

## Contributors and Contributions

EDNA WORTHLEY UNDERWOOD contributes prose, verse and translations to American and English periodicals. In addition to her interest in modern language she has given some time to biological study, the result of which is "An Orchid of Asia", a story based on social life in the plant world, which begins in this issue.

WILL CRAWFORD, one of the foremost American illustrators, has won deserved recognition through his drawings of jungle life.

LORRANE D'ORÉMIÉULX WARNER, with her husband, Langdon Warner, has visited the East several times for the purpose of studying oriental art.

EARL HERBERT CRESSY, a missionary of the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, is principal of the Wayland Academy of Hangchow.

LOWELL THOMAS concludes in this number his series of eight articles on Colonel Thomas E. Lawrence, the brilliant young Englishman who united the discordant tribes of Arabia into a solid fighting unit against Turkey and Germany. Mr. Thomas has recently sailed to Australia to deliver his travelogues on the Palestine and Arabian campaigns.

HELEN VARNEC (MRS. DONAT C. KAZARINOFF) is a Russian who has traveled extensively in Russia and neighboring countries. She came to America in 1917 after the first revolution in Petrograd.

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER is a young American writer who has been on the staff of the *Dallas News* and the *Rocky Mountain News* of Denver. She has written many ballet pantomimes and children's stories and has corresponded for Texas newspapers from the Mexican border.

CAROLYN HILLMAN, well known as a lecturer and as a writer of periodical verse, has achieved interesting results in her translations of Hindu, Chinese, Japanese and Persian verse.

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STEWART CULIN is curator of ethnology at the Museum of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. The journey of the Japanese sailors as narrated in the *Wonderful News* created lively interest more than a century ago and has been a subject of much discussion in European literature.

CAPTAIN PAIXTON HIBBEN spent seven years in diplomatic service abroad. He was correspondent for the *Associated Press* during the first years of the war, and later served in France with the 332d Field Artillery. Last fall he was detailed for duty with the American Mission to Armenia.

# ASIA

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TO D'ENTRECOLLES THE FRAGRANCE WAS LIKE MUSIC—THE FIRST FAINTLY OUTLINED NOTES OF A PRELUDE—BUT THE INDIANS BECAME DIZZY AND STARTED BACK TO THE PUEBLO

# AN ORCHID OF ASIA

## A Tale of the South Seas

By EDNA WORTHLEY UNDERWOOD

*Illustrations by Will Crawford*

JACQUES D'ENTRECOLLES and Dr. Ribot were riding together where the sand-wastes sweep back from Calais and begin to flatten out into level land. It was November, and the first dim edge of evening. The road stretched ahead, a coffee-colored, twisting thread, toward the farmhouse of d'Entrecolles, which they could see, and which was the color of the road. About it stood pale green poplars, which the wind was whipping wildly. The world was coffee-color and pale green. Over beyond the sand ripples, in a distance they could not see, a cold ocean, the color of the bending poplars, was beating against cliffs of yellow earth.

"It's no use, d'Entrecolles!" said the gray-haired doctor. "No use at all!" turning toward him a kindly, red, weather-beaten face. "My coming over to see you, and giving you first one medicine and then another is foolishness. You've got to get out of the country! You must breathe richer air than this. For three generations your ancestors have lived in the tropics. The thing for you to do is to go back there. There's something in the surroundings there that you need to keep life in you."

His companion turned upon him a face that was startling in its emaciation and began to cough as he spoke.

"Don't try to talk out here, Jacques! I should think you'd know better! Wait until we get to the house."

Later in the evening, when they were sitting in chairs drawn up in front of the fire, to which from time to time Jacques d'Entrecolles stretched out his thin hands eagerly, the old doctor took up the subject.

"You've got to go away! Your brother can take care of the estate—well enough, now—"

"But—where shall I go? And when I get there what shall I do? Must I be an exile?"

"Yes—very likely," answered the doctor, replying to the last question first. "Do? What shall you do? That's easy enough when money-making is not a necessity. You are interested in lots of things. Indulge some of your hobbies, preferably one that will keep you out of doors, in a country where the sun is hot."

Jacques d'Entrecolles's bright, dark eyes looked meditatively into the fire.

"I believe you are right. It is heat I need. This climate takes the vitality out of me."

The two men sat without speaking for a time, while d'Entrecolles turned over in his mind and then rejected vague plans for the new life that he was forced to begin.

The doctor was the first to break the silence. "I'll tell you what to do! It will combine business, health and pleasure. You are crazy over orchids. Be an orchidologist! Start an orchid farm."

"Yes, I'd like that—perhaps—"

"Now, I have the idea exactly," interrupted the other. "An old acquaintance of mine—Jean Labat—is here in Calais for a visit. He has been to Paris to put his ten-year-old daughter, Clarice, and his eight-year-old daughter, Marie, into a convent school. He was in government employ for a number of years in South America.

He got into some kind of trouble there. Nothing disgraceful at all! Some political mix-up in which he got the worst of it—which is probably to his credit. He's an orchid fancier, too! He is living now—a sort of voluntary exile because he likes the tropics—on one of the Powell Islands, southwest of India, not far from the equator, either just above or just below it. He's the only white man on the island. Now, that's the place for you to go and establish an orchid farm. I'll run across him in a day or two in Calais, and have him come over."

"That's not bad. There is nothing in the world that has fascinated me so peculiarly as orchids."

A week later, Labat drove over from Calais and, at d'Entrecolles's invitation, stayed a few days at the farm.

"The island where I am," he replied in answer to one of d'Entrecolles's requests for information, "is the most southerly and least known of the Powell groups. I do not think it is found on small maps. It is not very long and a few miles wide. In the Indian tongue it is called Vpra-na, which means 'the land where the dead come back.'"

"That must be just the place I need," said d'Entrecolles, smiling. "They say I look more like a dead man than a live one."

Jean thought so, too, but he did not say it. Had it not been for Dr. Ribot's assurance that all the man needed was change of air, he would have considered it folly for a man who looked like this to plan upon going anywhere.

At the end of the visit the arrangements were made and the plans for the new home drawn. Jean Labat and his wife, who came, on one side, of a South American Indian race, were to start for the island at once. Near the opposite end from which they lived—at a comfortable walking distance—Labat was to build a bungalow and furnish it. D'Entrecolles selected gardeners from his French farm to accompany him. He stipulated, in drawing plans for the grounds, that the front of the bungalow should form a half circle, and that the house to be set there should be bordered by a wide veranda. From this veranda he wished to look down avenues of trees that started from the building as a center and radiated like the spokes of a wheel. The other half of this circling veranda was to face the sea. The trees, which should be selected for height and size, must be cleared of vines and trimmed high to give space and air, and orchids set growing upon them. Some groups of trees—forming a square—he wished cut level on top and orchids placed here, in order to form, at some future time, an even, outspread flower-carpet. No other flower should be permitted to grow in this garden.

"This is my plan, Labat: to send plant-hunters to the cold countries, where it is inexpedient for me to go, and have them send on to you the result of their work. Now in Siberia there is a variety colored like smoked crystal. It is small and not fragrant, and looks more like a night-moth than anything else. It thrives on the cold steppe where dry winds blow. In the bogs of New England there are delicately tinted 'maiden tresses'.

"Have you been planning for this all your life?" laughed Labat, interrupting him.

"No, but I find I have read more than I thought and I am slowly recalling it—and what I've heard. The moccasin flower, too, is in New England. In the high valleys of the Alps, near the snow-line, there is a small, sweet-scented variety of a marvelous blue—almost a Wedgwood blue. There are a good many small ones in the north."

"When do you plan to reach Vpra-na, Monsieur d'Entrecolles?"

"Not for a long time! Not until the plants are blooming. I've got to get well, for one thing! It will take time to go to the flower-haunts; and it will take four years at least to adapt the plants to new surroundings. I do not wish to see the estate until everything is as I have planned it—bungalow built, plants in flower. I intend to make it the greatest orchid farm in the world, something worth a trip around the globe to see. I will arrange with my banker in Calais to look after the money end for you."

The next day he wrote to Veitch and Son of London, celebrated specialists and pioneers in cross-fertilization, to ship to Labat specimens of everything they had, and to give him advice on hybridizing.

In February, he set out upon his own long wanderings. He took ship for the Cape of Good Hope—and with grief at leaving the brother whom he loved. The precarious state of his health, the waterways to be traversed, made it possible they might not meet again. Winter rain fell like tears over the eager, boyish face that looked after him from the pier as the steamer moved away.

He went to the Cape of Good Hope in search of the waxen blossoms called *Bonatea speciosa*, which he found in reasonable abundance. He packed them in dry moss, sent them away by the first steamer and started north. He traveled slowly, keeping to the center of the continent, resting frequently and spending altogether more than a year in Africa. From Africa he sent to Labat hundreds of plants. In Madagascar he made a find—a white, six-rayed, waxen orchid, huge in size, from whose center depended long, pale green, swinging whips. The islands south of Asia he knew grew orchids in abundance. From the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal he procured quantities of tree orchids, whose flowers were little white stars, and fragrant; here, too, was a violet-hued natural hybrid (purple *Dendrobium*), the large, mauve-colored *Vanda teres*. In the Mergui Islands there were orchids of enchanting hues. In Penang he came upon a plant that at a distance the unaided eye could not distinguish from the spotted tropical spider. From the South China Sea he shipped six long boxes of white orchids that have down-hanging roots and resemble a bird of paradise; and pale blue, waxen specimens that form a trailing vine. In the Botanical Gardens of Buitenzorg, Java, they make a specialty of orchids, and he shipped to Labat seven cases. At the request of Mr. Niemenhuysen—curator of the gardens and a famous orchid specialist—he remained in Buitenzorg to learn something of methods of culture. In reply to d'Entrecolles's statement that he had written to Labat to cross the richly colored *Vanda* from Malay with the *Angraecum sesquipedale* of Madagascar, the old man replied with a heat of utterance that caused a sensation of surprise in his hearer.

"You'll learn things when you get to your estate and settle down to orchid farming! Strange things—which you wouldn't listen to in a fairy tale!"

"What do you mean?" asked d'Entrecolles.

"I can't explain! And that's the strangest thing of all. But you'll find out for yourself. Oh, I'm sure you'll be more successful than I have been! You have wealth. Your time is your own. And you are young—and good to look at." He noticed as he spoke that the face of d'Entrecolles had the golden pallor of those whose ancestors have lived in hot lands. "I shouldn't be a bit surprised—if you found out!"

"What has youth to do with it?" d'Entrecolles questioned, knowing that it was futile to probe the other matter, which interested him most.

"Youth? Everything! They are a queer lot—these orchids. They have likes, dislikes, nerves—passions—And, then, you like them differently from the way in which I like them. My interest has been purely scientific. You are nearer to them, d'Entrecolles! The other day you were standing under that purple hybrid down there—the one with the mouth the color of fresh blood and little white ripples along the edge like angry teeth—and I said to myself, 'D'Entrecolles does not look out of place among them!' You have changed, physically, too, have you not, since you have been on this quest?"

"Oh, yes!" Then he recalled how life and strength had suddenly swept back into his body like a tidal wave from an unknown deep. He had taken on flesh. His skin had grown dark. It had acquired certain coppery tints.

"And when you come to experimenting with hybrids by cross-fertilization, you'll find it's like being a god. There's no limit yet to the degree to which you can push it. You can see life, new, wonderful, which you yourself have willed, created right under your hand."

The word life gave him a peculiar thrill, as if he were in the presence of unguessed and invisible intelligence. The boundaries of the word expanded unpleasantly.

"Now I have made a plan for your journey. You won't be offended or think I'm officious, will you?"

"No, indeed! I'm grateful for advice from an expert."

"The best place to get orchids for experiments in cross-fertilization is South America. They have reached highest development there. The rarest, most wonderful flowers in the world are found in the South American jungles. I have not seen them, but a traveler, a friend of mine who is an artist, made sketches of them, which I am going to show you."

He went into the house, brought out a brown portfolio and opened it. "Now, what do you call that?" he questioned triumphantly.

"A white dove."

"I knew you'd say so! That's the orchid of the holy dove from Panama. The foot-hills of the Andes are full of orchids of different kinds. And so is Peru! Over the buried cities of the Incas they float like the souls of the dead. He—the artist who made these pictures—said that."

"To the hill-forests of Colombia you must go for the *Odontoglossum*. In the jungles of Ecuador there are trees which are enveloped with orchid blossoms. These orchids—from the old Spanish Main—are gorgeous and splendid, like the lustful dreams of the conquistadores. Did you ever see a red like that? What are these, you ask? Bee, frog, lizard, butterfly orchids. Notice, if you will, that they do not in the least resemble a flower. These I have shown you I wish you to collect first and send to Vpra-na. Now I've kept the best for the last," he added, closing the book. "And I haven't any picture



"NOW I'VE KEPT THE BEST FOR THE LAST," SAID NIEMENHUYSEN CLOSING THE BOOK. "DID YOU EVER HEAR OF THE 'DEATH-ORCHID' OF VENEZUELA?"

of this to show you. All I can do is to tell you about it. Did you ever hear of the 'death-orchid' of Venezuela?"

D'Entrecolles shook his head.

"I thought not! Not many white men have heard of it. And none has seen it. But the man who made these drawings says that he knows that it does exist. He traveled in Venezuela. Different Indian tribes told him about it. Its perfume causes either death or a narcotic sleep—to the Indians—from which they never awake in their right mind. No one has gathered it. It might not have the same effect upon a white man, you see. Now there's your chance. Go! Find it! Bring it back! If I were not so old, I'd go with you," the little old Dutchman exclaimed, his face burning with eagerness and excitement.

"I'll do it!" cried d'Entrecolles, with equal fervor.

"And you'll succeed," d'Entrecolles, because—they like you—"

"They?"

"Yes—"

He arose, said good-night, and without a word of explanation took the portfolio and went into the house.

When d'Entrecolles left Java for South America, it did not seem to him that he was setting out on a flower quest. It was as if the object of his journey had changed. It was as if he were going in search of a lost and unknown race. The dried plants that he had not shipped to Labat, he hung by the windows and around the walls of

his room. They bloomed, covering his little cabin with fantastic color and form. Then he found it was the flowers that supplied need of companionship and made the presence of his Frenchmen more and more negligible. This discovery did not please him. It made him vaguely apprehensive, like the approach of indeterminate danger. At night, particularly, did their fantastically focused shadows seem uncanny.

In the arrangement of this new journey he took the old man's advice. He went first to the West Indies, where he sought out and sent back, one by one, the flowers of which the Buitenzorg botanist had told him. As soon as this was done, he secured three trustworthy Spanish-speaking Indians and started for the jungles of Venezuela. He followed the Orinoco toward the Colombian border, inquiring at every settlement of natives if they had heard of the death-flower. Some admitted they had heard of it but declared they did not know anything about it. Others shook their heads and refused to reply. Others seemed frightened when the subject was mentioned and hastened away. When they reached Colombia, they turned north. They traveled until they saw foot-hills of the Andes and felt fresher air. Here they came upon a deserted pueblo. All had left with the exception of one old, wrinkled man, who was getting ready to follow.

"Do you know anything about the death-orchid?"

He did not answer at once.

"Do you mean the flowers that kill?"

"Yes. Can you tell us where they grow?"

"That's why we are moving," he answered vaguely. "At night their perfume is blown over here. It has made some of our people mad."

"But where is the place?"

"North—straight north; but higher in the mountains.



"DO YOU MEAN THE FLOWERS THAT KILL! THAT'S WHY WE ARE MOVING. THEIR PERFUME HAS MADE SOME OF OUR PEOPLE MAD."

In the first valley on the other side of that range there," pointing toward ripples of ash-colored summits beyond.

"Will you go with us?"

His face at once expressed such terror that it was useless to wait for an answer.

They camped that night on the site of the deserted pueblo. Just as the twilight was thickening into blackness, whiffs of peculiar, compelling fragrance came to them. It affected the senses like two high, long notes when a violinist slowly draws his bow across the strings.

With the first light, they set out for the foothills and the range of mountains to the north. Two days later,

they crossed the foot-hills and entered a pleasant, fresh valley in which there was a little river where gray herons waded, and whose bordering hills on the other side were thick with trees. They made camp under a clump of *guabos churimos*, the thick leaves of which they plucked to make beds. Red and blue macaws flew over them. Within the thickets, hidden from sight, they heard the *chilacoas* calling.

When the camp, which was near the second range of foot-hills, was nearly completed, one of the Frenchmen exclaimed: "That can't be snow shining there, on the crest of that hill! The hills are not high enough."

D'Entrecolles brought his field-glass. "No; it isn't snow. As you say, the hill is not high enough. It's flowers. Huge, white, shining flowers!"

"But we smell no perfume; so it cannot be the ones we are after," objected one of the Frenchmen.

"It might be! You can't tell. There are orchids that give off perfume only at certain hours, and different perfume on different days," exclaimed d'Entrecolles. "And sometimes they imitate scents of other flowers, just as mocking-birds imitate bird voices."

Later in the day, with the first lengthening of the shadows of the Andes, faint breaths of fragrance were discernible. To Jacques d'Entrecolles the fragrance was like music—the first, faintly outlined notes of a prelude. The Indians felt it quickly. It made them dizzy. They declared they would not stay, and grabbing up handfuls of grass to hold to their faces, they started back toward the deserted pueblo. The two Frenchmen found the odor irritating, but it did not make them ill. Its severity of effect was evidently not for the white race. The perfume increased with the night, growing stronger and stronger, like some orchestral composition rising to a climax of tone. When day had gone from the valley, leaving two far, high Andean summits rosy, the flowers began to glow with a baleful phosphorescence. An occasional flower shone out for a moment more brightly than others, and then darkened, and another took up

the glow, like an orchestra whose keys were color and light instead of tone. At midnight, the perfume lessened. At daybreak, it was gone.

For a number of days d'Entrecolles observed this hill of flowers from the distance of the camp, and felt for the first time the effect of the fateful perfume. To his French companions it was merely unpleasant. To him it was perilously pleasant. When it swept over him as he was dropping off to sleep, it bore him to a hasheesh world of visioned splendor. And the vision in its significance was always the same: He floated above a cataract more terrible and tremendous than Niagara; a cataract made,

not of water, but of fantastic, angry flowers, which were being lashed by some power he could neither see nor comprehend, from one form of life to another—on and on. And the upflung foam was a writhing agony of beauty. When day came, this vision of night remained in his mind as a definite symbol of material change. For several days he was content to watch the flowers from his vantage across the valley. They repelled and attracted him. He hesitated to invade their presence.

"It will not be difficult to procure the flowers," he declared reassuringly to his companions. "They are harmless by day. They have no light. They have no power."

The French gardeners did not feel inclined to accompany him. But at length he persuaded them. He was right. The flowers were harmless as other flowers by day. They had neither scent nor light. To the touch they were not poisonous.

For shipment they selected plants upon which the buds were starting. They packed them in dried grass. Thus sheltered from dust and moisture, they reached the Orinoco, where a steamer of the Iquitos Company bore them to the coast. Here the grass packages were crated and shipped to Labat. A letter went on the same steamer, directing Labat to cross one of the Venezuelan death-flowers—as soon as the blossom should be developed—with the flower he had obtained by crossing the great Malay *Vandea* with the *Angræcum sesquipedale* of Madagascar.

"Push this intercrossing to the highest limit! Choose the largest, strongest specimens. I am not sailing for Vprana, now. I plan to visit the Castleton Gardens in Jamaica take a look at the collection of exotics the Jesuit fathers started on Martinique, visit for a week or two the botanical gardens of Rio, and go on to Bogota to study in earnest. Bogota, you know—since you yourself told me—is the head of the orchid industry of the world."

Ten years after the departure from France, d'Entrecolles stood in the wonder-garden Labat had created. Indeed, he stood beside the botanical marvel that had resulted from the blending of the three great flowers. Labat had called it *Vita Nuova*, a name which d'Entrecolles changed, to the older man's displeasure, to *La Revenante*.

"*La Revenante*, d'Entrecolles, means dead life come back again. Can't you see that this is new life—*Vita Nuova*—which we ourselves have created?"

"I wish you wouldn't use that word *life*, Labat," replied d'Entrecolles in a new tone of vexation.

The orchid that caused this discussion, and that was, in truth, something new in the world, surpassed the others in size. It was of a nameless pale pink-violet color, which the night bleached to white. Its center was of a deep, unadorned crimson upon which shone two round, white velvet dots. From this center depended four white, satiny substances which, in the African mother-orchid, had been called whips, but which recalled to the mind of d'Entrecolles a picture by an Italian of the Renaissance. It was a picture of an angel—or was it a demon?—anyway, something beautiful, and it wore the guise of a woman; and in order to impress the idea of swift motion, that it was winging its way toward something, the artist had painted four arms.

While Labat had been experimenting with the heights of flower life, he himself had been doing the opposite. He

had been making one of the species grow backward. He had made it lose color, form, beauty, fragrance, texture, and become a pulpy, poisonous, disgustingly dotted monster. In doing this, he experienced savage joy.

As he moved about his fantastic estate, engaged in one duty and another, he became conscious that the white orchid-eyes of *La Revenante* followed him, focusing upon him everywhere their expressionless immobility. The flower bent and flecked him as he passed. And the touch was as the touch of flesh: a cold, startlingly colored, stinging flesh that left the trailing sensation of flame. The petals were white, floating, voluptuous arms. The flower clung to his fingers. It moved toward him when he approached. And it poured over him waves of sensual delight which crippled his will.

When he came up each morning from his dip in the sea to begin the work of the day, he saw the swaying curtains of bloom with fresh surety of vision. The cumulative impression made upon him was that of floating, detached symbols of human life. It was as if from some perfect distance, some vantage-point of vision, they would be focused in the eye into a complete form of living beauty, of which now each petal was a disintegrated part. They became tantalizing symbols, flower caricatures, which were beginning to cause more and more confused emotions.

"Are they life," he questioned himself eagerly, "climbing up to some glittering culmination? Or are they life dissolving in fluttering particles of charm?"

He began to talk aloud, as if arguing with himself. "The sensation that a beautiful orchid causes is not wholly pleasure. Mingled with pleasure, although in a lesser degree, there is something that resembles fear, then surprise, and to those who are sensitive, a vague, unsatisfied questioning. It is as if some monster, sensed but not seen, were trying to wing its way toward me across aeons of time." He paused in dismay at his own words.

"The rose, the lily, are beautiful—royally beautiful—but within the safe realm of little flowers. But *La Revenante*!"—he started nervously at the consciousness that he had not only spoken but thought of the orchid, at the moment, as a living woman—"La *Revenante* is beautiful with a different beauty; the perplexing, almost grievous beauty of something transcending known and definite boundaries of the flower world."

At mid-day, when he settled himself comfortably upon the bamboo couch on the veranda for his daily siesta, there fell across his face the wan, green shadows of the jungle day. He lay where he could look down the avenues from which the swaying curtains depended. As he watched them idly, the shadows of the orchids, which the semi-perpendicular sun flung upon the smooth ground, showed forms that at first were startling, at length terrifying, as they moved, combined, or parted, at direction of the wind. He could not sleep. He left the couch, defied the tropic sun and moved about his garden. Mid-day lays command of silence upon tropic life. The sun is god; the world is hushed before him. Color alone lives. In this silence, he felt eyes looking at him that he could not see nor escape.

He was glad when Vlei-la, the native girl whom Labat had educated, trained for a house-servant, and taught to speak French, joined him. Accidentally her hand touched him. The flesh of natives of the tropics, he found, is sweet and cool like the petals of the flower. Looking down upon

the almost bare brown body that walked beside him, he reflected how perfectly in place she was here, and how out of place she would be in a house in France. Reversely, he knew that not the most delicately intuited French woman could keep from being inharmonious here. Vlei-la, indeed, did not vibrate with a personality more dom-



HE HAD MADE AN ORCHID WOMAN. SHUT UP WITHIN IT THERE WAS A VOICELESS SOMETHING THAT WRITHED FOR DELIVERANCE

inant than the flowers. And he was not sure that he himself did. Nature dominated them both. Under this sun that melted everything in its blinding flame, differences and distinctions lessened.

Vlei-la caught the drift of his thinking. "We are just little dark bugs beside that, aren't we?" she questioned, pointing to the volcanic summit down whose slopes poured riotously the green life of the forest.

He laughed and agreed with her.

As they turned from one to another of the spoke-like avenues of the garden, it became evident that they were both trying to avoid a certain place, the rear corner of

the bungalow, where grew the hybridized Venezuelan death-orchid. The instant this fact became clear to d'Entrecolles, there swept before his brain a vision—the mournful, mephitic loveliness of *La Revenante*. Taking Vlei-la playfully by the arm he pulled her along.

"Come—why not this path?"

"No—no. Not—there!" she returned decidedly.

"Why not?"

She did not explain. She seemed afraid. She escaped from him and attempted to draw his mind away by changing the subject. "Look there—those gray-yellow flowers! Aren't they ugly little faces? They have long, hairy ears, silly eyes and hanging mouths—looking like this!" She tried to imitate them.

D'Entrecolles saw, as he followed her pointing finger, a band of imps exhibiting a spirit grotesque, ironic, mocking.

Vlei-la was not larger than a twelve-year-old child in France. He could hear the satiny sound of her bare feet as she walked beside him. He felt toward her the tenderness one cherishes for a pet. She marked a distance about half way between himself and the pallid flower.

When they had finished their tour of the garden, she curled up on one end of the veranda and looked with bright, tireless eyes at the blazing blue levels of the sea. She did not speak. The sea has stolen the voice of island dwellers and speaks itself with multiple power and personality. He wondered what it could be that held her attention as she sat so motionless, so silent.

Night came and lit a sudden splendor in the stars. The tropic night is not silent like the day. It is filled with noises. There is a shrieking, calling, trilling. Underneath there is a faint network of phantom sounds. He knew it was for this he had been waiting throughout the day. This had been the suppressed motive of thought and action—the longing for the hour to come when he could smell again the perilous perfume.

The consciousness that the hour had come brought its reaction: that it was duty to resist the impulse; that the hours of intoxication spent under the perfume were just as injurious as hours of intoxication obtained in a more usual way. He thought bravely that he could resist. But as he sat toying with the anticipated pleasure, a charming presence

swept over him. It inspirited like sunlight or clean wind. Something within the soul of him laughed back and joined it. As swiftly as without use of feet he was beside *La Revenante* in his perfidious paradise.

The great flower glowed sadly with a grayish lustre tinged with violet. But when he reached its side and touched it, it burst into a primrose-yellow phosphorescence. The perfume called like a voice. He pressed *La Revenante* lovingly against his cheek. He felt the cold tentacles, the satin pendants, a soft-skinned, fragrant face, in which shone two round, white, magnetic eyes, whose expressionlessness held a terrible power. The perfume



poured madness into his brain. Caressing words rose to his lips: "Exquisite waxen grotesque! Beautiful terror awaying beside me in the night! Where were you born? Under what moon of time?"

The impetuosity of his words aroused him. He turned just in time to see a white skirt disappearing around the corner of the bungalow. Vlei-la had been watching him.

Never had he felt an emotion that equaled this in intensity. It was a woman who stood beside him. With his hands of flesh he could not touch her. With the words of his mouth he could not speak to her. With his physical body he could not see her. And yet he caressed her, spoke to her, saw her. And the developing faculties which enabled him to do so were sweeping him away from ordinary life. They were dehumanizing him. These hours of overwhelming passion reverie induced by the drug-perfume were shutting off from him—or veiling—certain perspectives of memory, which were dear, and which kept alive his contact with the past.

A thin wind came crisping the tops of the tall canary trees. There was a haunting sense of cosmic change. The wind moved the flower nearer and nearer to him. It seemed to dance for joy. And the voice of the sea borne on the morning was its voice. Night had gone.

Throughout the day he slept. And the sleep had neither dreams nor remembrance. Occasionally, where its tissue was worn thin, he felt a face looking down at him. He knew vaguely that it was Vlei-la. At night, when he awoke, he was weary. He was exhausted. He felt a peculiar prostration of will. After he dressed, he took down from the wall a round mirror and looked at himself intently. He did not know what it was that impelled him to do so. It was as if he were looking for something that had not yet appeared, some change in himself. When he stepped out upon the veranda, day had already dropped in a yellow fury behind the waves.

"Don't go there tonight, Monsieur Jacques!" pleaded Vlei-la, stepping in front of him as if to bar the way.

He sat down wearily, waiting for what she would say next.

"If you could have seen your face when the great flower shed its light over you, you would not want to go. It was frightful! I should not have known you! And when you left to go to bed—just before day—the face of the flower was a white, grinning skeleton."

He looked at her helplessly. He heard terror in her tone. "Let us go out in the boat tonight. I will row you myself. And I will sing you a song of my people."

Limply he let himself be led away.

For the space of a week he did not revisit *La Revenante*. It was not because he did not feel an impulse to go, so strong that he had to fight against it continually. It was the will of Vlei-la added to his own.

He began to feel happy, light-hearted, just as of old. He began to plan for the visit of the brother whom he had loved so dearly. He could not understand why he had not seen him or made an effort to have him come to Vpra-na in all these years. It was as if he had lived them through in a swift intoxication that had dazed his brain. He and Labat were on more friendly terms. The latter told him that his daughter, Clarice, who had finished her studies in the *Sacré Cœur* in Paris, would soon be with them. He spent two happy days with the family on their

end of the island. He saw clearly that he had been at fault in the various disagreements with Labat. Life and its facts fell into their old reasonable adjustments. Almost every evening, he and Vlei-la rowed out upon the ocean.

Vlei-la saw the change in d'Entrecolles, and she determined to make it permanent. She chose early morning to destroy the great flower and the plant upon which it grew. When she came near enough to reach it, it poured a flood of perfume upon her like a sword thrust, and she staggered back toward the house, dizzy and faint. The next morning, she made another attempt, and lifted her hand, after covering her face. The arm fell limp, with a stinging sensation. Later in the day, she saw outlined fluctuatingly beneath the skin, near the shoulder, miniature red death-flowers. She showed her arm to d'Entrecolles and told him the cause.

"I am going back to Madame Labat. I am afraid of it! It will kill me if I stay. After I am gone, do not ever go near it again, Monsieur Jacques," she pleaded.

As he saw her disappear down the road that led to the other end of the island, terror assailed him. For three days, he did not perform his duties in the garden. He was careful to keep away from it. He idled by the sea. He explored the volcanic peak. He pretended he had interest in scientific investigation of the extinct crater. Each day he felt more strongly the impulse that called him back. Now the impalpable presence sometimes stood beside him in the day. Its loveliness was a sensation instead of a visual perception. The instant it came there arose a barrier between himself and all that he had loved before. With ears that were not the ears of his physical body he heard a step, a moving garment, a determined and planned approach, and *La Revenante* stood beside him. The fourth night, because he tried to think that the emotion induced by *La Revenante* reached certain heights of recompensing vision, he deliberately went to the corner of the bungalow. The great flower shone with an icy whiteness. The whiteness changed to dusky malevolence, which made him think of the dulled, day-stung eyes of the great owl. This was followed by wave after wave of perfume of varying intensity, like an angry voice that reproached. With a sense of the old, resistless charm, fear was joined.

The white eyes had the hypnotic power of evil attraction possessed by two shining, swift-turning wheels of steel. He could not look away from them. Color darkened, deepened, paled, changed, like the blushing and paling of emotion. He went nearer. Standing close beside this monstrous flower, he felt distinctly the vibrations of a seething, cruel life. Shut up within it there was a voiceless something that writhed for deliverance, for change, for power—something eager to press on to an attainment he could not foresee. *La Revenante* possessed a life as highly developed as his own, but upon a different plane. Through the ordinary medium, words, they could not converse. But *La Revenante* had found other ways.

Within his dazed brain this fact arose to confront him and to sober him. He had cultivated a flower beyond the limits of flower life. He had made an orchid-woman. The beautiful, pallid, silent flower was mocking his misery with her velvet-white, expressionless eyes. *La Revenante* was a vampire that sat upon his soul.

(To be concluded)

# ASIA

THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE ON THE ORIENT

VOLUME XX

NUMBER 8

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## Contributors and Contributions

### WILLARD STRAIGHT IN CHINA

The first of a series of articles on Willard Straight appears in this number. The series tells the story of a young American of unusual talents, working out a national problem for the United States in its international relations, as American representative on the field—in surroundings distinguished from normal American activity by the romance of oriental life in contact with the wit, intrigue and gaiety of European high diplomatic society. The problem was to effect a rehabilitation of China through the plan which is now about to go into operation in the American-English-French-Japanese Consortium for loans.

The second article, to appear in the October issue, will include Willard Straight's story of his adventure—shaven bald-headed in the guise of a lama priest—eavesdropping in the holy of holies of the Imperial Temple to see the Emperor of China in his annual ceremony of prayer. None but sanctified eyes should have seen. LOUIS GRAVES, writer of the articles, was intimately associated with Willard Straight during his last years in New York. Much of the story is from Major Straight's own diary, letters and sketch-books.

ERNEST P. HOROWITZ, formerly lecturer on Sanskrit and Hindu antiquities at Dublin University, is the author of several volumes on oriental literature.

"It is rarely that I have read anything that is more interesting than this manuscript, and altogether you have used your imagination to the fullest extent in creating the new orchid," writes Luther Burbank to EDNA WORTLEY UNDERWOOD, author of "An Orchid of Asia," the amazing story of social life in the plant world that is concluded in this issue.

DHAN MUKERJI, a Hindu, is a graduate of Stanford University who served in the English army during the war. Since then he has published a number of poems and is now in America lecturing on Indian literature.

ALICE TISDALE, the author of two books on Manchuria, has lived and traveled in the Orient for the past ten years. The greater part of this time has been spent in Antung, Manchuria, across the Yalu River from Korea.

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WILLIAM D. MCCRACKAN, journalist and author of several books on Swiss politics, is now in Jerusalem.

FLORENCE PELTIER, a successful lecturer on Japanese art, has written several books and many essays on Japanese life and Chinese and Japanese folklore.

DONALD LINDSAY is a young student of oriental literature.

STEWART CULIN is curator of ethnology at the Museum of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. The last installment of the journey of the Japanese sailors, as narrated in the *Wonderful News*, appears in this issue.

E. E. SPEIGHT, lecturer at the Imperial University in Tokyo, has translated some hundreds of Japanese folk-songs and poems into English and has assisted in translating the writings of Sir Rabindranath Tagore.

ROOPEN ZARTARIAN, one of the most illustrious of modern Armenian poets and editor of a Constantinople newspaper, was massacred by the Turks in 1915. His translator, BEDROS A. KEKLIK, is a resident of Minneapolis.

# AN ORCHID OF ASIA

## A Tale of the South Seas

By EDNA WORTHLEY UNDERWOOD

Illustrations by Will Crawford

SWINGING over the sea, the day came with a swift surprise. When d'Entrecolles went to bed, he gave directions to be called in three hours. He could not waste the day in sleep. There was something he must think about. He admitted to himself now what he had so long denied. Now, instead of resorting to vague evasions, he determined to seek reasons. As he sat in the sunlight, a face flashed upon him. He saw it with his mind, not with his eyes. Perhaps, indeed, it was the nerves of his body that saw. New senses were being developed in him, extensions perhaps of embryonic senses that all possess. He could see that they were being developed to meet this new requirement of life.

Ten years in the tropics had brought physical and mental changes, in both of which was discernible a drawing nearer to the speechless life about him. He thought less. He felt more. He relied upon instinct instead of reason. His body was more sensitively alert. His mind was duller. The crisp boundary between reality and vision was melting. The motive power of life was beginning to be, not his own mind and will, but a magnetic, irresistible power of the tropic earth. By some alchemy he was being transformed. Added to this there was an excitation of the senses caused by color and light. This was so great that beside it self-directed thinking seemed dull. One did not feel like expressing one's own thoughts so decidedly in the presence of this tremendous nature. It was easy to sink into a torpor in which body and nerves communicated in their own way with the silent life about them. In addition, the atmosphere was like a presence, a personality, embracing ranges of mood. Spicy, nameless scents were borne to him continually upon the tropic wind. The dim, steaming fragrance of the jungle was the fragrance of exuberant life. This was being inhaled into his body, mingled with his blood. An interchange of conscious and unconscious life was going on; a silent weaving together of two separate kingdoms—animal and vegetable. It was as if in Vpr-na his blood changed gradually to a sap. On this tropical island where the flaming sun made life a crucible of decomposition and reconstruction, he had noticed that the flesh of the natives was more like flower-tissue than elsewhere. Repeatedly he had thought of this when with Vlei-la. Here the growing things of the volcanic mountain suggested to him continually that there might be abnormal and sporadic extensions, both of substance and sense, toward a more powerfully sentient plane. The application of the word *Vpr-na* showed the sure instinct of unscientific jungle people. He had noticed in himself since he had been in Vpr-na, that dormant senses had been quickened without effort. It was as if a part of him had been pulled off, leaving an undersurface that was sensitive.

He had begun to be conscious of a sentient force in the growing things of the mountain above his head and his garden that overhung the sea. Here there was a converging of the planes of life. It was that point in na-

ture's perfected plan, where parallel lines, seen from a certain height and distance, become one. And he was caught in their riotous inter-lapping. There was, however, no good reason to believe, he saw, that for him this experience was an advance in life. It was just as likely to be a going down on the other side of the circle, toward the old, primeval life, in some unnamed geological period, when changing environment was developing special faculties, and the green, waving arms of the vine, with their uncertain motions at the mercy of the winds, was becoming, by infinite gradations of slow time, *determined* motion. In this experience he felt that he was describing a descending curve. For him it was a deterioration. But for the orchid, it was an upward curve, a betterment, a drawing near to some culmination of desire. In the orchid, the accumulated yearning of a voiceless flower-ace was reaching out to touch him. A flower-soul as ancient as the sea itself was drawing toward him. And its approach aroused not wonder, nor intellectual curiosity, but a vague terror, which he could neither express nor overcome. He saw clearly what had happened. He and the flower were caught in the rhythmic swing of cosmic waves, and now they were being swept together at that point of visible time that we call today, but that is really tomorrow. He saw now a new meaning in the term *La Rerenante*. It meant when the dead come back to live again a life of joy in the sun.

Now that he had admitted that he was confronting a peculiar condition based upon some fact he did not understand, that it was not the result of fancy or imagination, he made less effort to resist the drug-perfume. Every night found him under the great flower, eagerly inhaling the intoxication. There, all alone, he paced the deserted garden paths and gave himself over unrestrainedly to his perilous, polychrome festival.

The orchid does not keep to the color simplicity of garden flowers. The orchid owns only tints, shades. These color variations are so subtle, so unusual that they may not be named. They are like fractions of musical notes that may not be stated in exact mathematical terms. With the pleasure, there is mingled a feverish, tantalizing suggestiveness. They are peculiarly evocative of emotion. They stimulate the senses to perplexing pursuits. They are color spiritualized with grief. They are color intellectualized with experience. And the line of the orchid is as over-freighted with meaning as its color. These line-rhythms signify agony and revolt, with certain satin interspaces of cold triumph. As d'Entrecolles walked toward the bungalow the faces that followed him were beautiful caricatures of humanity, just as the ape and the monkey are disgusting caricatures.

He began to consider afresh this protoplasmic adventure. Was it improbable, impossible, that *La Rerenante* was a person, living upon a different plane? He knew that wherever we think we see a fixedly drawn line, we see, not the limit of fact, but the limit of our minds. Does anyone know the exact difference between animal

and vegetable protoplasm? In both are life. Life means impulse. Impulse means change—progress. Perhaps the fragile lines marking a flower carry sensation. A nerve is nothing but protoplasm.

He had made scientific experiments himself with the great flower. He had tried the effect upon it of loud and

He saw that *La Revenante* possessed an occult intelligence swifter of action and more delicate of comprehension than his own. She was the supreme expression of a race. In her persistent growth above plant life, she had sought and found places of oscillating resistance. Now she was poised and ready for flight higher.

Then his mind slipped beyond control and performed mad feats of imaginative thinking. While he sat there, meditating, the cell-eyes of *La Revenante* might be looking across space at stars—and at worlds beyond the stars—and registering impressions that were impossible for him. Just as a person climbs perilous mountains in order to look upon an enlarged world-vista, so had *La Revenante* climbed patiently to a dizzy peak of cosmic vision, and now she was reaping her reward. Who could formulate a guess as to what she was looking upon? And beyond what she saw, what was it that she dreamed? He was learning that it is the brain, not the eye unaided, that sees farthest. What was it that dwelt within him and thought? Did he know? Could he tell? Might there not be a like nameless presence dwelling within the flowers? Had he any right to say that this presence was of greater or less importance?

By daylight the face of the flower was fresh, unwearied, disconcerting, while the nights of furious brain-visions left him worn and exhausted. Beside this coldly shining, splendid youth, his body was of no more account than a withered leaf. It was a rag of flesh. He felt peculiarly ashamed, too, just now, that he must die and grow old. Then he thought of *La Revenante's* infinite prolongation of soul, whose memories had not been destroyed as his own had been. Where had been its beginning? When would it end? And in this cosmic adventure of hers, what had been the scenes by the way? In comparison with *La Revenante's* life, his own had been brief and its experiences shabby. She must have scorn of him.

He was insignificant beside her of the infinite past who had cast off life after life. He began to suffer from jealousy and envy. Was there some mighty, semi-immortal lover whom this intensified life did not burn up, as these futile visions of the brain were burning up in him the previous substance of life. Where had she been with him? Upon all the stars? What had he said to her of love?

All moods induced by *La Revenante* had this too great blending of pain. In her cold, sleepless soul a cruel ambition was hidden. There was something within him which the flower must cling to in order to gain a desire. He was rounding a cape of experience that jutted out into an uncharted sea. Was the flower's love of him an end in itself? Or was it merely a means of progression



"THERE IS A STRANGE FLOWER AT THE CORNER OF THE BUNGALOW. IT GIVES OFF LIGHT AT NIGHT. DESTROY IT AND THE PLANT UPON WHICH IT GROWS"

harsh noises, of chloroform, gases, music. In each case it had responded. And the response showed an organized attempt toward self-preservation. There was in it, too, a squandering of energy which this complication of life was squandering so recklessly in him. Sex was defined in it. A structural change toward greater strength than its Madagascan ancestor possessed had taken place. The flower had the power to perpetuate itself beyond the limits of flower-life. He had measured the temperature of the blossom. It was higher than that of other flowers. Heat means greater molecular activity. A more intense life was going on within it. It was changing more than the others. Then he recalled that the power of change "marks things which live little from things which live much." This "lives much" echoed for days in his memory.

toward something dearer and of more ancient desire? Was it love of a plant for a man as we understand love? Or was it something more irresistible for the will, more destructive for the body—chemical attraction? Were they "antagonistic affinities"? If this were true, the unified power of earth was behind it.

But it was not good for him—this experience. Indeed, it was quite the reverse. The effect of the perfume was becoming more and more injurious. He did not think his own thoughts now. He did not think or wish or will anything of his own accord. His mind was becoming by slow degrees a mirror that reflected the perverted passions of a flower. Less and less did memory frame for him pictures of the life he had lived with his brother before he came to Vpra-na. Less and less did he go over the pleasant years of wandering. Most dangerous of all, this life with *La Revenante* was beginning to seem the only real life. Any other was merely fictional. There was a something always beside him. The soul of him was never alone. Fastened to him by invisible tentacles of emotion and desire was a soul-parasite. He was beginning to speak haltingly and with a too frequent searching for the word. This was because, with *La Revenante*, he had conversed so long without the need of words.

What would happen if he could not save himself? Physicians know the ultimate effect of morphine, cocaine, opium. Those drugs give ruinous pleasure. They make those addicted to them grow old, bent, misshapen. But who knew what the effects of this perfume would be? It was greatly more dangerous because its powers were unknown. When he looked at himself in the morning, now, in the little round mirror that hung upon his wall, he saw a change. But he was not growing old or bent. Quite the contrary. He was beginning to look like a flower. A new and unwholesomely colored youth was enveloping him. He was drawing nearer to the monster that controlled him. Not only his mind was changing, but his body.

The orchids moved restlessly under the prodigious splendor of the tropic moon. One could hear faint metallic sounds like crinkling of crisp silks. Was it suffering or pleasure, or a combination of both, that motivated their restlessness? The perfume called to him like a voice. Like a voice it varied in emotional intensity. Again he suffered from jealousy. What did the radiant, satin-surfaced orchids say to each other under the moon, on these incredible tropic nights by the sea? What did they say to each other which he could not comprehend, because he was only a fragment of life broken off from the past, while they were life in its entirety? As the perfume passed over him it began to weaken self-directed thinking. The first touch made him vaguely fancy that, in the dreams of the orchid sleep, his mind was going backward just as he had made one of the plants grow backward and revert to an earlier state.

He had visions of vanished and unrecorded races. He saw faces that had been formed by a set of thoughts and emotions totally dissimilar to his own—faces such as the wildest dreams of poet or painter could not express drifted past. With the beauty and the strangeness were mingled horror and visioned cruelty. Against his will he became the recipient of tragic histories that had followed the birth of time. Out of the void blackness of the past, there rounded into visibility forms such as had not been

seen within the modern world, and faces mirroring a race-soul that held the unexpanded power of ages.

He floated above a world to which life had not come. Bare, black, jagged, mountains rose above tawny plains as limitless as oceans. Lonely waters became sullen ebony under the night, or surfaces of steel by day.

Upon the yellow slime at length fell the disintegrated dust of dead planets dropping through space. Thread-like lines shot across the wastes. Their motions were swift as if impelled by an electric flash. They invaded the earth like an army. The green lines crawled, clung, conquered. Dots sprouted upon them. The dots expanded. They took on form: round, oblong, smooth-edged, saw-toothed. Like joined like. They formed villages. The villages fought each other. They strangled, they smothered, they murdered each other. In their cold rage they leaped at the cliffs and the mountains. They circled their heights with green cords of steel. They corroded them. They crumbled their rocks to dust. They choked and checked the rivers. They leaped from place to place with a murderous fury. They were impelled only by two passions: greed and destruction. He saw pass before his eyes the battles of preglacial periods when plants invaded the earth.

Then a white curse fell with the lightning. Baffled rage of defeat vibrated through the air. There was a smoking fury of hate. Motion was taken away from them. They were bound to the earth that they had tried to destroy. They must remain motionless. They must remain at the mercy of whatever approached.

Ages and ages passed away, touching his highly keyed brain like dust circles flung from passing carriage wheels.

The green, growing things upon which the prohibition had fallen, had found their rage helpless. It turned in upon them. Its concentrated power found expression in a burst of color-fury, which wrapped the earth. Flowers were born! Millions and millions of invisible, bright burning cell-eyes, freighted with cruel memories, with cruel experiences, looked out upon the earth. When he saw them—even in his dream—he shuddered at the fact that "in organic memory there can be no shifting of truths."

The thin, cold, unsympathetic moon shone upon him as he stumbled heavily away to bed. He awoke in the late afternoon suffering from an exhaustion that was equal to illness. Whenever he slept now, the plant's influence over him was greatest. It was as if it were entwined within the recesses of consciousness, and there it drew him nearer to an unexplored life he feared.

As the day advanced he was unable to shake off the exhaustion. It was so pronounced it was like the annihilation of self. *La Revenante* set up a vibration too high for the human organism. This thought-transference poured ideas into his mind too quickly and in quantities too great for safe assimilation. *La Revenante* communicated by entire thoughts, not tiny, broken, ill-fitting word-particles. Too high a pressure had been placed upon brain and nerves.

Three months later Jacques d'Entrecolles awoke from what seemed to him a prolonged dream in the bungalow of Labat, on the other end of the island. After one of the numerous quarrels with d'Entrecolles, Labat had been impelled to go to the garden again by Vlei-la, who kept before his mind the idea of a danger which she either would not or could not explain. D'Entrecolles had shown a pitiful pleasure at sight of the older man and

begged Labat to take him away. "I haven't the will to go alone, now. I want you to take me."

Labat saw that a peculiar change had come over the body of d'Entrecolles. Evidently, too, some change had touched his mind. But Labat did not know what it was. The French gardeners were dead. And there was no use trying to get information from the sullen Indians. He believed the trouble had been caused by the dangerous Venezuelan death-flower. But there was no way to prove this.

After d'Entrecolles had been with Labat for a month he began to improve. His old self returned. But the peculiarities still marked his body. Labat now went over in d'Entrecolles's place to superintend the garden. One night after his return, when the family were at supper together, he remarked to d'Entrecolles: "The monstrous Venezuelan hybrid is dead and another is coming in its place. This bids fair to surpass the former. It bids fair to be such a flower as the world never saw."

D'Entrecolles was surprised to find that the fading of one flower and the appearing of another had no effect upon the passion that dominated him and that gave rise each day to the longing to go back.

Visitors were frequent. But he did not go over to meet them nor to tell them with pride of what he had done. He did not wish to read in the curious eyes of strangers the impressions made by the physical changes that had come upon him. He left the explaining of his wonder-garden to Labat, greatly to that gentleman's surprise. He seemed, too, to have given up his old, domineering ways.

The fame of this marvelous garden had circled the world. As a point of attraction worthy of visit it was mentioned in travelers' guides and in steamboat advertisements. The Royal Mail Steam Packet Co., of India, had just published the following statement in one of their circulars:

#### THE BOTANICAL WONDER OF THE WORLD

... the splendors of tropical orchids have up to the time of the daring and enterprising voyages of Monsieur Jacques d'Entrecolles, been only for those who could not appreciate them—for animals and serpents in the depths of impenetrable jungles. Now they are accessible to the world. A visit to this wonder-garden easily repays ...

"We had a steamer full today, Jacques!" Labat remarked one night. "They were crazy over the *Renanthera Louii* from Borneo. It has leaves three feet long. And each blossom spike is twelve feet in length. There are fifteen of these plants upon one canary tree. Right beside it, the blue *Vanda Rosburghii* has swinging draperies yards in length, which sweep the ground. Upon the side of the mountain I've built seats and a path. There visitors can sit and look down upon a block of trees whose leveled tops are covered with a carpet of rose-tinted *Aerides*. One of the women said they reminded her of curled, greedy flame-souls. And that same woman was afraid of *La Renanthe*! She declared it was a beautiful terror. I tried to get the party to stay over night. I wanted them to see the flower give off light and change color."

When Clarice came from Paris, d'Entrecolles had recovered his former mental traits. He was glad to see Clarice. He had been clinging to the thought of her

coming, and he gave himself over with determination to her company. She was slender, almost short. Her skin was pale and clear. She had heavy yellow hair and blue eyes so dark they were nearly black. She wore the latest fashions of France. She knew the gossip of the great city. She knew about the plays, the operas. She had a trunk full of books and magazines. All this brought freshly to his senses the other life he had once known. Her presence made him see the level fields of France he had loved; the crowded city streets filled with a life to which he belonged. He saw its gay, glittering boulevards by night. He heard the street cries. He felt the bitter, frost-gleaming winter upon the farm near Calais. He smelled the cold, invigorating breath of the pale sea that sent its spray in winter across the dunes. He went hunting with the brother he loved, whose face he could recall plainly now, and together they felt upon their cheeks the tingling wind. All this meant life, strength and calm reason.

The fragile, figured-muslin frocks of Clarice pleased d'Entrecolles particularly; the little girlish ornaments she wore, her high-heeled slippers and her gracefully fashioned hats. In conversation he tried continually to get her point of view, to look at things with her eyes, not because the point of view was superior, but because he felt it took him further away from something he feared. He felt he must cling to her, keep close to her, in order to save himself from something that impended. He was conscious now that there is nothing so necessary to keep close to as commonplaceness. It rules wherever men laugh and are happy. The way to live safely is to live entangled in the intricate mesh of petty daily interests. How much better would a life be with Clarice—with its pleasant and stupid frivolities, which he could contemplate with condescending good nature—than a lonely life in the midst of this tragic beauty. *La Renanthe* had kept him on the threshold of things—of love, of life. He had never intended to live in Vpra-na. He was vexed that he had wasted years there. He had planned to get well, gratify a caprice—perhaps do a unique thing in the world—and make money. He did not intend to be chained like a prisoner.

He would marry Clarice and go away. This determination brought him such relief and peace of mind as he did not think possible. He would go away forever from this glowing vegetation that drooped its disconcerting splendor over him. He would go away from the steaming jungle, whose green shadows floated always about him. He would go away from this riot of color, which disturbed the senses, and from the unresting rhythm of this blue, blazing ocean, whose sound beat within his body like a pulse.

One of the things that had hastened the proposal to Clarice and the arrangement with Monsieur and Madame Labat for the wedding, was a marked passage in a scientific book belonging to Labat, which he had picked up from the table, and which opened to the following sentence: "Continued pressure upon living tissue, by modifying the processes going on in it . . . gradually diminishes and finally destroys its power of resuming the outline it had at first. Thus the matter of which organisms are built up is modifiable by arrested momentum or by continual strain . . ."

With Clarice he planned the buying and furnishing of a home in Paris. She should have her carriage, her box at the opera; in short, she should be a great lady. He



CLARICE LAY UNCONSCIOUS ON THE GROUND. THE BALEFUL FLOWER HUNG ONLY A FEW FEET ABOVE THE GIRL'S FACE AND SHADOWED IT WITH WIDESPREAD PETALS

described to her the farm near Calais, and his brother. In a short time, he would be with his brother again. Then he would make up richly for these years of neglect. Then he would explain how it had come about. The future seemed clear.

Together they spent happy days in which d'Entrecolles was conscious of a striving, an insincerity on his part. He was trying to wish for the things he planned with Clarice. The less he really wished for them, the harder he tried. He clung to her as a child clings to its mother when it fears something. He taught her to manage a little sail-boat. He taught her to swim. One early morning as he saw Clarice floating down through the bright,

aquamarine water, which had a dizzy, magnifying quality, he thought that in just this way *La Revenante* had floated down through cycles of glittering ages, from the visioned contour of some former life. And he had happened to come upon her in one of the myriad moments of progression. The vividness of the impression was uncanny. It displeased him. He tried to put it away upon the instant. He did not wish even to remember. Later in the day, another picture came to him to make him realize how powerful was that past he was avoiding so carefully. He recalled how sometimes he used to feel he had pleased the strange flower, and its petulant soul was happy, and it had laughed. This laughter was com-



municated to him in sensations that were neither pain nor pleasure, but a gentle shock to the intelligence. The longing to go back still possessed him. Daily he fought against it.

"But why do we not marry and go to France?" questioned Clarice for the hundredth time. "What are we waiting for?"

"Nothing," he replied. "Nothing at all."

How could he tell her when he did not know? It was his wish, too, to marry and to return to France forever. No one was more eager than he to get away. What it was that prevented him, he could not tell.

The only person who saw and knew the reason was Vlei-la. She said to Clarice when they were alone, "If you will do as I tell you, things will come out right—and in a short time."

"What do you mean?"

"This! Tomorrow morning, before daylight, while Monsieur, your father, is still sleeping, you and I will go to the orchid garden together. There is a great strange flower there, at the corner of the bungalow. At night it gives off light and changes color. Take the hatchet from the shed-room with you, and destroy it, and the plant upon which it grows. Then you will see a difference in Monsieur d'Entrecolles! Then things will be arranged at once as you wish."

Clarice tried to probe this amazing statement of Vlei-la's. But the sullen nature of the Indian reasserted itself under questioning, and she remained silent.

The next morning, while the household were asleep, they went to the garden. Vlei-la waited in the road below the slight elevation upon which the bungalow was situated, explaining to Clarice that the perfume made her ill and she did not dare go nearer. Clarice went alone to where *La Revenante* shone dimly in the dusk. Vlei-la waited what seemed a long time. Clarice did not return. The house was beginning to be astir. Soon Monsieur would come to make his daily round. She herself did not have the courage to go after Clarice. When day came she turned back by the road along which they had come. She met Labat. She told him the circumstances in detail. He ran to the garden. Clarice lay unconscious on the ground. *La Revenante* had bent down until the baleful



HE FELT THAT THE SOUL OF HIM HAD ESCAPED AND HAD FLOATED AWAY

flower hung only a few feet above the girl's face, and shadowed it with widespread petals.

The little steamer was dispatched to the nearest inland for a doctor. When the doctor reached Vpra-na, Clarice was dead. And a most peculiar change had taken place in her. Her eyes were blinded and the iris was perfectly white, as if it had been burned with an acid. The pale cheeks showed crimson color like the high red of fever. The doctor said Clarice had died of a violent attack of meningitis, which often caused blindness, and left spots upon the body. Vlei-la told the doctor and the family that Clarice had been killed by the perfume and the touch of the great flower, and, by way of proof, she showed upon her own arm, near the shoulder, red spots exactly like the spots upon the face of Clarice. The doctor merely laughed at the idea and shook his head.

"Look at Monsieur d'Entrecolles, if you do not believe the influence of the flower!" retorted Vlei-la, angrily. The doctor turned and looked at him. His eyes became bright-pointed and quizzical. His face showed that some quick, startling thought had touched the brain, but he said nothing. He would make no admission. When he was climbing into the steamer to go back, he turned to give one last, searching look at d'Entrecolles.

Monsieur Labat and his wife made up their minds to return to France to join Marie, their other daughter. And they determined to take Vlei-la with them. They asked d'Entrecolles to go, too.

He shook his head sadly and said he was going back to the bungalow. Vlei-la attempted to dissuade him, but she was unsuccessful. He grieved over the death of Clarice. He was gloomy and silent. He seemed to feel self-accused, as if, in some way, he were accountable. He stayed on with the family for a few days and spent his time in turning idly the pages of piles of old books and pamphlets.

When he gave himself over again to the influence of *La Revenante*, the work of destruction was swift. Once there had been something in his eyes that made men love him. That was fading now. The human light was dying. The first morning he looked at himself in his



little round mirror he saw it flickering; a fleeting wisplight, as if far within and below a surface. The perfume of *La Renegante* was establishing in him a different life-rhythm. It was impressing upon his brain the pattern of a different thought-and-action life. Under the deepening brown of his skin the coppery tints looked of reddish hue and took on contours of changing charm. They floated over his body as a thought floats across the brain. When he first realized what was happening, he succumbed to such terror that in the sickening nerve contraction that followed, he felt that the soul of him had escaped and floated away.

A change equally great had taken place in *La Renegante*. It floated more sovereignly upon the air. It recalled the sensation made by a bugle's ringing note of victory. It exceeded other flowers in size. It was more than a foot and a half in diameter. The leaf petals were thicker. They more closely resembled flesh. The round, white, velvet dots seemed now to have outlined upon them deepening circles of darker shades, focusing slowly into twin expressions of consciousness. The red velvet center was more mouth-like. Tiny white teeth edged it. It possessed power of independent motion. Its fragrance was a reasoned organ-scale of perfume-tone marvelously adapted to expression. Over it hovered vaguely the semblance of a human face. The firm presenting of its leaf-surface to the wind indicated peremptory will. It was as if it were being dilated by another soul. It was as if the unheard-of and unbelievable transfer had taken place.

After the shock of fear in which d'Entrecolles felt that his soul had escaped, there was nothing to hold longer the body of him together. There was nothing to keep it from describing more and more a hideous and unhuman expansion. Gradually his mind faded. Nothing remained in the old way of organized intelligence. Motive power became perfunctory, muscular memory, the repetition of certain fixed habits established in the flesh. His mind had dissolved in the unexplored vastness of an ancient life.

Just before Labat sailed for France he came over, inspired by the insistence of Vlei-la, to make one last effort to induce d'Entrecolles to return on the steamer, with them, to his old home. D'Entrecolles was lying on the bamboo couch as Labat rounded the corner of the road that brought the bungalow in view. He came near enough to see him plainly. The first glance made him know that it was useless to speak to him. Upon the couch, facing him, he saw a crumpled, radiant-hued horror of flesh. The eyes had become the eyes of the great ape. A puzzled, defeated inquiry shone brightly

within them. D'Entrecolles had taken on flesh. The cheeks, exactly in the center, were pendulous as petals. A tilting forward and curving over of the ears was traceable. The muscles that control the mouth had relaxed. It hung open and showed white tooth-edges. The increased flesh was not distributed evenly over the body in the ordinary way. There were astonishing irregularities, which echoed human standards basely. There was an increasing attempt to simulate something else—some other form of life.

What had been beautiful in petal texture was revolting when translated into flesh. The human eyes whence intelligence had fled were inferior to the white velvet dots upon the flower. The body suggested to Labat the result that had been obtained when d'Entrecolles had made one of the flowers grow backward. As he stood there watching, he thought the flower curtains reached out and out, and tried to swing their blossoms nearer, as if they knew that the shape upon the veranda had become one of them.

But d'Entrecolles felt nothing now. He saw nothing. He feared nothing. The splendid visions were no more. No more did the nerves respond to emotion. The helpless flesh was a riot of changing colors. The helpless flesh alone lived. Occasionally, as a shiver passes over water, the expression of his lost self passed over his face for a moment. But the mind had had nothing to do with it. It was the transient thrilling of molecular memory.

His body had become something for a monster to batten on. Each day it took on fresh repulsiveness. The colors—which now contained disgusting suggestions of decay—blazed out, changed tint, faded, in the manner in which d'Entrecolles first saw the death-flower give out light so long before on the slopes of the Andes in Colombia. Labat realized that there were probably no bounds to this disorderly growth. He knew that in the vegetal kingdom there is no limit to growth until death stops change. The body was caricaturing the monster d'Entrecolles had hated so long—and feared.

Labat returned to his family. He knew that d'Entrecolles was past help now. And he wished to spare himself the unpleasantness of a closer view.

As days went on, the hideous changes in the body progressed. The ears curled over more and more. But they still kept something of their old power of sound reproduction; and they bore to him the ancient voices of unnumbered seas, unsleeping, which shook what little nerve-resistance still remained within him, with the rhythm of destruction. And before the eyes that neither saw nor knew color any longer, blazed the tragic, lazulite splendor of the tropic ocean.

*The End*

