

# Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE



A MAGAZINE of the

BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XIV

NUMBER 2

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1928, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$2.50 a year in the United States, \$3.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

**NOTE**—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1929, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

## Contents for August, 1929

Cover Design .....	Hugh Rankin
<i>Illustrating a scene in "The Inn of Terror"</i>	
The Eyrie .....	148
<i>A chat with the readers</i>	
The Inn of Terror .....	Gaston Leroux 152
<i>A tale of stark realism and gripping horror by the author of "The Phantom of the Opera"</i>	
The Shadow Kingdom .....	Robert E. Howard 166
<i>Grisly serpent shapes slither through this tale of Kull the King and Brule the Spear-slayer</i>	
The Speared Leopard .....	John Horne 183
<i>A story of the Leopard-men of Africa, negro magic, a weird metamorphosis, and bloody death</i>	

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

[CONTINUED FROM PRECEDING PAGE]

- Demon Doom of N'Yeng Sen**..... **Bassett Morgan** 193  
*The author of "The Devils of Po Sung" returns to the South Seas for another gripping tale of brain-transplantation*
- The Purple Sedan**..... **Lois Lane** 207  
*An unusual ghost story, involving a strange-colored automobile and a shocking murder*
- Folks Used to Believe:**
- The Murderer's Touch**..... **Alvin F. Harlow** 218  
*One of the curious superstitions of our ancestors*
- Outside the Universe (Part 2)**..... **Edmond Hamilton** 219  
*Blood-freezing horrors make vivid the second installment of this epic four-part serial of interstellar space*
- The Idol-Chaser**..... **Barry Scobee** 243  
*A strange quest took two white men into the jungle among unknown tribes and unforeseen dangers—a wholly unusual tale*
- Ballad of Winds**..... **Paul Francis Sutton** 252  
*Verse*
- The Hanging of Alfred Wadham**..... **E. F. Benson** 253  
*Evil apparitions haunted the good priest who could not save an innocent man from execution as a murderer*
- The Sorceress**..... **C. Noir** 261  
*Verse*
- An Examination in Diplomacy**..... **Edith M. Almedingen** 262  
*A brief story of Soviet Russia, and the weird ordeal imposed upon one of his operatives by a commissioner from the Tcheka*
- Old Mark**..... **August W. Derleth** 266  
*A strange lifeless creature loped across the moors—a tale of old Roman ruins in England*
- Weird Story Reprint:**
- His Unconquerable Enemy**..... **W. C. Morrow** 273  
*The dread tortures inflicted by the raja upon his enemy could not subdue the implacable spirit of revenge*

---

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

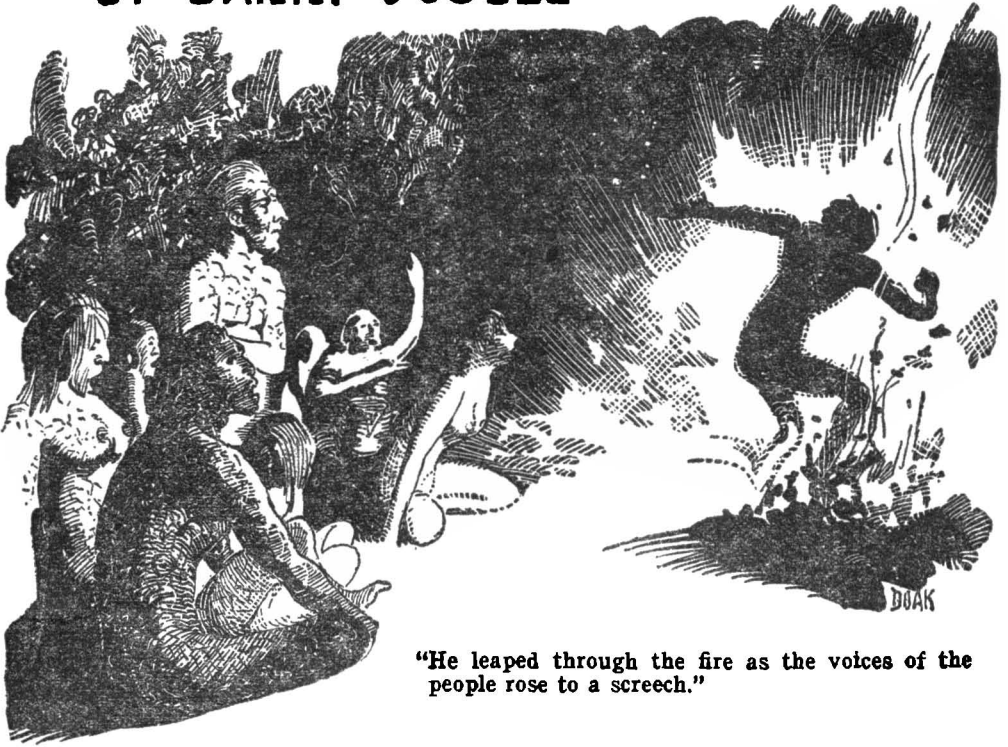
### WEIRD TALES

Western Advertising Office:  
**HARLEY L. WARD, INC.,** Mgr.  
360 N. Michigan Ave.  
Chicago, Ill.  
Phone, Central 6269

Eastern Advertising Office:  
**GEORGE W. STEARNS,** Mgr.  
Flatiron Building  
New York, N. Y.  
Phone, Algonquin 8328

# THE IDOL-CHASER

BY BARRY SCOBEE



"He leaped through the fire as the voices of the people rose to a screech."

**Y**OU are right, *señor*, I comprehend them perfectly. I have led no fewer than three on the long journey into the jungles. They are very strange. Each male—I know nothing of the women—has in his heart one great passion, an idol that he bows down to and worships and slaves for and makes sacrifices to, even to the sacrificing of his family, or his life, or his own happiness.

I am told that every day in North America—in your country, sir—the natives rush about hither and thither in the wildest confusion, each bent upon serving that special passion which is in his heart, so that they collide, vehicles smash, the weak are trampled upon. Is that true, *señor*? But pardon, it is perhaps not the discreet inquiry.

Have you a match? Thanks. Yes,

I will accept a cigarette, since you offer it. But it was only that I desired a match to whittle down for a toothpick.

Those three Yankees—la-la! Each with the hard thing in his heart. John Axe, he was for gold. He *must* have it. But what he brought from the jungles, sir, was an arrow wound and a fever.

And the man Thripp, hunter of bugs. Yes. Given to it day and night to the exclusion of mercy for those who served him.

And the man that named himself Professor Eric Lincoln Dobro. What do you think, *señor*, was his idol? The strangest of all. The seeking of the Ultimate Sanctuary, the Law of Happiness, the Point of Eternal Serenity. Yes. Ha-ha-ha!

The moment the news reached the

plaza that a stranger from North America was in town I hurried to his hotel with a collection of curios that I had gathered on the trip with the bug-hunter. To a room like this, *señor*, where you and I sit beside this table. But he did not invite me to sit comfortably. He was a tall, lean man with hard and cutting eyes, very impatient.

"What have you?" he sang out the instant I pushed the door open. "I do not wish to buy fruit, or curios, or statues of the saints. Finish quickly and depart."

I am not alert to take offense, sir. I hastily dumped the contents of my wicker on his table—a savage priest's feather head-dress, a withered hand, a condor's talon, a dart-blower, a necklace or two of teeth, a little dried human head of the Jivaros that had come my way in trade, such odds and ends.

A stale wild jungle fragrance—a stench, sir, that had been accumulating since the case was last open, puffed up into our faces.

"Smell it!" Dobro squeaked, plunging his long beak into the thick of it. "You have brought the jungle to me in a bag."

A green fire lit his sharp, cold eyes.

He clawed among my offerings, brushing them aside contemptuously, muttering that they would not interest a third-rate museum, until he hit upon the most insignificant object of all—a crude little human figure on a pedestal molded in clay and roughly burnt. He seized it up in both hands and gaped at it.

That figure, sir, was a curious thing. The pedestal was shaped like a basin. It represented a mud-puddle. And knee-deep in the puddle stood the little figure. It was as if a human being had risen up out of that puddle into the world. Mud ran down the body, dripped from the ends of the hands. Black mud that stuck on like clabber milk. Mud was on the head, and mud covered the face. It was an

ugly thing, a revolting thing, sir. But a work of art—savage, degrading jungle art.

"Where did this come from?" that Dobro demanded hoarsely—he spoke and understood Spanish with the same fluency that I perceive is yours, sir. "What sort of people made this?" he flung. "Speak, you stupid chunk!"

I am not a slave to be bawled at—la-la! My deliberate answer was to pluck that object from his fingers and set it up on my own palm and hold it out, tantalizing him.

That man stared, sir, and paled. He leaned toward it, and at the same time he pulled away from it. He was like a man tempted by perdition.

"God!" he cried out; "what an obscenity!"

"Obscenity?" I protested, thinking he was preparing to offer me a low price. "*Señor*," I said with dignity, "its value lies in that it is a consummate depiction of stupidity."

He did not heed me. His eyes were fastened upon that thing, and they were so hot with a green cold fire that I stared at it too, trying to see what he saw, wondering if its value might be more than I had suspected.

I regarded it a long time with the thoughts of a man of mature experiences, but I could make out nothing of consequence. It did not express anything at all except a human being as low as a river animal rising up out of its bed of mud.

That was what I saw then, and it was all that I was ever able to perceive afterward, though that Dobro saw other things—la-la! Amazing, astounding, *incredible* things, sir.

"God!" said Dobro again, looking at the figure filling my palms so neatly. "God, it is the essence of stupidity. It is a symbol of mankind rising from mindlessness. It is emerging from the door that I have long sought to go back through."

He snatched it from me and hugged

it to his breast like a fierce and hungry beast.

"Where did you get this?" he thundered suddenly. "Where did it come from? Speak up, man! Don't stand there like a gaping yokel."

To calm him I told him how an *indio* of the jungles had given it to the bug-hunter, who threw it away into the wet mold of the deep forest, and how I, recognizing its value and interest, had retrieved it and carried it all that long journey back across the mountains to civilization. Which was the positive truth, sir.

"But who made it?" Dobro insisted. "Who was the artist?"

"One of the tribe," I answered.

"Ah, you know that?" His words gouged like a stiff finger. "You know that?"

"Yes," I said.

"You can furnish proof?"

"Yes."

"What proof?" he spat at me.

"I saw one of the tribe rise from the mud like that," I told him.

His steely eyes that had no compassion whatever penetrated me, sir, for a full minute.

"If you are lying," he said at last like the hiss of a viper, "I will kill you!"

He jerked his chair over against the door and sat down in it, so that I could not have escaped even had I been alarmed and disposed to run away from there and get out into the blessed sunlight of the plaza.

"Now, my man," he said, "you and I are going to make a contract right here and now for you to guide me across the mountains and into the selfsame wilderness where you got that image and saw that emergence from the mud."

I protested that my health had been ruined by the other two journeys, that I was a sick man, that my family was poor and needed my constant presence. Which was, and is, the absolute truth, sir. But he was very liberal in his offers. An admirable trait of the

Yankees, no? So we arranged for me to conduct him.

And you would go to study the trees, *señor*? Is it the lumber that you are interested in? Or rubber? But you need not answer. I am not of the inquisitive sort. It is none of my affair.

**W**HEW! That was a terrific journey with Dobro. I mop my forehead, thus, when I think of it. Only a great deal of money could persuade me again. After many hardships, in which I bore the burdens of all, we at last arrived in the steaming valleys of those headwater tributaries of the Amazon.

From the very first this Professor Eric Lincoln Dobro—he said the Eric stood for Scandinavian blood in his veins, the Lincoln for Anglo-Saxon, and the Dobro for Southern European. I do not know. That was too much for me. But I do swear he had the look of a long-faced Spaniard. As I started to say, from the first this man kept prattling at my ear about the Tribe of the Mud—did they do this and did they do that? Which was but natural, considering that I was the only educated man with him. The others were but *indios* who deserted us every day or two, so that we were continually employing new ones.

When we at last began to find the wild and flitting tribes in those sweating jungles, this Dobro's curiosity knew no appeasing. He spoke with many of the chiefs and wizards—through me, of course, for I make fluent use of many dialects—beseeching them always for the secrets of their mystic tribal rites, and inquiring constantly where the Tribe of the Mud was to be found.

Those Indians were very timorous and would run away. But twice by gifts we persuaded a handful or two to put on their ritualistic ceremonies. Once we arrived at a village where a dance was beginning. Dobro danced

with them. Yes. He stripped to a breech-rag, hung about his neck the hot entrails of a fowl that he killed with his own hands, as the savages were doing, and danced till he fell exhausted.

I was revolted, sir. That is the absolute truth. I expostulated with him as one gentleman to another. He pushed me away with his bloody hands and flew into a rage.

"Leave off!" he shouted with a mad look in his eyes. "Stop your interfering. I will not be hindered. I, I who search for the Law of Happiness, the Ultimate Sanctuary, the Place of Eternal Serenity. I, I who have eschewed the common means—women and war, the ordinary sciences, commerce, and utopias, and religion. Bah! I explore the unexplored. Stand aside. I will not be blocked by the brother of an ox."

Brother of an ox—to me, *señor!* But I did not take offense. He did not truly mean me. He did not look at me when he said it. His darting eyes were upon his own thoughts. He was never a man to hold conversation with. He could not hold to a subject. He could not hear other men's talk. He would break into the middle of your conversation, or stop in the middle of his own and forget to go on. But he was forever prattling his phrases to the air. Flighty as the wind.

The Law of Happiness—was not that amusing, sir? I could have told him what it was: A bit of money, an industrious wife, a moderate number of children—eight or ten—a recent shriving, a comfortable bench in the plaza—and a few other things—a few—other things—la-la, it is best perhaps not to pursue that, sir. Money, wife, children, priest's benediction, bench in the sun, and stop.

La-la—the Ultimate Sanctuary. . . .

"And what if you find it?" I asked him once.

His eyes burned green and fierce and unseeing, up through the tree-tops.

"I shall be the greatest scientist in the world!" he cried out like an orator. "I shall have served humanity."

"If you don't find it!" I persisted, just to hear what he would say, for I am not inquisitive.

His countenance fell. He looked at the ground a long time before he spoke.

"If I don't find it—the integrity of science must be carried on." He was very meek. "If I don't—I shall nevertheless give to the world what I do find. That is the integrity of science."

My heart went out to him, sir, in that moment of meekness, though I did not understand him clearly. Not that I am not highly intelligent. But he talked in riddles. Yet his meekness soon vanished, and he kept on with his mercilessness, worshiping that passion, that hard idol that was in his heart.

He knew no rest. He would lie on his belly close beside the light of a smudge fire by night and write endless reams of fine script and mutter. By day he drove himself, and me, and those *indios*, through the twilight paths of those ever-growing, ever-perishing jungles. Of the little handfuls of flitting people that we found he made continual inquiry for the Tribe of the Mud, and the more he saw of low and stupid and revolting humanity the more obsessed he became.

He was like men who become slaves of the opium, who ever need more and more to satisfy their flesh until their appetite outstrips their capacity and can no longer be satisfied. That is the way of flesh, sir. It can not be satisfied. Only reason can be satisfied.

I did not think this out so philosophically in the jungle. No. We were too busy fighting the mosquito, the jaguar, and the vampire bat that sucks the blood. I arrived at these weighty conclusions here in the ease

of the plaza weeks afterward when I brought all my intelligence to bear—and talked somewhat with scientific friends, and the priest.

We went hither and thither in search of those people of the mud. One river was the replica of another. And at last he began childishly to chide me with an inability to find the tribe we had set out to see. He was a madman, sir.

However, in due time, by God's—you need not start, *señor*. I often cross myself when I mention His name. My elbow striking the edge of the table and the tiny cigarette end was merely an accident. Eh—another cigarette? I do not object, since you offer it.

As I was saying, in due time, by God's gift to me of a surpassing skill in junglecraft, I was able to penetrate the mazes of that sweating wilderness and arrive in triumph at the Tribe of the Ultimate Secret.

**W**E CAME upon them without warning in a dusky glade. Two or three stood in a pool of mud laving their naked bodies with slow motions. A dozen, a score of others, wallowed in the black mess or lay along the rim of the basin in sluggish lassitude.

How shall I make you see that picture, *señor*? They did not flee. They were not startled. They watched us with lazy eyes, stupid eyes. They were like crocodiles. They were—Dobro used a phrase—ah, “like prehistoric amphibians that had not acquired sufficient life to crawl out from under the clumsy feet of the mammoths.”

We watched them throughout the afternoon. The finding of them was like a sedative to Dobro—in one way. His madness vanished. He became quiet and studious. But inside him, it was plain to see, a great tenseness and expectation were at work. He approached them by slow degrees. Finally he was close enough to squat and touch one. It squeaked like a

toad when you punch it with your finger, and wriggled barely out of reach, and lay still with eyes blinking sluggishly.

As the afternoon wore on I knew that Dobro was up to something, sir. He was too subdued outwardly, too excited within. Toward night he placed all his written notes in the rubber bag and sealed it, and put the bag into the leather case and stuffed it into my knapsack. Then he turned on me.

“You!” he said. “Rub the sleep out of your eyes and listen to me. D’you hear? See these written pages of mine? You are to take them in the packet just as they are to the American consul, if something happens to me—if I do not come back. Do you understand?”

“If you do not come back!” I repeated in astonishment. “You are quite somewhere now, in this trackless jungle. Whither else can you go?”

He tossed his head angrily. He sat down on the ground before me in exaggerated patience.

“O admirable comrade,” he said, seething inside, “I perceive that I must explain the unexplainable to a brother of the ox, lest you spill the beans this night. Try, try, I prithee, try once to comprehend.”

You see, sir, he was of a madness. We had no beans. But not too mad to marshal his thoughts and presently proceed.

“The Law of Happiness,” he began in a restrained tone, “the Ultimate Sanctuary, is not to be found in anything that humanity knows. All that humanity conceives of is but broken dishes from which to eat. I scorn its every phase. The Law and the Sanctuary may lie in the next world, if such a world there be, but I can not go forward into it and return with a message. The Law and the Sanctuary may lie back in the world from which mankind emerged. It may lie just back of that point where mind first

flickered in flesh. I intend—I intend to go back—to see!”

His voice broke, sir, and rose shrilly. He bit his lip and strove to hold his enforced calmness.

“These people,” he continued, “are the low ebb of humanity. It is plain to see they are in the midst of some remarkable ritual or undertaking. They appear to be withdrawing their minds from the flesh—appear now to be almost mindless.”

Again his voice flew up. And this time he went on without bringing it under submission, flinging words into my face.

“I mean to join them! I mean to do what they do. I mean to think what they think. I mean to go with them to the very point of flesh-without-mind. Mayhap for a moment on beyond that port into the other world—and find the Ultimate Sanctuary in—some static condition——”

He could keep calm no longer, sir. He sprang up. He paced back and forth. His hands opened and clenched. He flung a command at me.

“You, whatever happens tonight, do you not interfere! This is the opportunity I have long sought. These people are the Path and the Door and the Key. Keep you off your meddling hands.”

Then again in a moment:

“Do you comprehend, brother of the ox, do you comprehend all that I have said?”

“Oh, certainly,” I assured him. “Yes, indeed. And I shall retain every word in my incomparable memory and repeat them to civilization.”

“Do precisely that,” he said.

In these last moments the swift tropic night had fallen like a weight. We were in a sea of darkness through which we might not swim up to any surface. As if it were a signal Dobro stripped off his ragged garments, what few were left to us. I could see his white body vaguely in the blackness. Suddenly he flung his arm out and whispered:

“What is that behind you?”

I jerked around. Nothing was there. I turned back. Dobro was gone. He had used that ancient ruse to vanish from my sight.

I searched twice around that pool of mud for him, being careful not to step on those things. I shouted thrice into the jungle, but the walls of the glade only threw my voice back at me like shattered stones.

I was distraught, sir. I sat down with my back to a tree. I was very weary also. I had not slept since day-break. I must have inadvertently dozed off; for the next thing that I knew Dobro was shaking me and gouging me painfully with the tines of our eating-fork and hissing in my ear.

“Wake up, pig!” Thus he addressed me in his mad fashion. “Make an outcry and I will impale your tongue. Listen with care. The *indios* are departing. Assemble our packs and follow. But have a care that you do not alarm them.”

I leaped alertly to my feet. The moon had risen high up. It lighted the glade. That Dobro, sir, was like a black ghost, mud from head to foot. He gave me a start, I tell you! With a final gouge Dobro disappeared.

I proceeded to put our belongings into the bags, including his discarded garments. In the midst of this there came a sudden and inexplicable sound from the jungle. It was like nothing that I had ever heard in all my wide experience. It was a hollow sound, or many sounds, without definite location. For one mad moment, sir, I thought it came from the man in the moon.

I am a courageous man, sir. There is none braver. But in that moment I fell upon my knees beseeching God and the blessed Virgin and several of the saints to preserve me whole for my family’s sake. While I was thus engaged in holy fervor that Dobro approached me from the rear, and set



his muddy foot midway of my shoulders and tumbled me over on my face.

"Knock off with that howling superstition," he ordered briskly, "and bring those packs."

It is not good luck to kick over a man at prayer. It is sacrilegious. But I hold no animosity against Señor Dobro, seeing what happened to him.

BY THE time I was up and had the packs on my back those savages and Dobro himself had passed through a black spot in the jungle wall. I followed and found myself in the usual narrow wilderness path, hard-packed and moist, with roots and vines to trip the unwary feet, and leaves to scratch one's ears. Once my hand closed upon a serpent and it licked my cheek with its forked tongue. A bad sign. Another time Dobro came looking for me back along the trail, groping with a stick like a blind man. He punched me in the face with it, sir, cutting my lip. Behold the slight puckering scar that remains to this day. Ordinarily I conceal it with a cigarette.

Thanks. I will. The entire packet? What beneficence! The sort that I myself admire and practise.

The inexplicable sound that I had heard went on far ahead of the procession. As we advanced it became drowned in the drone of a waterfall that we had heard throughout the day and that now became louder and louder as I progressed.

After quite a while I saw a fire gleaming through the interstices of the jungle. I judged the *indios* had arrived at their destination, and proceeded with caution. At the last I crawled on my hands and knees. Thus it was that I came to another glade and was able to see, lying flat on my stomach behind a spray of leaves, the whole scene before me.

And what a scene, sir. La-la! The huge branches of vast trees formed a canopy through which no gleam of the stars was visible. In the middle of

the open space was a great basin of thin mud. Beside the basin a huge fire burned. And ringing the glade around was a line of savages sitting on the ground and hugging their knees—old men and women and children and babes in arms. The glade was at the very brink of the cataract that had been roaring in my ears. A mist rose from it, lighted weirdly by that fire and rising into the canopy of leaves and black branches like steam from a witch's cauldron.

At one point in the ring were grouped the mud-covered savages that we had first seen. I perceived now that they were the strong and hardy ones of the tribe, men and women. The great crackling fire was between them and the pool of glistening mud. They sat motionless, stupid. I made out Dobro among them, in the rear rank. He was distinguishable by his superior height and size. He sat like the others, hugging his knees—though I could see his mud-caked head lift now and then and turn this way and that. No doubt those green and cutting eyes of his were taking in the sights.

Presently I became conscious of a new sound over the roar of the waterfall—and that inexplicable sound that had alarmed me was explained. It was made by men grunting and chanting into the open ends of some sort of bamboo contrivances—a hollow, booming sound, as vague and strange, sir, as anything that ever I heard.

As this grew in rising volume the old men began to beat on tom-toms. At first this was barely audible, but gradually it grew louder and louder. Then I noticed that the lips of all the people, save the mud-covered ones, were moving. Slowly, gradually, their volume rose and chimed in with the booming and the tom-tom beating—a chanting, wailing, thumping, booming diapason ever swelling louder and higher and wilder.

Sir, to me this savage music was the very voice of the jungle. The voice of mystery. The voice of savagery. It

stirred in me an emotion that I could not express in words, could not express even in my own thoughts. Fear, lonely longing, ecstasy—a sad ecstasy from the throbbing, sobbing pulse of a confused and wondering world.

The pulsing and sobbing and wailing rose to their height. My flesh crept. My heart seemed about to break. Then from out of that knot of mud-caked savages a man rose up. His eyes were strangely upon that fire and the glistening smooth surface of the mud beyond. He sprang forward. He leaped through the fire as the voices of the people rose in a screech. He plunged feet first into the black pool. He sank from sight. He did not come up. He did not appear again.

While I drew my panting breaths, sir, another mud-caked figure arose. He stared at the fire fanatically. He ran and leaped through the flames, and shot straight down into the mud. The surface had not settled when another arose and followed. And others, one after another, eager, fanatical. And all the while the tom-toms beat, the bamboos boomed, and the people wailed.

I am always alert, sir, but I had forgotten that I was in charge of that madman Dobro. When I remembered, only a handful of the mud-caked savages were left. I made haste, I tell you, to save him. I crawled through the vines and foliage of the jungle to seize him from behind and drag him to safety. But that jungle was dense and held me like hands. When at last, by my superior strength and determination, I came up behind the point where he sat and was ready to reach out, all the others were gone and Dobro was just rising to his feet. In a step he was beyond my grasp.

I think, sir, those savages in the pool where we first came upon them had not told the other tribespeople about Dobro's and my presence. Perhaps they did not speak in the course of their

ritual. When that ring of people saw the huge height of Dobro and perceived that a stranger was among them, their music and their wailing stumbled, and then rose again.

Dobro hesitated. I suspect he was wondering what was beneath that glistening surface. I felt pity for that lone, slightly stooped figure standing there, a supreme fool. But he was a man of courage, sir! Only a second did he pause; then he too sprang forward, leaped through the fire, and plunged out of sight in the black pool.

The music and the wailing stopped off short. The night seemed so still that it was a moment before I caught again the roar of the cataract. The musicians gathered up their tom-toms and hooting instruments, stuck them under their arms, and started away, for all the world like musicians at the close of a concert in the city plaza. The women took their children, and the whole tribe filed away down a path along the brink of the waterfall, disappearing downward into the black jungle.

**T**HE instant the glade was empty I rushed from my hiding-place to the pool. Its surface was calm. I looked about. Its farther side mingled with the great snaky roots of one of those huge trees. It was dark among those roots. I got a torch from the fire and held it down in those muddy claws of that tree.

I found a trench, sir, that had been dug from the brink of the pool among the roots to the waterfall—nothing less than a slideway that dropped steeply down into the cataract. I applied my alert mind to the problem. I realized that those people, diving feet first into the pool, could easily have thrust their bodies forward beneath the surface and come up within two or three seconds in the darkness among the roots. From there, with a twist of their bodies, they could have slid over the brink and shot down the

slideway into the fuming cataract. For a fact the brim of the pool showed slick where naked bodies had slid over. Convinced of this, and hopeful again for Dobro, I got the knapsacks and started down the path where I had seen the tribe go.

I made my way a quarter of a mile downstream, and retraced my steps part-way back. I shouted, but my voice was absorbed in the roar of the waterfall. I heard no one. I saw nothing but the stars twinkling above the stream where the tree-tops did not come together. I gave up for the night. It was useless to search in that darkness. Lest I be robbed of the knapsacks, I used them for a pillow. I believe it is good policy for men on an expedition to get what sleep they can.

When I awakened it was day. Those natives, sir, who had gone through the mud were wading along in the shallow rapids of the stream. Their bodies were wet and gleaming. They were washed clean. They had the look of a man who has just been shrived by the priest.

And then I saw that Dobro. He was sitting on a flat rock in the rapids, without clothing, hugging his knees, a patch of morning sunlight shining through the tree-tops upon him. You can imagine my relief at finding him still among us.

But that which he was doing, sir, was in a sense remarkable. He was looking at those washed natives with an expression—la-la!

Once here in the city a stranger from a ship came among us selling for a coin or two a little box that said upon it in print, "Raise the lid and see the biggest fool in the world." We bought them with alacrity and waste of good money. When we opened the lids we beheld our own faces in a mirror. You can imagine our feelings.

Sir, this Dobro had just such an expression on his face as he looked at those shrived natives. Like a man who had been fooled.

The *indios* came up the bank of the river, the men taking one path and the women another, and disappeared into the jungle. When they were gone that Dobro's expression altered. It changed to a kind of solemn amazement and utter incredulity. His lips began to move, and to hear what he was saying I arose and moved quietly nearer. And what words, sir!

"Well, I'll be damned! I, even I did it. *Even I!*"

He was not profane, sir. He was incredulous. He stared blankly into space, and with each word he nodded his head in short jerks.

"Even I did it. Well, I'll be damned!"

I stepped nearer and addressed him.

"No doubt you are right, sir," I said. "But why be so astonished about it?" He looked up at me.

"Did you wake up at last?" he asked.

"Did you find your Ultimate Sanctuary?" I retorted.

"Yes," he said, and regarded me as if defying me to contradict him.

He solemnly raised his bare arm and pointed up the purling river to where the cataract boiled and the mist arose.

"Yes," he repeated. "When those waters were whirling me and holding me down, when they were smothering me and making my struggle futile, when there was nowhere else to turn in my extremity, I turned to God like any common yokel and prayed to Him to deliver me."

He spat vehemently. He spat so vehemently, sir, that his spittle crackled on the surface of the water.

"Get the knapsacks!" he ordered like a sergeant. "Make haste. We go."

"Go?" I cried. "What next? Where now?"

"Back to civilization," he answered. "Back to tell the world what I did, what I *did*."

Sir, he had but exchanged one idol

for another. His idol had been to find the Ultimate Sanctuary. Now it was to tell the world what he had done. La-la! And the last was worse than the first, for he gave me no rest, showed no mercy, in that long race back over the mountains.

So you see, sir, I comprehend the North Americans. I will make a valuable guide for you into the

jungles if we can make satisfactory financial arrangements. . . . Yes, I comprehend them thoroughly. Except for one little thing, sir, a mere trifle. Why did that Dobro take that little idol-figure of roughly burnt clay, for which he had paid me four dollars, and twist it in his strong hands and break it up and throw the pieces into the river?