

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The cover features a black and white illustration with red accents. Two large Egyptian statues with striped shawls stand on either side of the central text. In the center, a man in a white suit is running away from the viewer, looking back with a terrified expression and his hands to his ears. The background is a simple corridor.

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FEATURE STORY

The Haunted Corridors

by

William
Hamilton
Osborne

"NO MAN'S MAN," a Story of Police and Politics, Coming in the October 15th Edition

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. I.

OCTOBER 1, 1918.

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THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS

A MYSTERY STORY BASED ON SCIENCE

By WILLIAM HAMILTON OSBORNE,

Author of "The Red Mouse," "The Running Fight," "Mr. Bachelor's Apartments," etc.

PART ONE

GUM-SHOE MIXLEY—denizen of the dark, night watchman of the neighborhood—was in a quandary. True, he was not paid for watching the Le Massena Mansion, a huge, deserted chateau-like dwelling, that stood dark and forbidding in the midst of rank grass and overgrown shrubbery; and yet the ethics of his peculiar profession demanded that he treat the just and the unjust alike; in Mixley's lexicon the just being those who remunerated him, and the unjust those who did not.

Gum-shoe Mixley had often solicited the patronage of the old Le Massena Mansion, but quite without result. For years it had lain wholly unoccupied, shabby and unkempt by day and dark as Egypt at night.

But for three nights running Gum-shoe Mixley had been puzzled—puzzled by the dim light and the furtive shadows

in the huge cupola that surmounted the Le Massena house.

It was hinted by the unjust in the neighborhood that Gum-shoe Mixley, night watchman, was not always puzzled by stealthy figures and moving lights. Gum-shoe's enemies had suggested that the houses of the unjust had been broken into, on occasion, as a warning to those residents of the neighborhood who did not regard the services of Mixley sufficiently enough to pay for them. But these lights in the big house were lights unknown to Mixley, and all the more because he had seen no one enter and no one go away. Mixley felt, however, that he ought to investigate; investigation, on his part, might lead to remuneration on the part of the old dowager who owned the deserted dwelling. On the other hand, as Mixley told himself, the duty of a night watchman is to watch, not to engage in pugilistic or more serious encounters with burglars or other breakers of the law. He was paid to watch, and

he was not paid—so he told himself—to shoot; and his stipend certainly had never warranted the risk of being shot at.

Mixley revolved these things in his mind as he passed the big place for the sixth time that night. Under a street light he paused and consulted his timepiece. It was scarcely ten o'clock. With the anxiety of a Paul Revere, he glanced once more toward the cupola. No lights had yet appeared; no one had entered; no one had left.

As Mixley stood there, courting the lamp-post for its company, he heard the steady tramp-tramp of a ponderous personage coming down the street. He caught the gleam of buttons as the figure approached. He noted that the figure stopped for one instant at a corner and rapped once, twice, with a night-stick, and Gum-shoe Mixley sighed with relief.

"It's McMurtry on his rounds," said Mixley to himself. "I'll put it up to him."

He did put it up to McMurtry, and though it was apparent that McMurtry took but little interest in a dilapidated dwelling known to be empty, yet, at one juncture of Mixley's narrative, McMurtry sunk his muscular fingers into Mixley's arm.

"Sh-h!" said McMurtry, holding his night-stick rigidly aloft in his right arm, "there's them lights now."

"And the shadows," added Mixley. "Mac," he said with chattering teeth, for the night air was chill, "how did they get in? There's a high board fence runs around the place on three sides, and nobody gets in from the street side so far as I can tell. Maybe they live there, Mac."

McMurtry thrust his right hand into his hip-pocket, drew forth his gun, took a firm grip on his night-stick and then nodded vigorously.

"We'll investigate and see, my boy," he said, in a gruff whisper.

He stepped over the low hedge that skirted the sidewalk, nimbly crossed the unkempt lawn, with Mixley at his heels, and quite as nimbly encircled the house, stopping with some surprise on the steps of the rear porch.

"This here door is open, my boy," he said. "Let's have a light."

Mixley drew forth his electric flash and step by step the two men ransacked the first and second floors.

"There's no fixtures gone," whispered McMurtry. "No lead pipe, neither."

He stood still and silent for an instant and Mixley could feel the sudden stiffening of McMurtry's nerve and muscle; that sharpening of every faculty that belongs to the real watch-dogs of the law by instinct.

McMurtry was paid to do something more than watch. "My boy," he whispered, "I hear them upstairs overhead. Whoever they are, I hear them."

They crept up softly and without the aid of light to the third floor. In the very center of this third floor was a winding staircase; apparently above this winding staircase was the cupola, and from the cupola unquestionably there came sounds; sounds of a weird, uncanny nature.

"It's c-c-c-cold," whispered Mixley, clutching the blue coat-tails of his stalwart friend.

His stalwart friend did not answer the remark, but uttered an exclamation more forcible than elegant, for in the darkness on the narrow stairway he had jammed his helmet forcibly against a door.

"Locked, by thunder!" he exclaimed. "And a sheet-iron door at that."

"Ah," whispered Mixley in return, "that, there cupola was made to be sound-proof, so I've heard."

"It may be sound-proof," returned McMurtry, in more of a growl than a whisper, "but we ain't sound-proof—do you hear that, now?"

That was a long, weird wail, a sound that seemed not of any living human voice, something like the sudden snap of a string upon a drumhead. Three times was this sound repeated and then it was followed by the confused murmur of voices—now low, now somewhat shrill. Then as the two men stood without the sheet-iron door with bated breath, there rang out into the stillness of the night the sudden bark of a revolver.

McMurtry waited no longer. He raised his night-stick and struck it heavily against the sheet-iron door.

"Come out or I will break in," he yelled at the top of his voice. Then backing down two steps he stood and waited with his gun trained upon the door.

Mixley and his burly friend were quite right—there were not only lights and shadows in the cupola; there were men—two men.

These men, an hour before, had walked side by side along the railroad track. They had come from the eastern end of town; they had walked swiftly and in silence.

The Le Massena Mansion backed up on the rear of the P. R. & Q. branch, and at the Le Massena Mansion these two men left the track, charged side by side down into the narrow gully and on the other side had scrambled up toward the high board fence that surrounded the Le Massena grounds.

One of the men—the elder—uttered a short grunt and shook his head at the fence.

"No thoroughfare," he said.

"Yes," returned the younger of the two.

"You mean—climb," grunted the older man again.

"I mean—this," returned the younger man; stealthily he felt along the bottom of the fence until he found what he sought, the loose board by which he had made his entrance two nights last past. He thrust his companion through this opening and immediately followed. Then once more, side by side, they strode through the rank grass and the nettles toward the house.

"Might just as well have come around by the street," grunted the elder man.

"Not a bit of it," replied the younger with conviction, "a secret is a secret until somebody finds it out, and nobody is going to find this out until the hour strikes, Garthwaite." He tapped his friend on the shoulder. "There are only three people in the world that know about this thing; you're one and I'm another—"

He stopped short, took out a large key and opened the kitchen door.

"And who is the third?" asked his companion, stumbling into the darkness after him.

"The third," returned the younger man, in a low voice, "happens to be Virginia."

"Virginia who?" said the elder man, astonished.

"Virginia Garthwaite," replied the younger.

The elder man whistled in surprise. "You don't say so," he exclaimed.

The young man drew him forward in the darkness.

A moment later they were standing behind locked doors in the sound-proof cupola. The younger of the two men struck a match and lit a large oil lamp standing on a table in the center of the room. For the first time the features of these two men became visible.

The younger of the two was the taller of the two. He was slender, but with a great breadth of shoulder that indicated possibly extraordinary strength. He might have been thirty, but he looked thirty-five. Smooth-shaven though he were, his countenance was swarthy and his square jaw gave evidence of a tendency to heavy beard. He was handsome in a way and his swarthy face was surmounted by a heavy mass of coal-black hair that fell down carelessly over his forehead. There was something essentially un-American, possibly uncivilized about him; he seemed, somehow, of the Orient. His name was Paul Champenois. He was a professor of physics at the little University of Ougheltee, whose lights twinkled somberly and soberly in the distance, and he was known to be an expert in Egyptology and archeology, as well.

"It's a little stuffy in here, Garthwaite," said Paul Champenois, raising the four double window sashes on each side of the square cupola, "and besides, we need fresh air in our enterprise. We need the avenues of air," he mused, as though speaking to himself, "the avenues of air."

He seized a pair of night glasses that lay beside the lamp, drew his elderly friend to the western window and thrust the binoculars into his hand.

"Garthwaite," he went on, "do you see that pin point of light that twinkles on the hillside over there?"

Garthwaite did and said so.

"That," went on Champenois, "is the light in a cupola, the cupola in your house."

"You don't say so," ejaculated Garthwaite.

"Two houses on a hill," went on Champenois. "I needed two, yours was one and this the other. Adjust those Audemairs and glance as the crow flies along the avenues of air, and tell me what you see."

"Why, bless my soul," said Garthwaite, "I see lights and shadows; I see Virginia, hanged if I don't."

"Possibly," said Champenois, "she sees you, too."

Garthwaite stared for an instant longer through the glasses, then turned back toward the middle of the room and sank into a chair. "Why have you brought me here, Champenois?" he said.

He was a thick-set man, was Garthwaite, with a pointed beard into which the gray already had begun to creep. He had pleasant eyes and a somewhat whimsical manner. He constantly regarded Champenois with an air of uncertainty, and this air of uncertainty was somehow deepened on this particular occasion, either by reason of the fitful glow of the kerosene lamp that deepened the shadows in the face of Champenois, or else by reason of the silence of the night and the mystery which apparently surrounded the proceedings.

"Gad," said Garthwaite, moving uneasily in his chair and staring at Champenois, "I don't see what Virginia sees in you; I'm afraid of you at times. It's a wonder to me that you're not a mystery to her."

Champenois flashed a frank smile of understanding toward Virginia's father.

"Virginia likes me," he returned, showing his white teeth, "because she is like me. You could never understand in a hundred years, Garthwaite, but your daughter is like me and I am like her."

"Gad, I believe you're right," replied his friend. "Hang it, but sometimes I think that you even look like her."

Champenois started. "Have you noticed that, too?" he queried. He leaned over the other man, placing one hand upon his shoulder. "Tell me," he went on, "what you mean by that; feature for feature, eye for eye, how do we look alike?"

Garthwaite rose and drew the other man into the full glare of the lamp.

"By heavens," he returned, "you don't look like her, either. She's dark and you are dark, and there it ends."

"Are you quite sure?" asked Champenois.

Garthwaite slowly shook his head. "There's just one thing that stamps you both," he answered, "and I can't name it. It may be the olive of your skin; it may be—" He paused uncertainly.

"It may be," said Champenois, "a dash of the Southern sun, or, what is more likely, the tint of the Eastern sky. Let me name it for you, Garthwaite—Oriental—is that the word?"

"Gad," breathed Garthwaite, "that's the very word; you've both got it and I wonder where you got it, you and she."

Paul Champenois smiled and shook his head. "We've talked it over many times, friend Garthwaite," he exclaimed, "and she doesn't know and I do not know, but it is there and whatever thing it is, it has brought us together. Why am I here in Ougheltree; why did I follow blind trails, blindly leading me to a university, the name of which I had never even heard?"

"You wanted a job, I suppose," replied the matter-of-fact Garthwaite, went on Champenois. "What brought you to the University of Ougheltree?"

"Blest if I know," said Garthwaite.

"I know," went on Champenois, "and I'm as certain of it as I am of the things I am going to tell you here to-night. The path of Virginia Garthwaite led, somehow, through the town of Ougheltree, therefore I came. That is all I know. My path had to cross hers at some time and at some place."

"Not a bit of it," returned Garthwaite briskly, "It didn't have to cross yours at all; it just happened to."

"You look at me," said Champenois, holding the other man's gaze steadily with his own eyes; "I tell you that the thing was as inexorable as fate."

Garthwaite looked at him steadily for an instant and as he looked he slightly shivered.

"Gad, but I believe you're right," he finally exclaimed.

He sank back into his chair and placed his hand over his eyes for an instant, trying to solve the mystery that was named Paul Champenois. Then withdrawing his hand he rose once more and shook himself.

"Well, go ahead with the game, Paul," he exclaimed.

"Why did you bring me here to-night?"

Champenois also shook from himself that strange involuntary air of mysticism that had for the instant settled down upon him, and striding to a corner of the room he plucked from an object there its covering of white, leaving the object fully revealed to view.

It was a strange object; constructed of glittering brass adorned with a multitude of levers and thumb screws and backed by an enormous dial marked off in sections so minute that they were indistinguishable by the naked eye. The dial appeared merely as a huge blur of dark gray against the dull wall paper of the room. But the distinguishing feature of the instrument was its multitude of hair-like fibers that stretched taut as harp strings between two arms of the machine.

Garthwaite glanced at it curiously. "What is it?" he demanded. Even as he spoke some slight tremor passed over the machine and a faint echo responded to his tones.

"Never mind what it is, friend Garthwaite," replied Champenois. "I brought you here to-night for just one purpose." He stretched his arm toward the western window. "Three miles away," he said, "on Chatham Hill, your daughter waits. You are going to talk to her to-night; talk to her just as you talk to me, over three miles of space."

Garthwaite smiled and jerked his hand toward another corner of the room. "And through a telephone," he said.

"Not through a telephone," responded Champenois, "and not by wireless. You are going to talk by means of the Champenois Autoauraphone, and there it stands before you."

"All right," said Garthwaite, "get a move on and I'll talk; I'll talk over three miles or over thirty miles; I'll do anything you say; just start the thing in motion."

But the young doctor of science was not ready yet to start the thing in motion. He had a point to make, and he proceeded to make it.

"Garthwaite," he said, "do you know how fast a sound travels?"

"Oh, lord!" groaned Garthwaite, sinking back into his chair and drawing a yellow-covered novel from his pocket, "you're talking science, and if there's anything on the face of this earth that I won't stand for, my dear Paul, it's science." He held up his hand as though to command silence. "Hark," he said suddenly, "sounds to me like footsteps on the stairs."

"Exactly," responded Paul Champenois, "and yet it is a matter of notoriety that this cupola is sound-proof. Possibly there is some one on the stairs; and all the ingenuity of man can't keep that sound from creeping in to us. The point I want to make, Garthwaite, is that sound never stops."

Garthwaite again held up his hand and listened. "Well," he said, "that sound has stopped, at any rate."

Champenois shot out his forefinger toward his friend. "Put your hand on that end of the table—quick!" he exclaimed.

Garthwaite did so and Champenois immediately tapped the other end with a resounding whack.

"You felt that blow at your end, didn't you?" he asked.

"Of course," said Garthwaite.

"If the table had been sixty feet instead of six you would have felt that blow, if your sense of feeling had been sufficiently acute; and if the table had been six hun-

drod feet instead of sixty, it would have communicated the blow from one end to the other. Force never stops; sound never ceases. How far do you think your daughter's voice, Virginia's, can be heard?"

"H-hum," replied Garthwaite, a bit wearily, "all over the house at times."

"You rear," went on Champenois, "can hear her voice possibly one hundred and fifty yards away, say five hundred feet; your ear can hear a cannon shot eighteen miles away; the sound of her voice and the sound of the cannon travel at about the same rate, one thousand feet a second. It would take the sound of the cannon two minutes to reach you twenty miles away; if it travels two minutes to reach your ear, why can it not travel five minutes to reach something more sensitive than your ear. Why can't it travel a half-hour or an hour?"

Garthwaite yawned. "It can if it likes, Paul," he said, delving into the middle of his yellow-backed book. "Go on, talk away, and don't mind me. When you're through talking let me know."

Champenois smiled. "What have you got there, Garthwaite?" he queried.

Garthwaite held the book in air. "Perfectly astounding proposition, Paul," he said, "best thing I've ever read. Story of a chap—extremely ambitious, too, always climbing up in the world and at every step marrying a new wife to fit his altered position in society. He altered his position about three times a year; took a new wife every time."

"What became of the old one?" queried Paul, picking up a tuning fork from the table and taking from his pocket a small, hammerless revolver.

"Gad," went on Garthwaite, "this fellow was a scientist in his way, too; always wanted to own an automobile; started in by building a garage; wonderful garage, very heavy, broad and deep concrete foundation; built it himself; took an infernally long while to get the foundation laid. About three times a year he would take a new splurge and add another layer, and here was the joke; the public didn't know it and I didn't know it either until just now, but under every layer of that foundation was one of his wives. One of them was a very large lady and caused a slight bulge in one of the walls. Foxy Fixem, the detective—"

"Foxy Fixem," mused Champenois, glancing at his friend severely, "and what is the name of this powerful work of fiction?"

"An eager glow appeared in the eyes of Garthwaite. "The Murdstone Murders," he returned gleefully.

"Ah," returned Champenois. "And the author?"

"Clarence V. Gabbage," returned Garthwaite, unctuously.

"Never heard of him," retorted Champenois.

"Nor I either," replied Garthwaite. "I never found his name in any work on literature, but you don't know what a hold Gabbage has on the people of this country; he's the king of railroad and news-stand novels. Talk about Thackeray, Dickens, Balzac—"

Champenois held up his hands in despair. "No wonder you sidestep science," he exclaimed. "Do you mean to tell me that you, occupying the chair of literature and languages in Ougheltree, have got the nerve—"

"Oh, not at all," replied Garthwaite, "not at all: Officially, I am for Meredith, but privately I hate him to beat the band. Meredith never did anything like Gabbage, mark my words."

"He must have wanted to," said Champenois, sarcastically, as the matter-of-fact Garthwaite plunged once more into the mysteries of the yellow back.

Champenois seized the book and tossed it out of the window. "My dear professor," he said, "if you won't listen, then look."

Ranged in a row upon a little shelf above their heads were a number of lamp chimneys. The scientist tapped the table smartly with a tuning fork. Immediately one lamp chimney, and only one out of the dozen, commenced to sing its shrill, weird, vibrant response. The tuning

fork had touched the soul of that cylinder to the quick. It made it cry aloud as though in agony.

Champenois seized another tuning fork and set that into vibration, whereupon the third lamp chimney in the row leaped inconveniently into life, trembling from top to bottom, singing its song a bit more weird, a bit shriller than the other.

Garthwaite looked on wonderingly. Champenois jerked his head toward the cylinder.

"Garthwaite," he said, "that is nothing but the principle of wireless telegraphy; something at this end of space sets in motion one set of vibrations and something at the other end, miles and miles away, catches those vibrations up. Listen, now, to this."

He thrust into the air his hammerless revolver and pulled the trigger. The noise made by the gun died away almost immediately, but in the corner of the room a huge gong took up the sound and kept beating and beating it back into their ears, answering the gun with what seemed a thousand metal tongues.

"Garthwaite," said Champenois at length, "I'm not talking wireless to you, I'm going way beyond anything like that. Give me a tuning fork big enough and a lamp chimney delicate enough, and I'll make the one respond to the other without wireless—not by means of clock, or flash, or code—but directly through the avenue of air, just as I shall make your daughter talk to you—just as you will hear your daughter's voice—across three miles of space to-night."

They were interrupted by crash upon crash. Champenois stood at attention and Garthwaite leaped to his feet. Garthwaite had a twinkle in his eye.

"It's your sheet-iron door taking up those tuning-fork vibrations, Paul," he said. "I think you have proved your point."

Champenois, without answering, descended the spiral staircase, unlocked the door and threw it open. He looked into the muzzle of McMurtry's gun.

McMurtry, without a moment's hesitation, swarmed up the narrow stairs, carrying Champenois with him and Mixley behind him.

Once inside the cupola McMurtry glanced about him with suspicious eyes.

"Aha!" he said, placing his strong hand upon Champenois' shoulder, "counterfeiters' den, I shouldn't be surprised."

But Mixley was surprised. He stared about him for a moment and then swooped down upon Garthwaite.

"Well, Professor Garthwaite!" he exclaimed, "and what are you doing here?"

He looked from Garthwaite, whom he did know, to Champenois, whom he did not know.

Garthwaite nodded absently. "I'm guilty, Mixley," he conceded; "I confess; I'm *particeps criminis*; I'm an accessory before the fact."

"To what?" exclaimed McMurtry. Then *McMurtry's* face broadened into a grin. "Ah, professor," he exclaimed, holding out his hand, "and what devilry are you up to now?"

Garthwaite spread his hands with a hopeless gesture and bowed to Champenois. "Ask Doc Champenois," he returned, "he knows and I don't; but whatever it is, we are in it together. If you've got two pairs of handcuffs, take us both."

McMurtry looked toward the instrument in the corner, strode to it and inspected it.

"It's no counterfeiting machine, anyhow," he said, still with the grin upon his face.

Garthwaite yawned. "Boys," he said, "if you can stand the strain, Doc Champenois will tell you all about it, and while he's telling you, I'll go and have a little smoke."

Whereupon at his first movement toward the door Champenois seized him by his shoulders and thrust him back into his chair, bowed low to the two minions of the law, saw them safely down the spiral stairs and out of sight, swung to the door and then came back to Garthwaite.

"Professor Garthwaite," he said, "will you get your daughter on the telephone?"

Garthwaite called up his house and got Virginia on the wire. He found, to his surprise, that Champenois had installed a branch telephone in the Garthwaite cupola, three miles away, and Virginia answered therefore from the top of the house.

"Virginia," he said her father over the wire, "what have you got there besides a telephone?"

"The Champenois Autoauraphone," responded his daughter.

"Virginia," he went on earnestly, "does it resemble a sounding-board hitched up to a weaving loom; is that the kind of a thing you've got?"

Virginia said she had, and she was ready and most anxious to make the first experiment.

"Where is Paul Champenois?" she asked.

Champenois was at the instrument. "Tell Virginia," commanded Champenois, "to turn screw number one to point C. and to pull the third lever on the upright."

Garthwaite gave the instructions over the wire and hung up the receiver and went back to his seat in the middle of the room.

"Now," said Champenois, "listen, and inside of two minutes you will hear your daughter's voice, because the sound of your daughter's voice never stops. It may grow too faint for the human ear, but it can never be too faint for this autoauraphone. Her voice goes on forever." He held up his hand. "Silence!" he commanded.

They were silent for a full moment; so was the autoauraphone; no sound was wafted to them across that three miles of space. The night was as still as death.

"I hear nothing," said Garthwaite, in a whisper.

"There's something wrong," exclaimed Champenois.

He stepped to the telephone and called up Garthwaite's house again.

Virginia answered, "I spoke," said Virginia, enthusiastically; "could you hear my voice?"

"No," said Champenois; "what did you say?"

"I said," she responded, "the sound of my voice never stops; you are hearing it three miles away."

"You said that?" demanded Champenois.

"Yes," she responded.

"You didn't hear my voice?" he asked.

"No," said Virginia.

"You spoke directly into the concentrator cone?"

"Yes," she said. "And you heard me?"

"No," said Champenois, "there's something wrong. Hang up the receiver, go back to the machine and talk, read, anything, but keep it up."

Again they listened and again the instrument was as silent as the night itself.

Champenois' face flushed, his brow clouded, but his fingers were very busy. He kept pushing up one lever and pulling down another; tightening one set of fibers and loosening another set, scanning the face of the dial with

a magnifying lens, and then suddenly, as Garthwaite sat there, the room seemed filled with sound. The walls reverberated, the house seemed to shake as with the roar of a distant cannon.

Garthwaite sat rigidly in his chair gripping the seat with both hands. "My heavens, man," he cried, "what was that?"

Champenois swiftly jerked the lever and there was silence. He stood up, his face pale, and wiped his brow with his kerchief.

"I don't know," he said at length, in faltering tones, "what it was. It was not a sound, it was sounds, a multitude of sounds—sounds here, there, everywhere."

He stood rigid, silent, for a moment, thinking hard. "I could not hear her voice at all," he mused. "She is speaking now, and yet I can't hear her voice. What did I hear?"

A new, strange light came into his eyes and he flung himself feverishly into his stool at the instrument and once more adjusted it in accordance with some new idea that had suddenly smitten him. Then he turned to Garthwaite.

"What do you hear now?" he asked breathlessly.

Garthwaite listened. "I hear a railroad train coming down rapidly from the West; the Cannon-Ball Express."

Champenois' lips tightened over his teeth. "Look to the west—out of the window," he commanded. "You can see up the tracks for a good two miles. Do you see a train; do you see the headlight of a train?"

"No," answered Garthwaite, "I see nothing, but it's coming like

wildfire, Champenois, louder and louder—" He stopped.

"Wait a bit," he went on, "I hear another from the east."

"Look to the east," said Champenois.

"I see nothing," replied Garthwaite, "but I hear—"

"You say," said Champenois, his voice hoarse with excitement, "you hear one train from the west and one from the east."

"Don't you?" demanded Garthwaite.

"Yes," said Champenois.

They both stood there, one glancing to the east and one to the west. The sound grew loud and louder still; it shook the building.

"Why," gasped Garthwaite, "they're here; they're on the tracks outside; they're passing. No, they're not." He fell back, his eyes starting from their sockets. "My heavens, man!" he cried, "what is that, and that, and that?"

Above the steady roar of the trains there was a re-sounding crash, a terrific impact; the sound of splintering wood; the crunching of heavy masses of steel; a report like the crack of doom, and then—silence.

Garthwaite looked at Champenois and Champenois looked at Garthwaite.



Like some huge rat, he turned and scuttled down the narrow, winding stairway.

"It was a collision, a head-on collision," exclaimed Garthwaite weakly. "They have smashed—crashed. Great heavens, man—"

But Champenois was at his side gripping his wrist with a grip of iron, his glowing eyes eating into Garthwaite's like fire.

"Garthwaite," he cried, in a hoarse whisper, "tell me, was there ever a collision on this road, a big collision like that we have just heard?"

"Yes," replied Garthwaite, "I should think there was, and twenty people killed."

Champenois' muscular fingers tightened their hold. "When did it happen?" he demanded.

Garthwaite thought for an instant. "Some time in the year 1898," he finally replied.

The scientist stiffened as with sudden shock, then he leaped back to the machine and threw off the lever he had opened.

He stood there looking not at Garthwaite, but at the machine, drinking in its mystery, its possibilities. In some sort of bewilderment he pressed both hands against his temples.

"Garthwaite," he finally exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper, "do you know what this thing means—do you see where it is leading us to?"

Garthwaite shook his head. "I know a phonograph when I see it, Champenois," he answered, "and I know a phonograph when I hear it, if that is what you mean."

Champenois frowned. "You don't understand, after all," he said. He stepped to the telephone and once more called up Virginia Garthwaite.

Virginia was seemingly in despair. "I thought you would never call me up, Paul," she said; "I've been so impatient. It must have been perfect—perfect."

"How perfect?" queried Champenois.

"You've been so long," she answered, "that I knew it must have worked right this time. I spoke very distinctly."

"Great Scott!" murmured Champenois contritely, "you don't mean to say you've been talking into your machine all this time."

"Talking and reading," said the girl. Garthwaite leisurely approached the telephone. "What does she say?" he asked Champenois.

"She's been talking and reading to us all the time," said Champenois.

The girl heard him over the telephone. "I've been reading Meredith into the machine, Paul," she laughed. "I thought you would like that best."

Champenois passed the information on. "She's been reading Meredith to the machine, Garthwaite," he explained.

Garthwaite held up his hands in holy horror. "No wonder the blamed thing wouldn't respond," he grunted. "Now, if she had tried Gabbage, I'm quite sure—"

But Champenois was talking earnestly into the telephone. "Virginia," he said, "the machine has gone farther than I hoped. Follow my directions, now, and I promise you results that you will hear yourself. Use the lens—do you understand? Pull lever number seven, thrust up the *aggravator* and turn the dial screw to M. 364. You understand?"

"Yes," replied the girl. "When you get results," said Champenois, "please call us up at once."

He hung up the receiver and seated himself in a chair near the telephone, gripping the arms of the chair tightly in his impatience.

"Great note," Garthwaite kept repeating, "to read Meredith to that machine; if you hadn't chucked my Gabbage out of the window, now—"

As if in answer to his suggestion a stealthy footstepsounded on the winding staircase and a slinking figure crept into the room. It was Mixley, night watchman, and in his hand he held a yellow-covered book. Mixley's teeth still chattered.

"F-f-found this on the lawn," shuddered Mixley; "saw

it drop; thought you would need it and I've brought it back."

Professor Garthwaite pounced upon it. "You're a hero, Mixley!" he exclaimed.

Mixley bowed and waited politely for the cigar that Garthwaite drew forth from his waistcoat.

"Blamed ghostly house this, gents," said Mixley, lighting the cigar for company before he started off, and then starting reluctantly down the dark, narrow staircase.

"Mixley," cried Champenois. Mixley turned.

"Oh," continued Champenois, "I wish you would stay here just a minute; I want to ask a question."

"Fire ahead," said Mixley. But the scientist did not fire ahead just then, for the telephone bell rang with unusual violence. Champenois' eyes lighted up and he answered it at once.

"You heard—" he began. And then he stopped, for the voice of Virginia—strained and unusually excited—came impetuously over the wire.

"I heard," she exclaimed, "and I am hearing now."

"What?" demanded Champenois. "Cheers," cried the girl, "cheers upon cheers. I hear the hum of excited voices, and once—only once—the shrill notes of a fife."

"And that is all?" asked Champenois.

"All," replied the girl, "except one thing; I heard a woman's voice in the midst of it all cry out 'There he goes!' and then more cheers—"

"Wait a minute," exclaimed Champenois, "I want you to tell that to your father."

Garthwaite took up the receiver and listened to the recital of his daughter. He shrugged his shoulders. "Some devilry out upon the campus, I suppose," he said.

Champenois only smiled. "We are nearer to the campus than Virginia," he returned, "and we heard no cheers, no shouts. Have you heard any, Mixley?"

"No, sir," responded Mixley, "I have not."

"Paul," came the insistent voice of Virginia over the wire, "will you tell me what it means? The night is as silent as the grave. Where do the voices come from? Tell me, please."

"I'll tell you later," responded Champenois. "You may shut off your lever. But you are quite sure you heard nothing but cheers?"

"Except the fife," responded the girl.

"Yes," went on Champenois, "but you heard no drum, no tramping of feet?"

"No," she answered, wondering; "why do you ask?"

"You'll know everything to-night," replied the scientist. He turned back to Garthwaite and repeated all that Garthwaite's daughter had just told him. Then he turned to Mixley.

"Mixley," he said, "how long have you lived in Ougheltree?"

"All my life," said Mixley.

"You remember when this house was built?"

Mixley scratched his head, searched the confines of his memory for the space of half a minute, and then nodded with certainty, vouchsafing the information that the Le Massena Mansion was erected in the fall of such-and-such a year.

Champenois turned now to his machine and busied himself there for an instant, adjusting the dial hand once more with his lens. No sooner had he pulled the lever than there leaped forth into the room a most tremendous racket.

Mixley looked behind him; his face turned white. He leaped forward.

"Goah!" he exclaimed.

"What do you hear, Mixley?" exclaimed Champenois.

"Goah!" repeated Mixley, "hear about twenty men pulling down this house."

"You hear the sound of hammers?" queried Champenois. Mixley nodded.

"I hear a saw," said Garthwaite.

Mixley shuddered. "I wish McMurtry was here," he

said, looking fearfully down the winding staircase, "or, I suppose if you gents would lend a hand—you've got a gun—it must be the lead pipe that they're tearing out."

Champenois smiled grimly. "It isn't the tearing out of lead pipe you hear, Mixley," he remarked, "and it isn't the tearing down of a house; it's the *building* of a house you hear."

Mixley strode to the window and glanced out into the night. "What house?" he demanded. "There ain't no house around here getting built."

"You hear," went on Champenois, "the building of this house. Do you understand?"

For answer Mixley cast one scared glance at Garthwaite, a second at Champenois and a third toward the machine; then, like some huge rat, he turned and scuttled down the narrow, winding stairway.

Once more the scientist shut off the machine. "Now do you understand?" asked Champenois.

"I understand nothing," replied Garthwaite.

"I'll tell you, then," said the scientist. "This machine has done to-night what in my wildest dreams I never expected it to do. It has failed to do the simple thing that I was sure it could accomplish, but I'll say this for it—it has done the thing I built it for. Garthwaite," he went on, "I told you that sound never stops; that is axiomatic, practically; being axiomatic, it is then only a question of mathematical accuracy to get an ear that will hear the sound, no matter how faint it has grown with time. I have merely built an artificial ear—an ear too delicate to hear the sounds of the present; too delicate to hear your daughter's voice, to-night, across three miles of space, but delicate enough to catch up and repeat the sounds of the years that are past and gone. Now listen once again."

Once again he did something to the machine and there burst forth upon the two men that tremendous discord, that medley of noises that they had heard at first, now loud, now faint, but always bewildering. Then he shut it off.

"Now what was that?" asked Garthwaite.

"That," replied the scientist, "was a sound made up of all the noises—think of it, Garthwaite—of all the noises of all time. If the machine did naught but that, it would be absolutely useless; not one sound could be distinguished from another. The machine distinguishes; it picks out the given sounds of a given time. You just heard, with Mixley, the carpenters of over a quarter of a century ago—you heard blow upon blow of hammers. Before that you heard a railroad wreck of a dozen years gone by, and Virginia heard—"

"What did she hear?" demanded Garthwaite, sitting forward, his hands on his knees, listening now intently.

"She, too, heard the noises of a dozen years ago; she heard three companies from the University of Ougheltree marching to the Spanish War."

"She heard no tramp of feet," said Garthwaite. "She heard voices; we heard none."

"Ah," commented Champenois, "you have hit the nail—or one of the nails—squarely on the head. You told me a few moments ago that twenty people were killed in that wreck. Did we hear their voices as we stood here listening?"

"No," replied Garthwaite, in a half-whisper. "I wonder why?"

"Wait a minute," exclaimed the scientist. Once more he adjusted his machine; once more it sounded forth, but this time there was no crash of metal against metal, no sound of splintering wood. Instead the machine uttered something that brought both men up all standing—a wail, the sound of moans, a groan of unutterable anguish.

Champenois, with his hand to his head, swung the lever back. He paced up and down the room for a moment before he spoke.

"I can't stand that, Garthwaite," he exclaimed. "I can't stand the sound of people—any one—in pain, suffering. My mother died in agony. Since then I have—" He broke off and stood silent for a moment, and then shook some memory from him. "Suffering like that seems

to make me mad," he said at last in his own even tones. "But never mind; the machine has made its point; it's all a question of pitch."

"Pitch?" echoed Garthwaite.

"Yes," responded Paul, "and yet I am wrong; it's a question of time, also, as you have seen. We must pick out our time, otherwise we get the sounds of all time. We must adjust the pitch to the kind of sound we want to hear. If it were not for that the sound of voices of a given day would be drowned by all the other sounds. Virginia heard the voices; she didn't hear the tramp, tramp; she didn't hear the drums; she heard the fife, because it resembles a shrill human voice. You and I heard no crash an instant just gone by, but mingled with the groans of the dying we heard the hiss of steam, sibilant like a voice. Now, do you understand?"

"I hear what you say," responded Garthwaite. "I think I understand what you say, and I see what you have done."

Champenois looked him squarely in the face. As Champenois looked upon his elder, there came into the latter's eyes that peculiar expression of fear that he had mentioned earlier in the evening.

"Well," said Champenois at length, "what do you think of it?"

Garthwaite shook himself. He averted his glance from Champenois and from the machine. Then he strode to the west window and looked out into the night. He drew himself together—seemed to be thinking hard; actually he was trying to release himself from some kind of a fancied spell that it seemed to him Paul Champenois and the machine had cast upon him. He turned almost fiercely upon his friend.

"I don't believe it!" he cried belligerently.

"You don't believe it?" gasped Champenois, aghast.

"No," blurted out Garthwaite; "I can't believe it; it passes human understanding. It's—it's a fake."

"A fake," repeated Champenois, an amused smile playing around his firm mouth. "Then I must be a fake."

Garthwaite shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know about that, Paul," he responded; "maybe you believe it yourself, but I don't. I think that your blamed machine is nothing but a phonograph. Maybe you don't know what it is, Paul; maybe the machine is fooling you, but that's all I can see in it. It has picked up impressions somewhere, has recorded them and repeats them. It may fool you, but it can't fool me."

Paul's eyes grew frightened for an instant. "Virginia will believe," he said.

"Well, let her believe, if she wants to," replied Garthwaite, "and you can believe, too, but leave me out."

Champenois folded his arms and glanced pleadingly at his friend. "Garthwaite," he said earnestly, "the time is coming when the whole world will believe, but I want you to believe now."

Garthwaite only shook his head. "You've got to show me," he said.

The young scientist was puzzled. He thought deeply for a moment and then he nodded with conviction.

"By George," he finally exclaimed, "I've got it. I'll show you and I'll make you believe, Garthwaite, in spite of yourself, in spite of everything."

It was three nights later. It was twelve o'clock at night. Garthwaite and his daughter Virginia sat in the tonneau of Paul Champenois's swift touring car. Paul Champenois was at the wheel tearing holes in the darkness, eating up long miles like fire. Beside him, in a huge leather case strapped to the seat, was the machine. "Where are we bound for?" asked Virginia tremulously of her father.

"Search me," replied the matter-of-fact Garthwaite, "but I'm game if you are—game for anything."

"I'm game for anything that Paul suggests," responded Virginia.

Silently they sped on, always in the same direction. Finally, still in the silence of the night, they reached a huge city beside a river, crossed the river on an early

morning ferryboat and at two o'clock found themselves dashing through the side streets of the borough of Manhattan.

Twenty minutes later the car drew up at one side of a deserted square.

"This," said Champenois, "is our destination."

Garthwaite started from the car, but Champenois drew him back. "Stay where you are," he commanded. "Do you recognize this place?"

"Yes," said Virginia curiously, "it is Cooper Institute." Garthwaite peered through the mist that had settled down upon the city.

"Gad, so it is!" he exclaimed, "and why have you brought us here?"

"I'll show you in a minute," said Champenois, unstrapping his machine.

By this time the streets were practically deserted. A milk wagon rattled past them noisily; in the far distance they heard the rap of a policeman's night-stick upon the pavement; two drunken roisterers, groaning and mumbling with fatigue, passed them unsteadily and staggered into the dim distance. A woman came furtively out of a side street, looked uncertainly about her and crossed the square; stood for one instant spellbound as she caught sight of the touring car—the electric light above heightening the effect of her gaudy headgear and the rouge upon her face—and then, catching sight of Virginia, the woman passed hastily across the street into another narrow thoroughfare, her footfalls growing fainter as she went. Then there was silence.

"Now," said Champenois. With his electric flash he hastily adjusted his machine, swinging into place the concentrator cone and with a rapidity that had come from long practice, he carefully fitted the *accelerator*, the *aggravator* with its *super-magnifier*, and finally the *reverbator*. Then he adjusted the dial screw with careful accuracy, and pulled the lever.

Out of the void immediately came the hum of voices. Virginia looked about her in alarm.

"I thought there were a million people about us!" she exclaimed in awestruck tones.

Her father said nothing. Suddenly the murmur became stilled and a voice, a single voice, a voice of tremendous power and sympathy, smote the silence. At the first words Garthwaite gripped the motor car.

"Listen!" he cried. They listened to the voice.

"... the great crime of having destroyed it . . . will be upon us. That is cool . . . a highwayman . . . holds a pistol to my ear . . . or I shall kill you . . . and then you will be a murderer. To be sure what the robber demanded of me . . ."

"I know that voice," exclaimed Garthwaite.

"Hush," said Champenois.

"Listen," cried Virginia. And again they were silent and the voice was going on—always going on.

"If slavery is right," said the voice, "all words, acts, laws and constitutions against it are themselves wrong, and should be silenced and swept away . . . Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is . . . but can we . . . allow it to spread into . . . and to overrun us here in these free states . . ."

There was a pause. Again there was the murmur of many voices and right alongside of the car to Virginia's left, out of the gloom, a single rough phrase sprang into being and patched itself together, spoken in the voice of a single member of a clamoring mob.

"Mountebank!" yelled this voice.

It was followed by a laugh, and then from across the square another voice answered it as though by way of echo:

"The man-monkey. Down with him."

There were other murmurs, and then another hush.

"I heard those two," said Garthwaite suddenly. But Champenois was holding up his hand and the voice was going on.

"... neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to government or of dungeons to

ourselves . . . let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it."

Silence again. And then, suddenly, like the roar of an avalanche, a huge multitude of men burst into cheers. Garthwaite, himself, under some spell that had been cast upon him, rose in the motor car, hat in hand, and cheered with the invisible crowd.

"Gad, Virginia," he said, "I was here myself; I heard it all; I was a boy then. Did you hear that chap that called out 'Man-monkey' over there?"

"Yes," exclaimed Virginia.

"He got a clip behind the ear that night," went on Garthwaite, rubbing his knuckles; "he never knew who gave it to him, but I did. I was there, I tell you, at the time, and in this place—"

"The time," said Champenois solemnly, consulting his dial with his lens, "was February, 1860; the place was Cooper Institute, and the voice—"

Garthwaite removed his hat. "Abraham Lincoln's," he said. "I remember it; I would know it anywhere."

PART TWO

"THEN you believe?" asked Champenois, as they bowled along toward home with the dawn just breaking in the East.

"I hate to, but I do," admitted Garthwaite.

"You're quite sure, then," said Paul, "that my machine is not a phonograph—quite sure they didn't have phonographs in Lincoln's days, are you not, Professor Garthwaite?"

"Gad," said Garthwaite, "it looks that way; that certainly was his voice. 'Yes,' he finally conceded, 'I am willing to tell you that I believe. I'm for the auto-aura-phone from now on, Paul.'"

"Ah, well," sighed Paul, "I knew you would come to it, but I missed that perfect faith in you that Virginia conceded to me. Virginia," he said, "do you see where this machine is going to lead us? We can go back, back, back to the beginning of time. We heard a railroad crash of a dozen years ago; we heard the building of a house back in the eighties; we have heard the voice of Lincoln more than half a century away. Virginia," he went on, his voice ringing with conviction, "people are reading history, but we shall know it; we shall do more than know it, we shall change it. We will know the truth; nothing shall be hidden from you and me. History may lie, but the voice of the past shall not; it will come down to us from the ages; we will go back, back—we will hear the voices of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; the sound of their voices has never stopped."

"Gad!" exclaimed Garthwaite, "I never thought of that. Let us hear them here and now."

They had pulled up before Garthwaite's silent house at the other end of Ougheltree and were getting out of the machine.

"I'm with you," said Champenois, pointing toward the cupola, "I'm with you here and now."

Virginia laid a hand upon his arm. "Have we any right," she faltered, "to know those things—to hear—?" Silently they ascended to the cupola and Virginia switched on the lights. It was a cozy, pleasant sort of a place, this cupola, but there was something intensely Oriental, or more properly Egyptian, about its furnishings. Virginia Garthwaite had fitted it up in her own way, according to her own tastes, and it was here, more than in any other place, that she seemed to fit in—she was part and parcel of the surroundings.

The glow in the eyes of Paul Champenois deepened as he looked upon her in the soft light. He was quite right, they were very much alike, these two—some air of mysticism surrounded both. Virginia, too, was tall and exceeding graceful, but full-throated and full-bosomed, and,

like Champenois, her every movement gave evidence of some supple strength.

"Paul," she breathed between her parted lips, as her own glance answered his, "you have been glorious—wonderfully glorious—to-night."

"As you *always* are," responded Champenois.

She sank upon a divan at one end of the little room and Champenois tore his eyes from her and strode to her machine, a counterpart of his.

"Garthwaite," he said solemnly, "you want to hear a voice from the ages, do you?"

"Yes," said Garthwaite, standing very rigid and turning suddenly quite pale.

"Not Adam's and Eve's," broke in Virginia in a startled voice. "Not that, Paul—nothing like that. I can't tell you how it feels to me—it's sacrilege."

Champenois paused. "There's one thing I have not said as yet," he remarked. "I've told you about time, I've told you about pitch, but I haven't told you why we had to go to Cooper Institute to hear the voice of Lincoln. Why couldn't we have heard it here?"

"To be sure," responded Garthwaite, "why couldn't we?"

"I'll tell you why," said Champenois. "In the first place, possibly we could, but it would have been faint and it would have been mathematically inaccurate. Lincoln's voice was attuned to the place wherein he spoke, just as our voices are to this room. There the surroundings were favorable for his voice to be heard on February 27th, 1860; his voice travels around and around the world, but as it comes back to Cooper Institute it falls once more into attune with the old surroundings; I could explain this to a mathematician—scientist—but you must take it from me as being absolutely true. If I were going to bring back the voice of Eve—or of the serpent—"

"Don't!" pleaded Virginia.

"I would go to the Garden of Eden—if I could find it—with my machine."

"I'll go with you," exclaimed Garthwaite, "blamed if I won't."

Champenois seized his lens and bent over the machine, swinging the dial hand far around the face.

"I'm all at sea, Garthwaite," he went on, "but I'm going to bring something to you now—some voice from the ages. Listen."

They listened. For a long time nothing was heard, then just a faint murmur, the fragment of a sound. Champenois bent low to hear it.

"I've got them," he exclaimed, "I'm sure I've got them." He piled on everything he had—concentrator cone, magnifiers, accelerators—everything. Then there was silence again and then another fragment of sound that grew up and swelled as the seconds passed.

Champenois held up his hand. "Garthwaite," he cried, "you're a linguist, past and present. Listen. We've got Egypt on the wire."

Garthwaite listened, shaking his head as the apparently unintelligible sounds proceeded.

Virginia, listening, looked uncertainly from one man to the other. "Is it Egypt?" she queried of her father.

"Not sure," he answered, "but I think it is."

The volume of sound grew louder, swelling and swelling, until it seemed too large for the small apartment, then it ceased. Then there leaped out of the silence a single voice—a woman's voice—crying in agonized accents

"Cleopatra . . . Cleopatra . . ."

Again and again, while they stood there listening, it rang out, beating the name into their ears.

"Cleopatra—Cleopatra—Cleopatra."

Champenois staggered back against the wall, beads of sweat starting from his forehead.

"God!" he cried, "Virginia, that was *your* voice; yours, do you understand?"

Virginia started up and Garthwaite started forward. And again the machine beat that single word into their ears:

"Cleopatra."

Virginia sank back on the divan and covered her face with her hands. For an instant she sat there trembling,

silent. Then she looked up into the face of Champenois, her blood running cold—the color fleeing from her lips.

"Yes," she conceded hoarsely, "you are right, Paul, it is my voice."

Three months later the two men—Champenois and Garthwaite—sat on a small rounded balcony fronting their suite in the American hotel at Alexandria. They were smoking native Egyptian cigarettes. It was the middle of the long vacation. It was dusk.

"Well," sighed Garthwaite comfortably, "we've been going some."

Paul's eager eyes peered into the dusk. "Some," he replied, "but not enough—not enough."

Garthwaite leaned over and touched him lightly on the knees. "I'm afraid, Paul," he said, with a touch of regret in his voice, "that it will never be enough—for you."

He looked keenly into his companion's face. For weeks now that restless fever had burned in the eyes of Champenois. For weeks the lines had deepened in his countenance. Garthwaite was right, there could be no end to his desire for this peculiar kind of knowledge. Even in the short race across Europe, they had acquired strange and wonderful information. Sometimes surreptitiously and sometimes by permission they had wrested from the dark corners of locked and barred boudoirs secrets which would have changed the fate of nations. In England they had established, beyond all peradventure, that Queen Elizabeth—that austere, unmarried sovereign of Great Britain—had been a man and not a woman. On the continent, on the contrary, they had proven Charles Martel, the Hammer, to be an amazon. Here, there, everywhere, in France, Spain, Italy, they had picked up broken threads of private history that in time would set the world afire; and each man kept his private journal—all in cipher—of these remarkable events.

But it was toward Alexandria that Champenois had set his face, for ever in his ears there rang that cry, in the voice of Virginia:

"Cleopatra."

It was that, unknown to Garthwaite, that had sent the feverish blood pulsing through Paul's veins—had chiseled the deep lines in his face. Sometimes he doubted whether that voice had come from the East. So far—with the exception of that once in Oughthee—he had been unable to patch the sound together out of the distance of the past. And yet that cry not only found its response in the machine, but in the innermost consciousness of himself. It seemed to him unaccountably as though Virginia had called to him for aid—as though somehow she were hopelessly lost, and that he must come East to find her.

Across the distances—the modern distances—on this balmy night, as he sat there with her father in the silence, his thoughts traveled back to Oughthee where they had left her. Why they had left her there, no one quite knew. She had been tremendously eager to join the uncanny expedition, and yet Paul somehow scented danger in this hunt for the ghost of dead sounds, and they had left her behind for safety's sake. It would have been much better, as events turned out, had she only come with them.

"Paul," said Garthwaite, at length, "what do you say to a stroll?"

"I'm with you," replied Champenois.

Together they descended to the narrow street below and wandered about the huge, sprawling town. They knew Alexandria as they knew their books, and yet there was one thing they had never grown accustomed to—the unexpected was always just around the corner—the unknown mystery of the East was ever with them.

"What's on for to-morrow, Paul?" queried Garthwaite.

"I think," responded Champenois, "the catacombs."

"And after the catacombs, what?" queried the older man.

Champenois puffed silently for a while upon his cigarette. "The voice of Virginia," he muscled almost to himself, "we must find that first; possibly we may find it there. And afterwards," he went on, "there are still other things. Garthwaite," he said, almost fiercely, "there are

things I want to know—things that I am going to prove for myself. I want to hear the footfalls of Salome as she danced before Herod. I want to hear the voice of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus—” He paused abruptly and looked off into the desert distance. “I want to hear the voice of one crying in the wilderness—I want—”

The older man caught him by the arm. “Paul,” he said gently, shaking his head, “I think maybe Virginia was right; I think you’d better not go too far. You don’t know what lies that way; there may be ruin—madness—”

He stopped, for a startled shriek had burst upon their ears—a woman’s shriek. Champenois shivered as he heard it.

“Where was that, Garthwaite?” he exclaimed.

Garthwaite extended his arm toward a brilliantly lighted spot in the market place. “It came from there,” he said.

They stopped and listened; and once more the shriek assailed their ears. Champenois caught his companion by the arm and dragged him toward the indicated spot. There they found a crowd—a strangely assorted crowd—mostly Alexandrians, but here and there a low-class Englishman. In the midst of this crowd were torches, and on the ground, flung flat upon her face, was a woman of Egypt—a bit of the flotsam and jetsam of Alexandrian humanity—her arms and feet pinioned. Over her stood a man, who, by his dress, was a lower magistrate. At his direction another man applied the bastinado to the soles of the woman’s feet. The woman’s voice rose shriek upon shriek. Champenois, with something agonizing in his face, at first placed his hands over his ears to keep out the sound. In another instant he had parted the crowd with his strong arms and was about to hurl the executioner from the small arena lit by the torches. The crowd gaped at him for one instant. In another instant Garthwaite had drawn him fiercely back into safe obscurity.

“What are you doing, you fool?” he hissed in Champenois’ ear. “You have no right to interfere.”

Champenois fought with him silently for a moment until the shrieks had ceased.

“There,” said Garthwaite, “she has confessed. Robbed some sailor, possibly, of a few cents. Come, let us go away.”

Champenois placed a trembling hand over his face. “I can’t stand a woman’s scream,” he said; “anything but that.”

The next day, with two guides, they visited the Alexandrian catacombs. The light machines were strapped to the backs of the guides—two lowly Alexandrians, who had listened with undisguised awe and admiration to the voices of the long ago. Paul set up his machine just within the entrance while Garthwaite explored the innermost re-

cesses. Little by little Champenois caught fragments of sound that came down to him from the beginning of the Christian era. None of them, however, were satisfactory to him.

For a full week or more he and Garthwaite had studied, with the utmost difficulty, the accent, the patois, the idioms of the older days. Perfect linguists though they were—masters of the dead languages—their own enunciation had been tainted and distorted by the moderns.

But now, as Paul listened, in the silence of his own particular nook, while his guide squatted humbly at his feet, he was able to turn sounds into sense. Suddenly his

soul leaped within him, for he heard in ghostly murmur from all sides the utterance of a name that he had waited for—the name of Cleopatra. But of all the voices that gave utterance to this name, none was Virginian’s. Carefully he adjusted his machine until he had narrowed all the voices down to one. That voice could be scarcely called a voice; it was a creak, composed of harsh, discordant, disagreeable tones. In the midst of it all this voice spoke with startling distinctness:

“I, Cleopatra . . .”

Champenois was upon his guide in an instant, digging his fingers into the man’s shoulder. “Go,” he exclaimed in the patois of the day, “and tell him to come back.”

Frightened, the guide did as he was bid, but already Champenois could see Garthwaite tumultuously racing down the long dim corridor toward himself, Garthwaite’s own guide trailing in the rear.

“Paul,” cried Garthwaite, “this way, quick.”

“This way,” shouted Paul with a gesture toward his machine. But Garthwaite stood his ground and Paul, in this instance the weaker vessel, met the elder man half-way.

“I have found,” began Paul, but Garthwaite only shook his head.

“And I’ve found,” he exclaimed, “something that you’ve got to see.”

Paul groaned. “To see,” he returned; “what do I care about seeing things. I tell you back there there’s *everything* to hear.”

“You come with me,” proceeded Garthwaite. He dragged him along the narrow corridor, twisting first to the right, then to the left, and finally brought him into a little rounded room about whose walls stood ghostly shadows.

“What have you here?” demanded Paul.

Garthwaite smacked his lips. “Aha!” he exclaimed, “Gabbage, the great American novelist, should be with us. I’ll write him about this, hanged if I don’t, and have him put some of this into his next book. Look here, Paul!” he went on, still with eagerness, “how would you like to have those things plunged, red hot, right into your eyes? Or be shut up with those spikes; or be broken on this



Champenois was upon his guide in an instant digging his fingers into the man's shoulder.

wheel?" He smacked his lips again with relish. "How would you like that, Paul?" he exclaimed.

The old frightened look returned to the face of Champenois; the uncanny glow was once more in his eyes. "A torture chamber!" he exclaimed, shuddering, "a secret torture chamber—hers!"

"Whose?" queried Garthwaite.

"Cleopatra's," went on Champenois. He glanced once, twice, thrice, hurriedly at those black and ghostly instruments against the wall, covered his face with his hands and then darted from the room. "I told you," he called back to Garthwaite, "I can't stand things like that. You come with me."

Garthwaite obeyed this time and they went back to Paul's machine. He had arrested its babbling when Garthwaite had called to him, but once more he pulled the lever and in another instant they stood there spellbound.

"Do you understand what she is saying?" demanded Champenois in a whisper. "She, Cleopatra, do you hear her croak—the tones of a hag? Do you realize that she was a hag, old, lean, withered, with a hump upon her back, with the face of a ghoul? Listen, she is saying so herself."

Garthwaite stood like a statue. The two guides crouched upon the floor, staring each other in the face. Now and then they heard a word that their modern ears could understand and at those junctures a gleam of frightened intelligence flashed from their eyes. Garthwaite held up his hand.

"I, Cleopatra....." went on the voice, growing more strident, harsher, fiercer.

"Do you understand her?" went on Champenois in his low whisper. "Do you catch what she says—that, hag as she is, misshapen as she is, she is going to rule the world; she is going to conquer men, kings, emperors. Listen," he cried again. "She is going to do more than that; she is going down into history as the loveliest woman of all time. She swears it, Garthwaite, and she will accomplish it."

Garthwaite smiled grimly. "She did accomplish it," he said, "some two thousand years ago."

Champenois threw off the lever for a moment in order that they might digest fully all that they had heard. They compared notes carefully. There could be no doubt that this self-described hag, whose very voice thrust itself into their very faces, was indeed Cleopatra. The whispered responses of her servants, her courtiers, confirmed it. And there was one thing that stood out in all that motley of tongues—in every voice but hers there was a note of abject fear; she was ruling with an iron hand. Behind her in the dim recesses of the catacombs was the torture chamber.

"How is she going to do this thing?" demanded Garthwaite. "There must have been historians that could not be bought. There were traditions. How can this distorted witch, in her ugliness, come down to us a siren, Champenois?"

Champenois smiled grimly. "Fortunately," he replied, "we have broken in at the beginning of things. She will tell us how. A woman who speaks as she speaks can accomplish anything. Do we agree on what we have heard?"

"Yes," said Garthwaite.

Once more Champenois pulled the lever and immediately there sprang forth into the dim corridor the same voice, but now tinged with infinite cunning and with calculation. To the few who clustered about her in those dim and secret recesses, she gave her commands. Then pausing for an instant she uttered a name, the name of another woman:

"Iras—send her to me."

At the name of Iras, Champenois, without knowing why, stiffened as with sudden shock. But he said nothing, for down those dim recesses voice after voice took up the cry.

"Iras, come hither, Iras!"

There was another pause and then the full, sweet tones of another woman swept toward them out of the darkness. "I come, Cleopatra," said the voice. "I come."

Then it was that Champenois strode to Garthwaite and clutched him in his iron-like grip.

"She is there," he whispered, shaking from head to foot. "That voice is the voice we have sought."

Garthwaite nodded. "It is Virginia's," he admitted.

For full two days the two men ransacked the catacombs with their machines. For full two days they listened to the scheming of a woman with a mind, but with nothing else to recommend her; not even a heart, possibly not a soul.

"Iras is the substitute," whispered Garthwaite to his younger friend.

Champenois drew breath sharply. "I don't wonder," he said gently, "if Iras then was like Virginia now."

Garthwaite was right. Iras was the substitute; their two days' listening proved it. Iras was the Cleopatra in voice, heart, soul, beauty that had come down to them in history, in song, in story; hers was the face chiseled indelibly on the obelisks; her charms were those written in hieroglyphics. Cleopatra was a dual personage—a crone with a mind, a young girl with every other attribute. It was Iras who was commanded to bring the Cæsars to their knees—to accomplish the downfall of Mark Antony. Whether she obeyed or not was for the ears of but one man to know. That, the two men failed to learn during the days of listening. But they listened to much purpose, for to them it became clear that it was Iras and not her mistress who was wrapped up in the famous carpet that unrolled itself at the feet of Cæsar; it was Iras who leaped therefrom, a bewildering beauty, and knelt before him—and all the while, gnashing her teeth in the dim recesses, was the hunchback sovereign, denied everything but power.

Champenois, as the dusk settled down upon the second day, drew his hand wearily across his face. The lines of fatigue and something else cut into his cheeks like furrows. He wanted to hear more; he wanted to know—but he wanted to find out alone.

"I think we have had about enough for to-day, friend Garthwaite," he exclaimed.

"I've had enough," echoed Garthwaite, wearily.

Champenois placed his hand upon the lever, and then, before he had thrown it off, above all the other voices that assailed their ears, there sprang forth a new voice—the tones of a man.

"Iras," cried this voice. "Where art thou, Iras?"

And then Champenois understood. The voice was his. He threw off the lever swiftly and seized Garthwaite by the arm.

Garthwaite drew back for an instant and searched the face of the younger man.

"What jugglery is this, Paul?" he demanded, looking doubtfully up and down the dim corridor. "What does it mean; what is it leading to?"

Paul dragged him on. "I don't know," he responded. "We'll find out later on."

He found out later on, but Garthwaite never did. As Paul unstrapped his machine from the shoulders of his guides at the hotel, he dropped a bit of gold into the palm of one and whispered in his ear. Then he ascended to his room.

"I can't eat, Garthwaite," he exclaimed. "I've got to sleep—to sleep. Good-night."

He did not sleep. For hours he tossed upon his bed until he heard the tap, tap that he waited for; then he rose, fully clothed, listened at the door of Garthwaite, smiling at the heavy rasping sounds that emanated from that room, then admitted the stealthy figure of the guide. He strapped on one machine on the guide's back and assumed the other one himself. Then together, side by side, they sallied forth to the Alexandrian catacombs whence they had come.

Paul wanted to know for himself, and for himself, alone, the destiny of Iras—that pseudo-Cleopatra. No rest should be his until he ascertained her fate.

He set up both machines now and dismissed his man. That gentleman was glad enough to creep back into the friendly moonlight at the entrance of the corridor, to sit

there crooning gently some little love song to himself for company.

Back in the recesses Paul Champenois with his electric flash adjusted both machines. One he attuned to the human voice, the other to the sound of clanking armor. Then, very carefully, with the use of his magnifying glass, he went back to his breaking-off place of the afternoon—back to his own voice calling down the corridors for Iras. Singularly enough, his voice met with response, but a response in whispers.

"Ptolemy." That was the name that Iras in her tremulous tones was uttering. And then again his own voice leaped from the darkness:

"Iras, my beloved."

And then it was that Iras poured forth into the ears of Ptolemy—the brother of that crooked hag dwelling in the shadows—the story that Champenois already knew. He heard the piteous wails of Iras as she besought Ptolemy for help before it was too late. She told him, amid shudders, of the horrible program that had been laid out for her. He could feel the tightening of Ptolemy's throat; the quickening of his muscular power; the drawing of his scimitar as he listened to the tale.

"Iras—bring her to me. Bedeck thyself, the Cæsar waits."

"No."

It was the voice of Ptolemy. It was his foot that clanked heavily down upon the stones.

"No," he cried again. "Iras—come—with me."

Paul heard the sudden turn they made; heard the swish of their garments as they ran side by side. Then all was pandemonium.

Shouts from all sides rang in his ear; the steady beat of feet upon the floor; the clank, clank of mail and armor; the cries for lights, for assistance, and the excited croak of Cleopatra, all hammered themselves in his ears, and then he knew suddenly that those dim passageways had become the scene of a tremendous battle.

Ptolemy, too, was not without his followers, and they rallied to his standard. Up and down and up and down again the opposing forces charged. Paul heard the clash of swords about him, even in his face. In the very spot where he was standing two warriors with muttered oaths fought like wildcats; fought to the death. All about him, unseen, were rushing, striking, death-dealing figures. He could almost feel their hot breath upon his cheek—could almost see the blood spouting from their wounds. And yet above the din there were three voices that kept beating on his ears—the voice of Cleopatra, a voice of command; the voice of Ptolemy, one of tremendous defiance; and then the voice of Iras, a wail of distress. Suddenly this wail deepened into anguish. There was a new rush, a new scramble along the passageway, and then Paul knew that Ptolemy's efforts had been in vain; knew that they had recaptured Ptolemy's beloved and were bearing her back into the clutches of her mistress. Her wails, her protests as they forced her past him, ate into his very soul. But those wails grew faint and fainter, as he listened, and, in their place, at his side—no, at his back, standing where he stood, almost limb to limb, he heard the breath of Ptolemy struggling mightily with his captor; heard him with a mighty swing twist himself from them; heard the swish of his scimitar through the air, the clash of his mailed hand upon a human skull, and yet he knew that Ptolemy was fighting as one might fight against a stone wall. Do what he could, the valiant brother of Cleopatra, the lover of Iras, could make no headway; he could simply stand and hold his ground and nothing more. Then once more arose the voice of the sovereign:

"Cæsar!" And the answering voice of Iras: "No, Ptolemy, or death."

A laugh of hate—derision—struck into the very marrow of Paul's bones. It was the laugh of the hunchback sovereign. She had come to know in that instant that, substitute though her maid-in-waiting may have been, an unwilling substitute was quite completely unmanageable.

"Death or Cæsar!" she commanded shrilly.

"Death," rang out the voice of Iras. And then the

struggles of the bound Ptolemy recommenced with superhuman vigor.

"No," he bellowed forth. "She is mine, Cleopatra. Iras is mine."

Again his misshapen sister answered with a laugh.

"Death," she responded, "and death by the longest way." Then it was that something seemed to snap within the brain of Champenois.

"No, no!" he cried out in agony, "anything but that. He started toward the torture chamber, but found himself powerless to move; in front of him there seemed an impassable host; his arms were bound; his limbs seemed paralyzed.

Suddenly Paul came to his senses—such senses as were left him. He suddenly came to know that he was not bound, that his limbs were not paralyzed; that he was not confronted as with a stone wall, and he took three steps—long, bounding leaps down the corridor. And then he stopped. He laughed wildly to himself as he realized his position. What could he do—how could he aid? Much better to be Ptolemy bursting his sinews against those bonds of old than to be Paul Champenois confronted by nothing but the sounds of old. If he could have battled at that instant it would have saved him. But there was nothing to battle against—nothing. Yet the machine was still recording its impressions.

Shriek after shriek—a woman's shrieks—were beating mercilessly into his consciousness. He hid his face with both hands and struggled, staggered blindly toward the entrance of the corridor.

"I can't stand it!" he yelled, his voice rising in its own agony as he spoke. His brain reeled for an instant and then with a hysteria that came upon him, it seemed to clear. In the very climax of his agony he saw a way of escape. Laughing wildly, peal upon peal, he rushed upon his machines, as Ptolemy had rushed upon the foe.

"God!" he exclaimed to them as though they were human enemies. "Stop, I tell you, stop."

Then pouncing upon them, both at once, he tore them apart, crushed them with his strong hands, threw them to the ground, beating them into a shapeless mass beneath his feet. Then, with bleeding hands and with lips torn by his own teeth, he stalked stiffly, fiercely, out of the mouth of the catacombs, past his crouching, shivering, frightened guide, and on, on into the desert.

Back in the American hotel, at two o'clock in the morning, Gathwaite was awakened by an insistent rapping on his door. He rose and lit the light, inquired who was there, and then opened. It was the landlord, a man with disheveled hair and sleepy countenance, hastily attired, who said a cablegram had just come in. Gathwaite seized it and looked at the address.

"It is for me," he said, trying to shut the door in the man's face; "many thanks. Good-night."

But the landlord was not so easily repulsed. Before the door could be shut upon him, he had inserted one foot and now his entire body into the room.

"Beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but from what I have heard, I thought you might need this."

From behind his back where he had been holding it, he drew a decanter of brandy and glass.

Gathwaite looked at him with puzzled countenance, then he tore open the cablegram and read. It was very brief.

"Virginia killed in railroad wreck to-night. Come home."

Out on the trackless desert there stalked a man muttering to himself in unintelligible tones—the voices of the past. On and on he sped into the wilderness of dead things.

This was Paul Champenois—Egyptologist, archeologist, scientist—destined never to return. He had traversed the haunted corridors of time—he had paid the penalty.