

# Weird Tales

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*Do You Believe a Memory Can be Inherited?  
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# John Carroll, Legionary of Rome

By B. WALLIS

Author of "The Abysmal Horror"

**T**HERE was the sound of many voices and loud laughter around me as I awoke to the stage of consciousness which precedes full possession of one's faculties. For a moment the sounds impinged upon my ears without arousing any particular emotion. Then with a snap I was awake and staring at a scene which left no room for any sensation save speechless amazement.

It could not have been more than half an hour back, I should imagine, that I, John Carroll, American citizen, had fallen asleep on the crest of Coomber Head, which lies some 1,500 feet above the village of Coombsbury on the North Devon coast in England, where I had been spending the first few days of my vacation and first visit to the land of my ancestors.

Although no later than the end of May the weather had been most infernally hot the last few days, and the top of this headland had appeared to me the most comfortable and airy spot for an after-dinner snooze that could be found. Here I had lain down upon the pleasant springy heather that covers the walls of the great circular earthen enclosure known locally as "Caesar's Camp."

"What the deuce!" I said aloud in the act of opening my eyes. And then instantaneously I became merely a registering machine incapable of any connected or logical mental proc-

ess. For what I registered was utterly beyond all human experience, and as incredible as an objective reality. And yet every one of those astounding figures by which I was surrounded was as obviously flesh and blood as I was myself!

The entire enclosure to the crest of the walls was covered with a mass of humanity. Hundreds, thousands of them there must have been. Some were in motion, but the majority sat or reclined on the bare earth, for so, unconsciously, I noted the ground upon which I lay appeared to be; not a blade of grass or a twig of heather could be seen, nothing but brown, bare, fresh-turned soil. In the center stood a number of large, flat-roofed tents, and several fires near by were burning vigorously and appeared to be the stage of immense culinary operations.

These things I noted almost as unthinkingly as a sensitive plate records the detail of a scene exposed for but a second, and by the same process it was impressed upon me that all the figures were arrayed in the most fantastic manner, outside of a pageant, it is possible to conceive. Yet there was a naturalness and ease in their wearing of these strange trappings which instinctively impressed me with the conviction that these were the right and customary habiliments of the wearers; and yet I knew that in

such fashion were clothed the legionaries of Rome of twenty centuries gone by! Detached assertions welled up from my subconscious self and formed themselves into mental images of words such as "Romans!" "Legionaries!" "Impossible!" "Insanity!" and so forth.

How long this dislocation of mentality prevailed I cannot say; I only know that the condition was suddenly broken into by the laugh of a man close beside me, a laugh as solid, as jovial, as gross, as any I had ever heard. Moreover, it was emphasized by a sounding slap upon my shoulder, delivered with the weight of a brawny arm. I turned with a convulsive start. And then I realized that I was surrounded by at least a dozen of these impossible beings, who were sitting or reclining within a few feet of me, as a knot of friendly men might gather together, and the nearest had his tawny thick fingers resting on my shoulder!

"Ha! Carolus," he said in a loud, boisterous voice, which, though rough, was good-natured and friendly. And there followed some sentences in a tongue which, though I did not grasp the meaning of the words, yet I recognized at once as being intimately related to the Latin I had knowledge of. Mind you, I so nearly recognized the words that their meaning seemed hazily intelligible to me, or rather, I seemed on the edge of it, yet imperfectly so. All I clearly realized was that he asserted I had been asleep and was chaffing me upon it.

As he spoke I was staring in unbounded astonishment. He was clothed in the same simple barbaric fashion as the rest of that astounding throng. A leather, sleeveless tunic and short kilt partly covered with plates of dangling metal of a reddish hue (probably bronze), lower limbs faced by ridged strips of a similar metal and attached by thongs of leather, and crested metal headgear

completed their simple wardrobe, though many lacked both helmet and leggings, which lay everywhere in neat little piles. Some wore rough hide sandals and others lacked any foot covering. Weapons—short, thick bladed swords, spears, and bows—were stacked in symmetrical lines on the slopes of the enclosure. My mind registered these things with almost photographic accuracy, while totally devoid of the least comprehension of my connection with it. And when my amazed gaze happened to alight upon my own recumbent limbs, a sudden faintness came upon me; for each member of my body was arrayed in the same inexplicable fashion, while my person, familiar to me as a broad, well-built individual, a little exceeding the average stature, had undergone a metamorphosis as startling as my costume. What I stared at now were the limbs and sinews of a giant, a Hercules among men! This huge individual was nearly seven feet in height and his arms were thicker than a strong man's legs! And his skin was as tawny as the fingers which still held their rough friendly grip on my shoulder.

In sudden terror I closed my eyes; I would shut out this impossible nightmare. Moreover, I now realized that an extraordinary sensation had been with me since I first awaked, a sensation of great languor, which increased distressingly each moment and now had become an actual physical torture. Something seemed to be leaving me, even dragged from me. There was an inward turmoil, a spiritual strife between myself and a relentless force that was invading every cell in me. Flashes of strange memory, words, images alien to me stabbed my brain in abrupt waves of thought, increasing rapidly in vividness and stability.

For a moment the strife grew so intense that I felt my senses reeling into unconsciousness and I was falling,

falling, into a bottomless black abyss. Then suddenly I was free from the sickening pain, and as in relief I drew into my lungs a great draft of sweet heather-scented air my eyelids opened slowly. And it seemed to me that in body I was feeling quite at my ease, and in mind aware and satisfied with many interests unknown to John Carroll. Though this thought only came as the flicker of a half forgotten dream, it did not arouse in me the slightest confusion. There I was as before (though of that past I had no thought), lying on the brown, fresh-turned soil, and the fingers still gripped my shoulder and their owner was still speaking to me in his deep, good-natured voice. Only now I understood perfectly and without effort every word he uttered. I felt very solid, very material, and very much alive. And though something in me hazily wondered at these things, yet a stronger identity accepted every word and detail as natural and fully in accord with the place, time, and previous happenings, and this identity was much the stronger and more persistent, so that the man who had fallen asleep but half an hour back could by no means arrive at full consciousness or assert his identity, though there was a nebulous mental awareness of the desperate strivings of this subdued personality, but each moment they grew weaker as I, a soldier of Imperial Rome, sat lazily listening to my good comrade, the lusty trencherman Clodius.

"Carolus, a mighty sleeper you, by the gods, and the sport no more than started. Wake up, man! Were you not so ill-tempered I would spare a clout for your eurlly head."

As he spoke a flash of memory stabbed through the brain of this dominant Carolus, and overpowering him for a moment, to me was born the thought: "Illusion! All illusion! My hair is as straight as a board!" and "What is this? Sounds like Latin,

but it's not the Latin I was taught. Illusion! Nothing but illusion!"

The words seemed flashed and imprinted on my brain, without thought in their conception or ensuing recognition of their import. It was a second's flash and then the picture had vanished and I, the tawny giant, was speaking.

"Clout away, old Clodius, my curly head is as hard as yours."

"Nay, lad, nay. Would sooner smite a ramping lion on the snout. With one like to you the stroke must be a death one or none, and as yet I have no ill feeling sufficient to nerve the blow. But truly, lad, prop your lids open for a space; our captain has a cunning skill in these things and is like to give us some fine sport with that strapping wench you brought in over your shoulder this morning. See how she stands facing old Fabius. I doubt me he would fare ill, were the barbarian loosed."

As he spoke he pointed towards the center of the enclosure, and I stared with interest there, for now quite naturally I recollected finding this fair savage in a clump of scrub while I was foraging fuel for the camp. How she had bit and scratched, as laughingly I pinned her to the ground with one arm and then, heaving her over my shoulder, had brought her to old Fabius, our senior centurion, for him to examine and squeeze out some little news of the enemy.

"Ha! Well done, Carolus!" (I was known to high and low in our legion.) "You will command a cohort one day yet," he exclaimed as I lowered her to the ground, though keeping a grip on her hands, for I had no mind to have my eyes plucked out; as had happened to more than one of our men. And I remembered that, though pleased by his words, I had somehow a distaste to see two of our hardy human Gaulish slaves roughly handle her limbs as they bound her with thongs.

Well I knew what lay in store for this poor savage. I had seen others as defiant and hardy to withstand torment as she promised to be, yet in a little they had been willing to unload their very souls to escape the attentions of his Gauls. True, this was not the first fair islander I had viewed so close. Barely twelve months back we had landed for the first time on these shores, but, we being few in numbers and the barbarians numerous, we had penetrated hardly two days' march inland and then returned to our long ships and sailed for the mainland. During this short stay I had seen many of their young women and girls, fighting alongside as bravely as their men. Several we had captured, and after disclosing all that they knew (under compulsion), then had they been mercifully slain. Without exception they had been personable women, clean-limbed and active as young deer, fair-haired and blue-eyed, but very stubborn and hard to persuade.

This maid, our first catch for many days (we were here to build a permanent post for the use of the legions now on their way) had a chiseling of feature and a something in her clear fine eyes that marked her as one apart from the ordinary, likely enough a king's daughter as such go in these parts; and as I gazed it came to me that if I could recall the deed it would be odds that the maid escaped. And at this point for the last time John Caroll telegraphed to the usurped brain the words. "It's all illusion! Abominable madness! It's got to be stopped!" Yet not for a moment did the gaze of Carolus cease to dwell on the fair flesh he had lightly doomed to suffer the merciless cunning of old Fabius. And the words of John Caroll were no sooner imprinted on the heedless brain that once was his, than they were swept into oblivion by the fast growing intensity of regret and unrest that had come upon the spirit of

the giant Carolus, an alien of aliens, nevertheless myself.

There she stood about a hundred paces away, while Fabius, Licinius, the captain of my cohort, and several others of rank sat a few feet away on rude benches our artizans had built. Holding the maid, one on each side, stood a couple of our Gaul slaves. From the hand of one drooped a length of thin, knotted cord, and the other fellow was watching attentively a long, slender rod of iron lying in the center of a small, red-hot fire of fagots that burned beside him.

THE scene was not novel to a single man among us. For nearly two years in a score of wild lands we had sojourned, and in that time fought many times that number of battles and an almost daily quota of minor skirmishes. Many had been the captives we had seen standing just as this maid now, a few to earn their abrupt dismissal from their misery by an early willingness to unburden themselves of a response to certain questions, the majority to travel a longer and even harder road to the same sharp end, and a few to the last as silent as if deaf and dumb. A stern, hard age was ours, yet we did but as others dealt to us. We were even the more gentle, for once the object was attained a happy dispatch was granted without delay to the captive, while our foes tormented a man for mere love of the game and assiduously kept the spark of life alight so long as it might be endured by one of our brave lads. Therefore was there no surplus of pity spilled among us at the fate of captive, man or woman; yet this one had taken my fancy and I was beginning to look with disgust and anger at my comrades, who could find amusement in the scene.

"I have a small opinion of your sport," I said somewhat sourly and sneeringly. "It is a simple matter to rack a maid to death."

"So!"

He stared at me in surprise.

"Carolus has a soft, gentle heart in his brute's body," he replied jeeringly, "though the first I have noted of it. Yet truly she is pleasing to the eye, a fine-looking wench, and might lighten some days of a hard life."

Several other remarks he delivered himself of, but they were in the main unprintable (as I think now). These evoked a rough denial from me, though in a somewhat lazy, indifferent manner, as was my way in these wordy combats with my comrades. The brawny ruffian laughed and called to those immediately around.

"Lads, cast an eye on our little Carolus. Already he repents of not keeping the wench hid to himself. Does he not make a sweet, simpering lover? Mayhap he would even yet snatch his catch from old Fabius and depart to savage lairs to raise a brood of cubs!"

"I have a mind to crack your skull," I said darkly.

"And have your nose slit for it," he said jeering. "You may call to mind that such was my promise for the next who spoilt a good soldier."

In this he was speaking truth; Fabius had a short, sharp way with any who depreciated his treasure, the bodies of his soldiers. Yet the men around me laughed but moderately. Brawny and hard though they were, and the victors of a hundred desperate battles, yet I, Carolus, was a giant, and tales of my huge strength were told in many a distant legion.

Every eye was upon that little group in the center, and between us and them there lay a vacant space in which no man set foot unbidden if he valued his life; for such was the custom and discipline of a legion on foreign soil. An interpreter (we had several, renegades from the tribes) was plying the girl with short, sharp questions in their uncouth tongue. She answered now and again merely a sin-

gle word in reply; and there could be no least doubt of what that word was, for the calm strength of her set hard face and the quiet force of the utterance spelled "No!" as plainly as if she had spoken in our noble Roman. It was clear that here lay a high spirit of great endurance and stubbornness.

As I watched, my uneasiness of soul increased vastly each second, and more and more I disliked the image of what I knew would shortly befall that fair flesh. Fire and twisted cords are grievous things. It seemed abominable, evil, that such a sightly form should be warped and shriveled in this ignoble manner. Yet though I felt great concern I was also angry that the matter should so appear to me. Many had I witnessed, young and fair too, who had suffered and cried in anguish in the hands of the tormentors; but, knowing that within their lips were likely the lives of brave soldiers, and bearing in mind those murdered honest lads of ours, I had never troubled overmuch at the stern necessities of war. But this was different; why, I could not tell; it was as if some invisible bond stretched between the maid and myself.

Ah! they had ceased to question her. Now was her time come. Silently and fervently I prayed the gods that the anguish might conquer her will and with a few short sentences she would earn her dismissal. For that was our way; we dared not let them go to report our weakness, so a merciful thrust was the solution. On second thought, this did not please me either; I had small wish to witness the maid a lifeless clod thrown into a shallow trench with a few shovelfuls of soil as an eternal covering.

A thin, scrawny brute, a Gaul from the great marshes of the mainland, snatched a short iron rod from the glowing embers with his rude pincers while his companion roughly whipped the hide rope from her shoulders. Instantly the red iron was clapped to

her back and a spurt of brown smoke shot upward while distinctly I could hear the sizzle of scorching flesh. The naked, beautiful bosom heaved convulsively and a shiver sped through the limbs. Yet not a sound escaped those tight-set lips, and the features were set with a marble fixity.

At once the iron was shifted a little space higher, for the cunning of the tormentors had taught them that nerves racked too long suffer death before the body. Again the spurt of smoke and the convulsive start. Her breath came and went in panting drafts, and though I was too distant to hear it, I could see that from her moving lips escaped a moan. And at the sight a deep, cold rage took hold of me, a black hatred of myself, my comrades, and of the gods on high who could placidly survey—such an abomination. The world between us twain lay blurred in a mist and my raging gaze alone saw the girl standing, naked to the waist, in the grip of the two gloating ghouls, and the wisp of smoke now slowly stretching upwards from her tortured flesh.

AS I stared in thunder-charged silence, a thought from the void leapt upon me and sank its shaft deep into my spirit; and hardly was it a thought, but more of a primal desire, as unbidden and uncontrollable as thirst, or fear, or love; and translated into speech it was the fierce, reckless determination that come what might I would pluck her from the clutches of that carrion and with one shrewd stroke release her brave, enduring spirit. Then those around, slave or centurion, should swiftly pass into eternal darkness, sped by the strongest arm in all the Roman legions. Blindly, madly, I lusted to slay and slay—with every stroke to hurl a dozen souls into the halls of the gods, to pile a mound of blood-stained corpses about me, until mine own lay still and riven beside them. Duty,

discipline, the pride of race, all had crashed with that little anguished moan, and I was a mere straw in the mighty torrent of fierce desire and unleashed wrath. Yet, though spilling over with the mad lust of vengeance and slaying, I had the minute cunning and alert instinct which a wild beast betrays to accomplish its end. Therefore, I arose quietly and at no great pace made my way towards the innermost ring of watching, laughing men. Had I followed my immediate raging impulse to rush upon them with naked sword and cleave a red-stained path to the lodestone of my desire I had wit enough left to realize that a hundred blades would flash to meet me and even Hercules himself would have fallen before that encircling ring of flickering death.

I must move slowly to my goal. Yet something in my face and posture must have betrayed the demon who dwelt within me, for the voices of my companions broke out in surprise and rough jesting before I had stood squarely on my feet.

"What has vexed our puny dreamer?" asked one.

"Our unseemly rejoicing has spoilt his slumber. The gods be kind to us," said another with mock gravity.

"Do you see his face? He would slay his own shadow," drawled one further out.

"Sit down, little sweet one, we have need of your happy converse," asserted his neighbor.

I heard them but as voices muffled by the roar of a mountain stream—the stream of the rage which filled my soul.

As quickly as I dared, as slowly as my insensate craving to slay would allow me. I edged my path through the press and to that inner ring. Everywhere I heard words of jest and welcome, as the greetings given to a marked man, and one somewhat of a favorite. Strangely, as I went, little images, memory pictures of bygone



days, flickered before me: but flashes, unrelated fragments of things that had passed, such as a former landing on these shores, the streets of Rome, the Appian Way, a mighty throng, miles upon miles of wildly cheering people showering flowers upon us, a travel-stained legion marching slowly between the endless crowds, the fair-haired captives in the rear, led in leashes like dogs, our second landing on this coast and the fierce struggle to beach our boats. In no wise, however, were these pictures a connected story of my life; they simply came and vanished; consciously my mind had no concern with them. All I knew was that I, Carolus, had a work in hand which the might of the whole world could not stay.

Soon I was right in the forefront of the inner circle, which held its rigid line as if a fence forbade further advance; and that fence was the stern discipline of the camp, the decree that whosoever encroached unbidden a foot within the vacant area need say farewell to life. Though I knew that, as simply as the fact that night followed day, yet I cared as little for the mandate as for the inevitable consequences of breaking it. Now but twenty paces distant stood the maid, her head bravely, resolutely, held on high, her lips clenched tight, and her gaze fixed in stony defiance upon some far distant point. Old Fabius sat a pace away upon a low, skin-covered bench, watching her calmly, impassively, as one might idly consider the writhings of an impaled insect. To him she was but a message in cipher which he was essaying to translate. Beside him stood or reclined some half a dozen of our officers watching with similar indifference the work of the Gauls. Two I overheard wager fifty sesterces whether she would speak now or under the eard. The men around me were mostly in low tones dilating on her person in the plain-spoken mode of our rank.

Rage, red and consuming, coursed my every fiber. That I had so amused myself on other similar occasions did not trouble me. I was divorced from reason or thought. One emotion alone possessed me and that was a devouring, burning flame of wrath. "Strike and slay! Each blow a red slash of death! Slay! Slay!" sang and thundered madly over and over again through my brain. This girl was mine. I did not understand, or try to, the why of this. I only knew that she was mine, and these dogs were marring, cracking this fair flesh, making a mock and a thing of scorn of mine own. By the gods! I would spill life like water, and by the road of red, screaming death she and I would enter the gardens of the gods; stark naked souls should be the steps of the ladder we would scale.

"Twenty paces, Carolus!" warned a voice behind me, and a grip was laid on my arm. "Are you tired of life?"

I spun around to face the speaker, and then I mistily realized that I was a good pace in front of the foremost rank.

"Yes, greatly am I wearied of it," I said slowly. "And you? There—it is sped!"

As I uttered the words I snatched my sword from my belt and ran the blade from neck to waist, and a red cavern opened, from which his spirit fled. And then I leapt. In two great bounds I cleared that vacant area and was beside the maid. My work was the movement of a lightning stroke. One slash, and the two Gauls were twitching corpses on the ground. They had no time to run; I doubt if they saw me until my blade in the same sweep had caught one in the throat and the other across the ribs and slashed him nigh in twain. Wheeling round, I faced the maid. Coolly, squarely, steadfastly her eyes met mine: it was but the flick of a second our eyes met, yet in that tiny instant

I read that she knew of my purpose, and awaited, serene, unfeared, the release I brought with me. As I turned, I had my arm drawn back, crooked at the elbow for the thrust. There was no more than the beat of a hawk's wing between her and the great darkness when in the instant my purpose was shattered, and I knew that not mine was the arm to speed that noble spirit on its airy flight. I did not think; there was no time; with one single sweep I gathered her into my left arm and flung her across my shoulder so that she lay in the curve of my raised arm. As I caught her up I wheeled in a circle with arm as rigid as the blade the fingers gripped, and the swish of several sinews and the crackle of cloven bones smote my ear as the closing circle of shouting men changed their wrathful cries to sobbing gasps and spilled their lives on the bare brown earth. I had no scrap of heed where my blade bit: be it slave man, or centurion, it was one to me. Simply was I a raging engine of destruction to every living thing that came within my reach; I would have slain the gods themselves had they been there.

Again and again I wheeled and slashed, and it seems to me that ever just behind there raced a red mist which ran as a shadow chasing the flash of my raking blade. Faces came and vanished; only one have I a clear memory of, and that is Fabius, his eyes glaring rage and incredulous amazement as he fell forward in a welter of spurting blood from a gaping gash that had come close to severing his trunk in two.

I see the image of these things, and I hear again the thunder from a thousand throats, and I know that I was raging and pressing swiftly toward a certain set point, the great open gateway which every night was barred with many hundred earth-filled sacks, but during day had naught but a few sentries to guard it. Swiftly was I

pressing toward it, for I think as yet not half the camp had awakened from their blank astonishment at my sudden madness. Every motion had been so sudden that I was half way to the gate before more than a score had essayed to block my path, and discovered their error. And then I saw the hundreds on either side rushing to intercept my way.

That way was hopeless; mere weight of numbers must stay my steps and I should be overwhelmed, even as the huge gurochs was overcome by a pack of wolves. What I hoped to gain by this unthinking urge of flight I knew not, I had neither plan nor hope for the future; my actions were the result of mere instinct, the blind rush and madness of a fleeing animal. Abruptly I swerved at right angles and made for the encircling barrier of earthwork. By some chance the way here was open and it seemed that I might top the crest before the racing streams to the gateway could retrace their steps and cut me off. Only had I the horde behind to reckon with, and, save a few, there lay many paces between us. A dozen, more or less, I cared naught for—one swinging slash when within reach and the foremost would be writhing on the bare ground a gory mess of passing life. Since manhood it was said that by much was I the strongest man in all our glorious legions. Certainly never had I met one in sport or earnest who caused me to doubt the truth of the tale. Now was I a god! Men melted away from me as if riven by the mad rage that flamed within me. The picked men of the finest army the world has ever seen were but puppets and playthings for my wrath.

Then I had reached the great earthen wall and there was none to stay my steps in front; and I knew that my long limbs had more than held their own with the press behind, in spite of the burden I carried, which then I heeded no more than a single

straw. Likely enough I had encountered a number of isolated stragglers, for I had a blurred impression of sudden fierce lunges of my sword arm and a scream or so, as if wrung from anguished sundering of flesh and spirit; likely such happened. In a moment I was cresting the ridge; several figures (sentries, I think) leapt to meet me. There was the clang and clash of stricken metal, and I had crashed through them. With a single bound I leapt from top to bottom of the steep outer slope, and my feet trod the bare, lonely hillside. Though the pursuit would by no means be relinquished, yet my soldier's training told me that no considerable body of men would be permitted to run thus in disorder over this hostile country in my wake. So there was granted to me a breathing space in the momentary confusion of selecting the huntsmen; at least I could search a spot to guard my back, and mayhap by the favor of the gods hold them off until darkness fell, some cleft or corner where arrow could not wing its barb and but few at a time could oppose me. Out here in the open the stream of thought flowed afresh and the desire to live flickered up once again, and though reckless and caring but little which way the dice came to rest, yet the thought of life was not unpleasing.

Darkness was not so long distant, the sun had been rapidly nearing its couch before I had left my comrades on the slope to deliver my message of incredible mutiny and red destruction. Now the light was greatly softened and the sun was sliding to the purple ridge of mountains far across the water; but the half light is a lengthy affair in these northern islands, and possibly it lacked an hour yet to complete darkness. Much might happen, would happen, in that short hour. I had no high or vain hopes of evading the mighty, relentless arm of Rome.

These thoughts came to me as I raced forward, making for the broken, rugged country of the coast about two miles away. Inland was a vast stretch of open moorland devoid of cover. Now I had time to wonder how it fared with my burden; neither sound nor movement betrayed that life rested within the tight grip of my encircling arm. Though dreading, yet fervently I trusted that such was the case, for the thought of fulfilling my original purpose lay as a black horror upon me, yet I knew I had but delayed the dreaded moment. Strange! I, whose blade yet dripped with the blood of a score and more of good comrades, could not nerve my mind to contemplate one single stroke of mercy.

POSSIBLY I had covered the best part of a mile when the first faint sounds of pursuit came to my ears, and glancing quickly over my shoulder I could see a dark stream of running figures pouring after me. I quickened my pace; when the end came I would not be shot down in the open like a dog. By the gods, no! My back should be against a wall, the way narrow and crooked. Face to face, I cared not how many came to the merry meeting before I sank to my last deep slumber; and in the heat of the blood-letting it might be that I could discover the spirit for that stroke which I dreaded more than anything I had ever known.

There must be such a spot within my reach, could I but find it, down where the hillside swept to break away suddenly in one deep wild leap of naked frowning rock to the foaming urge hundreds of feet below. In that space of towering crag and deep ravine it should not be so hard to alight upon my goal.

On I sped; now the ground was fast breaking away in rugged ridges and chasms to the final sheer descent. I knew I was holding my own in spite of my burden; had I not for wager of a

centurion once heaved to my shoulder the carcass of a bullock and with never a stumble circled the camp? Therefore, it was no strange matter that, though she was a well-built maid, my burden was but a jest, yet the dearest, deadliest jest I had ever borne, and I regretted not one second of the years which would have been mine but now were snatched from me. I had to do as had befallen, and that was all I knew.

Right by the edge of the sheer cliff I found what I craved. A long, narrow ledge, barely two paces in width, ran gradually downward and inward so that the rock above leaned over, and the far end of the ledge was roofed half way across. A great beak of bluff at that part gave a sharp turn to the few final feet of the shelf, which there terminated in a wall of sheer rock rising to the overhanging crest some twelve feet above. Once the entrance to the shelf was beset, there was no returning or escape for one so trapped. Yet a man such as I, standing at the bend, might hold that way against a thousand, for I could not be harmed save from the front, and there no more than two or three could assail me at a time. It was a trap, but the trappers could in no wise snatch therefrom their prey. The end was of course but a matter of time, but meanwhile there would be much blood spilled.

My decision was made on the instant, though it sealed my fate; but sooner or later they would have cut me off in the open and shot me down from a distance with never a blow of mine to repay them.

I strode to the end, and gently lowered my fair burden to the bare rock. There remained a little space yet before the first of my pursuers might arrive. I could not hope that my flight down here had been unobserved. I knelt beside her and sadly, gravely, gazed into her eyes, which were open, and calm, and brave. Lacking a word,

I gazed deep and long into the soul that lay behind the lovely eyes, gazed until her lids drooped and a ghost of color crept into her cheeks.

Some message, unspoken, untranslatable, passed between us. In a second my arms were round her and her head was lying on my shoulder and my Roman tongue was pouring words of love into ears of which I knew not even the owner's name! But a flame of recognition had leapt from the soul of us twain, and meeting, words mattered not. Time, and the bonds of race and speech, had ceased to vex the soul. Had we dwelt side by side from birth to white-haired decay we could not have been welded more closely together or known greater love. And death was pressing close and sure upon us; life had need to spread its pinions to the summit of the soul's ecstasy and tread the shining heights. Good need, for as I clasped her and rained kisses upon her sweet, willing lips something damp and warm crept down my arm and meandered across my shoulder. For a moment I stared, not understanding. Then I knew!

Quickly, gently, I released myself from the weak grasp of those clinging arms, and softly raising her head and shoulders caught sight of the cruel, gaping gash that some accursed blade had torn in that dear flesh. One look was enough. Of wounds and their meaning I had a wide and very sure knowledge. She was even now dying! As she lay in my arms the spirit wings had already spread for the flight across the black gulf. The marvel of that great enduring spirit! Through the wild struggle and mad race never a move or a gasp had told me of her mortal hurt. Yet it was better so, though madly I pressed my lips to hers in despair and met the fast-failing response of the fleeting soul. One last flicker of love—and then I was alone.

"Thanks, oh gods! Thy last great gift. Hail, oh gods! Now to reap the

harvest for thy granary," I called aloud, rising to my feet.

My blood, my brain, were as ice; no pain, grief, or care had home in me; my spirit had finished with such. Nothing remained to me but to die, and very calmly, very grimly, I resolved to set about the business; my ending should be remembered so long as one lived who witnessed it.

I had not long to wait. The sound of many hastening feet could be plainly heard. I drew close to the abrupt bend in the ledge. Nearer and nearer came the sound. Now they had come to the ledge itself, and I could hear the voice of Licinius, captain of my cohort.

"Take him with a rush, lads; he has no room for rough play down there."

"Not overmuch, Licinius," I called back quietly, "yet it will suffice for some merry sport. Tarry not, my comrades, I am waiting."

And in neither heart nor voice was there a grain of bitterness.

"You fox, Carolus, a pretty chase you have led us, and we are hungry men," came back a roaring grumble.

It was Quintus, a roystering old blade who loved his rations most mightily.

"Could you not have waited by the gate and held converse there?" he grunted, as with two others of my cohort he swung around the bend and leapt straight for me.

As I have said, hardly could three breast that narrow way, and hardly had the words left his lips when three had vanished from the ledge and went hurtling to the moaning water fully five hundred feet below. One lacked his head and the other two doubtless died before the water closed above them. As they fell my arm whipped back the road it had traveled, and two more old comrades fled through space.

Then there came a pause and sundry growling murmurs.

"It is a fool's game," declared one.

"Our little pet could make corpses of the whole legion if we encounter him thus," called another.

"That water has an evil, sour look about it," grumbled one very close to the bend.

In my mind I could see them craning their necks to watch the falling corpses in the gathering dusk cleave the dark water and mark their entrance by the high-thrown jets of white spray.

Death—clean, blood-letting death—held no great terrors for the soldiers of Imperial Rome: not by weaklings or the pen had she conquered and broken the mightiest nations of the world. Yet few men ever attain the height of calmly surrendering life if there rests no little chance of accomplishing some set end; therefore, the moments passed and no more turned that corner. Though I knew that for me the end was the same, yet to this I was utterly indifferent. A great weariness and distaste had come upon me for all human concerns, and each moment that I waited, this melancholy sank deeper and deeper into my soul.

"Of what avail this wanton slaughter?" I thought. "Glory, the little day of a memory? A few more years and it, too, will have passed. Weariness all!"

And as I pondered, all desire for strife and honor fell away from me and with calm indifference I awaited the end.

"Carolus, surrender yourself." a sharp clear voice broke through the mutterings of the men.

This Licinius, though a fop in Rome, yet on the march earned the respect of all as a skilled soldier and a leader.

"Your end is sure, and I grudge these men. Already over a score are dead, and who knows how many more the leeches will send to join them? A thousand curses on all madmen!"

For a moment he paused as if his wrath had strangled his utterance.

"But a good soldier you have ever been, Carolus," he continued more calmly, "and on mine honor I promise you shall die as a soldier, neither by fire, nor rope, but only the swift flight of a blade. Come now; I have passed my word. Surrender. But if not, you starve until, a shadow, the guard nails you to a cross to die as a thieving slave. You were ever a brave soldier; your cohort would have your end an honest one."

As he spoke, the calm logic and fairness of his words sank home to my already relenting spirit. Truly I had worked evil enough upon my brave comrades, and the end was as certain as it would be welcome. Yet I had a mind to suit myself as to the manner of it. Always I had been the victor in combat and I had little liking to relinquish the rôle. Abruptly a solution flashed upon me.

"Noble Licinius, I thank you for your gracious words. But I have another thought which commends itself to me; therefore I reject your offer and now proceed upon my way. Farewell, noble Licinius; farewell, good comrades!" I called suddenly in a loud cheerful voice, as in a few rapid steps I retreated to the end where lay the silent figure.

Taking it very tenderly in my arms I whispered softly:

"Are you already waiting, beloved? But a moment, and even in your steps my feet are racing. A flight with your dear shell, and then—what? The gods and you alone know."

As the last word fell from my lips I took one step to the vast sheer drop and there leapt straight out, my burden and I.

**A** RUSH as of some huge wind sped by and upward, roaring and screaming, while I, like a seamew, lay floating motionless in its clamorous violence. So it seemed to me. The noise of that mighty blast drummed

upon my brain with a deafening insistence beyond all speech; I had never conceived the possibility of such an immensity of sound. It penetrated every particle of my flesh; it crashed through every atom of space; and yet I hung motionless and unmoved amid it. Nor dread, nor care, nor regret lay upon me. I was as a lone god, supreme in nothingness, and I dwelt serene and untroubled for eons upon eons amid formless chaos, dwelt care-free until from an immense distance there seemed to drift the sound of a faint whisper, and in spite of the stupendous roaring it clove its path to me and would not be stayed. Louder it grew and more insistent, calling without pause and urgently, as if in some terrible distress. Whether I would or not, I had to listen, though I was aware now of a faint annoyance that my ineffable peace should be invaded. Louder, still louder and nearer it came. Something within me stirred, and as the voice grew more distinct, the clamor that had filled the universe sank and sank, until only a thin murmur of a passing breeze remained.

"Help! Help!"

I heard the words distinctly, as they were repeated over and over again in a woman's high pitched note. And now I was curious to discover the origin of the outcry, though as yet I had no wonder or desire to reconcile the happening with my past or the present. I leaned my head forward unconsciously, as one will in such circumstances; and there was I, John Carol, on my knees, bare gray rock beneath me and a foot ahead the edge of a vast precipice that sank sheer and grim for hundreds of feet to the sullen surge that beat against its base! And the strangest thing about my position was that it caused me no astonishment or the least confusion of thought. From the second my gaze alighted on that figure hanging desperately to the face of this awful descent, my whole mind and energies were wrapped up in re-

leasing the girl from her frightful peril. For it was a girl, and even in that terrible moment I realized she was a very lovely one, too.

Only a few feet below me she lay, held in the cleft of a large slab that had cracked away from the main body of rock and so exposed a wide crevice slanting inwards. By some providence one leg had caught and been wedged tight into this cleft, holding her secure for the time, though in a most painful position; for with one limb dangling over the fearful drop, she lay with her back resting on the sharp crest of the slab and so was utterly unable to aid herself or even ease her torture. Indeed it was probably well that such was the case, as the slab appeared but very uncertainly attached to the cliff, and any movement might have completed the separation. I could almost swear that the crack widened a shade as I stared. How she came to be there, how I came to be staring down at her, I could not imagine, and had no time to realize the astounding position. I must act without a moment's delay.

"Don't move an inch! I'll get you up somehow," I exclaimed.

My brain was working at top speed, but coolly, logically. She lay no more than four feet below me, but quite out of my reach for retaining the necessary leverage to sustain her weight in my grasp. Hastily I whipped off my stout leather belt and, removing my jacket, slipped out of my soft silk shirt. In a second I had tied the sleeves together at the cuffs, forming a wide noose; through this I wove my belt.

"Pass the noose under your arms." I called as I lowered it to her. "Be very careful! Don't move an inch you need not. That slab is only just balancing now."

I was lying full length on the ledge, for it was but a narrow ledge some ten feet below the broken crest of the cliff. My knees were bent, and my

feet, raised upwards, were desperately striving to discover some projection that would afford a purchase to work upon when her full weight lay on my arms. Sheer strength only could rescue her, and there was no chance of using my own weight to assist me. Fortunately I am a six-footer and, being somewhat of an amateur athlete, I was in fair condition, but knew that every ounce of strength I possessed would be required, and then the result was but a gambling chance. Anxiously I watched; she was very cool and collected and was following my instructions carefully, moving her arms and body with the utmost deliberation.

"Quickly! Get it under you! Hold tight! The slab's going!" I called in a tense voice of horror.

There could be no mistaking the fact—the crevice was widening! Slowly but perceptibly the crack was opening, and at any second the slab might leap forward and go crashing down. In a flash she had raised her body and slid the noose into place. I heard a little gasp; now she could see the movement herself, even note that she was slowly being carried outward from the face of the cliff. Her eyes were lifted to mine in pitiful entreaty. My God! Where had I seen those eyes before? And that gaze of trust in my succor!

"Hold tight! Don't struggle!" I shouted as I strained upward on the belt, the end of which was doubled around my left wrist and both hands gripped with the clutch of steel below. Thank heaven, my feet had found a little projecting knob of rock on the face of the cliff behind me! Had it not been for that I do not think I could have raised her. As it was, with cracking sinews I lifted her clear from the cleft and with the one huge heave had her level with the ledge, which immediately she caught at, thus taking a little of her weight from my arms. I drew myself rigidly backward and slid her fairly on to the ledge.

It was all over in a minute, and not a second too soon, for as she reached my side there came a loud cracking, a grinding screech, and by the convulsive shudder which sped through the form lying beside me I knew that she realized the narrow margin of her escape from a frightful death.

For a little we lay panting and exhausted. Then, recovering, I aided her to a sitting posture. She was deathly pale, but betrayed no trace of hysteria. Indeed she was the first to speak.

"I thought you would never find me."

Her tone was almost reproachful, though her voice was singularly gentle.

"You wandered and wandered; I could see you in the distance before you got close, and the cliff hid you. I suppose it was difficult to find me, and you were running so quickly, too."

"I—I don't quite understand," I said, staring at her. "I never heard your cry for help until I leaned over the edge. Running? Where? Good heavens! So I was—"

And then I stopped. I suddenly remembered perfectly that I had been running, and very vividly every incident of that desperate flight to—why, it was to this very ledge!

I stared around in dumb amazement. There could be no doubt of it. Here it was that I, Carolus, legionary of Rome, had taken my last stand. A few feet away lay the sharp bend behind which had stood Licinius and his men. I could hear his voice again: "You were ever a good soldier, Carolus." Surely those words had been spoken no more than a few minutes back! There at the end of the ledge was the very spot where had laid a silent figure, for whom I had forsaken and slain my comrades and leapt—but what was this madness I was thinking? There was some gulf, possibly of insanity, which had opened in my life, and I could not explain or under-

stand it. At any rate, for the present I must hold the secret, though in my mind confusion and bewilderment ran riot. And now, how could I explain my hasty statement?

"You didn't hear me until you came to the edge?" she queried in astonishment.

"Well, not exactly that. The fact is—"

I hesitated, groping blindly for some plausible story, and it came to me.

"I have had some trouble with-my hearing lately—strange noises—been under a specialist; and I hardly knew if your cry was due to this or not. In fact, until I came to the edge I could not be certain," I replied rather lamely.

"Yes, that explains it," she said quietly, but the words were so ambiguous—to my ears—that I was thankful to escape at the price. "How can I thank you? But for you I should have been hanging there now; perhaps even already—"

She paused and shivered as her glance went in dread to the void beyond the ledge, and as her head turned slightly in that direction I noticed what in the confusion of my mind had escaped my attention until now. Her dress was ripped clean across the shoulders, and on the light blue of her blouse lay a band of deep red.

"I say, do you know your shoulder is hurt?" I exclaimed anxiously. "I must see to it at once."

She looked a little startled and hesitated, but being evidently a sensible girl offered no objection to my services. Gently I drew back the torn blouse. There was cause enough for that broad, deep stain. She must have suffered the injury when arrested by the rugged sharp edges of the slab. The flesh between the shoulders was lacerated badly.

"I did not feel it in the least at the time," she remarked as I bound it



with strips torn from my shirt; "though now my shoulders are aching. It cannot be very serious, is it?"

"Serious enough; that is to say, you will have to get it attended to properly directly I get you home," I replied shortly.

I hardly knew what I said. Just such another wound, only a terrible, mortal one. I had gazed at this very day; and the lovely dying girl had been the image of this living one!

"Oh, my God! What is the meaning of it all!" I cried out suddenly.

The girl looked up with startled eyes.

"What is it?" she asked, and there was a little fear as well as wonder in her voice.

"Am I hurt so seriously? I hardly feel more than an aching."

"It's not that!" I exclaimed, and I could have bitten my tongue off with anger at my involuntary burst, but my nerves were on edge and I was really hardly accountable at the moment. "It's not that. It's something so extraordinary that it's incredible. I cannot say more now. But my being here is a miracle, as your being here is to me inexplicable. I am sorry, I did not mean to alarm you; let us forget everything else for the time except your safety."

The gravity and forced calm of my voice seemed to allay her astonishment, for she replied quite simply.

"Yes, I think, too, that my rescue was a miracle. As I lay down there I knew that days might pass before anyone caught sight of me, if ever. No person knew of my coming here, and I was in such a little spot among these awful rocks. Thank God, I did not know that cleft was spreading! Then I saw you, and I called and called, though I felt my voice could not reach you, for you were quite a long way off and running very quickly in another direction, until suddenly you turned and came straight to me. Do you know when

I could no longer see you because the ledge hid all close to me, it seemed as if I heard you talking; I could not understand the words; but of course it must have been the wind or my imagination."

The last few words were in the tone of a query, but I chose to ignore it.

"Now the main thing is to get you home. Do you live in the neighborhood, I mean within walking distance? I fear there is no chance of getting any aid, and I do not like to leave you to do so."

"No, please do not leave me alone in this awful place—I am sure I can walk quite well with your assistance," she cried very eagerly. "I live at Brendon Hall; perhaps you know it? About two miles from here. I am Elaine Lestrage. My father is General Lestrage," she added quite simply and paused as if waiting for me to introduce myself.

"And I, Miss Lestrage, am John Carroll, American, civil engineer, of no fixed abode, merely a visitor to your country; my people, I believe, came from Devon some two hundred years ago, therefore I am not entirely an alien," I replied, smiling.

The statement was minutely accurate, though I had not mentioned that, having lately inherited a considerable fortune, I was fulfilling a long suppressed desire to visit the land of my forefathers.

"Now if you will direct me we had better be on the move; as you see, the sun will soon be setting." (I had not noted this before, so occupied had I been with my thoughts.) "If you will take my arm until we reach the road, possibly you can manage fairly well."

So saying, I helped her to her feet, and with her arm linked in mine we immediately started on our way. After the first few yards we got along very well, though naturally the pace was slow. As we cautiously made our way along the widening ledge to the safer though more broken ground above, we

passed the sharp bend which "no more than three could breast," and so vivid was the memory there invoked that I could have sworn I heard the mutterings of the soldiers of Imperial Rome.

NOW whatever befell from this moment would interest few and probably bore many. Let me briefly state that within twelve months from that day I had wedded the only girl in the world for me. Before we became engaged I narrated the entire circumstances of my astounding experience to her, though with great doubt as to its reception. In the cold light of everyday practical life it appeared as rank insanity; yet I could not divest myself of the conviction that I, Carolus, legionary of Rome, had lived those tense, reckless moments as certainly as I, John Carroll, civil engineer, was a living denial of this conviction.

A plausible solution is the one offered by an old friend of my college days, Professor Hyland, the eminent American psychologist.

I cannot recall his exact words or even pretend to follow his very exhaustive delving into the working of the machinery of our mentality. But in its essence the following, I gathered, was a brief synopsis of his explanation. In every living person there lies dormant a mind or self which, for lack of a better definition, one can regard as a hereditary mind, a something which is handed down from generation to generation and which has stored up within it the experiences of all the past generations. In the vast majority of persons this mind never rises into the conscious mentality of the individual, but nevertheless it is there, and is the source of the very common impression of recognizing certain previously unknown localities. It is possible, he stated, that, favored by obscure and abnormal conditions, this legacy from bygone ancestors might assert itself so

vigorously as for a short space to usurp completely the functions of the conscious brain and present its memories as veridical happenings in the plane of the living individual.

The origin of these abnormal mental conditions, or how induced, was a matter so far beyond us. Apparently, as evidenced in examples of lost memory and dual alternating personality, neither warning nor predisposition to such lapses was observable. They simply occurred, and neither time, location, sex, nor age had any bearing upon their sudden appearance; that was as far as science had reached from available data.

He considered, however, that environment may have been a factor in vitalizing my subconscious ancestral memory, the proofs of some previous knowledge of the locality being irrefutable. He had small doubt that the episode had been an actual experience of one Carolus, an ancestor of mine. Though this assumption of course presumed that he had survived the final leap from that awful height, and bearing in mind that he was an exceptional man and the water below of great depth, the supposition is by no means out of reason. So strongly had this ancient memory been revived that one might affirm the bygone giant legionary had relived those tense moments as truly as if once again enacting them in the flesh.

Now whether this solution is the correct one I cannot say, but it appears to me most plausible. If so, from the depths of my soul I tender my gratitude to that fierce, reckless spirited, giant ancestor of mine, who has been dust for more than two thousand years, yet deathless from generation to generation. To him I owe a life's happiness, with the life I brought back from the open gates of death. In reverence I salute him across the chasm of the centuries: "Hail! Carolus, Legionary of Rome. Hail!"