrid thin brown man 'ad disappeared. Oh sir, it's 'ard to know the guv'nor's gone! Somethin' 'ellish 'as 'appened to 'im."

"Speak, man," urged Kincaid, his face white. "How did it happen? Who was here?"

"Cawn't sye, sir, w'at 'appened," moaned the valet, leaning weakly against the wall. "I've my beliefs, though, sir! 'Ave an idea that the French magician, Le Voyen, is to blime. 'Ave a werry bad feelin' about 'im, sir. 'E was alwyes w'isperin' in the guv'nor's ear. 'E was greedy for money, too, Mister Kincaid. I've seen 'im get checks—large ones they was, too."

"His address, quickly!" demanded Kincaid, seizing the telephone frantically in an effort to get Trafalgar Hospital, where Rutherford had been taken.

" 'Ere it is, sir," gasped Seddons, extending a card, which read:

PROFESSOR CASPAR LE VOYEN
Clairvoyant
India Square 993. London E. C. 5

Leaving Seddons in charge of the apartment, Kincaid hurried directly to Scotland Yard, where he told the story. He came away, accompanied by an inspector. Together they hastened to the India Square address.

A TALL, swarthy individual in a red silk smock opened the door, raising his black goatee inquiringly at the two.

"Monsieur Le Voyen?" inquired Kincaid, directly.

"I am Le Voyen," announced the swarthy one, showing his white teeth. "Might I inquire of thee, *Monsieur,* the purport of thees veesit? I am ver' busy——"

"An official talk with you, my man," explained the Scotland Yard man, showing his shield.

"Ah, then, *Monsieur;* in zat case," spoke the clairvoyant, bowing low, "please enter!"

With a forced politeness, Le Voyen waved them into a large, dimly lighted atelier, the walls of which were covered with mystic symbols. Against a black background they shone dully in the rays of a lurid lamp, which, as Kincaid observed, was an image of Satan's head. So sinister were the features that for an instant the visitors recoiled.

Kincaid came to the point at once.

"I came to see you about John Rutherford," he said, coldly, eyeing the glittering black orbs of the conjuror unfalteringly.

"Ah, yes, *Monsieur!* Rutherford! I know heem; he ees one gentleman," gestured Le Voyen rapidly, his swarthy features paling suddenly.

"Rutherford is either dead or dying as a result of an experiment last night; some unholy process——"

"Dead, *Monsieur!*" rasped the clairvoyant. "So eet ees w'at I feared! Zounds! Eet ees too bad——"

"It is going to be very bad for you, Le Voyen!" declared Kincaid, his sandy hair bristling and his face growing hard. "You are responsible for this thing. As a result of your coaching last night, your pupil today is beyond human aid."

Le Voyen half leaped from his chair over the blunt accusation. For a moment his control deserted him.

"Eet ees not ze truth!" he shouted desperately. "I tell you, *Messieurs,* I haf had nothing to do weez hees misfortune. Rutherford, he came here. He beg me to exorcise ze familiar, which plague heem.

"I say I can not—I haf not ze skill—eet ees too dangerous for attempt. I say eet may keel heem. He get angry an' declare he shall try heemself; that he know enough of magic to dispel ze phantom, even eef I do not help. But I refuse. He go away ver' mad."

"A likely tale!" grated Kincaid, pointedly. "But it doesn't hold water. You gave him the advice that led to his doom. I know that."

"Ha! that ees w'at thou sayest, yes?" sneered the magician. "Eet ees not w'at thou canst prove! I defy thee, *mais oui!*" The black eyes shot beams of hate.

The Scotland Yard man let fall the receiver of a telephone he had quietly made use of during the conversation.

"Rutherford is dead," said the inspector, laying a hand upon the clairvoyant's shoulder. "I formally arrest you on a charge of murder. It is best if you come quietly."

The Frenchman paled and fell limply back into his chair. His glittering eyes were now like those of a trapped animal, seeking a loophole of escape.

"Wait, *Messieurs!*" breathed Le Voyen, with beads of perspiration standing out upon his forehead. "Rutherford ees not dead! He ees in one deep state of suspended animation!"

"The authorities state otherwise," exclaimed the Scotland Yard detective, producing a pair of handcuffs.

"Zey do not understand!" cried Le Voyen, frantically. "Monsieur Rutherford project heemself into ze fourth dimension. Hees soul leave hees body, *voilà!* He haf not enough power to re-enter eet. Ze familiar go —pouf!—like zat! Eet fool ze doctaires! I, *Messieurs,* can bring back hees soul. I shall prove eet!"

The magician was in earnest now, and Kincaid's eyes met the surprized ones of the inspector. For several moments neither spoke. Then Kincaid's arm rested itself upon that of the sleuth.

"It will do no harm to let him try it," he whispered, aside. "If he fails, he can not escape the charge."

"As you say, sir," consented the Englishman, after a pause.

With Le Voyen in the center, the three set out at once for Trafalgar Hospital.

Dr. Matthew Haxton emerged from the operating-room to meet them. The elderly physician had waged a hard fight to save Rutherford, whose case had sorely puzzled him.

"I am sorry, gentlemen," spoke Haxton, with sincerity. "There was really nothing we could do. It is, indeed, too bad. And quite a mystery it is, for this young man possessed sound health and a strong heart."

Kincaid, without delay, outlined the purpose of the call. Haxton thought the suspended animation theory impossible, but, in the end, gave permission to make the experiment.

"I shall impose but one condition," announced Le Voyen. "I mus' do my work alone, else I shall fail."

"Nonsense!" insisted Haxton. "The three of us are going into the operating-room with you. I, for one, would like to know how you magicians work!"

"Eet will be suicide!" declared Le Voyen, firmly. "Lock ze doors eef you weesh. I shall not try to escape. Eef you refuse, I shall not undertake eet. One murdaire charge ees bettaire zan four." He shrugged his shoulders defiantly.

The three other men held a consultation, in low tones.

"All right, then," announced Haxton, finally. "We shall wait outside for you and the resurrected patient. If you win, my hat is off to you, my good fellow!"

The physician ended with a chuckle of disbelief.

What went on in the operating-room the waiting trio never afterward knew. A sensation of rushing winds through lonely caves—of being in the presence of great power—assailed them. A whirring of wings sounded through the corridors, as of pinioned creatures wheeling across the mouth of some vast, deep chasm. Sudden panic gripped the three men. Together they rushed toward the operating-room entrance. Before it could be reached, they were flung to the floor, as if brushed aside by resistless force. A streak of flame-colored light flashed with blinding effect over the glass door panels. A crescendo of shrieks, a succession of shocks, preceded a single concussion that shook the building to its very foundations.

It was as if some paralyzing drug had seized the three who waited. They were still staring stupidly at the door, when the operating-room lights flared up. A second later the door swung open, and Le Voyen appeared on the threshold, with a smile of triumph lighting his swarthy features.

He beckoned them in, pointing toward the operating-table, where a form stirred.

"Pairhaps," announced Le Voyen, with meaning glance toward Haxton, "the learned doctaire ees convinced Monsieur Rutherford ees not dead? *Voilà!*"

The three men stared, open-mouthed. They saw the government man's eyes flutter open, and roam, for an instant, about the room. Jack Rutherford was alive!

"Where am I?" he demanded wildly. "Ah, I can not recognize this place!"

Half rising from the table, Rutherford slumped weakly over. Haxton rushed to his side, and swiftly administered a stimulant.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the physician. "I don't understand it. Here is a man who has been dead for hours, and yet he lives!"

Rutherford's strength was coming back. Within five minutes he was able to walk without assistance.

The Scotland Yard man stepped near. "You are John Rutherford, an American, are you not?" he asked.

Rutherford nodded.

"Have you any charge against this man?" queried the Englishman, indicating Le Voyen with a flourish of his hand.

"None at all," answered the embassy man, quickly.

"Then, gentlemen, I shall bid you good evening," said the detective, as he bowed and left the operating-room.

It was when he turned his head that Kincaid saw it. The satyr! There it stood in its accustomed place, just in rear of the embassy man.

Evidently the experiment had failed altogether, thought the chemist, moving toward Le Voyen to demand an explanation.

"So, the satyr is not dispelled after all, then?" he asked, directly.

"*Mais non!*" responded the clairvoyant. "I can not comprehend, but eet ees still attached. A great power

has done thees work. Eet ees dangerous, but—zounds!—eet can not be helped."

Rutherford, still shaken by his experience, went to his quarters, in company with Kincaid and Le Voyen. Seddons, who met them at the door, gave a cry of relief and almost collapsed.

"Seddons," spoke Kincaid, after Le Voyen had departed and Rutherford had fallen into a sound sleep, "you must watch your master closely. There must be no more experiments. 'Phone me instantly of any attempt."

Awakened to a new sense of responsibility, the little cockney gave Kincaid his promise.

Two days later, Rutherford and Seddons left London for a rest. They had chosen a small, quiet village in the English countryside.

Kincaid, at the station to bid them good-bye, observed the head of the satyr, staring out of the compartment just over Rutherford's shoulder. The chemist returned to his club, unable to throw off a foreboding that all was not yet well with his friend; that there would be further danger to face.

The following two months proved a period of anxiety, so far as Kincaid was concerned. During that time, he had received no word of Rutherford.

Seddons' letter came unexpectedly. Beyond the postmark, "London, E. C. 2," it bore no address. It read:

Mr. Allan Kincaid.
Esteemed Sir:

I have written you twice before, but suspect you did not get the letters. We are back in London now. That devil, Le Voyen, came to the country with us. He even took the same train. He has been with us every minute since. Mr. Rutherford is behaving quite queerly, sir, not at all like himself. Drinking and savagelike all the time. The funny brown man doesn't trouble me as much as Le Voyen's influence over my master. It is getting very hard to stay in Mr. Rutherford's service. Pardon my boldness, sir, but from what you said some time ago, I thought you ought to know.

Respectfully,
THOMAS SEDDONS.

That was all, but it was enough to send Kincaid to King James Street posthaste. There, to his surprize, he found that Rutherford had vacated his quarters almost two months before, and had gone without leaving an address.

"Confound it!" muttered Kincaid to himself. "No address! Downright careless of Seddons. Wonder how I'm going to find them now? Humph, guess I'll have to wait for him to write again."

He examined the letter once more, and this time he gave vent to a surprized whistle. The address had been neatly sheared off the paper.

It was in the club, weeks afterward, that he next heard of Rutherford.

Simon Atwell, manager of the London branch, Hemisphere National Bank, of New York, loomed up in the lounge, and settled his three-hundred-pound bulk alongside Kincaid. He passed a hand slowly over his shaggy mane of white hair, and raised a pair of keen blue eyes to Kincaid's.

"I came to see you about Rutherford," announced the banker, with a slight raise of his bushy eyebrows. "I was his father's friend, as you are his. It is necessary that we talk freely. May I?"

The younger man begged Atwell to talk as plainly as possible.

"Bank men seldom discuss their depositors," spoke Atwell's deep voice. "Against ethics, you know. But, damn it all, Kincaid, young Rutherford's gone wild, of late. Throwing away money—he and this Le Voyen—and won't listen to reason. Everything about him has suddenly changed; even his signature. Behaving like a beast! It's got me guessing."

"I know exactly how you feel, sir," declared Kincaid. "I've lost

sleep over the matter, myself. Rutherford won't let me help him, yet that is the very thing he needs."

"Something's got to be done!" interrupted Atwell, shaking a pudgy forefinger, with emphasis. "We've got to save that boy from himself. Any suggestion?"

The keen blue eyes narrowed a little.

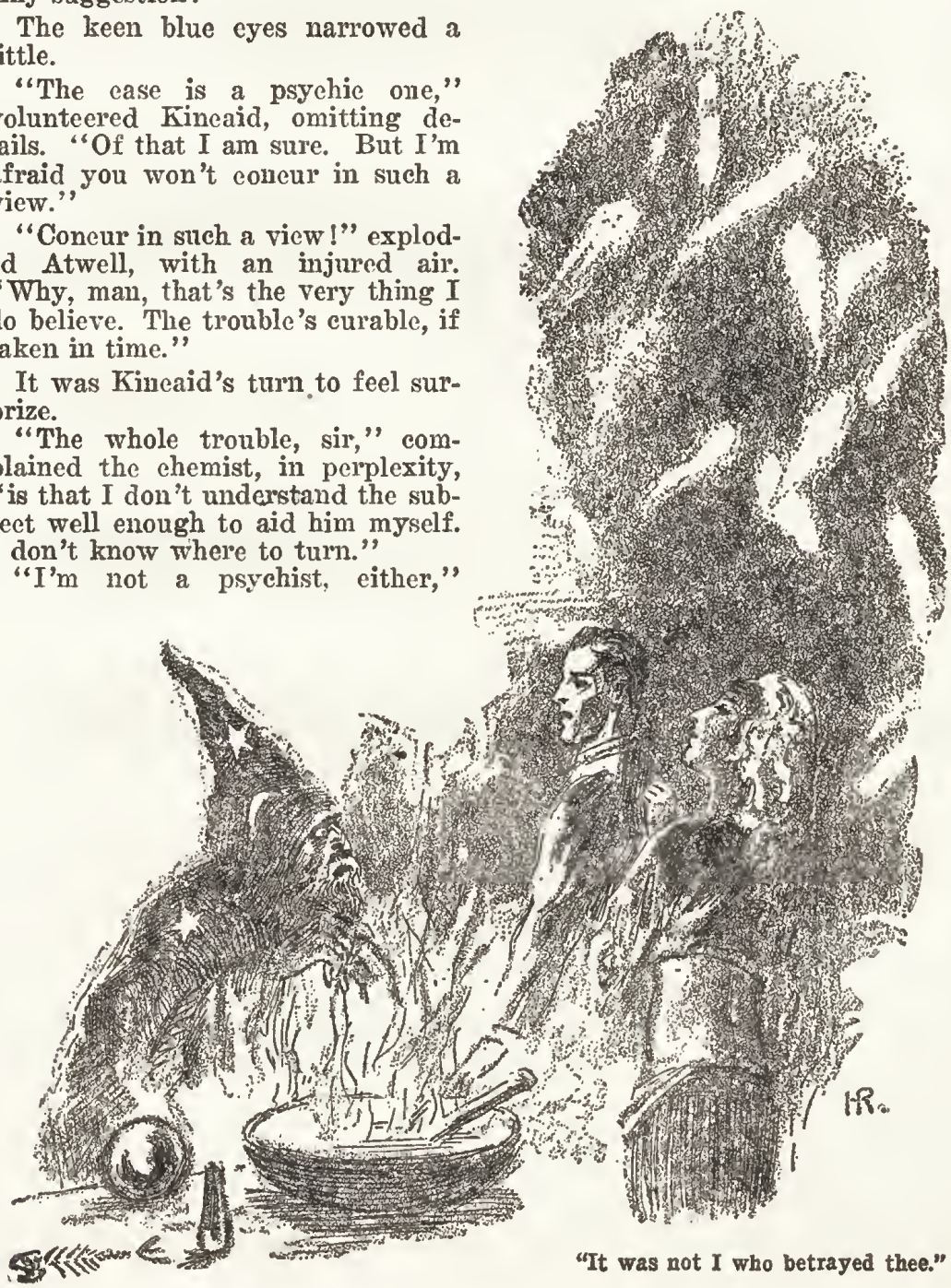
"The case is a psychic one," volunteered Kincaid, omitting details. "Of that I am sure. But I'm afraid you won't concur in such a view."

"Concur in such a view!" exploded Atwell, with an injured air. "Why, man, that's the very thing I do believe. The trouble's curable, if taken in time."

It was Kincaid's turn to feel surprize.

"The whole trouble, sir," complained the chemist, in perplexity, "is that I don't understand the subject well enough to aid him myself. I don't know where to turn."

"I'm not a psychist, either," snapped the banker, "but fortunately, I do know where to turn. I have a friend here in London, a Dr. Arthur Littlejohn, who is a master of psychic science. He hates publicity like the devil, but in spite of that he has a world-wide reputation."



"It was not I who betrayed thee."

"An Englishman?" asked Kincaid, with no attempt to conceal his interest.

"No, an American," replied Atwell. "He visits Europe frequently, though. He's a member of this club, and stopping here now, if I am not mistaken. Suppose we find out."

An inquiry brought prompt results. The scientist, they learned, was, at that moment, not five hundred feet distant.

IN THE reading-room was seated a smallish, well-groomed man, with a close-cropped Vandyke beard, who glanced up from his copy of the *London Times* as his callers approached. He regarded them intently over the gold rims of his spectacles, which were attached to his waistcoat by a ribbon. Nodding a cheery greeting to Atwell, he arose from his easy chair. The bank man introduced Kincaid and the psychist at once.

Kincaid was immediately conscious of the magnetic power of the scientist, who, a man perhaps past fifty, was the possessor of an almost shining pallor of countenance, and remarkably keen eyes.

Littlejohn hurriedly rang for coffee and cigars.

"Doctor," explained Atwell, over his cup, "we have come to impose ourselves on you, to ask your aid in a very grave matter. Will you give it?"

"You have known me long enough, Simon Atwell," said the savant, a glint of humor in his glance, "to know that I would do anything to help an old friend. What's the trouble?"

The Vandyke beard raised a trifle, over a suspended coffee cup.

"We'll come to the point," announced the banker, with satisfaction in his manner. "Let Kincaid tell you the story."

The young chemist held nothing back. He gave details of Rutherford's plight, from beginning to end. When he had concluded, Littlejohn straightened in his chair and gazed intently at the narrator. He hurled a rapid-fire series of questions at Kincaid, and then gave a soft exclamation of astonishment. His whole manner had tensed, and he was now sitting on the edge of his rocker, in rapt reflection. It was some minutes before he spoke again.

"First, let me ask if Rutherford is the identical man mentioned here?" inquired the scientist, indicating an article in the newspaper he had laid aside.

Atwell, hastily adjusting his glasses, scanned the page and gasped. His eyes had fallen on the following headlines:

SOCIETY GIRL BREAKS
ENGAGEMENT TO ENVOY

Helen Leonard, Heiress, Announces Troth With Millionaire at End; American Colony Amazed

"The same!" burst out Kincaid. "I am a friend of both principals. I didn't dream it would end like this—haven't seen the morning papers."

"Bad, indeed; very bad!" sighed Atwell, shaking his shaggy head. "Littlejohn, you've simply got to help that boy. I know that you never accept a dollar for your work—that you are well off, yourself—but at least let me pay expenses. Name any amount you like!"

The scientist shook his head. He waved aside the proffer of remuneration.

"I'll take the case," he decided, after deliberation. "Whatever there is to be done must be undertaken immediately. I may say that, as a psychic problem, this interests me. The solution will be anything but easy."

"Good!" boomed Atwell, slapping one knee. "I knew you would! It's mighty white of you, Doctor! What a load it takes off my mind! Keep me posted, won't you? Unfortunately, I've got an appointment in

half an hour." He offered his apologies and hurried away.

"Have you Miss Leonard's address?" asked the psychist, now that he and the young chemist were alone. "We must see her at once."

Kincaid drew forth a memorandum book, in which, some time before, he had marked down a house number in the West End of London. It was that of friends with whom Helen was stopping. He stepped to a telephone and asked if they might call. Permission came over the wire.

A few minutes later, Littlejohn and Kincaid left the San Carlo Club together. They hailed a taxicab and were driven to an imposing house.

Presenting their cards, the callers were ushered into a living-room, where, almost immediately, Helen Leonard herself entered.

LITTLEJOHN had seen much of commonplace beauty, but that of this slender, Titian-haired girl challenged in sheer exquisiteness anything he had ever seen. There was something fine, splendidly strong about this young woman, who, when hardly out of her teens, had been left alone in the world, when her father, Colonel Austin Leonard, had died, and his millions had passed to her.

Kincaid stepped quickly up and led her into the room, where she acknowledged the psychist's gallant bow. He noted a sad light in her blue-gray eyes, as she sank wearily into a chair.

"I'm so sorry, Helen," began Kincaid, awkwardly. "Indeed, I've only known it since this afternoon."

Seeing her unshed tears, he stopped.

"Miss Leonard," spoke Littlejohn, earnestly, "John Rutherford is in danger. It is our desire to save him, if we can. Your aid may mean the salvation of the man you love. Tell us what has happened. It is very important, and there is little time to be lost."

Helen seemed bracing herself with an effort. Like many another woman, she found real courage necessary to bare a tragedy close to her heart.

"It is true, Allan," she said, in a low tone, turning to Kincaid, "that I have broken with Jack. I was forced to do so, to save my self-respect."

Her white hand went to her throat, with an impulsive gesture. Both men saw bruises there. She was very pale.

"A week ago," she continued, "when I met Jack in the Strand by appointment, I was startled to see with him a strange brown man, in fancy-dress costume. Jack evaded my questions about the fellow, and asked me to motor as far as his quarters and wait outside until he could obtain some important papers. I agreed, of course.

"The steady stare of that thin brown creature, during the ride, unnerved me. My alarm was further increased when I noted that the big French car was headed, not toward Jack's quarters, but through an immense slum district.

"I demanded an explanation of Jack, and his answer was the thrust of a drug-soaked handkerchief against my nostrils. I struggled, but lost consciousness. The next I remember is that the car stopped, and I was carried into a squalid house.

"I was fully conscious when taken into a small, shabby front parlor, where a bearded, dark-skinned man introduced himself as Monsieur Le Voyen. Jack came to the point at once. He did not love me, he said, but Le Voyen idolized me. In short, he said that I must wed this terrible Le Voyen if I wished to leave that house alive.

"I made my choice, then and there, declaring that death would be a thousand times preferable to such dishonor. Le Voyen, however, stepped forward and seized me in his arms. I begged Jack to spare me this humiliation, but he only laughed. I think that turned my mind.

"I tore myself out of Le Voyen's grasp and lifted a pair of fire-tongs from the grate. I struck Le Voyen with all my force across the head, when he lunged toward me with the fury of an animal. He went down insensible. The man to whom I was formerly engaged seized me. I was thrust into a dingy bedroom and locked in.

"How they overlooked the matter of fastening the window, I can not say. At any rate I waited for a time, and when the men raised their voices in an argument, I climbed over the sill and lowered myself to the ground. Eventually I found a taxi-cab and made my way home."

"It was splendid—brave—of you, Helen," gritted Kincaid. "Why, they might have——" He clenched his fists angrily at the thought of the contemptible treatment accorded this gentlewoman, this girl that he had always loved.

"Shocking, Miss Leonard; shocking, indeed!" declared the psychist. "It ended very fortunately for you. Do not censure Rutherford too harshly. I can only tell you that his mind is temporarily deranged. It is up to us, whether his affliction is permanent. It will be difficult, but I think we shall restore the real Rutherford, who worships you."

"If you only could!" breathed Helen, who still cherished the man she had broken with. "Please, Doctor—and you, Allan—let me thank you from my heart for what you are doing. I see it differently, now. Poor Jack! If only I could help!"

"You can," counseled Littlejohn, on departure, "but that will be later on, when we have the case definitely in hand."

The two men bade her farewell and departed for the club.

Waiting in the lobby for a time, Littlejohn suggested an evening at the Grenoble Theater. It would be a diversion, and besides, he said, the newest comedy had opened there. The scientist explained that his mind often worked better amid scenes of gayety than it did in isolation.

Neither Littlejohn nor Kincaid found it possible to fix thought upon the sparkling lines of the play, perplexed as they were about the case. Hardly aware of the tuneful music, both sat silently for a time, and left their seats fifteen minutes ahead of the final curtain.

Passing through the foyer, Kincaid clutched the scientist's arm and drew him to one side. The chemist had lowered his voice to a whisper, indicating a corner of the lobby, not twenty feet away.

Raising his eyes, Littlejohn perceived the figures of Rutherford and the swarthy Le Voyen. Both were in evening attire. Le Voyen was wearing a sardonic smile, Rutherford twisting his countenance into an evil leer.

Kincaid by his side, the scientist edged his way closer to the pair. Now he was face to face with them. The yellow orbs of Rutherford fixed themselves menacingly upon Littlejohn. The lips curled into an angry snarl, and an expression of hate spread slowly over his features. It was reflected upon the leering face of the satyr, standing directly in rear.

Le Voyen, at that moment, attempted to slide in between Rutherford's body and that of Littlejohn. His sinuous movements were for all the world like those of a snake. Rutherford's arm raised itself, threateningly.

"Stop!" commanded the scientist, fixing his glance full upon the embassy man. "You can not strike! Drop your hand! I order it!"

Slowly Rutherford's hand came down, until it rested by his side. He was as powerless to move as if gripped fast by a vise of steel. His facial contortions revealed the struggle he was making to oppose the

psychist's will. The visage of the familiar gibbered unintelligibly, in impotent rage, as it felt the conquering force.

Le Voyen turned a sickly yellow and fell hastily back. He sensed Littlejohn's power, and realized that his own could not cope with it.

The psychologist stepped forward, but at that moment the outpouring theater crowd seethed between him and Rutherford, the man he was attempting to save. His psychic hold was snapped. Despite the efforts of Kincaid and himself to close in on the quarry, Littlejohn realized it was useless. Rutherford and Le Voyen were swallowed up in the crowd, and they vanished without trace.

"You see now what we have against us!" murmured Littlejohn, when he and Kincaid were walking away from the theater. "It is extremely important that we get Rutherford to a secluded place, where the spell may be broken. It is also necessary to strip Le Voyen of his evil power, so that Rutherford may be safe. It will mean danger to both of us."

"I'm ready to face it, Doctor," declared Kincaid, promptly.

"Bravely said, Kincaid!" replied the scientist. "Now to work. This is April 9th, is it not?" His eyes sought Kincaid's inquiringly.

"April 10th," corrected the chemist, with a smile.

This intelligence apparently startled Littlejohn.

"Humph!" he reflected. "Every hour counts now. Should Rutherford escape London and revisit the scene of his last adventure, I fear the result."

"You mean that it might cost him his life?"

"I mean that it might cost him his soul," answered Littlejohn gravely. "Rutherford is now only half possessed, as a result of what took place at the last Hereties' Sabbath. Another would mean complete capitulation and eternal damnation!"

"Great God!" burst out the startled Kincaid. "You can't mean that, Doctor!"

"But I do mean it, son," insisted the scientist earnestly. "Unless we have freed Rutherford by the close of May 1st—the Satanic Sabbath—there is little hope. There is work to do, and no mistake."

"You are afraid, then, sir, that the occurrence in the Grenoble lobby will cause our subjects to leave London?"

"Yes," said Littlejohn, anxiously. "We must try to prevent it."

He quickly outlined a plan of operation. They would go to Rutherford's quarters at once, and corner the men they sought.

"But we haven't the address, Doctor!" insisted Kincaid. "I've combed London!"

"I have already found it," said the psychologist, quietly. "Last night, through a tour of London hospitals, I discovered Seddons, the valet, out of his mind, raving over 'imaginary horrors,' as the physicians termed it. I knew that these horrors were very real! Plainly, the little fellow is the victim of witchcraft."

"Le Voyen's work!" shouted Kincaid, clenching his hands.

"Without a doubt," spoke the scientist, soothingly. "Seddons knew too much. He was too straightforward. Le Voyen feared the little cockney's knowledge might incriminate him. So he decided to remove Seddons in the most horrible fashion imaginable—a death spell."

"What?" cried Kincaid, turning white. "Do you mean to say poor little Seddons is dying? This is terrible, Doctor, diabolical!"

"Of course it is," exclaimed Littlejohn, with a kindly glance over his spectacle rims. "But what else can we expect of Le Voyen? I did the one thing possible to aid Sed-

dons. I placed him under a deep, protective trance. But it can not last for many hours. We must find Rutherford's lodgings immediately. The valet's life depends on it."

RIDING swiftly through the West End district, Littlejohn produced a court order for Rutherford's commitment in a private hospital. The psychist explained that he had taken this precaution to insure a complete cure, under the best conditions.

Kincaid suggested bringing in the police and having them take the quarry by force. Littlejohn shook his head.

"I have reasons against it," he asserted. "To rely upon others in this instance spells failure."

The taxicab stopped. The two investigators went to the entrance of a rather pretentious dwelling and rang the bell. There was no answer.

"Let's break in by the rear way," suggested Kincaid, as they skirted the house. Littlejohn nodded.

The chemist placed his shoulder to the back door and heaved. He would have plunged headlong into the hallway had it not been for Littlejohn's staying hand.

"Not even locked!" remarked the psychist. "Someone has undoubtedly left this house in quite a hurry."

The two visitors went swiftly through the silent dwelling, going from room to room, as they mounted to successive floors. The entire house was in a state of wild disorder. In cyclonic fashion, paintings and statuary had been chipped and smashed, the furniture hacked and broken.

There were two large bedrooms on the top story, one of which, Littlejohn surmised, had been Rutherford's.

The scientist moved silently from one chamber to the other, feeling out the atmosphere. A sensation of utter despair, of gloomy disconsolation, seized Kincaid. It seemed exactly as if some terrible presence were in the room, watching them.

"There are forces here," spoke the scientist, calmly, steadying Kincaid with his gaze. "Very bad ones, at that. But we need have no fear."

Littlejohn halted in the room next to Rutherford's, bidding Kincaid to stand closely behind him. He pointed to a smashed retort, and then to the walls, which had been scorched, it seemed, by flames.

"Sorcery!" he announced in an undertone. "Humph, Le Voyen shows his hand. Black magic! Not the least doubt of it."

A number of times the psychist circled the room, pressing close to the walls. With a sudden cry he thrust open the door of a large closet.

"Stand back!" he warned the chemist. "Be careful! As you value your life, don't touch anything!"

Littlejohn made a mystic sign and dropped to his knees. Before Kincaid could realize what it was about, the scientist was ripping up the loosened boards of the closet floor. A large crypt was disclosed.

Looking into it, Kincaid could see several odd caskets, of dark red color, which were covered with strange inscriptions. Littlejohn hastily drew on a pair of rubber gloves, and hauled forth the containers, one by one. These were taken to the center of the room, and ranged alongside.

Swiftly the scientist lifted the cover from the first of the curious, miniature coffins. A small image lay within. It was the lifelike representation of a human being, except that the tint of the flesh was a corpselike ivory blue.

"Seddons!" cried Kincaid, staggering back in fright. A sharp command from the psychist steadied him.

Kincaid saw the scientist's hand go slowly over the head of the ef-

figy, and grasp something. Littlejohn raised his eyes and gave utterance to a rapid jargon of words. At the same time his hand came slowly away from the head of the image, and held aloft a long, thin spike, which had been embedded in the skull.

The chemist's eyes bulged as the effigy gradually changed color. It had suddenly assumed the warm white tone of healthy human skin.

"Fiendishly cruel!" declared the savant. "Death by insanity! Seddons, however, has escaped the doom marked out for him. He is saved; the death spell is undone!"

Snatching the effigy from its coffin, Littlejohn dashed it into a thousand pieces against the hearthstones.

Littlejohn's hand was now exploring the second container. Kincaid's hair rose at the sight. He gave vent to an inarticulate shout as he glimpsed the effigy that lay within.

It was a likeness of himself! The color, however, was that of life, and not of death.

Littlejohn's hand withdrew from the skull a pin similar to that taken from the first image, and held it aloft.

"You were marked for the same fate, my son," announced the psychologist, "except that you were protected beforehand. I took the precaution to weave a shell of psychic sheathing about you. That is why you, too, were not seized with the 'horrors', as poor Seddons was."

He seized the witch doll, breaking it up, as he had broken the first.

"Now look!" suggested the doctor, whisking away the lid of the third coffin. Inside lay the warm-tinted reproduction of himself. Again the scientist drew forth a long pin from the brain. He laughed as he hurled the statue against the brick tiles.

"It wouldn't work," chuckled the scientist. "I took the trouble to offset Monsieur Le Voyen's 'medicine'. Hello, what's this?"

The figure in the fourth casket was that of a woman.

"Helen!" burst out Kincaid, gazing down upon the startling resemblance in the face of the wax effigy, with its clustering crown of Titian curls. "God knows what fate that fiend had marked out for her!"

"Sacrifice!" said Littlejohn, grimly, as he slashed the bonds that bound the figure to a small stone altar, and quickly broke the image.

"Le Voyen needed only an effigy of Rutherford to make his murder plan complete," declared the younger man. "But, Doctor, doesn't this business—these magic dolls—seem to you like a bit of horseplay?"

"Not a bit of it!" responded Littlejohn, instantly. "This is Vaudois, one of the worst forms of black art known. Unlike Voodoo, or other corrupt forms, it is cast without the subject's knowledge, without the aid of mental suggestion on the victim's part. With a Vaudois puppet in existence, one's life is in frightful jeopardy, unless the charm is discovered and the rites of exorcism used to offset the spell."

"I am anxious about Helen, Doctor," declared Kincaid. "Do you think there is any further peril? These things have increased my apprehension a lot."

"For the present, she is safe from psychic peril," answered the psychologist. "I took the same measures to protect her that I took with all save Seddons. I say safe, reservedly, son. Up to a radius of one hundred miles my influence will protect her against ordinary evil influences. That doesn't mean, of course, a combination of powerful forces."

He motioned Kincaid into the hallway. They had barely cleared the threshold, when a shout startled them.

"Halt!" boomed a gruff voice. Both visitors stood still, casting a glance about them. They saw two men, one at each end of the landing.

Both of them were utter strangers to the Americans, but had the appearance of being clean-cut, cool individuals, not likely to trifle, or to be trifled with.

"Your name, please," spoke the taller of the pair, a well-built, ruddy-cheeked Briton, wearing a close-cropped white mustache, "and an explanation as to your presence in this house."

Littlejohn nodded. He swiftly withdrew a slip of paper from his waistcoat pocket. The effect was magical. The elderly man saluted and stepped back a pace, exposing the little gold badge of Scotland Yard.

"My brother officer, sir," he explained, indicating the other sleuth at his side.

"I suppose, Inspector, we've all come here for the same purpose," smiled the scientist, good-humoredly.

"We have, indeed, sir," he replied, "if you are seeking the two occupants of this house. We want them rather badly, I might say."

"The charge?" queried Littlejohn, raising his Vandyke beard a trifle.

"Drugs!" qualified the inspector; "the exportation into France of narcotics, worth many thousands; contrary, of course, to the British law.

"We came here merely as a precaution," he added, "although we have definite knowledge that the quarry slipped successfully through our fingers last night, and is, by this time, somewhere in France. It was just in the remote event that one or both of them might return. Of course there's no chance of that now."

LITTLEJOHN jotted down his address and telephone number, requesting the inspector to notify him of any developments. Accompanied by Kincaid, he left the house, and telephoned Helen Leonard.

"We are starting for Paris tonight, my child," said Littlejohn over the wire. "There have been developments."

"And, because I am a woman, I suppose you've telephoned to say that I must stay here in London," interrupted Helen's voice. "Doctor, I shall insist upon going, too. I can not remain here, while friends are risking their lives to save Jack. A woman may always help, and I demand that privilege."

"That's just why I called you up, my dear," declared Littlejohn, with a chuckle. "Pack your bags, instantly. We'll call for you in just two hours."

Through the telephone Littlejohn heard Helen's delighted cry. She had forgotten, in her excitement, to bid him good-bye. He laughed as he hung the receiver on its hook, and rejoined Kincaid.

"Another call to make," he told the chemist, as the cab halted in front of Trafalgar Hospital.

The two men were piloted through a maze of wards, and were, at length, shown into a private room.

A pale figure, with a growth of beard several days old, stirred in bed as the visitors approached. The wan face of Seddons brightened.

"Well, now, Seddons, my man?" smiled Littlejohn, kindly. "You're mending splendidly, I see. How do you feel?"

"Gryte, guv'nor; gryte, Mr. Kincaid, sir," cried the little cockney valet, beaming upon them. "'Ad quite a time, sir—quite balmy, they tell me—but I'm feelin' quite splendidly now."

"You must remain here until you are stronger," said Littlejohn. "I shall telegraph you from Paris, later. There's money awaiting you in the hospital office, so there's no need, at all, to worry."

"Good-bye, Seddons, my boy," spoke Kincaid, clasping the valet by the hand. "We'll see you soon, when you're fit and fine."

The little cockney was actually shedding tears, as they left. Lying in bed, he protested, was a "blimed dull dawnee." He begged them to take him with them, then and there, sick or not.

Collecting their bags at the club, the Americans drove to Helen's home, where they found her awaiting them. They entrained about nightfall, and by dawn were crossing the Channel. At Havre, they stepped aboard a fast express and were whirled into Paris.

Littlejohn telephoned the Countess De Tourneur, an old schoolmate, in whose care he was to entrust Helen, and when he had ended the conversation, the little party proceeded to the De Tourneur home, a handsome, imposing residence near one of the most beautiful small parks in the world.

"Kincaid and I go south, tonight," Littlejohn informed their hostess, Celestine De Tourneur, at tea, in the late afternoon. "Don't be alarmed should there be a lapse in messages, however. And, whatever you do, my dear Celestine, do keep Helen cheered up."

At 10 o'clock they bade the two women good-bye, and were whisked to Quai D'Orsay, where they entrained.

IT WAS dawn in the Pyrenees, when the travelers alighted, twelve hours later, on a deserted railway platform. They moved afoot toward a small town which lay there just ahead, overlooking the valley.

"Our destination by rail," confided Littlejohn. "But there are still some miles to be traveled by cart. We shall set out at midnight, leaving our luggage here. The nature of our quest must be kept *sub rosa* in this place."

At the village inn, Littlejohn let it be known they were English naturalists, in search of butterfly specimens. Reserving quarters for three weeks, the scientist, in conversation with the stout, elderly proprietress, said they would probably start out into the country at once. The announcement seemed to startle her.

"*Nom de Dieu, Messieurs,*" she burst out, excitedly. "A dangerous thing—this butterfly-hunting, in the Pyrenees—right now! Beware the Eve of May!"

The woman crossed herself devoutly, gesturing in the direction of the mountains, as if she were trying to warn them of hidden peril there. Kincaid was sure he heard her mutter something about the "terror of madness, the terror of strange beasts," as she moved away.

In the blackness of the night the two men donned travel-worn garments of British cut. They descended the rickety stairs of the inn and silently left the town.

Two miles ahead, Littlejohn left the road and rapped softly on the door of a peasant cottage. A stirring sound arose within, accompanied by the fall of footsteps, and a hand upon the latch.

"*Qui va là, Monsieur?*" queried the voice of a man. Littlejohn spoke a sentence in French, and the door swung open. A middle-aged peasant, holding a lighted candle, beckoned them inside. He muttered something and retreated from the room.

Ten minutes later, the sound of wheels and horses' hoofs rounded the cottage, and stopped at the door. A youth, of perhaps twenty—the peasant's son—awaited them in a cart. The travelers climbed to their seats and were driven away.

The lad was apparently frightened. To some of Littlejohn's questions he replied in monosyllables; to others not at all. Kincaid, lighting a cigarette, glimpsed the features of the boy. He was terrified!

Three miles ahead, the youth drew the team to a halt.

"*Messieurs! Messieurs!*" he cried, his hands trembling so that he could

hardly hold the reins. "I can not—dare not—go farther!"

Gradually calming the boy's fear, Littlejohn urged him forward, and thus the remainder of the journey was accomplished. The goal was reached quite suddenly, as the team rounded a sharp bend in the road. A dull light high overhead—from some tower, perhaps—warned them of a town, not five hundred yards distant.

Littlejohn pressed a sheaf of franc notes into the yokel's hand, and signaled him to stop. He and Kincaid were barely clear of the wheels when the panic-stricken driver whirled his horses about with such suddenness that the cart almost overturned. Without so much as wishing them Godspeed, the boy lashed the animals into a mad dash and disappeared in the direction whence he had come.

"Come," whispered the scientist, leading Kincaid up a hillside to the right of the road. "The spell is in the atmosphere. We can not afford to be discovered here. Furthermore, it will not be safe for us to enter the place until the sun is up."

Kincaid was aware of weird, depressing sensations as Littlejohn pointed out the old gateway of the town, and the twin towers flanking it. Foreboding gripped his soul and left it chilled as he discerned the outlines of massive battlements, of moats, drawbridges, flying buttresses, and beyond, rising dimly in the air, a myriad of spires and turrets.

"The ancient stronghold of the Vaudois!" spoke Littlejohn, in low tones. "For two hundred years it repelled every assault of the Inquisition. Battalions, legions, armies, have dashed themselves to pieces against those walls. Full many a battle has left that moat piled high with dead and dying.

"An act of treachery yielded this city to the Brown Monk—Pierre Canard—who burned half its population at the stake; men, women and children alike. But the other half escaped, hiding in secret catacombs underground, to arise one night and slaughter the invaders. Pierre Canard and a hundred of his followers were burned to death at a single time.

"Neither king's men nor feudal knights were ever able, afterward, to recapture the place. Through the past six hundred years it has remained a citidel of infamous worship, down to this very day. Although it is but one of the centers of black necromancy which still exist in Europe, it is the May Eve 'Mecca' of the Witches' Sabbath.

"In short," continued Littlejohn, "I speak of the last day in April, each year, when 'Sabbath Eve' reigns in southern France. It is a time when thousands of the Dark One's disciples hold revelry here—a time fraught with peril for any God-fearing man or woman who chances to be in the zone of evil worship. Such is the fear in many of the border towns that the inhabitants leave their homes until the festival has passed.

"The neighboring villagers shun this spot as they would a plague. Their priests are aware of certain ghastly ceremonies that go on here, and many have perished in an effort to witness these at close hand in order to combat them more effectively. Ah yes, much has been done to curb the Vaudois, but it has never been stamped out. In fact, the religion has grown in recent years."

"Awful! Unbelievable!" murmured Kincaid, rubbing his eyes. "I feel the peculiar effects of this place already. Ugh, how my head whirls!"

"Influences causes these forebodings, Kincaid," said Littlejohn. "You must throw these off with your whole will. Psychic suggestion is destruction, under these conditions, unless guarded against. You must fight it!"

The travelers paused, regarding the thin-rimmed moon that hung weirdly over the darkened city. A few steps farther, and they had gained the peak of the bluff.

"Non-resistance is perilous, then?" queried Kincaid, anxiously.

"Yes," the psychist informed him. "It is especially hazardous where a knowledge of the psychic is lacking. I hesitate, my son, in exposing you to danger. I believe it would be better —safer for both—were I to go into that city alone. You could wait here, outside the walls——"

"No!" burst out Kincaid, doggedly. "I shall take chance for chance with you. I am not a weakling, Doctor!"

"Of course you're not!" returned the older man. "I am confident you would face any physical test heroically. But the danger here is in mental attack by unseen forces. If it were the human element alone, the odds would not be so overwhelmingly against a novice."

He turned to the younger man, kindly, regarding him with clear eyes.

"Doctor," requested Kincaid, earnestly, "try me! I am ready to obey you implicitly. I quite realize that I must lean upon your superior psychic training, and that I shall doubtless increase your difficulties. But I shall go down fighting, if it comes to that."

He smote his right fist into his left palm, by way of emphasis.

"Bully for you, Kincaid!" beamed the scientist, his hand seizing the young chemist's. "It is settled, then. Hello—why, it's dawn, already!"

He broke off suddenly, glancing aloft, where light was stealing in from the east.

At the psychist's signal, Kincaid arose. He gave a cry of amazement over the panorama being fast unfolded by the light of day. The bluff on which they stood overlooked the entire city of the Vaudois.

"Magnificent!" said Kincaid, in wonderment. "Why, this place is a feudal fortress, indeed, with its walls, towers and battlements. There, in the distance, is a lofty bridge, over some sort of chasm. Why, the gulf seems to run straight through the center of the city!"

"There are actually two towns in one," explained the doctor. "They are separated by an almost bottomless gorge. The bridge was built early in the Fourteenth Century, when the city enjoyed important manufacturing and commercial prestige, and the population numbered more than twenty thousand. But that importance was lost centuries ago. Today, I doubt if there are more than two thousand people in the entire place."

Kincaid pointed toward a new wonder in the scene before him.

"What is that great building that seems to dominate everything else in the city?" he asked, in an undertone. "That black stone structure over there, with the lofty apse and the jagged tower? Why, it's fully as large as Notre Dame in Paris!"

"That," replied the scientist, gazing at the faint silvery streaks of light creeping over the black façade, "is the Cathedral of Horns, a church of blasphemy. But we must be going. Do exactly as I bid you and remember our rôles. We're English pilgrims to the Sabbath, you know."

With a final appraising glance at the garments they wore, the two men descended into the road and approached the walled city. The drawbridge was down, and unguarded.

They crossed the narrow span, and moved through the deserted gates, into the streets. Strange, but there was no early morning activity; indeed, no sign, whatsoever, of life!

Silence was everywhere. The narrow highways were merely empty stretches, broken here and there by patches of grass, between the long-unused cobblestones. Gabled roofs of houses staggered high up over the

thoroughfares, all with the atmosphere of abandonment about them. The entire city had the appearance of a tomb.

Their footfalls set the echoes flying, as the travelers passed through the outer town and crossed to the inner one by means of the chasm bridge. A sensation of overpowering dizziness—of awful depths below—assailed them as the thick, sulfurous fumes of the gorge rose up and wrapped about their bodies like a mantle.

"Sulfur springs," explained the doctor, briefly. "The place abounds with them."

It seemed to the two, in glancing back over the path, whence they had come, that the very pit of Hades had been crossed.

They reached the market-place, a huge, silent, grass-grown square, upon whose farther side the great Cathedral tower reared itself aloft against a sky of gray.

"Look, Doctor! Quick!" breathed Kincaid, with excitement. "There's the head of Lucifer himself! It's at the top of the tower!" He broke off in dismay, shocked at the blasphemy of the thing.

A great satyr's head crowned the jagged Cathedral crest, in the spot where the cross is usually stationed. The points of two thick horns swept boldly from the statue's skull, as if to pierce the clouds.

"It is the sign," whispered Littlejohn, "of the dark faith; the beacon of an evil rendezvous. Let us go, quickly! There must be no curiosity exhibited by us. Here, my son, this way."

He led the chemist into a side street, and halted before an ancient inn. It was there that they encountered the first living being they had seen that day, an elderly peasant man, who approached on tiptoe, half walking, half hobbling in a peculiar jerky fashion.

Finding modern French of no avail, Littlejohn tried Basque with marked success. He made it understood that they were in search of lodgings.

The old fellow raised a wrinkled visage to Littlejohn's, surveying him with what was, unquestionably, a shrewd pair of eyes. He proclaimed himself the inn's handyman, a servant of Monsieur Tabelard, the landlord.

About lodgings, he did not know; he must, first, consult "*Monsieur,* my master," who he feared was not yet awake. However, he would see, he promised, mincing off into the building.

The two travelers followed the aged servant into the taproom, where they awaited his return. But there proved no need of this.

Almost as if he had dropped from nowhere, a tall, powerfully built man appeared, bowing low, and studying them, covertly, with his flashing black eyes. His cavernous face was made more unearthly still by his medieval doublet of black velvet.

"I am Tabelard," he announced, quickly; "Monsieur Tabelard, whom it pleaseth to serve thee, *Messieurs.* My servant hath informed me——" He paused, revealing two rows of long white teeth in a smile.

"——That we would fain have quarters," added Littlejohn, courteously. "We are, *Monsieur,* two English pilgrims, who have journeyed from afar for the great festival."

"Ah!" exclaimed the landlord. "Ah, *oui!*" He betrayed a quickening interest, in a lightning glance at Littlejohn. "*C'est bien!*"

"*Du Sabbath!*" whispered Littlejohn.

"*Sacré!*" cried the host, in a low, tense tone. "*Voilà!* You are welcome, indeed, *Messieurs.* Your presence is an honor to my house. Accommodations? You shall have the best."

With a parting gesture, the landlord departed as mysteriously as he had come.

Where there had been an absence of life in the foyer before, there was now bustle and scurry. People appeared in the streets outside, as if they had suddenly suspended movement and had resumed after a pause. Peasants filtered into the taproom, one by one, tiptoeing along the wall, and suddenly leaping at right angles to the bar.

"Strange," muttered Kincaid under his breath. "Nobody seems to do anything directly in this place; everybody seems to act obliquely. Humph, no wonder the streets are twisted!"

The uncanny sensation of being in a dream town came over them as they entered the dining-room. Through the tiny-paned, leaded windows they observed the forms of men and women slither past, as if all were bent upon important business. No one appeared to take the slightest notice of them, yet both of the travelers knew they were being closely watched.

The food, however, was good. Littlejohn and Kincaid ate ravenously, reclining in their chairs, at length, to light fragrant Havanas, and to keep their eyes open.

"In one, two, three days, *Messieurs,*" declared the gaunt landlord, approaching them solicitously, "you shall weetness a great spectacle. Ha, ze arrival of ze faithful—ze Pilgrims—here. Many come from very far—Russia, maybe, but Italy, Germany, France and England, assuredly. My house weel be ver' crowded over ze festival."

He smiled wolfishly, and, expressing the hope that they would find the inn comfortable, moved away, jerkily.

DURING the next two days the two Americans traveled back and forth through the city, hoping to stumble across some trace of Le Voyen and Rutherford. They were constantly forced to ward off influences, while roaming the quaint streets and public places of that curious medieval town. It was like stepping back hundreds of years into the past.

It was most odd, they observed, that, contrasted to the absence of life on the day of their arrival, people were now everywhere in the streets; most of them passing to and from the market-place, filling the streets with the staccato tap-tap of wooden shoes. No one seemed excited or hurried; yet the Americans could not escape a realization that somewhere, below the surface, they, too, could feel an undercurrent of great activity and preparation.

Whenever Littlejohn and Kincaid turned a corner, or halted abruptly, people appeared suddenly and came gliding past them, to hurry off in one direction or another.

"There is some mysterious system of espionage here," remarked Littlejohn, under his breath. "Do they really know who we are, or are they determined to make sure of us? They are taking elaborate pains to appear indifferent about us. But this may be, of course, a ruse to throw us off the track."

He was conscious of many eyes watching them, as cats watch mice. They had emerged again on the great market-place, and were moving toward the Cathedral. They settled themselves on an ancient stone bench, fully as blackened and moss-grown as the rest of the square, to rest and observe.

Peasants were clustered about the stalls on one side of the rectangle when the Americans appeared on the scene, but immediately the little groups broke up. The individuals composing these joined other knots of folk, who, emerging from the side streets, moved to and fro so as to be constantly passing the strangers. It was incomprehensible, the way these townspeople had of suddenly looming

up about the two Americans, who were never alone.

"I tell you, it gives me the creeps!" said Kincaid, under his breath. "There's something afoot, I wager!"

"Patience," encouraged Littlejohn. "Tomorrow is May Eve, remember. That is, doubtless, the reason for some of this activity. I feel that we are in for a trying experience, unless we are able to beat down the powerful forces now gathering. It is a question, not of partial, but of complete possession. One might yield to ordinary evil influences, here, and yet free himself. But if one were overwhelmed by the powerful witchery of the Sabbath, he would, most probably, spend the rest of his days here, guarded by familiars."

"But Rutherford was completely possessed, and yet he returned to London," declared Kincaid, so far forgetting the passers-by that he received a warning glance from the psychologist.

"Yes," replied Littlejohn, softly, "but with a familiar guardian, and with conditions."

"Do you think that Rutherford and Le Voyen are here?" asked Kincaid, reflectively. "They might have been delayed, you know. If the landlord knew——"

"——He would keep quiet about it," added Littlejohn. "I am sure that both are here, and that they know we are here, as well. I don't think they would come to grips with us again, openly." He chuckled as he thought of that evening in the Grenoble Theater lobby in London.

He lowered his tone, for several of the passing peasants had stopped, apparently to gossip, but doubtless to overhear what the strangers were discussing.

Littlejohn signaled the younger man. They arose and moved away, maintaining silence, until they had gone some distance along a side street. They were now some distance from the market-place.

In the gathering dusk, neither observed a slender youth, pressing against the wall of a building, halfway down an alley, nor saw the start of surprize the figure made as they passed by. Neither heard the youth's voice call their names, nor saw a slender hand steal to the soft, double-visored helmet and disclose for a moment the blue eyes and damask cheeks of a girl.

It was Helen Leonard!

She had been forewarned of the terrible dangers of this city by good folk in the border towns, and had been careful to screen her movements as much as possible. Throughout the day she had moved from building to building, alley to alley, and had cautiously avoided the more frequented thoroughfares.

"Too bad I couldn't attract the doctor or Allan!" she told herself. "Well, I'll locate them, somehow, later on."

Hardly had she uttered these words, than a dull boom—a sort of subdued roar—shook the ground beneath her feet. Her startled eyes raised upward to see a blood-red glare issue forth from the upper part of the building against which she stood. A series of rumblings followed, as the light expired. The voice of a man shouted hoarsely in the distance, and died away.

Helen perceived a small door in the rear of the building, and, with a slight push, she opened it. She entered a passage, leading somewhere into the depths of the structure.

THE girl crept cautiously along as the corridor widened, and halted suddenly. She crouched down in the shadows, for the passage had opened, without warning, into some vast hall.

Close at hand she saw two dark figures, in robe and cassock, bending over furnaces. Cauldrons, suspended

by chains, bubbled over intermittently and sent writhing forms of fire into the air. The very atmosphere was lurid.

"Ha! Giles! Giles! Hither!" cried one of the two men. "Summon Her Highness, the queen! Say Dumaine waits in the alchemy!"

The younger monk bowed low and fled off into the shadows.

Within a few minutes the indistinct form of a woman appeared in the background. The alchemist wheeled from the glare of the furnaces and knelt, cringing, at her feet.

"What now, Dumaine?" the woman cried, imperiously. "Know ye not the flow of Sabbath pilgrims is at hand? Speak quickly, and have done! Time doth fly!"

"O Daughter of the Dusk!" beseeched the kneeling one. "Hear me. I have important intelligence——"

"Quickly!" commanded the woman's voice.

"Thy Highness," burst out the alchemist, "J'Adon is reincarnated!"

"What dost thou say, knave?" demanded the queen, with emotion.

"I swear to it—I swear, in the name of the Master, that it is true!" spoke the sorcerer. "Only here dare I speak of it. The very walls of the palace have ears. That is why thy slave took the liberty of calling Thy Majesty, here, within this humble laboratory."

"Ah!" exclaimed the woman, stamping her foot.

"Hear me, O Queen!" continued the alchemist. "J'Adon has reclothed himself in powerful form, and is now within our gates. He seeks to enslave thee, and seal the doom of Benedicte, thy betrothed! Le Voyen—the Hermit of the Vosges—is aiding him, under the black ritual."

"Go on, Dumaine, go on! The truth!" came the woman's voice, tensely.

"We must act, O Daughter of the Dusk!" cried the man, eagerly. "We must thwart these usurpers at a single stroke. The Hermit seeks the spiritual primateship of this religion—the robes of which I wear—and J'Adon seeks thee, O Vermilyea!"

"Hast thou a plan?" whispered the woman, anxiously.

"Ay, Madame," spoke the necromancer. "The usurpers plan to strike at the close of the Sabbath revel. But, ha! A cup of hemlock, as the Master appears, and it is done! Our enemies will taste defeat and bitter death. They will be honor guests. And they can not refuse the Black Communion!"

He chuckled fiendishly.

"Dumaine! Dumaine!" cried the woman, angrily. "What is this plot of thine? A poisoning on the Sabbath? Why, the faithful would rise! I shall not heed thee. I care not for J'Adon, nor Le Voyen, but this thing shall not be. Benedicte and I must needs join our powers, and enchain these plotters later on."

"Madame!" whined the alchemist. "There is no other way. Theirs is the strongest magic. We should be overcome——"

"Thou speak'st falsely, knave!" declared the woman, sharply. "What wouldst thou? Wouldst bring thy queen to scorn? Place thou no hemlock in the chalices of J'Adon and Le Voyen, at the Communion. Instead thou shalt put drugs to rob the senses and produce deep coma. Thus will the usurpers be made powerless, and enchantment a trifling matter. This do I command! See that thou dost obey!"

"Ay, Thy Majesty," murmured the hooded man, bowing to the ground. "It shall be done. But, Madame, one other thing."

"Speak!" exclaimed the woman.

"At the inn of Tabelard are the Americans, Kincaid and Littlejohn.

They wear the guise of English pilgrims. They have come to do thee injury—to defy the Great One, our Master, and to take J'Adon and Le Voyen as hostages."

"So!" breathed the woman, furiously. "They dare to visit us, with such fell designs in view? Indeed, these knaves do well deserve the ax! Have them imprisoned at once."

"But, Madame," insisted Dumaine, "it is not so easy. They must first be caught off guard. We can not, summarily, seize them by physical force, for the older man is a necromancer of power. They must needs be lured into a trap and their minds conquered."

He tapped his forehead, meaningly, and gloated.

"Take them tonight," replied the woman, sternly. "I care not how it is done. Tomorrow eve, they die!"

"Trust me, Thy Majesty!" entreated Dumaine, gleefully. "Thy words are as law to thy servant. Good Monsieur Tabelard and the faithful keep watch."

The rustle of feminine garments died away. The faint sound of a door closing, somewhere far back in the great alchemy, signified her departure.

"*Tiens! Tiens!*" grated Dumaine, arising to full height. "I swear by the Master, that this Hermit, Le Voyen, shall taste hemlock! I swear it by the horned crest of Lucifer! He seeks to tear the robes of primate from my back, does he? Ha! We shall see! But, my dear master, J'Adon, only a sleeping potion will be thine! Thou shalt wake with Dumaine's aid to seize the throne and make the queen thy slave."

Giles, the under alchemist, emerged from the shadows like a wraith, and seized the primate's arm. He pointed toward the passage, and whispered excitedly into Dumaine's ear. Both sorcerers darted toward it.

HELEN waited no longer, but glided back along the corridor, like a slender fawn. Her one thought was to gain the inn of Tabelard and warn the two Americans of their peril. To Littlejohn and Kincaid she would tell everything.

She could hear the footsteps of pursuit following through the passage as she reached the outside. She found herself once more in the alley, with the darkness as a cloak.

As she raced through the mouth of the alley, two figures leaped upon her and bore her to the street. There had been no warning. The cowled men had leaped up from the shadows and closed in on the girl. A heavy hand was pressed over her mouth, and her arms were pinioned behind by a thong.

"*Sacré!*" exclaimed one of the men. "A girl! A saucy minx, at that! Bring her along; we'll hear her story later."

Helen struggled furiously, but her strength was no match for that of her powerful kidnapers. Her small feet landed with such painful effect upon the shins of her two captors, however, that they gave vent to a volley of oaths. They paused long enough to thrust a gag in her throat.

She recovered consciousness when the cowled men were carrying her into the foyer of what appeared to be a public building. The light of a large lamp fell upon the features of the men, and instantly she had recognized them.

They were Rutherford and Le Voyen!

"Zounds!" exclaimed Le Voyen. "Ze American wench! Aha, zat's good luck! Zere weel be no fire-tongs to hit me weeth, thees time!" He snatched the gag from her mouth.

"I know who you are, now!" cried Helen, glancing at each man, in turn. "You may have the physical strength to overpower a lone girl, but I

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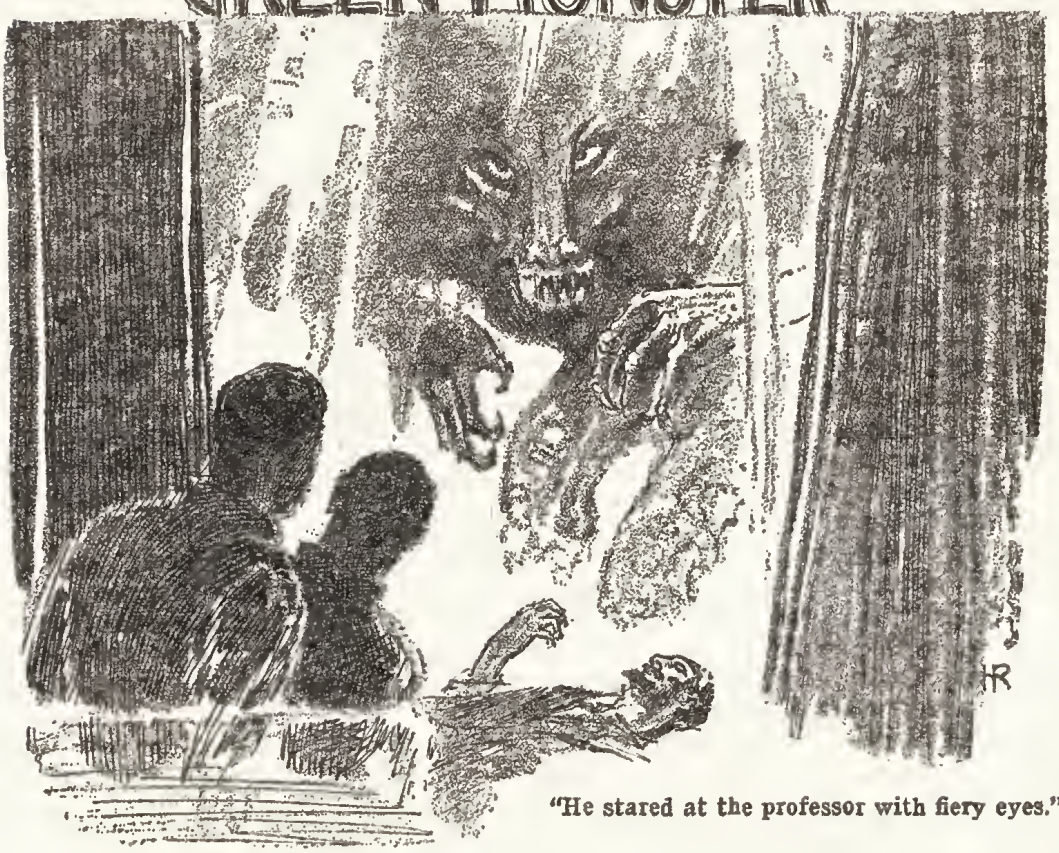
The GREEN MONSTER

by ARTHUR MACOM



"He stared at the professor with fiery eyes."

AS I PASSED beneath the dense shadow of Bremlin Tower it seemed that the whole world had suddenly become a place of creeping phantoms, half visible in the heavy fog that hung about me. The complete quietude of the quadrangle palled upon my distraught nerves like the aftermath of an opiate. My feverish imagination created hideous powers in every corner of the old stone cloister that skirted my path. Then, through the curtain of darkness about me, the chimes in the tower rang out with muffled tone. It was only a matter of a few minutes before I should be in the house of my professor, yet I dreaded with unreasoning fear the thought of keeping my path. Nor could I explain the sensation. But the lights of the professor's house loomed before me; I should be there at once.

I knocked hastily upon the huge oaken door. Presently there came the sound of approaching footsteps, falling softly on the carpets within. I was surprized at the suddenness with which the door was swung open.

"Ah! Good evening, Boreau," the professor greeted me. "I have been expecting you." He glanced at me with an oddly significant air. I trailed him back into his tiny study, where he designated my chair before the remnants of a log fire. For several minutes he stood, staring at me like a cat watching a sparrow. Whatever may have been the purpose of this brief examination, he seemed to

be satisfied as he sat down, facing me at an angle. At last the silence was broken by his low-pitched voice.

"Perhaps you are wondering why I have asked you here tonight?"

The inquisitiveness of my expression was his answer. Again he fell into a profound quiet. There, in the hush of the old house, with the weird atmosphere of the whole evening, I could not restrain my moody thoughts. The flitting shadows of the log fire danced grotesquely upon his long face, changing its shape and mien with every moment. His white beard was visible and invisible by turns. His eyes, too, affected by the play of changing light, gleamed sardonically through the dusk or faded into mysteriously gloomy pits. The spell was again broken by the professor's voice.

"Borcau," he stated, "I have an experiment." I nodded. "You have heard my theory of the concentration of thought? Doubtless it will be better if I go over it briefly, since this experiment is based upon its principles. This is my assumption."

He paused momentarily to collect his thoughts. I leaned forward eagerly, knowing that the professor's opinion was considered authoritative upon the subject.

"The theory of hypnosis holds that a person may easily be convinced of any being or state of being while he is in the hypnotic trance. Under such conditions he can actually perceive with all of his senses the being suggested by the person who has hypnotized him. This part of the theory is incontestable."

As I did not question him, he continued in a dull, ponderous monotone:

"A number of the savants have a still more advanced belief—to which I admit that I subscribe—that if the state of hypnosis has been deep enough, the subject will be open to a number of post-hypnotic influences. That is, when the subject has been awakened from the actual state of hypnosis, the beings which he has been led to see or to feel while under the influence will recur in his ordinary existence. He will hear voices or see apparitions which a person who has not been in the same state can not hear or see. Furthermore, he will in all probability give some logical reason for his sensations, or at least some acceptable data which will substantiate his statements. Yet he does not know that these are merely the result of the suggestions of the operator, nor is he aware that he has ever experienced them before. In other words, they exist as phantoms of his own brain, which can be dispelled only at the will of the operator who has instilled them."

The professor paused, quietly observing the doubtful expression on my face. I could not see what he was driving at, yet the vague feeling of uneasiness returned to trouble me with renewed insidiousness. The silence became unbearably ominous, and I hastened to ask further questions.

"And exactly what, Professor, is the aim of this experiment?"

"This: I shall deliver in these rooms a lecture to a selected group of students. I shall tell them that there exists in this locality a certain apparition which I have seen. I have chosen a list which, I feel sure, includes only those who will be open to the power of suggestion from my mind. By this experiment we shall determine whether this last premise of mine is actually true, whether these men will encounter the hallucination which I shall picture."

For a moment he seemed to consider giving me some further detail of his plan, but he evidently thought better of it.

"There is," he continued, "a still more fantastic premise, born of the brains of Oriental philosophers—yogis—which holds that the human mind can actually restrain, arrest,

destroy or create matter; but there is no reliable evidence to support this theory, and I have absolutely no faith in it. You may forget it, since it has no part in this experiment."

I stared at the professor in nervous astonishment. The whole scheme seemed fraught with unforeseen dangers. Yet I could not help feeling complimented that he should have told me in advance.

"Then, Professor," I asked, "what is it that you wish me to do?"

I confess that I questioned him with a certain temerity, for I had no desire to become deeply involved in so mysterious an affair. The professor stared into the fire with half-closed eyes. At first I thought he had not heard me. I was mistaken.

"Boreau," he answered, casting off his mantle of silence, "you must gather in this room the men on this list by 10 o'clock tomorrow night. If they question you, tell them that you know absolutely nothing about it."

He shot me a look of warning.

"And remember, Boreau, that you must not listen to my lecture. I shall want you in the room, but if you heed me, the result will be disastrous to the success of the experiment. If you feel an impulse to believe me, throw it off! I shall need you as a witness."

The tone of his voice revived my uncanny mood. The professor had risen from his chair, indicating that the interview was at an end. After murmuring my good-byes, I hastened from the house.

THE day following this strange conversation found my mind filled with forebodings. I had invited the men to come to the professor's house and had maintained complete silence regarding the nature of the meeting. But in spite of my confidence in the professor's judgment, the unearthly nature of the affair had played havoc with my peace of mind.

When the appointed hour arrived, I knocked upon the professor's door. From where I stood I saw that the students had come before me. They were standing in groups of three and four, babbling disconnectedly of what might possibly occur. One of them, a certain Hallmark who was in several of my classes, called out to me from across the room.

"Hullo there, Boreau!" He hurried over to grasp my hand. Then, while I was greeting my fellow students, he whispered in my ear with an inquisitive voice: "The professor left a note for you to come immediately to his study. He was not here when we came in. And say—what's up? D'you know?"

"Not yet, Hallmark," I lied glibly.

"Darn funny he doesn't show up to say hello," he whispered. "Prof's putting on too much mystery for me!"

"He is!" I called over my shoulder, for I was on my way to the professor's study.

I found him sitting at his desk.

"You are on time," he said.

"Yes," I replied. "You wanted me?"

"Yes, Boreau. Take them into the drawing-room. The lights will be off but they can find chairs. Tell them I shall be in at once. And remember"—he laid his hand upon my shoulder with an air of gravity—"you must not believe a word that I say. The cause of science can be materially advanced tonight if you obey me. Remember: don't listen!"

"I won't," I muttered to myself as I returned to the guests.

It was a matter of minutes before I had them seated in the darkened room. The curtains had been drawn, so that there was no light except at the front, where a single beam came through a small pane.

The hum of excited conversation was suddenly interrupted by the creaking of the door. Immediately the head of the professor appeared in

that single ray of light. His body was draped in some black cloth, so that his sardonic face seemed to be floating about in the darkness, from which it stood out with eery definiteness. His eyes darted this way and that until the whispering of the men had died down to a tense hissing of breath between their teeth. Then he began to speak without any apparent change of his features.

"My friends," he murmured heavily, "it is a pleasure to have you here tonight. But you must not be nervous; you must lean back in your chairs. Lean back in your chairs—and rest. Rest! I have something to tell you but you can not understand me if you are nervous or excited. You must rest . . . rest . . . rest!"

The breathing of the men became placid as his words affected them with their gentle persuasiveness. From somewhere outside the room came a low booming sound like the thud of a distant drum. It was warm in the darkness, and I felt a comfortable sensation of drowsiness settling over me.

"That is better," continued the professor. "Now you are quiet. Now you will listen to me. You rest . . . you no longer doubt me!"

The distant booming continued, keeping a sort of rhythm with the professor's gentle voice.

"This thing which I shall tell you is strange . . . strange. Yet you know me," his voice rambled on, "and you shall believe me. What I tell you is true and you believe me. Your minds are at rest with themselves and all shall be as I say that it shall! You believe me!"

The voice, the booming, the warmth of the room, the darkness, all seemed to lull my mind into a shadowy trance, and through the darkness I could feel the tingling of some unknown potency. I felt that I would believe the professor; but while my spirit seemed completely at peace, far off in the subterranean channels of my intellect I knew that something was wrong. The sensation lay dormant before the rhythm of the distant drum and the deathlike darkness. The professor droned on.

"I have seen a Thing moving about in the darkness . . . a strange and fearsome Thing. First I saw it by the cloisters, cowering in the shadows there. I have seen it again, creeping along by the wall of the great Tower. It seemed like a luminous mist, like an aura in the dusk. While I stood there watching it, it glided away, like a phantom back from the grave."

His voice trailed off into the darkness about him. The booming sound seemed to have blended with the pulsing warmth, yet I could not feel that there was warmth. Even the professor's head, limned against the darkness by that single beam of light, seemed to have fused with the void surrounding him. All consciousness receded from me; I thought that I stood in the shadows of the cloisters with the dim outline of the Thing somewhere in the dusk before me. Then a voice came back from unfathomable distance.

"It towered above me like some monster jinnee from the past. It was entirely green, with trailing shadows of green hanging from its mighty form. And its eyes, great balls of fire gleaming through the night, glared at me with murderous hatred. There was unutterable wickedness in those fiery orbs, wickedness that would have mocked me even as it slew me. When it turned upon me it reached out gigantic talons, groping in the ghoulish twilight for my throat. Then I fled from those haunted cloisters, fled before the Thing that would have slain me even as it would slay you. Oh beware! Beware of the Thing in the cloisters that will strangle you with its hideous talons. And do not look into its flaming eyes, for it will fasten you down with its tensity

until it can tear the breath from your throat!"

Perspiration broke from my brow. I was seized with a fit of violent trembling. My throat seemed dry and swollen, as though I had felt the terrific clutch of those murderous hands. Fear ran through my heart and burrowed deep into the hidden recesses of my soul; for I knew I should meet this fiend incarnate, this hideous monster that transfixed its victims with gleaming eyes, to tear open their throats with its ghastly talons. My mind could not tell me where I was; I dreaded lest I was standing beside that haunted cloister where this Thing stalked in its deathly course. In vain I strove to move; I was paralyzed by fear of the unknown.

Then from afar came the voice of the professor, piercing the wall of my trance. The cloister, the Tower, seemed to totter in the gloom and go reeling off into a vague mist. All became a chaos as I went whirling through imaginary space at a tremendous velocity. Again came the voice, this time much nearer to me.

"Boreau! Boreau! Awaken! This is the professor!"

The giddiness left me as my senses began to clear, and I saw the professor standing before me in the dark. I gazed at him bewilderedly.

"I told you not to listen," he said, speaking sharply. "I warned you! Now stand here—and do not listen again!"

MY MIND was now quite clear: I understood that I must have fallen into a deep trance, for I was once more aware of the monotonous booming and the sultry room. The professor had glided back into the solitary beam of light. His voice continued, yet now I did not heed what he said, but strained to the sound of tense breathing in the room. Again that ponderous voice:

"Watch for this Thing when the night has come, and such demons are stalking about. Even now I feel the glare of those terrible eyes, boring into my back with their incarnate hatred. Even now I dread to glance over my shoulder, lest its fearsome arms should come stretching through the darkness toward me."

With a tremendous effort the professor forced himself to turn his head up into that beam of light. As he stared into the distance his calm features began to distort themselves with a look of unspeakable terror. His mouth sagged open; his eyes, dilated, seemed to bulge from their sockets. He flung his black-robed arms into the light above him as though to ward off some menacing gesture.

"Look!" he moaned weirdly. "It is there. Its talons are reaching for my throat! Its eyes . . . how fiendishly they gleam in the darkness! Beware of it! Flee from it! It is the Green Monster!"

There came a scrambling of feet, a falling of chairs. Someone, overcome with hysterical fear, screamed wildly. The darkness pulsated with the trembling of human bodies. The rampant horror of that moment was indescribable . . . yet I had seen nothing!

"It is gone," cried the professor loudly, this time in his natural voice. "Awaken, my friends." Then, turning toward me, he called out, "Lights, Boreau, quickly!"

In the dazzling rays of the electric lamp he stood before us as the professor whom we knew in the classroom, having cast aside his black draperies. The guests were sprawling in their chairs in all stages of stupefaction. Some of them stared before them with the effect of that horrible moment stamped on their faces. Some held their heads between their hands as though awakening from a bad dream. Others shuddered, fingering their throats nervously. All were dazed.

The professor continued to command them to awaken until the spell began to wear off. Then he commenced to read rapidly and calmly from a manuscript. The paper was absolutely irrelevant, and I could not restrain an exclamation when he ended without mentioning the singular events of the evening. His conduct bore an astounding similarity to that which he affected in closing his ordinary classroom lectures. At the end, the guests arose, talking complacently on various topics. In a few minutes they began to saunter casually from the house.

I hastened to approach the professor, intent on asking him to explain their peculiar behavior. He must have read my question in my eyes, for as I neared him he whispered to me:

"Not tonight, Boreau. Come in the morning—and good-night!"

At the door I joined Hallmark, and together we started across the campus. Outside of a few trivial remarks we said nothing at all until we reached my door, when he spoke in a casual voice.

"Dry old lecture tonight, wasn't it?" he yawned lazily. "When he acted so queerly about telling us to sit back and rest I thought we were in for something interesting. I fell asleep . . . pretty darn dry . . . glad I woke up in time to say good-bye."

My stare must have disturbed him a bit, for he turned back into the night.

"Well . . . see you tomorrow," he said. "Me for the sheets!"

"Good-night," I managed to utter.

And to think that only fifteen minutes before I had seen him shuddering with fear! Could he remember nothing of what had happened?

I sat in my room for some minutes before the possibility of it could soak into my head. Undoubtedly the whole affair was strange beyond description. I went to sleep with my brain a whirling mass of doubts, fears and perplexities.

THE next morning I sat through my classes with a maze of questions running through my mind. I could not understand the sudden transition from a state of abject fear to one of complete ignorance. Nor could I understand how I had allowed my mind to slip from my control, sweeping me into those peculiar and terrifying illusions which I had undergone. Why the professor had gone about this experiment in such an odd way was baffling. Why were all the lights off except that single beam in the front of the room? Why had the professor affected that unusual tone of voice? The heat, the strange booming sound, the garb of the professor—all of these were beyond my understanding.

When the last class was over I hastened to the professor's with these questions on my tongue. I found him sitting in his office, busily writing in a memorandum book. He greeted me laconically, waved me into a chair, and continued until he had finished his writing. At last he turned toward me.

"Well, Boreau, what do you think of it?" he asked.

"Why, Professor, I am completely at sea."

The tone of my voice must have forecast the state of my mind, for the professor, smiling faintly, settled back to answer the flood of questions which he knew I would ask. I lost no time in discussing the general scene, but plunged immediately into the mystery.

"First of all," I asked, "why did your pupils act so queerly when they had completely come to? They did not seem to realize that only a few moments before they had been frightened out of their wits. In fact, Hallmark remarked that he had never heard such a dry lecture in his life. He said that he had fallen asleep

soon after you started, and could remember nothing until the end."

"Naturally," he laughed.

I did not understand.

"They remembered nothing because they had been in a deep hypnotic state," he explained. "When I called them into their consciousnesses they assumed that they had been asleep, since they could remember nothing of what had occurred."

He grinned at my amazement.

"But I remember it all!" I exclaimed.

The professor waved the remark aside.

"Certainly, Boreau. I saw that you, too, in spite of my warning were falling into the same state. I hastened to call you back before you had seen the Green Monster. Does that explain the matter?"

I thought this point over for a minute. It seemed that I had caught the professor in a mistake, for, if they remembered nothing upon regaining consciousness, where could the experiment lead to? I put this question to him in a rather triumphant manner.

"Boreau! Boreau!" he cried; "do you forget everything I tell you? I explained that I predict they will suffer from hallucinations caused by post-hypnosis. That is, they will actually see the Green Monster as I have described him, only they will not realize that they are under a foreign influence. If he does appear to them, it will seem to be the first time. This, Boreau, is the entire experiment. We have only prepared our elements; the reaction, if there is to be one, should ensue."

I was crestfallen at my lack of memory, yet my mind was not at peace.

"But, Professor, do you mean to tell me that these visions may continue indefinitely? In that case, you will have done the men a great harm, for they would always be haunted by the Green Monster; and that, I confess, would be a horrible existence. I know, for I almost saw him myself!"

"Oh no," he explained; "I can destroy this hallucination at any time by putting them into the hypnotic state and removing the idea. Then, too, if something should happen that my mental powers failed, the vision would recede, since it exists only in their minds through the directing force of mine!"

This prepared an ultimate solution to the matter. When I asked about the darkness, the solitary beam of light, the dull sound and the heat, the professor explained that these were mere accessories to hypnosis, externals which facilitated his task. Yet now that I had smoothed the mechanical doubts from my mind, I found that my vague uneasiness refused to disappear. I dared not mention this to the professor, since he would have laughed at my groundless presentiment. I paused for a final question.

"Then do you believe the experiment will succeed?" I asked.

"It is still a little early to come to any conclusion," he answered, "yet I believe that within the next few days we shall hear of some strange apparitions in the neighborhood of the Tower or the cloisters. Of course," he added, "the matter is entirely problematical. I can not be sure that they really accepted my suggestion, nor shall I know until we have heard several rumors about the school. But something should happen soon, if my theory is correct."

Again I felt that sensation of uneasiness. The professor had turned to his writing, completely unaware that I was still in the room.

Several days passed in which I heard nothing more of the matter. I began to believe that, after all, the professor had failed to produce any of the effects he had anticipated. I saw a great deal of the men who had been there that night, yet never did

I mention the matter nor signify that I remembered anything of the lecture. I fell into the routine of college life. My uneasiness passed away.

ABOUT a week later I was standing in front of my house when Hallmark came walking by. He called in a casual voice, asking if I wanted to walk by the library, and, since I recalled that I had certain research work to do, I accepted, glad of the companionship.

The night was much like that on which I had first gone to the professor's house. A dense fog had settled down over us like a blanket, so that we could not see around us for more than twenty feet. There was a faint wind in the pine trees, which, with the dripping of the water from the limbs above, gave the night a somber tone. Here and there in the gray mist a light glowed dully. All about us was a sullen quiet; our feet crunched harshly upon the graveled path. Hallmark and I, somewhat depressed by the singular hush, walked along without speaking. Then Hallmark whispered:

"That's the cloister, isn't it? I can't make it out from here."

There was nothing unusual in his voice, yet his words sent a faint tingle through my body, recalling, as they did, the professor's warning.

"Yes," I answered; and then, "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I don't know," he returned; "just wondered."

We went on, and since it was closer to the library by way of the cloister, we headed for the spot. I stifled whatever misgivings I might have had, for I knew that it was merely a suspicion that prompted them. We entered the cloisters just as the chimes were beginning to toll the hour. It was 10 o'clock. "About this stuff I've got to dig up," I thought to myself, "I'll need a Schneider & Greve's, and I'd better glance through Hudson while I'm here."

The crunching of our feet on the gravel intruded on my revery with an ominous sound and I was recalled to my surroundings.

Suddenly I felt Hallmark's grip tighten convulsively on my arm.

"Look, Boreau!" he muttered tensely. "There by the second arch!"

He stopped dead-still, rooted to the spot. I looked. There was nothing but the eddying fog, moving in a fantastic sort of way. Hallmark's fingers were digging sharply into the biceps of my arm. I glanced at the man; his face was screwed into a look of doubt and perplexity. But even as I watched him his face began to twist into a picture of agony.

"It's coming here, Boreau! God! What is it? Boreau!"

Still I saw nothing!

"What is coming?" I whispered, for I was frightened in spite of my senses.

"Look! Boreau!" he screamed. "This way . . . run!"

He strove futilely to move from his tracks.

"Those blazing eyes!" he shrieked. "Run! Oh God! . . . it's got me . . . help! Help!"

His voice died in his throat as if some monstrous hand had throttled him as he screamed. His eyes seemed to bulge from his head, and his mouth hung open with seeming torment. Even as I stared at him he fell to the ground with a low, hideous moan. Yet I saw nothing!

I bit my teeth into my lips and forced myself to bend over the form of my friend. With an agony of self-restraint I picked him up and fled into the library.

The doors were open, so that I was able to dash in. At the sound of my frightened cries and Hallmark's piteous moaning a crowd swept around us and strove to bring Hallmark to his senses.

"What's happened to him?" someone cried.

All eyes turned toward me. I looked at them with a frightened glance. I could not find my tongue; my palate was parched and dry; my senses reeled.

"I—I don't know," I managed to utter. "He saw something in the cloisters and fell beside me. He is——"

My explanation was cut short by a jumbled flow of words from Hallmark's mouth.

"It was green . . . all green," he moaned, thickly, "with trailing shadows of green. God! It's got me, Boreau! Run——"

His voice trailed off again in a dismal muttering. I stared at him aghast. Those were the professor's words! Trailing shadows of green! I had not foreseen this, nor could I believe I knew its cause. For a moment I thought I should hurl my secret at the throng, but by clenching my nails until they dug into the flesh of my palms I managed to restrain myself. The crowd was whispering excitedly, half frightened by Hallmark's condition and my own dismay.

Someone cut in with an authoritative tone: "He's coming around now."

Hallmark had opened his eyes, and was staring at us in wild amazement.

"Is it gone?" he whispered, tensely.

"What was it?" asked the person with the authoritative voice.

"The . . . the . . . Thing . . . the Green Monster . . . it nearly got me——"

His voice broke into a sob; the man was completely unnerved. The professor's words again!

With the aid of a few of the crowd I carried him home, and there I left him, piteously nervous. And that night I dreamed of terrible green talons reaching for my throat, and all through my sleep ran the monotone of Hallmark's piteous sobbing.

THE morning paper carried a short account of Hallmark's "Mysterious Encounter." There was nothing definite to the matter: he had seen (so the story ran) a monstrous green thing slithering toward him through the fog. Its eyes had seemed to bore into his very soul, filling him with an unreasoning fear of this giant unknown. Then, as Hallmark had said, it had fastened gruesome talons into his throat, after which he knew nothing until he was revived in the library. The paper mentioned that a Mr. Boreau, who had been with him at the time of the alleged encounter, had absolutely denied having seen anything, although he, too, had confessed that he had felt that inexplicable panic. The article ended with an attempt at editorial satire, commenting upon "those who flee from imaginary bugaboos!" Hallmark was suspected of some nervous disease or a great prankishness—with emphasis on the latter. Poor fools!

With the news in my hand I rushed to the professor's house. He was sitting in his study, the scene of that first terrible night, grimly reading the first result of his unusual experiment. His lips were curved in a satisfied smile; he gloated in his triumph.

"Professor," I cried, "you must destroy this evil hallucination!"

The professor looked amazed. "But, Boreau—it is succeeding!"

"If you had seen Hallmark's face! If you had been there, Professor," I pleaded, "you would not ask for reasons. The man's nerves were shot to pieces. I have never seen such terror!"

The thought of poor Hallmark sent cold shivers coursing up and

down my spine. I could say no more, but only stare at the professor in vain entreaty. He looked coldly at me.

"Boreau, I am disappointed in you. I do not propose," he continued, "to allow this scourge to run on for long. But there must be several occurrences to substantiate the experiment. In a week's time the need will have passed, and I shall release them from their condition."

There was nothing I could do. I must remain a party to the experiment until the professor chose to terminate it. He alone could solve the situation; I was powerless. I felt a revulsion from my former admiration for him. This was too cold-blooded, too completely cruel. The thought that Hallmark might go through the experience again caused me to shudder. I bowed as politely as I could and left the house.

THE week succeeding was one of utmost horror. Six different men, all members of that memorable seance, had seen the Green Monster in the darkness. After twilight the voices of all were hushed or stilled, for in all of them dwelt the fear of this terrible thing. Out of every corner its hideous eyes seemed to stare with murderous glance at passers-by. Grim terror stalked rampant where once had been peace and youthful happiness. And the men, who at first had been ashamed of their fears, had begun determining a hurried exodus from the accursed spot.

I could not go near the professor; the very thought of him filled me with loathing. When I watched the havoc he had wrought in the minds of my comrades, I burned with a singular bitterness, all the more intensified by the knowledge that I was helpless to prevent it. I dared not approach him.

Then the catastrophe occurred. I was in my room, trying to solve a knotty problem in one of my courses, when I heard the chill night air suddenly rent with terrific screaming. My muscles were temporarily paralyzed; I knew that the Green Monster had appeared again. The screams died off into the darkness and were superseded by violent yells for help, which all the time came closer to my room. I was terrified into action. I rushed pell-mell into the hall, where I found a group of men, all of them staring at each other in dreadful anticipation.

"Come quickly," I cried; "let us help him! The Green Monster has appeared again!"

Their faces writhed in ill-suppressed anguish, but they ran swiftly at my side. We dashed out of the door into the darkened street, flying toward those terrible yells as fast as our legs would carry us. Then, a few hundred yards from the cloister, we met them!

Three men were dragging between them the collapsed body of another. I rushed to their side. Upon their stricken faces I saw the stamp of the monster.

"What has happened?" I shouted, my tongue beyond control.

"The Green Monster . . . we saw it . . . all of us! And it got Bob, here."

I stared at them, aghast. I bent over the prostrate body to give assistance.

God! What was this? This was unbelievable! There was a trickling of blood at the nose. His eyes seemed about to burst from his head; the lips were literally shredded by the champing of his teeth. My reason seemed to totter with the horror of it all. He was dead! Strangled by the Green Monster! So this was the experiment!

"Dead!" I screamed.

A low moan went up from his comrades. The crowd fell back, of-

(Continued on page 142)

The Story of a Ghost-Dog

Tony the Faithful

By W. K. MASHBURN, Jr.

A HUGE Persian cat descended the finest Colonial staircase in all Louisiana, with the complacent self-assurance of his kind. The bottom steps of the flight were variously wider than those above, so that the balustrade curved outward in a graceful flare at the lower end. At this stage of his descent, the cat hugged the wall, and peered through the slender balusters at a worn spot on the floor-covering immediately behind the newel post, with somewhat less complacency than he had previously exhibited.

As the animal reached the floor, he hesitated a moment, then circled toward the farther wall of the dimly lighted hall. The door of Colonel Desmare's library was set in this wall, and, as the cat stalked past it, the door abruptly opened, and the colonel himself stepped into the hall. Startled, the already nervous cat leaped sideways, landing in a spot close to the stairway, a few feet behind the newel post.

No sooner had its feet touched the floor, than the cat's back arched convulsively. For an instant it stood rigid; fur stiffly erect, eyes gleaming yellowly. Then, emitting one ear-splitting screech, it streaked incontinently down the long, dim hall.

"H'm," vouchsafed Colonel Desmare, from where he had paused in the library door. "That's the third time Felix has shown a marked antipathy toward that particular spot. It's interesting—very! Psychic phenomenon, in fact. I must mention it when next I write Dr. Moreau: that's quite in his line."

The colonel reached one hand inside the door, to the wall switch controlling the lights in the library. Having pressed the button, he closed the door and crossed the hall. Resting a thin, aristocratic hand upon the balustrade when he reached the stairs, the colonel stood for a moment regarding the spot behind the newel post, where a better light would have shown the carpet to be thin and worn. The fine head of the old planter was bowed as he stood thus, and, had there been anyone to see, it might have been that his eyes—the gray eyes that could be so bleak and steely on occasion—were strangely misty.

"Poor old Tony," sighed the colonel.

The long hall was dimly lighted at present, by a single, inadequate electric bulb, so that its recesses were deeply shrouded in shadow. The door that Colonel Desmare had just closed, stealthily reopened, and another shadow, darker and more sinister, spread itself upon the wall as the hulking, ominous figure of a squat, brutish negro crept across the threshold from within the darkened library. Softly the intruder crept toward the musing, unsuspecting man at the foot of the stairs.

The feeble light glinted dully upon the steel that lurked in one huge black fist. The very shadows in the hall cried aloud, *"Assassin!"* Would the colonel never hear? The air itself seemed fraught with warning. There was a mutter of distant thunder, and the old planter shook his shoulders, as if to throw off the revery that had bowed his proud head.

"I had better go back and shut the windows in the library."

Colonel Desmare turned to carry out this intention, just as the upswung knife in the negro's great paw began its descent. With a startled cry, the colonel seized the black's thick wrist.

"Bo-Jo! You murderous devil!" Although he lacked strength to check the actual downward swoop of the blade, the planter succeeded in diverting its point to one side. "Armand!" he shouted, hoping to arouse the negro butler who had quarters in the rear of the house.

AT THIS outcry, Bo-Jo's left hand gripped the colonel's throat, and he frantically sought to drive home the knife. The colonel, for his part, clung as frantically to the hand that held the blade, at the same time trying desperately to wrench himself free of the hand that was set like a vise upon his throat. With his fingers still biting cruelly into the planter's windpipe, the negro jerked backward in an effort to loosen the colonel's tenacious grip upon his other wrist. The action threw Bo-Jo back upon the newel post of the stairway, which caught him in one side of his back, upsetting his balance. The negro loosed his hold upon the colonel's throat, clutching sideways at the balustrade in an attempt to keep his footing. The planter's weight, pulling backward, had really aided Bo-Jo; relieved of it, the negro pivoted sideways on the newel post, toppling to the floor behind it. The colonel slumped in a limp heap at the foot of the stairs.

On the instant, it seemed that bedlam had been set loose from a dozen different quarters. There was a noise from the rear of the house, as if someone blundered toward the hall in such haste as to upset all the furniture along his path. From the front came the sound of imperative voices, the stamp of impatient feet, and a dull, insistent pounding on the heavy door. In the hall itself, there was a sudden furious disturbance in the shadows beneath the stairway—a scuffling and thrashing accompanied with shrieks that alternated with whimpers of agonized terror, and a vicious, snarling, animal growl.

A sudden scream, choked in the middle, sounded in the hall. For a moment, the pounding on the door was suspended, and there was breathless quiet in the house. Then the long-drawn, wailing howl of a dog, mournful yet savagely triumphant, rent the silence.

The hammering on the front door was resumed with more determination than ever; the voices became more loudly insistent. Tumbling into the hall from the rear came the grotesque, night-shirted figure of old Armand, an antiquated revolver thrust forward in one aged but resolute hand.

The butler cried out at the sight that met his eyes, under the dim gleam of the hall light. The still, contorted figure of Bo-Jo claimed his attention only long enough to emit one stupendous gasp of amazement and horror; then Armand ran to the foot of the stairs and dropped to his knees beside his master.

Another figure rushed into the hall from the direction whence the butler had come. It was Le Bleu, the plantation overseer. He stopped short for one surprized second, but that was all. Le Bleu was practical, as always.

"Why yo' don't open de do', Armand? It's Sheriff Picot, come fo' dat Bo-Jo."

The overseer suited his action to the word, and himself, with methodical haste, unbarred the door to Sheriff Picot and a deputy.

"COLONEL hurt?" demanded the sheriff, perceiving Armand bending over Colonel Desmare, whom the butler partly supported with one knee. "Where's the nigger?"

Observing, at this juncture, Bo-Jo's figure sprawled in the shadow of the stair, half concealed behind the flaring end of the balustrade, the grizzled sheriff stopped short. "What in thunder!" he ejaculated.

Le Bleu, the practical, had found the switchboard and turned on more lights. The sheriff bent closer over the negro. "Ah! We heard the dog howl," he remarked. "He sho' did a good job on Bo-Jo."

A gasp from the colonel focused attention in his direction. After coughing ineffectually, the old planter managed to get down a few painful swallows of the water that Le Bleu had just brought. He rubbed his throat gingerly.

"Hurt, Colonel?" asked the sheriff. "Take it easy," he added, as the colonel essayed to rise.

"Not greatly, Sheriff," said Colonel Desmare, answering Picot's question. "Where is that black devil?"

The sheriff jerked a thumb over one shoulder. "As soon as we found he'd broken jail, we figgered he might try some deviltry over here, so we made a bee-line in this direction. We'd have been too late, though—you can thank the dog, Colonel, not us."

"The dog?" queried the colonel. The sheriff nodded.

Assisted by Armand, Colonel Desmare got to his feet. Leaning heavily on the butler, he walked over and regarded what was left of Bo-Jo, a puzzled frown on his face.

"This is where Tony used to sleep," he murmured. The sheriff observed that the colonel spoke quaveringly, but set it down to the still present effects of near-strangulation.

"Good thing for you he did," sagely observed Picot. "Made a good job of it too, that dog. Ripped the nigger's throat clean out." He looked around, as if just remembering something. "Where is the dog, by the way?"

Old Armand gulped, audibly, and Le Bleu looked sideways at the sheriff. For once, the Cajun overseer's stolid face registered puzzlement — and something else. Furtively he crossed himself.

"Yes," answered the colonel, looking hard at Picot, "where is the dog?"

"Eh?"

"Do you remember why I preferred charges against Bo-Jo, Sheriff?"

"Sho'!" nodded the sheriff. "He tried to knife Le Bleu, and swore he'd knife you, after you had Le Bleu lash him with a bullwhip for—for——" His eyes were suddenly wide, and he finished with a startled ejaculation. "Eh——?"

"Just so," said the colonel, succinctly. "I had Le Bleu lash him—well. It was rather feudal, I admit; but a dog like *that* one——"

"You mean to tell me——?"

"——That there hasn't been another dog in this house," evenly interposed the colonel, finishing Picot's question.

"But, good heavens, Colonel," expostulated the sheriff, "you had the nigger whipped *because he killed your dog!*"

"Precisely," agreed the colonel, a trifle wearily. "He was a *good* dog, Sheriff."

"A good dog," weakly agreed Sheriff Picot. "Yeah. A *dam'* good dog!"

The Three-Storied House

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

THE three men paused for a moment in the glare of the street lamp. Two of them slowly and deliberately lit cigarettes; the third stared back along the street with a curiously defiant expression on his face.

"Oh, come, Johnson! If it's that three-storied house that's bothering you, we'll go back and investigate it."

The man called Johnson shrugged his shoulders and turned. The three men walked silently on for a distance somewhat over a city block.

"Why is it, Johnson, that you can't ever pass a three-storied house without a shudder of repugnance? It gets on a fellow's nerves after a bit; I'm getting so that I watch for every three-storied house that I pass."

"If I've told you once, I've told you a dozen times, that the story's too utterly like a fairy-tale to repeat in public. It's humiliating to have you observe me like this, but it can't possibly be helped; it's in me, that's all. Can't you let it go at that?"

"I can't, Johnson. I'm ready to believe anything if it will explain your peculiar aversion to three-storied houses. Come with me to my home——"

"If I told it at all it would be when walking; I could never sit still, I know."

"Anything, Johnson; but tell it."

A faint stillness had settled over the city. For about ten minutes no one said a word; four blocks had been traversed. Johnson began to speak in a subdued voice.

"When I first came to this city, seven years ago, I roomed and boarded in a three-storied house out on the West Side. It was a queer old ramshackle building, and I remember that when I first saw it I did not consider that it might be inhabited. It was owned and controlled by an old lady, who dressed always in black silk, and wore an odd little frill cap on her white hair. It was the woman, not the house, that drew me. She had a curiously irresistible appeal; when you're alone in a strange city you notice such things.

"I roomed on the third floor. I tried to get a room on the second, but it appeared the second floor was leased for a lifetime, and more. I didn't say anything to the landlady about the second floor for a long time after; not until I was forced to speak about it.

"Both of you have roomed in houses like that at some time in your lives, I'll wager. And both of you know the natural curiosity that afflicts you—a curiosity to see what your fellow tenants are like. I met the tenants of the house one by one, but never once did the old lady offer to introduce me to the tenants of the second floor. This singular slip on her part annoyed me, but I had some satisfaction in knowing that no one else in the house had met the mysterious tenants.

"Life went on in the rooming-house as life goes on in all rooming-houses. I made friends with neighbors—very open people, who were

decidedly not in sympathy with back-fence gossip. They asked me one after another what I thought of my landlady, how I liked the house, and stereotyped questions in the same vein. But a young lady puzzled me one day. I had been standing with her before her home for all of half an hour, when suddenly she asked what I thought of the noisy tenants of my landlady's second floor. I admitted that they were noisy, and was forced to confess that I had not as yet met them. She smiled, and looked over at the second floor. I followed her gaze. Even from there the curtains on the windows looked curiously old.

"That question was asked me more than once after that, and I began to wonder what instigated it. And I began to redouble my efforts to catch sight of the tenants of the second floor. But to no avail; I neither saw them nor heard them leave their rooms. Neither of them ever appeared at table; there were at least two of them, as I could tell from the noise I had heard.

"I began to speak to my fellow roomers about the people on the second floor. They were as mystified as I, though not one of them allowed himself to be bothered by tenants they had not yet met. One of them suggested that perhaps they were acrobats, judging by the noise they made; another supposed that they were eccentrics of one type or another; yet another suggested that there might be no one in the rooms at all—maybe someone had committed suicide there, or a murder had been done there, or something to keep the landlady from renting the room. This last was, of course, a humorous remark, for all of us had been annoyed by the constant noise of the people below us.

"One night I woke from a sound sleep. A curious scratching sound, followed by a soft moaning, came to my ears. It seemed to come from the room immediately below mine. For a while I listened; then abruptly I thought of the humorous suggestion made by the tenant some while ago, a suggestion that had been given a queer basis by the girl of my acquaintance across the street, the same girl who had drawn my attention to the noise of the tenants of the floor below. The scratching sound increased in intensity; suddenly it developed into a steady pounding. The moaning stopped at once; for a while everything was quiet. Then a shrill scream came from the room below, and again, silence. My neighbor in the next room got up and pounded on the floor to quiet them; I imitated his example. The scratching sound was resumed again after a half-hour, and the entire program was repeated. More than one of us on the third floor were robbed of sleep that night.

"The same thing happened on successive nights. More pranks developed, to the great annoyance of all the tenants. Complaints to the landlady did absolutely no good: she could do nothing, for they were life tenants. 'You have grounds for putting them out,' said I. 'It would be impossible to put them out,' she answered. 'They have been here so long.'

"At last one night the noise was too intolerable for expression. Sitting up in bed I began to wonder whether or not my key would fit into the lock of the room below me, from which most of the noise came. Pounding on the floor had brought no response, save possibly in increase of the outrageous disturbances. I began seriously to contemplate entering in on the tenants below and upbraiding them as they deserved. The scratching sound had been coupled with a violent pounding; the noise of sobbing was mingled with moans. There was a noise as of scuffling, as if a chair or two had been overturned.

"It was too much. I got up and slipped on my dressing-gown. I got

my key from my coat pocket and without hesitation went downstairs to their door. I pounded on the door and in a loud voice demanded instant silence. But the noise continued.

"There are some things, boys, that one never forgets; for instance, if your ordinary routine is changed, is interrupted, by something so far from your sphere in life, that your comprehension can not embrace it. From that night on I could never tolerate three-storied houses.

"I put my key into the lock. I threw open the door. There was an abrupt cessation of all noise. But what I saw petrified me; I could not move.

"There was nothing—absolutely nothing—in that room! The light of a street lamp shone on countless layers of undisturbed dust!" .

Weird Recipes

FROM the household book of Sir Kenelm Digby (1603-65) we cull the following formulæ which the honest knight regarded as of high merit in the treatment of disease.

For "a Sudden and Infallible Cure of Bleeding, either at the Nose or by a Bloody-Flux," you had a very simple remedy. You had only to "take two parts of the Moss growing on the skull of a dead-man (pulled as small as you can with the fingers) and one part of Mastick (in Powder), mingle them well together; then make them into the consistence of a soft Plaister with Gum Dragaganth brought into Mucilage by steeping in Plantain and red Rose-water." Of this you made a plaster upon linen or leather to lay upon the forehead for nose-bleed and upon the abdomen for flux.

Dead men's skulls must have been easily procurable in those days, for another method of curing hemorrhage was to scrape up one drachm of human skull, put it into a glass of white wine, let it stand over night, and drink it in the morning, fasting. This, it was said, would inevitably cure in two or three days.

For aches in any part of the body, there was a very curious remedy. The instructions were: "Cause a dyer to dye you some thick, spungy Flannel of the blew colour called Coventry-blew. When it is dry, dye it again; dye it thus five times, at last the Dye will be so deep that it will look almost black." This you laid on and around the aching part in several folds, and after a time the ache would disappear.

If you suffered an injury to the bladder, you were directed to hang by a string about your neck a "little Bag containing some Powder of Toads calcined; so that the bag lay always upon the Pit of the Stomach next the Skin"; and presently it took away all pain and inconvenience, that is, if you left it hanging there; but if you took off the bag, the pain returned. "A Bag continueth in force but a month," says the book; after so long a time, you must wear a fresh one."

"It was a vision of fetid obscenity."

"The cross is not a passive agent. It protects the pure of heart, and it has often appeared in the air above our sabbats, confusing and dispersing the powers of Darkness."

—John Dee's *Necronomicon.*

THE horror came to Partridgeville in a blind fog.

All that afternoon thick vapors from the sea had swirled and eddied about the farm, and the room in which we sat swam with moisture. The fog ascended in spirals from beneath the door, and its long, moist fingers caressed my hair until it dripped. The square-paned windows were coated with a thick, dewlike moisture; the air was heavy and dank and unbelievably cold.

I stared gloomily at my friend. He had turned his back to the window and was writing furiously. He was a tall, slim man with a slight stoop and abnormally broad shoulders. In profile his face was impressive. He had an extremely broad forehead, long nose and slightly protuberant chin—a strong, sensitive face which suggested a wildly imaginative nature held in restraint by a skeptical and Brobdingnagian intellect.

My friend wrote short-stories. He wrote to please himself, in defiance of contemporary taste, and his tales were unusual. They would have delighted Poe; they would have delighted Hawthorne, or Ambrose Bierce, or Villiers de l'Isle Adam. They were terrible and somber studies of abnormal men, abnormal beasts, abnormal plants. He wrote of remote and unholy realms of imagination and hor-

ror, and the colors, sounds and odors which he dared to evoke were never seen, heard or smelt on the familiar side of the moon. He projected his shameless creations against wormy and obscene backgrounds. They stalked loathsomely through tall and lonely forests, over ragged mountains, and slithered evilly down the stairs of ancient houses, and between the piles of rotting black wharves.

One of his tales, *The House of the Worm*, had induced a young student at a Midwestern University to seek refuge in an enormous red-black building where everyone approved of his sitting on the floor and shouting at the top of his voice: "Lo, my beloved is fairer than all the lilies among the lilies in the lily garden." Another, *The Defilers*, had brought him precisely three hundred and ten letters of indignation from local readers when it appeared in the *Partridgeville Gazette*.

As I continued to stare at him he suddenly stopped writing and shook his head. "I can't do it," he said. "I should have to invent a new language. And yet I can comprehend the thing emotionally, intuitively, if you will. If I could only convey it in a sentence somehow—the strange crawling of its fleshless spirit!"

"Is it some new horror?" I asked.

He shook his head. "It is not new to me. I have known and felt it for years—a horror utterly beyond anything your prosaic brain can conceive."

"Thank you," I said.

"All human brains are prosaic," he elaborated. "I meant no offense. It is the shadowy terrors that lurk behind and above them that are mysterious and awful. Our little brains—what do they know of the loathly, crawling things that come down from outer space and suck us dry? I think sometimes they lodge in our heads, and our brains feel them, but when they stretch out horrid tentacles to claw and absorb us we go screaming mad; and of what use are brains then?"

"But you can't honestly believe in such nonsense!" I exclaimed.

"Of course not!" He shook his head and laughed. "You know damn well I'm too profoundly skeptical to believe in anything. I have merely outlined a poet's reactions to the universe. If a man wishes to write ghostly stories and actually convey a sensation of horror to his miserable and unworthy readers he must believe in everything—and *anything*. By *anything* I mean the horror that transcends *everything*, that is more terrible and impossible than *everything*. He must believe that there are things from outer space that can reach down and suck us dry."

"But this thing from outer space—how can he describe it if he doesn't know its shape or size or color?"

"It is virtually impossible to describe it. That is what I have sought to do—and failed. Perhaps some day—but then, I doubt if it can ever be accomplished. But your artist can hint, suggest——"

"Suggest what?" I asked, a little puzzled.

"Suggest a horror that is utterly unearthly; that makes itself felt in terms that have no counterparts on this earth."

I was still puzzled. He smiled wearily and elaborated his theory.

"There is something prosaic," he said, "about even the best of the classic tales of mystery and terror. Old Mrs. Radcliffe with her hidden vaults and bleeding ghosts, Maturin with his allegorical, Faustlike hero-villains, and his fiery flames from the mouth of hell, Edgar Poe with his blood-clotted corpses, and black cats, his telltale hearts and disintegrating Valdemars, Hawthorne with his amusing preoccupation with the problems and horrors arising from mere human sin (as though human sins were of any significance to the things that suck at our brains), and

the modern masters, Algernon Blackwood who invites us to a feast of the high gods and shows us an old woman with a harelip sitting before a ouija board fingering soiled cards, or an absurd nimbus of ectoplasm emanating from some clairvoyant ninny, Bram Stoker with his vampires and werewolves, mere conventional myths, the tag-ends of medieval folklore, Wells with his pseudo-scientific bogies, fish-men at the bottom of the sea, ladies in the moon, and the hundred and one idiots who are constantly writing ghost stories for the magazines—what have they contributed to the literature of the unholy?

"Are we not made of flesh and blood? It is but natural that we should be revolted and horrified when we are shown that flesh and blood in a state of corruption and decay, with the worms passing over and under it. It is but natural that a story about a corpse should thrill us, fill us with fear and horror and loathing. Any fool can awake these emotions in us —Poe really accomplished very little with his Lady Ushers, and liquescent Valdemars. He appealed to simple, natural, understandable emotions, and it was inevitable that his readers should respond.

"Are we not the descendants of barbarians? Did we not once dwell in tall and sinister forests, at the mercy of beasts that rend and tear? It is but inevitable that we should shiver and cringe when we meet in literature dark shadows from our own past. Harpies and vampires and werewolves — what are they but magnifications, distortions of the great birds and bats and ferocious dogs that harassed and tortured our ancestors? It is easy enough to arouse fear by such means. It is easy enough to frighten men with the flames at the mouth of hell, because they are hot and shrivel and burn the flesh—and who does not understand and dread a fire? Blows that kill, fires that burn, shadows that horrify because their substances lurk evilly in the black corridors of our inherited memories—I am weary of the writers who would terrify us by such pathetically obvious and trite unpleasantnesses."

Real indignation blazed in his eyes.

"Suppose there were a greater horror? Suppose evil things from some other universe should decide to invade this one? Suppose we couldn't see them? Suppose we couldn't feel them? Suppose they were of a color unknown on the earth, or rather, of an *appearance* that was without color?

"Suppose they had a shape unknown on the earth? Suppose they were four-dimensional, five-dimensional, six-dimensional? Suppose they were a hundred-dimensional? Suppose they had no dimensions at all and yet existed? What could we do?

"They would not exist for us? They would exist for us if they gave us pain. Suppose it was not the pain of heat or cold or any of the pains we know, but a new pain? Suppose they touched something besides our nerves—reached our brains in a new and terrible way? Suppose they made themselves felt in a new and strange and unspeakable way? What could we do? Our hands would be tied. You can not oppose what you can not see or feel. You can not oppose the thousand-dimensional. *Suppose they should eat their way to us through space!*"

He was rapidly talking himself into a frenzy.

"That is what I have tried to write about. I wanted to put into a story the crawling, formless thing that sucks at our brains. I wanted to make my readers, absurd and unworthy fools, feel and see that thing from another universe, from beyond space. I could easily enough hint at it, or suggest it—any fool can do that—but I wanted to actually describe it. To describe a color that is not a color! a form that is formless!

"A mathematician could perhaps slightly more than suggest it. There would be strange curves and angles that an inspired mathematician in a wild frenzy of calculation might glimpse vaguely. It is absurd to say that mathematicians have not discovered the fourth dimension. They have often glimpsed it, often approached it, often apprehended it, but they are unable to demonstrate it. I know a mathematician who swears that he once saw the sixth dimension in a wild flight into the sublime skies of the differential calculus.

"Unfortunately I am not a mathematician. I am only a poor fool of a creative artist, and the thing from outer space utterly eludes me."

SOMEONE was pounding loudly on the door. I crossed the room and drew back the latch. "What do you want?" I asked. "What is the matter?"

"Sorry to disturb you, Frank," said a familiar voice, "but I've got to talk to someone."

I recognized the lean, white face of my nearest neighbor, and stepped instantly to one side. "Come in," I said. "Come in, by all means. Howard and I have been discussing ghosts, and the things we've conjured up aren't pleasant company. Perhaps you can argue them away."

I called Howard's horrors ghosts because I didn't want to shock my commonplace neighbor. Henry Wells was immensely big and tall, and as he strode into the room he seemed to bring a part of the night with him.

He collapsed on a sofa and surveyed us with frightened eyes. Howard laid down the story he had been reading, removed and wiped his glasses, and frowned. He was more or less intolerant of my bucolic visitors. We waited for perhaps a minute, and then the three of us spoke almost simultaneously. "A horrible night!" "Beastly, isn't it?" "Wretched."

Henry Wells frowned. "Tonight," he said, "I—I met with a funny accident. I was driving Hortense through Mulligan Wood——"

"Hortense?" Howard interrupted.

"His horse," I explained impatiently. "You were returning from Brewster, weren't you, Harry?"

"From Brewster, yes," he replied. "I was driving between the trees watching the fog curling in and out of Hortense's ears and listening to the fog-horns in the bay wheezing and moaning, when something wet landed on my head. 'Rain,' I thought. 'I hope the supplies keep dry.'

"I turned round to make sure that the butter and flour were covered up, and something soft like a sponge rose up from the bottom of the wagon and hit me in the face. I snatched at it and caught it between my fingers.

"In my hands it felt like jelly. I squeezed it, and moisture ran out of it down my wrists. It wasn't so dark that I couldn't see it, either. Funny how you can see in fogs—they seem to make the night lighter. There was a sort of brightness in the air. I dunno, maybe it wasn't the fog, either. The trees seemed to stand out. You could see them sharp and clear. As I was saying, I looked at the thing, and what do you think it looked like? Like a piece of raw liver. Or like a calf's brain. Now that I come to think of it, it was more like a calf's brain. There were grooves in it, and you don't find many grooves in liver. Liver's usually as smooth as glass.

"It was an awful moment for me. 'There's someone up in one of those trees,' I thought. 'He's some tramp or crazy man or fool and he's been eating liver. My wagon frightened him and he dropped it—a piece of it. I can't be wrong. There was no liver in my wagon when I left Brewster.'

"I looked up. You know how tall all of the trees are in Mulligan Wood. You can't see the tops of some of them from the wagon-road on a clear day. And you know how crooked and queer-looking some of the trees are.

"It's funny, but I've always thought of them as old men—tall old men, you understand, tall and crooked and very evil. I've always thought of them as wanting to work mischief. There's something unwholesome about trees that grow very close together and grow crooked.

"I looked up.

"At first I didn't see anything but the tall trees, all white and glistening with the fog, and above them a thick, white mist that hid the stars of heaven. And then something long and white ran quickly down the trunk of one of the trees.

"It ran so quickly down the tree that I couldn't see it clearly. And it was so thin anyway that there wasn't much to see. But it was like an arm. It was like a long, white and very thin arm. But of course it wasn't an arm. Who ever heard of an arm as tall as a tree? I don't know what made me compare it to an arm, because it was really nothing but a thin line—like a wire, a string. I'm not sure that I saw it at all. Maybe I imagined it. I'm not even sure that it was as wide as a string. But it had a hand. Or didn't it? When I think of it my brain gets dizzy. You see, it moved so quickly I couldn't see it clearly at all.

"But it gave me the impression that it was looking for something that it had dropped. For a minute the hand seemed to spread out over the road, and then it left the tree and came toward the wagon. It was like a huge white hand walking on its fingers with a terribly long arm fastened to it that went up and up until it touched the fog, or perhaps until it touched the stars of heaven.

"I screamed and slashed Hortense with the reins, but the horse didn't need any urging. She was up and off before I could throw the liver, or calf's brain or whatever it was, into the road. She raced so fast she almost upset the wagon, but I didn't draw in the reins. I'd rather lie in a ditch with a broken rib than have a long, white hand squeezing the breath out of my throat.

"We had almost cleared the wood and I was just beginning to breathe again when my brain went cold. I can't describe what happened in any other way. My brain got as cold as ice inside my head. I can tell you I was frightened.

"Don't imagine I couldn't think clearly. I was conscious of everything that was going on about me, but my brain was so cold I screamed with the pain. Have you ever held a piece of ice in the palm of your hand for as long as two or three minutes? It burnt, didn't it? Ice burns worse than fire. Well, my brain felt as though it had lain on ice for hours and hours. There was a furnace inside my head, but it was a cold furnace. It was roaring with raging cold.

"Perhaps I should have been thankful that the pain didn't last. It wore off in about ten minutes, and when I got home I didn't seem to be any the worse for my experience. I'm sure I didn't think I was any the worse until I looked at myself in the glass. Then I saw the hole in my head."

Henry Wells leaned forward and brushed back the hair from his right temple.

"Here is the wound," he said. "What do you make of it?" He tapped with his fingers beneath a small round opening in the side of his head. "It's like a bullet-wound," he elaborated, "but there was no blood and you can look in pretty far. It seems to go right in to the center of my head. I shouldn't be alive."

Howard had risen and was staring at my neighbor with flaming eyes.

"Why have you lied to us?" he shouted. "Why have you told us this absurd story? A long hand, forsooth! You were drunk, man. Drunk—and yet you've succeeded in doing what I'd have sweated blood to accomplish. If I could have made my idiotic readers feel that horror, know it for a moment, that horror that you described in the woods, I should be with the immortals—I should be greater than Poe, greater than Hawthorne. And you—a clumsy clown, a lying yokel——"

I was on my feet with a furious protest.

"He's not lying," I said. "The man's insane with fever. He's been shot—someone has shot him in the head. Look at this wound. My God, man, you have no call to insult him!"

Howard's wrath died and the fire went out of his eyes. "Forgive me," he said. "You can't imagine how badly I've wanted to capture that ultimate horror, to put it on paper, and he did it so easily. If he had warned me that he was going to describe something like that I would have taken notes. But of course he doesn't know he's an artist. It was an accidental *tour de force* that he accomplished; he couldn't do it again, I'm sure. I'm sorry I went up in the air—I apologize. Do you want me to go for a doctor? That *is* a bad wound."

My neighbor shook his head. "I don't want a doctor," he said. "I've seen a doctor. There's no bullet in my head—that hole was not made by a bullet. When the doctor couldn't explain it I laughed at him. I hate doctors. And I haven't much use for fools that think I'm in the habit of lying. I haven't much use for people who won't believe me when I tell 'em I saw the long, white thing come sliding down the tree as clear as day."

But Howard was examining the wound in defiance of my neighbor's indignation. "It was made by something round and sharp," he said. "It's curious, but the flesh isn't torn. A knife or bullet would have torn the flesh, left a ragged edge."

I nodded, and was bending to study the wound when Wells shrieked, and clapped his hands to his head. "Ah-h-h!" he choked. "It's come back—the terrible, terrible cold."

Howard stared. "Don't expect me to believe such nonsense!" he exclaimed disgustedly.

But Wells was holding on to his head and dancing about the room in a delirium of agony. "I can't stand it!" he shrieked. "It's freezing up my brain. It's not like ordinary cold. It isn't. Oh God! It's like nothing you've ever felt. It bites, it scorches, it tears. It's like acid."

I laid my hand upon his shoulder and tried to quiet him, but he pushed me aside and made for the door.

"I've got to get out of here," he screamed. "The thing wants room. My head won't hold it. It wants the night—the vast night. It wants to wallow in the night."

He threw back the door and disappeared into the fog. Howard wiped his forehead with the sleeve of his coat and collapsed into a chair.

"Mad," he muttered. "A tragic case of manic-depressive insanity. Who would have suspected it? The story he told us wasn't conscious art at all. It was simply a nightmare-fungus conceived by the brain of a lunatic."

"Yes," I said, "but how do you account for the hole in his head?"

"Oh, that!" Howard shrugged. "He probably always had it—probably was born with it."

"Nonsense," I said. "The man never had a hole in his head before. Personally, I think he's been shot. Something ought to be done. He needs medical attention. I think I'll 'phone Dr. Smith."

"It is useless to interfere," said Howard. "That hole was *not* made by a bullet. I advise you to forget him until tomorrow. His insanity may be temporary; it may wear off; and then he'd blame us for interfering. It doesn't pay to meddle with lunatics. If he's still crazy tomorrow, if he comes here again and tries to make trouble, you can notify the proper authorities. Has he ever acted queerly before?"

"No," I said. "He was always quite sane. I think I'll take your advice and wait. But I wish I could explain the hole in his head."

"The story he told interests me more," said Howard. "I'm going to write it out before I forget it. Of course I shan't be able to make the horror as real as he did, but perhaps I can catch a bit of the strangeness and glamor."

He unscrewed his fountain pen and began to cover a harmless sheet of paper with curious jeweled phrases—unearthly phrases. I knew that in a moment the paper would become unholy. I knew that it would glow with an unhallowed light; that witch-fires would flicker over it; strange shadows deepen all about it. From his brain strange and monstrous ideas would flow in a continuous stream to the smooth, white paper.

I shivered and closed the door.

For several minutes there was no sound in the room save the scratching of his pen as it moved across the paper. For several minutes there was silence—and then the shrieks commenced. Or were they wails?

We heard them through the closed door, heard them above the moaning of the fog-horns and the wash of the waves on Mulligan's Beach. We heard them above the million sounds of night that had horrified and depressed us as we sat and talked in that fog-enshrouded and lonely house. We heard them so clearly that for a moment we thought they came from just outside the house. It was not until they came again and again—long, piercing wails—that we discovered in them a quality of remoteness. Slowly we became aware that the wails came from far away, as far away, perhaps, as Mulligan Wood.

"A soul in torture," muttered Howard. "A poor, damned soul in the grip of the crawling chaos."

He rose unsteadily to his feet. His eyes were shining and he was breathing heavily.

I seized his shoulders and shook him. "You shouldn't project yourself into your stories that way," I exclaimed. "Some poor chap is in distress. I don't know what's happened. Perhaps a ship has foundered. I'm going to put on a slicker and find out what it's all about. I have an idea we may be needed."

"We *may* be needed," repeated Howard slowly. "We may be needed indeed. It will not be satisfied with a single victim. Think of that great journey through space, the thirst and dreadful hungers it must have known! It is preposterous to imagine that it will be content with a single victim!"

Then, suddenly, a change came over him. The light went out of his eyes and his voice lost its quaver. He shivered.

"Forgive me," he said. "I'm afraid you'll think I'm as mad as the yokel who was here a few minutes ago. But I can't help identifying myself with my characters when I write. I'd described something very evil, and those yells—well, they are exactly like the yells a man would make if—if——"

"I understand," I interrupted, "but we've no time to discuss that now. There's a poor chap out there"—I pointed vaguely toward the door—"with his back against the wall. He's fighting off something—I don't know what. We've got to help him."

"Of course, of course," he agreed, and followed me into the kitchen.

Without a word I took down a slicker and handed it to him. I also handed him an enormous rubber hat.

"Get into these as quickly as you can," I said. "The chap's desperately in need of us."

I had gotten my own slicker down from the rack and was forcing my arms through its sticky sleeves. In a moment we were both pushing our way through the fog.

The fog was like a living thing. Its long fingers reached up and slapped us relentlessly on the face. It curled about our bodies and ascended in great, grayish spirals from the tops of our heads. It retreated before us, and as suddenly closed in and enveloped us.

Dimly ahead of us we saw the lights of a few lonely farms. Behind us the sea drummed, and the foghorns sent out a continuous, mournful ululation. The collar of Howard's slicker was turned up over his ears, and from his long nose moisture dripped. There was grim decision in his eyes, and his jaw was set.

For many minutes we plodded on in silence, and it was not until we approached Mulligan Wood that he spoke.

"If necessary," he said, "we shall enter the wood."

I nodded. "There is no reason why we should not enter the wood," I said. "It isn't a large wood."

"One could get out quickly?"

"One could get out very quickly indeed. My God, did you hear that?"

The shrieks had grown horribly loud.

"He is suffering," said Howard. "He is suffering terribly. Do you suppose—do you suppose it's your crazy friend?"

He had voiced a question which I had been asking myself for some time.

"It's conceivable," I said. "But we'll have to interfere if he's as mad as that. I wish I'd brought some of the neighbors with me."

"Why in heaven's name didn't you?" Howard shouted. "It may take a dozen men to handle him." He was staring at the tall trees that towered before us, and I don't think he really gave Henry Wells so much as a thought.

"That's Mulligan Wood," I said. I swallowed to keep my heart from rising to the top of my mouth. "It isn't a big wood," I added idiotically.

"Oh my God!" Out of the fog there came the sound of a voice in the last extremity of unutterable pain. "They're eating up my brain. Oh my God!"

I was at that moment in deadly fear that I might become as mad as the man in the woods. I clutched Howard's arm.

"Let's go back," I shouted. "Let's go back at once. We were fools to come. There is nothing here but madness and suffering and perhaps death."

"That may be," said Howard, "but we're going on."

His face was ashen beneath his dripping hat, and his eyes were thin blue slits. Before the tremendous challenge of his courage I was abashed.

"Very well," I said grimly. "We'll go on."

Slowly we moved among the trees. They towered above us, and the thick fog so distorted them and merged them together that they seemed to move forward with us. From their twisted branches the fog hung in ribbons. Ribbons, did I say? Rather were they snakes of fog—writhing snakes with venomous tongues and leering, evil eyes. Through swirling clouds of fog we saw the scaly, gnarled boles of the trees, and every bole resembled the twisted body of an evil old man.

Only the small oblong of light cast by my electric torch protected us against their malevolence.

Through great banks of fog we moved, and every moment the screams grew louder. Soon we were catching fragments of sentences, hysterical shoutings that merged into prolonged wails. "Colder and colder and colder . . . they are eating up my brain. Colder! Ah-h-h!"

Howard gripped my arm. "We'll find him," he said. "We can't turn back now."

When we found him he was lying on his side. His hands were clasped about his head, and his body was bent double, the knees drawn up so tightly that they almost touched his chest. He was silent. We bent and shook him, but he made no sound.

"Is he dead?" I choked out the question hysterically. I wanted desperately to turn and run. The trees were very close to us.

"I don't know," said Howard. "I don't know. I hope that he is dead."

I saw him kneel and slide his hand under the poor devil's shirt. For a moment his face was a mask. Then he got up quickly and shook his head.

"He is alive," he said. "We must get him into some dry clothes as quickly as possible."

I helped him. Together we lifted the bent figure from the ground and carried it forward between the trees. Twice we stumbled and nearly fell, and the creepers tore at our clothes. The creepers were little malicious hands grasping and tearing under the malevolent guidance of the great trees. Without a star to guide us, without a light except the little pocket lamp which was growing dim, we fought our way out of Mulligan Wood.

THE droning did not commence until we had left the wood. At first we scarcely heard it, it was so low, like the purring of gigantic engines far down in the earth. But slowly, as we stumbled forward with our burden, it grew so loud that we could not ignore it.

"What is that?" muttered Howard, and through the wraiths of fog I saw that his face had a greenish tinge.

"I don't know," I mumbled. "It's something horrible. I never heard anything like it. Can't you walk faster?"

So far we had been fighting familiar horrors, but the droning and humming that rose behind us was like nothing that I had ever heard on earth. In excruciating fright, I shrieked aloud. "Faster, Howard, faster! For God's sake, let's get out of this!"

As I spoke, the body that we were carrying squirmed, and from its cracked lips issued a torrent of gibberish: "I was walking between the trees and looking up. I couldn't see their tops. I was looking up, and then suddenly I looked down and the thing landed on my shoulders. It was all legs—all long, crawling legs. It went right into my head. I wanted to get away from the trees, but I couldn't. I was alone in the forest with the thing on my back, in my head, and when I tried to run, the trees reached out and tripped me. It made a hole so it could get in. It's my brain it wants. Today it made a hole, and now it's crawled in and it's sucking and sucking and sucking. It's as cold as ice and it makes a noise like a great big fly. But it isn't a fly. And it isn't a hand. I was wrong when I called it a hand. You can't see it. I wouldn't have seen or felt it if it hadn't made a hole and got in. You almost see it, you almost feel it, and that means that it's getting ready to go in."

"Can you walk, Wells? Can you walk?"

Howard had dropped Wells' legs and I could hear the harsh intake of

his breath as he struggled to rid himself of his slicker.

"I think so," Wells sobbed. "But it doesn't matter. It's got me now. Put me down and save yourselves."

"We've got to run!" I yelled.

"It's our one chance," cried Howard. "Wells, you follow us. Follow us, do you understand? They'll burn up your brain if they catch you. We're going to run, lad. Follow us!"

He was off through the fog. Wells shook himself free, and followed with hoarse shrieks. I tasted a horror more terrible than death. The noise was dreadfully loud; it was right in my ears, and yet for a moment I couldn't move. I stared at the blank wall of fog, and gibbered.

"Christ, Frank will be lost!" It was the voice of Wells, my poor, lost friend.

"We'll go back!" It was Howard shouting now. "It's death, or worse, but we can't leave him."

"Keep on," I shouted. "They won't get me. Save yourselves!"

In my anxiety to prevent them from sacrificing themselves I plunged wildly forward. In a moment I had joined Howard and was clutching at his arm.

"What is it?" I cried. "What have we to fear?"

The droning was all about us now, but no louder.

"Come quickly or we'll be lost!" he urged frantically. "They've broken down all barriers. That buzzing is a warning. We're sensitives—we've been warned, but if it gets louder we're lost. They're strong near Mulligan Wood, and it's here they've made themselves felt. They're experimenting now — feeling their way. Later, when they've learned, they'll spread out. If we can only reach the farm——".

"We'll reach the farm!" I shouted encouragement as I clawed my way through the fog.

"Heaven help us if we don't!" moaned Howard.

He had thrown off his slicker, and his seeping wet shirt clung tragically to his lean body. He moved through the blackness with long, furious strides. Far ahead we heard the maniacal shrieks of Henry Wells. Ceaselessly the fog-horns moaned; ceaselessly the fog swirled and eddied about us.

And the droning continued. It seemed incredible that we should ever have found a way to the farm in the blackness. But find the farm we did, and into it we stumbled with glad cries.

"Shut the door!" shouted Howard.

I shut the door.

"We are safe here, I think," he said. "They haven't reached the farm yet."

"What has happened to Wells?" I gasped, and then I saw the wet tracks leading into the kitchen.

Howard saw them too. His eyes flashed with momentary relief.

"I'm glad he's safe," he muttered. "I feared for him."

Then his face darkened. The kitchen was unlighted and no sound came from it.

Without a word Howard walked across the room and into the darkness beyond. I sank into a chair, flicked the moisture from my eyes and brushed back my hair, which had fallen in soggy strands across my face. For a moment I sat, breathing heavily, and when the door creaked, I shivered. But I remembered Howard's assurance: "They haven't reached the farm yet. We're safe here."

Somehow, I had confidence in Howard. He realized that we were threatened by a new and unknown horror, and in some occult way he had grasped its limitations.

I confess, though, that when I heard the screams that came from the kitchen, my faith in my friend was

slightly shaken. There were low growls, such as I could not believe came from any human throat, and the voice of Howard raised in wild expostulation. "Let go, I say! Are you quite mad? Man, man, we have saved you! Don't, I say—leggo my leg. Ah-hh!"

As Howard staggered into the room I sprang forward and caught him in my arms. He was covered with blood from head to foot and his face was ashen.

"He's gone raving mad," he moaned. "He was running about on his hands and knees like a dog. He sprang at me, and almost killed me. I fought him off, but I'm badly bitten. I hit him in the face—knocked him unconscious. I may have killed him. He's an animal—I had to protect myself."

I laid Howard on the sofa and knelt beside him, but he scorned my aid.

"Don't bother with me!" he commanded. "Get a rope, quickly, and tie him up. If he comes to, we'll have to fight for our lives."

WHAT followed was a nightmare. I remember vaguely that I went into the kitchen with a rope and tied poor Wells to a chair; then I bathed and dressed Howard's wounds, and lit a fire in the grate. I remember also that I telephoned for a doctor. But the incidents are confused in my memory, and I have no clear recollection of anything until the arrival of a tall, grave man with kindly and sympathetic eyes and a presence that was as soothing as an opiate.

He examined Howard, nodded and explained that the wounds were not serious. He examined Wells, and did not nod. He explained slowly that Wells was desperately ill. "Brain fever," he said. "An immediate operation will be necessary. I tell you frankly, I don't think we can save him."

"That wound in his head, Doctor," I said. "Was it made by a bullet?"

The doctor frowned. "It puzzles me," he said. "Of course it was made by a bullet, but it should have partially closed up. It goes right into the brain. You say you know nothing about it. I believe you, but I think the authorities should be notified at once. Someone will be wanted for manslaughter, unless"—he paused—"unless the wound was self-inflicted. What you tell me is curious. That he should have been able to walk about for hours seems incredible. The wound has obviously been dressed, too. There is no clotted blood at all."

He paced slowly back and forth. "We must operate here—at once. There is a slight chance. Luckily, I brought some instruments. We must clear this table and—do you think you could hold a lamp for me?"

I nodded. "I'll try," I said.

"Good!"

The doctor busied himself with preparations while I debated whether or not I should 'phone for the police.

"I'm convinced," I said at last, "that the wound was self-inflicted. Wells acted very strangely. If you are willing, Doctor——"

"Yes?"

"We will remain silent about this matter until after the operation. If Wells lives, there would be no need of involving the poor chap in a police investigation."

The doctor nodded. "Very well," he said. "We will operate first and decide afterward."

Howard was laughing silently from his couch. "The police," he snickered. "Of what use would they be against the things in Mulligan Wood?"

There was an ironic and ominous quality about his mirth that disturbed me. The horrors that we had known in the fog seemed absurd and impossible in the cool, scientific pres-

ence of Dr. Smith, and I didn't want to be reminded of them.

The doctor turned from his instruments and whispered into my ear. "Your friend has a slight fever, and apparently it has made him delirious. If you will bring me a glass of water I will mix him an opiate."

I raced to secure a glass, and in a moment we had Howard sleeping soundly.

"Now then," said the doctor as he handed me the lamp. "You must hold this steady and move it about as I direct."

The white, unconscious form of Henry Wells lay upon the table that the doctor and I had cleared, and I trembled all over when I thought of what lay before me.

I should be obliged to stand and gaze into the living brain of my poor friend as the doctor relentlessly laid it bare. I should be obliged to stand and stare as the doctor cut and probed, and perhaps I should witness unmentionable things.

With swift, experienced fingers the doctor administered an anesthetic. I was oppressed by a dreadful feeling that we were committing a crime, that Henry Wells would have violently disapproved, that he would have preferred to die. It is a dreadful thing to mutilate a man's brain. And yet I knew that the doctor's conduct was above reproach, and that the ethics of his profession demanded that he operate.

"We are ready," said Dr. Smith. "Lower the lamp. Carefully now!"

I saw the knife moving in his competent, swift fingers. For a moment I stared, and then I turned my head away. What I had seen in that brief glance made me sick and faint. It may have been fancy, but as I stared hysterically at the wall I had the impression that the doctor was on the verge of collapse. He made no sound, but I was almost certain that he had made some horrible, unspeakable discovery.

"Lower the lamp," he said. His voice was hoarse and seemed to come from far down within his throat.

His voice horrified me so that I was guilty of a great treachery. I lowered the lamp an inch without turning my head. I waited for him to reproach me, to swear at me perhaps, but he was as silent as the man on the table. I knew, though, that his fingers were still at work, for I could hear them as they moved about. I could hear his swift, agile fingers moving about the head of Henry Wells.

I suddenly became conscious that my hand was trembling. I wanted to lay down the lamp; I felt that I could no longer hold it.

"Are you nearly through?" I gasped in desperation.

"Hold that lamp steady!" The doctor screamed the command. "If you move that lamp again—I—I won't sew him up. I'll walk out of this room and leave his obscene brain to rot. I don't care if they hang me! I'm not a healer of devils!"

I knew not what to do. I could scarcely hold the lamp, and the doctor's threat horrified me. In desperation I pleaded with him.

"Do everything you can," I urged, hysterically. "Give him a chance to fight his way back. He was kind and good—once!"

For a moment there was silence, and I feared that he would not heed me. I momentarily expected him to throw down his scalpel and sponge, and dash across the room and out into the fog. It was not until I heard his fingers moving about again that I knew he had decided to give even the damned a chance.

IT WAS after midnight when the doctor told me that I could lay down the lamp. I turned with a cry of relief and encountered a face that I shall never forget. In three quarters of an hour the doctor had aged ten years. There were purple caverns

beneath his eyes, and his mouth twitched convulsively. There were wrinkles upon his high yellow forehead that I had not seen there before, and when he spoke, his voice was cracked and feeble.

"He'll not live," he said. "He'll be dead in an hour. I did not touch his brain. I could do nothing. When I saw—how things were—I—I sewed him up immediately."

"What did you see?" I half whispered.

A look of unutterable fear came into the doctor's eyes. "I saw—I saw"—his voice broke and his whole body quivered—"I saw—oh, the burning shame of it! Because I have seen a—what man should not look upon—I bear the mark of the beast upon me. I am contaminated forever. I am unclean. I can not stay in this house. I must leave at once."

He broke down and covered his face with his hands. Great sobs convulsed his body.

"Unclean," he moaned. "The old, hideous secret that man has forgotten—a horror to look upon. Evil that is without shape; evil that is formless."

Suddenly he raised his head and looked wildly about him.

"They will come here and claim him!" he shrieked. "They have laid their mark upon him and they will come for him. You must not stay here. This house is marked for destruction!"

I watched him helplessly as he seized his hat and bag and crossed to the door. With white, shaking fingers he drew back the latch, and in a moment his lean figure was silhouetted against a square of swirling vapor.

"Remember that I warned you!" he shouted back; and then the fog swallowed him.

Howard was sitting up and rubbing his eyes.

"A malicious trick, that!" he was muttering. "To deliberately drug me! Had I known that glass of water——"

"How do you feel?" I asked as I shook him violently by the shoulders. "Do you think you can walk?"

"You drug me, and then ask me to walk! Frank, you're as unreasonable as an artist. What is the matter now?"

I pointed to the silent figure on the table. "Mulligan Wood is safer," I said. "He belongs to them now!"

Howard sprang to his feet and shook me by the arm.

"What do you mean?" he cried. "How do you know?"

"The doctor saw his brain," I explained. "And he also saw something that he would not—could not describe. But he told me that they would come for him, and I believe him."

"We must leave here at once!" cried Howard. "Your doctor was right. We are in deadly danger. Even Mulligan Wood—but we need not return to the wood. There is your launch!"

"There is the launch!" I echoed, faint hope rising in my mind.

"The fog will be a most deadly menace," said Howard grimly. "But even death at sea is preferable to *this* horror."

IT WAS not far from the house to the dock, and in less than a minute Howard was seated in the stern of the launch and I was working furiously on the engine. The foghorns still moaned, but there were no lights visible anywhere in the harbor. We could not see two feet before our faces. The white wraiths of the fog were dimly visible in the darkness, but beyond them stretched endless night, lightless and full of terror.

Howard was speaking. "Somehow I feel that there is death out there," he said.

"There is more death here," I said as I churned at the engine. "I think

I can avoid the rocks. There is very little wind and I know the harbor."

"And of course we shall have the fog-horns to guide us," muttered Howard. "I think we had better make for the open sea."

I agreed.

"The launch wouldn't survive a storm," I said, "but I've no desire to remain in the harbor. If we reach the sea we'll probably be picked up by some ship. It would be sheer folly to remain where they can reach us."

"How do we know how far they can reach?" groaned Howard. "What are the distances of earth to things that have traveled through space? They will overrun the earth. They will destroy us all utterly."

"We'll discuss that later," I cried as the engine roared into life. "We're going to get as far away from them as possible. Perhaps they haven't *learned* yet! While they've still limitations we may be able to escape."

We moved slowly into the channel, and the sound of the water splashing against the sides of the launch soothed us strangely. At a suggestion from me Howard had taken the wheel and was slowly bringing her about.

"Keep her steady," I shouted. "There isn't any danger until we get into the Narrows!"

For several minutes I crouched above the engine while Howard steered in silence. Then, suddenly, he turned to me with a gesture of elation.

"I think the fog's lifting," he said.

I stared into the darkness before me. Certainly it seemed less oppressive, and the white spirals of mist that had been continually ascending through it were fading into insubstantial wisps. "Keep her head on," I shouted. "We're in luck. If the fog clears we'll be able to see the Narrows. Keep a sharp lookout for Mulligan Light."

There is no describing the joy that filled us when we saw the light. Yellow and bright it streamed over the water and illuminated sharply the outlines of the great rocks that rose on both sides of the Narrows.

"Let me have the wheel," I shouted as I stepped quickly forward. "This is a ticklish passage, but we'll come through now with colors flying."

In our excitement and elation we almost forgot the horror that we had left behind us. I stood at the wheel and smiled confidently as we raced over the dark water. Quickly the rocks drew nearer until their vast bulk towered above us.

"We shall certainly make it!" I cried.

But no response came from Howard. I heard him choke and gasp.

"What is the matter?" I asked suddenly, and turning, saw that he was crouching in terror above the engine. His back was turned toward me, but I knew instinctively in which direction he was gazing.

The dim shore that we had left shone like a flaming sunset. Mulligan Wood was burning. Great flames shot up from the highest of the tall trees, and a thick curtain of black smoke rolled slowly eastward, blotting out the few remaining lights in the harbor.

But it was not the flames that caused me to cry out in a frenzy of fear and horror. It was the shape that towered above the trees, the vast, formless shape that moved slowly to and fro across the sky.

God knows I tried to believe that I saw nothing. I tried to believe that the shape was a mere shadow cast by the flames. I even managed to laugh, and I remember that I patted Howard's arm reassuringly.

"The wood will be destroyed utterly," I cried. "I know that they will not escape. They will all perish."

But when Howard turned in his fright and screamed, I knew that the dim, formless thing that towered above the trees was more than a shadow.

"If we see it clearly we are lost!" he shrieked. "Pray that it remains without form!"

"I see nothing!" I groaned. "There is blackness above the trees."

"It has no form," gibbered Howard. "We should not—we must not see it! It is our little brains that give it a form. When it enters our brains it becomes clothed in a form. If it enters our brains we are lost."

"The woods are burning!" I shouted. "There is nothing above the trees. All is blackness and emptiness above the trees."

But even as I stared at the shape with loathing, with furious disbelief, it grew more distinct. Above the burning trees it hovered awfully, and I slowly became aware that it had wings.

"It is like a bat!" I groaned. "It is a great bat with yellow wings brooding over the fire."

"It *is* a bat!" sobbed Howard. "It is dark and very large and almost formless, but it *is* a bat!"

"No, no!" I shrieked. "It is not a bat. We see nothing. There is a great, vague form that moves back and forth above the trees, but it is not a bat."

Howard buried his head in his hands and sobbed aloud in an agony of fear. "Our brains will grow cold," he moaned. "They will enter and suck at our brains."

"Oh, not that!" I cried. "I will die first. I will throw myself into the water. That terror is more terrible than drowning."

We stood trembling in the darkness, a prey to the most awful horror. The shape above Mulligan Wood was slowly growing clearer and I did not think anything could save us. And then, suddenly, I remembered that there was one thing that might save us.

"It is older than the world," I thought, "older than all religion. Before the dawn of civilization men knelt in adoration before it. It is present in all mythologies. It is the primal symbol. Perhaps, in the dim past, thousands and thousands of years ago, it was used to—repel the invaders. I shall so use it. I shall fight the shape with a high and terrible mystery."

I became suddenly curiously calm. I knew that I had hardly a minute to act, that more than our lives were threatened, but I did not tremble. I reached calmly beneath the engine and drew out a quantity of cotton waste.

"Howard," I said, "I want you to light me a match. It is our only hope. You must strike a match at once."

For what seemed eternities Howard stared at me incomprehensibly. Then the night was clamorous with his laughter.

"A match!" he shrieked. "A match to warm our little brains! Yes, we shall need a match."

"Trust me!" I entreated. "You must—it is our one hope. Strike a match quickly."

"I do not understand!" Howard was sober now, but his voice quivered hysterically.

"I have thought of something that may save us," I said. "Please light this waste for me."

Slowly he nodded. I had told him nothing, but I knew he guessed what I intended to do. Often his insight was uncanny. With fumbling fingers he drew out a match and struck it.

"Be bold," he said. "Show them that you are unafraid. Make the sign boldly."

As the waste caught fire, the form above the trees stood out with a frightful clarity.

"There is nothing there," I cried. "We see nothing. We are protected. We are invincible."

I raised the flaming cotton and passed it quickly before my body in a straight line from my left to my right shoulder. Then I raised it to my forehead and lowered it to my knees.

In an instant Howard had snatched the brand and was repeating the sign. He made two crosses, one against his body and one against the darkness with the torch held at arm's length. "*Sanctus . . . sanctus . . . sanctus,*" he muttered.

For a moment I shut my eyes, but I could still see the shape above the trees. Then slowly it ceased to resemble a bat, its form became less distinct, became vast and chaotic—and when I opened my eyes it had vanished. I saw nothing but the flaming forest and the shadows cast by the tall trees.

The horror had passed, but I did not move. I stood like an image of stone staring over the black water. Then something seemed to burst in my head. My brain spun dizzily, and I tottered against the rail.

I would have fallen, but Howard caught me about the shoulders. "We're saved!" he shouted. "We've won through."

"I'm glad," I said. But I was too utterly exhausted to really rejoice. My legs gave way beneath me and my head fell forward. All the sights and sounds of earth were swallowed up in a merciful blackness.

2

HOWARD was writing when I entered the room.

"How is the story going?" I asked.

For a moment he ignored my question. Then he slowly turned and faced me. His lips opened but no sound came from between them. I noticed that he had aged horribly. He was much thinner (I don't think he weighed more than one hundred and ten pounds) and there were myriads of tiny wrinkles about his eyes.

"It's not going well," he said at last. "It doesn't satisfy me. There are problems that still elude me. I haven't been able to capture *all* of the crawling horror of the thing in Mulligan Wood."

I sat down and lit a cigarette.

"I want you to explain that horror to me," I said. "For three weeks I have waited for you to speak. I know that you have some knowledge which you are concealing from me. What was the damp, spongy thing that landed on Wells' head in the woods? Why did we hear a droning as we fled in the fog? What was the meaning of the shape that we saw above the trees? And why, in heaven's name, didn't the horror spread as we feared it might? What stopped it? Howard, what do you think really happened to Wells' brain? Did his body burn with the farm, or did they —*claim* it? And the other body that was found in Mulligan Wood—that lean, blackened horror with riddled head—how do you explain that?" [Two days after the fire a skeleton had been found in Mulligan Wood. A few fragments of burnt flesh still adhered to the bones, and the skull-cap was missing.]

It was a long time before Howard spoke again. He sat with bowed head, fingering his notebook, and his body trembled horribly, trembled all over. At last he raised his eyes. They shone with a wild light and his lips were ashen.

"Yes," he said. "We will discuss the horror together. Last week I did not want to speak of it. It seemed too awful to put into words. But I shall never rest in peace until I have woven it into a story, until I have made my readers feel and see that dreadful, unspeakable thing. And I can not write of it until I am convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt

that I understand it myself. It may help me to talk about it.

"You have asked me what the damp thing was that fell on Wells' head. I believe that it was a human brain—the essence of a human brain drawn out through a hole, or holes, in a human head. I believe the brain was drawn out by imperceptible degrees, and reconstructed again by the horror. I believe that for some purpose of its own it used human brains—perhaps to learn from them. Or perhaps it merely played with them. The blackened, riddled body in Mulligan Wood? That was the body of the first victim, some poor fool who got lost between the tall trees. I rather suspect the trees helped. I think the horror endowed them with a strange life. Anyhow, the poor chap lost his brain. The horror took it, and played with it, and then accidentally dropped it. It dropped it on Wells' head. Wells said that the long, thin and very white arm he saw was looking for something that it had dropped. Of course Wells didn't really see the arm objectively, but the horror that is without form or color had already entered his brain and clothed itself in human thought.

"As for the droning that we heard and the shape we thought we saw above the burning forest—that was the horror seeking to make itself felt, seeking to break down barriers, seeking to enter our brains and clothe itself with our thoughts. It almost got us. If we had seen the shape as clearly as Wells saw the white arm we should have been lost."

Howard walked to the window. He drew back the curtains and gazed for a moment at the crowded harbor and the colossal buildings that towered against the moon. He was staring at the skyline of lower Manhattan. Sheer beneath him the cliffs of Brooklyn Heights loomed darkly.

"Why didn't they conquer?" he cried. "They could have destroyed it utterly. They could have wiped it from the earth—all its incredible wealth and power would have gone down before them. The great buildings would have toppled into the sea, and millions of brains would have fed their lust—their terrible, unearthly lust."

I shivered. "But why didn't the horror spread?" I cried.

Howard shrugged his shoulders. "I do not know. Perhaps they discovered that human brains were too trivial and absurd to bother with. Perhaps we ceased to amuse them. Perhaps they grew tired of us. But it is conceivable that the *sign* destroyed them—or sent them back through space. I think they came once before. I think they came millions of years ago, and were frightened away by the sign. When they discovered that we had not forgotten the use of the sign they may have fled in terror. Certainly there has been no manifestation for three weeks. I think that they are gone."

"Then I have saved the world!" I shouted exultantly.

"Perhaps." He eyed me disapprovingly. "I think I can forgive you for that," he said, "but it is nothing to gloat over."

"And Henry Wells?" I asked.

"Well, his body was not found. I imagine they came for him."

"And you honestly intend to put this—this ultimate obscenity into a story? Oh, my God! The whole thing is so incredible, so unheard of, that I can't believe it. I can't! My friend, my friend, did we not dream it all? Were we ever really in Partridgeville? Did we sit in an ancient house and discuss unmentionable things while the fog curled about us? Did we walk through that unholy wood? Were the trees really alive, and did Henry Wells run about on his hands and knees like a wolf?"

Howard sat down quietly and rolled up his sleeve. He thrust his thin arm toward me.

"Can you argue away that scar?" he said. "There are the marks of the beast that attacked me—the man-beast that was Henry Wells. A dream? My friend, I would cut off this arm immediately at the elbow if you could convince me that it was a dream."

I walked to the window and remained for a long time staring at the stupendous galaxies of Manhattan. "There," I thought, "is something substantial. It is absurd to imagine that anything could destroy it. It is absurd to imagine that the horror was really as terrible as it seemed to us in Partridgeville. I must persuade Howard not to write about it. We must both try to forget it."

I returned to where he sat and laid my hand on his shoulder.

"You'll give up the idea of putting it into a story?" I urged gently.

"Never!" He was on his feet, and his eyes were blazing. "Do you think I would give up now when I've almost captured it? I shall write the most terrible story that the world has ever seen. My readers shall crouch and whimper in awful fear. I shall surpass Poe—I shall surpass all of the Masters."

"Surpass them and be damned then," I said angrily. "That way madness lies, but it is useless to argue with you. Your egoism is too colossal."

I turned and walked swiftly out of the room. It occurred to me as I descended the stairs that I had made an idiot of myself with my fears, but even as I went down I looked fearfully back over my shoulder, as though I expected a great stone weight to descend from above and crush me to the earth. "He should forget the horror," I thought. "He should wipe it from his mind. He will go mad if he writes about it."

THREE days passed before I saw Howard again.

"Come in," he said in a curiously hoarse voice when I knocked on his door.

I found him in dressing-gown and slippers, and I knew as soon as I saw him that he was terribly exultant. His eyes shone and he greeted me with a feverish intensity.

"I have triumphed, Frank!" he cried. "I have reproduced the form that is formless, the burning shame that man has not looked upon, the crawling, fleshless obscenity that sucks at our brains!"

Before I could so much as gasp he had placed the bulky manuscript in my hands.

"Read it, Frank," he commanded. "Sit down at once and read it!"

I crossed to the window and sat down on the lounge. I sat there oblivious to everything but the typewritten sheets before me. I confess that I was consumed with an unholy curiosity. I had never questioned Howard's power. With words he wrought miracles; breaths from the unknown blew always over his pages, and things that had passed beyond earth returned at his bidding. But could he even suggest the horror that we had known?—could he even so much as hint at the loathsome, crawling thing that had claimed the brain of Henry Wells?

I read the story through. I read it slowly, and clutched at the pillows beside me in a frenzy of loathing. As soon as I had finished it Howard snatched it from me. He evidently suspected that I desired to tear it to shreds.

"What do you think of it?" he cried exultantly.

"It is indescribably foul!" I exclaimed. "It is terribly, unspeakably obscene!"

"But you will concede that I have made the horror convincing?"

I nodded, and reached for my hat. "You have made it so convincing

that I can not remain and discuss it with you. I intend to walk until morning. I intend to walk until I am too weary to care, or think, or remember."

"It is deathless art!" he shouted at me, but I passed down the stairs and out of the house without replying.

3

It was past midnight when the telephone rang. I laid down the book I was reading and lowered the receiver.

"Hello. Who is there?" I asked.

"Frank, this is Howard!" The voice was strangely high-pitched. "Come as quickly as you can. *They've come back!* And Frank, the sign is powerless. I've tried the sign, but the droning is getting louder, and a dim shape——" Howard's voice trailed off disastrously.

I fairly screamed into the receiver. "Courage, man! Do not let them suspect that you are afraid. Make the sign again and again. I will come at once."

Howard's voice came again, more hoarsely this time. "The shape is growing clearer and clearer. And there is nothing I can do! Frank, I have lost the power to make the sign. I have forfeited all right to the protection of the sign. My soul is corrupt. I've become a priest of the Devil. That story—I should not have written that story."

"Show them that you are unafraid!" I cried.

"I'll try! I'll try! Ah, my God! The shape is——"

I did not wait to hear more. Frantically seizing my hat and coat I dashed down the stairs and out into the street. As I reached the curb a dizziness seized me. I clung to a lamp-post to keep from falling, and waved my hand madly at a fleeing taxi. Luckily the driver saw me. The car stopped and I staggered out into the street and climbed into it. "Quick!" I shouted. "Take me to 10 Brooklyn Heights!"

"Yes, sir. Cold night, ain't it?"

"Cold!" I shouted. "It will be cold indeed when they get in. It will be cold indeed when they start to——"

The driver stared at me in amazement. "That's all right, sir," he said. "We'll get you home all right, sir. Brooklyn Heights, did you say, sir?"

"Brooklyn Heights," I groaned, and collapsed against the cushions.

As the car raced forward I tried not to think of the horror that awaited me. I clutched desperately at straws. "It is conceivable," I thought, "that Howard has gone temporarily insane. How could the horror have found him among so many millions of people? It can not be that *they* have deliberately sought him out. It can not be that they would deliberately choose him from among such multitudes. He is too insignificant—all human beings are too insignificant. They would never deliberately angle for human beings. They would never deliberately trawl for human beings—but they did seek Henry Wells. And what did Howard say? 'I have become a priest of the Devil.' Why not *their* priest? What if Howard has become their priest on earth? What if his obscene, loathly story has made him their priest?"

The thought was a nightmare to me, and I put it furiously from me. "He will have courage to resist them," I thought. "He will show them that he is not afraid."

"Here we are, sir. Shall I help you in, sir?"

The car had stopped, and I groaned as I realized that I was about to enter what might prove to be my tomb. I descended to the sidewalk and handed the driver all the change

that I possessed. He stared at me in amazement.

"You've given me too much," he cried. "Here, sir——"

But I waved him aside and dashed up the stoop of the house before me. As I fitted a key into the door I could hear him muttering: "Craziest drunk I ever seen! He gives me four bucks to drive him ten blocks, and doesn't want no thanks or nothin'——"

The lower hall was unlighted. I stood at the foot of the stairs and shouted. "I'm here, Howard! Can you come down?"

There was no answer. I waited for perhaps ten seconds, but not a sound came from the room above.

"I'm coming up!" I shouted in desperation, and started to climb the stairs. I was trembling all over. "They've got him," I thought. "I'm too late. Perhaps I had better not—great God, what was that?"

I was unbelievably terrified. There was no mistaking the sounds. In the room above, someone was volubly pleading and crying aloud in agony. Was it Howard's voice that I heard? I caught a few words indistinctly. "Crawling—ugh! Crawling—ugh! Oh, have pity! Cold and clee-ar. Crawling—ugh! God in heaven!"

I had reached the landing, and when the pleadings rose to hoarse shrieks I fell to my knees, and made against my body, and upon the wall beside me, and in the air—the sign. I made the primal sign that had saved us in Mulligan Wood, but this time I made it crudely, not with fire, but with fingers that trembled and caught at my clothes, and I made it without courage or hope, made it darkly, with a conviction that nothing could save me.

And then I got up quickly and went on up the stairs. My prayer was that they would take me quickly, that my sufferings should be brief under the stars.

The door of Howard's room was ajar. By a tremendous effort I stretched out my hand and grasped the knob. Slowly I swung it inward.

For a moment I saw nothing but the motionless form of Howard lying upon the floor. He was lying upon his back. His knees were drawn up and he had raised his hands before his face, palms outward, as if to blot out a vision unspeakable.

Upon entering the room I had deliberately, by lowering my eyes, narrowed my range of vision. I saw only the floor and the lower section of the room. I did not want to raise my eyes. I had lowered them in self-protection because I dreaded what the room held.

I did not want to raise my eyes, but there were forces, hideous and obscene powers at work in the room which I could not resist. I knew that if I looked up, the horror might destroy me, but I had no choice.

Slowly, painfully, I raised my eyes and stared across the room. It would have been better, I think, if I had rushed forward immediately and surrendered to the thing that towered there. It would have consumed me in a moment, consumed me utterly, but what does life hold for me now? The vision of that fetid obscenity will come between me and the pleasures of the world as long as I remain in the world.

From the ceiling to the floor it towered, and it threw off drooling shafts of light. The light was slimy and unspeakable—a liquid light that dripped and dripped and dripped, like spittle, like the fetid mucous of loathsome slugs. And pierced by the shafts, whirling around and around, were the pages of Howard's story.

In the center of the room, between the ceiling and the floor, the pages whirled about, and the loathsome light burned through the sheets, and descending in dripping shafts entered *—the brain of my poor friend!* Into his head the light was pouring in a

continuous stream, and above, the Master of the Light moved slowly back and forth in awful glee. I screamed and screamed and covered my eyes with my hands, but still the Master moved—back and forth, back and forth. And still the foul light drooled and oozed and ran and poured into the brain of my friend.

And then there came from the mouth of the Master a most awful sound. . . . I had forgotten the sign that I had made three times below in the darkness. I had forgotten the high and terrible mystery before which all of the invaders were powerless. But when I saw it forming itself in the room, forming itself immaculately, with a terrible integrity above the drooling yellow light, I knew that I was saved.

I sobbed and fell upon my knees. The fetid light dwindled, and the Master shriveled before my eyes.

And then from the walls, from the ceiling, from the floor, there leapt flame—a white and cleansing flame that consumed, that devoured and destroyed forever.

But my friend was dead.

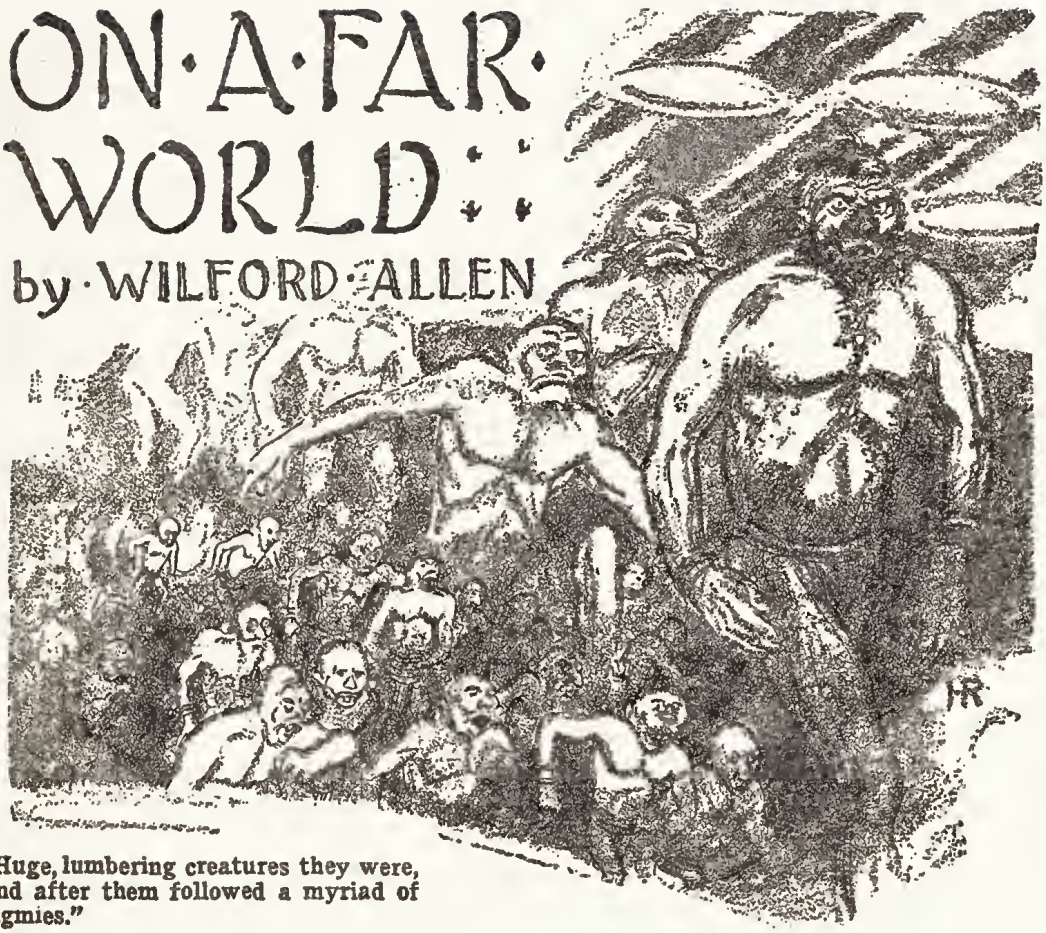
4. The Eye

A frenzy moves me toward the window-blind;
  Some impulse urges me to raise the shade;
  Why is it that I linger weak, afraid,
With morbid fancies running through my mind?
What are these loathsome images that bind
  My hand? Why is my arm so strongly stayed?
  What sense of overhanging doom has made
Me fearful of the sight that I shall find?

Some warning voice calls out: Go back! Go back!
I would not turn through fronted by the rack!
  And with a jerk, I raise the shade to greet
Whatever on the other side should lie,
  And stare and stare in horror as I meet
The leering of a huge and sightless eye!

ON·A·FAR· WORLD

by·WILFORD·ALLEN



"Huge, lumbering creatures they were, and after them followed a myriad of pigmies."

THE computing-room of the observatory was full that night. Three new comets had been discovered within the space of two days—something unprecedented; and in order to maintain the reputation of the observatory for getting out the first preliminary elements of the orbits, the whole staff and two of the advanced students had been pressed into service. In fact, it was a scientific necessity for us to act quickly, for the very reputation we enjoyed meant that the work would not be done elsewhere, the other observatories having formed the habit of awaiting the elements and ephemerides which we usually broadcast through the central distributing-bureau within twelve hours of the receipt of the last of the three necessary observations.

It was ten minutes past 1 when Crowley and his check computer successfully completed their last check, and it was not more than fifteen minutes later that the slowest team finished the ephemeris of the last comet and sent it on its way to the radio. Usually, after such a siege, we would be glad enough to go to our near-by homes and to sleep, but that night something, possibly the excitement engendered by the unusual circumstance of having three orbits to work up at once, seemed to hold us. The air was filled with eddying tobacco smoke, and everyone sat back in various postures of repose, chairs tipped backward, feet sprawled around or atop the computing tables.

Crowley's voice broke the silence drowsily, seeming to come through

the cloud of smoke like the voice of some figure in a dream.

"Too bad Breinbar isn't alive. I remember, back more than twenty-five years, we had two comets to work on at once. I was just a student then, and I took one of the orbits, with another student to check for me. Breinbar took the other orbit by himself; he never used a check computer—said he did his own checking in his head as he went along. I was just new then, and slow, of course, and I had not much more than transposed the observations into their heliocentric positions than Breinbar was at my shoulder. He had finished his orbit in a little more than two hours. Then he finished mine, and we were out of there before midnight. The man was a wonder, but he really did very little computing, for he was always busy working up something or other that he never dared publish, even when he had it demonstrated to his own satisfaction."

The voice fell silent for a moment, then resumed again, seeming to come from a distance.

"He was a queer man, a genius. He knew things that seemed impossible, that couldn't be proved. I have something in my desk now that he gave me—when I asked for it."

Crowley reached down and opened the lower drawer of his desk, bringing out a typewritten manuscript which showed the stain of age. Breinbar had been dead more than eleven years, and the sheets had been written years before he died—I don't know how many years.

Again we were lulled into immobility by the droning of Crowley's voice as it continued, though in a sense our minds continued active. At least I know that my mind during the ensuing hour was in one respect more awake than ever before or since—more able to receive and image vivid pictures.

"I never knew whether to believe this or not," the computer's voice went on. "It is evidently pure imagination, and yet he claimed that it was fact. And there is something about it that even then made me doubt my own reasoning in rejecting it; has always made me doubt myself. So I asked him for it.

"I ought to explain that Breinbar had many interests which he did not dare let the scientific world at large know of, for fear of losing his standing as a scientist. In those days he would have been branded as a charlatan in the ranks of the world's scientists, had even the part of his many thoughts become known. One of his theories was that there existed a reservoir of intelligence, a place or thing where intelligence became for all practical purposes a tangible entity. To enter it wholly would bring about the end of his earthly body, but he believed that he was able to penetrate partially into the mystery at times, and to learn things that he could never have learned in other ways. It is certain that his genius could be explained more easily by such a fancy than by many of our so-called reasonable hypotheses.

"This paper tells a story which he said came from that pool of intelligence. You will see that it is in effect the history of the overwhelming of the life of a world by an invasion from another and entirely different sphere. In some respects it parallels our old earth-story of the flood. I am going to read it, and you can listen if you wish."

THIS [he began to read] seemingly imaginative tale is actually the history of the death of a civilization quite similar to ours which once existed on a favored planet of a far-off sun. It is drawn from the great pool of intelligence which holds the knowledge of all that has happened in the universe. That fact being sufficiently incredible, I will not undertake to detail how the story was

drawn from that pool. I am only setting it down on paper in the way we earth-folk have of preserving the records of our thoughts, for the benefit of those earth-people who can not draw on that greater reservoir of facts.

The planet, of which the people all spoke one language, called Nekka, was quite similar to our earth in most respects. Its distance from the sun, its periods of revolution about its axis and about its sun, were about the same as our earth's. That being the case, it was perhaps not unnatural that the course of the evolution of life there should closely parallel that on the earth, so that the time came when a very human population filled its cities. So close was this similarity, in fact, that is is as easy to picture what happened there as though it took place upon our earth.

Nekkan geologists made an intensely interesting discovery one day, though they did not dream of its significance then. Studying the gravel deposits of a Nekkan river, they brought to light the battered remains of some peculiar structure of strange fabrication. So crushed that its real shape and function were conjectural for a long time, there was still enough to show that it could not possibly be the product of the Nekkan civilization. Its position under the gravels placed its age at more than twelve thousand years, completely antedating Nekkan history.

The literature of our missing link is not so voluminous as that which the strange discovery brought forth on Nekka. The usual scientific and popular controversies raged. As might be expected, the various speculations were fruitless, though the truth was scattered through them, if it could only have been sorted out and assembled. The only fact that seemed to be settled by the painstaking attempts at reconstructing the thing was that it had been some sort of a vehicle, but in a manner remotely similar to that of a submarine. Spectacular writers even suggested that it might have been a space-car, wrecked on Nekka thousands of years before after a voyage from some other world already civilized. But it was all pure conjecture, some more, some less spectacular.

In a little laboratory, a young Nekkan student whose name we would probably spell Corring, was bending eagerly over a strange contrivance. Even in the university community of Nekkalota he was looked upon as being somewhat "off" on his subject of experimental psychology. He was known to have some crazy notion that he could extract from the ether the knowledge of things which had happened or were happening in other places. In fact, had it not been for his entirely human courtship of Elfa, the pretty daughter of one of the town's big men, he would have been regarded as crazy. As it was, it was the general belief that he was not yet lost, though treading in dangerous ways.

As he stooped eagerly, watching the movements of the recording arm of the machine, no sound came from his half-parted lips. Another man of about the same age, who had been sitting in the other end of the room engaged in some work of his own, came up as the humming noise from Corring's instrument grew louder in tone and volume, and leaned over his friend's shoulder. At the sight of the words being traced by the recording arm the newcomer's attitude of mild interest was transformed and frozen into one of amazed attention.

"Why, Corring! The thing is writing!" he gasped, as though the evidence of his own eyes were incredible to his intelligence.

Still intently watching the words as they formed letter by letter, Corring did not answer at once.

"Nekka! Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" The word was repeated again and

again on the tape, after the manner of the call-word of a telegraph instrument. "Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" The wording changed abruptly: "Warning—Drubbans coming to attack! Warning! Nekka! Nekka!" the call resumed again, repeating itself endlessly.

Corring straightened slowly and looked into his friend's staring eyes.

"Bort, do you see what I do there —Drubbans coming to attack——?"

"That's what it says," the other managed with an effort. "Someone's playing a joke on you. Knows what you're trying to do, and he's having his little fun with you," he finished, breathing more easily as he ventured the explanation.

"Probably right," Corring smiled wanly. Then he became suddenly serious again. "Drubba—that car they found under the Merling sands —that was made of corla, wasn't it? And corla isn't mined on Nekka so far as we know, while it seems to be one of the more common elements on Drubba. Do you suppose——?"

His face was white as he stopped as though afraid to finish his question.

"Of course I don't suppose," Bort growled nervously. "Someone's playing a trick on you. It's plain enough. Probably knowing about the corla car gave him the idea—that and knowing your fool notion about getting messages from space."

With one accord both turned back toward the tape again. It had grown in length to more than a yard, and still the same word was coming: "Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" Then again that warning, "Drubbans coming to attack!"

In spite of himself, Bort shuddered; then with sudden decision he pulled Corring by the arm. "Come on to sleep. Turn that thing off and let's get some rest and the joke will be on the other fellow if he stays up all night."

He moved as though to throw the dials around.

"Don't touch that!" Corring's alarm was evident in his voice. "I got that adjustment by accident, and I might not get it again in a lifetime!"

"Piffle!" the other grumbled. "Well, let it alone then. In the morning we can see how long the other fool stays up. Come on!" He emphasized his demand by switching off the lights.

BY MORNING the events of the night had receded in Corring's consciousness until they seemed a part of a dream, and he entered the laboratory fully expecting to find the tape clean of any words, so that the shock of seeing the pile of tape on the floor still being added to as the tape fed through the instrument, receiving its mysterious message, was almost as great as it had been the night before. The tape was almost exhausted, and still the message came, seemingly uninterrupted throughout the night: "Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" with the warning words at intervals of every yard or so: "Warning, Drubbans coming to attack Nekka!"

By 10 o'clock the heads of the physics and psychology departments were in his laboratory, watching the message issuing on a new tape. And still the warning was the same, the long reiteration of the name "Nekka," as thought to attract attention, with the warning interspersed every fifteen minutes.

The physicist was frankly incredulous, adopting the explanation that Bort had advanced. Corring's own psychology chief was wavering, drawn between his inclination to believe, and his reason, which argued for the hoax.

"Why, man!" the physicist was saying; "Drubba is at a distance from the sun a hundred times ours! It is cold, far too cold to support

life. And even if it had life, how could it reach us?"

"Yes, I know," Corring answered slowly. "But—I know I am making myself ridiculous—but how about that car of corla that they dug out from under the Merling? Where did that come from? So far as we know there were no beings on Nekka capable of building such a thing twelve thousand years ago. And—corla is abundant on Drubba."

"No." The other two shook their heads in unison, while the physicist continued, "Bort, here, is right. Someone has learned what you are doing, and has rigged up a corresponding apparatus to send this message to you." He turned back to the instrument. You've certainly got an ingenious thing here, though, Corring. Mind if I look it over?" He leaned closer; then an exclamation broke from his lips.

Clustering about, the others read the new message: "If you need proof," the thing was spelling out, "wire the observatory at Aberlun to turn the great telescope on the second moon!"

"Still kidding you, Corring," Bort smiled.

"We'll see," the experimenter said grimly. He brushed aside the efforts of the others to restrain him. "I'll do just what it says."

"Why, you poor fool!" Bort trotted after him. "You'll just let the whole world know what a fool you are!"

"I'll chance it," Corring muttered, as much to himself as to the other. "I'd rather be a live fool than a dead one." And quickening his pace he went out, leaving his friend to return slowly to the others, shaking his head sorrowfully.

ATTEMPTS were made to keep from the public the exact details of what the astronomers saw on the second moon through the great instrument which brought its surface seemingly within a distance of three miles. The attempts succeeded for a time, in the sense that for a while the general public did not know just what had been seen. But somehow a rumor got out, and, in the way of rumors, it assumed as many forms as it had tellers. Panic seized the people, even before any official announcement came.

Inside twenty-four hours the defensive forces had received their summons, and orders had been issued placing the entire planet under the rule of the military. Then commenced the scenes of awfulness which were to continue in a mounting crescendo of horror for many years.

It soon seemed as though panic would do for the invaders what they presumably intended doing themselves. Orders, manifestos, appeals, issued in rapid succession from the government, but without any effect other than seemingly to increase the terror. The cities and districts most remote from control were given over to scenes of despoliation and death such as can only follow the coming of utter conviction in the minds of the people that all hope is lost. The law-abiding element was paralyzed by that conviction; the lawless seized the opportunity to enjoy if but for a short time the reign of anarchy. Fire, murder, and then disease, swept vast areas, while the government tried with one hand to restrain the people, and with the other to prepare against the invasion of beings whose very form was unknown. For no one knew just what form the threat would take, or what weapons would be effectual in repelling it.

The great telescope showed dark ears flitting through the empty space above the surface of the second moon, or at rest upon its surface. Estimates of the number varied, as they were constantly arriving and departing, and an accurate count was impossible. In size, they were

approximately two thousand feet in length by not more than five hundred in diameter. Featureless they seemed, apparently without doors or windows. But it was all too evident that they contained life, or at least that their movements were controlled by life of some degree.

The government had no choice but to conclude that the second moon was being used as a base for operations against Nekka. The accumulation of cars upon its surface grew rapidly. But so long as they remained on the moon they were beyond the reach of investigation and of attack alike, and Nekka could do nothing but go ahead blindly with such warlike preparations as in the past had proved efficacious in the old wars between its nations.

The laboratory of the research man, Corring, was guarded constantly. It became the center of great activity as the scientists of Nekka assembled, and under Corring's guidance constructed duplicates of his instrument, then variations of it, in the hope of obtaining new information. Each one as made was watched anxiously for anything—a word, sentence, anything—that could give a hint of the form the threatened blow would take or of what means would be effective in warding it off. But no further warning came.

Yet months passed, and there was no overt act on the part of the strange visitors on the second moon. The respite gave the government time to quiet the disturbances at home, but it was useless so far as giving time to prepare weapons was concerned. Every man was armed with weapons which had been useful in the past, but no one dared to hope that these would be successful against a foe who could navigate space itself in great space-ships. The only hope was that possibly the strangers had no evil intentions, but were only stopping on the second moon for a time. That idea was beginning to gain ground among the people when suddenly the threat began to take more definite form.

With no warning of their coming, a squadron of the great space-ships swooped down on the capital. As the second moon was under constant surveillance, and the raiders were not seen to leave it, they may not have come from the moon, though it was certain that they returned to it after the attack. The first warning that the doomed city had was when a series of great explosions rocked its buildings into heaps of ruins. The people of the surrounding country, scurrying out of their houses at the shock of the explosions, saw the night air lit up as though by the flare of a great volcano. Within five minutes the great city was an inferno of flames, with the very stores of ammunition which had been gathered in the arsenals and forts for its protection adding to the destruction as they exploded. The horrified watchers saw the shining forms of the big ships, riding high above the stricken city, rising slowly higher to avoid the gigantic convection currents set up in the air by the conflagration.

For two hours the ships of death rode over the dying city, then as suddenly as they had come they disappeared without making any effort to communicate with the land below. Their mission was evidently accomplished. The observers at the Aberlun observatory saw them on their return, heading directly for a point in space where the second moon would be in eighteen hours. When the moon reached that point in its orbit the space-ships were arriving, and they settled down into the midst of a great concourse of similar vehicles which had assembled on one of the lunar plains.

THE wave of terror which swept over Nekka with the news of the disaster was even more horrible in

its results than the earlier wave. For while the other had mainly disorganized the more remote districts, the effect of this blow was almost to paralyze industry even in the great centers.

But if the general public was panic-stricken, the government itself rose superbly to the emergency. The great heads of the civil government had perished, together with many of the higher heads of the army, but the next ranking officials stepped into their places, and if it was the intention of the attackers to break down the leadership of Nekka by the blow delivered to its capital, the attempt failed. Adapting itself to the conditions forced upon it by the unknown foe, the government issued orders for the evacuation of the cities, instructing each urban family to take shelter with a designated rural household. The army necessarily had to hold the fortified positions, but even it was spread out as much as possible.

And the whole population gave up the last hope of escaping the fate that threatened.

Another long wait followed. It seemed inexplicable, the leisureliness with which the invaders took the situation. Where events had proved that they need fear no effective opposition, one would not have looked for delay. Yet they did delay, and a year passed, a year during which murder and disease decimated whole districts.

In all Nekka there were none but haggard faces. No one but saw close friends or relatives break under the strain and die according to their make-ups; some deaths of quick violence, others the less dramatic but even more horrible death of long-drawn illness. Friend greeted friend with only a mute stare of hopelessness. Few mothers could summon a smile of encouragement for their own children. Where hope had failed, conversation seemed to be only a waste of time, and people who had once chattered happily throughout the day and half the night now went about wordless, or with only a short and often surly word when necessity obliged. The great food and material factories being shut, the material side of life was flung backward many centuries in everything except warlike preparations. For the army, trained to know no possible course except resistance to the end, no matter how plainly evident that end might be, kept at its work. It was the only part of the Nekkan civilization which retained its morale. And it was not the morale of hope; for even there all hope was dead.

After the destruction of the capital, the great scientific laboratories at Nekkalota were broken up, as it was too dangerous to leave them in such a conspicuous place, at the mercy of such a raid as had wiped the capital from the surface of Nekka. To Corring was assigned the task of striving to re-establish communication with the source of that strange warning, for after the events of the last year or more, no one could doubt that it had been a warning. He took his corps of assistants far into the Nekkan mountains, where he established new laboratories which were as cunningly hidden as Nekkan arts could manage. And night and day the instruments were watched, with hopeless eyes, though no word ever appeared on the waiting tapes.

In their cunningly concealed laboratory in the remote mountain chasm, Corring and his coworkers still watched the Corring instruments for some further word which might throw a gleam of hope over the gloomy future which faced Nekka. But more and more of their time was absorbed by tense-faced watching of the television screens which mirrored the happenings of the hour on the planet. Through the screens they had seen the gray raiders floating above the rocking capital, had

seen the scenes of despair which were enacted everywhere on the surface of the ill-fated planet.

Then came the great invasion, when, so long as they obeyed their orders, Corring and his helpers could do nothing but clench their hands helplessly and stare with desperation into the television screens as the Drubbans began the drive which meant the murder of a civilization.

THE first warning was a short bulletin from the observatory: "Fleet of enemy ships taking off from second moon. Heading for point in space where Nekka will be in eighteen hours."

An hour later a second bulletin followed: "Many enemy space-ships leaving second moon headed after advance guard which left hour ago. Rough estimates of number in advance guard sixty, in main body following about five hundred."

A third bulletin still later told of yet another and greater body of ships. After that the news was of interest only to the military. To others it did not matter, for after their recent demonstration of power it did not seem to make any difference whether the invaders came in five hundred or in five thousand of their deadly vehicles.

The wisdom of Nekka in evacuating its cities was soon manifest, for, arriving punctually eighteen hours after the hope-destroying announcement from Aberlun, the great gray ships sought out every city of any size, and the horrified Nekkans saw from their fields great clouds of flame-shot smoke rising from the spots where their mighty cities had been, while the ground quivered continually with the great explosions, as though it were writhing under the shock of planet-shaking quakes.

Within the short space of six hours no place large enough to be an inviting target remained, though the great guns of the army spat fire viciously and the death-rays flared greenly aloft from their hidden engines. The only discernible effect of the barrage of rays and shells was the destruction brought down on the forts from which they emanated; for the attacking craft, seemingly unscathed, would turn on each fort as soon as it disclosed its position; there would be a single explosion, and nothing but a gaping crater would mark the spot where elaborate defense works had stood. The single guns in the fields fared better, for but few of them were destroyed, but whether because the enemy were unable to locate them, or because they were deemed too insignificant to be worth the effort which their destruction would require, no one could know.

The few airships which ventured to approach the invaders were quickly brought down in flames before they managed to get close enough to inflict damage, if indeed they could have harmed the seemingly impenetrable gray hulks which bore the Drubbans. Before the graphic screens Corring and his friends marked in the failure of this defense the end of hope for Nekkan life.

Having blasted the Nekkan cities from existence, the invading forces gathered and settled down on the plains of Allwan, driving the unfortunate inhabitants before them in maddened terror. Then it was that the Nekkans made their supreme effort.

From hidden hangars everywhere fast planes appeared, took on their loads of soldiers and arms; and before night the strange fleet on the Allwan plains was hemmed in on all sides. Not a soldier there had any idea that he could be effective against the enemy when the latter should sally forth, yet it was all that their commanders could do to prevent them from dashing themselves blindly against the huge gray ships,

so great was the relief which came with the chance for action.

And still no sign came from within the ships, which were indeed as windowless as they had appeared to be to the astronomers at Aberlun.

Darkness came, and Nekka kept the plain bright with the light of many flares, expecting every moment to see the foe attack.

Morning came, and with it the first sign of life from within the ships. Officers, peering through their glasses, saw doors open simultaneously in all of the cars as though at some unheard signal. Huge, lumbering shapes clambered out clumsily, enough like human beings in form for there to be no doubt of their kinship, yet their like had never been seen on Nekka before, at least within the knowledge of the Nekkan race. For the coming of that car which had been buried beneath the Merling gravels twelve thousand years before was far beyond the recollection of the race. Huge the strangers were, standing fully twenty feet tall, and stocky, pudgy, their color a weird tone of greenish gray. But the strangest thing about them was the slow deliberation of their movements. It seemed incredible that such slow-moving beings could have handled anything which moved with the wasplike swiftness of their space-cars, for it would require a touch of lightning quickness on the controls to guide and control them as they had darted about the day before on their mission of destruction.

That mystery was solved when after them there came a swarm of pigmies; creatures which would look small beside any man. Darting in and out among the huge lumbering forms of the gray-green Drubbans, they looked even smaller than they were. They outnumbered the giants three to one, and in fact it was on the basis of that ratio that they took their places in the invading array—each giant followed, as by his dogs, by three of the dwarfs.

That day there was better planning in the Nekkan army than in that of the invaders. For the mistake which the strangers made in attacking with their pigmy slaves proved in the final analysis to be their undoing, though it could not prevent the virtual extinction of the Nekkan race. For the order went among the Nekkan forces: "Keep out of the way of the giants, but bend all of your energies toward exterminating the pigmies. Our observers at Aberlun say that the second moon is now deserted; the invaders, staking all on a single blow, are attacking with all of their forces, holding nothing in reserve. It is obvious that they depend upon their pigmy slaves to accomplish their quick movements, and if we can destroy the smaller strangers, we shall have a respite in which to prepare our resistance to the giants."

WHOEVER was responsible for that order had analyzed the situation accurately, except in one particular. The end of that day of desperate conflict found the pigmies wiped from the face of Nekka, their very remains annihilated by the disintegrating effect of the Nekkan rays of war. With them had perished fully half of the defending army. But it was then that the full horror of the situation finally penetrated the consciousness of the Nekkans. The gigantic invaders were virtually immortal!

It is not difficult to understand why, when one takes time for cool reflection. They had come from a planet far removed from their sun. Its year measured more than a thousand of the Nekkan years; its day lasted years of Nekkan time. It was not only natural but inevitable that life processes on Drubba should be in accord with its slower time. The life-span of a Drubban would cover

a thousand generations of Nekkan life; his movements would seem to a Nekkan to be correspondingly slow. Drubbans were present in the invading army who had been a part of that scouting expedition which had lost the member that had been dug up from the old bed of the Merling twelve thousand Nekkan years later.

But the horrible thing about it, the fact which did in truth spell the end of things to the horrified Nekkans in this emergency, was that even though it were possible to inflict a mortal wound on a Drubban (and during the battle they had showed themselves to be immune to the effects of the strongest Nekkan rays), even if it could be possible to kill one, the time it would take him to die would be measured by months of Nekkan time, and during much of that time he would still be in full possession of his destructive faculties.

As the terrible realization came home to the Nekkans, they broke in panic, even their officers joining the mad rush to get beyond sight of the great green things that could not die.

And the Drubbans, advancing deliberately but relentlessly, spread slowly over the land, a great green wave of destruction which searched out each Nekkan and, disdaining science, tore him to pieces with great green hands of pudgy flesh, unmindful of what scratches the Nekkans in their mad but fruitless struggles might chance to inflict.

It was a task of some difficulty to the Drubbans, too, however leisurely it may have seemed to the terrified refugees or to others who had the same consciousness of time as they. For, to the time sense of the invaders, the entire event was measured by the time which a few Drubban hours would fill. To their minds, their movements were swift and effective as they pursued and clutched the smaller enemy who danced in and out among them with the speed of a fly dodging the swatter. It required persistence to catch and swat the "flies," but Drubba had learned to be persistent during the million years of its racial history, and finally, after what to the Drubbans was only the part of a day, though to the dying Nekkans many months, all had been killed except what few had managed to get into holes in the rougher mountains where the Drubbans did not think it worth their while to follow. Even so, on our earth, we allow the wolves to exist when they confine their activities to the rough lands where it is too much trouble for us to pursue.

During that day when the two mutually antagonistic civilizations were locked in their struggle for survival, the Corring instruments were unwatched in their mountain hiding-place. There was not a man in the laboratory who did not live that day before the television screens. Nerves and muscles straining to the breaking-point, at the end of that day of horror, when the Nekkan forces finally broke into disorganized flight, each of the far-off watchers fell back, shaken and weak as though he, too, had shared physically in the death struggle. As they looked into one another's pallid faces, the same thought staring from the dilated eyes of all, for a time no one broke the silence of realization. Then Corring's lips moved, so feebly that if the others understood his words it was rather because the same words were in their own minds than because they heard his voice.

"This is the end!" was all he said, and the others nodded in voiceless agreement.

Then, the last purposeful effort to save the race of Nekka having failed completely, fate took a hand in the guise of an instinctive act, born in the heart of Corring of a strange parentage: despair, and his love for Elfa.

His arms thrown aloft in a gesture of despair which the others recognized and shared in, he staggered to his room, and in a few minutes returned, clothed for a long journey, his pockets stuffed with a month's supply of concentrated nourishment.

"You men are free." He paused a moment on the threshold, as the others clustered about. "It is the end. You can stay here and die afterward, or go out and die quickly—whatever way you wish it to be. Myself—I am choosing to go."

As he stumbled down the chasm, all thought was obliterated from his mind save one: to reach Elfa before the end.

IF THIS were a love story and not the history of the death of a civilization, the course of Corring in his search for his love might be told; for it was inconceivably long and difficult. Under the circumstances it was so improbable of success as to be an impossibility. A mathematician would be obliged to recognize that the chance of its having a successful conclusion as a mathematical probability would be less than one out of billions; so that it is difficult to understand that it was successful, unless one accepts the possibility of the interference of—something.

The fact that, once he had found her, the desire to live should have returned again in full force, is not so hard to understand, nor even the fact that almost two months after he had staggered out in search of death, he staggered back, up the rocky gorge, bearing the almost lifeless body of the girl; though that last fact, the flight toward their refuge, when they were obliged to travel by night in constant fear and, for days at the last, foodless and often without water, would seem incredible enough unless one granted the existence of a fate weaving for Nekka again.

And then it did seem that fate was inclining toward the dismal remnants of the once great race. For, the very night that Corring fell over the door-sill of his hiding-place, to be gathered up with Elfa and tenderly cared for by the few who were left of his assistants, the instruments began to write!

They wrote for some time before the glad fact was known. For, not unnaturally, the hopeless men, only waiting for death, had long since given up their watch. It was pure chance—or was it?—that one in passing an instrument should glance at it carelessly, to be galvanized into shrieking activity by what he saw.

"Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" The words, springing into vivid black existence on the background of the white tapes, were again coming, endlessly. The inarticulate shouts brought all up, breathlessly.

"Nekka! Nekka! Nekka!" Over and over, as before; then, finally, the message that they were waiting for with bated breath: "Nekka! You have one chance yet. I am forbidden to tell you this, but I have evaded my guards and if you will take this quickly there is still time before they come. Make sure, for this is the last time. The punishment for this disobedience will be total extinction for me as an intelligent entity, but since I too was a Nekkan, I do this gladly.

"Your only chance now lies in destroying the invaders by means of an epidemic. Take these directions carefully. If followed exactly they will enable you to create and breed bacteria, which, though harmless to yourselves, will within two weeks of Drubban time destroy the entire Drubban race as completely as you destroyed the pigmy slaves they took from Yarru. For them, there is no antidote to the venom of these organisms."

The directions were far too complicated for us to understand. Only a science which has attained the point reached by Nekkan science could have translated the directions into action. It is a tribute to those half-

dead survivors of the Nekkan race that, affrighted themselves at the prospect, they succeeded.

You might think that they began at once. But they did not. The promise had been deliverance from their enemies after two weeks of Drubban time. But that meant virtually a lifetime for Nekkan beings, and after such a period, would any of that pitifully small remnant of the Nekkan race be left?

Yet their unknown friend in the Beyond of space was right when he had said they had no other hope. And there was one gleam of hope, the fruit of that act, seemingly so purposeless, yet perhaps purposeful on the part of some greater Intellect, when Corring, in despair, had gone to seek for Elfa.

For, after long months during which each step of the experiment was taken only after long and careful checking against the well-guarded instructions, the effort to create living organisms was successful. Nekkans had actually created life! But the achievement which once would have brought a thrill produced only a gasp of relaxation from the little group who had breathlessly awaited the verdict. For only the first step had been taken.

There was no certainty that the organisms which had been created in that midnight moment had the needed attributes, though the conviction was in the minds of all that they had the promised power; for had not the other statements of the unknown friend proved true? And, even so, there remained the task of communicating the organisms to the Drubban invaders, then of holding on until the promised deliverance came.

The success of that last desperate effort depended largely upon the quick and thorough dissemination of the bacteria to the Drubbans, who by then had spread over the whole surface of the planet and were busy in erecting their fantastic habitations. It was evident that the chance of success was increased with every new focus of infection which could be established. And there were left only eighteen weakened Nekkans for the fearful task.

The plan, when finally matured, was for fourteen to set out and travel by night, and with the benefit of Corring's experience in evading the great green invaders, for each to reach a definite place before releasing the death-dealing bacteria. By starting at least fourteen different foci of infection at strategic points, it seemed that the epidemic, if as deadly as they had been promised, would spread through the green-hued race in the space of considerably less than the two weeks of Drubban time.

Necessarily, the chance of any one of the fourteen returning alive was nil, but there was no hesitation on the part of any as they set off in the dark of night almost a year later. For each knew that he was doomed anyway, and life had no great value to any of the chosen messengers of death to the Drubbans.

Corring and Elfa, as the nucleus of the new civilization on Nekka, were to remain behind, with the two medical men of the group, whose duty would be to keep them in health through the long period of waiting. For theirs was the task of living until the invaders had disappeared from the face of the planet, then to come forth with their progeny to found a new Nekka.

THERE was no word in the months following the grim-faced departure of the avengers. None of them ever returned with word; none had expected to return. The four left in their lonely hiding-place did not dare to take the risk of venturing forth to ascertain the success of their offensive measures. All they could do was to wait for the forty years of Nekkan chronology which corresponded

with the two weeks of Nekkan time that the bacteria required for their work.

Two years of Nekkan time passed. There was now a fifth member of the little party—a child of a few months. Hope would have burned higher had the little group had any way of knowing whether success was attending the fight on the Drubbans by the bacteria. But, completely in the dark, rendered pessimistic again by the passage of so many months of loneliness, no one dared to hope.

Then came the proof, although it was not welcome when in the coming it reduced the number of the surviving group to three. For it was the two physicians who were called upon to follow the footsteps of the fourteen in sacrificing themselves for the good of the race. In their going, though, they left a ray of hope for the two remaining adults, for the thing that took their lives was the proof of the successful spread of the synthetic bacteria through the green-gray race.

A sudden fearful sound broke on the mountain quiet, reverberating from far down the canyon. The five in their hiding-place had never heard its like before. While they peered down the gorge in terror, the contorted figure of one of the Drubbans came into view, bounding up the stream bed with the ludicrous movements which we see in a slow-motion picture. The creature seemed to be in frightful pain, mad as though from the delirium of fever.

At first the four hoped it would pass on up the canyon, but some vagary of fate drew to its attention the little-worn and carefully hidden path which led up to the refuge.

Elfa, her face blanched by fear, clasped the child in her arms and fled lightly up the path behind the laboratory, back into the mountains. Corring leapt forward to take his place beside the two physicians. The others thrust him back quickly.

"Go!" The one called Ludnor growled the word out. "Go with her and hide above and watch. We will try to stop the thing. If we do, come back. If not, keep on and—good luck!"

Ludnor must have the credit for what was done. For, realizing that what was needed was not the eventual destruction of the Drubban—the bacteria would accomplish that—but rather to put it out of action instantly, he wasted no time in reaching for any weapon. Instead, he ran directly toward the thing to attract its attention, then turned and fled toward the brink of the five-hundred-foot cliff below the trail.

The Drubban, seeing him, pursued, all the venom of its tortured body finding vent in the chance to catch and rend an enemy. Ordinarily, Ludnor would have out-distanced the clumsy pursuer in the rough ground in which he was at home, but it was no part of his plan to do so. Closer and closer he let the green thing come, until, his movements carefully timed, he reached the brink of the precipice with the other just one bound behind. He dodged then, and would have escaped as the Drubban plunged over to land below, a broken hulk, but the poison working in the veins of the pursuer had quickened its motions abnormally and it reached out an arm as it swept past the dodging Nekkan, striking him full with the momentum of tons. The two vanished together, and there was only a single cry which arose from the throat of the Drubban just before the thud which told that they had been broken on the rocks below.

The end came to the other a few moments later, when a second Drubban, which had followed the first unnoticed when the attention of all had been riveted on the other, threatened to bring disaster in spite of the sacrifice of the life of Ludnor.

For the second physician, unnerved by the spectacle of his col-

league's death, hesitated too long. The creature caught him close in its fat green arms. The cries of pain from the victim mingled for a moment with the hellish sounds from the Drubban's throat, then ceased. And still the monster tore and tore, and in the tearing lost its chance for further destruction. For the effort seemed to use up the last spark of the green-hued thing's vitality, and even as it let what was left of the Nekkan slide from its bloody hands, it toppled over, dead.

THAT night, Corring sat late in his laboratory, working, while Elfa sat near by, watching. Suddenly he raised his head, and the girl saw in his eyes the glow of hope. Her own face lighted as she leaned toward him eagerly.

"Elfa," he breathed in a tone which told plainly that he could hardly believe it yet, himself. "Elfa, I can't believe it, but it's true. The Drubban's blood gives cultures of the bacteria that we made here! It killed him! If it works as quickly on the others—we may not have to wait for forty years. But"—as he saw the eagerness beginning to grow on her face—"but we mustn't be too impatient. It might kill this individual in a short time, and still take many years to spread through the whole land. But it's working!"

That night for the first time since the terrible thing had commenced years before, the two stood under the stars and looked up with a realization of what the world, the universe, is. Without hope, there had been no beauty in the world. Given hope again, the far twinkling worlds again became eternal symbols of the majesty and beauty of life which extends through all space and things and time.

Shoulder to shoulder they stood with their eyes fixed on the tiny points of light which perhaps were great suns shedding their life-giving light on other races. Corring drew his woman against his side.

"It will be a long wait, Elfa, but it is our job. Our job as a part of the same life that makes those stars shine, Elfa. And afterward, who knows but that sometime we can go out and visit those worlds? Maybe that is where our Unknown Friend was, when he disobeyed and saved our lives.

* * * * * * *

IT WAS the sudden silence that followed the ending of the even droning of Crowley's voice which aroused me. I looked around through the smoke-filled room. The others were blinking their eyes as though they, too, felt that they had been dreaming. Crowley was silently folding the faded manuscript.

"Well, you've heard it," his voice broke in on my thoughts again, still dreamily. "What do you think?"

"It couldn't be," Wallace's voice answered for the rest, and it, too, sounded as though it were speaking from another world. "It—*couldn't be! But, Crowley—it could be, for all we know!* Something of the sort must have happened somewhere in the universe in all the eternity of time and space that is available for its happening. The only part of it that I would doubt would be that a human, even Breinbar, could have learned of it."

"That part, Wallace," Crowley's voice carried its utter conviction, "that part might well be true, if only the other could. For I knew Breinbar, and I would say that if there is in the universe a pool of such knowledge, he might have fathomed it indeed!"

We did not discuss the thing afterward, yet I am sure that in the minds of the others who heard it that night in the smoke-filled amosphere of the old computing-room, it has occupied, as in my mind, more time than any

other thought. I can not drive from my mind the picture of Charles Breinbar, sitting at his desk late into the night, putting on paper the word-description of the pictures which came into his mind from that reservoir of the knowledge of the universe. For that is the way it is pictured in my mind—that he saw things in his mind just as they had happened in a far universe at a time ago perhaps measured by the life of a world—saw them enacted as actual happenings. As they actually happened? Or as they happened in his imagination? Ah! You have me there.

But at times, I, like Crowley, half believe, when I recall those words of Wallace's: "It could be, for all we know. Something of the sort must have happened—somewhere in the universe in all the eternity of time and space that are available. . . ."

THE GATES OF NINEVEH

By **ROBERT E. HOWARD**

These are the gates of Nineveh: here
  Sargon came when his wars were won,
Gazed at the turrets looming clear,
  Boldly etched in the morning sun.

Down from his chariot Sargon came,
  Tossed his helmet upon the sand.
Dropped his sword with its blade like flame,
  Stroked his beard with his empty hand.

"Towers are flaunting their banners red,
  The people greet me with song and mirth,
But a weird is on me," Sargon said.
  "And I see the end of the tribes of earth.

"Cities crumble, and chariots rust—
  I see through a fog that is strange and gray—
All kingly things fade back to the dust,
  Even the gates of Nineveh."

The BAT-MEN of THORIUM

BY BERTRAM RUSSELL

"Stranger kisses have never been given."

The Story Thus Far

PROFESSOR PERRY and his party, making deep-sea researches in a specially constructed submarine, are sucked down five miles below the ocean's surface by a maelstrom. They are drawn into a vast cavern, and finally emerge into a great underground lake, five miles below the surface of the Pacific Ocean, where strange bat-men, with wings, inhabit the island of Thorium, ruled by Diegon. The bat-men communicate silently, by reading one another's thoughts. They have mastered decay and death, and have lived for countless years. Diegon's daughter, Thalia, has been kidnaped by the Zoags, or ape-men; and Professor Perry is also carried off by the Zoags as he is investigating the power house, run by atomic energy, by means of which the bat-men suck fresh air from the outer world into Thorium through a vent in the earth. The other members of the professor's party fight their way through the Zoags by setting fire to the strange white trees, amazing the Zoags, who have never seen fire. They rescue Diegon's son from the Zoags, and escape to Thorium. The bat-men raise an army to fly to the city of the Zoags and rescue Thalia and the professor, while the Americans proceed to the city in the submarine. The Zoags rush them, and the submarine opens fire upon them with a machine-gun.

THERE was a deafening rattle of bullets from the mitrailleuse, and I could hear the screams of the Zoags as they fell in dozens. Griggs had ceased firing, and we surveyed their fallen ranks with a feeling of shame. Scores had fallen, and their comrades were in headlong retreat. We had cleared the way, but at what an awful price in blood! In a few seconds the market-place was deserted.

"You release the professor," I said to Griggs, and together we started to crawl cautiously to shore. We were armed with revolvers and hand grenades in case of emergency.

Keeping as much in the dark as possible, we were able to proceed un-

seen, for we had extinguished the searchlights, and after their glare, we felt sure that the Zoags with their poor eyesight would not be able to see much for several minutes. I was able to approach quite close to the cage where the princess was held captive, and now came the most dangerous part of my task. I had to climb up the scaffolding which the Zoags had erected, and there, in full view of anybody who might have been looking, release the Princess Thalia. Carefully I looked around, but saw nothing that looked like a Zoag. I therefore crept to the base of the scaffolding, and began to climb.

I could not see any sign of Griggs at all, and concluded that he had not yet emerged from his hiding-place. Perhaps things were going to be easier than I thought, and yet the deep silence and desolation were ominous.

I had climbed half the way up, and nothing untoward had occurred. My hand was upon the heavy thongs that held the door of the cage fast. I reached into my pocket for the sharp knife with which I had planned to sever them, but, to my horror, it was not there. I must have dropped it on my way from the ship! I must attempt to untie the clumsy knots. Rapidly I began to disentangle them, while the beautiful creature inside the cage gazed breathless with excitement. Of course, her highly developed powers of mind-reading told her that I intended to rescue her, and, as I loosed the final knots, a dazzling smile illumined her features. I watched, fascinated, as this smile twisted into a grimace of horror. Guttural cries, the shouts of the Zoags, came to my ears! We were discovered!

"Spread your wings and fly," I said to the princess, but she refused. Evidently she would not leave me in the same plight in which I had found her.

The shouts continued, punctuated with revolver shots. I had almost forgotten about Griggs in my excitement and my attempts to unloose the princess. I supposed that his courage had made him less cautious than he should have been, and now he was discovered, but whether it was he or I that the Zoags had seen first, I could not say. I could see hundreds of the ape-men running wildly in the direction of the submarine. Occasionally I caught a glimpse of Griggs as he turned to fire a shot at his pursuers. Of the professor there was no trace, and I supposed that he must still be in his prison. Griggs had failed! But he was putting up a brave fight for his life. A burst of fire and a deafening crash told me that he had hurled a grenade into the midst of his pursuers. I prayed that he would be enabled to get inside the submarine before it was too late.

As for me, I was completely at a loss what to do. Alone and single-handed against a whole nation, I could not hope to effect much. The Zoags were clambering up the scaffolding, and it would be only a matter of minutes before they had us both safely imprisoned again, unless the princess consented to take my advice. I entered the cage, and again urged her to leave, but she remained obdurate. She seemed to be thinking. At length a smile lighted her beautiful face, and she communicated her thought to me.

She intended to fly back to Thorium, and to carry me there also! A daring idea, but not to be thought of for a second. Suppose my added weight should drag her into the water? I doubted her strength, especially after the confinement and torture to which she had been subjected. But she was determined.

Approaching me, she bade me cling tightly to her, and as this wonderful creature folded her white wings about me, I felt a dreamy ecstasy creep over me, in spite of the danger that threatened me. I loved this wonder-

ful woman who was about to risk her life to save me!

There followed an experience which I feel quite safe in saying has never before been vouchsafed to mortal man. With a great gliding movement we swooped from the cage into space. I felt her strain herself to the utmost to clear the hairy arms that were outstretched to clutch us from below. Her great wings beat the air, and I felt her surge resistlessly higher and higher over the heads of the gesticulating Zoags, who watched with dismay the flight of their prey. As we passed over the submarine, I could see Griggs with the mitrailleuse trained upon a horde of the enemy, valiantly trying to beat them back.

SOARING majestically, we passed from Zoagland, and over the deep dark, open sea. Gradually the shores of that awful place were left far behind. Over it a strange, unearthly red glare hung ominously; it might have been a reflection of the recent bloodshed, but it was something far more terrible than that, as we were soon to learn.

As the wondrous Thalia surged onward, I grew dizzy and my head whirled from watching the ceaseless rush of the water below us, but I had only to look up to find peace in the reassuring smile of my fair companion. A new tenderness was in her look, a caress in her thought as she bade me take courage.

"You, who have dared so much for me, have courage. A little more, and it will be over," she said. "I can dimly see the walls of my own city."

I peered ahead, and it was indeed true. In a few minutes more we were flying over the beautiful city of Thorium, and with a gentle glide, no slower than the swallow's, we alighted in the courtyard of the palace.

Diegon was seated on the dais, surrounded by his ministers of war. We soon learned that his captains were away fighting, and the reports that kept coming in every few minutes indicated that all was not well with his armies.

There was no sign of either Griggs or the professor, and I was in despair of ever seeing them again. I was eager to return again to the fray, but there was no means of transportation. I could only sit there in the great hall and await news of my friends.

After perhaps half an hour of waiting, there was a commotion outside the palace. I started up gladly at sight of Griggs, who came up to the dais. In a few words he told his story. He had succeeded in reaching the prison where the professor was kept, but had been unable to release him before he was attacked by the Zoags and driven back to the ship. He had barely escaped with his life, as the cuts and bruises he bore testified. Once he had been able to train the mitrailleuse upon the enemy, however, he had repulsed them. He had entered the craft, and endeavored to start the submarine, but had been unable to do so, because the professor and I had always attended to that difficult part of the navigation. Frantically he had pushed and pulled, turned and twisted controls, while the infuriated Zoags clambered and clung to the outside of the vessel, trying to find a way to enter. At length he had got the machinery started, and returned to Thorium as soon as he was able. He had witnessed my escape with the Princess Thalia and expected to find me at Thorium.

The plucky fellow now announced it as his intention to return to the land of the Zoags to hunt for the lost professor. I immediately signified my intention of accompanying him, and together we started for the submarine. We immediately stepped aboard, and set a course that would bring us to the land of the enemy

without delay. On our way, we were startled at seeing hundreds of boats, all heavily manned by Zoags, and concluded that they were bent upon carrying the battle into Thorium. It looked as if our friends were going to have a hard time of it. But we, for our part, could not abandon our search until we could learn for sure what had happened to the professor. As before, we brought our craft easily within reach of the shore, and, not stopping for any precautionary measures, we stepped upon the land.

A battle as strange as the mind of man may conceive was in progress as we advanced upon the town where the professor had been imprisoned, and which was evidently the capital of the Zoags. Masses of the hairy inhabitants stood together in great phalanxes while they tried to defend themselves from the attacks from the air. The graceful forms of the bat-men, generaled by those uniformed commanders who had conferred so gravely with Diegon and ourselves in the great council chamber, were hovering above the Zoags.

The tactics of the Thorium army were indeed the only ones possible under the circumstances. Against the superior strength of the apelike Zoags they could not hope to win in a hand-to-hand encounter. They therefore swooped down, again and again, upon the exasperated Zoags, each bat-man choosing his own victim and grappling with him in such a way as to put him at the greatest disadvantage. Again and again I saw a white, birdlike figure dart upon one of the hairy men, and, grasping him, soar aloft to a dizzy height and then dash him unerringly into the midst of his compatriots below. It was a sickening sight to see these forms come hurtling down from the air to their death, and usually the death of one or two of their own number on the ground. Except for the guttural cries of the Zoags, the whole battle was conducted in a ghastly silence, which served only to accentuate the deadly precision of the bat-men's maneuvering and the fierce earnestness of the battle.

We still could not find any trace of the professor. The cage in which he had been confined was now empty. Whether he was dead or alive, we could not even guess. But still we searched. Our presence had been undiscovered, so intent had the Zoags been upon throwing off their adversaries. We discovered that the square where the princess and the professor had been exhibited was in reality only one of the squares of the town, and not the principal one of all. The main square was farther away from the water, and as we approached it, we could see in that strange lurid light that we had noticed earlier in the day—I use the word "day" for want of a better, in this place where there is no day or night—we saw a vast crowd of Zoags massed intently about some central figures.

These were evidently the priests, or their equivalent in the society of the ape-men. They were robed in flowing hoods which made them look grotesque and fearful. Griggs with his usual reference actually expressed the situation as I felt it. He put his mouth close to my ear, and muttered: "I've said all along we were not far from the Old Man, sir, and now, bli'me wot with this awful 'eat, and them there devils, I'm beginning to think we'll taste brimstone ourselves pretty soon."

"Nonsense," I replied, though I myself was at a loss to explain some of the things, particularly the strange red glare and the ever-increasing heat. That there was no fire down here we had long since learned, but if this was not the reflection of a great conflagration, I could not guess what it might be.

Griggs had been fearfully peering ahead. "Nonsense, is it, sir? Well, just you look closely. Them there devils has got the professor there, and

shoot me if they're not proddin' 'im with pitchforks! And—my God, sir—look there! If that's not flame what else is it? We're in for it now, sir!"

I LOOKED in the direction Griggs indicated, and my heart quailed within me. He was right. There, truly, was a great tongue of flame, licking hungrily at the dry foliage. As I looked, I saw not one, but dozens, of these tongues, and while I watched them spread I heard the crackle of the fire as the woolly foliage yielded to its embrace. The whole place was burning! But the priests paid no heed.

"We've got to get the professor out of this, right now," I said.

Griggs looked at me in horror. "But you can't get a man out of 'ell, sir!" he said.

"Don't talk nonsense," I said sharply, for I knew that, though Griggs was second to none in courage, nevertheless his superstitious fears might make a coward out of him.

I saw his eyes anxiously scanning the spreading flames, and the true explanation came to me in a flash.

"You started that fire yourself, Griggs," I accused him, hoping to arouse him from his abstraction.

"I? For the love—'ave you gone crazy, sir? I started it?"

"Just that, and nothing less."

" 'Ow can you say that, sir? Wot with them devils there with pitchforks, and one thing and another, I expect they'll soon 'ave us a-shovelin' coal on to the fire ourselves, if we don't 'urry away."

"We've got to hurry away without doubt," I answered, "but we must rescue the professor first. The flames will spread in every direction, and engulf the whole of this underworld in a few hours. Can't you see by the way they are spreading that they are fed by virgin material? Flame was unheard of down here until we came with our grenades and mitrailleuses and such death-dealing incendiary devices from the surface. We have started a fire down here that can't be put out."

Griggs thought for a moment. "I guess you're right, sir," he said, rather shamefacedly, but with his courage obviously on the return. "I was a bit reckless with my fire when all them ape-men was after me."

"No doubt about it. The very unconcern of the Zoags shows that they have not yet noticed what is upon them. They don't know what fire is."

"Well, they'll soon find out, and it's our chance to rescue the professor—that is, if they don't *Joost* him before we can get him free," answered Griggs.

All this time we had been advancing cautiously upon the assembled throng, and now we were quite close. We remained concealed behind a small clump of the woolly trees, which grew quite close to the center of the square. I noticed with great interest that the professor was strapped to the ground with only the flimsiest of tethers, and it would be the work of only a few seconds to release him.

As the flames gradually advanced upon the crowd, I saw a few of them stop to look with astonishment upon the strange red glare that slowly approached them. Some of the more curious of them left the scene of the *Joost* to examine the fire at closer quarters. It was indeed a pitiful sight to watch these ape-creatures as they tried to pluck the fire from the burning trees and bushes. Their guttural cries attracted their comrades away from the *Joost* ceremonial, and gradually they drifted away from the center of the square, and at first in surprize, then in fear, stood in a mass, unwillingly backing away from the ever-devouring monster that advanced relentlessly upon them. They tried in their ignorance

to push it back with their great hairy arms, as though it were something solid to be lifted or moved about. Great was their terror when singed and burning arms told them that such methods would not avail.

We had seized the opportunity to approach the professor and release him. We had little difficulty in unloosing the knots, and had commenced to assist our friend to his feet when we were discovered.

"Run for it—quick!" I said. Together, we half carried, half dragged the professor from the square, with a hundred Zoags in pursuit. We were just approaching the trees, when we saw with consternation that other Zoags barred the way.

Already they had Griggs in their grasp, and were advancing upon the professor and me. There was nothing to do but fire. I leveled my revolver, and aimed at their leader. There was a spurt of flame, and he fell. The others looked on in astonishment. But they were not to be repelled by one shot. Another, and still another, I fired, and each time a Zoag fell. I abhorred having to kill defenseless creatures in this way, but it was our lives or theirs, and I hoped they would soon see the folly of attempting to stop us. It seemed that they did, for at length they hung back, but still they blocked our path.

Griggs had succeeded in releasing himself, and we three stood still confronting the momentarily baffled but unquestionably hostile throng. Behind us we could hear the infuriated cries of the priests and their followers as they tried to battle the flames. A barrier of fire now separated us from our pursuers, so that if we were safe from attack that way, we were also unable to escape or retreat. Our plight seemed indeed hopeless. As we reloaded our revolvers, expecting another onslaught, our eyes roved in all directions, anxiously seeking a way out. We could discover none, but suddenly help came in a form as unexpected as it was welcome.

Out of the air there swooped a hundred of the winged creatures whom we had for the moment forgotten. At their head was that young man who had sworn to defend us if it were ever in his power—the beloved son of Diegon, whom we had once rescued from the Zoags. How he had learned of our plight I never was to discover, but it was probably through telepathy in a message which he had either received direct from our distressed minds or from his sister, the Princess Thalia that I loved, whose mind was, I knew, keenly attuned to my own.

BEFORE the astonished ape-men could defend themselves, they were snatched from the ground, almost simultaneously, and hurled hither and thither, their bodies being dashed to pieces on the rocks and the ground. We stood unmolested.

"Flee!" came to me in a single word, as clearly as if spoken into my ear by their leader, as he brushed past me with his warriors to battle with others of the enemy. And flee we did. Staggering, and stumbling, we finally emerged from the forest.

Around us raged the awful carnage. White wings grappled with green arms, grunts turned to groans, blood flowed freely. And lending a lurid horror to everything was the red terror of the flames—the fire which the inhabitants of this dark world had never known until we had turned the explosive and incendiary devices of the surface upon their helpless masses. The cities of the Zoags were blazing, and crumbling to ashes. Even the beautiful city of Thorium had caught the fire, and the flames greedily licked about the beautiful walls and columned courts which the art of the bat-men had erected. I swallowed hard at sight of this dreadful destruction.

But a new peril confronted us. It was long before I understood what it was. The burning cities emitted a heat that made the place, always hot, now well-nigh unbearable. The choking fumes irritated our parched throats and made us gasp for breath. Everywhere around us the struggling fighters seemed to be slowly overcome. They appeared to be slowly choking; their movements became sluggish, like the figures in a slow-motion picture. Their thrust and parry failed of its intent. Sweat rolled from them. As I looked, drawing deep breaths, unable to comprehend what was taking place, I noticed that the lurid flames were rapidly dying away.

Suddenly the professor caught my arm. "The *Atlantis*—quick!" he gasped, dragging me away from the scene.

I had barely strength to follow him.

"What's wrong? I can't get me bearings," said Griggs.

"No oxygen," answered the professor. "Save your breath to get you to the *Atlantis*. It is our only hope now."

I began to understand then. For some reason the pumping-system had failed. The suction of air from the world outside had ceased, and the place was being rapidly robbed of all its air. That fact accounted for the choking sensation that I had experienced. That was why the flames had died away when seemingly at their height.

We struggled forward like men in a dream. Our lungs felt as though they must burst. We drew wheezing breaths of the polluted air, which seemed to fill us with lead instead of life. Slowly our dragging steps took us to the small craft wherein our hope of safety lay. It looked truly like home to us now. It was the one thing that could preserve our lives, for a few hours at least.

We saw the water a few yards away from us. The sight of it gladdened our hearts. In a few minutes we should be safely aboard the *Atlantis*, and out of danger for a short while, at least. But our hopes were rudely dashed to the ground.

Griggs was the first to make the discovery. He cried out with a low moan, "The *Atlantis!* It's gone!"

He was right. Search as we might, we could find no trace of the craft that stood at that moment for life itself.

We stood at the water's edge in dismay. There now seemed nothing to do except to lie down and die. But the professor, who seemed to require less oxygen than Griggs and I, had been inspecting the water at our feet.

"Of course—that would be it!" he exclaimed suddenly.

"What would, sir?" said Griggs apathetically.

"Why—the *Atlantis* is submerged in a few feet of water here. If there were more light, I doubt not we could see her hull. One of us must have forgotten to turn off the controls when we left the ship the last time with the machine-gun. Don't you remember?"

"I believe you are right," I said.

"I'll soon find out," said Griggs, and the brave fellow stripped off his coat and staggered to the brink of the water.

I remembered how Griggs had saved us once before when the tentacles of the gigantic octopus bade fair to draw us into its maw. But now he was wounded, and his strength had almost failed. Besides, he was not a powerful swimmer, resembling most seafaring men in this respect.

"Stay awhile; I will go," I said.

This was no time for argument, so after pushing the weakened Griggs aside I drew a deep breath of the foul air and plunged into the water.

The professor's surmise had been accurate. The *Atlantis* lay gently on the bottom. Strange fishes and monsters of this underground lake swam about her stout hull. My lungs began to feel heavy. I swam around the craft, seeking the hatch by which to enter. It loomed large and distorted before me. A great bell began to toll in my head, and my eyes smarted, as I wrenched at the covering. My strength was beginning to fail, when I got it loose. At last it came open.

I entered the compartment, and opened the door connecting with the inside of the *Atlantis*. A flood of water followed me into the submarine. I had no time to pump out the water from the connecting-chamber. I had already closed the outer hatch, and only the water in the chamber could follow me into the craft. The pure, sweet air of the interior of the submersible was like wine in my veins.

Switching on the lights with trembling hand, I stood astounded at the sight that met my eyes. A hideous monster clung to the elevating-control and glared at me with glassy eyes. It was one of the Zoags. In a trice all was clear to me. He had entered the submarine, and not knowing how to operate it, had caused it to submerge, but was quite unable to raise it.

He offered no resistance as I stepped to his side, and, roughly pushing him aside, threw the necessary controls to bring the *Atlantis* to the surface. I felt the craft slowly rising, and I prayed that I might not be too late to rescue my friends. A thought came to me. I took the diving-costume from the locker where it was kept, and hastily donned it.

By the time this was done, the *Atlantis* was resting at the surface. I paid no attention to the Zoag, who crouched in a corner in an attitude of terror. I sprang out on deck, and, leaping across the small strip of water that separated the *Atlantis* from the shore, ran to my two companions.

Griggs was unconscious. The professor lay on the ground, wheezing. I picked the little cockney up, and ran to the *Atlantis*. Opening the main hatch, I hastily dropped him inside. My method was rough, but this was no time for ceremony. The professor, understanding that I had been able to recover the *Atlantis*, had risen to his knees, and was endeavoring to crawl to the water. I grasped him by the waist, and ran to the submersible. It had edged away from the shore somewhat, but I had little difficulty in leaping across. As the professor and I entered the ship, a dark green form darted past, and out on deck, and thence to the shore. It was the Zoag.

"Poor fool!" I thought. "He does not know that a worse peril awaits him out there."

Griggs and the professor were reviving rapidly. I still had on the diving-suit that I had donned sometime earlier. Without it, I knew that I should be helpless in the outside air. While I was convinced that the inhabitants of this strange underworld were now beyond all aid, I experienced, nevertheless, a nameless urge, an intense longing, which I was at a loss to formulate in any definite train of thought. I was drawn once more to leave the craft, and I clumsily crawled ashore in the diving-suit. With feet that were leaden I slowly walked once more the magnificent avenues of Thorium.

THE flames had almost died away now, being stifled by the absence of air. Only a flickering of ugly reddish light and a heavy pall of smoke told of the destruction that had been wrought here until a few minutes ago. Around me lay countless bat-men, their beautiful forms gasping in the throes of suffocation. I felt sick and faint as I viewed them.

Their only hope lay in the recommencement of the power-plant, and I was quite ignorant of the principles of its operation.

My footsteps approached the great hall, where Diegon had held his councils for so many centuries. Never again would it glitter with the splendor of this hidden civilization. They had conquered Death for centuries, but at last Death had claimed them for his own.

The air within the hall was singularly lucid. The haze of smoke and the devouring flames had not encroached here. Under the normal bluish green of the radium illumination that the men of Thorium had adopted to combat their darkness, it looked peaceful and stately as ever. But I knew that it was the peace of Death.

I saw two forms upon the dais, and as I approached with trembling knees, I knew whose they were. Enthroned, majestic and noble as ever sat the great Diegon. His face between convulsive gasps was placid and content. His wings enfolded that other whom I had come to love—his daughter Thalia. Salt tears fell from my eyes as I looked at these two from behind the glass of the diving-helmet. The love and the wisdom that had guided a kingdom, here united in death! But they were not dead, though I knew it was only a matter of minutes before the end must come. Their tired and heavy eyes scarcely looked upon me. They could never have recognized me in the diving-suit, but through the medium of that upon which the Thoriumites relied more than anything else, thought, they knew who stood before them.

Gently disentangling herself from the embrace of her father, the beautiful Thalia, queenly, but unsteady, advanced toward me. With a sob, I took her into my arms. Her face was pressed close to the thick glass of the diving-suit, but her eyes could gaze into mine. Her rich lips were pressed against the clammy glass, and separated by its thickness, mine met hers. Stranger kiss could never have been given or taken! Her face fell into lines of perfect happiness, and while her eyes closed, and her breath faded into imperceptible gasps, I held her tightly in my arms, the tears falling, and the salt rheum stinging my tongue.

Gently I carried her to the dais, and with trembling arms gave that which I loved more than anything else back to her father. His eyes opened when I folded the gossamer wings about his daughter once more, and from his fast-failing brain there came the words: "My son, you have done well. This is the end. But perchance we shall meet again in that place of which you have told me. May it be so! Farewell."

Words failed me. I turned, and fled from the hall. The last long look that I took at them before I passed out into the open showed me these two creatures, united in death, as they had been in life, folded in each other's embrace, their faces turned to the skies, as though defying Death itself.

MY STEPS soon brought me to the *Atlantis* again, and I found my two companions now greatly recovered, and impatient to leave. I told them that Diegon and his daughter, as well as the rest of the inhabitants of Thorium, were dying, and they agreed that we could not hope to do anything for them. It was doubtful if we could transport Diegon or his daughter to the craft, and even if we did, we could only keep them alive for a few hours. The supply of air was limited, and we had put our equipment to hard use during the few weeks that it had been installed. It would be impossible to replenish the air supply now, without further access to fresh air, and as we possessed only three diving-suits, it

would have been quite impossible to aid the others in that precarious escape which we now contemplated.

We strapped to our backs as much of the compressed meats and other foods as we could carry, and taking with us a spare cylinder of oxygen apiece, we ran the *Atlantis* into a small cove, in fact the same one from which the Zoag had carried the professor away, and leaving the ship for the last time, we plodded up the steep incline that led to the power-house.

As we ascended the pathway, we noticed great masses of the radium ore, the pitchblende which the power plant had been accustomed to employ as fuel. The professor, whom nothing could deter from his scientific investigations, had slipped into his pocket a small piece of lead pipe when we left the *Atlantis*. I had not troubled to inquire why he should wish to burden himself with an extra and apparently unnecessary load, but its use now became apparent. He had stopped, and carefully approaching one of the heaps, had extracted several grams of something. I afterward learned that it was radium in the pure state. This he carefully placed in the piece of lead pipe, and closing the ends by treading upon them, he rejoined us, and we proceeded upon our journey.

Around the main gate of the power-house a sad sight met our eyes. Dodd, that brother and image of Diegon, lay dead, surrounded by a circle of dead Zoags. He had, evidently, put up a brave fight to keep the motors running. The evidence of superior numbers was everywhere apparent, however, and he had been brutally killed by the enemies. Now they lay gasping for the air that their own act had deprived them of.

Since our own air supply was precious, we did not linger but approached the mouth of the tunnel, which we had surmised connected this underworld with the earth above. We unslung the lanterns and grappling-hooks which we had brought with us, and prepared for the journey to the surface. Fortunately the lanterns were electric, and would therefore burn without air. I led the way, the professor coming next, and Griggs bringing up the rear.

We were soon swallowed up by the darkness, and saw nothing beyond what our own meager light showed us. One thing, however, gave us hope. Everywhere the evidences of suction were apparent. They hung like the stringy, cobweblike stuff one sees around electric fans, and they carried unmistakable evidence of origin at the surface. Here a dead leaf, that had once been green; there a piece of twig; and most remarkable of all, a discarded cigarette of a make well known and popular at the surface some fifteen years ago, lying wedged in a crevice here, just as if its owner had carelessly tossed it aside yesterday.

For hours we toiled, in an ever more steeply ascending climb, until at last our way became almost vertical. This it was that we dreaded, for it would be a hundred times more difficult to climb an upright shaft, assisted only by grappling-irons, no matter how many projections were afforded us.

We had tested the presence of air by trying occasionally to strike a match. There was air present, but not in quantities large enough for us to dispense with the helmets. This constituted our major difficulty; for we could not eat until we were able to remove the helmets, and to do this we must have air. At last, however, the matches which we struck glowed brilliantly, and we stopped to rest and remove our helmets.

We ate heartily, as may well be imagined after the difficult climb.

"How much farther do you suppose we've got to climb, sir?" said

Griggs, after we had refreshed ourselves.

The professor knit his brows in perplexity.

"I really have no idea," he answered, after some thought. "It would under ordinary circumstances be possible to obtain some idea of our depth by a calculation based upon the pressure at the surface, and the pressure here. Even the fact of the existence of air here would, under ordinary conditions, enable us to arrive at some conclusion. But all calculations would be futile, because the men of Thorium have been sucking air from the surface, and therefore the presence of air here does not denote very much."

"What to my mind does denote a great deal, however, is the fact that the shaft is now nearly vertical," I hazarded.

"Yes. That is undoubtedly important. The resistless forces of the ancient volcano which found vent through this tube must have united upon establishing their path to the surface, and flowed in a vertical path."

"At that rate we should not have very much farther to go," I said.

"Am I dreaming, or do you see what I see?" interrupted Griggs excitedly.

With one accord, the professor and I looked in the direction Griggs indicated. What we expected to see we knew not, but what we did see was surprizing enough, and simple enough, but of more comfort to us than all the theorizing which we had been engaged upon to stimulate our spirits.

Griggs had risen, and advanced slowly, as though fearful his eyes might still be deceiving him. Stooping gingerly, he reached for it, and grasped the small object that had attracted his attention. A cigarette! Partly smoked, and thrown away evidently in a careless gesture, it lay here, miles below the surface of the earth, as serene as though tossed there yesterday by its owner.

He brought it to us, and I took it in my hand and examined it carefully. "Pearl," I read. "I have never heard of that brand."

"I've seen 'em, sir. When 'is Majisty's fleet visited 'Ong-Kong, sir, I bought some of 'em, sir. Over in Kowloon, sir, I bought 'em."

I passed the cigarette to the professor, who examined it with care. "Griggs is right," he said. "There are Chinese characters on the paper."

"Well, I wouldn't mind if we climbed out of this hole, and found ourselves in 'Ong-Kong," said Griggs. "I 'ad a girl there once, and she——"

The professor had returned the cigarette to him, and the story of Griggs' girl was terminated by a few puffs which he took from the "Pearl" which he had lighted.

Greatly heartened at this new evidence that we were on the right track, we soon resumed our arduous climb, after taking the precaution to tie a rope around the waists of all three of us, in case one should miss his footing. As it happened, this precaution saved the life of the professor, whose sight was not so good as my own.

THE story of that terrible ascent need not be told here. It need only be stated that for three days and three nights—though we only knew this by our watches—we toiled with aching limbs and torn hands up that nightmare of rock and lava. Our supply of water ran out, and we were forced to refresh ourselves at the tiny springs which occasionally dripped through the walls of the lava tube.

At last, when the air had become rich and pure, and the sea breeze more noticeable, we emerged almost without warning into the world again. We must have completed the last part of our climb during the night,

for with the breaking of dawn a great, jagged hole loomed directly above us, faintly pink with the rose of the morning sun. After another hour of travel we staggered out into the fresh beauty of morning.

We were saved! Exhaustion now overcame us, and we lay upon the ground in complete fatigue. The professor was the first to recover, and, seeing a large butterfly, he started off in pursuit. For the first time in my life I realized the value of butterfly-hunting. The professor had discovered a species of *Lepidoptera* which told him that we were in Polynesia.

"It's all right with me, if we're not on some cannibal island. Maybe this is the place where they ate Captain Cook," said Griggs, wryly.

We were in a huge bowl covered with grassy verdure. It was evidently the crater of an extinct volcano. The professor's prediction was accurate, as we soon found out. It was not long before we met a man clothed in Oriental attire. He was, as we soon learned, a Japanese, and resident of the Samoan Islands. We had made our return to the earth through an extinct volcano.

Soon we took steamer for Honolulu, and thence to San Francisco, where we were regarded as the victims of some great shock, chiefly shipwreck; as maniacs, or unadulterated frauds, according to the persons who heard our story.

Finally the professor bethought him of the radium which he had brought so carefully in the piece of lead pipe. Even this did not suffice to convince the skeptical minds of those who heard our story. We therefore sold the radium to a great institution, and the sum we received was enough to make the three of us independently wealthy for the rest of our lives.

One day the professor and I sadly said good-bye to the glorified Griggs, as he proudly walked aboard the great *Leviathan* in New York, resplendent in fur coat, spats and big cigar, with half a dozen porters carrying his numerous trunks and baggage.

My heart was still sick for that wonderful creature, Thalia, who lay dead in the arms of her venerable father miles below us, but I swallowed hard, and gripped the hand of our good friend, as the going-ashore whistle blew.

[THE END]

Under the Moon

By EUGENE C. DOLSON

In the hours of sunlight, ghosts are lazy;
They hide in caverns and sleep by day.
When the moon's at full and the winds are crazy,
Oh, then is the time ghosts have their way.

In the woods tonight are a thousand devils—
The trees are rocking with all their might;
And the sprites and goblins hold their revels
Under the moon this windy night.

The MAN WHO REMEMBERED

by Willis Knapp Jones

"The earth shook, and the sky was getting darker—proof of the sun's anger."

AFTER the blow that knocked him senseless, Phil Espinosa regained consciousness babbling in some unknown tongue that neither of his American fellow scientists could understand.

None of them had seen the blow given, but from their Bolivian natives with the help of Paco, who spoke Spanish as well as Quechua, the Indian language, the ethnologist Craver discovered what had happened. It seemed that Gomu, an Indian worker whose light hair attracted as much notice as his surly disposition did, had got into an argument with Phil, who was superintending the excavation of a *huaco,* or Indian burial mound, and had hit the American over the head with a shovel. The other Indians had rushed to Phil and so had not seen what became of the rebellious Gomu.

And now, here was the scientific expedition hundreds of miles from a railroad with their archeologist out of his head, babbling nonsense and failing to recognize either Craver or Sanderson, the botanist and animal man, both of whom he had known for years.

Paco brought in a new problem: "The Indians want to know what to do."

The lad was at the tent into which the injured Espinosa had been brought. Before either of the Americans could answer, Espinosa sat up on the cot and again talked in that unknown tongue. The ethnologist knew that it was some formal language, since he could detect speech-

groups and voice inflections; but he was totally unacquainted with the vocabulary.

Paco, the youngster, opened his eyes, however, and after a moment of bewilderment, made some reply. At once Espinosa answered him, and an animated conversation ensued. It was evident several times that Espinosa used words that Paco did not understand, but for the most part they were perfectly intelligible to each other.

Yet when Sanderson interrupted and tried to speak to him in English, there was a dullness in their colleague's eyes. He said something to Paco which seemed to surprize the youngster.

"He say: 'Who are those men?' " he reported in Spanish.

"But, Phil," Craver burst out, "we're the men that came with you from the States to search for the lost city of the Incas. Don't you remember?"

Again the look of bewilderment in Phil's face. Sanderson repeated it in Spanish, but with just as little impression.

"What language does he understand?" both men demanded.

"He speak Quechua, *Señores*," the boy told them. "But not the Quechua we talk. A long-time old language. Often he say words I not know until I remember how my grandmother who live 'most forever, she used to say."

They knew that Espinosa had studied Quechua, the ancient language of the Incas. They had heard him carrying on faltering conversations with natives when there had been no one near who could interpret for them; but never had he shown such fluency as now.

They began to be worried. He seemed to have forgotten everything. Through the boy they tried to stir his memory, reminding him of the great university that had sent them out, their great hopes of discovering traces of a legendary city, Intihuatamba. At the name, his eyes gleamed. Raising one of his small and very well-formed hands, he pointed and spoke rapidly.

"He say Intihuatamba five league yonder in the lap of the mountain that never sleep." Paco pointed to a lofty peak, a snowcap, though this was the South American November, springtime.

"Tell him he's all wrong," Craver commanded. "He himself found the map of the Conquistadores marking the location as right around here."

" 'Conquistadores,' he say. 'Who are Conquistadores?' "

"Good Lord, what's the matter with that man?" Sanderson cried. "The author of the best book published on remnants of the Conquistadores, and he asks us to tell him about the first Spaniards to visit South America!"

Craver was frankly skeptical. "Either he's playing a monstrous joke on us with pretense of ignorance, or else it's amnesia. Blows on the head do sometimes cause loss of memory. That's well authenticated."

Paco now interpreted something the archeologist said. "He want to know when you go to Intihuatamba."

"But yesterday when he set the men to digging, he told us himself that we were there."

When the lad repeated Sanderson's remark, Espinosa showed signs of disgust. The boy hesitated to translate his reply until Craver questioned him. "He say—he say, 'Surely he know where he live. He come from Intihuatamba his self.' "

"Humor him, Craver," Sanderson urged. "If he is raving and thinks it's somewhere else, we'd better go there. Leave the heavy stuff here and come back later when he's sane again."

"Yes, maybe a change of surroundings will restore him, though I'm sure I don't understand how the

little bump that I found on his head could knock him silly."

The Scotchman shook his head. "I don't know. I'm no doctor. But I did read somewhere about a man who was master of a dozen languages until his Convolution of Brocaw was injured, and then they all left him except his native tongue, the one he knew first of all."

"Well, that won't apply to Espinosa's case, then. I know that in spite of his Spanish name and his small hands and feet which Latins have, he was born in the United States and talked English long before he talked Spanish. And as for Quecha—well, he's been at that less than a year. He's cracked. That's the trouble with him. The idea of saying he lives in Intihuatamba! Why, that was nothing but a legend when the Spaniards reached Bolivia, and that was——"

"1526, four hundred years ago."

"Well, the Duchess believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast, but this is too near lunchtime for me to swallow any such tale as that."

PHIL ESPINOSA was giving evidence of impatience, so, to humor him, they began making preparations for their fifteen-mile tramp. Only part of the equipment was to be taken along, and half the men. Gray-haired Sanderson, the leader of scientific expeditions in virtually every part of the world, picked out the things to take along, and left the permanent camp in charge of a majordomo who was to keep the Indians at work opening the Inca burial mound.

After a light meal, the rest started out: the three white men, Paco the interpreter, and eight porters. Their road was the bed of a stream along which Espinosa led them unhesitatingly. At first he examined his shoes and clothing with some curiosity, but said nothing about them. He did, however, catch up a poncho to throw over his shoulders. Then with a machete in his hand to cut down bushes and jungle foliage, he fell into a swinging stride at their head.

Craver came next, a revolver at his belt with the holster unbuckled. He did not trust his colleague now. With insane notions in his head and a dangerous weapon in his hand, there was no knowing what he might do. But the archeologist paid no attention to the rest. He seemed to have reverted almost to a savage, a bundle of nerves and fears. His glance, suddenly grown keen, swept everything with quick, birdlike turns of his head. His pace was so rapid over the muddy road that the carriers had to pant under their loads, but he did not delay, except momentarily to find the best way around pools.

Once, as they slowed down while he slashed down jungle growth to let them skirt a mudhole, Sanderson called to Craver, "I've been thinking about the Convolution of Brocaw theory. I don't much hold with those who stick language ability into one corner of the skull, like a cupboard, but if there's any truth in heredity, and his line of Spanish ancestors got linked with some of the Indians who lived here before the Conquistadores arrived, then Quechua was their family language long before English, and——"

"Sanderson, you're cracked too! I guess it's time we left this unhealthful part of Bolivia and started home. Oh, Espinosa—I say, Phil, aren't you ready to go home, too?"

The archeologist, machete in hand, worked steadily, entirely oblivious to the mention of his name. Not even when Craver went directly behind him and called him again did he turn.

"I wonder what he's calling himself now," he said aloud. Then he lapsed into Spanish. "Paco, ask what *el patrón* calls himself."

Back came the answer: "*Cúnturni*, Son of the Condor."

Craver laughed. "That's not evolution, Sanderson, having a good scientist like Espinosa turn into a scavenger bird. That's devolution."

Just then their guide turned aside abruptly. He seemed surprized at the absence of a trail, but after a halt of a moment, and a glance upward at the snow-capped cone that towered just above them, he swung his machete and cut a swath through the lush jungle growth.

Scarcely a sound broke the stillness; only the crash of falling stalks, the sloshing of their feet and the chattering of the frightened birds. The air was dank, for no sunlight entered through the matted foliage stretching a dozen feet above them. There were no taller trees, such as the eighty-foot arching roof that they had met so often before, because now they were ascending the easy slope toward the mountain.

Sanderson stopped once and gathered a handful of the soil. "H'm, lava," he muttered. "Old Thunderbore must have had some great old eruptions in the past, but they didn't succeed in killing back the jungle."

Though the plant life was not so dense, their path was as dark as ever, for night was approaching. "Ask him how near we are," Craver directed.

"He say in one half coca chew you see the fire of his village."

"Yes, he seems to be pure native now. Don't you remember the Indian we met near Cuzco who told Phil that before he could use up one cud of that coca they chew we'd be at a *posada* where we could pass the night?"

The archeologist did indeed seem all native. There was a tenseness about his stride quite foreign to his usual way of walking. But finally he stopped and Paco relayed his command: "Remain here till I come back."

He gave a weird bird-call and went on swiftly. Sanderson would have remained, but Craver followed. "Come on," he said. "There's no telling what he'll do in the state he's in."

But not until Espinosa stopped did they catch up to him. There he was, standing on a mound, and repeating this mournful bird-call, listening and looking in every direction in an agony of uncertainty. He was talking petulantly to himself. Paco, appearing at last, interpreted his words. "He say he lost. Intihuatamba is here but town disappear."

"Never mind. Tell him it's too dark to find it tonight. We'll make camp now and search in the morning."

Espinosa made no reply. He seemed dazed as he sat in the light of the campfire which the porters had quickly built. There was something melancholy about him. He kept rubbing his delicately formed hands together, and from time to time he would imitate some jungle bird.

The other white men were greatly worried over him, but were helpless. Craver tried to examine his wound, which was revealed since the bandage had been tugged off by some projecting branch, but Phil snarled at him and wrenched away. He would not let even Sanderson touch him, though previously he had been very fond of the white-haired botanist.

He ate the food which was given him, giving the impression that his thoughts were far away. And then, wrapping himself in his poncho, he lay down with his feet to the fire as the Indians about him were doing.

Through Paco, Sanderson asked him to come into the shelter tent, but he replied that he always slept on the ground when away from his own stone hut, and would be cold away from a fire.

Twice during the night Sanderson came out to see if Phil was all right. Once he put more wood on the fire because the American, sleeping between two porters, was turning and muttering, and Sanderson was afraid he would catch cold, since it was nearing morning.

The next thing he knew, he was aroused by a wail that petrified him. The scream that followed was enough to frighten anyone. It brought the two white men out of their tent, and every Indian was on his feet. Espinosa, the only one not aroused in fear, looked up at those who were gathering around him.

Daylight was breaking, and in the greenish light he wore an expression of embarrassment. "Jove, what a rummy dream!" he remarked, sitting up. "I say, Sandy, did I yell as loud as I dreamed I did."

"Louder!" replied the Scot.

Paco rattled off something in Quechua, but Espinosa put up a restraining hand and in slow and halting syllables started to answer. Then he switched into Spanish. "It's too early in the morning for me to struggle with Quechua, Paco," he apologized.

As he passed his hand over his head to smooth down his rumpled hair, a startled expression crossed his face. "Ouch!" he said. His exploring fingers touched the bump gently. Then the sight of the volcano above him made him scowl and look about him. "What's the joke?" he demanded. "What are we doing here?"

"That's what we wanted to discover," Craver told him. "It's your funeral. You guided us here."

"Go ahead; I'm green," Espinosa laughed. "I'll bite and ask for explanations. And what about this crack on my—oh, I remember. Gomu! But, I say! That's queer."

"What's queer?" asked Sanderson.

"The way he fitted into my dream. Say, won't some of you tell me what it's all about?"

"As if you didn't know!" Craver remarked dryly. "But anything to please you. Like a prophet with a message, you were all for leading us to Intihuatamba fifteen miles from where we were, so out you——"

"Now wait. How could I lead you there? We were there already."

"That's what we thought, but when you began rattling off Quechua so fast that——"

"That's enough, Craver. I'm fairly gullible, but when you talk of my ability to speak Quechua, I won't swallow that, even though I dreamed I could handle it like a whiz."

"Maybe you'd better tell us your dream," Sanderson spoke for the first time. "Perhaps that will straighten things out."

"All right. We must be some miles away from camp, so I'll tell it to you on the way back. I'm sorry I brought you here on a wild goose chase, if I did it. But I must have been out of my head. I'm still a little bit muddled. But let's get packed and start back."

The white-haired botanist shook his head. "I don't know whether I want to go back. I believe I'd like to sink at least one shaft here."

"There couldn't be anything here," Espinosa insisted. "We're wasting time that we ought to be devoting to Intihuatamba."

"Perhaps this is Intihuatamba. You know we Scotch are supposed to be sort of fey, and I'm not too American to have lost my confidence in what you call 'hunches.' That mound over there——"

"Don't be foolish, Sandy. No people in their right minds, especially a group of Inca courtiers fleeing with their families after their uprising went wrong, the way the founders of Intihuatamba were supposed to have done, would pick a site just below an active volcano. Why, that's as crazy as my dream was!"

"We humored you yesterday, Phil. Now it's my turn. Tell those porters to uncover that mound, and while they're doing it, let's hear your dream."

The Quechua that Espinosa used to them came far less confidently than it had come the day before, but he made them understand, and after the breakfast Phil told his dream.

"I THOUGHT I was one of the courtiers that built the place. You see, after being saturated with all my reading and study of the place, it's no wonder. But I even knew my name. It was"—he paused and scowled, then a smile broke—"Cúnturni."

He did not see the startled glance exchanged between his companions.

"We fled from Cuzco, till we got so far away that we thought the Inca would never find us. We built thatched houses of wood, and took up our lives under the cone of just such a volcano as that, only we thought, then, that it was extinct. Oh, I can remember dozens of little incidents! We had run off with the Rainbow Banner of the Inca, and since I was the strongest one in the group"—he looked at his almost feminine hands with a rueful smile—"I was made keeper of it. My house was bigger than the others and more strongly built, the only one in the village of stone.

"I was married, too. She had been called Star of the Inca, but when we left the Inca she became simply *Ccocolla*, Star. I can see her now." He shut his eyes.

For a moment there was silence, then Craver spoke up. "Go on, leave her out of it. She doesn't matter."

"Oh, but she does! We were so happy together. I remember making for her a curious ring with a gold nugget that looked like a star. She joked me about it because I thought I was making it small, but it slipped off from every finger but her thumb, while it just fitted my little finger. I must have had a bigger one than I have now. Funny how the details come back to me, isn't it?"

"You read them somewhere." Craver yawned. "But what I'd like to hear is an explanation of your yell, if you have one. Otherwise, I'm ready to start back."

"Well, if you don't let me tell my dream——"

"Go ahead, Phil," Sanderson told him. "I'm more interested than you know."

"The trouble came when a priest announced that the Sun was angry with us and would not help us until we sent back the banner. I thought he had been bribed, because just then a messenger arrived from Cuzco, a light-haired Indian named—all I can think of is Gomu."

Craver nodded. "No wonder. You've got him on the brain since he cracked you yesterday."

"Maybe," Espinosa agreed, though he did not sound convinced. "But to continue. Ccocolla and I had been married a year and were going to have a baby, a boy, for in those days we knew how to determine the sex of children, though for the life of me I can't remember how it was done. Anyhow, I swore that the Inca should never get this banner while I was alive. Some wanted to surrender and return, since they were tired of having to do all their own work and live so miserably, but Ccocolla and I withdrew to my house and to its strongest tower.

"That was about noon, and the sky was getting darker all the time. We heard queer rumbles, and the earth shook. Most of the people were afraid, especially when Gomu said—and the priest agreed—that it was proof of the Sun's anger. He called them all together to decide what to do, but I refused. Then Gomu came, asking to speak to me; and, seeing that he was alone, I unfastened the door. But he attacked me treacher-

ously and stunned me with some weapon that he had hidden.

"It was dark when I recovered. There was a sulfurous smell everywhere and I heard what I thought was rain pattering on the stone roof. I was in exquisite pain. One of my legs had been so bruised by something that I could not move. I called Ccocolla. No answer. The hearth fire was still burning, and by its light, at the foot of the couch where she was accustomed to lie, I saw something gleaming. I crawled over, each inch a torture. It was the ring I had made for her.

"Then I was in an agony of doubt. The Rainbow Banner which I had hung from the wall was gone. Had Gomu taken her, too? I slipped the ring onto my little finger and edged my way to the door. Someone must know where she was. By now I could scarcely breathe. The odor of sulfur was increasing, and when I opened the door, I knew the cause.

"There was the weirdest of lights everywhere, reflected from the red glow coming from the top of the mountain."

Espinosa shuddered. "It is all horribly vivid. Though I have never seen a volcano in eruption, I know just how one looks. What I thought was rain was a shower of ashes. Some of the houses were already aflame.

"Down the mountain, glowing red-hot, came a stream of molten lava. I saw that unless it turned it would overrun me. There was I, helpless, unable to bear my weight on my left leg. No one came in spite of my screams, not even my wife. I was sure then that she had been carried off, losing her ring in the struggle, or possibly leaving it as a sign for me."

He was trembling all over. He pressed the balls of his palms into his eyes as though to shut out the sight.

"And then what?" It was difficult to say whether cynicism or anxiety colored Craver's tones.

Then I screamed and woke up to see you all looking at me as though I were a ghost."

"Well, you tell a good story," Craver acknowledged, "but you'll have to admit it was nothing but a dream."

"Yes, I know, but it was weird enough while it lasted."

Sanderson was studying the mountain. "Have either of you noticed that scar down the southwest side?"

Both his companions raised their heads.

"You see where the lava spilled over in some eruption, and then started down the slope. For about half-way down it is headed straight for this spot, then it turns into that gully and is diverted southward. Doesn't that bear out what Phil was trying to describe?"

Craver, now that Espinosa was recovered, was endeavoring to treat the whole affair as a huge joke. "He's probably been studying the mountain since daybreak to make his story sound all right."

The archeologist shook his head. "No, I swear I told you absolutely nothing but what I dreamed. But why all the fuss over a little dream?"

"You never studied dreams seriously, apparently." Sanderson spoke seriously. "I don't mean dreambook stuff—coffins mean death, shoes mean marriage, and that rot. But psychologists claim to be able to tell not only the past life of the individual, but also of the race, by dream study. Mightn't it be that Phil went through some experience that one of his remote ancestors endured?"

"Impossible!" Craver objected. "In the first place, any ancestor of Espinosa's with a broken leg would have been killed by the volcano, and a dead man can't transmit hereditary influences."

"But according to his story, he left a child, and the father's fate might have been a legend, or he might have been saved. Besides, if there's anything to it, a volcanic eruption would be a good explanation of the disappearance of the town, just as Herculaneum was blotted out in Italy."

"Sanderson, are you going to give Phil the satisfaction of thinking he fooled us yesterday with his pretense of insanity?"

"I'll give you my word of honor," Espinosa broke in, "that I have no recollection of anything between the time that Indian attacked me and this morning when I yelled."

"The knock on the head would take care of that, Craver."

"Amnesia—if that's what he had—is cured only by the passing of years or by an operation," the ethnologist pointed out.

"Or by another blow. In his dream he was struck on the head, you remember."

Craver laughed heartily. "A blow given in a dream cure amnesia?"

Sanderson's face was serious. "Do you remember two lines by the English poet, Noyes:

> Did the grog we dreamed we swallowed
> Make us dream of all that followed?

I don't know. I'm only wondering."

THERE was a shout from Paco, and at his words the scientists leaped up. The Indians had stepped back, and in plain sight was a gap in the ground through which some stone beams projected, protected from the elements by a grayish, ashlike covering. Inside could be seen some sort of room.

"Well, Craver?" Sanderson was exultant. "How about it? The place Phil dreamed of, the tallest building in the town whose reinforcements held up against the weight of the volcanic ashes!"

Under the spell of their enthusiasm and curiosity, the Indians went on digging, while Sanderson, sure that they had found the ruins of the lost Inca city, sent Paco back for the other porters and the rest of the stores.

The scientists were too much excited to stop for anything, and they even helped dig while the Indians were resting for lunch.

By the middle of the afternoon, they realized that they had made one of the finds of archeology, a place left in the form in which it had existed centuries before. Enough of the hard soil had been removed from the building to free the front entrance. Then more carefully than ever they went on uncovering what they found. Finally a human shoulder-bone was uncovered that crumbled into dust at the touch. Sanderson at once ordered them to stop, and Phil, whose duty was to take charge of such excavation, continued the task.

One of the careless Indians had smashed part of the left arm, but around the forearm and hand the volcanic deposit had fossilized.

From the instant of their discovery, Phil had been like one in a dream. He did not seem to know what was going on. Craver, his skepticism vanished, was as eager as the others to get to the bottom of everything. Seeing the mold around the arm, he had an idea. He picked up what was like a shell for a cast and tried to put his hand in it. "It's more your size, Phil," he said. "Put your arm in. My hand is much too big."

Espinosa did as he was directed. After tapping the shell, he thrust in his arm. Then his eyes dilated. He gasped and fainted.

As quickly as possible they drew off the shell, fearing some animal had made it his shelter. But Craver gave a cry and pointed. On Espinosa's little finger was a ring they knew he had never worn before, a plain gold ring, but set in it was a little gold nugget, exactly like a tiny gold star.

The GRAPPLING GHOST

by CAPWELL WYCKOFF

"She gazed spellbound upon one of the most unbelievable sights in the world."

IT IS queer what a difference a few hours make. The trivial events of the morning loomed in another light now. When we had come in for the week-end party, Prudence had been standing in the lower hall talking to a young man who I later learned was Roger Canfield. I caught only a scrap of the conversation, for Canfield was leaving. Willowby, who had arrived before us, was standing there listening, his eyes on Canfield.

"But if you *should* decide to sell——" Canfield said, but Prudence interrupted him tartly.

"This has been my home for twenty years and I have no fault to find with it," she answered. And then, although it might have been simply a fancy on my part, I thought I caught a meaning glance from Canfield to Willowby, and an answering gleam in Willowby's eyes, but Canfield was gone then and I was not sure.

The whole thing passed from my mind then, and I enjoyed myself during the day, but at night. . . .

We sat around Hunterton's parlor, listening uneasily to Willowby's talk. Our situation was uncomfortable in the extreme. All lights had gone out early in the evening; the servants, I learned, had left the day before; and a howling wind and rain storm rattled the casements and shook the doors. Since 6 o'clock we had sat in the wavering glow of candle-light and had talked in hushed voices, starting at every fresh gust that set the big house vibrating. And Willowby, who knew

the history of Melancholy House better than Hunterton did, insisted on talking about the most weird things.

Weird, at that time. Probably they would have seemed commonplace in the daytime. But Melancholy House had gained its name honestly; we all knew that sorrow had dwelt eternally under its roof. I didn't quite see why Hunterton ever wanted to have his party in that house. Down in town Hunterton owned a house that was the envy of his neighbors, but his secret delight was this ugly, sinister mansion which hid in the woods, the home of his elderly sister and her ward. Personally, I felt queer about coming, and now, marooned beside the fireplace, fascinated and alarmed by Willowby's talk, I wished I had pleaded another engagement and had remained in Boston.

There were eight of us. Prudence Hunterton, of course; she lived in the place: a fine-looking old lady, some years Hunterton's senior, rather sharp of tongue and nervous, but with a reserve. She never went to pieces. Hunterton was there, and Willowby, and Garry Bainbridge. The ladies—Margy Bronte, Hilda and Mary Duffield and Ann Hunterton—lent the only cheerful touch to our company. Hunterton sat close to Margy; Garry watched Mary Duffield; Prudence watched us all; and I suppose I was expected to take care of Hilda Duffield, but I spent my time watching Willowby and Ann Hunterton.

Ann was a Hunterton by adoption, and we all knew that Willowby was deeply in love with her. Temperamentally they were suited, for Willowby was grave and serious, a thinker and a philosopher, and Ann so deeply quiet that she had earned the name of Pensive Ann. At the time that Willowby was so insistent on telling ghost-stories, Ann appeared to be the only one of us who was not alarmed and yet enthralled. She stared silently into the fire. With the candles in back of us, and the red firelight in front of us, our shadows moved and spread with disconcerting suddenness upon the walls and the floor, and Charlie Willowby insisted on relating the various legends relating to the house where our sorry party was taking place.

"But the best story of all," said Willowby, his keen eyes sweeping the circle, "is that of the Grappling Ghost."

Prudence's lip quivered momentarily. "Mr. Willowby, please! I'm sure there are other subjects that will interest us more than this one. I suggest that tomorrow morning, when the sun is out, you tell us that particular story, and as many others as you can recall. Just now——"

"Pardon me," Willowby interrupted, quietly. "I think in one point, my dear Miss Hunterton, you are wrong."

"Explain yourself. In what am I wrong?" demanded Prudence, who disliked exceedingly to be told that she was wrong.

"To begin with," said Willowby, "I realize the effect that the storm and the absence of reliable lights has on us all. But I claim that our minds are all attuned to the weird and the thrilling right at the present moment as they never will be again."

He turned to the rest of us quickly. "To be honest, I ask you all if you haven't a secret desire in your hearts to talk upon unusual subjects at the moment?"

We had. Willowby had led up to the subject in such a way that to drop back into ordinary conversation would have been highly unsatisfying. I doubt if there was one among us who did not want to hear the story of the Grappling Ghost. Under Willowby's pressure, we admitted it.

"You see," Willowby nodded to Miss Hunterton, "I was right. And

it might explain your experience of a week ago."

"I hoped you wouldn't mention that," Prudence said, reproachfully.

Seeing us look with increased interest at her, Prudence felt obliged to tell us the story.

"One night last week," said Miss Hunterton, "I thought I heard Ann coughing; in fact, I did hear her coughing, and so I got up and crossed the upper hall, neglecting to make a light, for I know every inch of the place, and don't need a light. But before I reached her door, and just as I was passing the end of the hall, just where it turns, a very cold hand was placed firmly on my arm! It was no trick of the imagination; I'm not given to dreams or scares. I felt it! It unnerved me so that I gasped aloud and ran into my room. The hand made no attempt to detain me; it simply slid off from my arm. When I had gained sufficient courage, I lighted a candle and searched the hall, but found nothing amiss. I then went into Ann's room and found her sound asleep. That's all."

"The Grappling Ghost!" said Willowby, triumphantly.

"Nonsense! Don't be silly!" cried Prudence, tartly. "I don't believe in legends and ghost-stories. I simply don't like to hear 'em on a night like this, that's all."

"Suppose," drawled Garry, with assumed ease, "that you relate this gripping story, Charlie." Garry smiled at what he considered a brilliant sally, but no one appeared to notice it.

The invitation was all that Willowby needed. He launched into the story without waste of time. Apparently he was telling it simply for the joy of making us feel uneasy, yet I couldn't help feeling that he had a real motive in it all.

"I SUPPOSE that you have all noticed the armored figure at the top of the stairs?" he began. And after we had all nodded, he went on: "That particular suit of armor belonged to Sir Godfrey Montmorency, a noble knight of the Crusades. One look at that suit of armor will convince you that Sir Godfrey was a massive man. It is broader than the ordinary. That may not have struck you as it did me, but I've had several chances to look over armor, especially when I was in England and France; and when I first saw that outfit I knew that the original wearer must have been a man of massive limb. So, from Mr. Canfield, who owned this house before friend Hunterton purchased it, I learned its history. Hunterton knows the legend, and so does Miss Hunterton. I doubt if anyone else does.

"This Sir Godfrey Montmorency went to the Holy Land during the time of the Crusades. He wore that grim suit of armor which stands at the head of the stairs. And Sir Godfrey's pride and joy was not his flashing sword, nor his keen spear, nor his whistling battle-ax, but his faith was in the strength of his arms and his legs and his thighs. He loved to grapple with his enemies. Countless stories are told of his prowess in physical battle. Man to man, arm to arm, locked in a death grip, Sir Godfrey loved to fight his battles. A hundred stories are told of how he threw away his sword in the midst of the battle, to rush at his foe and grind him in the crushing strength of his mighty arms.

"Sir Godfrey returned from the Crusades with a mighty record, and unharmed. But he returned to find that others had seized his own possessions. He quietly recruited a following and besieged his own stronghold. Then came the moment when he was face to face with his foe, and Sir Godfrey challenged him to

single combat, a combat of purely physical strength. With alacrity his invitation was accepted. They met in front of the two small armies, which had drawn apart to watch. Sir Godfrey was crushing his foe slowly but surely between his mighty arms, when the false knight, suddenly drawing a concealed dagger, slipped it between the bars of Godfrey's visor, killing him instantly. The army of the foe swept Godfrey's forces from the field, and the grappling knight was stripped of his armor and his body was dropped down a well. His armor, which is on the landing above us, was kept in the castle, later sold, and Mr. Canfield's ancestors brought it with them when they built the house here.

"And now for the legend. It is simply this: Sir Godfrey's ghost, never destined to be still and at peace because of the trick played on him, comes back from time to time and enters the armor. The suit of armor may then be found walking around the house, seeking someone to grapple with; and heaven help anyone who is abroad at night when the Grappling Ghost is on the roam! That's all there is to it."

"And that's enough," said Margy, who had been grasping Hunterton's hand. "I'm feeling cold all over now."

"I'm not going up to bed and pass that armor," Hilda Duffield said, firmly.

"You think that explains the touch on Miss Hunterton's arm?" I asked, smiling.

"She was just around the corner from that suit of armor when she was seized," Willowby said, turning his eyes away from Ann, who had not moved during the entire recital.

"Stuff and nonsense!" sniffed Prudence, getting up. "I wasn't seized; somebody — or something — just placed a hand on my arm, that's all. That's enough, I grant you that. I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm going up. I'm tired, and I don't want to hear any more of Mr. Willowby's horrid tales. I've lived here for twenty years, without thinking as much about 'em all as he has in an hour. Good-night."

A little later on we all went up. There was simply nothing else to do. Attempts at bridge had been failures. After Willowby finished his story we sat and stared into the fire, listening to the wild beating of the rain on the windows, and shivering slightly when we heard the mournful wail of a boat horn. We all wanted to go to bed, but no one wanted to start.

But finally Hunterton led us up the broad stairs, candle in hand, and we all had a close look at the black, forbidding suit of armor which stood solidly on a pedestal at the top of the stairs. A menacing, warlike article it was, very wide and short, and we felt a thrill of wonder and uneasiness as we looked at it. We didn't stay long, for the girls were frankly scared by it, and I must confess that we men felt better when we had left it behind us. The only one who seemed truly interested in it was Willowby. As for Pensive Ann, she passed it by, and went into her room without so much as looking at it.

I HAD a small room to myself, and was soon in bed. I had hoped for sleep, but none came. The ceaseless beat of wind and rain and the creaking of shutters and a loose door below kept me awake. Then, quite suddenly, I sat up in bed with a gasp.

It wasn't that anything had happened, but that I had remembered something. I was to make a very important call to Boston, and had forgotten to do so. A business deal hinged on it, and I must make the call. The events of the evening had completely brushed it from my mind, and now I wondered if it were not too late. No, after thinking a mo-

ment, I was sure that it was not. It was about 10.30, and Pemberton always remained up until a very late hour. I knew where the telephone was, and I must go down and make the call.

At that thought, I paused and sat down slowly on the edge of the bed. I will never make the statement that I am a brave man, and I was probably less brave tonight than ever before. Willowby's cursed stories had put me into a frame of mind that was far from comfortable. I knew that I must go down those wide stairs, first passing that suggestive iron figure at the head of the steps, and with only the light that a candle gives. At the same time I cursed Willowby and his stories and my own habit of forgetting, but a moment later, with candle in hand, I was out in the hall, silently traversing the corridor.

I never so much as looked at the armor of the Grappling Knight, but turned my head and looked over the banisters. Without making a sound I went to the telephone, softly called the number, and then had to wait for a few minutes—long, scary, uneasy minutes—while my call was put through. But finally I got Pemberton on the wire, and began to talk to him. Abruptly I ceased to talk to my partner.

"Hello! What's the matter?" Pemberton called over the wire.

"Oh—nothing!" I answered, as soon as I had caught my breath. "But we haven't any lights up here, and my candle just went out. A little draft, I guess."

But I hadn't felt any draft.

It was certainly dark after that. I finished the conversation and hung up the receiver, peering into the darkness. The last red gleam had left the fireplace. Not a light showed upstairs, and I didn't know where to look for matches. In short, I must grope my way up the stairs, down the hall, and into my bedroom in the inky darkness. I felt like saying a blessing for Melancholy House, tightened the cord on my bathrobe—which didn't tighten my uneasy heart any—and felt my way to the stairs.

My fingers found the stair rail, and the next instant the unlighted candle fell with a crash to the floor. A hand closed over my wrist with sudden force, and an arm circled my body at the same time. The weird story of the Grappling Ghost shot through my mind in an instant. For a space of time that seemed endless I stood while the arm tightened, then, in a frenzy I began to struggle, simply switching my body in an effort to free myself of the arms. In the midst of the struggle something cut into my finger, on the under side, but the impression was fleeting, for my mind was occupied only with the desire to break away and run.

I cried out, and aroused the household. At my cry the grappler suddenly vanished from my side, and when Prudence and Hunterton reached the landing, each with a candle in hand, I was alone, sitting on the bottom step, panting for breath and dripping with cold perspiration. They rushed down and poured out questions.

Hilda, Garry, Mary, and last of all Ann, came running down the stairs and gathered around me. I told them what had happened. Stark horror gathered over them all.

"I'm going to call the police," announced Hunterton, moving toward the telephone.

"There is no use in doing that," Prudence advised. "No policeman, especially the kind we have in Rockton, would come up here tonight, in a storm like this."

But Hunterton picked up the telephone. "Just the same, I'm going to call them," he said. But after a moment, he put down the telephone.

"Didn't you just use this 'phone?" he asked me.

I told him that I had.

"Well, it's dead now," replied Hunterton, grimly.

"Where," said Hilda, suddenly, her voice the least bit squeaky, "is Mr. Willowby? And where is Margy?"

"Here I am," Margy cried, from the upper landing. "But I don't know where Mr. Willowby is. I just knocked at his door, and receiving no answer, took the liberty of opening the door and looking in. He hasn't even been to bed, because his bed is undisturbed."

Charlie Hunterton frowned darkly, looking from one to the other of us. "I wonder if Willowby is playing any foolish jokes? If he is, I feel that I won't be able to forgive him. I like a joke myself, but——"

A tiny flame of light came fluttering down from the landing above. Margy had dropped her candle, and it flashed by me, to lie sputtering on the carpet. A moment later and Margy was running down the stairs, to throw herself into Hunterton's arms, out of breath, gasping with terror.

"My God!" she panted. "It's gone!"

"Margy!" Hunterton cried. "What's gone?"

"The suit of armor!" She slumped into his arms in a dead faint.

For an instant we stood spellbound; then Garry, coolest of us all, leaped up the stairs, followed by Hunterton, who passed the inert form of Margy to the Duffield girls. Their shadows danced on the wall, then stopped, and we could see the niche where the armor had stood.

The niche was empty.

Prudence broke the silence which followed our gasps. "Why, my heavens! That thing has stood there for a hundred and fifty years. Who moved it?"

Hunterton and Garry walked slowly down the stairs, declining to search the upper floor, and we looked blankly at each other. Alone in that evil house, with the storm outside, telephone communication cut off, and that terrifying suit of armor roaming around the house, silently grappling for victims! An amusing company we must surely have looked, as we stood around in bathrobes and slippers, but nobody thought of the humorous part, just then.

"I'm past thinking that Willowby is playing a joke, now," said Hunterton. "Only an idiot would do a thing like that. There is only one thing for us to do." He moved to the fireplace, piled logs and applied paper. With his candle he lighted it, and a welcome flare of light followed. "We'll simply have to sit around here until morning. In the daylight we can run down the ghost and find Willowby, but I'm sure you all feel as I do, that no one wants to go prowling around at this time of night."

"But what if something terrible has happened to Mr. Willowby?" suggested Prudence, the practical.

"That's true," Garry said. "We've got to make a search for him." But I noted that there was no eagerness in Garry's tone when he said it.

"I'll at least call him," Hunterton offered. "Willowby! I say, Willowby!"

Willowby's name went echoing down the halls and through the house, but nothing like an answer came back.

Margy had regained consciousness by this time, and she was sitting on the sofa with Hilda and Mary. Prudence stood near the fireplace, and I sat in a big chair, close beside Ann, who occupied a settle. Garry and Hunterton looked uncertainly at each other, and then Garry took up one of the candles.

"Let's go, Charlie," he said quietly.

I felt that I should offer to go along, although I didn't want to go. But Hunterton told me to stay with the ladies, and he and Garry disappeared into the dining-room, leaving us beside the fire.

WHILE we sat there in gloomy silence, they searched the downstairs of the house. It seemed like hours, but in reality it took only a few minutes. It was with relief that we saw them come back through the curtains that screened off the dining-room.

"Not a thing," Garry replied to our unspoken question. "Now, I suppose we ought to look upstairs."

"I suppose so." Hunterton spoke as reluctantly as Garry.

We all of us had our backs to the stairs. And we all heard a whistling noise, which sprang up from our own company. Hilda Duffield had made it. Looking at her we saw that her lips were open, her eyes wide and staring, her bosom heaving rapidly. A light of sudden madness was in her gray eyes.

"Good Lord!" came through her set teeth. "Look—on the stairs!"

With a perfectly timed motion we swung toward the stairs.

Half-way down, one gauntleted hand clutching the railing, stood the Grappling Ghost.

At least it was that horrible suit of armor. Broad of shoulder, greaved, buckled and helmeted, the figure stood there for a second, looking down at us. Then it began to move forward, setting each mailed foot on the steps with care and deliberation. We could not see behind the lowered visor, yet we felt that keen eyes were watching us. As the awful figure, only half seen in the light of the candles and the fire, descended, one mailed foot tore a splinter from the step, and we heard the wood rip. While we waited in painful silence, the Grappling Ghost reached the bottom of the stairs and faced us, arms apart, head bent forward.

I remember perfectly how we were placed. The three girls on the sofa seemed frozen to it. Prudence stood stiffly beside the fire, like a soldier about to be shot, awaiting the explosion of the guns. I sat riveted to my chair, and Ann's hand had closed over mine, her grip growing tighter each moment. On the other side of the table Garry and Hunterton stood steadily, our only fighters worth the name, and rather shaky, at that.

But it was Garry who broke the tense silence. He stepped to the fireplace, reached down and got a poker, never taking his eyes from the armored figure. He had placed his candle on the table.

"You take this, Hunterton." Garry placed the poker in Hunterton's cold hand and hitched his own bathrobe a bit more tightly at the waist. "Let's go for this ghost, Charlie."

Garry, the athlete, the football player, looked suddenly magnificent to us. Hunterton, without moving his head, spoke to him.

"What are you going to do?"

Garry laughed boyishly, looking with shining eyes at the grim figure that faced them. I thought we were all going a little mad.

"Well," Garry said, "I heard that this fellow was a first-class wrestler. I've done a little of it myself. And up to the present time, if the story runs true, he's only had a chance to wrestle with Saracens and foreigners in general. I'm spoiling to see what he can do with an American. Don't butt in unless he tries to pull a fast one, Hunterton."

And with that, suddenly crouching a bit, but moving steadily forward, Garry Bainbridge made for the Grappling Ghost. We all saw the ghost move arms that clanked softly, move one foot a trifle back with care, and extend one arm a bit farther than the

other. Warily Garry moved about him, seeking an opening, while we gazed spellbound upon one of the most unbelievable sights in the world.

With lightning suddenness Garry rushed in, seizing the extended arm of the ghost and jerking it toward him. The other arm he pushed back, causing the armored figure to swing sideways. But the grappler was prepared, and with speed swung one leg back of Garry's, hooking the young man just above the knee. Down on his back went Garry, his feet slipping out from under him, and sliding with a rush upon the carpet. Hunterton started forward, his poker upraised.

The Grappling Ghost raised its ugly helmet, and a flash of hidden fire seemed to leap from the bars of the visor, the same bars through which the false knight had thrust the dagger which had ended the career of the original grappling knight. It proved his undoing. Garry seized one greaved leg, pushing it backward with all his strength, at the same time thrusting the leg upward. The armored figure fell to the floor with a crash which shook the room, and Garry rolled over, gained his feet, and made a flying leap onto the prostrate form. With a savage motion he twisted off the helmet and flung it to one side.

"Willowby, of course," gasped Garry, sitting on the broad shoulders.

WILLOWBY shook Garry off, rising slowly to his feet; and standing thus, he faced us all with a cool smile. The girls relaxed and grew cold; Hunterton frowned in deep displeasure; Prudence smiled sourly.

"A very, very funny trick, Willowby," said Hunterton, a sneer on his face. "Quite appropriate for the time and place. A clever way to keep us amused until morning."

"That's what I thought," said Willowby, breathing heavily, and looking at Garry, who was standing in an attitude of offense beside him, ready to spring at the least sign of movement on Willowby's part. "I was merely illustrating one of my stories. I thought you'd like it better if it was illustrated. A thousand pardons for upset nerves!"

He attempted a grin of easy assurance, but it was a failure. I noted that his eyes were not still, that he was continually glancing about the room. He endeavored to do so in a manner calculated to escape our notice, but if such was his idea, it was a failure. Our senses were sharpened by the proceedings of the night, and we all noticed it. He twisted his head slightly to one side, glancing up the stairs, and then faced us again, hesitating.

The pause was awkward. We all felt a contempt for him, but did not know just what to say. The trick, if such it had been, was in decided bad taste. The thought, calmly dwelt upon, was absurd; Willowby was not insane, and it was scarcely to be supposed that a man with his intelligence would waste his time in a game so cheap and useless. It was with a start that another idea came to me.

I got up with some nervous trembling and made my way to the "ghost." Willowby watched my approach with suspicion, and drew off slightly as I approached him. I placed one hand on his mailed sleeve and he withdrew the arm with unnecessary haste.

"Would—would you mind taking off that armor?" I asked.

He frowned savagely, glancing hurriedly toward the hall, which was back of me.

"What for?" he demanded, his eyes narrowing.

"I wish to find out something," I answered, again reaching for the right arm.

He hurriedly drew to one side, glancing toward the company. Hunterton came forward.

"I don't know what Mr. Wallace wants," said our host. "But in view of the scare you gave us, Willowby, I think you should do that little thing for us."

"He'll do it for us!" Garry had spoken, quietly, but with an unmistakable ring in his voice. He walked to Willowby and looked him squarely in the eyes. "I'll give you a minute in which to decide whether you're going to shed those iron duds, Willowby!"

THERE was a period of chilly silence while Willowby and Garry eyed each other balefully, but after what seemed an age Willowby sullenly began to undo the straps that held the shoulder-plates in place. The upper sheets came off, and then Willowby made a frantic effort to reach the straps that crossed the back of his armor. He gave it up finally, and then seemed to shrink perceptibly as a certain light dawned in Garry's eyes.

"By George!" breathed Garry. "He can't undo them! And if he can't reach the straps to open them, he couldn't reach the straps to do them up. Willowby, who dressed you in that suit of armor?"

That was more than I had figured out. The others stood spellbound, held by another feeling, the return of uncertainty. Willowby shifted his eyes ever so slightly and watched the hall door, though for only a moment. He opened his mouth to reply, and then realized the futility of telling a lie that was obvious to all. Before he could say anything, I began, with fingers that trembled, to open the snaps on his arm-plates.

"I want to help you in your latest theory," I said, forcing open the last buckle, and running my hand along his arm. "Ah! This is not the man who attacked me down here by the stairs!"

"How do you know?" snapped Hunterton.

"In my struggle," I said, taking the armor off Willowby's other arm, "I happened to run one hand up his arm, and I felt that the man who grasped me wore arm-bands, the kind that hold up the sleeves, you know." I passed my hand up Willowby's left arm and then shook my head. "Mr. Willowby has no such article of wearing-apparel on his person. And then, too, something scratched my hand; as you can see, it is bleeding slightly. Mr. Willowby wears no rings. Gentlemen—and ladies—it is absolutely apparent that there is someone else at large in this house besides Mr. Willowby!"

A gasp went up from the others, and it was then that I first saw the warning gleam in Willowby's eyes. He had been looking over my shoulder and in the direction of the hall door, as he had been for the past few minutes. I turned before the others did and I saw it. Something black descended over the candles, which had been massed on the center table, and they went out abruptly. The red glow of the fire only intensified the gloom.

Several things happened then. I was bowled over in Willowby's frantic rush and I heard a medley of screams from the ladies. Hunterton uttered a single word, basically profane, and then I think I heard him run. Garry, as I afterward learned, threw himself in the general direction of Willowby, and the sounds of a fierce struggle ensued.

Afterward it was all clear, but at the time it was chaos. I heard Hunterton, who knew the lay of the house, rushing accurately through the hall door, to snatch up a forgotten flashlight that was on the hall table. Faintly, from my position on the floor, jammed against an armchair,

I saw a gleam of strong light. I heard the crash of breaking glass, and then nothing was audible except the violent thrashing around on the floor.

Finally, after what seemed an age, Hunterton returned and lighted the candles. A curtain had been tossed over them from the hall, and had been thrown so accurately as to put them out all at once. We looked to the foot of the stairs, to find Garry grimly seated on the prostrate form of Willowby, who was neatly trussed up in the bonds of Garry's bathrobe cord. Hunterton walked sternly over to Willowby, who glared up at him.

"He got away," said Hunterton, speaking through fast-clenched teeth, "but I saw who it was. Willowby, what was young Roger Canfield doing here?"

"Roger Canfield!" Prudence cried, winding up her hair, which I suspect one of the girls had pulled down in the excitement.

"Yes, Roger Canfield." Hunterton jerked Willowby erect.

"You had better tell," Prudence said, grimly. "For I can guess what it was all about, now."

"He'll tell," Garry promised, thrusting his face near Willowby's. "Mr. Willowby, if you know what's good for you, you'll talk!"

Willowby realized that the game was up, and he talked. He was pretty shamefaced about it, too.

"How many times has Roger Canfield been here to coax you into selling his father's place back to him?" he asked Prudence.

"Three times," said the lady. "And I've told him flatly that I won't sell under any circumstances. He mentioned that the place had an evil reputation and that it was an unhealthful house for anyone. I asked him why he wanted to buy it so badly, and he said that it had a sentimental attraction for him. I knew that wasn't his reason, of course, but no matter what it was, I wouldn't sell it to him. I know as well as he does that this region is growing up fast and that the property will be worth a lot of money in a few years."

"That is the whole story," nodded Willowby, head averted. "He works with Trumit and Betts, and he was in on a tip that a large price was to be offered for the house and property, with the view of turning it into a summer place. I guess you can see the same promise in the land as he can. Well, I—I'm a bit indebted to Canfield; got into a stock scrape with him, and didn't know how I was going to get out of it. A few days ago we were speaking about the place, and he told me that you wouldn't sell it under any circumstances. Spoke of the various stories connected with the place, and then the same idea took possession. To make a long story short, he hired me to help him scare you folks so that you wouldn't care to stay here. We arranged for this little game tonight, and the storm helped us wonderfully.

"But he didn't carry out his end of the plot. He dressed me in this iron suit and we were to scare you as best we could under the circumstances. He was surprized downstairs by Mr. Wallace and grappled with him, which was all right so far as it went; it served to bring you all together. But his part was to snuff out those candles when I was walking down the stairs, and I was to disappear before you got them lighted again. We didn't have a very connected plan, but it was to work itself out as things went along.

"I can explain that cold hand business, Miss Hunterton. Roger has a key, and he was in the house on the night you spoke of. He was caught in the hall by you, and it came to him that it would be a good plan to scare you by touching you, and he

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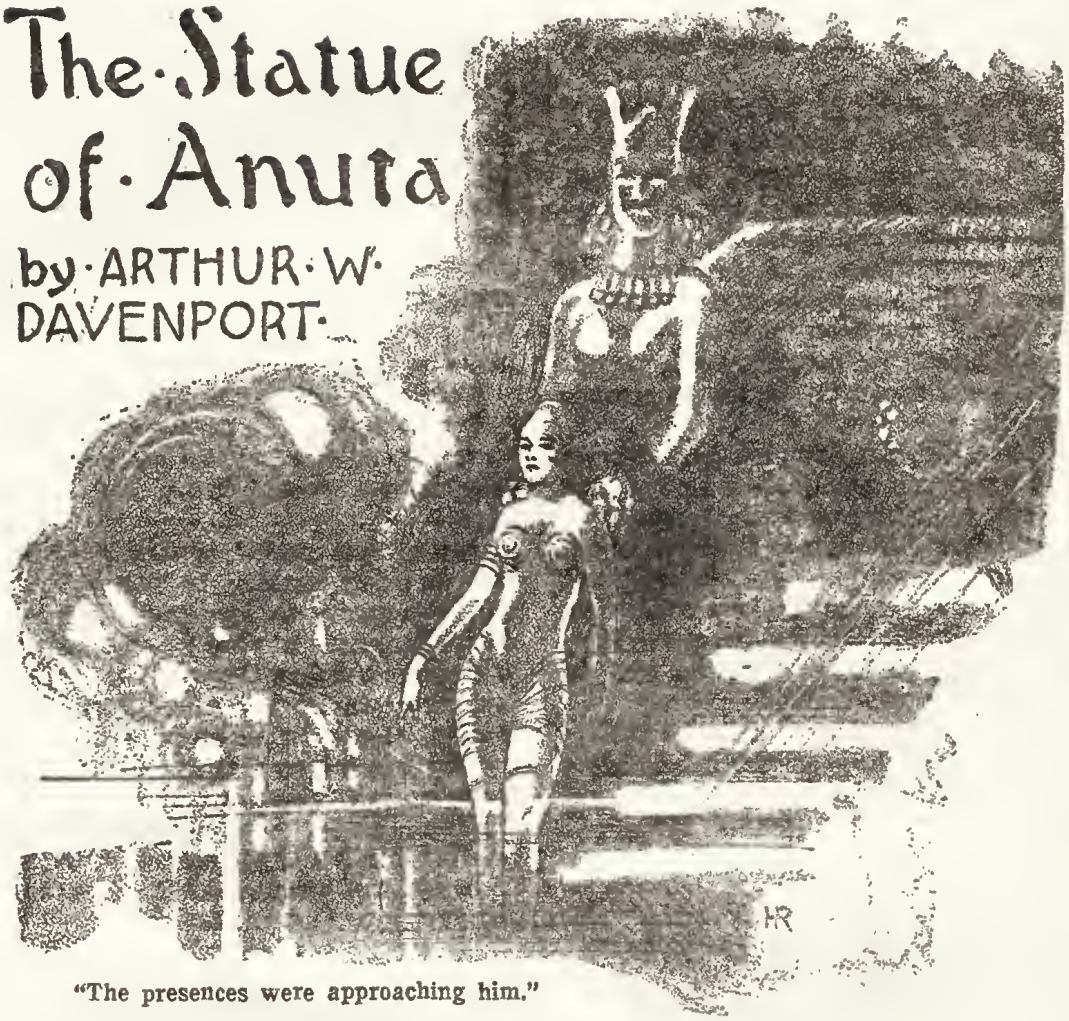
The Statue of Anuta

by ARTHUR W. DAVENPORT



"The presences were approaching him."

THE devil and all his angels fly away with etiquette! I dared not even consult my watch to gain the vain solace of knowing just how long it was until dawn. But Parker stood his punishment without fidgeting, listened with grave courtesy and deferential interest while Ismail Pasha rambled on in sonorous periods that got exactly nowhere. Never a word was forthcoming regarding the subject which was to have been discussed at this audience granted us by the commander of the fortress of El Azhár and governor of the richest *pachalik* in Turkish Kurdistan.

The weather . . . raids by those thieving Kurds . . . the depredations of the wandering Bakhtiari in a province to the south. . . .

Good Lord, but how I would have enjoyed the luxury of a yawn a mile wide and forty fathoms deep!

Parker sucked at the stem of a *narghileh,* nodded in acquiescence to Ismail Pasha's remarks, at times dropping rumbling platitudes of his own.

I was now way past yawning. My eyes had stared sightlessly for an interminable period and then, with a start which I hoped was not too perceptible, I woke and wondered whether the pasha had noted my hideous breach of etiquette. Even a

representative as able as Parker could scarcely undo the damage such a slip would cause.

Well, maybe he hadn't noticed it. But I'd have to buck up with a jerk!

Those thieving Kurds again held the floor. Not a word about that oil concession. And then——

A long-drawn and dolorous wail wrenched me to acute consciousness—a horrid, agonized, pulsating moan, inarticulate, yet seeming to enunciate half-formed words in some strange tongue.

Ismail Pasha dropped the stem of his narghileh and leaped to his feet. Again that hideous wail, bestial, yet terrifyingly human and, worst of all, strangely feminine. Ismail sank back among his cushions. His white features twitched; his fingers convulsively clutched and released the jeweled grip of his dress sword.

The pasha muttered as one dazed by a severe clubbing on the head. And then, shouting in a voice that would carry across a battlefield, "Masaoud! Isa! Yussuf!" he struck his hands thrice together and, again leaping to his feet, paced to and fro as he awaited the arrival of the retainers he had summoned.

I was now painfully wide awake. That awful scream, the pasha's terror, the horror bitten into his lean, predatory features and stamped into his half-slanted, glittering eyes. . . .

The retainers, though visibly shaken, bowed ceremoniously as they entered the master's presence.

"Harkening and obedience, *effendi!*"

"Saoud, horse and arms! Isa, pick up whatever valuables you can in a hurry! Yussuf, set fire to the house and overtake me if you can!"

The man was mad, but magnificent in his madness. For an instant I forgot that fearful moan in the hallway, so startled was I by the pasha's outrageous commands.

And Parker stood by, calm and unperturbed, as if it were quite the thing to hear that the commander of the fortress of El Azhár designed to desert his post, burn his house, and ride into the night with as much of his retinue as could overtake him!

Then, to Parker and me, as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened, "Death has haunted me in this house until I prefer to meet him as a man, on the highroads of Allah. You will pardon me, Parker Effendi, but urgent affairs call me."

He bowed and would have left us.

Parker seized him by the sleeve.

"Stay, *effendi.* I am your friend from times past. Trust me. Perhaps——"

Again that awful scream. Down the corridor leading to the hall of audience came an icy gust of wind. A rustling and hissing as of serpents and silks and dead leaves shivered in our ears; and then a monstrous, misshapen, vague figure oozed and wove its way toward us from the depths of the gloomy corridor.

Even Parker was unnerved, and reached for his Colt .45. I shook in my boots and wondered if the chattering of my teeth were audible.

"*There is neither might nor majesty save in Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!*" thundered Ismail. "Gold, glory, silver, each avails not!"

Then, tossing aside his turban, drawing and dashing to the floor his frostily glittering sword, Ismail strode forward, bareheaded and empty-handed, to meet his doom. But as the pasha advanced, firmly as though on parade, the apparition thinned, became nebulous, blended with the darkness of its background, and vanished as Ismail's long, powerful hands sought to engage it.

I fancied that I heard a metallic tinkle, and half sensed rather than saw a blurred, luminous whiteness vanish with, but slightly after, the monstrosity in the corridor. And then Ismail Pasha turned, his fingers still clutching and groping. Shivering violently, he picked his way across the

marble-tiled floor of the hall of audience and sank to his dais.

Not for a dozen concessions would I have duplicated the mad valor of that superstitious Turk.

The clicking of my own teeth was now passably inaudible.

FORMALITY and Oriental etiquette had been fairly well scattered by the apparition; so that when Isa led a saddled and fully accoutered Kochlani stallion into the very audience hall, Parker waved him aside. And then to Yussuf, who had returned, presumably to seek further details regarding the arson he had been ordered to commit, "Never mind the fire tonight. The master has changed his mind."

It was scarcely necessary for the pasha to nod in confirmation, for Parker's assumption of command, as well as his sang-froid, had given him entire mastery of the situation. Yet, though still unstrung and trembling violently, Ismail had regained his sanity, and composure was rapidly returning.

"You are right, Parker Effendi. We will stay and fight. You with your knowledge of *Feringhi* magic will drive out this *ghulah* that howls in the halls of my house at night, and seeks to strangle me as I sleep, and mutters fearful things in my ears."

"Tell me all about this *ghulah*," suggested Parker. "It is quite possible that I might devise ways and means of driving it out."

"Who am I to know," despaired the pasha, "other than that it howls as you have heard, particularly on nights when the moon is full? I feel, rather than understand, that it urges me to follow it to the underground haunts of Shaitan the damned. And I have felt its cold fingers at my throat, seeking to strangle me."

"Who else has heard it? And seen it?"

"All I have questioned have heard it. And many have seen it. The first few I had flogged and put in irons for the uproar they created. But all to no purpose. And then I saw it myself." The pasha shuddered. "But you with your *Feringhi* magic——"

Here was a pretty situation! We'd started out on the trail of mineral rights, and now, after infinite delay, Parker had to assume the rôle of magician to humor a superstitious Turk before getting down to facts.

Superstitious Turk? Well, my own teeth just a few moments ago had given a nice imitation of an air-hammer in action.

"Quite so, *effendi*," assured Parker. "It may be that I can help you. Tonight I shall study the matter, and tomorrow I'll look about, also question the members of your household. But tell me, how did you know it would appear tonight?"

The pasha's eyebrows lifted in Saracenic arches.

"How did you know I expected it tonight?" he countered.

"Because you kept us here far into the night, thinking that unless I myself saw it, I would not believe."

"Quite so, Parker Effendi," agreed the pasha. "This is a night of the full moon. So I wanted to see whether it would appear to you. Otherwise, after the fashion of your people, you would not believe and help me."

And with these words the pasha dismissed us, consigning us to the care of Yussuf, who, though as much shaken as his master, was pleased to escort us to our quarters rather than set fire to this haunted palace and ride into the night in pursuit of the pasha.

"PARKER, what the devil do you make of it?" I queried. "Sounds a bit thick, what? Or were we all dreaming?"

"Far from it. There was something in that corridor."

We were approaching the spot where we had first observed the apparition.

"Look!"

Parker stooped, picked up and handed me a heavy bracelet of ancient workmanship, red gold curiously chased and engraved.

"A trinket of this kind couldn't lie here very long without being picked up. It must have been dropped sometime during the latter part of the night. And, for the time at least, I choose to fancy that it was dropped by the apparition."

"Most curious," I commented. "Odd workmanship. Looks Assyrian."

I indicated the embossed figures, which reminded me very much of those engraved on cylinder seals found by archeologists in the mound of Koyunjik, near Mosul. "Though I don't recognize the gods, or whatever they may be."

"Well, I do," declared Parker. "The whole layout engraved on this bracelet depicts the worship of Anuta, the consort of Anu, lord of darkness and the underworld. And, as you may have noted, the walls of the audience hall as well as other parts of the palace and fortress are in the main composed of brick and masonry taken from Assyrian ruins. Do you begin to see a possible connection?"

I couldn't, and I admitted that following the flights of Parker's facile fancy was beyond me. And now that the excitement had subsided, I could once more enjoy the luxury of a forty-fathom yawn.

Yussuf stood by to usher us into our apartment.

"Go on in, Holborn. I'll be with you in a second."

When Parker returned, some fancy or other impelled me to want to take another look at the Assyrian bracelet.

"Too bad," replied Parker. "Also too late. I returned it to the place where I found it."

"The devil you did. Why?"

"Simply because the wearer of that bracelet sometime tonight passed by the spot where the apparition scared the daylight out of us. And she'll return for it. Then we'll know something more—though perhaps nothing significant."

"Why not ask the pasha directly? We're working in his interest, and he'd get the truth for you."

"All wrong, Holborn. Logical, but all wet. For the less the pasha knows about logic, the more credit I'll get for the magic. Finally, I'm not sure enough to commit myself. Now go to sleep while I think the matter over."

If, earlier in the evening, Ismail Pasha had only made a similar remark!

I SLEPT until noon, and would have slept longer, but Parker's prowlings about were a bit too much for me. Inconsiderately enough, he was crawling about on his hands and knees, pausing from time to time to tap the marble tiles of the floor with a small hammer.

"Now what?"

"Oh, are you awake? I rather feared I'd disturb you."

"You did!"

Parker continued his messing around, finally leaving the floor and devoting his attention to the wall of our room, prying and poking into the crevices between the great stone blocks with a hunting-knife.

After an interminable period of tinkering, Parker led the way out to the grounds surrounding the palace, where, after selecting a comfortable spot in the shade of a plane tree, he spread a small rug, parked himself, and, with the aid of a pack of cigarettes, proceeded to smoke his way into the afternoon. His preoccupation forbade any questioning as to the curious doings of the previous night, or his investigations that morning; so that my only hope was to help myself to his cigarettes and try to mimic placidity.

From all appearances, he had gathered considerable food for thought. And while he had not committed him-

self, he had dropped remarks that suggested that his questioning of the members of Ismail Pasha's household had not been entirely fruitless.

An old man approached, bowed low, and announced, "The master will see you, *effendi.*"

"We will be with him in a moment, Talaat. And, by the way, have you any further news for me?"

"Little enough, *effendi.* Nothing whatever, in fact, unless . . . but you will pardon me for mentioning such trifles——"

"I might even thank you very much, Talaat. Proceed."

"Such trifles," resumed Talaat, "as the Gurjestani slave girl's arrival, three or four months ago. She was the gift of Zaghloul Bey. And I heard from one of the eunuchs that she was very much grieved at the loss of a bracelet Zaghloul Bey had given her——"

"Did she find it?"

"Yes. And in a most unusual place. In the corridor leading to the hall of audience."

I began to see that Parker had a friend at court, though what was so unusual . . . But as might be expected, Parker anticipated my thought.

"What was so unusual about that, Talaat?" queried Parker.

"Really nothing, *effendi,* unless it be the fact that the girl declares that someone must have stolen it from her and then dropped it in that corridor; for she has not for many days been in that part of the palace."

"Very good, Talaat. By the way, has she ever seen the *ghulah* which is causing such an uproar?"

"No. Though many of us have been spared seeing it. But she has not even heard it howling——"

"Ah!"

And I knew that Parker was hot on the trail.

"Very good, Talaat," he repeated.

The old man bowed again, and thanked Parker for something which clinked surprizingly like coin as it changed hands.

"Not so bad, Holborn, not even half bad! Wise old egg, that Talaat. By the way, did you notice last night that the walls of the audience hall were of sculptured stone much like those of our quarters? And that the tiles of the floor were of ancient marble, worn glassy smooth? And that just at right angles to the approach to the pasha's dais there is a distinct depression worn in the tiles, as if by countless feet walking in a fixed, narrow path for countless years?"

"Lord, no! About the forty-fourth time the thieving Kurds were paraded, I got too dopy to wonder if the pasha would ever get down to earth —nearly passed out, though if I'd been expecting the apparition that Ismail expected, I'd doubtless have been alert enough. On the level now, Parker, did we really see the thing, and hear it howl, or was it something we smoked after I was stuffed so full of *pilau* and *kous-kous* and that junk the Greeks call *loukoumia* that my eyes might have seen almost anything whether it was there or not?"

"You saw and heard, just as I did and Ismail Pasha did. Seriously speaking, this place is haunted."

THE sentry at the door of the audience hall presented arms. An orderly announced us, then straightway returned to usher us into the presence of the pasha.

Parker was as deft at dispensing with formalities as he was ordinarily patient in conforming with them; so that the pasha, even before he could call for coffee, found himself being interrogated.

"I have heard," began Parker, getting to the point, "that this *pachalik* is a post greatly to be desired?"

"Even so. When it pleased the Servant of the Magnificent to assign me to this province, I was in debt for the very boots I wore. And now——"

Ismail's sweep of the arm encompassed the hall of audience and its magnificent vesture of silver censers, silken hangings, resplendent eunuchs with ivory-handled fans, and glittering captains of the guard.

"And now—but see for yourself. Yet withal I have governed justly and kindly, and without oppression. Never have I taken more than half the produce of the land, except when crops were exceptionally poor. But now," he despaired, "it has pleased Allah the All-wise and All-knowing that I be driven from my house by the servants of Shaitan the damned."

"And now," resumed Parker, "who is this Zaghloul Bey?"

The pasha's keen eyes narrowed to oblique slits. He stroked his beard for a moment, then replied, "An enterprising and brilliant young man. But the Servant of the Magnificent saw fit to appoint me to this *pachalik* instead of him. In fact——"

"But tell me again," interrupted Parker, "what would have happened had you followed your impulse last night and deserted your post?"

The pasha's gesture and grimace were expressive.

"I rather thought so," agreed Parker. "Therefore it is well that we drive out the *ghulah* that howls during the full moon and seeks your throat as you sleep." Then, after a moment's reflection: "Let one of your artizans fashion me a heavy mallet of copper, having engraved on it the characters I have written on this slip of paper. This I must have before sunset."

The slip of paper was inscribed with what seemed to me to be a curious and meaningless jumble of mathematical symbols and Greek characters arranged in a diamond-shaped pattern.

"And tonight," concluded Parker, "let every one of your household, and you also, keep to his quarters while I match my wits against the *ghulah*. Publish this order, but do not post any sentries to enforce it, lest their presence disturb me more than the loiterers they would arrest."

"Did you know," remarked Parker that night, as he pocketed his flashlight and picked up the copper mallet the pasha's smith had fashioned, "that this castle was built by Toghrul Beg the Tartar about nine hundred years ago?"

"Interesting, but what of it?" I queried. "What has that to do with Ismail Pasha?"

"Well, perhaps nothing at all. But that, and other information I picked up as I turned the archives of the castle inside out, may work into the scheme very nicely. At least, so Zaghloul Bey seemed to think. But never mind that pistol! You may get buck fever and polish off some innocent bystander, which really would be quite unnecessary, even though Ismail wouldn't take offense at any such slight mishaps."

"But, hell's fire, man!" I protested.

"Take it along then, if you must. But the apparation didn't do Ismail any damage other than make his eyebrows curl."

"Well, how about that hammer you're packing?" I contended with what seemed to be a fair amount of justice.

"That," declared Parker, "is a psychological weapon, if you simply must check up and try to make me consistent."

Anything but consistent, I fancied, but since Parker never needlessly risked his own hide, I left my .45 in our quarters.

Silently we picked our way through the succession of corridors leading to the hall of audience, where we were to take our posts and waylay the apparition. Moonlight filtering through the high, barred windows toned the barbaric splendor of the great room to a soft magnificence of silken hangings and frostily glittering trappings, a suave, unreal beauty of wondrous

fascination. What a place to await the amorphous horror that threatened to drive Ismail Pasha from the perennial looting of a rich province!

The great dais of state, with its cushions and luxurious spread of canopy, was the most likely place of concealment. Inconsistently enough, I felt that even in the presence of the supernatural one does best to lie in ambush. Very curious how, in spite of logic and reason, we picture even the forces from across the border as subject to our own human limitations!

"Just a second there," whispered Parker. "Before you find a place to sleep, give me a lift, you with your strong back. Steady a second——"

And Parker, balancing himself on my shoulders, was disengaging the priceless silken Kashan rug from the silver rings from which it hung on the well to the left of the pasha's dais.

"Now what?"

"I'm just following my hunch. To get at the source of the ailment, we've got to trail the apparition to its general headquarters."

The lustrous rug slid softly to the tiled floor. Parker gathered its rich folds, tossed it aside, and began prying and picking at that portion of the wall which it had concealed, apparently seeking with a slim-bladed knife to gouge the mortar from between the slabs of masonry.

A faint click.

"Ah! . . . just as I suspected. . . ."

Parker's antics aroused my curiosity even to the exclusion of ghost or *ghulah*. In fact, at odd moments it had seemed the uttermost height of absurdity, all this mummery of ghost-breaking, a game to humor a neurotic pasha . . . but, damn it, my teeth *had* chattered!

But before I could question Parker——

That same awful, pulsating wail moaned from the depths of one of the corridors leading to the hall of audience. Throbbing, pulsing, howling like a lost soul that has wandered to the very edge of all space. . . .

Good God! I could almost hear the soft, poisonous rustle of that vague, monstrous form.

"Steady!" cautioned Parker. "Stand fast. It's coming this way."

As if I had any intention of going to meet it!

It was coming this way—was here—was entering the hall of audience, sifting and oozing its way out of the tenebrous depths of the outer corridors and into the pale moonlight that marched across the tiled floor in long, shimmering columns.

It? There were *two* of them!

One monstrous, misshapen, amorphous, a hideous, misty mockery of a feminine face and figure; the other lovely, graciously curved, but walking with the hesitant pace of a resurrected corpse that is not yet quite accustomed to the regained use of its limbs. And the two in some strange way seemed blended into one, complementary horrors, each a part of, though apart from, the other.

I heard Parker catch his breath. Here indeed was more than he had reckoned on.

The presences were approaching us.

The malignant, formless features of the greater shape worked hideously. The tenuous hands settled on the shoulders of the smaller form as if in guidance. Straight toward us.

The windows were too high from the floor. Nor could I sink through the tiles to escape. So I stood fast.

Why hadn't Ismail burned the house after all? What was a *pachalik* more or less?

And then they turned to the left; their left . . . if such creatures have either right or left. . . .

Parker clutched my arm.

"By the Lord, I was right! Look!" he exulted. "It's following that trail worn into the tiles!"

Somehow my fear left me. They were bound somewhere other than our corner in the shadow of the dais.

Then that awful wail again, this time as a chant in peculiar cadence. A processional chant of demons on their way to some black sabbath. . . .

The greater horror merged into the massive masonry of the wall, at the very panel from which Parker had removed the Kashan rug. The slim figure, diabolically lovely in its graceful semi-nudity, paused, wailed in acute anguish, pressed against the panel. The gesture was expressive of anticipation of failure, as if she had failed often before, and despaired ever of succeeding.

But this time the panel yielded, opening into cavernous depths beyond.

"I was right!" repeated Parker. And before I knew what was in the wind, he was half dragging me across the moon-barred tiles of the hall of audience and toward the shuddering darkness beyond the secret doorway.

Flashes of his torch revealed steps, flight after flight, down to the very foundations of the palace. Monstrous images stared at us: solemn, bearded Assyrian gods and kings and heroes, winged monsters, processions of archers. . . .

And ever before us was the ghostly figure of that lovely girl; and ever in our ears her chanting, now more regular, following an outlandish, varying cadence that tore my nerves to shreds.

AT THE foot of the last flight we found ourselves in an adytum of such expanse that our torch could not pick its extremities save only when its beam fell on winged, human-headed monsters, colossal in size and foreboding in aspect . . . foreboding, but beneficent compared to the shadowy terror we had trailed. One of the apparitions had vanished, leaving the smaller, in that darkness but a vague glow of whiteness and a throbbing, unearthly chanting.

For a moment she stood still before a statue which loomed terrifically out of an area of darkness less intense than that obscuring the rest of the shrine; and then, slowly raising her arms above her head, she sank down upon her knees, finally touching her forehead and open palms to the marble floor.

The ray of Parker's torch touched for an instant those slim white arms. And in that instant I recognized the curious bracelet Parker had found in the corridor the night before. So . . . this was the girl presented to Ismail Pasha by his enemy, Zaghloul Bey!

"Quite right, Holborn. She seems to be in a trance. Hypnosis, or somnambulism. When she wakes up, she'll not have the faintest recollection of having performed these antics before that statue. No, don't try to awaken her. And this," continued Parker, pointing ahead of the girl with the slender beam of the torch, "is the root of the evil, this statue of Anuta."

As Parker revealed the form and features of the image, I recognized in stone the nebulous monstrosity that had accompanied the girl across the hall of audience.

"Now take the torch a moment," directed Parker. "Give me some light on that image."

Copper mallet in hand, he advanced toward the altar.

But at his first step, he halted. A whirring, vibrant sound seemed to pervade the shrine; and then, as I stared along the beam of the flashlight, I observed something like a faint cloud of dust coming up through a crack in the floor. It rose like a wisp of vapor, curling about, weaving through fantastic shapes as it mounted some six or seven feet, where it stopped, spread out, and began to assume definite outline, becoming dense, finally like a figure seen through a fog bank.

Finally it stood forth fully proportioned: an animated reproduction of the statue of Anuta, save only on a larger scale. Its face was contorted into an expression so hideous that

both heart and breath stood still for an instant, leaving me bereft of thought and motion alike.

It drifted imperceptibly toward us. Parker barred its advance, just for an instant; and then he took the aggressive, stepping forward to meet it.

"*There is neither might nor majesty save in Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!*" pronounced Parker in solemn, resonant Arabic. . . .

The figure seemed about to envelop him, strangle him in its somber, poisonous folds . . . and then, as if lashed back, it retreated, step by step, to the crack in the floor.

I saw it fading, fading into a vapor which sifted back through the floor from whence it had emerged.

All in the few instants of my mental and physical paralysis; and before I could say aye, yes, or no, Parker had leaped to the altar and with his copper mallet was belaboring the hideous stone effigy with ringing strokes that threatened to shake the foundations of the castle.

In the acute silence that followed, I realized that the girl lying on the floor behind us had ceased her strange chanting.

Parker was visibly shaken. Flashes of the torch revealed his face, drawn and quivering; and the copper hammer trembled in his grasp. It hadn't been quite the mummery he had expected!

"Give me a hand here, Holborn, and we'll get her out of this den . . . never mind, take my hammer."

And Parker shouldered the girl, then led the way up into the hall of audience.

SHORTLY after the hour of morning prayer, Parker sought Ismail Pasha to report the success of his *Feringhi* magic.

"Your house," explained Parker, "was built nine hundred years ago by Toghrul Beg the Tartar, on the foundations of a temple of the infidels who ruled this land countless years ago. Here, on the floor of what is now your hall of audience, you can see the trail worn by the footsteps of the unbelievers as they marched in procession to the subterranean, innermost shrine of Anuta."

The pasha stared at the trail leading to the heretofore secret panel which opened into the cavernous vaults beneath the palace.

"But what has that to do with the *ghulah?*" he queried.

"Much, as you will see," replied Parker. "Most of this palace was constructed of brick and masonry salvaged by the Tartar from the ruins whose foundations he used, just as they stood. And this evil spirit walked by night in your house, seeking to lead true believers into the shrine to bow before her image and renew a worship for years abandoned. All this we saw last night; a terrific presence such as you yourself saw the night before. We followed the *ghulah* to her den. But instead of bowing, we took the copper mallet and broke the image into many pieces."

Not a word of the Gurjestani slave girl, nor of her curious bracelet. I wondered why Parker kept this interesting phase to himself.

"From now on," he continued, "there will be no presence to howl by night and eluteh your throat and whisper in your ear: provided that you take the fragments of the image, grind them very fine, and scatter them to the winds. Furthermore, you must tear up those slabs of the floor which bear the footprints of the infidel, and replace them with undefiled stones."

"But what of those other images in the shrine?" queried Ismail Pasha. "And the numerous carvings on the walls of my house, all of which you say are the work of the infidel, and beloved of this evil spirit?"

"Remove them also," advised Parker. "And if you wish, I will have a friend of mine, a learned doctor, carry them back to *Feringhistan* where they will be imprisoned in a

house built for that purpose. Thus will you be freed of every vestige of the *ghulah* which sought your destruction. As for the copper mallet with which I shattered the unholy image, I shall leave that here as a symbol of victory."

The remainder of the morning was devoted to discussing the mission which had originally brought us to El Azhár. The pasha's terms were just and fair, thanks doubtless to Parker's magic of the preceding night, instead of being the extortionate and outrageous pieces of banditry usually inflicted by the Turk when he can dictate terms.

"And now, Parker Effendi," suggested Ismail Pasha as he read and signed the document his secretary had drawn up for us, "let me give you some personal gift as a token of my esteem and gratitude."

"Really, it was nothing," protested Parker. "I am happy to have served you."

"But I insist. Since you are a connoisseur of rugs, perhaps you would care for that Kashan which masked the secret panel," suggested the pasha.

"That is too magnificent," declared Parker. "Let it rather, since you insist, be some trifle——"

At that point I was strongly tempted to seize the copper hammer and bend it across Parker's head. The very idea of declining that precious Kashan silk rug!

"Some trifle," repeated Parker with studied carelessness, as of one who plays subtly with an idea.

"Such as——?" prompted the pasha.

"Well . . . the truth of the matter is that in questioning your servants, I couldn't help but notice a certain Gurjestani girl who wore a very thin veil and a very heavy bracelet——"

"Ah!" The pasha smiled knowingly, stroked his beard approvingly. "So——"

"And I have reason to believe that you do not especially prize the gift of your friend Zaghloul Bey. And since the girl is not a true believer, perhaps you might part with her."

Again the pasha stroked his beard; and then he whispered an order to a eunuch at the left of the dais.

"Not so bad, Parker, not so bad," I remarked as we cleared the gates of El Azhár and began our march back to Stamboul. "But why in all hell did you take that Gurjestani girl instead of the Kashan rug? I know what the pasha thought; but I know better. Now what *is* the game?"

Parker's eyes twinkled with the fire of a subterranean jest. And then he permitted a laugh to invade the mask of the past few days.

"I may as well confess here and now. The truth of it is that the girl was the *immediate*, though not the basic cause of the haunting of the palace."

"The devil she was!"

"Yes. Didn't you notice that she was in a trance as she walked the corridors? And didn't we learn from Talaat and through other channels that this girl had not only never seen the apparition, but had never even heard it?"

"Well?"

"It's an involved proposition," continued Parker. "So let me give you the elements, and you can coordinate them as best you can. Here you are: The palace, as well as most of the fortress, is built of the debris of an Assyrian temple, where, hundreds of years before either Christ or Mohammed, countless people concentrated their minds on the powers of their goddess, Anuta. A statue of the goddess was set up before them, and the deity was pictured in that fashion in the thoughts of her devotees. Over and over again, age after age, these thought-forms were created, sustained, rhythmically and constantly, chanted

in words and expressed in emanations of mental force."

"Do you mean that the thing we saw, that Ismail saw and felt at his throat, was merely the product of the imagination of the ancient Assyrians?"

"Roughly, just that, Holborn. Remember that thoughts are really things. Have you ever wondered whether that which we dream has in some sphere an existence while we dream it? Whether indeed we ourselves are other than the thought-forms of some omnipotent and omniscient dreamer who by his dreaming gives us what we fancy is existence? Wild concept! But, nevertheless, conceivable. And under proper conditions, thought can be transmitted from person to person without any visible means of communication.

"It is because of the concentration of those minds on that one image that in time a thought-form such as haunted the pasha was created. We ourselves saw and heard it. I didn't touch it, and I'm glad that I didn't. But as I advanced on it that night, I could feel a resisting force, physical resistance. And to screw up my own courage, to put up counter-resistance, I repeated the words used by Ismail the night he confronted the apparition: merely an expression of mental superiority. Made no difference what I said. Might as well have recited a paragraph of C. Smith's *Analytical Geometry*.

"As I said, I don't know whether it could have manifested itself physically. But look what it nearly did for Ismail Pasha! Drove him to the verge of madness. Nearly caused him to desert his post.

"Well, and by destroying that image, removing the tiles which bore the footprints of devotees descending to the innermost and deepest sanctuary, and obliterating the sculptures connected with Anuta, we destroyed those tangible objects which by suggestion could impress on the present inhabitants of the palace the thought-forms of the ancients. Do you follow me thus far?"

I agreed to the possibility of such ancient vortices of thought having the power of persisting and influencing us today. But what of the Gurjestani girl?

"Now as to the girl: I considered her a medium, a susceptible person who reacted to forces that had no effect on those about her—forces that lay virtually dormant until her receptive mind gave them a chance to revive. Her response caused a resurrection of the latent power. Remember, the haunting of the palace did not begin until some time after her arrival. Remember also that the shrine of Anuta has been here hundreds of years. In a word, everything necessary for the haunting always has been present, except for a receptive personality to amplify it; just as you must have an audion tube, a radio set, to convert into audible vibration the forces of the ether; just as, without such apparatus, a hundred broadcasting stations will not reveal themselves.

"It seems that Ismail saw no connection between the girl's arrival and the appearance of the apparition. But my finding the bracelet in the hall led me to inquire, and old Talaat's remarks did the rest. Particularly significant was the fact that she was amazed to learn where the bracelet was discovered, in a part of the palace she rarely if ever visited. Doesn't that hang it on her? Since she must be in a trance to go through with the Anuta worship, she of all people would not be aware of the manifestations.

"Destroying the statue and sculptures would ordinarily suffice. But I couldn't risk leaving the girl here to continue her somnambulistic wanderings; she herself might cause a continuance of the apparition.

"You wonder how she got that way? She was the gift of Zaghloul

Bey, a rival and an enemy of Ismail. Very likely the girl had been hypnotized, had this Anuta thought-form impressed on her mind before she was sent to the household of Ismail by his rival. Her having the bracelet would make the spell more compelling. In a word, Zaghloul Bey knew what he was doing: which I gathered not only from stories current in Stamboul some time ago, but also from remarks made by various of Ismail's servants regarding a visit of Zaghloul to felicitate Ismail Pasha on his being appointed to that rich province.

"The inscription on the hammer? A differential equation! Nothing more. But it impressed Ismail, hardened his mind against further apparitions. Simply because he couldn't understand the symbols.

"And," concluded Parker, "had Ismail ever suspected the girl of having caused that apparition, he'd have taken a very effective method of stopping it. So I had to take her on a pretext; for I simply couldn't stand the idea of that lovely creature being sewed up in a bag and dropped into the lake. Not even for an oil lease!"

An Utterly Strange Story Is

THE LITTLE HUSBANDS

By DAVID H. KELLER

ON THE decks of a small steamer which was slowly making its way along the upper stretches of the Amazon, a white man sat on the shaded side and longed for something to relieve the dull monotony of the journey. He had tried everything from learning Spanish to shooting at sleeping alligators, and yet every day became more unendurable. There seemed to be no end to the river, and each day's mileage was small, unappreciable, compared with what was yet to come. That day was hot—the flies worse than usual—nothing interested him—he was bored with life. Then he saw the bottle glinting in the sunlight. He sent for his rifle and was on the point of shooting it when something made him stop, think, and ask one of the deckhands to jump over and get it—for a silver coin. Five minutes later he was trying to get the cork out. His inability to do so at once irritated him so that he smashed the bottle with a hammer. Inside he found a number of rolls of paper, leaves from a little note-book, and every page was numbered. The writing was fine, but legible. Smithson, the celebrated anthropologist, on his way to the unknown, read with interest the following:

I STARTED this after my capture and I am ending it on the day of my death. It will not make any difference to me personally whether it is ever found, but it may be of great interest to the world. I can think of a thousand things that will prevent a

bottle from reaching civilization and only one thing that will bring it through, and that is—God's desire.

My name is Johnson Jeremiah Jenkins, special oil investigator for the Empire Oil Production Company, headquarters, London. They have the names of my nearest relatives, also all of my personal belongings. I trust they will properly provide for my mother and see that she is cared for in her later years.

As this company knows, I was on a special investigation to locate new sources of oil on the upper Amazon. They have my last reports. After I wrote to them, I had trouble with my guides. They did not want to go on with the trip, but finally I bribed them to go with me one week's journey up the river. We would paddle in the early morning and late evening and rest in the heat of the day. While they rested I would walk around the jungle hunting for oil indications. On the fifth day of this week I came upon a series of tracks in the soft earth. They looked a little like those made by a human foot, but ten times larger, and their depth into the earth showed a considerable pressure, possible only by a tremendous weight. I called the head porter and showed him the tracks. He refused to explain them—at least he said he could not tell about them—but that night, after I refused to go with them, the entire party of natives took French leave while I was asleep and left me alone, some thousands of miles from nowhere.

They did leave me a canoe, and I was not frightened—not then—for I figured that a white man who acted peacefully was as safe there as he would be on Piccadilly in London. I have always thought this, and never went armed except against wild animals. Unfortunately the natives had taken the boat in which I had my firearms. All I had was a canoe with some food and bedding in it.

I had promised myself to go on for one week, and I still had two days to go. The fact that I had to go alone made no difference, so on I went. The first day and night nothing happened. The second day nothing happened, so I felt rather cheered up as I made camp, ate a little supper, and started to sleep. While falling asleep I made plans for my return to civilization, starting the next morning.

Sometime during the night I was awakened by a sense of pressure and suffocation. Something had picked me up, wrapped as I was in my blankets, and was carrying me away. My struggles seemed useless, so I ceased to kick. It seemed futile to cry; nothing to be done but wait and see what happened.

I was carried on through the night and finally put down on the ground. As soon as I could I unwrapped myself from the twisted folds of my blanket and tried to find out where I was. I felt the walls of a hut which were woven out of reeds. The top was just high enough to touch with my head. In the darkness I thought it felt like a large beehive, such as I had seen so often at home, made out of rope. There being nothing else to do, I spread my blanket on the ground and tried to sleep. I was sure that morning would show me I had fallen into the hands of a tribe of savages.

Morning came at last and I could see streaks of sunlight through the cracks of the hut, I heard a voice sing, "It's a long way to Tipperary," and I knew then that I had found a friend. Later the door of my hut was untied and the same Irish voice asked me to come out.

IT WAS a new and peculiar world I found myself in. There was a collection of little huts such as I had spent the night in. Around these huts was a cleared space, and around that a circular fence, made of tree trunks bound together with thick ropes. It was a fence such as I had often seen in France, but this fence

was fifty feet high, and on the top was a crown of tangled cactus. As a prison it seemed perfect. I saw the huts; I saw the fence; and then I saw the men.

Later on I found there were eighteen of them, and I was one more. They were of all nationalities and all colors, and they all seemed to be trying the best they could to keep from showing that they were very unhappy. My Irish friend was singing and some of the Frenchmen were dancing the tango. Everything was nice and spotless, and the men all seemed clean and well fed. Several had on rather elaborate suits of skins and others very ornate head-dresses of multicolored feathers.

They saw me and at once ran to where the Irishman and I were standing. A dozen questions were asked me in almost as many different languages. Who was I? Where did I come from? Who really had won the war?

I tried to talk, but they made so much noise for a few minutes that they could not hear me. Finally they became quiet, and I told them all about myself that I thought worth while, and gave them the latest news of the world. Then I asked them what it all meant. At that they looked worried and said I would find out soon enough. When I urged them for decency's sake not to keep me waiting, they talked the matter over and delegated one of their number to do the talking for them. He was an Englishman, Sir Rollo Rowland of the Dorchestershire Rowlands, and seemed to be rather an expert on birds; at least that is what had brought him into the upper Amazon valley.

"This is going to be rather hard to tell you, Jenkins, old chappie, but the fact is that we are all the captives of a bally lot of women. They have a hobby of collecting men, just as I used to do with birds, and keeping them in these dinky little huts. Each man belongs to one woman; rather a clever arrangement, what? They wash him and dress him and give him little gimeracks to eat and make little clothes for him, and every woman wants her man to look a little bit snappier than the other men. So long as the man behaves himself the woman is devilishly nice to him and shows him a bally good time, but when she gets on the outs with him she puts him under the sod and hunts around for another man. Part of the time they have to be content with niggers, but what they really like most is white men, and the snappier the men are the longer they last. The woman that caught you has had a Portuguese; he is in his hut now in a blue funk, and small wonder, my lad, small wonder! It is good-bye to him and how do you do to you.

"You understand that we are their husbands. How does that seem? Some fine ending for an Oxford man, what? I have lasted longer than most of them, on account of my education, and then I learned to speak their language. That made me the official interpreter and had a lot to do with keeping me alive.

"There are just eighteen of these women—that is, just that many old enough to have husbands. There are a lot of girls, and no boys and no men, except us. I guess they kill the boy babies—perhaps they only have girls born to them.

"This woman who was married to the Portuguese was not very well pleased with him: I guess he was rather surly when alone with her, and one has to please them, my lad, one has to please them. So he gets killed and you have his place. His wife was away for some days hunting for a man, and I guess he will suit her—young, English, good-looking.

"There is not much use of telling you more. You will find out about it in time. Just a word of caution. Forget the world and do not try to

escape. Death is not so bad, but it is unpleasant to be hung up on those cacti and just left there to die. If you look closely you will see some bones up there—I was here when the last man was put up there."

That was about all he would say just then.

All day we were left alone. Night came, and I went to my hut and tried to sleep. The next morning the Irishman called me to come out and have breakfast with them. As we were eating, a shrill cry rang through the air and every man went and sat down, rather docile-like, in front of his hut. The Portuguese, shaking with fright, crawled inside his hut.

When I first saw it come over the fence I thought it was some odd kind of a snake, light brown, and then I saw that it was an arm, and the fingers reached down to the front of the Portuguese's hut, and, not finding him there, pushed the hut over, picked him up, screaming as he was with fright, and carried him over the fence. All the men kept very still and I noticed that they looked at me in a rather peculiar manner. I did not know what it all meant, but I knew enough to keep quiet. Then the arm came over again and the fingers picked me up.

There was not much use of protesting, so I just shut my eyes, only I had a sick feeling in the bottom of my stomach like a sea-sickness. In just a few minutes I felt that I was on the ground again and slowly opened my eyes and looked around. The women were evidently having some kind of a meeting.

If they had been smaller they would not have been so bad-looking, but any woman seventy feet high looks rather peculiar. They were all sitting in a circle, a ring of gigantic figures squatting on the ground. Alongside of me was the Portuguese, and he was not very happy. We were right between the legs of one of the women. I tried not to look at her face but I just couldn't help it, and she saw that I was looking at her and smiled. I smiled back and waved my hand to her, sort of jolly-like, though I did not feel that way at all. The woman seemed pleased with me, because she started to laugh and even clapped her hands; it sounded like thunder. She even reached down and patted me with one of her fingers.

Then they had some kind of ceremony with singing. Their song was harmonious enough, but the sound was like exploding cannon, and I held my hands over my ears.

I wish that I had kept my eyes shut too. For after the singing the woman who seemed to own us took a sharp stick shaped like a lead-pencil, only it was about fifty feet long, and right there in front of us all she scraped a hole in the ground; and then she took the Portuguese and squeezed him between her thumb and finger, just as you would squeeze a bug. He gave one yell and that was the end of him; so she threw him into the hole and covered him up with loose dirt, and then with a wild yell that echoed through the jungles she jumped up and stamped on his grave with her feet till it was all nice and smooth. Reaching over, she picked me up and started to rub me against her face and mouth. Her lips were soft enough—but it was a devilish unpleasant sensation.

Months passed after that.

I was well treated, had lots to eat, and no mother could have kept her baby cleaner than the woman who was my wife kept me. She used to go on long trips through the jungle carrying me in a little fur bag on her back. She tried to talk to me and wanted me to teach her English. It seems that some of her husbands had been Americans and she had picked up some of the language.

I was well enough treated, but the life was hard in a way. It took a philosopher to stand it—a regular Stoic—lots of the men they caught couldn't stick it at all—tried to escape or committed suicide in some other way. I saw that it was helpless and hopeless—nothing to do till they caught some chap with firearms and dynamite or poison.

Two years later. Things are no better. I am heartsick and homesick. The woman had a child, but it was a boy, and without saying a word to me they killed it—like as if it were a dog. She tried to cheer me up but I was too heart-broken to respond. She said she hoped the next one would be a girl, and tried to speak softly to me, but her voice at best is like distant thunder—hoped the next one would be a girl.

One year later. Have lost track of the time, but think I have been here four years. Things change a lot. Only the three of us—the Englishman, the Irishman and I—are left of those who were here when I came. The rest are all new—most of them a surly lot. It is harder for the women to get new men, and the men they do get are not gentlemen and make poor companions to the rest of us. I have the fever a lot and am losing weight. Am going to try to put these papers in a bottle and watch my chance to drop it in the water the next time the woman takes me out.

The fever keeps up. I have been sick three weeks. Part of the time I was out of my head. The Englishman told me that when the woman picked me up I cursed her. Does she know enough to understand?

Later on. The women have been out and gathered up a group of American explorers—all college men and young fellows. I believe that my woman got one of the men. Yesterday one of the old crowd was killed and one of the new men married to his widow.

Next day. Another marriage took place today.

Later. All the new men are married but one. I believe he belongs to my woman.

She has just told me that I am sick too much of the time and that she wants somebody that is younger. She said that if I wanted her to she would let me escape. Took her offer.

Next morning. Too weak to escape. Had a hard chill and am burning with fever. Have had a talk with the man who is going to take my place and asked him to dispose of this bottle the first time he had a chance. Told him I had no hard feeling. The Americans are arranging to escape but I know they will fail. Good-bye. I hear them singing.

JOHNSON JEREMIAH JENKINS.

POOR Jenkins was killed this morning and I am the new husband of his widow. I am glad to be able to say that he was so sick from the fever that he was unconscious at the time of his death. I am going to drop his message in the river as soon as I can. I have read it and talked to Sir Rollo Rowland and the thing looks rather dark, but we hope that our native American wit will find a way of escape. This is a rather serious business for grown-up men to be in.

JAMES JONES, Prof. Biology,
Reiswick University, U. S. A.

An Eery Little Story Is

Symphonic Death

By FRED R. FARROW, JR.

THE four great kettle-drums stood shrouded in their soiled covers. Bass viols stood and leaned at queer angles against the back wall. Cellos and tubas sprawled upon the floor. The conductor's desk, littered with manuscript, seemed a gaunt sign-post in the midst of a wilderness of chairs and orchestra trappings.

Most of the lights had been turned off, and in the feeble light that remained the theater looked dingy and forbidding. Great, ugly carvings frowned down upon the stage. The faded drapes swayed silently in the draft, seeming to wave at an invisible audience.

Philip Schmitt, the youthful conductor, and Hanforth, his concertmaster, walked up the center aisle, their footsteps echoing hollowly on the marble floor back of the parquet circle.

Schmitt was nervously talking, " . . . and according to his will, we must play the fourth movement of the *Fate Symphony* at sight. Not one of us, not even I, the conductor, has seen the score. I tell you, Hanforth, it seems uncanny.

"Think of the last thirty-two bars of the *Marche Exotique*. God, what awful harmony! Terrible ninths for double-basses and bassoons and those infernally shrieking chromatics for first fiddles! There's more than power behind that music. I seem to feel old Scheel right back of me when I conduct it."

Hans Scheel was the former conductor of the orchestra. He had taken the organization, then only a group of fair amateurs, and by his unflagging energy and genius had built it into the artistic ensemble of a perfect symphony orchestra of one hundred and ten men. He loved it with all the fervor of a genius for his brain child, and resented the slightest criticism of its playing, or of his own compositions.

Belonging to the modern school of composition, Scheel had many critics who attacked him and his works. The chief one of these was Emil Brandenburg. Like Scheel he was arrogant to the nth degree, and although they had never come to blows, many hard battles had been fought verbally.

One night after the concert, Brandenburg had knocked at Scheel's dressing-room, and after being admitted he began, as was his custom, to pick apart, piece by piece, one of the conductor's favorite numbers.

Said he, "It's a lot of claptrap—so much orchestral bookkeeping. Twenty years from now no one will remember any of it. Modern harmony—bah! Modern discord, I call it!"

Scheel had stood looking at him with his burning eyes. He pronounced, almost like a curse, these words: "You fool! Dare you mock me and my works? In life I can defend my art, but after death it must, for the world, stand alone. However, if you continue, I will crush you, even from the grave, along with any other unworthy upstart who attempts to fill my position when I am gone."

This had silenced Brandenburg for the time, and one week later Scheel

died, leaving the *Fate Symphony* and specifying in his will that the final movement was to be played without rehearsal. It was significant, too, that the score for this number, the *Scherzo Fantastique*, was written in red ink.

HANFORTH and young Schmitt walked silently across the street to a tiny restaurant. They sat down at their favorite table in the back, and Schmitt nervously lighted a cigarette.

He had been concertmaster of the orchestra for five years, and had distinguished himself at this post. Now that he was conductor his youthful shoulders seemed to bend under the responsibility of leading one hundred and ten men through symphonic mazes. He lacked the self-confidence which time alone could give him.

"I don't know whether you will believe it or not, Hanforth, but whenever I conduct I seem to feel his sneering, domineering personality, just as he was in life."

"Well, I don't take any stock in that, but I wish we didn't have to play that scherzo at sight. The rest of the symphony is difficult enough, even after rehearsal."

Schmitt pushed his blond hair back from his brow and said, "Well, it's just got to go all right, or if it doesn't I'm afraid to think. There's something uncanny about it all. I keep remembering what Scheel told Brandenburg just before he died. Furthermore, Hanforth, you never read the program of the *Fate Symphony*."

He shivered and went on: "The story is that of a young man who knows that there is hereditary madness in his family. In time he goes quite mad himself. The *Marche Exotique* depicts him being taken to the asylum, and the finale paints his ravings in a padded cell."

"What a horrible subject to write a symphony upon!" exclaimed Hanforth.

"Yes, and Scheel could write. He was like these artists who draw impressionistic sketches—all lines and queer distorted angles. I would rather take a sound thrashing than go through with tonight's program. The men themselves are uneasy. They have scented something, and it wouldn't take much to make them walk out."

"You can't really blame them for not liking to play such difficult stuff by sight, without having rehearsed it at all."

"No, but everything must go right; it's just got to."

The two men sipped their coffee in silence. Schmitt called for the check, paid it, and climbing into a taxicab, went to his hotel to dress for the evening.

EIGHT o'clock. Fifteen minutes more and the concert would be under way.

Expensive limousines carrying bejeweled women and men in top-hats drove up to the front entrance.

The musicians themselves began to arrive. Already quite a number were tuning up on the stage, each individual adding his bit to the dissonance of an orchestra before playing.

Eight-ten. Philip Schmitt arrived at the stage door. He looked pale but determined. The doorman took his coat and hat, and Schmitt nervously adjusted his tie in front of a small mirror back-stage. Precisely at 8:15 he opened the door at the left wing, and walked to the conductor's desk. A storm of applause greeted him.

There was the score of the accursed symphony under that of Moussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, the opening number on the program. There in the right balcony box sat Brandenburg, smug, sneering and complacent as ever. Schmitt tapped his stand for order, and the players ceased their tuning.

Turning slightly to the left, to the first violins, he began to conduct the eery triplets of the first bars of Moussorgsky's composition. At the

fifth bar he turned to the flutes, which shrieked the approach of the spirits.

All well. The spirits gathered, danced, and were dispersed by the tolling of the bell at midnight, and the number was brought to a close amidst whole-hearted applause from the audience.

Schmitt waited a minute or so to enable the men to tune and get their breath. Then they began with a grumble from double-basses that shook the floor. This was answered by a plaintive strain for oboes and clarinets; then an upward sweep for cellos, and a harp cadenza. He gave the violas their cue after the harp, and the symphony was under way. First violins announced the terror motif of the young man doubting his own sanity. This was answered by the bassoons, which seemed to mock. Again the terror motif, this time more pronounced. The movement ended with a sad strain for English horn and viola.

The second movement was much similar to the first, the terror and doubt motives being developed with awful certainty. Schmitt then began to feel it. He had tried to concentrate on his reading and to be oblivious to all other influences. Now, however, he knew absolutely that he was not alone on the conductor's platform. Another presence was there, invisible and malevolent.

He glanced toward Brandenburg in the box. His sneering look had been replaced by one of awe not unmixed with fear.

They began the *Marche Exotique*. The great orchestra groaned in horrible dissonance. Silvery glissades from the celesta were crushed by the ominous rhythm of double-basses.

Schmitt seemed in the grip of something intangible yet all-powerful. This, then, was to test his worthiness. Well, he would give them all he had. The number concluded with the cellos and the bass viols seeming to descend a giant staircase into the infernal regions accompanied by the terrible despair motif from first and second violins.

Brandenburg's face now bore a look of fear. He, too, had sensed it, remembering the fateful words of Scheel, "I will crush you even from the grave."

Hard-headed and stubborn though he was, he began to be afraid. He wondered what the concluding movement would bring forth. He nervously hitched his chair around in the box where he sat alone, and fearfully looked behind the faded draperies. The sneer gradually replaced itself on his face. He was a fool to take any stock in dead men's curses! He swore softly under his breath, as a child talks to itself in the dark for comfort.

The scherzo was under way.

Philip Schmitt was pale. His knees trembled. He glanced at the horrid array of red notes on the score before him. Red! The color of madness! He felt like shouting, but continued to beat time as though in the grip of some invisible power. He seemed to feel old Scheel's eyes burning into his back.

Violins laughed horribly. Flutes and clarinets shrieked in awful glee. The orchestra seemed to be running away, yet under it all the hand of the master had bound them together in perfect counterpoint.

The audience looked on and listened, spellbound with the awful miracle that was being wrought.

Suddenly, after a loud cymbal crash, the lights went out; the whole house was in darkness save for the small lights on the music stands.

Some few detected a bluish glow around the conductor's desk. Brandenburg was one, and he observed it with stark terror clutching at his heart. He seemed to see the words written in letters of fire: "I will crush you even from the grave." His eyes bulged. His reason seemed to totter. The orchestra was groaning

like a giant in pain. Through it all crept the madness motif—seven shrill little notes for oboe. Above the grumble of double-basses, above the moaning of the violins, the madness theme stood out and seemed to triumph in the downfall of a human soul.

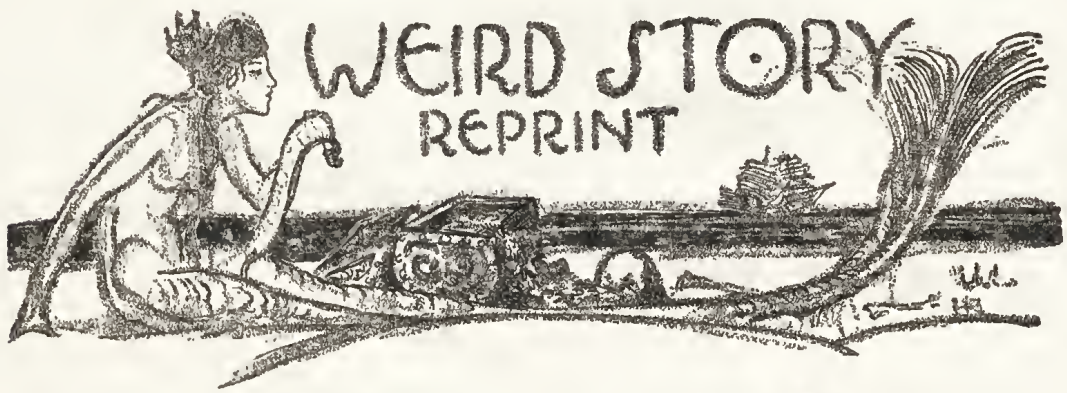
The blue glow around the conductor's desk grew more intense. Brandenburg, his face horribly contorted with fear, saw Schmitt reel and fall. He attempted to rise, but in his place was a shadowy form, beating time. The form grew in distinctness, and the features became those of Hans Scheel. There he stood, his eyes flashing fire, his huge forehead bulging under his scant locks. No, there could be no doubt.

A shriek tore through the air from the balcony box, followed by another and another, and the sound of people wildly stampeding toward the exits.

The lights went on. Ushers ran upon the stage to quiet the crowd. Over the rail of the balcony box there hung something that had been human but which now leered, with bulging eyes and distorted features. From its mouth came strange, meaningless sounds. Suddenly it recovered itself, climbed over the rail and fell to the stage below.

The orchestra stopped playing. Schmitt sat on the edge of his platform, head in hands, shaken but sane.

At the side of the stage, physicians were doing all they could to ease the last moments of a thing that gibbered horribly and glared with the light of madness in its protruding eyes.



*The Bowmen**

By ARTHUR MACHEN

IT WAS during the Retreat of the Eighty Thousand, and the authority of the Censorship is sufficient excuse for not being more explicit. But it was on the most awful day of that awful time, on the day when ruin and disaster came so near that their shadow fell over London far away; and, without any certain news, the hearts of men failed within them and grew faint; as if the agony of the army in the battlefield had entered into their souls.

On this dreadful day, then, when three hundred thousand men in arms

 This story, originally printed in an English newspaper during the World War, won wide popularity, and was responsible for the legend that phantom archers had come to the assistance of the British army during the retreat from Mons.

with all their artillery swelled like a flood against the little English company, there was one point above all other points in our battle line that was for a time in awful danger, not merely of defeat, but of utter annihilation. With the permission of the Censorship and of the military expert, this corner may, perhaps, be described as a salient, and if this angle were crushed and broken, then the English force as a whole would be shattered, the Allied left would be turned, and Sedan would inevitably follow.

All the morning the German guns had thundered and shricked against this corner, and against the thousand or so of men who held it. The men joked at the shells, and found funny names for them, and had bets about them, and greeted them with scraps of music-hall songs. But the shells came on and burst, and tore good Englishmen limb from limb, and tore brother from brother, and as the heat of the day increased so did the fury of that terrific cannonade. There was no help, it seemed. The English artillery was good, but there was not nearly enough of it; it was being steadily battered into scrap-iron.

There comes a moment in a storm at sea when people say to one another, "It is at its worst; it can blow no harder," and then there is a blast ten times more fierce than any before it. So it was in these British trenches.

There were no stouter hearts in the whole world than the hearts of these men; but even they were appalled as this seven-times-heated hell of the German cannonade fell upon them and overwhelmed them and destroyed them. And at this very moment they saw from their trenches that a tremendous host was moving against their lines. Five hundred of the thousand remained, and as far as they could see the German infantry was pressing on against them, column upon column, a gray world of men, ten thousand of them, as it appeared afterwards.

There was no hope at all. They shook hands, some of them. One man improvised a new version of the battle-song, "Good-bye, good-bye to Tipperary," ending with "And we shan't get there." And they all went on firing steadily. The officer pointed out that such an opportunity for high-class fancy shooting might never occur again; the Tipperary humorist asked, "What price Sidney Street?" And the few machine-guns did their best. But everybody knew it was of no use. The dead gray bodies lay in companies and battalions, as others came on and on and on, and they swarmed and stirred, and advanced from beyond and beyond.

"World without end. Amen," said one of the British soldiers with some irrelevance as he took aim and fired. And then he remembered—he says he can not think why or wherefore—a queer vegetarian restaurant in London where he had once or twice eaten eccentric dishes of cutlets made of lentils and nuts that pretended to be steak. On all the plates in this restaurant there was printed a figure of St. George in blue, with the motto, "*Adsit Anglis Sanctus Georgius*"—"May St. George be a present help to the English." This soldier happened to know Latin and other useless things, and now, as he fired at his man in the gray advancing mass—three hundred yards away—he uttered the pious vegetarian motto. He went on firing to the end, and at last Bill on his right had to clout him cheerfully over the head to make him stop, pointing out as he did so that the King's ammunition cost money and was not lightly to be wasted in drilling funny patterns into dead Germans.

For as the Latin scholar uttered his invocation he felt something between a shudder and an electric shock pass through his body. The roar of the battle died down in his ears to a gentle murmur; instead of it, he says,

he heard a great voice and a shout louder than a thunder-peal crying, "Array, array, array!"

His heart grew hot as a burning coal, it grew cold as ice within him, as it seemed to him that a tumult of voices answered to his summons. He heard, or seemed to hear, thousands shouting: "St. George! St. George!"

"Ha! Messire, ha! Sweet Saint, grant us good deliverance!"

"St. George for merry England!"

"Harow! Harow! Monseigneur St. George, succor us!"

"Ha! St. George! Ha! St. George! a long bow and a strong bow."

"Heaven's knight aid us!"

And as the soldier heard these voices he saw before him, beyond the trench, a long line of shapes, with a shining about them. They were like men who drew the bow, and with another shout, their cloud of arrows flew singing and tingling through the air towards the German hosts.

The other men in the trench were firing all the while. They had no hope; but they aimed just as if they had been shooting at Bisley.

Suddenly one of them lifted up his voice in the plainest English.

"Gawd help us!" he bellowed to the man next to him, "but we're blooming marvels! Look at those gray . . . gentlemen, look at them! D'ye see them? They're not going down in dozens nor in 'undreds; it's thousands, it is. Look! look! there's a regiment gone while I'm talking to ye."

"Shut it!" the other soldier bellowed, taking aim, "what are ye gassing about?"

But he gulped with astonishment even as he spoke, for, indeed, the gray men were falling by the thousands. The English could hear the guttural scream of the German officers, the crackle of their revolvers as they shot the reluctant; and still line after line crashed to the earth.

All the while the Latin-bred soldier heard the cry:

"Harow! Harow! Monseigneur, dear Saint, quick to our aid! St. George help us!"

"High Chevalier, defend us!"

The singing arrows fled so swift and thick that they darkened the air; the heathen horde melted from before them.

"More machine-guns!" Bill yelled to Tom.

"Don't hear them," Tom yelled back.

"But, thank God, anyway; they've got it in the neck."

In fact, there were ten thousand dead German soldiers left before that salient of the English army, and consequently there was no Sedan. In Germany, a country ruled by scientific principles, the Great General Staff decided that the contemptible English must have employed shells containing an unknown gas of a poisonous nature, as no wounds were discernible on the bodies of the dead German soldiers. But the man who knew what nuts tasted like when they called themselves steak knew also that St. George had brought his Agincourt Bowmen to help the English.

The Eyrie

(Continued from page 4)

whose *Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds* are, I believe, the classics of the weird-scientific type of story. There has been a let-down, though, in the atmosphere of many of your stories; the illusion of unknown, powerful evil which Lovecraft so ably creates in *The Call of Cthulhu* and which permeates the writings of Quinn and Greye La Spina is either lost or bungled by many of the writers who seek it. The thought of unknown, malignant, powerful, *outside* intelligences, to whom evil unimaginable, cruelty and *spiritual bestialness* are as natural as the breath of life is to man, is the quality in a truly weird story which grips the reader in spite of the instinctive antagonism it arouses in his mind. Nictzin Dyalhis catches it to perfection in *The Dark Lore* (in last October's WEIRD TALES). Arthur J. Burks catches it frequently in his tales of the West Indies—but not when he writes of Thirtieth Century egomaniacs with fur wings *(The Invading Horde)."*

Fred W. Fischer, Jr., of Knoxville, Tennessee, writes to The Eyrie: "Just a word of congratulation on your book, *The Moon Terror,* which was absolutely wonderful. It was exciting from one end to the other, and the little short story with the long name, *An Adventure in the Fourth Dimension,* was very amusing. And WEIRD TALES itself, the original of such stories, is also getting better and better, much to my gratification, although I can not equally compliment you on the poor quality of the print and the paper."

"I'm all for WEIRD TALES, and think they are the last word in fiction," writes Dorothy Leggett, of Baltimore. "*The Twin Soul,* appearing some time ago, was truly as uncanny as one could wish for, and *The Giant World* was the spice of the magazine. The best of all, though, are the Jules de Grandin stories by Seabury Quinn; so all in all, here's to WEIRD TALES. More power to them!"

"I have just finished the May issue of WEIRD TALES," writes Jack Darrow, of Chicago. "The best story is *The Bat-Men of Thorium,* by Bertram Russell. It's the best since *The Time-Raider,* by Edmond Hamilton. The second best is *Three Coffins,* by Lieutenant Burks. It is truly a weird, weird tale."

Writes Artman Hall of Oakland, California: "Your magazine holds a prominent position on my book-shelf, and I and the family derive a great deal of interest and knowledge from your stories. Each new issue contains new surprizes and a bigger field of the weird and supernatural. Although I have read all the stories, my favorite author is Seabury Quinn. Murray Leinster almost won me to his side with his story, *The Strange People,* but I still remain true to the banner of Seabury Quinn. My choice in the May issue is *A Wager in Candlesticks,* by Robert T. Griebling—

a wonderful story, of a type not easily forgotten. The first installment of *The Bat-Men of Thorium* also bids well to be among the leaders."

Jack Snow writes from Piqua, Ohio: "Just a short note to tell you how greatly I appreciated Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu*. Such stories do not require an ordinary 'thank you'; they go through life with the reader, coloring and enhancing his world, and raising it from its mundane sordidness to fantastic heights of beauty and poesy from which no man nor thing can topple it."

"WEIRD TALES," writes Earl R. Doolittle, of Indianapolis, "has been my favorite magazine for five years, ever since the first issue was published in March, 1923. Excellent your stories were at that time, and excellent they still are; in fact, there has been a steady increase in artistry and literary merit in the past three years. I am glad to see that you have reprinted that fascinating serial, *The Moon Terror*, as a cloth-bound book. Another of your serials that richly deserves permanence in book form is Greye La Spina's *Invaders From the Dark*—one of the greatest werewolf stories ever penned."

"I want to tell you how much I enjoy your magazine," writes Mrs. E. K. Campbell, of Atlanta. "I think WEIRD TALES is the most entertaining magazine I have ever read. The stories are well written and the subjects are so unusual, so out of the ordinary, that one is lifted completely out of one's self. Above all, the tales are absolutely clean, which is not to be said of all present-day magazines."

Readers, what is your favorite story in this issue of WEIRD TALES? Your first choice in the May issue, as shown by your votes, is the opening part of Bertram Russell's serial story of a strange land under the sea, *The Bat-Men of Thorium*.

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The Witches' Sabbath

(Continued from page 32)

have the power to tell you both, to your faces, that you will both pay God's penalty for such villainy!"

"Stop!" cried Rutherford. "Mention not that word here, woman! It is forbidden. Repeat it, and thou shalt taste torture!"

"Come, girl!" snarled Le Voyen. Thou'rt in the hands of thy judges. Consent to be my mistress, or else choose death! What say'st thou? A little sleeping potion and there'll be no pangs of regret!"

"A thousand deaths, first!" cried Helen, renewing her struggles to free herself. "I choose death, and the quicker the better!"

She sank back, moaning from exhaustion.

"Bah!" sneered Rutherford, his yellow eyes mocking her. "Le Voyen gets thy wealth in either event. Thou hast chosen death; so be it! Ah, but what a death!"

Le Voyen lifted the form of the half-fainting girl, and followed Rutherford down an almost endless circular staircase, where they paused for a moment in a moldy rotunda. Rutherford's hand sought a hidden lever. He pressed it. A narrow slab of stone slid aside, and there was a rush of cold, damp air from the space within. Helen felt her body thrust into this vault, and heard the slab grate to. She swooned and knew no more.

IN IGNORANCE of all this, the two "English pilgrims" were lounging in the taproom, at the other end of the town.

"A majority of these people," remarked Littlejohn, under his breath, "know no word of English. Yet each possesses a memory that enables him or her to take a complete mes-

sage in any language to the cult leaders, who translate it. They have also psychic methods of gaining information. Now that darkness has settled, the tide of Sabbath pilgrims will begin to pour in from every quarter of Europe. We must keep to our rooms. Be vigilant!"

There was no sign of Tabelard, the tall landlord, when they moved into the foyer; yet like a wraith he appeared behind them when they turned toward the stairs.

"*Ah, Messieurs les pélerins,*" he bowed. "You have seen the sights of our old town! You are please with eet, yes? Eeet ees old—ah, ver' old, *mes braves!* Here, for centuries, our people have leeved! The old life you have come back to, waits——"

His voice trailed off to a whisper, and his eyes burned into those of his listeners, significantly. The "pilgrims" nodded.

When Littlejohn lighted a cigarette, the landlord sprang back in terror, at the sight of the match flame. He was plainly afraid of fire. But Tabelard recovered himself quickly, muttering something about "vertigo." The "pilgrims" passed upstairs.

Their rooms were opposite, at the end of a narrow, sloping corridor. Neither could shake off the strange influences which hovered about the inn at night, in strange contrast to the peaceful, lulling influences by day, when the gentle coo of pigeons sounded overhead in the eaves.

Kincaid entered his room and flung himself down upon the bed. He must have fallen asleep instantly, for about ten minutes later he awoke with a start. Something was at the window. He felt sure of it.

He struck a match and lighted the candle. And then he saw it!

There, against the sill, it rested; the slim figure of a man, in the olden garb of a monk.

"Verdelet!" he gasped, stepping back.

The familiar broke into unintelligible gibberish, and then spoke: "Wo! Wo! I am undone! I am no longer attached! I only hover about, in helplessness!"

"What nonsense is this?" demanded Kincaid, angrily.

"I speak truly, sire!" moaned the satyr. "I was sent to guard him whom they call Rutherford. Le Voyen, the Hermit of the Vosges, has wreaked sorcery, and now I am back to the queen, empty-handed. Oh, I shall be punished and sent back to the lower regions!"

"So you have come to tell me this?" inquired Kincaid, shivering in spite of himself.

"Ay, sire! And to inform thee that thou thyself, and the good seer with thee, art doomed! Thou wilt be captured tonight, and sacrificed."

"If you think that you can frighten me, you're mistaken!" shouted Kincaid. "Begone!"

He leaped for the satyr. His hand clutched only the window-ledge. Verdelet had vanished.

He recrossed the hall immediately, and entered Littlejohn's room. The scientist was busily examining the contents of a small bag he had drawn forth from his waistcoat. He listened eagerly while Kincaid told him of Verdelet's visit.

"The creature came to warn us," declared the scientist, nodding apprehensively. "We had best leave this inn at once."

"Doctor," admitted Kincaid, "I was foolish enough to leave my pistol in the railway town."

Littlejohn assured the younger man that firearms would prove quite a handicap under the conditions they must face.

"Here," informed the scientist, "is a powerful defense—a psychic weapon." He picked up a shimmering, curved bow, and a sheaf of silver arrows, which were lying upon the bed. Kincaid viewed these with astonishment, marveling over the

mystic symbols graven over them. The inscriptions were in Sanskrit.

Littlejohn tautened the bowstring and whisked the implement inside his coat. Repacking the other objects hastily, he thrust the bag into his shirt.

At that moment a rap sounded upon the bedroom door. Kincaid opened it.

There stood Tabelard, bowing low. He tendered the two men a sealed note, with a strange crest. Three finely written lines commanded them to appear immediately for "official reception." It was signed "The Chamberlain."

"*Messieurs,* you have received a signal honor," crooned Tabelard. "Summoned to sup with Her Majesty and the Primate!" He rubbed his hands together with a sort of gloating satisfaction, a hint of ridicule lurking in his deep-sunk eyes. "The court guides await you without, *Messieurs.* An honor! An honor, indeed!"

If Littlejohn had observed the purport of the summons, he gave no indication of it. He pretended surprize and pleasure. They would go at once, he announced, signaling Kincaid to join him, as he followed Tabelard down the corridor.

"Prisoners!" whispered the scientist, in front of the inn, as four muscular pages, attired in medieval somberness, closed around them. "Keep your wits."

The party started off in the direction of the market-place.

The terrible ceremony of the Black Mass and the obscene revels of the Witches' Sabbath will be described in the startling and gripping chapters that bring this story to a conclusion in next month's WEIRD TALES.

The Green Monster

(Continued from page 42)

fering no aid, saying nothing, only stunned by the catastrophe.

"Take him home!" I shrieked, almost hysterically.

Without another word I turned and ran toward the professor's house. The light was still burning in the studio. It would not have mattered had it been otherwise, for I should have torn him from his bed had he been there. I did not knock; I rushed headlong into the study. The professor sat before me with a smile on his cruel lips. He looked at me amusedly.

"Has the Green Monster appeared again?" he laughed.

"It has!" I cried, panting with the intensity of my hate. "It has appeared again, and this time it has slain a man! Strangled him with its monstrous talons, as you said it would."

The professor's face went a pasty white. He stared at me like a man possessed. I knew that the fear of the monster had come over him, too. I gloated in the consternation of that look. Then his expression changed to one of determination; he set his jaws grimly.

"Sit down, Boreau," he commanded. "Tell me about this."

"The Green Monster has appeared again," I shouted. "It was seen by three other men at the same time, and it has strangled Bob Huntingdon. I saw him after it was done!"

For a minute the professor seemed to be working at some idea. Then he leaped to his feet.

"Boreau, this is terrible! Had I foreseen this I would never have started this experiment." His words came hard and fast. "The concentrative power of the minds of the university has created it. Their wills, their rampant fears, have gotten beyond control. Where before it was only a hallucination, it is now a reality! Run, Boreau, and gather all of those who were at the lecture before. It is a matter of life and death, for at any minute the living fantasm may seize upon one of them—or anyone now!"

I turned and fled, but as I ran I heard the professor muttering, "I had not foreseen this. I have heard of the creation of material forces through the exercise of the mind—a Hindoo, a yogi theory—yet I had thought it a fantastic myth . . . a myth——"

His voice was beyond my hearing as I rushed toward the quadrangle.

IN FIFTEEN minutes I had collected the majority of his former guests about me, and the others, convinced of the all-importance of the request, were hastening toward the professor's. As we neared the place we saw that the lights were off. From somewhere on the place came that ominous booming sound. I noticed that the shades of the study had been drawn.

As we put our feet within the door we heard a sudden scream, a wild cry for help. So great was our excitement that we dashed back into the study without pausing.

My companions fell back against the door, paralyzed by the vision before them. There, under that solitary beam of light, lay the professor, while over him loomed that hideous Monster I had heard described. I felt the fiendish hate of his glance as he stared at the dying professor with those fiery eyes of his. As I stood there he began to glide through the gloom toward me. I was frozen with horror. The perspiration broke from my brow, blinding me with its scalding sting. Even as I thought it would fasten its tremendous fingers

into my throat, the professor rose from the floor in a semi-crouch.

"Boreau," he moaned, "it shall not touch you! It has broken my neck. I am dying, and when I die it will disappear forever!" He pulled a knife from his garments.

I believe he had anticipated the attack upon himself. The Monster leaped to snatch the knife from his hand—too late! The professor sank back upon the floor, and even as he did so, the green Thing faded into the shuddering dark.

"Lights!" I cried. "For God's sake put on the lights!"

Someone found them. We stood in the study with only the dead professor before us. I turned to my companions in the doorway.

"Let us go," I sobbed. "The professor is dead, and the Green Monster is gone forever."

Blindly groping in the clear light, I staggered from the unholy spectacle. Somehow I reached my room. Then, in the still fearsome night hours which the shadow of the monster seemed to inhabit even now, I wrote a full report of the professor's terrible experiment; I expressed that, with the death of the professor, his power over the minds of his unfortunate subjects had passed away, and with that power the Green Monster. Morning came, and the sun cast a cheerful beam over my fast whitening hair.

The Grappli: Ghost

(Continued from page 11

did. I knew that he was in th tonight; heard him tap on the while we were talking, but yo thought it was part of the sto

"That's all there was in i sorry for the scare I've giv but—well, if you knew the I'm in, I'm sure you'd forgiv

WILLOWBY went away ver the next morning. I subsequently that he marrie and I suspect, from the fact t events of the night didn't s frighten her, that she migh known something about it all hand. However, we had a enough of Melancholy House. years later the Huntertons s and realized a large profit on i armor disappeared, and Pr kept the secret of its disposal self.

But on the morning when W and the rest of us went awa ticed that the old lady was remarkably grim—making ar at it, I thought. Margy Bront her about it.

"Well," said Prudence, "the Scriptures tell us that give is divine. Mr. Willowby us to forgive him for the sc had given us. Humph! I'm to be divine, that's all!"

Missing Ad Page

"Don't make a monkey of yourself"

cried Bob as I sat down at the piano

I WAS spending my vacation with Bob when I met his cousin, Helen. It was love at first sight with me. But unfortunately she didn't seem to feel the same way about it.

"You've got nothing to worry about," Bob insisted when I told him my tale of woe. "Just leave it to me. All you need is a little publicity . . ."

The very next day he announced that he'd just had a long talk with Helen.

"Boy! What I didn't tell her about you!" he exulted. "Believe me, I boosted your stock sky high!"

"What did you tell her?"

"Well, she's crazy about music. So I conveniently forgot that you can't play a note, and told her you are *an accomplished pianist!*"

"But Bob . . ."

"Not another word! I've got you sitting pretty, now. If you're asked to play—just say you've sprained your wrist."

That very night we were all invited to the Carews' party. On the way over, I sensed a big difference in Helen—a difference that made my heart beat fast with a new hope.

* * *

I Am Asked to Play the Piano

A little later in the evening we were all gathered around the piano.

"I've heard so much about your talent!" cried Helen. "Won't you play something for us?"

"Yes!" "Yes!" "Please!" came from all sides.

With a smile I bowed low . . . and replied that *it would be a pleasure!*

Bob's grin changed to amazement. Calmly ignoring his frantic signals I walked over to the piano. Quick as a flash he followed me.

"For the love of Pete get away from that piano," he whispered excitedly. "Don't make a monkey of yourself. If Helen ever hears you play she'll think everything else I told her is bunk, too!"

Turning to the guests, Bob announced, "Perhaps we should wait until some other time. His wrist was slightly sprained in tennis this afternoon and . . ."

"Oh, that's nothing!" I broke in, and without any further hesitation I began the first notes of Irving Berlin's famous "Russian Lullaby"! The tantalizing, irresistible strains seemed to throw a spell over the guests.

I forgot Bob's astonishment—forgot the glow of admiration in Helen's eyes. On and on I played—losing myself in my music—until thunderous applause shook the room.

That brought me to myself with a start. For the rest of the evening I was the lion of the party.

Bob could hardly restrain his curiosity until we were safely home.

"Why didn't you tell me you knew how to play? When did you learn?"

"You never asked whether I knew how to play," I countered.

"Of course not! Last summer you didn't know one note from another—how was I to guess you'd blossomed into an accomplished pianist overnight?"

"Not overnight, exactly!" I smiled. "Although it almost seemed that way! Remember that Free Demonstration Lesson in music I sent for last summer? Well, when it came and I saw how easy it was to learn without a teacher I sent for the complete course. It's great! Why, almost before I knew it, I was playing simple tunes! I can play *anything* now.

"So you really *are* an 'accomplished' pianist! The joke's on me, all right!"

"Oh, I wouldn't say 'accomplished'," I laughed. "But enough of a pianist to get a lot more fun out of life than I used to!"

* * *

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