

# Weird Tales

*The Unique Magazine*



# Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the

BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XIII

NUMBER 5



Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, 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 Lav. II, 12, Servant'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 810 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.  
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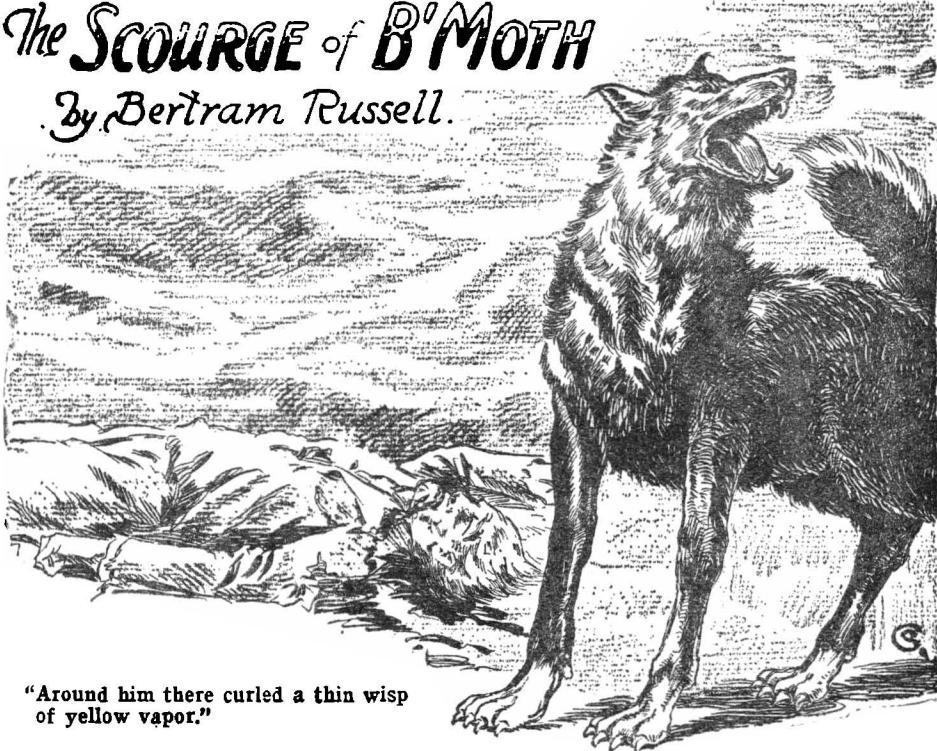
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# The SCOURGE of B'MOTH

By Bertram Russell.



"Around him there curled a thin wisp of yellow vapor."

## 1. *The Fog*

THE first inkling that I had of the gigantic abomination that was soon to smother the world with its saprophytic obscenity was obtained almost by accident.

My friend Dr. Prendergast, a gentleman eminent in his own particular branch of medicine, which included all sorts of brain specializations, operations, trephining, and so on, called me personally by telephone from his own residence late one night.

It struck me as surprizing that he should not have had his secretary or nurse call me during office hours. I was not in error when I thought his mission an urgent one.

"Randall," he said to me, "I've never seen the like of this in all my years of experience, and I am pretty sure you never did in yours either."

"A mental case?" I asked with quickening interest.

"Yes. And more. It's got me almost beaten to a standstill. I confess I'm pretty nearly stumped. I've gone over him thoroughly—X-rayed him and so on—but still I can't find any evidence whatever of organic disturbance."

"Well—can't it be a functional neurosis?" I asked in some surprize.

"If it is, I never saw another like it. The fellow seems to be actually possessed. He acts without knowing why he does so. I've given him a rough psycho-analysis, but it reveals nothing more than the repressions and inhibitions that every average person has. His unconscious contents show absolute ignorance of the awful obsession by which his waking hours are beset."

"There must be a reason for it," I

said. "If a man has an obsession, there are unconscious associations to exorcise it with. It can only be the symbol for something else—"

"The symbol for something else. You're right there. But if I can't find out what this something else really is, and pretty soon at that, this patient is going to join his Master before long."

"His Master?" I queried, surprised at what I thought to be a Biblical allusion by Prendergast.

"Yes. Whoever that is. He talks about nothing else. This Master represents the thing that is dominating him, stretching out its slimy tentacles from the darkest depths of unfathomable abysses to strangle the desire to live within him. He says now that he is eager to die, and you don't need me to tell you what that means in the neurotic."

"I'll come over immediately," I said.

"German-American Hospital, ward 3, psychiatric," he said, giving me the final instructions.

I HURRIEDLY donned my clothes—I had been reading Goethe in a dressing-gown before retiring—and unlocking the garage, I started the coupé. Soon I was on my way to the hospital where my friend had arranged to meet me.

The night was exceptionally dark, and a thin, clammy drizzle had commenced to fall—not a cold rain, but a viscid, penetrating dankness like the breath of some Stygian fury. The car was quite closed, yet I felt the clammy thrill of it inside. I even noticed that the instrument board was covered with drops of fluid and the wheel became wet and unruly under my touch. I almost allowed it to slip out of my hands as the car rounded a sharp curve. I jammed the brakes on. The wheels skidded on the slithery ground. I had been just in time to prevent the coupé from careening over the edge, where a dark abyss fell away from the

road as if a giant had scooped a track through the heart of the hills.

A cold perspiration broke out all over me. I could hardly drive. My hair tingled at the roots. For it had seemed to me at that moment that *hands other than my own had wrenched that wheel from mine in a demonic lust of murderous intent*. Try as I would, I could not throw off the hideous thought that a nameless fetidity had me in its control at that moment, and was even now within the car bent upon my destruction.

Was I, a psychiatrist of years' standing, versed in all the processes that produce madness in the human brain, skilled in treatment of those within its devouring maw—was I falling headlong, powerless to help myself, into the awful depths of lunacy? I fought the very suggestion, but to little avail. The dark night, the wild and mountainous nature of the country (where the hospital had been erected for the sake of quietness and seclusion) combined to produce a feeling of unknown forces, malignant in their fury toward man and the sons of man, that I could not dismiss.

But more than all was the nauseating, overpowering effect of that clammy fog, like a breath of evil, that rode with me, enveloping me in its chill blast. I laughed aloud at the notion of a presence other than my own in the car, and the laugh, muffled by the turgid breath that surrounded me, echoed in weird accents from the rear of the car. My voice had sounded strange, like the insincere laugh of an actor who is not interested in his rôle. I even turned to the rear of the coupé, as if expecting to see the presence there, but my darting eyes revealed nothing.

"This madness must cease," I told myself, as I turned on the electric warmer inside the car. It may have been the comforting heat that this produced, or it may have been an unconscious assurance that the laws of nature still continued to function—

my turning the switch had proved this—I did not know what was the true cause, but as the heat within the car increased, my spirits warmed, too, and I found myself driving with my accustomed care, and utterly without the meaningless fears that had overwhelmed me so few minutes ago, but so many ages since, as it seemed to me then.

The air inside the car was clear now: the drops of moisture had disappeared from the instrument board, and my hand grasped the steering-wheel with its accustomed firmness. But it was becoming uncomfortably hot. Still, I hesitated to switch off the heater, arrested by I know not what unknown fear. It may have been a warning from that Great Unknown that we are now only dimly beginning to understand. I can not say. But, at last, I switched off the heater.

As the air cooled, my spirits cooled, too. I felt the same senseless dread stealing over me, and I watched with intense anxiety for the reappearance of those drops of moisture on the dashboard. Seeming to materialize from nothingness they came.

The air within the car thickened, and again caressed me with its voluptuous and sickly folds. As the lights of the hospital appeared upon the crest of a ridge ahead of me, I began to tell myself that I *had* to turn on the heater once more. But my will was not equal to the act. I drove on in a kind of dream, blithely careless of anything in the world. The steering-wheel responded easily to my touch; it even seemed to spring from under my hand as I swerved around treacherous corners where chasms thousands of feet deep yawned below, missing the edge by a scant few inches.

I drove on heedless, in the dense opacity. I could see nothing now. But the wheel seemed to have a magic of its own. I felt the car bumping and undulating like a roller coaster. My head crashed against the roof. The

springs bent with an ominous crack. I felt the wheels slithering sideways as though someone were pulling them from their course, and finally, with a terrific crash, the coupé turned over and would have capsized completely if the pillars that marked the entrance to the hospital had not partly prevented it from falling.

Dr. Prendergast and two of his associates opened the door and dragged me out, half dazed, into the night.

"What's wrong, Randall?" said Prendergast anxiously.

I stood there, stupidly, hardly knowing what answer to make.

"We've been watching you for some time. We saw your lights five miles away. You've been driving like a man in a dream. Look — you've ruined half the flower beds in the hospital grounds."

I turned, and saw the tracks of the car cut deep into the lawns and flower beds before me. I had left the driveway and traveled across the hills and valleys of the landscape garden. A chill dread came over me. I could see the tracks of the car clear out into the road beyond. I could even see the headlights of another car traveling along the same road that I had come —miles away. In the soft air there was no moisture; above, the stars twinkled along their age-old courses. The fog had lifted!

With a new fear clutching at my heart's vitals, I spoke to them.

"The fog—the rain—it made it impossible for me to see. I couldn't find the road half of the time. I never saw such a night!"

"Fog? Rain? There's been no fog and no rain. Why, we could see your headlights for miles. The night is as clear as a crystal."

"But there *was* fog, right up to a minute ago. The car was wet with it, I tell you."

As I spoke, I reached my hand to the windshield, intending to prove my assertion. In amazement, I looked at it. There was no trace of moisture—

none at all! I stooped to the grass, and buried my hand in it. There was no rain upon it. It was even a little dried up, and I could see it had not been watered for some time. Again I pierced the night. There was not a cloud in the air anywhere, not a bank of fog between the hospital and the city.

"What you need is a stimulant. Come inside, and I'll give you one," said Dr. Prendergast, taking me cautiously by the arm.

Fearful for my own sanity, I stumbledly entered the hospital. As I took one last look around, I thought I saw a thin whisp of sickly vapor curling around the green lawn before me, like a wraith of yellow venom, and while my distraught nerves tingled in every fiber, there came to me the muffled echo of a mocking laugh.

Half walking, half sliding, I was taken into the hospital.

## 2. *The Call of B'Moth*

"FEEL better?" asked Dr. Prendergast, when I had gulped the stimulant that he had handed to me.

In the cheerful air of the doctor's private office I felt my fears to be of the flimsiest. I even felt constrained to laugh aloud at them. But the memory of that ride was not so easily effaced. However, I made light of my experience, saying that I had had but little sleep, and night-driving did not agree with me. Dr. Prendergast gave me a curious look from his slanted eyes, but said nothing.

We left the office, and taking the elevator, were soon in ward 3—the ward where the mental cases were confined. A nurse met us with a chart in her hands.

"How is the patient?" asked my colleague, with more than usual interest.

"Still delirious, Doctor," answered the trim little nurse.

"We shall take a look at him," he remarked, walking toward a cot in a

far corner of the room. "There he is," he added, to me.

Before us lay a pallid-looking figure. His black hair was tousled, as though he had been tearing at it with his fingers. His eyes were surrounded by deep, hollow circles that made him look like a grim precursor of death itself. He was talking inarticulately, and holding a disjointed conversation with some imaginary creature that he alone saw.

As I sat beside him, he burst into a frenzied laugh. Lifting his emaciated hand toward me, he pointed a skinny finger into my face.

"Ha! ha! Here's another one to rob the Master. You came too late—the Master saw to that. Ha! ha!"

"Quiet yourself," said Dr. Prendergast in a soothing voice. "You are going to get well, but you must not excite yourself in this fashion."

"Going to get well? Oh no, I'm not! The Master saw to that. I'm going soon, very soon. I'm going to join the Master. Deep down—where he waits for the faithful. That's where I'm going. Why should I want to live? Why should I wait around when there is work to be done?"

"What sort of work?" I inquired, hoping to relieve the compression within him by allowing him to talk.

"The work of the jungle. The work of the deep. That's what must be done. The time approaches. Millions and millions will help. And I shall soon be there. Ha! ha! You came too late. The Master saw to that. On the storm he rides. His breath is the breath of the fog. In the rain, he comes to the earth. He stayed you tonight. Eh? Didn't he?"

In spite of myself, I was troubled. Who was this Master who rode on the wings of the storm, and whose breath was the fog? I asked myself how this lunatic in his ravings knew of my experience that night. He was gasping for breath. His efforts had exerted him unduly, and apparently he was about to expire.

The nurse brought a glass of water, which he gulped greedily. "Water," he said. "Oceans of it. That's what the Master likes. That's the way to reach him. Into the caves where the blue light flames it goes, down, down beneath the bodies of dead men, deep—deep. The Master! Ah! B'Moth! Master—I come!"

His head fell back upon the pillow, and with a rapt expression in his eyes he died. I stood perplexed. This could be no ordinary case of hallucination. The man had seemed, as Dr. Prendergast said, bewitched, possessed. I left the cot, in company with my friend.

Suddenly he clutched my arm feverishly. "Look," he cried. "*Look!*"

I turned in the direction in which he was pointing. The glass of water was still clutched in the patient's hand. The fluid glowed with a lambent bluish radiance. It fluttered across the features of the dead man, which became greenish under its influence. His lips twisted into a snarl under the light, and the sharp fangs of his long canine teeth pricked through his closed mouth.

And the water in the glass was bubbling—bubbling as though it boiled; and there before my eyes the fluid slowly fell, until the glass was empty of all save the bluish glow that surrounded it, and not only it, but the bed, the linen, the dead man, and *ourselves!*

### 3. *The Unknown*

THE pressure of my professional duties served to drive the matter from my attention for several days, but it was rudely brought to my mind in a manner as strange as can well be conceived.

I had been carelessly scanning the newspaper, when my eyes were arrested and riveted by a small and apparently unimportant notice that was sandwiched in between the account of a big alimony case and the raid upon some bootleggers. Had the editor

known the full import of his copy, he would have blazoned the thing in block type, and put out a special edition of his sheet. But he did not, any more than did I myself at that time, suspect that soon there was to arise from the deeps a menace whose cancerous sores were destined to spread their purulent way into the very heart of civilization itself. I quote the notice verbatim:

ARICA, PERU, May 8—A strange case was brought to the attention of police here today. Alonzo Sigardus, a negro of West Indian extraction, was haled before Justice Cordero on a charge of attempted suicide. He was seen to dive into the ocean near Point Locasta by Captain Jenks, the lookout at the Marine Exchange station there.

Jenks says he rushed to the assistance of the man, thinking he had intended to go swimming and did not know of the treacherous undertow at the point. When he arrived, however, he saw at a glance that it was a case of attempted suicide, for Sigardus could not swim, and was merely floundering around helplessly in the depths.

Captain Jenks promptly dived into the water at the place known to sightseers as Devil's Cauldron, and after a frantic struggle with the maelstrom, during which the negro did his best to drown the two of them, was able to rescue the man.

Instead of thanks, however, Sigardus struck Jenks brutally upon the face, crying: "The curse of B'Moth upon you! It was the call of the Master. What right have you to interfere? I went to join B'Moth, and now you have dragged me back again. When the time comes, you shall suffer."

The incident has aroused widespread local interest, because it is said that the Devil's Cauldron upon foggy days is the meeting-place of spirits of the deep. Legend has it that upon such days, and during the rainy season, the Monster of the Pool arises from the deep water to claim his own.

Obviously, the distorted mind of the superstitious negro thought he had been called by the spirit of the Cauldron. It is interesting to note that a thick haze commenced to overcloud the pool after Sigardus had been rescued. Until this time, the sun had been shining with great brilliance.

There is much excitement among the native population here, and talk is common that the rescue bodes no good for the white man. Serious disturbances have arisen in several inland villages, and police and military have united forces to protect the white population against whom the attacks seem chiefly to have been directed.

Apparently, the incident had only obtained recognition in the press because of the legends which were connected with the Devil's Cauldron, and which were thought to be of interest to the outside world; and because of the attempted uprisings against the white people. But to me, the insertion of that single and apparently incomplete word gave a sinister and terrible inflection to the whole paragraph.

Who, or what, was B'Moth? It must be the same "Master" to whom the dying man had appealed in the German-American Hospital. And there was no shadow of doubt that it was a duplication of the same occurrence, unconnected with it except by the subtle influence of the B'Moth.

I felt my hair begin to tingle when I read the news item again and came to note about the fog that overlay the pool after the negro had uttered his curse. This was too close a similarity to admit of any such explanation as mere coincidence. As a psychiatrist it interested me greatly, and I even began to feel in some obscure way that it was my duty to investigate the whole business. Perhaps (and far-fetched as the idea may seem, I thought of it in all seriousness)—perhaps the very sanity of the world was at stake.

As I laid the paper aside and prepared to drive to my office, I felt again the oppressive weight of that unspeakable thing that I was slowly coming to dread, so that I could not drive alone in fog or through a rainstorm (though I dared tell no one of this phobia) I felt—Good God, how I felt! —the weight of that slimy pollution. I seemed to be drawn unresistingly into the slavering maw of this foul corruption from hell. I stood transfixed, my teeth chattering, unable to lift a hand, watching the place where I felt absolutely certain the thing was. And then into my jangled consciousness came the imperative ringing of the telephone bell.

I moved slowly toward the instrument, my eyes fixed irresistibly upon the other side of the room. Mechanically I lifted the receiver.

A voice came as though from a great distance. "Is that Dr. Randall? Please come across to the German-American Hospital immediately. Dr. Prendergast has gone insane!"

#### 4. *Madness*

WHEN I arrived at the hospital where my friend was being treated, the condition of my mind was far from equable. That the same calamity which I dreaded had actually befallen my friend came as no slight shock. But I resolutely strove to compose myself as I entered the building. If my suspicions were correct, there was work to be done, hard work and plenty of it—if this foul thing was to be foiled in its malign purposes.

I found Dr. Prendergast in a comfortable private room—the best in the place. He was sleeping quietly when I entered. But before I had been there more than a few minutes, he awoke, and looking at me, shook hands cordially. He did not have the appearance of a lunatic at that time. He began to speak, in a natural, softly modulated voice.

"Randall, there's something strange and uncanny about this business. Ever since that affair when I had to call you into consultation, I have had an odd feeling that all is not well. I've actually been harassed by morbid phobias—if that's what they are. I never dreamed of a psychosis coming to me. The more I think about the matter, the more I have come to believe that you and I are marked out as martyrs to the cause, though why, or how, I can not even begin to understand."

"You seem all right now, and certainly you never gave me the impression of being neurotic."

"That's just it. I ought to be the very last person to lose his mind, but though I am as sane as it is possible

for a man to be at this time, in a few minutes that Thing may have me in its clutch, and I shall be a raving lunatic. It's funny, Randall, to be able to analyze your own particular form of lunacy—if such it is. I can remember quite well what happened to me last night. It is much more real than the usual dream associations. And I dread its return more profoundly because of this. If this is lunacy, it is a form never before seen. But I don't think it is lunacy at all."

"Tell me about it," I urged. "Perhaps two minds can do what one can not."

"There's not much to tell. I had been reading Freud until a late hour last night — his last book, you know. Thoughts that were assuredly not born of earth came to me. I began to feel an immense distaste for life—the life that we live today, I mean. I thought of the days of the jungle, and those primordial memories that lie dormant within every man came back to me. The artificiality of the world, with its commercial systems, its codes of conduct, its gigantic material things, that after all have done little else besides making life harder to live, and shorter—all these appeared as the flimsiest futility.

"It seemed to me that man was not made to live in this fashion. I thought that the giant primeval forest with its fierce combat of man against man and beast against beast was the fitting habitat of life. I thought of those monsters of the deep, glimpsed occasionally by passing vessels—huge beyond the conception of man. Once life had been lived altogether on a gigantic scale like that. I felt, I can't say just why, a deep kinship, an affinity with those bloated colossi of the sea—the carrion that feed upon the bodies of the dead. They seemed to me to represent the farthest step that could be taken in a retrogressive direction—back from civilization, you see—back from the painfully acquired things that we count so valuable.

"And—here is the strange part—it seemed to me that this thought did not come wholly from myself. It was almost as if something had whispered into my ear that foul abomination of regression. I felt that at the same moment, not I alone, but thousands and thousands, rather millions, were dreaming of the time when the cycle should have been completed. We always learned that things are cyclical, you know. Rome rose; was great; fell. So on with the other civilizations, all of them. So undoubtedly will be our own great civilization. It will be the mythical end of the world that seers have predicted for centuries. There will be no starry cataclysm, but a return of all life to the jungle.

"Competent authorities state that if something is not done to stop this approaching catastrophe, we shall be literally eaten alive by insects—ants, for instance. There seems to be plenty of scientific basis for this suggestion. But who has thought of the awful possibilities that may arise if those unknown creatures, bloated to foul enormity, shall in concerted array overrun the civilized world?"

"It's an awful thought, but there's no foundation for it," I said comfortingly; for even in his sane moments my friend seemed to evidence a wildness not quite normal.

"I'm not so sure that there's no basis for it. I've had a feeling, lately, that there is a tremendous movement under way that has as its sole object the overthrow of civilization and re-establishment of the life of the jungle.

"And here's what appears to be the reason for selecting us. We can exercise an enormous control over the minds of men; you agree? This unspeakable Thing has seized upon us, is trying to enmesh us in its filthy net, to enlist us in the cause, because with the influence that we can exert we should be enormously valuable. Do you follow? We are to be apostles of this rotten creed!"

"What an appalling idea! I'd rather be dead," I said with a shudder.

"Dead! Who knows what might happen to you then? You might join the Master——"

"You, too!" I cried.

A spasm of horrible fear crossed my friend's face as the full import of his words bore in upon him. His muscles were twisted in an agony of internal strife, as he fought the insidious influence that was striving to warp the straightness of that magnificent brain.

"They haven't got me yet, Randall. But they are after me! I'll fight them. I pray that my lucid intervals may be frequent enough to enable me to unravel this foul mystery. Good God!—I'm in a cold sweat all over. Tremors!"

I started across the room to the table, and pouring a glass of water, handed it to my friend.

He shuddered convulsively, and recoiled from it as from a living horror.

"Away!" he shouted. "Take that contagion away! It's after me! It's alive! I won't drink it. It means madness!"

With a frantic effort he dashed the glass and its contents upon the floor.

I stared at my friend, agast. Suddenly a thought came to me—a recollection of that night when a certain glass of water had glowed with iridescent fire; when, through the baneful influence of the fog, my own mind had skirted the borderland of lunacy. I began to understand.

My colleague was calming himself again. Presently he spoke.

"It's going to be a fight for me," he said. "But I'll battle to the last gasp. Your part will be to watch, and, if possible, learn more of this awful Thing that menaces the sanity of the world. There must be some way to destroy it."

"How shall I start?" I muttered in puzzled bewilderment. I had only the slightest of clues to work upon.

The newspaper cutting did little more than confirm what I already suspected.

"Your key is the word of the Master: 'B'Moth'. Don't forget—*B'Moth*. What it means, I can't say. But the word has been ringing in my ears for days. That's the Master—that's the name of this cankerous rotteness that you must destroy!"

### 5. *A Clue From the Past*

I LEFT the hospital in a daze. How was I to destroy this Thing? I was already half in its clutches. I could do little but flounder in the dark. If, as Dr. Prendergast and that dead man had asserted, there were millions of followers, they kept their doings secret. "B'Moth"—the word was like a voice from another world—without meaning.

I thought, and thought, in an agony of apprehension. I knew not where to turn for information. I spent hours in my library, greatly to the detriment of my practise. I exhausted most of the books of mythology and of anthropology, but still I could find nothing that seemed to have any bearing upon the matter.

One day, when I was going through an ancient volume of Kane's *Magic and the Black Arts*, bound with a heavy bronze clasp, and closed with lock and key, I came upon the following:

There be many who revere the Devourer, though few have seen the full stature of this great power. It is a vision fraught with eldritch horror, and much sought by wizards of early times. One, Johannes of Madgburg, wise in the lore of the ages, hath met success greatly in his efforts. He asserteth that the Devourer liveth in the Deep, and is not to be reached by any means, yet he hath been able to feel his breath and know his will. The secret is in a vaporous effluvium. For the Devourer hath power to manifest himself where there is moisture. His breath is the fog and the rain. Wherefore, many do account water the elemental, and do worship it in divers ways.

This Johannes hath told in his book of medicine how he did conjure from a heavy vapor in his retorts the very Essence itself

upon occasion. The phosphorus light of dead things did swell into a great brightness and fill the chamber, and withal came the spirit of the Devourer. And Johannes hath learned that he liveth in the deepest Ocean, where he awaiteth only a time auspicious for his return to earth. Many there be who joyfully believe the time approacheth, yet Johannes saith that many centuries shall pass ere the Master returneth to claim his own.

Much astonishment hath one remark which he made produced. He saith that the Devourer is a familiar of every man and every woman. He liveth eternally in the Inner Man. He reacheth forth from the Deep, and the Inner Man doth hear. All-seeing is his eye, all-hearing his ear. None can destroy him, for he is intrinsic in all men. In times of evil and lust, of war and strife, of man against man, and brother against brother, the Devourer liveth lustily in men. His ways are the ways of the Deep. There be saints and mystics who believe they have exorcised the Devourer, but in them, also, he liveth. In the depths of the waters, and in the souls of men, he sleepeth, and one day will awaken to take his own.

I finished the ancient manuscript with a start. Though the Thing was called by another name, I could not doubt that the reference was to the same. I sought eagerly for the book of medicine that had been written by Johannes of Madgeburg, and after hunting all day I at last unearthed a copy in an antique shop. It was torn, and badly discolored, the writing in Latin, and in many places hard to decipher, but I found something of great interest to me.

Johannes, after describing his attempts to communicate with the Devourer, told of his success. He had learned the secret from a philosopher of a still earlier day, a day so far buried in antiquity that it preceded our own era by centuries. I quote, translating as well as I am able:

Being of a mind to discover the Ultimate, I sought diligently into the works of historians, and wise men of all ages. In my studies, I chanced upon a manuscript written by one, Joachim of Cannes. He had gathered a wealth of lore from men of every clime. He said the name of the Devourer was Behemoth, which, indeed, is translated into "he who devours the souls of men."

This monster is of great antiquity, and was well perceived by the ancients.

In the Hebrew Bible, he is mentioned countless times. The seer Job makes much in speaking of him. All men are agreed that his size is as great beyond a man's as a man is great beyond the stature of a toad. He has power to reproduce for ever, and after the flood times he was driven into the ocean, where he lives among the dead in the caves of crawling things.

But the power of his thoughts is over all men. He has divers powers of manifestation. Through water, and through mist, is he felt, and his thoughts are the thoughts of the toad and the snake, wherefore these reptiles are accounted sacred by many. There is but one spell that can be cast to conjure him back to the ocean, and the parts of it . . .

I dropped the manuscript with disappointment. In my extremity I was prepared to work any spell, if it would, as Johannes said, be successful in exorcising this dread Thing. And the careless handling of the ages had torn from the manuscript the very page where the spell was formulated.

But now at least I had a clue to the Thing. I snatched up an apocryphal Bible, and read avidly all the references to the Behemoth in the Old Testament. There were many, but they were all agreed upon the devouring quality of the destroyer, and all affirmed that he would some day return from the depths to claim his own.

Winslow's encyclopedia, which I consulted last, placed as a footnote to an earlier article a paragraph stating that in many countries an organized worship of the Behemoth was practised under various disguises, and that the cult was more prevalent near the equator, and among savage races. The learned historian suggested that the animal might be a hippopotamus!

How little did he know of the power about which he wrote! But I gleaned from this short note another interesting fact. As I reflected upon it, it seemed a very natural corollary of the proposition. The worship was more prevalent in tropical countries, and among the lower races of humanity. The reason was obvious: they were nearer the jungle, both physically and

mentally. I also suspected that it would be common among the dwellers of savage lands near the ocean. The isolated incident of the Devil's Cauldron substantiated this belief.

With some satisfaction in my heart I left the metaphysical library when I had finished my search for the day. As I crossed the sidewalk to the parking-station where I had left my car, I stood still in my tracks, gazing with horror upon the sight that met my eyes.

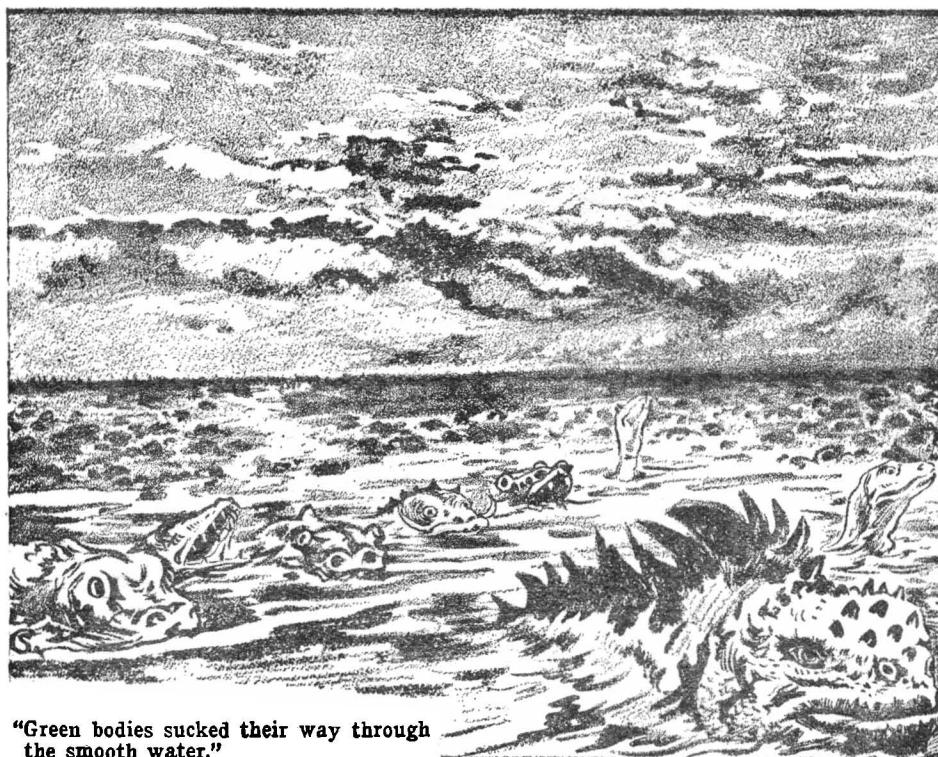
A dirty, tousled figure was dashing along the street, pursued by two policemen. He was clad in the lightest of garments that looked more like underwear or sleeping-clothes than anything else. He stumbled occasionally, but some instinct seemed to enable him to keep out of the grasp of his pursuers. He was carrying something which he balanced with great dexterity. I looked closely as he ap-

roached me and saw that it was a tank filled with water, and inside the tank was the slimiest collection of horrid things that I had ever seen—toads, lizards, water-snakes, all the loathsome life of the water was there. And as he approached me, eluding his pursuers by a hair, I saw that this man in pajamas was the once great Dr. Prendergast!

#### 6. *Dead Flies*

BUT what a changed Dr. Prendergast! His professional manner had disappeared. His usually benign face was twisted in a snarl of fury, and his teeth gnashed and champed like a jungle animal lustng for blood. I was horrified at the metamorphosis in my friend.

The policeman explained that they had caught him robbing a near-by aquarium, and refused to believe his



"Green bodies sucked their way through the smooth water."

story that he had been ordered to take the reptiles that he still carried with such a jealous care.

My professional card and reputation, however, satisfied the officers, and, since the doctor refused to part with his treasure, saying he would die first, I finally agreed to pay for the stolen property, and the owner accepting my proposal, my friend was permitted to retain his prize.

Throughout the journey back to the hospital he babbled unceasingly about things I could barely understand. Hundreds of times he repeated the words "Master" and "B'Moth." He asserted that he had done the Master's bidding in stealing the reptiles, and called upon the Thing to reward him when the time came.

I questioned him a hundred times as to his reasons for stealing the tank and its contents, but a cunning look came into his eyes, and, try as I would, I could not elicit from him any reason for his act. He clung to his statement that he had but done the bidding of the Master and that he was to be rewarded for it.

His look held suspicion and distrust for me. Like that other poor creature, he sensed in me an enemy of his Master. At times I caught him leering at me with a murderous expression in his red-rimmed eyes, and I confess that I felt not wholly comfortable, there alone in a closed car with this madman who had been my friend.

It was with something approaching a sigh of relief that I drove in at the broad entrance to the hospital where he was still confined. He showed no disposition to resist the attendants who came to take him to his room, and seemed satisfied in the belief that he had accomplished his end.

When he entered his room, he carefully placed the tank and its contents upon a table in the center, and apparently gave it no further attention. I

left him, then, and went to the office of the hospital.

The report was the same as usual. Dr. Prendergast had been sleeping well, and eating, but his moments of lucidity were fewer and farther apart. Even when he was normal, he seemed to brood under the weight of the obsession that was dominating him.

He had developed a mania for collecting insects of all kinds. He had begged the authorities of the hospital to procure for him jams and other sweetmeats, which, instead of eating, he placed in appropriate places about his room. With fiendish delight, he waited for the vermin that are bound to be attracted by the preserves.

His room was overrun with flies, ants and mice, but instead of destroying them he used every effort to encourage the horrid things. He had constructed boxes that acted as traps, and which the superintendent of the hospital informed me were filled to overflowing with various sorts of insects. He had one box filled with grasshoppers, another with ants, a third with flies, and so on.

This loathsome occupation was something that I could not understand. What was his purpose—for I felt reasonably sure there was a purpose—in making this collection? I could understand the tank of reptiles after my reading of Johannes. They were undoubtedly symbolic of the Master himself. Perhaps he had caught them in the belief that they were kin of that loathsome Thing. But the insects and vermin—these I could not explain at all.

I was not to remain in darkness for long, however. On returning to the room, I stood outside for a moment, and peered through the aperture in the door that is frequently used for observation purposes in mental cases. The simulated indifference of the doctor had passed away, and, under the impression that he was now alone, he was working furiously.

At first I could not understand his

occupation, but soon it flashed upon me what his horrible object was. In his hand was a box. It was filled with flies, in a semi-stupor, induced, I suppose, by want of food. The great man was slowly sprinkling handfuls of the pests out of the box where they lay too weak to move. He then fed them carefully to the vile creatures within the tank! I noticed at his hand other empty cages, and supposed that they had been filled with ants and grasshoppers. With a vile leer, he fed the last of the flies to a loathly water-snake, and with great contentment replaced the boxes in a neat pile upon a shelf.

Grasping the handle of the door firmly, I entered the room.

His face a mask of infamy, my friend whirled upon me with a champing of teeth. Like a cornered tiger about to strike, he crouched against the wall, but, with a smile, I seated myself upon a chair. Seeing this, and that I did not intend to interfere with his pets, he relaxed somewhat, and sat upon the bed. His face was cast in a moody pattern. His brow was knit in a frown as if pondering something.

Slowly the tensity of his body relaxed, his face assumed the normal lines of good humor that I had so often seen upon it, and he looked up.

"By heaven, Randall! If what I think has happened, I am better off dead!" he said.

"No matter what has happened, I am pleased to see that you are still fighting," I answered.

"Yes, but the effort is almost too much. I wanted to kill you when you came in. You had better watch me, for I am liable to do it the next time. A feeling came over me that you were in my way, or rather in the way of that hideous Thing that has me in its power, and that you ought to be killed and fed to the sharks."

"Why fed to the sharks?" I asked with much interest.

"Because they are of the sea—de-

vous themselves. Every living thing they devour, if it is not of the sea, is another soul added to their power—to the power of B'Moth."

"Extraordinary!" I ejaculated in amazement.

"That's the word. But I know—I can't say *how* I know, but I feel it just the same—that the object of this business is to place an overwhelming power in the hands of the filthy abominations at the bottom of the sea, and in the depths of the jungle."

"You're right there. I've discovered that. Is that why you have been feeding those land creatures to the reptiles in that tank?"

He followed my pointing finger, and shrank from his pets in abject terror.

"Did I collect those things?" he asked quaveringly.

"Yes. Can't you remember it?"

"I have some idea of laying out bait for insects, under the impress of a will stronger than my own, but why I have those snakes, I don't know."

"You stole them this afternoon," I said quietly.

"Stole them, eh? I can't remember that at all. This thing is getting a pretty tight grip upon me. I'm afraid that unless we can do something, I am finished. I can't remember what I've been up to at all for the past few days. I'm losing this fight."

"We'll pull you through. My idea is that you obtained the reptiles in order to feed the other things to them, and thus increase the proportion of souls for the deep. I can't explain it any better, but you can follow, perhaps. You wanted to help this ghastly business by strengthening the mental influence of the Master and his kind." I shuddered as I found myself using the word "Master" so easily and familiarly.

"No doubt you're right. I can't imagine any other reason for such an act. The very sight of these green

slimy things chills me now. I can't think of it without a shudder."

"There's one thing I want to ask you."

"Go ahead," said my friend without much enthusiasm.

"Are there any particular times when this thing comes to you?"

"No particular times, but on certain occasions. By Jove, I ought to have thought of it before! It's when there is fog outside that I experience the drowsy feeling that precedes these attacks."

I could not repress a cry of pleasure when I heard this. I remembered my own experience in the automobile that night, now so long ago, as it seemed. The drowsy feeling had come to me with its stupefying accompaniment when the fog had rolled in through the cracks of the car. It had disappeared when I lighted the heater. An idea came to me—a possible means of saving my friend in his extremity.

I rang the bell for an attendant.

"Lay a fire, and light it immediately!" I ordered.

The attendant looked at me in amazement. The day was a hot one, and my order must have seemed as crazy as the sick man's ant-collecting.

"Hurry," I snapped, as I saw the look that I was coming to know spreading across the face of the patient.

The attendant flew like the wind, realizing that the matter must be important. While I anxiously watched the struggle that was, I know, going on in the mind of my friend, the fire was laid. Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. His jaw was gritted in fierce resolve, as he watched the attendant futilely attempting to ignite the kindling.

There was no time to waste. I dashed out of the room and into the dispensary. My eyes found a bottle of alcohol. Snatching this from the hand of a startled intern, I ran back

to the room as fast as my legs would carry me.

Dr. Prendergast was writhing upon the bed and clawing frantically at the tenuous wisps of gray mist that seemed to be stretching out their sinuous tentacles to draw him into their clutch. They seemed actually indued with life, as I am convinced they were. He lay upon the bed as though trying to hide from the relentless purpose of this inspeakable Thing that strove to blast his sanity.

The alcohol flew from my hand, the match ignited it, and the flames licked greedily at the kindling. The thin wisps of mist writhed and twisted, and gradually vanished as the fire gained volume and roared a menace to this evil Thing from the depths.

Upon the bed lay the racked form of my colleague, shuddering and weak, but smiling—and in his right mind!

#### 7. *More Light*

**W**"E'VE won!" he cried jubilantly, grasping my hand.

"Rather say 'we are winning,'" I smiled, pleased at the success of my experiment. "Don't let that fire out, no matter how hot it becomes in here, or you'll soon find out that this business isn't finished. Look! Can't you see it out there on the lawn? That mist—twisting and curling like a thwarted Thing? It's alive, I'll swear. If you let that fire out, or open this window, it'll be after us again with a vengeance! Don't forget—keep that fire burning night and day! It's life or death now!"

I left immediately, for I had much to do. I hurriedly drove to Brocklebank, a small town in the country. Stopping the car before the portals of a large residence, I rang the bell. The servant, who knew me well, ushered me without introduction into the library of my old friend, Geoffrey d'Arlancourt, a student of antiquities and strange beliefs. I wondered that I had not thought of him before.

I broached the subject on my mind without further delay:

"What do you know about the worship of the Behemoth, Jeff?"

He wrinkled his brows quizzically. "The Behemoth?—well, a little. It's apparently a mythical monstrosity that has been the focus of various forms of Satanism, pseudo-religion, and downright butchery."

I told him about my investigations into the writings of the mediæval philosophers, and what I had learned about the Thing.

"In that case you probably know more than I can tell you," he smiled, "except that you, perhaps, have never seen the worship actually practised."

"No, indeed," I said. "That's what I came to see you about."

"Well, I have. The name apparently has innumerable variations, but always the main idea is the same. I have sometimes been tempted to think that there may be some such thing in reality. You know, of course, that the so-called savage races are given to all forms of voodooism, animism, and the like. We say, in our sophistieation, that this is only because they have not yet learned a true sense of values. I am often inclined to think that it is because they are freer in their subjective processes than we are. They think that a tree has power for good and ill. We say it is not possible, and yet Bose, for instance, to mention only one of the great scientists, has conclusively proved that a plant has feeling of joy and pain, and actually cries aloud when hurt. These people, being more readily receptive to influences that we deem spiritual (because we can not otherwise comprehend them), are naturally those among whom such a worship might find a firm foothold. The nearer we go to life in its bald reality, the nearer we come to the worship of the Behemoth and other allied things."

"Do you mean to imply that this worship is beneficial?" I questioned, in some surprise.

"I won't say that, but I will say that it serves a very definite purpose in filling a gap that we of civilized times have left void. But to return: If you want to find examples of Behemoth worship, look for them among the lower strata of society—in the hot countries, among the aborigines of New Zealand, and so on. It was in such places that I found innumerable instances of it on my recent cruise. I confess that I was greatly surprised at the prevalence of the thing. It is spreading at an alarming rate."

"Tell me the details," I said breathlessly. Apparently I was on the trail at last.

"Substantially, the worship is the same everywhere, and its very similarity gives it the appearance of representing a widespread truth. It appears to be related to a real, a living thing. The great idea back of it is that the time is rapidly approaching when the jungle will return to its own, when civilization will be wiped out, and the law of power will again prevail.

"Apparently this Behemoth has never been seen, but it can be felt. I almost believe I have felt it myself. Incantations are made in a language absolutely unintelligible to anybody; the medicine men themselves have told me that they can not apprehend the meaning except through the medium of traditional translations. And here is another strange thing: though I have seen this worship in New Guinea and Peru, in Malaysia and Finland, the syllables have always a similarity. The incantations are seemingly the same. They are merely unintelligible gibberish, more like the language of apes or the roar of the sea lion than speech, yet they are pronounced nearly alike by these widely separated races. Randall—*they mean something!*"

Again I felt my flesh beginning to creep at the thought of the tremendous power with which I had to deal.

How well did I know its obscene intent, its insidious force!

"What is the central feature of the worship?" I asked.

"There are two: a mystic union with the Behemoth, which means a pledge to aid in the restoration of the jungle and the overthrow of civilization; and secondly, the objective side, which includes the sacrificing of unbelievers, usually to members of the reptilian species, though I have seen children given to huge and bloated jaguars, who were kept as sacred symbols."

"I suppose there are even places here where this foul abomination holds sway," I suggested with a flutter of anxiety.

"Not a doubt of it. The thing is apparently gaining currency everywhere; why not here? I could almost tell you where to look to find the worship practised."

I then told d'Arlancourt everything that had led me to make these inquiries. When I had finished, his face was tense and fearful.

"This is monstrous! I can scarcely believe it. If it is true, we must take steps immediately to root out this cancerous putridity at its very heart. Wait!"

He walked across to the bookcase and selected a volume. For some minutes he read in silence. Then he spoke:

"There appear to be some secret orders founded upon this worship. The names will, in all probability, be changed, but they may be close enough for us to discover more. One is the Macrocosm. Another is the order of Phemaut, a very ancient one, originating in Egyptian times, and worshiping as its symbol the hippopotamus. If my memory serves me aright, the word for hippopotamus in the language of the third dynasty was P-ehe-maut: very similar to Behemoth, you see."

"Now, we shall ascertain if there

are any relics of this business in Twentieth Century America."

He lifted the telephone receiver, and a chill dread came over me. I felt again that nameless and overwhelming fear that presaged the coming of the Thing.

D'Arlancourt was speaking. "Secret service? Give me Ellery. Tell him it is d'Arlancourt. Yes, please. Hello—yes, this is Jeff. I want to know whether you have any reports on secret societies that bear a name like Phemaut, B'Moth or Behemoth—a name something similar to that. What—good heavens! We'll be over, right away."

He turned to me, and his face was gray. "He says there are known to be about a thousand societies going by the name Phemaut, and many more with similar names, and that, after raiding them, the police have discovered tons of bones—human bones, charred, and in many cases, buried. But worst of all, he says these societies have been suspected of destructive intent of the worst kind—incendiaryism, dynamiting, murder, and the like. Randall, you have put your finger upon the worst sore the human race has yet had to cauterize!"

#### 8. *The High Priest*

WE FOUND Ellery caressing a beautiful police dog, a pet which he had trained from puppyhood.

D'Arlancourt rapidly described to the secret service man what I had already told him. Ellery received the information, at first with a quizzical smile, but, under the accumulation of evidence that we were able to present, his face took on a grave mien. He called his secretary, and instructed him to obtain a certain address.

"And send a telegram to the secret service departments of every civilized country, in code," he added. "Inquire if there have been any signs of an attempt—what shall I say?" he stopped, looking helplessly at us.

"Ask if there have been any overt attempts that appear to be directed by secret societies to rehabilitate the life of primitive times at the present day," I put in suggestively.

"But they'll think me crazy. They won't know what I mean."

"They'll know well enough if they have run into anything like what we are dealing with here," said d'Arlancourt quickly. "If they don't, they will only think the cable has been garbled in transmission."

"All right, put in something like that. Ask particularly if they have had any trouble from groups of people who worship any animal, or any reptile, particularly one that resembles a hippopotamus."

"Very well, sir," said the secretary with a slight smirk.

"That's all," snapped Ellery.

We left the office together, and drove to the meeting-place that the detective wished us to visit. Ugly rumors had been associated with it, and there was some probability that we should find what we sought there.

The night was fast falling as we approached the hall. It was in a squalid and miserable section of the city. We parked the car some distance away, and mingling with the motley throng that sought admission, we entered the building, and seated ourselves near the rear door.

The place was almost filled, and very soon after our entry the lights commenced to dim. They dwindled to mere dots of green flame, and there arose a chorus of meaningless babble like the chatter of apes in the forests of the Amazon. This was evidently the greeting extended to the high priest of Behemoth, who was now entering.

He was clothed in a shining green robe that was apparently made from the skin of some monster of the deep. Like decaying fish, it glowed a bluish green, and surrounded the repulsive features of a mask that he wore with a fiendish, unnatural light. Slowly

he mounted the steps to the rostrum. I saw that there was before him a tank which glowed with that lambent blue fire that I had seen in the glass when the insane man had died in the German-American Hospital.

I found it impossible to repress a shudder. The place was almost dark, and except for the priest on the rostrum, we could see nothing but the tiny points of green that indicated the colored electric lights.

There appeared to be no ceremonial or ritual in connection with the business. Everybody did as he pleased, but always there was that wild jargon, that reminded me of the forest. At my left hand sat a huge negro, and close to him was a woman, with pendulous jowl, and huge teeth projecting from between thick lips. Her shouts almost rent my eardrums.

As the affair went forward, the crowd became ecstatic, and many threw themselves in transports upon the floor, tearing their clothes away from their bodies and dancing wildly in the eery darkness. Many carried tame serpents which they lovingly caressed; others had tiny monkeys which they kissed affectionately. Men and women alike threw themselves upon each other in a frenzy of mad abandon. I saw a Malay struggling in the arms of a white woman, and heard their shouts of ecstasy. I saw others sinking teeth deep into the arms, the legs, the shoulders of those nearest to them in an insane fury of primeval ferocity. There was a beautiful girl, her white body stripped naked, lying in the brutal embrace of a bronze figure, drinking in with passionate abandon the kisses he showered upon her. Apes flitted hither and thither among the crazed throng, receiving homage wherever they passed. Serpents writhed, their slimy coils encircling the throats of the devotees. And the shouting rose to a bedlam of unintelligible sound. The air was becoming thicker every minute. I could not understand it

at first, but soon it was clear to me. I had seen that heavy greenish vapor before. It was the breath of that hellish atrocity that these deluded wretches worshiped. It seemed to overhang the whole hall, enveloping all in its clammy folds. I felt the sickly touch of it, and writhed as though in the grip of some loathsome Thing. My companions sat there with drawn faces, their muscles tensed in an effort to resist the awful spectacle.

The cries rapidly blended themselves into a rhythmical shouting. Into my dazed senses there was borne the sound of a single phrase: "B'Moth . . . Master!" It was repeated a thousand times as the heavy pall closed in upon us thicker and thicker.

The giant negro sitting at my side spoke to me in a roar of joy. "The Master is almost ready," he shouted above the din. "A few more days and the world will feel his power." He beat his brows, and cried in ecstasy, "Come . . . B'Moth . . . Master, come!" I nodded in pretended agreement, and he went on with his shouting.

A woman threw her arms about me and whispered foul things into my ear. Suddenly the attention of the crowd was centered upon the priest at the rostrum. He had uncovered the tank of water upon the platform, and to my horror I saw there, with jaws agape, a huge crocodile. It seemed clothed with the sulfurous glow like everything else.

Into the pandemonium of noise there was injected a new and startling sound—a shriek, shrill and piercing in its power—the voice of a woman in mortal terror! I strained my eyes through the heavy vapor, and saw—good God!—it was a woman that this monstrous priest held aloft over the tank! His purpose was plain. He intended to feed her to the filthy thing in the water.

I stared in horror. Action paralyzed my limbs. I could not lift an

arm to save her! At my side there roared forth a deafening blast. A spurt of flame pierced the night. Ellery had fired his automatic. In fascinated horror I saw the tank splinter as the bullet pierced it. Water, tons of it, poured forth, iridescent and phosphorescent, covering the devotees. The crocodile slithered to the floor, and floundered rampant among those nearest him. His red-smeared jaws champed furiously at the arms and legs of the people in the front seats, while Ellery fired and fired.

At last he found his mark. The crocodile writhed in mortal agony, flapped his tail, striking half a dozen men who were bowing before him, and died. The priest dropped the girl, and commenced to run. In his haste, the slimy mask which covered his face became dislodged, and fell to the ground.

I stared in stark horror at the lust-distorted visage that was revealed to me. My brain reeled in loathing. As I gazed, fascinated, at the twisted features of that face, at the blood-frenzied, dilating nostrils, I wondered how man could sink so low. For the face into which I looked as the priest closed a door behind him and disappeared from the hall was the once kindly one of the great Dr. Prendergast.

#### *9. Jaws of the Jungle*

THE girl came dashing up the aisle and disappeared into the street. We were in a dangerous position. The frenzied mob turned upon us with murderous lust, and scratching, punching and panting we were borne to the floor. Again Ellery's gun spat lead and flame, and the crowd edged away from him. In the lull, we dashed for the door and escaped across the street into the car.

We saw the girl standing in the street. Hastily telling her to get into

*(Continued on page 711)*

## The Scourge of B'Moth

*(Continued from page 596)*

the car, we drove back to the office of the detective.

When we arrived, we found the secretary in great distress. The police dog that Ellery loved so much appeared to have been taken suddenly ill. The detective excused himself, and left the room.

We heard him outside, calling the dog. There was a patter of canine feet, then a snarling growl. We heard a heavy body thud to the ground, and a cry of pain. Darting to the door, we saw a sight that sickened us.

Ellery lay upon the floor, and blood was streaming from his throat where the infallible instinct of the dog had ripped the life out of him. He was dead before we reached him. And as the dog—half wolf, wholly wild—stood there, with his slavering jaws, growling at us, his face seemed to be transfigured. The diabolical leer, the unspeakable enmity of those eyes, touched with a devilish light, bespoke the fiend, the devourer, Behemoth. Around him there curled a thin wisp of yellow vapor, twisting and turning in a glance of ery glee.

D'Arlancourt picked up Ellery's revolver from the table and fired at the brute. The dog fell dead, and as he fell—was it true, or did my distraught nerves belie my senses?—I thought I heard an ominous rumble from the dark recesses of the room, as the vapor floated out of the window and vanished.

### 10. *The Scourge of B'Moth*

IT DID not need the statement of the girl whom we had brought with us to convince us that the day was near when the whole horde of the jungle would attempt to overrun civilization.

The telegrams without exception told of a series of attempts to the same

end. Several of them in fact employed the word "B'Moth," showing clearly that the incidents were all connected by some strong central purpose.

But we were still in the dark, and ignorant of the time and place of the attempt. The thing was expected to raise its slimy head in Argentina, Africa, India, and a dozen other countries. How could we hope to deal with them all at the same time?

What we did do, however, was to cable to the police forces of the entire world, telling them to watch diligently and be on their guard for any invasion from the jungle or from the sea. Probably our message sounded fantastic to them, but we made it as convincing as possible.

This done, we set about for a means to protect our own people from the menace which we felt was imminent. After some thought, I found a possible means to forestall these hideous things. It was a daring one, and risky; not to be attempted without the full consent of my good friend Dr. Prendergast, of whose whereabouts I was not even sure at this time.

However, I telephoned the hospital, and asked if he was there. I learned that he was, and that the hospital authorities had succeeded in rekindling the fire which a careless attendant had allowed to die some time previously. The doctor was rapidly recovering. I requested the office to connect me with him, and he replied cheerily enough.

He was quite unable to furnish me with any information of the sort that I desired. Finally, I made the proposal that I had in mind. It was the only way that offered even a possible solution of the problem.

"Are you willing to do something for the cause of humanity?" I asked.

"What is it that you want me to do?" he asked rather anxiously. He had already been in dire peril, and I could well believe that he feared the Thing more than anything else in the world.

"I want you to let that fire die out again for a few minutes," I said slowly and distinctly.

"Good heavens! I can't do that. You know what it would mean."

"Yes, I know. And because the matter is so important, I ask you to do this. We will be outside, and ready to light it again, so you will not be powerless."

"Why do you want me to do this?"

"There is a chance that you may be able to tell us when this invasion will occur. If it is to be soon, all the followers of the Master will have to know it. You must try to remember all that occurs while the fire is out. Will you do this?"

"It's a lot—but I'll do it," he said resolutely.

We hurried over to the hospital, and watched through the aperture of the door while Dr. Prendergast allowed the fire to flicker slowly to death. His face grayed with fear as the last sparks died down and the ashes cooled. I could see, even from that distance, the great drops of perspiration breaking out upon his brow, as the insidious influence stole over him. The room darkened, and the tendrils of vapor slowly gathered about him. He lay upon the bed like one dead, but, by his breathing, I could see that he was still alive.

I saw the distorted ferocity that I had come to know so well these last few days spread over his regular features. I heard the grunts that came from him as from some wild animal. He snarled and spat in a very fury of savage lust, as he became metamorphosed from the doctor into the demon. No longer did he lie motionless, but he moved excitedly about, and began to talk in a language meaningless to me. He seemed to be holding a lengthy conversation; but at last he struggled, as though attempting to throw off some fearful oppression, and I knew that it was time to relight the fire. I entered the room, resolutely shunning the dampness that sought to

envelop me with its coils. I soon had a bright fire burning, and slowly the good doctor revived.

"Do you remember anything?" I questioned, anxiously.

"Yes, I remember all. I can scarcely credit it. There will be an invasion from the ocean with the next full moon. Monsters will attempt to blot out the whole civilized world, and the followers of B'Moth are expected to help in the destruction. I myself have been ordered to help."

"You are sure that it is to be with the next full moon?" I interjected earnestly.

"Yes. The next full moon—when is that?"

I consulted the calendar. "It is a week from today," I said. "Have you any idea where the attempt will commence?" I suggested.

"None whatever, but I suppose it will be somewhere in this country," he said dejectedly.

"Well, we will be on our guard everywhere," I said.

D'Arlancourt and I left the hospital, and hurrying to the secret service offices, we again sent several telegrams, and also radio messages to ships at sea. We requested everyone to keep a sharp watch for any accumulation of monsters both at sea and on land.

We spent some days of enforced idleness, and were becoming hopeless of being able to prevent the awful catastrophe that was about to overwhelm us. We had had great difficulty in influencing the war department in the matter, but finally they had consented to order the forts in various parts of the country to fire upon anything extraordinary belonging to the animal world. That was as far as they would go, and the order was given more out of courtesy than anything else. And who can blame them? They were used to fighting armies, and not spirits. But it was the

order that saved the world, as subsequent events will show.

As the day of full moon approached, the armed forces of a world united for the sake of civilization were mustered and anxious. Then came the message. It was from the steamer *Malolana*, plying between San Francisco and Hawaii. The broadcast that we had sent out a few days earlier had been effective. The captain reported that he had seen a school of monstrous things swimming rapidly toward the mainland, directly upon the steamer routes forming the great circle to Honolulu. There were thousands of them, like enormous blanket-fish, huge beyond comparison, almost as large as his own ship!

During the day, other messages came in from various vessels on the great circle route to Hawaii, and they all mentioned this huge array of Things. The Presidio at San Francisco was immediately notified, and we caught a fast airplane that took us to Chicago, and Denver, and so to Mills Field.

It was the night of the full moon when we arrived at San Francisco. We motored hastily to the Presidio. Activity was everywhere. The enormous disappearing guns that can shoot a shell thirty miles were ready to hurl destruction at the invading hordes from the deep. The scout planes hovered aloft to signal the approach of the invaders. Telescopes were trained anxiously upon the starlit Pacific. Fort Miley was a scene of activity also. The naval stations at Bremerton and San Diego were watching for any change of course on the part of the hordes from the ocean. And with the full moon, they came! The ocean for miles was a seething, swirling mass of horrid immensity. Green bodies sucked their way through the smooth water. The swish of their swimming was plainly audible to the watchers on the lookouts of the Presidio.

"Fire!" went forth the order, and

the range guns belched a message of death. Again and again shells were hurled into the center of the bloated creatures. Still they came on, slowly, relentlessly, ceaselessly.

The air was a deafening hell of shrieks and blasts as the guns did their work. The ocean was red with the blood of the Things. And still they came on!

Mines were exploded outside the Golden Gate—mines placed there to blow up battleships. But still the things came on!

Airplanes dropped bomb after bomb upon the horde, and came back for more ammunition, but still the advance continued! A dense fog that I had learned to dread was enveloping the sea—the breath of Behemoth himself, coming to general his forces!

Time after time the guns spoke. The very hills shook. From Fort Miley there came thunder, too. Battleships anchored in Navy Row steamed to the mouth of the Golden Gate and hurled broadside after broadside at the monsters. They were slowing up now, and their number was greatly reduced, but still the advance was not halted.

At last came frantic word from the coast-guard station at the beach that they were landing. The panic-stricken people were leaving their homes, to see them crushed beneath the weight of the horde like so much matchwood. The guns laid down a concentrated barrage upon the landing-place of the monsters and tore the beach to shreds.

Under the glare of the huge searchlights I saw streams of sluggish red, where the awful carnage went on; but at last they turned back—back to the sea whence they came. The fog lifted—had the Master met his fate?—and the filthy things floundered heavily away from the shore, jostling the carcasses of thousands of their dead as they did so. Still the thunder of the guns followed them, far, far out to sea, to the extreme limit of their range; and when it was all over we

sank limp to the ground, speechless before the peril that had just confronted us.

### *11. Conclusion*

OF COURSE, the details were never made public, but on the following day we received cablegrams from all parts of the world telling of a concerted attempt to regain power by these creatures of a dreadful past.

From India came messages telling of invasions by hordes of tigers and mammoth elephants; from Africa of lions, all the wild life of the forest; from Burma stories of huge apes that crushed the life out of men; from South America, of all the reptilian life of the Amazonian forests massed in relentless array. But thanks to our knowledge of their purpose, the attempts were frustrated.

The stories of incendiarism, of course, could not be kept out of the press. The dynamiting of the McAuliffe Building in New York is common property. The butchery of Professor Atkinson in his laboratory of experimental hygiene is well known. Throughout the civilized world, the police forces were hard put to it to cope with the threatened overthrow of civilization.

But, once again, civilization triumphed, and the forces of destruction were greatly reduced, although not destroyed; they never can be destroyed. But my friend Dr. Prendergast laughs at the fog now, and the rain has no terrors for me.

Was my surmise correct when those things turned tail and made again for the open sea? Is B'Moth dead? I wonder!