

Weird Tales

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The Seventh Devil

By F. DOUGLAS McHENRY

IT WILL not be my purpose in narrating the events which follow to enter into a technical discussion of the scientific principles involved, nor to attempt to prove the statements I shall make. It may be that at some later date I shall prepare a more academic treatise on my work at the Island of the Seven Devils. The scientific mind, however, is too prosy, too lacking in romantic appreciation to make any great appeal either to my sympathies or to my ambitions. I am, I will say, primarily an adventurer, and not a scientist; it was only because I perceived within the narrow confines of the laboratory possibilities of adventures which surpassed those of the seas or the deserts or the jungles—of all of which I have had a taste—that I supplied myself with an array of books, microscopes, and miscellaneous apparatus sufficient to carry on the work which I had in view.

I had been liberally educated in my youth, and knew that I should not be permitted to practise in my native land, nor, for that matter, in any civilized country, the one branch of science which made its greatest appeal to me. So it was that on the eighth day of November, 1908, profiting by the tale of the celebrated Dr. Moreau, I betook myself and my equipment to a rock-bound Pacific islet which my sea roving had discovered to me some years before. This island is labeled on some few charts as "The Island of the Seven Devils," but on the majority of maps it will be sought in vain.

I honestly believe I am the only human being that ever set foot upon this isle. The nature of its coast is such that at only one spot is a landing at all possible. On three sides the waves lash against sheer rock walls, and a close approach would mean certain destruction to even the most experienced navigator. Than the fourth side, however, extending for a quarter of a mile, a more inviting landing could hardly be desired. The long, gentle slope of the single hill which composes the island is, at this point, almost devoid of rocks, and supports but a few stunted trees. It is quite grown over with scattered underbrush and tall grasses which at high tide grow almost to the water's edge. When the tide is out, however, about sixty rods of the most inviting smooth yellow sand bask in the warmth of the tropic sun as it shines over the crest of the green hill.

Yet of the four parts into which I have divided my island shoreline, this fourth is by far the most dangerous, the one offering the surest destruction to whoever accepts its alluring invitation. For this sixty rod stretch of inviting beach is in reality sixty rods of treacherous quicksand. This fact I discovered through the loss of two of my black fellahs, who, when I had made my first discovery of the island, had attempted to land in search of water. Their cries as they felt themselves sinking were terrible to my ears, but they were of short duration; almost before they realized their peril, the men were buried.

The only possible method of approach, I discovered, was to wait until the tide had reached its very highest; then, at a point marked by a single large boulder, the seventh of those which gave the island its name, a landing could be made in safety.

Such, then, was my island. This was the spot where for six years I labored at a work which, because I was more an adventurer than a scientist, no other, I believe, has ever dared attempt.

I SHALL not occupy space with the details of my endless experiments, with accounts of my repeated failures and rare successes. Yet I do not deplore my unsuccesses; for it was only by being repeatedly shown the wrong paths that I finally hit upon the ways which led to the marvelous truths I am about to disclose.

There are those who will censure me as cruel and heartless, for I know well the popular prejudice against the vivisectionist. Yet the problems I was solving required an intimate knowledge of the functions of certain organic parts, and it was only by experiments conducted upon living animals that I was enabled to obtain this knowledge. After all, I was in search of truths which were to benefit the race and ease the toil of man—and why am I more to be censured than the surgeon who hurts so that life may be saved or eased, or the butcher who kills so that men may live?

Three times every year I was visited by a faithful servant who brought to me the supplies which I ordered by means of the wireless telegraph—for even in those days this instrument was sufficiently developed to be of use to those who could afford the cumbersome paraphernalia, and to me it was a necessity. Each visit of the yacht added to my collection of instruments and specimens; so that at the end of five years I had a very considerable laboratory and a good-

sized museum. In the latter was a great collection of dogs, pigs, monkeys, and birds. Many, which you will call examples of my inhumanity, were to me but the results of successful experiments and evidences of my growing skill as a vivisectionist. Many of them were existing without certain of the vital organs, others were without portions of the brain. One dog, from which I had removed certain of the super-motor centers from one side of the brain, spent all his time walking in a circle, under the impression, I believe, that it was proceeding in a straight path. Another, in which the cerebellum had been mutilated, was unable to maintain its balance, and was forever getting to its feet and toppling over again. Here was a monkey that walked sluggishly about on four feet, kept its nose for the most part buried in the mud floor of its cage, and seemed insensible of its ability to climb, or to perambulate upon two feet; for the brain of this monkey had been removed, and in its place I had transplanted a portion of the brain of a pig.

These animals were my text-books (for my experiments had now passed beyond the range of published books), and often I studied them far into the night. I analyzed their actions, correlating their abilities with the anatomical parts which I had removed or substituted. In this way I obtained an astounding knowledge of the functions of the bodily parts.

I often worked, as I said, far into the night; for to me day and night were as one. This was the case upon the 25th day of December, the beginning of my sixth year of exile. The only significance which the date held for me was that it was to show the success or failure of my latest and most daring experiment.

Two weeks previously I had killed three Diana monkeys. From each I had extracted that portion of the brain which experiment had shown

me contained the reasoning centers. These three portions I had then combined and inserted into the empty brainpan of a living monkey from which the brain had been entirely cleared out. I had allowed fourteen days for the parts to grow together and the wounds to heal. During that time I had kept the animal in a cast, which prevented the movement of a single muscle that might interfere with successful healing. Now, on the 25th of December, I was about to unpinion the animal.

The night was the most disagreeable I had experienced at any time on the island. A terrific storm, which had been raging for two days, must now have reached its apex. Never before had such great volumes of water, foam-capped, lashed themselves to atoms upon the rocks; never before had the scream of the wind been as high-pitched and menacing as on that awful night. I had built my laboratory upon the highest promontory of the island, for I delighted at night to hear the fury of the winds about me, and at day to survey on all sides the empty sea. It filled me with a sense of security, for in renouncing all my friendships with men, I had taken the elements for my companions, and in them I reposed every confidence.

On this night I alone, of all the life in the laboratory, was calm. Even the birds beat their wings in fright upon the bars of their cages; and my giant gorilla, known to me by his label number as "143", screamed furiously and rattled the huge chains by which he was bound.

Amid all this tumult, my mind had never been clearer, nor my hand steadier. With infinite caution I cut away the plaster and the straps which bound the object of my latest experiment. In calm but real suspense I watched the little fellow for an hour or more as he discovered the use of one muscle after another. For life to him was now as a rebirth. He pos-

sessed his own knowledge no longer, but within his cranium was stored the accumulated learning of the three brains I had transplanted. With intense interest I placed him in a maze, but he learned it in no time; I gave him a puzzle box, and he had it open in an instant. In fine, I put the animal through a series of tests and rated his ability upon a rude scale which I had formulated and I found that his reasoning power was equal, not to the sum of the powers of the brains he now carried, but to the square of that number. That is, I now had a monkey nine times as intelligent as the average monkey!

For a long time after that I sat staring into the darkness of the wild night, and dreamed of the possibilities which I had unearthed in that night's work. Perhaps by eliminating more unessential portions, I could place four or five brains in one cranium. Think of it! A monkey sixteen or twenty-five times as intelligent as an ordinary monkey! An achievement like that was worth six years of exile, even on this God-forsaken rock stronghold. As I meditated on this, an unusually violent gust shook the island at its very base. I stepped to a window to gaze into the starless night.

Starless, did I say? Surely not, for almost on the horizon I saw a single gleam of light. It took a moment for my senses to adjust themselves to the meaning of that lone star. Some ship, unable to hold to her course in the furious gale, had been blown within a few miles of my treacherous coast. I knew well the strong undertow which flowed toward my island, and as far as I could determine, here was a ship directly in its path. There was just one chance to save it, and that one I chose. I gathered every available lamp in the place and, backing the lamps by a large mirror, placed them in a window facing the direction in which I had seen the light.

"If they have any sense at all," said I, "they'll know enough to steer clear of my light."

I then returned to my reflections.

"Think of it—a monkey with the reasoning power of a man! Or even —" But here I halted. There were lengths which even I, zealous as I was at the moment, halted before. I do not know what devil put the thought into my mind, or if I even realized what I was thinking, but I found myself unable to keep my eyes off No. 143, and each time I perceived the gorilla's distending muscles, his perfect physique, the thought intruded itself a little deeper into my brain.

I went again to the window and peered into the storm. There was the light, its position changed but very little. For a full quarter of an hour I stood there, studying its battle with the waves. It was moving westward, there was now no doubt of that. By this time it must be nearly out of the path of the undertow. They had seen my light and were steering clear.

Of a sudden I returned to the laboratory, took from the shelf a bottle labeled ethyl alcohol, and mixed a powerful draft in a beaker. Again and yet again I filled and emptied the beaker. Then, with the hot stuff still burning in my throat, I stumbled to the window and extinguished every light.

I SHALL pass as quickly as possible over the events of the twenty-sixth of December. Not only is the recollection of that day revolting to me, but I fear that a detailed account of my acts would prove equally repulsive to any who may read this tale.

The storm, as I had expected, had lost all its fury. The sea was still much agitated, however, by choppy waves, and put me in mind much to my discomfiture of the last tremors of a dying man.

It shall suffice to say that when with the sunrise I ventured to the

edge of my rock-bound islet, I found the coast strewn with the debris of a wrecked vessel. I stripped myself and without further ado set myself to my task. When the day's work was finished, I deposited on the floor of my dissecting room three dripping corpses.

The transplantation of these three brains into the cranium of No. 143 was a task which occupied my attention almost undividedly for the next six weeks. I found that in order to prevent the struggling of the gorilla, which would have been disastrous to proper healing, it was necessary to keep the animal almost constantly in a stupor, depriving him of the use either of mind or of muscles.

On the fourth of February I deemed that the rupture had sufficiently repaired itself. Accordingly I restrained from administering further drugs, removed the casts and bandages, but secured the animal firmly by heavy chains.

For three days I did not sleep, and scarcely ate, as I watched, fascinated, while the creature awoke to a realization of his powers.

In some of his feats I was delighted beyond my highest hopes; in others I was disappointed. I had expected that, possessed as he was of human knowledge, and because of the almost human structure of the gorilla's larynx, the creature would be able to speak; but try as I would, I could obtain no sounds other than unintelligible gibberish. Nor did he have sufficient control of his muscles to write; but when he was placed before a typewriter, I was amazed at the dexterity with which he plied the keyboard. But what a task I found it to translate his writing! It was made up indiscriminately of *English, German and Spanish!* It was by his inability to differentiate among these three languages—one of which he had acquired, apparently, from each

brain—that I explained his inability to speak intelligibly.

But these details will be of more interest to the scientist than to the general reader, and have little to do with the story in hand: the story of my adventure with three human beings in the carcass of one animal—for such was truly the creature I had created.

He seemed from the first to be what I had designed him to be—a purely intellectual machine; for all the centers of emotion—of fear, of lust, of envy—had been removed to make room for other parts.

But I was soon to be made aware that upon this score I had miscalculated, and that some fragment of emotion had been left in one of the transplanted brains. And this fragment was—black hatred.

I first discovered this when No. 143 was seated before an English translation of Bergson's *Creative Evolution*.

The creature's acute senses and quick brain had been taking in page after page of this somewhat ponderous work, and I had perceived, somewhat to my surprize, an appearance of evident displeasure slowly setting over the usually immobile features. Of a sudden the animal uttered a wild shriek and sent the volume hurtling through a reagent cabinet. The book was followed by a chair and the typewriter; and when the infuriated beast arose from his chair (for I no longer kept him in chains, the better to observe him) and began to pace madly about the room, finally settling his black eyes upon me, I became indeed alarmed. And with good reason, for after a momentary hesitation he made a rush in my direction. It was only by the use of chloroform that I saved my own life and succeeded in subduing the creature. While he was still unconscious I again manacled him and chained him to the strongest pillar in the building.

Would that I had killed him then and there! Several times afterward the thought of doing away with him entered my mind, but try as I might, I could not bring myself to destroy this creature of my art. Emotions contrary to hatred were entirely lacking in his remarkable brain, and so it was but a short time before I found him entirely governed by this one passion.

He spent the greater part of his time screaming madly and rattling furiously the chains which bound him. True, upon occasion, when I placed a typewriter before him, he sat down to it and pounded off the most scathing criticisms—of Kant, of Darwin, of Spencer, of Einstein—such as man had never read before and probably will never read again until the coming of the Superman of Nietzsche. He had not the slightest tolerance for those whose intellectual powers were less than his own. But usually when I presented the creature with the typewriter, it was hurled back at me, and from it I sustained more than one injury.

EVENTS had been proceeding so for some time, when one evening in the latter part of March I determined to put an end to the creature's miserable life. I was seated at the time in my study, smoking interminable cigarettes of an Indian drug that had the effect of partially anesthetizing the senses while rendering the brain remarkably acute. I was turning this resolve over in my mind and watching the cigarette smoke as it ascended in an almost unbroken stream nearly to the ceiling. While I was thus absorbed, I saw the tiny stream of bluish vapor break suddenly at a height of about three feet above the table. It took but an instant for me to grasp the meaning of this—that somewhere behind me a door had been opened. I believe I turned pale. I know I trembled, for I knew not what to expect.

Or, rather, I knew but dared not face the thought.

Mustering my courage I turned and faced the door. There I beheld, crouched as for a spring, No. 143, with a heavy, long-bladed amputating knife in his hand. In an instant I had put myself on the other side of the table—and not an instant too soon, for he made his rush and crashed into the table, burying in the thick wood the knife which was meant for me.

While the animal leaped over the table, I scrambled around it and made for the door. A quick glance over my shoulder showed the brute not four feet behind me, the murderous knife raised high, ready to strike. I slammed the door behind me. But I had felt a sharp sting of pain, and looked down to find part of my right arm left in the room with No. 143.

By great good luck I succeeded in getting into an adjoining room and bolting the heavy door before the gorilla had made his escape from the study. I was thankful, too, at the time, that because of the great number of animals I kept I had constructed many of the rooms, the one I was now in included, without windows. For forty-eight hours I lay with my ear at the door of this room—weak from loss of blood and fevered from pain.

You who read this narrative can imagine but little of my sensations during those terrible two days. I know that at times I was delirious, but for this I was thankful; for anything was better than to contemplate my predicament with a clear mind. My safety during this period I attributed only to a sort of apathy which must have come over my captor. But when fierce rage again controlled him, what might not happen? Of what devilish schemes for my destruction was his monstrous intellect not capable? Perhaps he was even now con-

cocting some devilish method of doing away with me!

So far as I could determine, however, No. 143 seemed to have relapsed into indifferent sluggishness, and was content to keep watch outside my door without attempting to get at me. I knew that in physical combat—there were no weapons in the room—I should stand no chance of success. But I knew also that whereas the gorilla had access to food and drink, I had none. Necessity, then, forced the evolution of the plan which I put into execution at the earliest practicable moment.

IT WAS at the beginning of my third day of confinement that I heard at last the sound I had been waiting for—the footsteps of my jailer dying away into the back regions of the building, where he must have gone in search of food.

With infinite caution I slid the bolt and ventured on bare feet into the hall adjoining my room. Cautiously, slowly, I made my way to the door at the end of the hall. But alas! I had underrated the cunning of my foe. As I swung open the door, a huge metal plate crashed to the floor. At once I heard a great slamming of doors and a mad rush of footsteps in the back regions. I rushed out of the door and sped with all my strength toward the open sea. I had crossed but a quarter of the distance when an animal shriek behind me announced that my pursuer was on my path. Ahead of me—but oh! so far ahead!—I saw my goal—the landing rock, the one safe spot on my beautiful, treacherous stretch of shoreline.

A dozen times I stumbled, and my pursuer seemed upon me; a dozen times I cursed myself for my foolhardy scheme. I was no match for the brute in speed or in agility, but I knew the ground as he did not, and it is due to this fact alone that I am now able to write this tale. While the

gorilla was beating through the underbrush, I was speeding straight over the path I knew so well. On the last short stretch, when we were on even terms, I thought more than once to give up. But with strength I can not account for, I reached the devil-rock and scrambled up on it.

Not ten paces behind me was the gorilla. I still had but a chance. I made as if I were going to dash on to the smooth sand on my left. Six paces away the brute saw me and di-

vined my intention. He turned to head me off. Not ten feet from me he entered the treacherous sand, uttered a final mad scream of hatred defeated, and sank from view.

As soon as my arm was sufficiently healed, I left the Island of the Seven Devils—I hope forever. But the fascination of my work is strong upon me, my laboratory is still intact, and maybe some time—. But who can say what the fates are mapping for the future?