

# WEIRD TALES

THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE

EDWIN BAIRD, Editor

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Also a number of odd facts and queer fancies,  
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*A Novelette of Weird Happenings—*

# The Ape-Man

By J. B. M. CLARKE, JR.

**L**ET'S GO and call on him now then," said Norton in his impulsive way, rising and crossing to the window.

The fine rain, which had been swishing intermittently against the panes with each gust of wind, had ceased for some time, and as Norton lifted the blind and peered forth he got the first glimpse of a wan moon struggling through an uneven copper-edged break in the swift-moving clouds.

"I was to have gone over there this evening," he said, "but 'phoned the engagement off on account of the storm. However, it's not too late . . ."

It did not take much persuasion to induce Meldrum to consent, for, although a year or two Norton's senior and inclined in consequence to give him paternal advice now and again, he generally indulged his whims.

"You can't break a teacher of the lecturing habit," was the way Norton expressed it.

He himself was an architect, and both were single men, although Norton was striving hard to build up a connection that would enable him to marry one of the prettiest girls in town, with whom he was then "keeping company." Meldrum locked the door of his apartment behind him, and the pair sallied forth into the fresh damp air of a night in early spring.

"After all you have told me, I am rather curious to see your South African

friend again," said Meldrum, setting his pace with his friend's. "While no doubt an interest in animals is wholesome enough, his particular taste seems to run unpleasantly to apes and monkeys. Some of those experiments of his, of which you spoke, seem rather purposeless—making baboons drunk for instance . . ."

"If you could have seen him when he was telling me about that baboon business you would have taken a dislike to him too," said Norton, making a gesture of displeasure with his hand. "Although I will admit I had an aversion toward him from the first—I didn't quite know why. He had a trick of laying his hot heavy hand on my shoulder that used to irritate me dreadfully when we were in the Inspection Department in Washington."

"What was he doing there?" asked Meldrum.

"He had been inspecting aeroplane spruce in British Columbia," replied Norton. "and he had a desk in our office. I was there for about three months after being invalided home, before I was sent to New York."

After a few moments silence, Norton added:

"He is more than queer. He is a throw-back."

"A what?" said Meldrum, puzzled.

"A throw-back—an atavistic specimen," said Norton firmly. "A mixture of old and new, and a bad one at that."

"That's a pretty nasty accusation, Harry," said Meldrum.

"You may think so," said Norton obstinately, "but I tell you I'm not simply guessing. Apart from his peculiar build, with his monstrous length of arm and leg, short body, and small head, and his perpetual and unnatural theories and experiments with apes and things, there is still further evidence that I saw with my own eyes when we went to New York together one weekend and visited the zoo. It was not my fancy, I can assure you, Meldrum, that made me imagine the very brutes were interested in my companion. I tell you, there was scarcely one of those creatures that did not show excitement of some kind, some of rage, others of fear, but generally of anger.

"One big chimpanzee went simply wild for a time—so much so that an attendant came along to see what the trouble was. It capered furiously, thundered at the bars of its cage, and then executed a hideous kind of clattering dance, beating its hands and feet on the floor with extraordinary rapidity. Yet all Needham had done was to make a peculiar kind of clucking noise in his throat and smile his sinister smile. I'll bet the brutes recognized him as one of their kind. Some of them looked as if they expected him to open the cage doors . . ."

"What is he doing here in Burlington now?" asked Meldrum.

"Something in connection with lumber, I believe," said Norton, as they entered North Avenue and turned in the direction of the park. "He has rented a small house out here on this street and lives there alone. He seems to prefer being alone always."

They walked on for some little distance, and then Norton said, "This is the place," and indicated a small two-story residence standing alone in a neat garden some twenty yards from the thoroughfare.

It was quite dark save for one lighted window upstairs. The pair went up the path to the front door and Norton, after a little fumbling, found and pressed an electric button, without, however, pro-

ducing any effect as far as could be observed.

"The bell doesn't seem to ring," said Norton, pressing again and again. "Perhaps it's out of order."

He knocked at the door and listened. Everything was quiet inside. Heavy drops of water splashed down from the roof, intensifying the silence. A trolley-car hummed past on the street, throwing a brilliant light on the trees and shrubs of the garden, and then leaving them darker than ever. Again Norton knocked loudly, but without result.

"That's not his bedroom, I know," he said, nodding up at the lighted room. "for he told me he hated the noise of the cars passing under his window. He must have fallen asleep over a book or something. I might throw a stone at the window."

"No I wouldn't do that," said Meldrum, walking back a few paces and staring up. "Perhaps we had better just go away. I can meet him again."

"But I would like you to see him, now that you've come," said Norton. "Wait a minute."

He tried the door and found it unlocked. Entering the hall, he called:

"Needham, Ho. Needham!"

Again they listened, and again nothing happened. As he groped in the darkness, Norton's hand encountered the electric switch and he turned on the light. A narrow stairway was revealed, leading overhead.

"Just wait a minute," he said to Meldrum, "and I'll run upstairs. I'm sure he's there."

He disappeared swiftly, and, after an interval of a few moments, came quietly down again.

"Come up," he said, beckoning to his friend. "He is sound asleep in his chair. Come and look."

## II

TOGETHER they crept up. The room door was ajar, and they noiselessly entered what was evidently a sitting-room. Needham sat in a large arm-chair, with his back to the window, sleeping quietly. A reading lamp on

the table was the sole source of illumination, and, since it was fitted with a heavy red shade, the upper portion of chamber was in comparative darkness.

The full light of the lamp, however, fell upon the form of the sleeping man, who had sunk low in his chair and was indeed in an extraordinary attitude. His book had fallen to the floor, and his long arms hung over the sides of the chair, the hands resting palm upwards on the rug. His huge thighs sloped upward from the depths of the chair to the point made by his knees, and his long shins disappeared below the table.

Norton glanced at Meldrum, who was looking at the sleeper curiously.

"Ho, Needham!" said Norton, loudly. "Wake up!"

The slumberer was roused at last, but in a startling manner. With a lightning movement, he sat bolt upright and clutched the arms of the chair, his features working convulsively, while a stream of horrible gibberish, delivered in a high piercing tone, burst from his lips. Norton went as pale as death, while Meldrum remained rooted to the spot where he stood.

Then, recovering himself, Norton ran forward and, seizing Needham by the arm, shook him violently, exclaiming:

"It's all right, Needham! It's only Norton come to see you."

The man in the chair regained his composure as quickly as he had lost it, and, if unaware that anything unusual had happened, got to his feet and said:

"Hullo, Norton, old chap! Take a seat. I must have fallen asleep and had some beastly dream or something. Sit down."

He crossed to the wall near the fireplace and switched on some lights that illuminated the whole room. Then, seeing Meldrum for the first time, he advanced toward him and shook hands.

"It's not quite the right thing to steal into a man's house in his way, I know," said Meldrum. "I am sorry if we startled you. We rang and raised a rumpus down below, but without effect. I was taking a walk with Norton after the storm, and it occurred to him to come up and see you and apologize for

his absence this evening. So we came together."

"It's quite all right," said Needham, in his peculiar nasal tones. "I am glad you came. I sleep pretty heavily and had a beastly dream just when you came in. I was back in Africa."

"He was moving about as he spoke, placing a box of cigars, a bottle of whisky, some glasses and a siphon of soda-water on the table, and Meldrum observed him carefully. His peculiar build was not so noticeable when he was on his feet, the design of his loose tweed suit seeming to make him appear better proportioned. At times he looked almost handsome, but at other times, with a different perspective, the extraordinary length of his arms and legs was very apparent, while still another view made him appear almost grotesque, the singular shape of his small head, with its closely-cropped black hair, offending the sense of just proportions. His eyes were brown with muddy whites, and the sinister effect of his high cackling laugh (which was very frequent), accompanied as it was by a downward movement of his large hooked nose and an upward twist of his little black mustache, was not lost upon the observant teacher.

The room itself was dirty and untidy in the extreme. Stale tobacco fumes filled the air, and articles of wearing apparel were scattered around. Some unwashed dishes stood on a small table near the fireplace, and remnants of food lay on the floor. Books, papers and magazines were flung about in disorder and Needham's huge muddy boots lay where he had thrown them, below the chair on which Norton sat.

"What were you doing back in Africa?" asked Meldrum pleasantly, helping himself to a cigar.

"Back amongst those beastly baboons," said Needham, with his unpleasant laugh, at the same time proceeding to fill the glasses. "You know, I once ran into a bunch of them when I was out alone on a hunting trip, and I saw a curious sight. There was a big fight on among them—there would be about twenty of them. I should think,

I saw the whole business, and it was some fight, I can tell you. Rocks and chunks of wood were flying in all directions, and they were clubbing one another in great shape. As far as I could judge, they were roughly divided into two lots, but it was pretty much of a mix-up.

"But there was one old gray fellow that took my fancy rather. He seemed to be the chief egger-on. Whenever things looked like calming down a bit, he stirred them up again by means of a number of curious calls. I could not quite make out what part he was playing, or what side he favored, for he seemed to keep pretty well outside of the fight, only concerning himself with those that went down. He finished them up in the most methodical manner as they lay. And if two were attacking one he would throw himself in on the side of the two to help finish the odd fellow—and then he seemed to set the remaining two fighting one another I think he gave false signals at times. At any rate, he was the freshest of the three or four survivors when it was all over. And then they sat down and had a kind of powwow."

Norton glanced again at Meldrum, who smiled at him slightly, then said to Needham:

"Really? How very extraordinary that you should witness all this. Did they not attempt to molest you?"

"No," said Needham, with his evil smile. "They didn't attempt to interfere with us—didn't seem to mind me at all, which is rather unusual for them, for they are shy of humans as a rule. I stood on a big boulder and watched the whole business. The old chap had his eye on me, but either he understood firearms (I had my rifle and revolver, of course), or else I was lucky when I imitated some of his peculiar noises. He seemed quite scared when I came away with one of his favorite calls, and when they finally cleared out, after covering up the dead with branches and leaves, he gave me a most significant look—seeming to beg that I would not give him away.

"At least that's how it appealed to me.

And, strangely enough, I was instrumental in capturing the very same animal later on, together with some others, during a hunt. I lured them to a certain spot by that very noise."

He had thrown himself down in his easy chair again, and as he laughed afresh his crooked yellow teeth uncovered, and his little eyes glittered unpleasantly. Meldrum was filled with a strong sense of repulsion.

"What was that particular noise like?" Norton struck in for the first time.

Needham put down his glass and, laying his head back slightly, made a peculiar kind of clucking gurgle in his throat. In an instant, from the corner behind Norton's chair, came a shrill chatter of terror, and a little red figure hurried across the floor and dived below the table. Norton almost dropped his glass, and Meldrum gave a startled exclamation. Needham alone was calm.

"Ah Fifi, you rascal!" he said. "Did I scare you again? That's too bad. Come here."

A small long-tailed monkey, clad in a little red jacket, came slowly from below the table and advanced timidly toward Needham, who spoke coaxingly to it, and finally made a kind of rippling noise with his tongue that seemed to reassure it, for it jumped on the arm of his chair and sat quietly blinking at the visitors. Needham tickled its head with his large forefinger.

"I bought Fifi from an Italian," he said, noting his guests' look of astonishment. "She is good company—catches flies, switches the lights on and off, and does other useful things—eh, Fifi?"

The little animal looked up at him intelligently, and with a sudden movement Needham wound his great fingers about its throat. With a plaintive cry, the little creature made futile efforts to tear away the strong hand about its neck, plucking frantically with its small paws.

"Don't!" said Norton in a sharp voice. "I can't bear to see animals tormented."

"I'm not hurting her," said Needham, removing his hand. "She's a nervous little thing and must be taught not to

be so frightened. I think the Italian must have ill-used her. But she is clever, for all that," continued Needham, laughing. "She is learning to play the piano."

Lifting the little monkey, crossed the room with long strides to the corner, where a small cottage piano stood, and seated himself on the stool. "Now play, Fifi," he said.

The intelligent creature leant forward and commenced striking sharply here and there among the notes, producing a curious kind of tinkling resemblance to certain bars from "Old Black Joe". Meldrum was conscious of a strange prickling sensation—he did not quite know why.

After a few moments, Needham rose again and, putting the monkey in a box in the corner of the room, returned again to his chair.

### III

IT WAS late before the friends took their departure, Needham holding their interest with stories of his adventures in different parts of the world. Indeed, it was only when Meldrum became aware, by the restless movements of his friend, that Norton was not enjoying himself that he recollected the lateness of the hour and suggested it was time they took their leave.

"You fellows mustn't be too critical of my quarters, you know," said Needham, laughing, as they descended the stairs together. "I confess I am not a tidy person. I have led the rough bachelor life too long. But you fellows should understand something about that."

He accompanied them to the sidewalk, and after some desultory remarks about the weather, the visitors set off toward Norton's home. The moon was shining brightly and after the heavy rain and wind the air smelt fresh and moist. Meldrum inhaled it with evident pleasure.

"Now that I have seen your friend at close quarters," he said. "I must confess that I do not feel so strongly inclined in his favor. The state of that room was disgraceful even for a bachelor, and

there is no excuse for anyone at all shutting out the fresh air. But, although his tastes seem to run unpleasantly to monkeys, I hardly think he deserves the appellation you bestowed on him."

"Perhaps not," said Norton, who seemed in better spirits, now that he was in the free fresh air again. "As far as the atmosphere of his house is concerned, he once explained that to me by saying that since he had been in Africa he had to keep the temperature up. I think he said he had rheumatism. But I don't like him."

There was silence for several minutes, and then he burst out:

"And of course he pays attention to Elsie."

"Ah!" said Meldrum significantly. "Perhaps a lover's jealousy has something to do with the case."

"We met him one day on Church Street," said Norton. "and of course I had to introduce him. He made himself very agreeable, and yet it seemed to my fancy that he was not so much taken up with the girl as anxious to do me an ill turn. Other fellows pay attention to her, too, of course, but that's because they admire her. It was not so in his case, I am convinced. After we left him Elsie said: 'What a fine-looking man!' And then she added: 'No he isn't—he's a horror!'"

"Well," said Meldrum heartily. "apparently you do not need to fear her falling in love with him, however it may be in his case. I really am afraid it's a case of 'I do not like thee, Dr. Fell.' Meldrum laughed. "But I hardly think," he wound up. "you have any solid grounds for quarreling with him. The world is wide enough to hold both of you."

Often in the days that followed, Meldrum, moved by a curiosity he could not quite account for, took his evening walk out on North Avenue past Needham's house. Of Needham himself he saw nothing. Once he heard the weird tinkling of the piano, but generally the form of the little monkey in its red jacket could be seen sitting motionless at the upper front window looking out on the street. It struck Meldrum as

strange that the creatures should sit so quietly. In the course of his progress past the house he did not observe it stir or alter its position. Its gaze seemed fixed on that point of the road where Meldrum fancied its master would first come into sight on his way home from town.

"Never knew they were such devoted things," Meldrum ruminated. "What a queer kind of a pet to keep! And what a queer life to live, anyway, alone in that house. He doesn't even get anyone to clean it up apparently. Some strange people in this old world!"

With this philosophical reflection, Meldrum passed on in the direction of the park.

Term examinations kept Meldrum busily occupied during the days that followed, and the friends did not have occasion to see one another for nearly two weeks. Then, when they did meet, it was again through the instrumentality of Needham, after the evening of the party at the Miner home. The Miners were neighbors of Norton's sweetheart and lived out some distance beyond Ethan Allen Park.

Thus it came about that after seeing his young lady to her home Norton found himself, some time after midnight, at a point perhaps a couple of miles from his rooms and with the acre of the Park lying almost directly between himself and his objective. He determined to cut across it, a thing he did quite frequently.

The night was cool and cloudy, with fitful bursts of moonlight which tended rather to accentuate the blackness of the intervening spells of darkness. Had Norton not been thoroughly familiar with the topography of the land he might have had some difficulty in keeping his direction. But he kept going forward confidently, noting certain well-known landmarks. He skirted the base of the hill on which the tower is situated, and was just on the point of plunging into a thick grove of trees, leading down toward the main gateway, when he chanced to look behind. And there he saw rather a disquieting sight.

The moon had just struggled through

again and its pale light revealed to the apprehensive Norton the gigantic form of Needham perched on the top of a large boulder in a crouching position as if about to spring down. It might have been perhaps fifty yards from the spot where Norton stood. Even as he gazed Needham leapt down (from a height of some ten feet) and disappeared. Norton stood waiting, but there was no further sound. He walked on again, wondering uneasily what Needham might be doing in the park at such an hour—unless perhaps he, too, was taking a short cut. But Norton felt uneasy nevertheless.

Entering the grove he pushed forward briskly. It was very dark now, the moon being hidden once more, and the gloom and whispering of the trees made his flesh creep. Several times he looked behind him, but could see nothing. Then a crackling of branches, this time much nearer, brought him to a dead halt, and, facing about, he called loudly:

"Hello, Needham! Is that you?"

There was no response, and Norton stood with straining ears and eyes, his heart thumping in alarm. And even as he stood the horrible thing happened.

He was almost directly under a huge gnarled oak tree, and as he laid a hand on the trunk for a moment to steady himself he happened to glance up, and the hair bristled on his scalp to find a pair of luminous yellow eyes gazing down upon him.

Ere he could recover, a form seemed to detach itself from the shadows and a pair of great hands reached down and clutched at his throat, while a chuckling voice said:

"Aha! You would give me away, would you?"

#### IV.

IN HIS terror, Norton did what was possibly the best thing in the circumstances—fell to the ground. For this action seemed to upset the equilibrium of the figure in the tree (which seemed to be suspended by the lower limbs) and caused it to relax its hold and draw up its arms for an instant. And in that

instant Norton had recovered and was off, running as he had never run before, slipping, dashing, plunging, colliding, but never stopping and never looking back.

How he ever found his way out to the street was always a mystery to him, but he became aware, presently, that he was on North Avenue once more, and in the light of the first arc lamp he slowed down and finally stopped to recover. There was no sign of Needham, although Norton had heard him crashing along in pursuit.

Everything was still, and not a soul was in sight. Fear overcoming him again, Norton hurried on and did not stop until he was safe in his room and had locked the door. But he enjoyed little sleep during the remainder of that night.

Next evening Norton hastened to Meldrum's apartment and poured the whole story into his friend's sympathetic ear.

"You see," he said excitedly, "I was right about him, after all. He is a throw-back—he came at me from the trees. His instincts drove him there. Talking, too, about my giving him away! He knows I know what he is."

"He possibly played a practical joke on you," said Meldrum cheerily. "He tried to give you a fright and succeeded. You called him, and he came—although not quite in the manner you expected, eh?"

"Well I am not such a nervous person as all that, either," said Norton. "I admit, however, that in sober daylight it does not look quite so bad. It did not seem like a joke at the time, though. I am convinced he meant me harm."

"I do not think you are justified in that belief, Harry," said Meldrum decisively. "The man is trying to be friendly to you and you keep rebuffing him. And as for 'giving him away' that's nonsense, and you know it. What have you to give away? Simply that you don't like him and have strange ideas about him? That won't hold water, you know. You had better forget your fancies and come along with me

and see this new circus that has just struck the town. I notice by the placards they have some baboons and I am rather curious about the creatures since hearing Needham's stories. Come along! You need something to take you out of yourself. And if I were you I would not mention that business the next time you see Needham, unless he broaches the subject . . ."

Tasker's, "The Greatest Show on Earth," had pitched its camp some distance from the town over toward Wincooski, and after a brisk walk the friends found themselves in the enclosure in which the curious were beginning to gather. There were the usual games of hazard, coconut shies, roundabouts, candy stalls, and side shows of all kinds clustered round the main tent, where the grand performance was held later in the evening. Presently they discovered the whereabouts of the baboons, which did not, when viewed, present quite the appearance of the monstrous creatures portrayed in vivid colors on the outside of the tents.

Meldrum and Needham stood observing the animals in silence for some moments when Norton, happening to glance in the direction of the tent opening, saw the tall form of Needham in the act of paying his admission fee. Norton's heart beat faster with the recollection of his experience on the previous evening, but Needham smiled and waved a greeting, as if nothing unusual had happened. Norton turned again to the cage—to discover that there were others interested in the arrival of the newcomer.

There were three baboons in all, two apparently not yet full grown, and an old fellow of hoary aspect, who sat by himself for the most part near the front of the cage, watching the passers-by. He was treated with great respect by the two younger ones and was evidently still strong enough to be reckoned with. The old baboon had risen to its feet and was gazing intently at the approaching figure.

For some moments it stood thus, then, seizing the bars of the cage in its hands, it rattled the framework with tre-

mendous force, at the same time giving vent to a peculiar sound. At its cry, the other two ran forward and the extraordinary spectacle was seen of all three creatures staring fixedly at Needham as he made his way toward them.

There were not many people in the tent—the hour being early—but the few who were there turned toward the spot. Needham laughed and shook hands with Meldrum, at the same time waving one of his hands playfully in the direction of the old baboon. Like lightning, a long hairy arm shot forth toward him, but the distance was too great for the creature. Again it thundered on the bars.

"Hey Kruger, what's the matter now?" shouted an attendant, approaching. "Quit that! Do you want to bring the house down?"

He struck with a pole at the hands of the animal on the bars, making it shift them from place to place. But it was not to be driven back, and it still continued to stare at Needham.

The attendant drew away, saying in a sulky tone: "Don't meddle with the animals, please."

"It's all right, old chap," said Needham pleasantly. "He wanted to shake hands with me, but I declined with thanks."

"Don't do nothin' to annoy him, please," said the man in surly tones, preparing to depart. "God knows what might happen if he got loose. He did once, and we had a hell of a time. He nearly killed a man."

"Ah, *did* he?" said Needham, with interest. "He's pretty strong, I take it?"

"You can bet your sweet life he is!" the man called back over his shoulder. "We take no chances with him."

"By Jove!" said Needham, gazing at the baboon. "He's mighty like the old fellow in the fight I told you about, now that I look at him closely."

The three walked away from the spot at Meldrum's suggestion, but, looking back every now and then, the teacher noted, with some uneasiness, that the creature still retained its position and still followed Needham's figure with attentive eyes. There were a few other

cage in the tent containing smaller monkey, and other animals and, having strolled past these, they soon found themselves once more opposite the baboons.

The place was now clearer than before, and Needham, glancing around to see that he was not observed, made a swift cross-wise motion with his hand and emitted the peculiar noise that Meldrum had heard him make on the night of their visit. Its effect was electrical. The two younger baboons, who had sat themselves near their older companion, ran at once to the back of the cage, where they cowered, whimpering and exhibiting every indication of alarm.

But the old baboon acted differently. The tension, which had up to this point kept its figure severely rigid, now relaxed. It squatted down on the floor of the cage and commenced nodding its head briskly up and down, its features distorted by what, to Meldrum's fancy, looked extraordinarily like a grin. Needham smiled, too, and, glancing from one to the other, Meldrum felt his flesh creep slightly.

"Let us go," he said hastily. "We have seen enough of these brutes."

Needham acquiesced, and they made their way to the exit.

V.

"**B**EASTLY clever things, though," said Needham, as they passed out into the clear night air. "And strong as the very devil. I think myself there is something in the old idea of the African natives that apes pretend not to understand speech for fear they should be made to work." He laughed his unpleasant laugh, and again Meldrum felt squeamish.

"You seem to have given them some study," said Meldrum, as they made their way toward the main tent.

"I have seen a good deal of them one way and another," said Needham carelessly, "and read a little, too. A curious thing I discovered was that when under the influence of liquor (and it's some sight to see, believe me!) they are peculiarly receptive to auto-suggestion. I

believe a fortune could be made by putting them through tricks in this way—if the authorities allowed it. As for thieving, they would 'steal the milk out of your tea' as the old song says."

In the excitement of the extensive and elaborate circus performance provided by Tasker's Needham and Meldrum soon forgot about the baboons, and it was late in the evening when the three made their way back to Burlington. Emerging from Church Street, Norton and Meldrum turned up toward the University, while Needham strode off in the direction of the lake.

"Better lay aside your prejudice and think the best of the man," said Meldrum to Norton as they parted. "He is a mighty interesting fellow, and has a fund of knowledge that is remarkable."

Two days later found all Burlington in a state of excitement. Through a piece of carelessness the door of the baboon's cage had been left unlocked and the old gray baboon had made a successful dash for liberty and got clear away. It happened in the evening, and the fading light hampered pursuit. When last seen, the brute was heading away from Winoski toward the lake shore.

Search was kept up throughout the night without result, and then, next day, word came that the creature had been seen in a tree near the entrance to Ethan Allen Park. As soon as possible the entire park was surrounded, and a contracting circle of hunters and curious people scoured the woods and shrubbery, but apparently the animal had moved on again to fresh quarters.

Word was sent all over the surrounding countryside, and no effort was spared to locate the missing animal, but several days passed without result. Numerous stories got into circulation regarding supposed escapades on the part of the missing baboon, and there were no end of rumors as to its being seen—at one time on the railway near the freight yard, at another waving from the tower in the park; and, again, far along the lake shore. Nervous persons kept to busy thoroughfares after dark. But the actual whereabouts of the creature remained a mystery.

Fresh stories went around of stealthy prowlings round houses and mysterious rattling of doors in the small hours of the morning. Chancing to see some of this in one of the evening papers, Meldrum's attention was again drawn to the subject, and there returned to his mind his encounter with Needham at the circus. Obeying a sudden impulse, he set off in the direction of Needham's dwelling in North Avenue. He had not been near it for some time, but he found himself possessed of a curious desire to see whether the little monkey still sat looking out of the front window.

Walking sharply, Meldrum soon came in view of the quaint wooden house with its trees and grass plots. The sun had not yet set, and in the clear evening light Meldrum could see the small crouching figure sitting in its accustomed place. He stopped, as he reached the house, and stood watching a moment, and then, suddenly became petrified with astonishment.

For there came all at once into view, over and beyond the head of the small monkey, the great gray face of the old baboon with its long lips curled back and its doglike tusks displayed!

It gazed forth for an instant, seeming to hold back with one hand the lace curtain that overhung the window, and then disappeared as suddenly as it had come. Needham rubbed his eyes, then continued staring stupidly. The little monkey made no sign.

Thinking that perhaps the baboon had found its way into the house through an open window during Needham's absence, Meldrum felt that he ought to warn the South African, without delay, of his unpleasant visitor. He went up the path to the house and rang the bell. He thought that at the sound he detected a far off scampering, but no one came in answer to his summons. He tried the door and found it locked.

In some perplexity, Meldrum came down the garden path to the sidewalk, wondering exactly what course to pursue. He looked again at the window. The little monkey still sat gazing intently at the street. Of the baboon there was no sign.

## THE APE-MAN

"It may have been imagination," murmured Meldrum. "But it looked unconsciously real."

He had turned his steps back in the direction of the town, and was meditating whether or not to communicate his fears to the authorities, when to his relief he saw the tall figure of Needham striding toward him. They stopped to greet one another, and Meldrum hastened to tell the other what he had seen.

"Oh, nonsense!" said Needham, his mustache twitching. "They don't come around houses like that—not in the day time, anyway. The place was all right at midday and has been locked up tight ever since. No; you must have imagined it."

He laughed lightly, and in a subconscious kind of way Meldrum seemed to get the impression that the tall man was more anxious to laugh the story off than to continue to discuss it. However, he offered to accompany Needham home and help search the house.

"Just wait there for a moment if you don't mind," said Needham (again with nervous haste, it seemed to Meldrum) "and I'll walk around and have a look at the windows. If they are all right I'll give you a wave."

He hastened off, and after a short interval again made his appearance at the front of the house and waved his hand. Meldrum waved back.

"Everything O. K.?" he asked.

"Quite O. K.," called Needham. "So long, old man. See you later."

Somewhat puzzled, Meldrum set off in the direction of the town.

On the evening of the next day the telephone in Meldrum's sitting room tinkled briskly and Norton's voice came over the line.

"Needham has just 'phoned down," he said, "and has asked me to go round to his place tonight to get some old African stamps he has hunted out for me. I once asked him if he had any and he promised to get me some. I wish now that I hadn't asked him."

He laughed rather nervously, and then added:

"I wish I'd just said 'no.' for I don't much want to go. However I promised

to look in for a few minutes. Would you care to come along if I come round for you?"

"Too busy with examination papers just at the moment," said Meldrum, "and it would bring you out of your way to come over here. It's after eight o'clock now. I might be free about ten and pick you up when I take my usual stroll. How would that do?"

Norton said, "All right," and Meldrum hung up the receiver.

As he did so, a strange sense of foreboding came upon him and the vision of the baboon rushed back to his mind. He shook himself in annoyance and resumed his work.

But he could not regain his ease of mind, and after spending nearly an hour in a vain attempt to concentrate on some problems in algebra he closed up his books impatiently and sought his hat and coat.

He stood irresolutely in the hallway for some moments, and then, with a laugh, opened a drawer and drew forth a revolver, which he slipped into his overcoat pocket, after seeing that all its chambers were filled. He laughed again as he descended to the street, but drew some comfort, nevertheless, from the touch of the cold steel upon his hand.

### VII.

THE night was dark, but the air was clear and invigorating. Meldrum walked smartly in a direction away from Needham's residence, since he was earlier than usual and had but plenty of time to meet Norton, finding that he could not free his mind from an unaccountable anxiety, he swung round presently and made his way to North Avenue.

It did not take him long to reach the house, and as he drew near he observed, with a slight feeling of surprise, that one of the downstairs rooms was illuminated—a room he had never yet seen lighted. It lay toward the rear of the house, its windows facing a broad gallery.

Obeying a sudden impulse, Meldrum, instead of going to the front door, walked quietly along the gallery and peeped through a corner of the blind

into the room. What he saw there made his blood run cold.

The room was about fifteen feet square, with blue paper on the walls and plain oak furniture. A square table stood in the center at which several figures were seated. Needham sat with his back to the window, and in the chair on his left sat Norton, a pile of postage stamps on the table before him, and over opposite Needham, directly facing the window, sat, or rather sprawled, the figure of the gray baboon!

On the table was a decanter of whisky, and all three had tumblers. Norton's glass was half empty, standing beside the postage stamps, but Needham and the creature were both drinking, the animal seemingly following the movements of the man, lifting the tumbler to its lips and setting it down again as Needham did, as far as Meldrum could judge by the movements of his right arm, which was visible. The brute's eyes were fixed upon the man across the table, and from its appearance and the limpness of its figure Meldrum decided it was in an advanced state of intoxication.

Norton seemed to be spell-bound, staring fixedly at the scene before him. Occasionally he passed his hand in a bewildered way over his forehead, or looked stupidly at the half empty tumbler before him. But he seemed incapable of either speech or action.

In horror and indignation, Meldrum continued to gaze. As fast as the baboon's whisky was gulped down Needham filled its glass again. From the fact that he did not fill his own very frequently, Meldrum concluded that he did not drink every time he pretended to do so—apparently deceiving the befuddled creature.

Like a flash, Meldrum remembered Needham's remark about the intoxicated baboon and autosuggestion. And with a fast beating heart he gripped his revolver and waited.

From being limp and sluggish, the ape now began to show signs of animation. It sat more erect, its eyes began to glitter, and occasionally it turned its head and gazed at Norton who still sat

in apparent stupefaction. Every time it did this it seemed to grin at Needham with frightful suggestiveness, nodding its head as it had done when in the cage at the menagerie.

Fearing he knew not what mischief, Meldrum went quietly and hurriedly to the front door, opened it with extreme caution, and managed to make his way undetected to the door of the room in which the trio sat. Through the half open doorway, he could now get a view of Needham's face, and its diabolical contortions were dreadful to behold. It was apparent that he was working the animal up to something, but what that something was the creature apparently did not quite seem to grasp.

Presently Needham made the strange clucking noise in his throat, at the same time stretching out his arms toward Norton. That gave the brute its clue. It rose unsteadily to its feet, and turning its evil eyes toward the recumbent figure of Norton, seemed about to spring at his throat.

With a crash, Meldrum kicked open the door and entered the room, covering Needham with his revolver. The baboon, its attention distracted by the noise of Meldrum's entry and apparently finding Needham's influence withdrawn, now appeared to feel the full effect of the whisky fumes once more, and sank back into the armchair more fuddled than ever. Norton had by this time fallen back in his seat, his head tilted toward the ceiling. Needham, however, has its wits about him, and his ghastly yellow face, convulsed with fury, attempted to force a sickly smile.

"Needham," said Meldrum sternly, "I don't know what abominable devilry you are up to, but it must stop here and now. If you can right things here go ahead. If not, I shoot—either you or the brute, I am not particular which."

Although outwardly calm, Meldrum's heart was beating furiously and he was hunting desperately in his mind for the proper way to handle the situation. It was not clear to him as yet.

"Why, Meldrum!" said Needham in a thick voice, cunningly feigning  
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drunkenness, although he was perfectly sober. "What's all this? Revolvers? We are all friends. Norton had a drop too much—old man baboon dropped in and joined the party—I was going to get him to do some tricks. . . ."

"That's quite enough," said Meldrum sharply. "You are no more drunk than I am. Open that window and let Norton have some air. Loosen his collar—"

A sudden chattering caused him to pause and drew his attention for a moment to the mantel over the fireplace, on to which the little monkey had suddenly jumped from some nearby corner.

"Ha, Fifi!" said Needham quickly. "Lights!" The switch was within easy reach of the creature's hand, and in an instant the room was plunged in darkness.

The hallway being also without illumination, the blackness was profound. Utterly unable to tell what might happen, and fearing the baboon to be the principal danger point, Meldrum came to a swift decision and fired in the direction of the creature's chair. A frightful scream broke the silence followed by a wild gibbering, punctuated at times by what appeared to be Needham's voice shouting commands.

Then there came a loud crash of glass, as the table was overturned, followed by snarling, cursing and pandemonium. Stumbling blindly in the darkness, Meldrum endeavored, without success, to locate the switch in the hallway, but finally a faint glimmer showed him the outline of the front door, and he dashed forth into the street.

Several people had collected on hearing the shot, and aid was quickly forthcoming. Together with several neighbors and others, Meldrum again entered the house, and the light in the hall was turned on. The door of the occupied room had been swung shut and the dreadful snarling din still continued.

"The baboon must have broken in and attacked my friends," was Meldrum's hurried explanation, as they forced open the room door and finally got the lights turned on.

A hideous litter of broken furniture,

pieces of glass, liquor, and bloodstains were everywhere revealed. Needham and the baboon, locked in a death grapple, were rolling among the ruins. By a curious chance, Norton's chair had been left standing, and he still sat there, limp and motionless, unaffected by all the noise.

With difficulty, the baboon was overpowered and secured. It was still bleeding copiously from the bullet wound in its shoulder, but it gnashed and tore at its captors with undiminished fury. Needham was bleeding from many wounds and presented a dreadful spectacle, much of his clothing being torn to shreds. In addition to receiving many cuts, he had been badly mauled by the infuriated animal, whose wrath, by some strange combination of circumstances, had been turned against himself. He sat breathing heavily, too exhausted to talk to those around him.

The removal of the animal drew off most of the curious and some sort of order was restored. Realizing that Norton had apparently been drugged, but not wishing just then to say anything of what he had seen, Meldrum made the plea that his friend had evidently been overcome as a result of the terrible scene he had just witnessed, and, procuring a cab, took him first to his own chambers and then to his home, where he was prostrated for some weeks as the result of the shock.

Needham disappeared almost immediately, and Norton's relatives did not deem it expedient to search for him. He was never heard of again in that city, and later it transpired that he had returned to Africa.

The baboon lived for some years after its strange adventure, but on dying it made no confession. And such mysteries as to how long it had been the guest of the South African, whether or not it was the same creature that he had once betrayed into captivity, to what extent the two understood one another, and whether or not it was incited to murder on that dreadful evening, were never solved.

And, indeed, nobody had any great desire that they should be.