

# The Windsor Magazine.

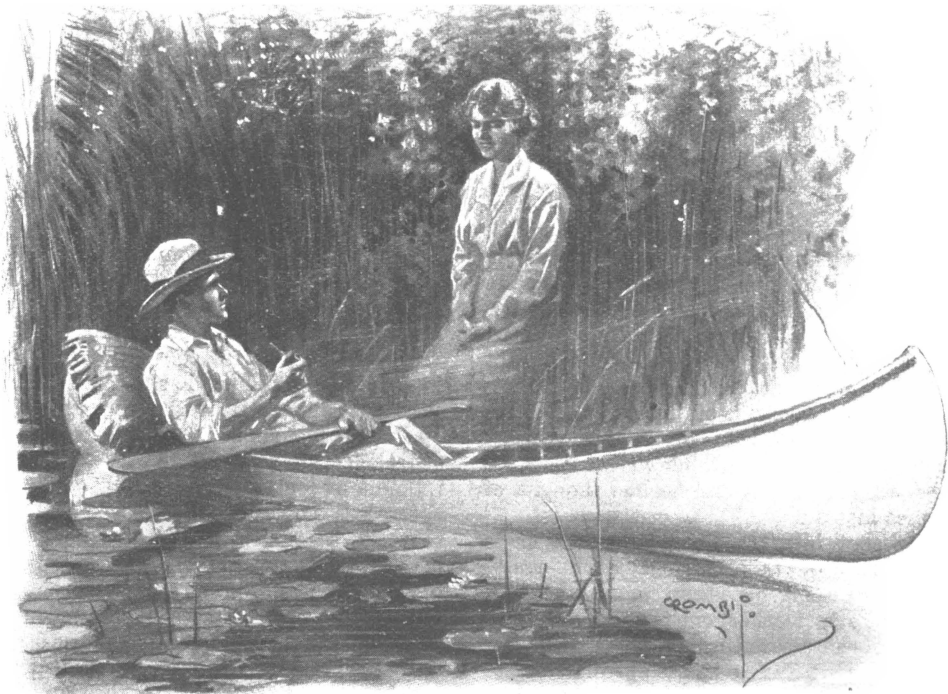
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"The dream of Agnes smiled at him, and did he hear her say, or did he *feel* her say, 'Of course, Ralph, it's really me. It was really me before.'"

# THE WOOD OF SEEN DREAMS

By DOUGLAS NEWTON

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

CARDEN went into the jungle tangle that some of his people called the "Forest of Seen Dreams," and others "Wood of Love." Perhaps both meant the same thing; many thought so, but then your Brazilian is a sentimental creature. Ralph Carden had no opinions either way. He just went in.

He did remember, as he drove his canoe beneath the arabesque of vines, with their heliotrope and daffodil-yellow flowers, that he ought to be carrying the tail feathers of a hyacinthine macaw. Unless one carried the tail feathers of a hyacinthine macaw in

magic places, the *curupira* (evil spirit) invariably turned one into a jaboty turtle. Carden grinned as he span his light craft along the canoe-path under the mat of vines, and into the deep, hushed, sunless heart of the wood. The Senhorita Iola Maria Cravo would think twice about marrying a jaboty.

But *was* he going to marry the Senhorita Iola? She certainly did not know it—officially—yet. And now he was a little uncertain himself. Idiotic for a man of his stamp to become uncertain just when he *was* certain. But then it had been idiotic to

think of Agnes Cheyney after having forgotten all about her for three years.

Why think of a girl like that at all, especially when one wanted to think determinedly about another woman? Why should she occur to the mind—unless, of course, one put it all down to the preposterous magic of this fantastic wood?

He had thought of her here, of course. He had come into the place against the weighty warnings of his mayodomo, just as he was doing to-day, because he wanted space and quiet to think—to think of the *Senhorita Iola*, her father's importance, and the significance of his marriage with her. He had settled himself down, with a pipe, in his canoe to think weightily of her and all she meant, and he had thought of Agnes instead.

He shot into the little lake that made the heart of this magical wood—really one could easily believe in magic when one rode like a feather on that silent pool. It had been created for fairies out of sheer beauty. One came on to it abruptly out of the green-black sunless gloom of the canoe-paths, out of their deep and massive silence. The magic of the place had made them silent. There was no racket of insects or the chattering and calling of birds and beasts, and in all the waters of this place no snake or fish or alligator broke surface with a splash.

The lake burst on one in a silent explosion of beauty. It was so tiny that the sun could not get down to its waters, but, over the tree-tops, laid a wash of brilliant, brazen gold across the summits on the further side, shining on tall umbrella heads of scarlet, blue and yellow blossom and turning them to fantastic beacons of flame. This bold light sent filtering down towards the water a faint and mealy glory that flooded the cup of the lake with a subtle and shining fairy radiance.

Tall, austere, and as solid as cliffs the trees massed round the pool, and the vines on them hung down like fabulous scarves, jewelled with flowers so abandoned in their colour that they had all the splendours of a spectrum made of gems. In the still polished waters trees and vines, jewel flowers and the thick, shining swath of gold along the tree-tops shone delicately mirrored.

A fairy place, certainly. The place of places to think of *Iola* and his marriage, and—Agnes. Good Heavens, the thought of Agnes was coming back already! It had

been over there, under that vine thick with flowers of iris-blue and smelling like honey and limes subtly commingled, that he had seen her. . . But no, he mustn't be an ass. He hadn't seen her. How could he, with her several thousand miles away? Thought of her—yes, thought of her was better.

Thought of her, of course, that was the sensible way to put it. But was there ever a thought so intimate, a dream so real? He had been lolling back on the cushions, smoking, trying to concentrate on the practical and blissful side of a marriage with so important a girl as the *Senhorita Iola*, and he had looked up, and there was the girl he hadn't seen for five years—hadn't thought of for three.

Queer! So vivid was the—the dream that she seemed to be sitting there (on a mangue root, no doubt), looking down at him, smiling at him. There was the same old brave, candid, rather boyish friendship in her look, and something more—something deeper and more sumptuous and more gentle in her eyes; but that must have been sheer imagination. He hadn't remembered that look. In fact, he didn't see how a kid of sixteen could have looked like that—too much wisdom and worldly knowledge and strength in it.

But, now he came to think of it, she hadn't been at all like the kid he had remembered. Like, but not like. The slim, leggy, coltish grace had gone; something more mature and fine was there. The same strange white skin—lovely skin—and corn-coloured hair, of course; a slimness—yes, but not the same; the same deep blue eyes, candid, honest, laughing, jolly, but not quite the same. Again, more knowledge in them, a depth, a serenity and a trust that spoke of a noble maturity overlying the clean, fine sweetnesses of youth. And—and by Jove, her hair was up, and her skirt was long! She'd grown up. He checked his canoe and stared at the patch of iris-coloured flowers. As he had seen her under those flowers she was *grown up*, and he had never seen her, herself, grown up.

He was quite startled. How could this thing have been? He had last seen her as a kid, and feminine sixteen is redoubtably kiddish to masculine twenty. She had been his kid chum—the only one who had any sort of human feeling for the rough, loutish, rather overbearing doctor's son he had been. The only one who had

believed there was something in him. The only one who had given him moral support—when he needed it badly—in his vague, big dreams of a splendid future overseas.

She may not have understood half of the pioneer heroics he poured out—or did she? There was always something quick, intelligent, and discerning in her—but merely to talk to her had helped to stiffen him. A fine kid, a fine pal, nothing more, she was too young. But why had she grown up in—in his dream?

He told himself that of course she would grow up in his mind. It was five years since he had seen her, and his mind naturally and automatically fitted her out as it fancied the years would deal with her. But somehow his mind would not allow him to think this. It also finally floored him by demanding why he should have thought of her at all.

“Must be the magic of the place,” said Ralph Carden, grinning, and not believing it a bit, and he began to pull towards the iris flowers. And then he said, to show how superior he was to local superstition: “Must be careful about this magic. Iola and her father go to Rio by the first train to-morrow, and I’ve settled nothing. Unless I see old Cravo to-night, I shall probably never marry Iola. I must see to it that no spells are put on me.”

The grin that accompanied these words faded a little, and again he stopped paddling. After all, perhaps it wasn’t wise even to monkey with—with these thoughts. It was because of what had happened a week ago, because he had so suddenly and inexplicably thought of Agnes, that he had driven this vital matter of marriage up to the last moment. A week ago he had been ready to propose formally to Senhor Cravo for the hand of his daughter. He had, in fact, resolved to do so at the first opportunity. The whole thing had been settled in his mind. And then he had seen—no, remembered Agnes, and since then he had dilly-dallied like a positive ass, had put off going to Cravo’s estate for no valid reason at all.

He must not let that folly overcome him again. He must think out the whole thing, his settlements, the whole of the contract as the Brazilian law ordained. (He was tying up under the iris-coloured creeper as he thought this wisdom.) It would also be a happy idea to arrange to join the Cravos in Rio in a month or so’s time. That would be jolly; he’d like to see Iola

amid the vivid gaieties of the capital. And then he’d be introduced to the Cravo relatives in the Government, useful people who would help him a great deal in the future work he had planned.

Cushions were at his back now, his pipe was drawing well, the thick scent of honey and limes fell like a caress on his senses. He was comfortable, and thinking in his old habitual sureness. It was a good plan, this marriage. Iola was a nice girl. The Cravos were of old grandee stock—good blood. Iola was probably as clever as the most modern of high schools in Rio could make her, and pretty—not with Agnes’s queer, deep quality of beauty. Ah, he had caught that in time! Agnes creeping in. He must stop that.

He lifted his head and sniffed at the sedative and enrapturing scent from the iris flowers. Lovely stuff! What did the dagoes call it? Oh, “The Melter of the Heart.” The Portuguese name had a richer sound, but that was the literal meaning. “Poetic beggars, these dagoes,” he thought. “Melter of the Heart! It fits in with the name of the wood, ‘The Wood of Seen Dreams’—more magic!”

He grinned and told himself this was not practical business. He got back to Iola and the marriage. A good thing in every way, this marriage. Of course he could stand without Cravo and his political influence and the money and land that would come through the only child. It would naturally mean something, help him enormously in the great plans he had made. No doubt at all about that. At the same time he could do without Cravo. He was big enough, he had the power to do all he wanted himself. Yes, he had forced his way into a position that counted, not only on The River, not only in Brazil, but in the world. The world knew Carden of Brazil. He’d made the most of his short time. A bit startling for those at home in Greenlanes, that. They hadn’t expected anything at all from the doctor’s lout. Nobody had seen the quality in him—except Agnes.

Agnes again! All the same, Agnes *had* seen it. She had felt the “something” in him that the others had missed, had been attracted by it, had encouraged him in it. Hadn’t she sort of—sort of shown that when he saw her the other day? Hadn’t she let him know that she was glad, that she knew he had made good, and, better, had always known he would. But



that was absurd. That suggested he had talked—well, communicated, rather—with her, who was thousands of miles away, when he had only remembered her—only remembered her. But it was strange how near and real she had seemed, how *actual* she had been. Almost those thousands of miles might have been annihilated. He might have been talking to her. Almost she might really have been there, under the iris-coloured flowers, as—as she was *now*. . .

As she was now!

He stared at the iris-coloured flowers, and he said, or was it his mind said, "Hallo, it was you—it is you, Agnes!"

And Agnes, sitting under the iris flowers, the—the dream of Agnes smiled at him, and did he hear her say, or did he *feel* her say, "Of course, Ralph, it's really me. It was really me before. You can see I'm not the same as the kid I was. And it's really you, or am I only dreaming rather—real?"

"I must be dreaming rather real, too," he smiled. "It's the magic in this place." His grin was sceptical, ironic, even in his dream. "It is 'The Wood of Seen Dreams,' you know."

"I see," she cried. "Of course, that's why."

"But we're dreaming," he said desperately, with a dreamer's seriousness of conviction. "I'm dreaming, and presently I'll wake up."

"But it's real, too," she said with a sort of breathless gladness. "It's a dream, and real—I can see it is. I never saw you as brown as that, or with that scar on your temple."

"No," he answered (but he couldn't say if he made use of spoken words). "That was a dago knife. I never even wrote home about that, naturally."

"Why didn't you go on writing, Ralph?" she asked.

"I meant to, but work got hold of me. You know how it is. I was always saying 'Next mail,' and next mail found me so deep in things that—that it was always next mail."

"You were going ahead; but of course you were—you were made to. I never doubted it."

"No, you never did," he agreed. "But I wonder how you knew. You were only a kid."

"A woman kid," she smiled at him. "They know more than knowledge tells

them, Ralph. They feel things. I felt the something in you; you had a force, a direction. I knew you must be big."

"But others didn't. Why didn't they feel it, too?"

"Oh, *they* weren't the same." She seemed to stare at him as though half hoping, half fearing he would understand that. "Of course they couldn't see." She smiled a little at the uncomprehension of his face. "Lots of people don't see things which—which one thinks obvious."

"Such as?" he asked.

"Oh, well, let's get back to facts," she said softly. "Tell me about you."

"Oh, well, as to that, look here. Did you get my last letter? I sent it about June 19—. It was never answered."

She stared at him, eyes suddenly bright,

"That's it, of course," she cried. "It's somewhere in the Dead Letter Office. We left Greenlanes the December before."

"Left Greenlanes!" he cried. "Left the Manor!"

"Had to," she said sadly. "The smash came. Too much family, too many mortgages, and too little income. We were on the way to the crash even before you left."

"Poor kid! I never imagined—I always looked up to you, we all did. All of you in the Manor seemed so above the world's cares and affairs, a sort of rooted tradition, a hierarchy going on for ever and coming from for ever. Poor kiddie! Tell me about it."

Curious how this dream in a South American wood could be so circumstantial. He really believed what he heard, what he dreamed, just as he really believed she was there before him. Absurd, of course. Even though he dreamt he knew it to be absurd. But why had he already noticed that the clothes marked a change in her condition? Neat clothes, clothes that realised her strong, candid personality, but not the smart clothes of his memory; these were the clothes of a worker, really.

"Oh, it's all rather trivial," she went on. "We smashed, as many old families smash these days. Some of us married and escaped. Some got jobs."

"You?"

Why was he suddenly anxious?

"A job," she smiled. "But let's get back to you."

"Why not marriage for you?" He was puzzled, and his plain speaking seemed natural to the dream. "You were—are really beautiful!"

"You think so, you really do?" she cried, and for a moment her face glowed, and was more beautiful than ever. Then a reticence stronger than the candour of a dream conquered her. She said evenly: "I—I preferred a job. I always wanted to do things, you remember. You haven't forgotten how I envied you. And now about you? Tell me the things I've only guessed about you."

"Can't you see them?" he said. "This is a dream. Can't you see them?"

"No, you've got to tell me."

"Oh, well, you know I came up to the Jacunda as a sort of superior office-boy. I sweated over the desk work and did all the odd jobs that my honoured superiors, with heat languor and jungle fever in their blood, thought it better for youth to do. It is the routine, but it was beastly. Then I went up to a place called Pajee."

"You sent the last letter I had just as you were going up. You said a man had been killed there."

"Bragged of it, maybe," he smiled. "I was rather proud in my heroics then. But Pajee explains why I did not write—Pajee was rather a busy place. As a matter of fact, not one but five men had been killed at Pajee. It has a good climate, but its Indians were bad. Years before, when they knew not white men, and were trusting, a white man had come among them. He was a bad hat, and swindled them as his nature ordained. He and the four good hats who followed paid for that."

"But they didn't kill you, those Indians?"

"It was expected. The office on the Jacunda tried to stop my going. It was even suggested that this outlying division should be closed down, in spite of its good rubber yield, because it was so dangerous and costly. But I got my way, and went up, and—and I suppose the thing you saw in me came out then, for I changed things at Pajee."

"Tell me," she said. "We're dreaming and can speak plainly. Tell me how."

"I went up, I found out what tribe had done the murders, and I went straight to their village."

"With a fighting force?"

"Well, if you like. Five scappily-armed dago peons, all of a-tremble, went with me. But I didn't really need 'em. The mere fact that a white man had the nerve to walk straight into their midst seemed to take the wind out of the Indians. The whole

tribe simply stood and gaped at me, fuked me, too—thought I had some sort of magic about me."

"They were armed? How many were there?"

"Oh, yes, armed all right—spears and blowpipes, and bows and their seven-foot reed arrows, you know. There were about five hundred fighting men, I should say. Of course they ought to have wiped me and the dagoes off the face of the earth. But—well, they just didn't. I got through."

She looked at him, past him, eyes brooding. She was seeing, he vaguely felt, his tall, square figure moving into that jungle village, the mighty trees round, and the little leaf roofs that made the huts under the trees, and the mob of naked red men standing about the clearing, staring at him, not one of them daring to raise spear or blowpipe for fear of that "something" that came out at them and dominated them from the figure in white ducks that moved so calmly among them.

"What did you do to the murderers?" she asked.

"Hanged 'em," he said.

"There?"

"Oh, yes, from the big 'saint' tree they used as a town hall."

"They gave them up?"

"I ordered them to give them up. I named them. I spoke their crime, they could not deny it, so I hanged them before the tribe. The lesson had to be brought home."

"And nobody threw a spear?"

"I shouldn't be alive now if that had happened. It would have broken the spell. They'd have massacred us all if somebody had given a lead."

She stared at him and suddenly laughed. She was seeing him sitting there in the jungle gloom amid the spears—a lonely white figure whom any man could stab, whom no man dare stab. He was sitting there calmly, his face aloof and firm, the eyes under the powerful forehead dark, resolute, and dominant. She knew that glance. It had been called uncouth and vulgar in Greenlanes, and it had been recognised by the primitive men of the jungle as the glance of might.

"Why do you laugh?" he asked.

"I was thinking. What affronts the civilised is power in the bush. Well, you hanged them, and then?"

"I went back to Pajee and started work."

"And succeeded?"

"Well, yes, there was no more trouble, and in a few months it was paying. I said it was rich in rubber, didn't I? There was no reason why it should not pay. It only wanted proper handling."

"Only that?" she smiled. And in that was summed up the difference between the lack of proper handling that had made the Pajee Division of Jacunda Developments a very bad debit on the balance sheets and the genius that had turned the scale.

For Agnes understood, and Ralph Carden, though it was only a dream, thrilled at the old joy of being understood by her. She recognised that it was the strange quality of command in him that had worked the miracle. She knew that it was the instinctive "something" within him that

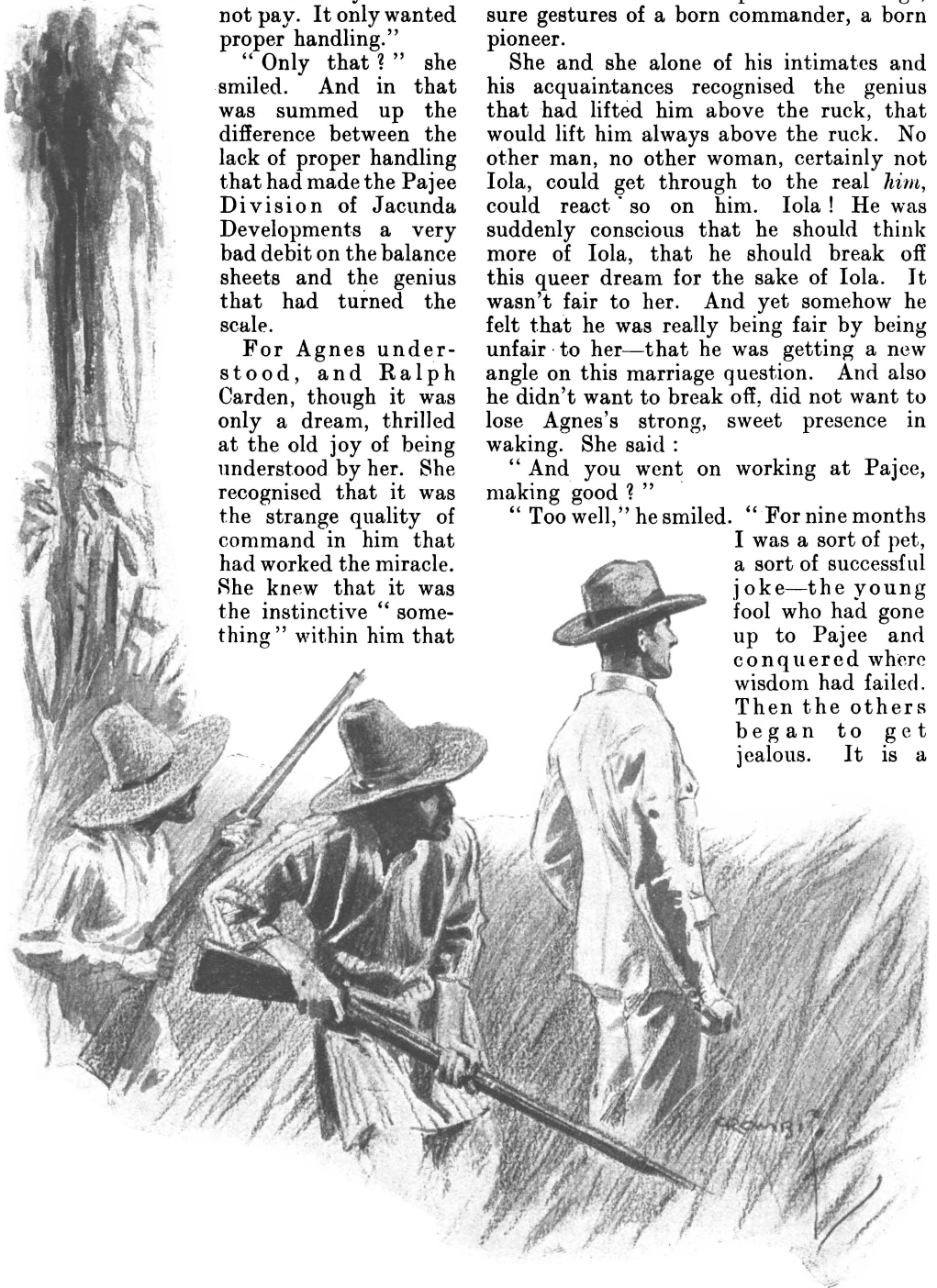
had enabled him to dominate and win the natives, that had enabled him to treat them squarely, to develop a sour land fairly, to administer and build up with the large, sure gestures of a born commander, a born pioneer.

She and she alone of his intimates and his acquaintances recognised the genius that had lifted him above the ruck, that would lift him always above the ruck. No other man, no other woman, certainly not Iola, could get through to the real *him*, could react so on him. Iola! He was suddenly conscious that he should think more of Iola, that he should break off this queer dream for the sake of Iola. It wasn't fair to her. And yet somehow he felt that he was really being fair by being unfair to her—that he was getting a new angle on this marriage question. And also he didn't want to break off, did not want to lose Agnes's strong, sweet presence in waking. She said:

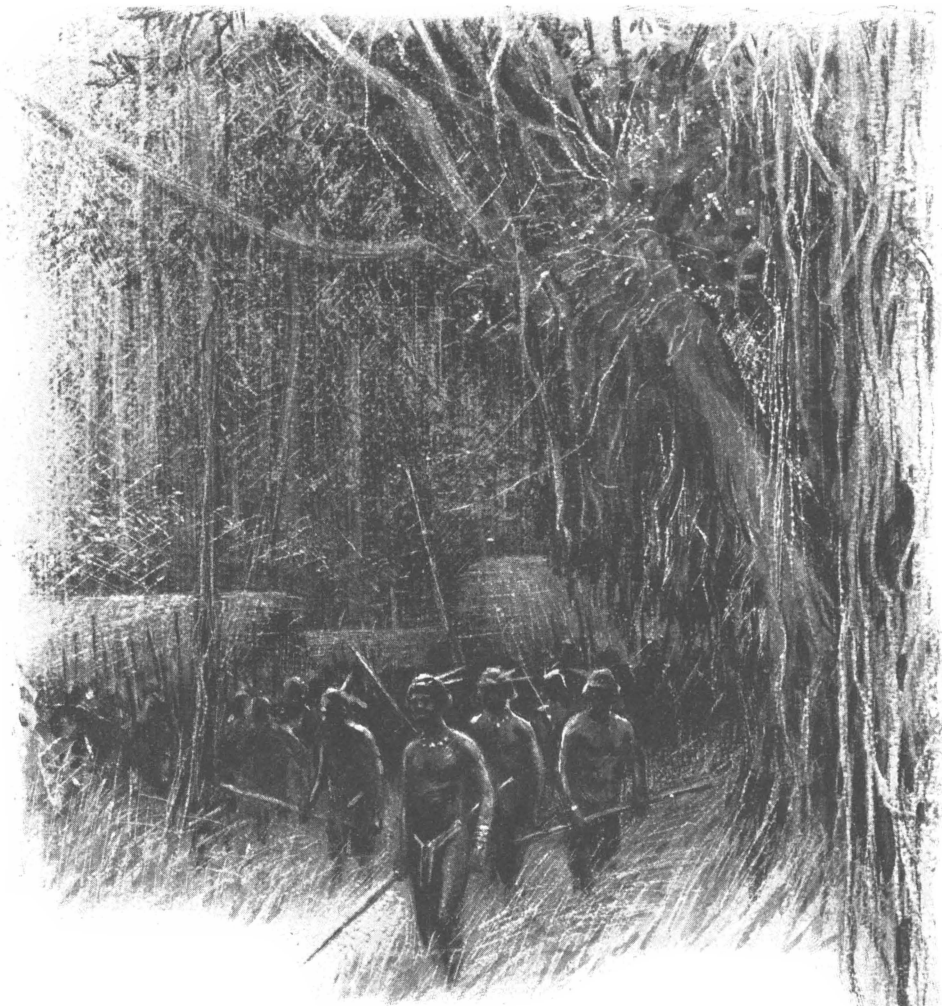
"And you went on working at Pajee, making good?"

"Too well," he smiled. "For nine months

I was a sort of pet, a sort of successful joke—the young fool who had gone up to Pajee and conquered where wisdom had failed. Then the others began to get jealous. It is a



"I found out what tribe had done the murders, and I went straight to their village."



“Not one of them daring to raise spear or blowpipe.”

mistake to be too successful if you value the friendship of men. At first they merely sneered, then they began to hunt for reasons explaining why I was a danger to them and their official returns. It wasn't hard to find an excuse. It was soon entered in reports that I was having a malignant effect on the natives. I was enticing all the best workers away by my pampering and so forth and so on. The rest of the estates were being drained for me.”

“Was it a fact?”

“It was, only I didn't pamper. The Indians seemed naturally to take to me. It wasn't because I didn't hold them with a strong rein. I stood no nonsense from them, but I did understand them. Somehow their customs and ways of looking at things were plain to me, and I could treat them

on their own terms. And according to their lights I was fair with them. Funny how a little thing like that counts. I had Indians from beyond the Amazon itself coming to me to get advice.”

“I don't think it a little thing,” said Agnes. “It seems a big thing to me—the thing that is the difference between a big and an ordinary man. But I understand—that was always in you. Go on. What was the upshot with your colleagues?”

“The Anglo-Saxon one. They decided that it would be best for all concerned if I was promoted to a fine fat post where my effectiveness could be entirely and successfully suppressed.”

"You saw through that?"

"A blind man could have done so. As politely as they had suggested the transfer, I declined it. That stirred up things. They sent along a Para director to persuade me. When he found he could not, he grew hot in the collar, took a high hand, and asked me if I realised the alternatives to such a refusal.

"I said I not only realised them, but intended to take them, and I tendered my resignation there and then. He was rather taken aback, but had reached a pitch where he could not climb down. So I left then, not waiting even for my six months."

"Well?"

"Well, I didn't go to the workhouse. Having made friends with the Mammon barbarity, so to speak, I rather fell on my feet. The headman whose lands ran along the border of Pajee gave me concessions—good land, rubber, timber and growing grounds. I did well there—in fact, in a year I had bought Pajee. Nothing startling about that. The Indians still came to me. No rubber-gatherers would walk the Pajee estradas, and the land went sour and to weed. It was because I did not like this, because I was fond of Pajee, that I bought it. And then—and then I went on buying. I'd got the habit, I suppose, and I seemed to have the knack of making good."

"And your old firm, the Jacunda Developments?"

"I'm Jacunda Developments now. It all seemed to come my way, just naturally. The thing that was in me, that you always saw in me, Agnes, made me go on. I worked straight through until I was on the Amazon bank. And it wasn't all getting riches and land."

"It couldn't be," she whispered. "I know you. You build up as you grow."

"Yes," he said, "I'm like that. The thing in me makes me put something into it for others. I've sweetened this great track, organised it, made it healthy. It knows what transport is now, and roads and railways and how the water-paths can serve. And there's something like justice in it, too, even in a dago land, and there are some of the sweets of life. It isn't all grab for the top and misery for the lower dog. It isn't heaven yet, my land, but it's several degrees further away from hell than when I came to it."

"You needn't have said that," she smiled. "Don't I know you?"

"Better than anybody," he answered.

"It's because you know—it's because of you—you that have been in me, even though I seemed to forget the memory of our talks, remaining always with me, that I am what I am, my land is what it is. I'd forgotten, Agnes, but now I'm remembering and seeing. Forgetting on the surface, I have never forgotten in my heart."

"I've never forgotten, Ralph, on the surface or in the heart."

He looked at her, and how real was this dream, and more than real, for he could see deeper than the surface! He could see that in her heart which she had never shown him—the child love that a child knew how to hide, that had now grown glorious with her superb womanly growth.

"No," he said, "I see. You would never forget, not for a minute. You are not the sort. You love me. You always have!"

"Yes," she answered, "I always have, I always will. I can tell you this, because it is only a dream."

"There is a magic in it, too," he smiled. "It is a dream and more than a dream. It has brought us true knowledge of each other. It has told me I love you, too, Agnes."

"But not always?"

"Not always like this, my dear," he smiled. "But in my heart, always." He thought of Iola—deliberately thought of Iola—and said again with absolute certainty: "I have always loved you, if I didn't always know."

"There is no one else?"

"There never was anyone else, my dear," he smiled, and he didn't even think of Iola.

"Oh, Ralph, Ralph, my dearest," she cried, and he saw she was crying, "come home to me—I've waited so long!"

"I'm coming," he said. "Give me your address."

She gave him her address—a little flat which she shared with a girl from the office where she worked. It was set in a street in a congested city district he had never heard of.

"I'm coming," he said. "I'm coming straight to you—"

Something rapped, wood on wood—his pipe falling in the canoe. He sat up. The thick, jewel-flowered, scented silence of the pool was about him. The smell of honey and lime was about him. He looked towards the iris-coloured flowers. Agnes was no longer there.

No longer there—only this South American

forest pool was there—but he repeated the address she had given him, and looked round the pool with a soft smile.

“The Wood of Seen Dreams,” he said quietly. “Yes, it *has* magic. I have dreamed and I have seen, and have seen right.”

His mayodomo came fussing down to the landing stage as Carden’s canoe came up. He was scared and anxious. He could only say: “Senhor! Excellency! Senhor!”

“You thought I was lost?” smiled Carden.

“Senhor . . . so long a time away . . . and that wood. It is a bad place.”

“Not bad,” smiled Carden. “Its magic is a good magic.”

“But you know it has magic, senhor?”

“Yes, much magic—the Wood of Seen Dreams, the Forest of Love—its magic is exactly as its names say.”

“Then—then you are all right, senhor?”

“More than all right,” said Carden, landing.

“That is so,” said the mayodomo. “Then—but the senhor will know that his launch has been waiting to take him to Senhor Cravo’s this hour. What will your excellency? Will you go in it at once, or will you dine?”

“I will dine, and not go in it. I stay at home to-night.”

“Senhor!” cried the mayodomo, for he had at least a suspicion as to what Carden’s visits to the Cravo estates might mean.

“Senhor, you do not visit Senhor Cravo?”

“It is the magic of the Wood of Seen

Dreams,” said Carden, smiling. “I do not leave the house to-night. But to-morrow, yes. You will pack my clothes. I go to Para to-morrow. Steamboat clothes, Juan, for I sail for my home at once.”

“Sail for your home—now?” cried the mayodomo. “Is it because of that wood you have—?”

“Gone mad,” smiled Carden. “No, I have gone sane. The wood has given me sanity.”

And he knew the full extent of his sanity a few weeks later when he walked into a little flat set in a district he had never heard of outside his dream.

An Agnes changed from the adorable kid he had left at home, an Agnes of fine, clear, sweet maturity, such as he knew, such as the dream had made him know, sprang up, crying:

“Ralph, Ralph, you here! How did you find me?”

“Because you told me,” he smiled.

“I told you?” She was suddenly glowing in exquisite confusion.

“In a dream on a magic pool in a magic wood,” he smiled. “Don’t you remember?”

“Then it was—*was* more than a dream!” she breathed, her breast heaving and her eyes bright.

“And there was more in it than your address, dear,” he said. “Do you remember what?”

And her eyes told him that she remembered, even before she went into his arms to confess.

