



"His little stomach fitted better into the lump of boulder."

PREHISTORIC TALES.

BY CHARLES GLEIG.

II.—CLUB-LAW.

UG and Zug had been very happily married for a year, when a member of the tribe, named Mug, came to reside in the empty cavern opposite. Mug appears to have moved early in the spring of 9999 B.C. The season was certainly springtime, but the prehistoric records are uncertain, within a thousand years or so, and the precise date cannot be accurately stated.

Moving was not a very arduous business in those days, and Mug, being newly married, had little furniture to shift beyond two pairs of reindeer skins and his outfit of flint choppers and scrapers.

The bride simplified the move by wearing the whole of her trousseau; but a civilised observer would hardly have noticed it. Zug, of course, did notice it. She was nursing her baby at the entrance of Ug's cave, and, catching sight of Mrs. Mug's pebble necklace and bone earrings, she instantly grew

dissatisfied with her entire outfit of shells and feathers.

The Mugs' cavern was situated some twenty yards inland of Ug's cave, and Zug had sometimes proposed using it as a spare room for the accommodation of her husband's bachelor friends. For Zug was rather a prude, and, if the legends may be credited, this defect in her charming character was never entirely overcome. Ug, however, would not permit his friends to be isolated in a damp cavern, so it had remained unoccupied for a long time.

"Ug," said his wife, when he returned from the chase that night, "those Mugs have moved into the cavern, and I want a pebble necklace."

The young hunter had been married long enough to perceive the connection between the Mugs' move and his wife's inordinate desire.

"The necklace was the gift of Mug's father," he replied, "and they say it took fifty moons to make."

"Your father," sighed Zug, "only gave me a worn-out marrow-pusher."

"For which, at the time, Zug, you thanked him on your own pretty marrow-bones."

The conjugal compliment pacified her for the moment, and Ug managed to get to sleep. But Zug lay awake for an hour, partly because of the undecorated state of her shapely neck; partly, too, because Ug had secured the better side of the conjugal couch. Her side had two nasty lumps of boulder in

of maternity, Zug forgot the necklace; but her pangs of envy revived next day. For the well-dressed bride opposite vaunted her neck-gear even on working days; and Zug, as she went about her simple, cavehold duties, felt at her own nude neck as a young man fumbles anxiously with his hairless upper lip. Probably Mrs. Mug was afraid to hang it up or hide it in a hole, but Zug did not consider these risks.

Thus the relations between the ladies were, from the outset, strained. Zug omitted the usual courtesy of presenting her neighbour with a joint of meat, and Mrs. Mug retaliated by making a very offensive bonfire when the wind blew towards the mouth of Ug's cave.

After gazing upon the pebble necklace for half a moon, Zug began to lose her appetite.

"If you were a loving lord," she told Ug, "you'd get me a necklace."

"But, my dearest lake-eyes," protested Ug, "there is but one other in the tribe, and that belongs to your father's new wife."

"Still, you would get me one," persisted Zug sullenly, "and," she added significantly, "it wouldn't be my new stepmother's."

Ug pondered the dark saying as he followed the prints of the deer. His wits were less swift than his nimble heels, but after two days he grasped her meaning. Now, Zug was very dear to his heart, although she had been his wife for a year; but the etiquette of the tribe prohibited internal theft, whilst unprovoked assassination was sternly and painfully revenged. For even in those joyous days a rude kind of club-law prevailed. Unless a tribe were exceptionally large and powerful, internal murder was a luxury in which only the greatest chiefs could indulge.

Soon Zug taunted Ug again with the



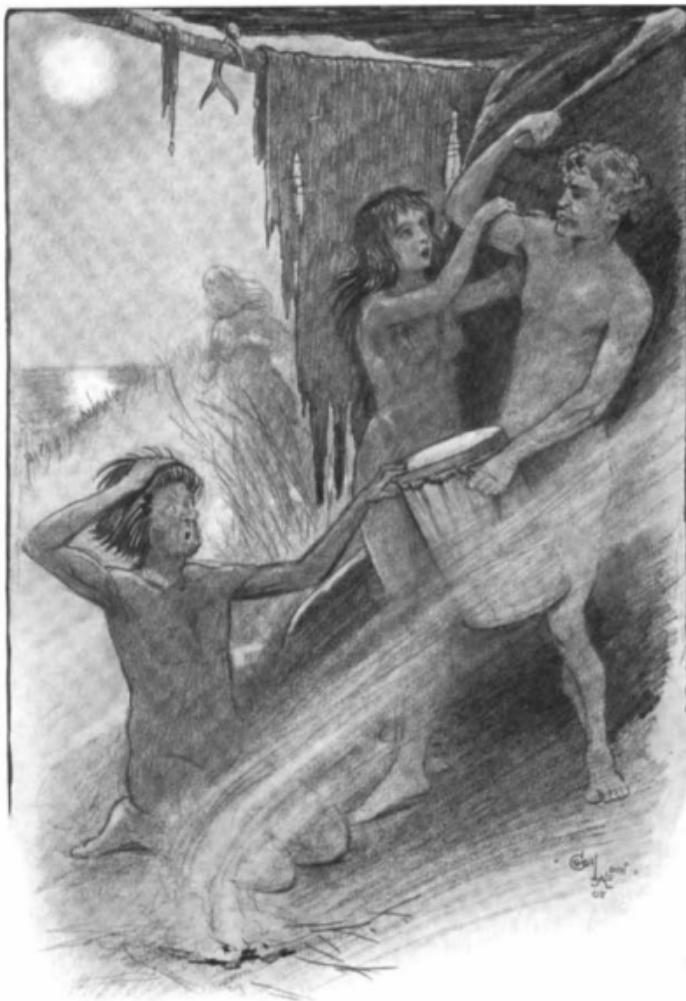
"Mug speedily abandoned his honest calling in order to devote himself to music."

it, and she could feel them plainly through the layers of skins.

"Such is marriage," thought Zug disconsolately. "Six moons ago he would have taken the lumpy side himself. Had I asked him for a whole girdle of pebbles when I was a maid, he would have got it for me."

Then the baby felt a boulder in *his* back and began to whimper.

"My precious bit of blubber," she cooed in swift remorse, and turned the discontented infant the other side uppermost. His little stomach fitted better into the lump of boulder; the child slept. Thus, in the pride



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shameful nudity of her neck, but his retort came pat.

"The man Mug does not love strife," he said. "He gives me no reason to slay him."

"Thrice she has made a bonfire when the wind blew from the forest," replied Zag.

"For that I dare not club him, but I will order him to do it no more."

Zug's sole reply was a petulant snort. She knew that Mug would put a stop to the nuisance. Presently she sidled up to Ug.

"I know a way by which you could provoke him," she whispered tenderly.

"How?" he asked incredulously.

"Listen," she said, as she nestled to his breast. "The sun grows hot, and soon that woman will begin to swim in the sea. Then I will find means to take the necklace from her, for she will not let the water touch it, I am sure."

"It is forbidden to seize the goods of a friend," objected Ug.

"They will not know who has taken it," she argued.

"But they will suspect us."

"Yes," said Zug eagerly, "and she will make Mug accuse us of the theft. We can deny it, and if I hide the necklace in the secret crevice, who shall find it?"

"Well?" said Ug doubtfully.

"Then you can club them both," she concluded simply. "The Chiefs will hold that he provoked you sorely."

Now, Ug was anxious to please his wife and restore her happiness, but the more he reflected upon her scheme, the less he liked it. He felt no enmity against his harmless neighbour, besides which he was more conventional than his wife, and harboured a prejudice against internal theft. Zug was, for the period, an advanced woman. The tribal laws, she complained, were made by the men and with scant regard for the interests of the weaker sex. Her inordinate craving for the necklace increased her contempt for the laws. She was seriously piqued, too, by Ug's refusal to oblige her in so trifling a matter as the duly provoked assassination of a neighbour whose wife made offensive bonfires.

Thus coolness arose between Ug and his lady. Their conjugal happiness might have been blasted but for the happy chance that Mug made a drum and began to play upon it. It was, I need hardly say, a rude and primitive instrument, and Mug played it badly. Still, it was the first drum ever heard in this country, and Mug was the first musician—the ancestor of the long-haired race that has since multiplied excessively

throughout the world. Within a short time Mug achieved local celebrity by his execrable playing, and he began to suffer from the complaint that has made such terrible ravages in the modern artistic world. In brief, he got a "swollen head."

If space permitted, it would be valuable to trace here all that legend records of the moral decline of this prehistoric drummer. I can only tell you, however, that Mug speedily abandoned his honest calling in order to devote himself to music. After his astonishingly successful *début*, on the occasion of a sacrificial feast, he never dismembered another quadruped. Yet he had been skilled in that useful speciality, having been trained to it from boyhood. At first he was content to play at mere family gatherings, and accepted moderate payment; but as his inflated reputation increased, his charges became so heavy that a considerable audience was needed to defray them. On the memorable occasion when old Sux, the Chief of the tribe, celebrated the birth of his fiftieth child, Mug charged two hindquarters of reindeer, half a woman-load of the best blubber, and a child-load of bear's grease. Mrs. Mug also grew inflated with vanity, sat beside him when he played, and sported her pebble necklace most offensively.

The tribe began to distinguish between the artist and his art, and Mug's wealth and luxurious mode of gorging himself earned him many enemies. The man was parsimonious and did not entertain.

At one Council meeting there was some talk of paying Mug a fixed tribal salary, and of obliging him to drum for eight hours a day. But the motion was not carried, owing to jobbery on the part of Mug.

The Mugs still resided in the cavern opposite the Ugs, for you will understand that Mug had splashed into fame headlong, and that desirable caves seldom fell vacant. Whether from real love of art, or mere greed, Mug practised strenuously. Artist like, he kept late hours, and often, when indigestion prevented sleep, he would drum till ten o'clock. Ug, though not insensible to the genius of his neighbour, soon grew restive under the din, and presently irascible. As a keen hunter, he usually went to bed with the sun—at least, figuratively.

Zug noted the growing irritability of her lord with great expectations. Often the drumming awoke the baby and made it howl. When it failed, Zug used to pinch the child. At length Ug awoke one night in a great rage.

"That beastly child makes more dia than the drum," he complained.

Zug (who had recently pinched it) clasped the babe protectingly to her breast.

"Mug is the destroyer of sleep," she said. "Were I a man, I would take away his drum."

Without reply, Ug rose and quitted the cave, leaving Zug in disturbing suspense. "Had he left her, or gone to act upon her advice?"

But in a few minutes he returned, carrying the drum, and followed by the Mugs.

"Gimme back my drum, you crocodile!" wailed the outraged artist.

"For two fishbones," said Ug, "I'd smash it up with my club, and you too."

"No, no," entreated Mug. "Hold your Philistine hand. Club me, but spare my——" Emotion choked the rest.

"Your wife?" asked Ug.

"My drum!" shrieked Mug unchivalrously.

"Destroy the drum," urged Zug, "for then shall my lord dream sweetly."

Ug raised his club to strike. It was a critical moment in the history of music, for the hunter was quite unmoved by the agonised prayers of the Mugs. A moment later the club would have fallen, and the evolution of music must have been arrested for centuries. We of the Twentieth Century, for example, might now regard "Haydn's Surprise" as the greatest triumph of musical composition. We assuredly should not have advanced so high in culture as to be able to accord national appreciation to "Pretty Little Pansy Faces." But at this awful prehistoric moment (what a subject for the "story" painters!) Zug caught the club-arm of her husband.

"Hold, my lord!" she exclaimed.

Ug, who was really a very polite husband for those times, humoured her by pausing.

"Well?" he asked. "What now, my lake-eyes?"

"Let her give up the necklace, and we will spare the drum," said Zug.

Mrs. Mug's nails itched for vengeance. Her face grew distorted by passion, and she hurled opprobrious prehistoric epithets at her crafty neighbour.

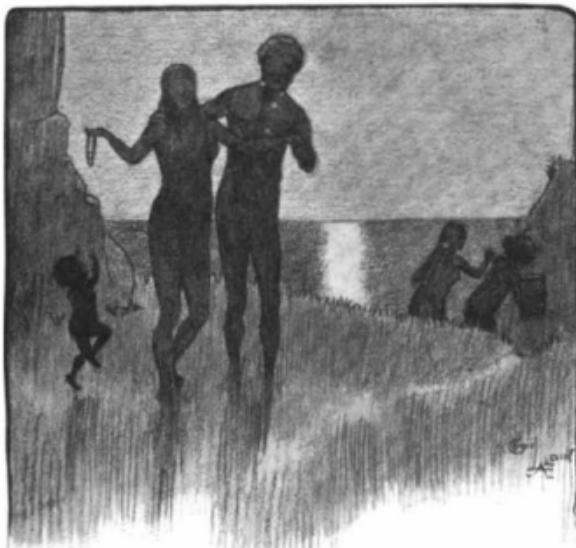
"Give up the gaud!" snarled Mug.

His wife slipped the necklace over her head and threw it upon the floor of the cave.

"Now give me my drum!" cried Mug suspiciously.

"Yes," said Ug, "take it; but dare to play by night again, and I will beat both you and drum into fragments no bigger than my son's thumb!"

Thus the fair Zug obtained her heart's desire, and peace was restored to the cave of Ug.



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