

Weird Tales



MARCH, 1945

Cover by A. R. Tilburne

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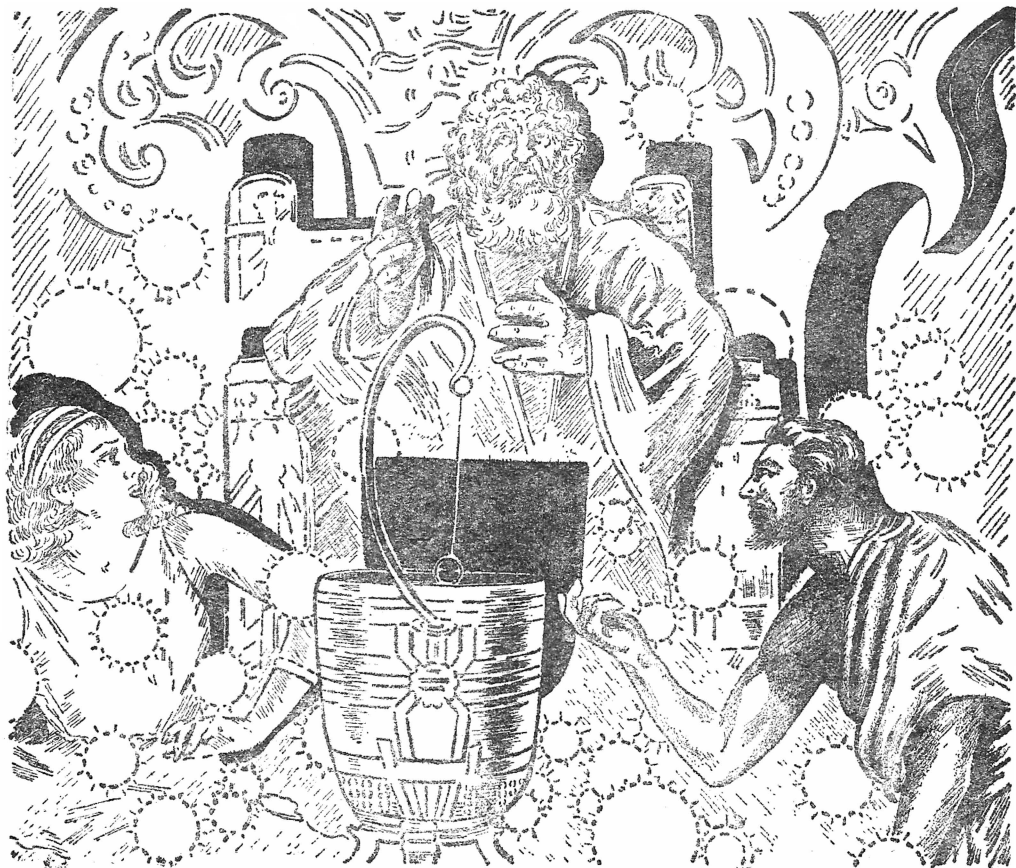
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D. McILWRAITH, Editor.

LAMONT BUCHANAN, Associate Editor.

In the Beginning



By *H. BEDFORD-JONES*

JASPER CONKLING is not a queer fellow at all. He is head of Conkling & Strauss, importers, a pretty keen business man, and like most men who have attained sixty or so, knows a good deal that he doesn't broadcast.

As his lawyer and fairly intimate friend, I was aware that he had a certain leaning

toward the occult and that was all. Probably he took me for a hard-headed unbeliever.

He was right about that. I am.

When he broke this story to me, I thought at first he had gone off his nut.

"What would you say," he began, "if I told you that my office safe contained a link

Heading by *A. R. TILBURNE*

Most men who have attained sixty or so know a good deal they don't broadcast—or can't . . .

with the philosophers, magicians and soothsayers of past ages?"

"It's entirely possible," I rejoined. He fingered his white goatee and mustache, smiled slightly, and his brilliant, piercing eyes twinkled at me.

"But if I went further and said that this link was articulate and could relate its history and experience in such a manner that these could be made into coherent stories?"

"I'd say your agile mind was slipping," I replied, "or else that some drugstore spook-chaser had you under his thumb, which amounts to the same thing."

He chuckled. "My boy, I'm going to surprise you. I'm telling you cold facts. Also, they will be supported, or at least credited, by the thousands of people who today are in more or less constant communication with the other world."

I relaxed. "Bosh! Jasper Conkling, have you become converted at your age to the inane mouthings and doubletalk of spirit mediums and street-corner charlatans?"

"You misapprehend," said he, with a quiet earnestness that was impressive. "I grant you that professional mediums, spiritists and so on are the bunk. I'll go farther and say that anyone, *anyone*, who exploits the occult for gain of any sort, is a rascal. If he had some occult power in the first place, as many have had, and used it to these ends, it was withdrawn from him. That is the first law of the supernatural."

"What the devil do you know about the supernaural?" I demanded. He chuckled. He chuckled again.

"More than you'd imagine. On the other hand, there are countless people today, and always have been, who do possess occult knowledge or powers, unsuspected by any around them. They keep their mouths shut, wisely, about it. They have no dealings with the false prophets who chase the dimes and dollars of the credulous."

"What do you mean? Can you rattle off some incantation and call up a ghost?"

"My boy, I'm speaking of plain, common-sense, practical things, like the brass cup now in my office safe. I can give you the notes of its memoirs, if I may so term them."

"A cup?" I echoed. "Did you say a cup?"

"I said a cup. A brass cup." His shrewd blue eyes were twinkling again. "Later, if you're interested. I can show you this object

at work—though I cannot yet explain its workings. I hope to do so later. If you'd care to take the notes I have regarding its origin and expand them into suitable form, you may do so."

"Very well," I said, to humor him. As a client, his account was worth a large sum annually, and I was not fool enough to chuck it up.

"But mind you," he added gravely, "while perhaps these memoirs cannot be substantiated, the existence of this cup is a historical fact, as far back as the sixth century AD at the very least. Here are the notes; you weave them into a yarn as you like."

I took the bulky envelope of typed pages he thrust at me, and when I got home laid them aside and, for a few days, forgot them. Jasper Conkling's talk of plain, practical things rather tarnished the gloss of illusion; had he declared this to be arrant black magic, curiosity would have tempted me to jump into it.

But the moment came when I opened the envelope and delved into the typed pages, and from the very first sentence, the lure took hold of me. "It is gainful knowledge to make dead men speak the truth." Curious, almost sinister words!

IF THAT cup spoke the truth—and I say "spoke" advisedly—what a strange link it made with Greek and Roman fumbblings at the occult, with Gothic and Saracen necromance, with wizardry of old France and Germany! The pages to hand dealt only with its origin. This was two thousand years ago, in the day when the sage Apollonius lived in Tyana and was world-famed as the master of all wisdom, and beneath the shady old fig-tree by the harbor mouth sat deep-eyed Cleon, architect of the new temple being built in honor of the earth-mother. A pleasant man, Cleon, an athlete until a falling block of marble crushed one foot in youth; now he limped, walking with a stick, and the Greeks who worshipped beauty turned their eyes from him, and the woman whom he loved was forced to see him no more. Helen was her name, and Agias her father was president of the city council and a merchant whose ships traded to lands afar.

If she could not see Cleon, at least she could and did go to Apollonius, the master of healing, who was called a wizard because

in his search for medicinal art, then thought to be magical, he had traveled over the known world and had pierced the secret mysteries of all people. He was the only Greek, other than Plato, to have passed the veil of Isis and gained the secrets of the Egyptian masters, and now he was an old, old man who healed without fee and loved all men, and was loved by them.

Helen came to him and clasped him about the knees, after the manner of a Greek suppliant, and broke into tears. She was a slim golden creature, too slim for beauty—the Greeks liked 'em plump—but she had a way with her. When they called her Helen, which meant "taker," they were right.

"Help him, Apollonius!" she begged. "Cleon is your friend; help him! They're plotting against him—my father, and that rascal Thyrax who hopes to marry me, and Captain Hiram, the Sidonian shipmaster who serves my father."

"What are they plotting?" demanded the sage, blinking at her.

"I don't know. I can't find out; but they mean to have his life. Thyrax hates him because I love him. My father hates him because he limps, and is not wealthy, and loves me. Captain Hiram is a hard, evil man who hates everything and everyone."

"Is that the master whose big galley is just back from Alexandria, and lies unloaded at your father's wharves?"

"Yes, yes. Oh, you must help Cleon! No one else can help him. You can do anything, and you are his friend."

"But I cannot heal his injured leg, child," said Apollonius sadly. "Many things I cannot do. Wisdom can help itself, but can rarely help others. Still, Cleon is a brave fellow and has a heart of gold, and is beloved by the gods. I'll see what I can do."

She rose, all tears and laughter, and flung her arms around him in joyous gratitude. Apollonius kissed her cheek, not without a sigh, and patted her shoulder.

"There was a time—" he said, and checked himself. "Why, child, these arms of yours are muscled like steel!" he exclaimed in surprise. "You make me afraid."

"Of what?" she asked, smiling.

"The future," he answered darkly. His wisdom had many secrets. Now he would say no more, but put her from him and bade her return home and trust to him.

But it was too late; the hour had already struck. Even while they talked here, the heavy-browed Agias and two other elders of the council had been visiting the temple construction.

Cleon received them hospitably, gave them seats in the shade of the wide fig-tree, and discussed his plans with them. He was surprised by the friendliness of Agias; instead of his usual hostility, the merchant showed confidence and warm approval of the work, complimenting him highly.

"I would like your opinion on something," Agias said to him. "One of my ships, as you know, has just arrived from Egypt—she's not yet unloaded. Well, Cap'n Hiram had a chance to pick up several pillars from the temple of Demeter at Tanis; that's the Greek colony near Alexandria, you know—a very ancient city."

"Oh!" exclaimed one of the councillors. "He brought them for our temple of Demeter here, did he?"

Agias laughed. "That was his idea; but can they be used?" He's due at my house now with his reports. Why not come along, everybody? And you, Cleon. I don't know whether you can use those pillars here; if you can, I'll contribute them gratis to the work. And, by the way, he brought some excellent wine of Cyprus. I'd like you to try it."

NO ONE had to be asked twice, and the party set off at once for the pleasant villa of Agias in the upper town. On the way, Thyrax met and joined them, so that they made a round half-dozen in all.

Cleon was a trifle suspicious of the merchant's sudden cordiality, and was well aware of the feelings of Thyrax—he reciprocated them fully, having no love for this coldly scheming man who aspired to Helen's love. Praise of his work had dulled the sharp edge of caution, however, and when Captain Hiram joined the party and spoke with admiration of his architectural skill, Cleon quite warmed to the dark Sidonian. Also, Agias brought out a precious silver goblet from Crete, and insisted on toasting the architect of the new temple, which was a pleasant honor.

That Cyprian wine was rich and heady, and the slaves kept the cups filled, and by the time they got around to discussing those

pillars, Cleon had put away more than he realized. Captain Hiram's warm praises were pleasant in his ears, too.

"There are four of the pillars," said the captain after another drink. "Not large, and instead of being plain they are exquisitely sculptured. They have neither capitals nor bases—just the marble pillars. They are said to have been brought from Greece long ago, and to have been carved by Pheidias himself."

"But they're Egyptian, all the same," spoke out Thyrax. The Sidonian assented.

"Yes, of course."

"And it's quite impossible to use Egyptian pillars in a Greek temple. It can't be done," asserted Thyrax positively. "The proportion and shape—"

"Why, that's nonsense," broke in Agias. "I never heard of such a thing! What do you say, Cleon? You're an architect."

It was too good a chance to set Thyrax back on his heels. Cleon jumped at it.

"How high are they?" he asked.

"About eighteen feet," Captain Hiram replied. "But damned heavy."

"You set 'em down at my temple construction, and I'll put 'em up in a week," he said confidently. "I have the exact place for them—to hold up the cornice on the east front. No other pillars there, so they won't have to match anything else—"

"You'll ruin the whole work!" exclaimed Thyrax vehemently. "You'll spoil the entire temple and make the city ridiculous! I tell you it can't be done!"

A violent argument burst forth, considerably heated by the Cyprian wine. The city councillors were in alarm lest the temple be ruined; Cleon was overjoyed to have Agias on his side against Thyrax, and stuck to his contention.

Captain Hiram could give no description of the columns, except that they were marvelously carved.

Cleon tried to keep his head, but came close to blows with Thyrax, who finally threw a heavy purse on the table.

"Five hundred pieces of gold says it can't be done—and the city council to be the judges!" said he furiously.

"That's a fortune," rejoined Cleon. "I've nothing to match it—"

"You have brains," Thyrax countered mockingly. "What! The famous architect

can't support his own notions? You do well to be afraid, you rascally upstart!"

"That's the price of a first-class slave," said Captain Hiram, laughing. "Match it with yourself, Cleon! Wager your freedom against the purse!"

This, eventually, was just what Cleon did. Infuriated by Thyrax, his judgment ruined by the wine, he cast prudence to the winds. A scribe was called. The wager was duly written out and witnessed by all present. The columns were to be so placed as to be approved by the council and the citizens; failing which, Cleon was to be sold as a slave and the money handed over to Thyrax. Success meant that the purse of gold would go to him. The time element was extended to a month, however.

Captain Hiram promised to deliver the four columns on the morrow.

NEWS of the wager spread like wildfire. While the city was ruled by the council, every citizen had a voice, and civic pride ran high; council and citizens were to be the judges, and a good thing too. There would be no spoiling the looks of this temple to please an architect's whim. The average citizen was a pretty good judge of art, as well.

Yet the very thought of incorporating in this temple four pillars from the famous old city in the Nile delta, and said to have been carved by the hand of Pheidias himself, hundreds of years ago, was inspiring. Public sentiment was fairly balanced. No one cared a hang whether the wager were won or lost; all that mattered was the temple, but this mattered vitally, because heavy taxes had been levied to pay for it. The excitement began to rise daily.

Apollonius, who had been called over to Samos to help combat an outbreak of plague there, came back home to find a despairing note from Helen asking why he had not intervened. He read it, heard the news from his slaves, and shook his head. Donning a clean white chlamys with scarlet border—he was not above a trifle of vanity in his old age—he took staff in hand and stumped downtown, his white hairs and venerable beard blowing in the breeze.

As usual, quite a crowd tagged after him, for he was easily the most famous man in the city, and whenever he went abroad peo-

ple thronged around begging for charms or miraculous cures or bits of wisdom.

But today he sent them all packing, and made his way to the new temple, where Cleon's table was set beneath the shady fig-tree. The table was heaped with sketches and writing materials, and Cleon sat staring at nothing. He jumped up as the sage approached.

"Pardon, master—I did not see you coming. Here, take my stool."

"You look like a stricken man, my friend."

"So am I, by my own folly," said Cleon. "I'm a fool!"

"No; you walked into a trap," rejoined Apollonius. "I know about the wager; I tried to warn you, but it was too late. Tell me the rest."

Cleon walked over to one of the four columns, laid nearby and covered with canvas. He laid one of them bare. It was a beautiful shaft of marble, barely six inches thick at the bottom, rising and swelling until, halfway up, it became the figure of the goddess Demeter, whose uplifted arms were ready to support a cornice above.

"Look at it!" he said bitterly. "The others are similar—tiny shafts at the base, widening into full figures above."

"I see nothing wrong with it," said Apollonius. "Indeed, it seems exquisite. Of course, I am no architect. I can discourse of medicine, of healing herbs, or philosophy and the wisdom of the gods. I deal with the clouds, not with stones."

"I've been working over it for days, all in vain," said Cleon gloomily. "A pillar or column cannot rest upon so tiny a base—there must be a pedestal of some sort. It looks like a bottle upside down. Here, glance at these sketches—I've tried in every conceivable way to make the things look proper. It is impossible. No one knows how they were placed in that temple in Egypt. . . ."

He raked over his countless sketches, making the point clear. He had sketched bases of every imaginable kind for those four columns, and in every case they looked grotesque. Apollonius suggested inverting them; this was all very well, except that the figures would then be standing on their heads.

For an hour, the matter was argued on every side. Apollonius told of how Helen had begged his aid; but now, as he said frankly, he was powerless to give any. The ingenuity of the trap was deadly. There was no escape from it. No possible way appeared in which those pillars, with their spindly narrowing bases, could be placed.

"And yet," said Apollonius thoughtfully, "Pheidias placed them and made them, and he was the greatest sculptor and artist of the ages!"

"Then let him tell us how," said Cleon, with a despairing laugh. "I'm done. So far as I can see, the thing's impossible. I'll become a slave for life, and serves me right for being a fool."

The old man started slightly, at those words.

"My son, Pheidias might indeed tell us," he said gravely. "There is a way."

"I'm not jesting," snapped Cleon.

"Nor am I. I have never used this way, this means, to talk with the dead; yet it is gainful knowledge to make dead men speak the truth! I heard from the priests in Egypt of the method. If you like, we may try it. But first I must warn you."

Cleon, startled, regarded him with comprehension. "Do you speak of magic?"

"So it is called; whenever people do not understand a thing, they call it magic. Yet I must warn you," went on Apollonius earnestly. "A penalty is attached to the use of this method to serve personal ends, as in this case."

"Anything's better than slavery," said Cleon. "Even death. I'm not afraid of death; but I dread slavery."

"Death, to the uninformed, is always a heavy thing, but the wise man smiles at it," said the sage. "Have you any knowledge of graving in metals?"

"Every architect must have such knowledge," said Cleon.

"Very well. Search in the shops for a cup of brass, good solid brass. It must be a span across the top, and at least a span deep."

"Easily found," said Cleon promptly.

"Ah, but you must work upon it! Inside this cup, a third of the way down from the rim, you must engrave the letters of the alphabet, so that they run clear around the

cup. And to one outer edge of the rim, attach a small brass ring. That is all. Do this, bring it to my house tomorrow evening, and I shall furnish the rest."

"Master," said Cleon, wide-eyed, "surely you do not deal in sorcery?"

"You fool, haven't I more sense, at my age?" barked the philosopher. "I must see Agias now and arrange to have Helen come to my house also; she must take part in this work. Sorcery, magic, mumbo-jumbo, wizardry—call it what you like. You have an educated brain and should know better. I suppose you think I can mumble some incantation and pluck a demon out of the air! Well, perhaps I could. At least, it can be done. But how am I to explain natural laws to idiots? This is merely natural causation. . . ."

Snorting in his beard, he seized his staff and stumped away, still growling. Cleon stared after him, then broke into a laugh.

"Magic or not, what's the difference?" he said. "He's lending his help, which is the main thing. Talk with the dead, indeed! I'd talk with the gods themselves or the Lord of Hades if it would get me out of this trap!"

Just the same, it was a trifle startling to talk in that matter-of-fact way about speaking with the dead. What to Apollonius was pure matter-of-fact, to others was apt to be somewhat hair-raising.

Little Cleon cared; his faith in the sage was absolute. And the prospect of seeing Helen was heartening. He had not exchanged a word with her for weeks past, so strictly did Agias keep her guarded by slaves. So he went to work at his assigned task hopefully.

It was not difficult to obtain such a cup as was desired; he got a handsome, heavy cup that stood solidly on three feet, made fast the ring as ordered, and set to work on the alphabet. This required nicety of craftsmanship, and was not finished until sunset of the following day.

THE daylight died, the stars came forth. The cup wrapped and under his arm, Cleon made his way to the house of Apollonius, going to the rear entrance. A slave admitted him and led him to the private apartment of the sage, through rooms whose

walls held cases of manuscripts. The house had been decorated by a Cretan artist, and everywhere were seen the strange painted sea-monsters such as ranged in the palace of King Minos at Crete.

In the inmost chamber, an austere room lighted by a tall bronze Etruscan lamp, was waiting Helen. She started up as Cleon entered; he set down the cup and folded her in his arms—a meeting of silent, tense emotion too deep for words.

"Where is Apollonius?" he asked at length.

"With my father—oh, yes, he insisted on coming. Apollonius will manage him. I'm supposed to be quite ill." She laughed a little and drew back. "Cleon! Is it all true, what Apollonius told me? Yes, of course it is—and yet, so strange, so incredible! But here he comes—I hear his staff—"

The sage himself strode into the room and greeted Cleon with a growl.

"Well! Agias is safe for the present. Let's see that cup." He unwrapped the brazen cup and inspected it. "Well enough. Sit down, you two, at the table under the lamp. Now don't pester me with questions. Obey me, and fear nothing."

The table-top was empty. A jar of water stood nearby, and taking it, Apollonius filled the cup partly full, until the water was nearly up to the graven letters. He set the cup carefully on the table, then produced a cord and a short rod of brass.

The base of this rod he fitted into the ring on the lip of the cup, which held the rod upright. The top was bent over in a curve and was fitted with a ring, through which he slipped one end of the cord. This was a heavy three-fold cord of silk. He drew it through to the end, which was fastened to a light brazen circlet or ring. Thus, the cord with its ring was suspended directly over the cup. He lowered the ring until it was inside the cup and almost touching the water, then seated himself.

"Now," he said, separating the loose ends of the cord into three parts, "each of you hold, with me, one of these strands. Cleon, have you writing materials?"

Cleon produced a wax tablet and stylus, and laid them ready.

"No talk," went on Apollonius gravely. "Fasten your eyes and thoughts on the ring

hanging inside the cup. I'll do any talking that's necessary."

To Cleon, the whole performance looked silly. He did not know what to expect; and assuredly there was no necromance at work. The light was bright; the gods were not invoked; there were no incantations or other indicia of wizardry. He was rather disappointed, and it was hard to fasten his mind upon that brass ring, with Helen so close. His foot found hers beneath the table, and her blue eyes danced at him.

The silence became heavily oppressive. Nothing happened. Apollonius sat gravely intent, his massive features like rock. Cleon shifted position restlessly, until Helen's foot touched his, and her smile warmed his heart, and he quite forgot what he was here for. He knew from her words that Apollonius had talked with her regarding this work and no doubt had extended his vague warnings.

He stiffened suddenly as her face blanched. Following her startled gaze, he looked at the ring inside the cup. It was moving. The cord on which it hung was swinging. His eyes darted to their three hands, holding the three strands of the cord; not so much as a finger was twitching, and only a decided pull could have moved the cord—but the ring was swinging, swinging, circling ever wider and wider. . . .

"*Ting!*" With gentle tinkle, it struck the side of the cup.

"Write down the letter it touched," said Apollonius.

Cleon obeyed. The cord was spinning again, the brass ring was again in motion; it touched another letter, and continued its course. How did it move and why? There was none to answer. There was nothing to explain.

"Very curious," said Apollonius musingly. "I never played with this toy before. How the Egyptian priests could have used it, I cannot say, with the abundance of characters in their hieratic script. We have only twenty-four letters in Greek, yet they have barely enough space on that cup. . . . Cleon! What is written? What is the word?"

The cord had ceased its motion, the brass ring spun a little and hung quiet. Cleon looked at his tablets.

"Ask!" he said, impressed in spite of himself. "Just the one word—ask!"

"Very well," said the sage. "First, with whom are we speaking?"

Gradually the cord picked up motion, the ring swung, and began to strike the side of the bowl. Helen was watching, wide-eyed, startled, as those letters were touched. All three were spelling the words as they came—no need of the tablets now.

"The guard!" said Apollonius. "Very well, guard. We wish to speak with Pheidias the sculptor or with one of his master-workmen. Can he speak with us?"

Almost at once the cord moved, the ring swung. Came only one word: "Wait."

THEY relaxed, stealing glances one at another. Apollonius smiled grimly as Cleon bent dark brows upon him in unuttered questions.

"Ask me not," he said. "Even to a Magus, a seer who knows all the mysteries, there are things too simple to be explained."

"You did not pull the cord," said Helen, wondering. "I watched. Nor did I. Nor Cleon. Who did, then?"

"Perhaps all three," said the sage quietly. "What does it matter, if answers come to what we ask? In the other world is no time or space, as we know them. Now take down the letters as they come, Cleon, for we shall need to refer to your tablets later. What is said will not be repeated. . . . With whom are we talking?"

The ring was swinging, gathering momentum, and this time it began to strike the cup more rapidly, with greater force. Came the answer: "Pheidias is here."

"We ask information," Apollonius said, as though to some other person before them. "In the name of the gods! Four pillars have been brought here from Tanis, to be erected, and yet—"

He broke off, as the ring swept into motion and interrupted him. Cleon sought in vain to pierce the mystery of this motion. That he was not causing it, he well knew. Nor was Helen, for she did not know how to write. Yet words came, and came fast. Apollonius, then? Those strong, beautiful old fingers were absolutely quiet; there could be no trickery here.

"I know," came the words on the tablets of wax. "I understand your problem. The answer is simple indeed. Each column needs

a pedestal in the form of a lotus-blossom, the petals rising to a height of four feet, the column rising from the center. Try it, Cleon. Make the sketch now, while I wait."

The ring fell motionless.

For the first time, Cleon felt a tingle of awe, of terror—drowned in a great wave of comprehension. Of course, of course! Feverishly he sketched an outspread lotus bud, half open, with the pillar rising from it—the lower tapering base concealed by the petals. The result was perfect.

"Magnificent!" he cried. "Look! It is the solution!"

The ring moved, the words came in reply. "Not quite. One petal too many."

"We thank you, Pheidias," said Apollonius. A light perspiration bedewed his wide brow. "We thank you humbly for coming."

For the last time, the ring moved and struck.

"All effort is progress. You have accomplished a thing, but whether for good or ill I know not. We are only men like you; death is but stepping through a door. Farewell."

The ring spun idly and fell into rest. There was a dull sound, as Helen fell half across the table, senseless. Cleon sprang to her side.

"Leave her be; she is not harmed," said Apollonius, wiping the sweat from his face. "It is only loss of energy. Well, you have your answer! Here, let me have charge of her. You have your own work. Go to it at once; time enough for love when success is won."

With sudden, unexpected show of strength, Apollonius lifted Helen in his arms and bore her from the room, calling his slaves.

Cleon hesitated. He snatched up his wax tablets and pouched them. Impulsively, he wrapped up the cup again, and with it the rod and cord and ring, and departed. He had implicit confidence that Helen was safe enough, since the sage so declared. As a matter of fact, he took the apparatus with him in order to examine it more closely for some sign of trickery. He could not believe what had happened. The wonder of it stupefied him.

Yet, working far into the night, sketching each of the four columns with a pedestal

proportioned to receive it, he knew that the information given him was most exact. Before sunrise, he had drafted the pedestals, to be made in sections; every bit of his paper work was completed. An hour later he and a dozen stonemasons and apprentice sculptors were at work. The brass cup was laid away and, temporarily, forgotten.

TWO days later, he informed the council that the pillars would be unveiled for inspection at the end of a week. He worked day and night, toiling like any slave, at the task, hidden behind great canvas curtains which let no one observe what was going on. In the midst of this, he learned of the grief that had smitten the whole city—Apollonius, the Magus, the sage wise man famous throughout the whole world, was stricken and dying. Cleon rushed to his house, to find that Apollonius had passed away.

Now he flung himself even more furiously into the work. Three columns were up, the fourth was ready to be swung into place; on the morrow was to be the unveiling. Night came, and with a slave-gang Cleon labored until the fourth column was in place. The work ceased. Cleon bathed, and flung himself down on a pallet behind the canvas curtain. He slept, and dreamed of clashing weapons, and in his dream the wraith of old Apollonius came and looked sadly upon him, and passed on, silent.

He wakened suddenly. Someone was beside him; it was Helen.

"Up, up!" she was crying, tugging at him to waken him. "Quickly—there is no time!"

Bewildered, he sprang up. In the starlight she stood with sword in hand and shield on arm; he thought her a goddess at first.

"I have weapons—here is a sword for you, here another shield," she panted out. "I brought them from my father's house—quickly! They are coming—Thyrax and Captain Hiram and some of my father's slaves—one of your workmen talked, said that your work was done and would certainly win approval—they are coming to kill you—no time to escape—"

She was gasping for breath. Already the shuffling of sandaled feet echoed from the stones. Cleon leaped forth from behind the

canvas wall, and a yeli greeted him; they were already rushing forward, there was not an instant to spare.

Helen moved out beside him, and the stabbing, shouting killers closed in. The steel swung and clashed; man after man fell away, hurt or maimed or dead, as the swords struck home—but before the noise of the tumult roused the town, the work was done. A spear struck Cleon down, and that was his death-wound. None knew Helen to be a woman, none knew her for what she was—and she, too, fell, her arms reaching for him in death. They lay thus together when the guards arrived and the slayers fled.

And they were buried thus together, in a tomb near the wondrous columns which made the city famous and caused men to come from afar to behold the temple and its pillars, like no others in the world heretofore. And when they were laid to rest, the cup in its wrappings was laid with them, for no one knew what it was and yet all guessed it to be some treasure of the dead architect.

This was the story that came from the notes, and Jasper Conkling nodded with delight as he read over the pages I handed him. It was not a happy story, and I said so.

"Bosh!" said Jasper Conkling. "Truth is seldom happy. You call the story unhappy because the actors die. Well, doesn't everybody die?"

I let it pass to save argument. "How-

ever," I said, "this mentions the Greek alphabet as having twenty-four letters. I always understood it had twenty-six."

He got a book and looked it up. Very early Greek had sixteen; Greek of the period in the story, twenty-four. Later Greek, here and there, had twenty-seven.

"Anything else?" Jasper Conkling asked, with disagreeable triumph.

"Yes. Do you claim that these notes were supplied in the same manner used in the story—the dangling ring, and so forth?"

"Certainly," he rejoined. "And the other notes also—those dealing with the entire history of the cup, down to the time of Albertus Magnus."

"Then kindly explain the trick."

He regarded me gravely. "You have turned this first batch of notes into a story. You have here the words of Apollonius himself. Are they not sufficient?"

"No."

He shrugged. "Then, my friend, you must wait. You shall see the thing at work, you shall judge for yourself. Meantime, take with you the second chapter of these memoirs, which deal with the days of the Emperor Valens, and the references to historical works which actually mention the cup, and weave the next story in the chain. Will that be satisfactory?"

It was not, but for the moment it had to be.

