

W I N G S

TALES OF THE PSYCHIC

BY

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"The Honorable Gentleman and Others"
"The Man On Horseback," Etc., etc.

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TO MY FRIEND
F. ELLIOT CABOT

*"Lonely! Why should
I feel lonely? Is not
our planet in the
Milky Way?"*

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WINGS

TALES OF THE PSYCHIC

WINGS

I

THAT Saturday night at the height of the London season when Martab Singh, Maharaja of Oney-pore, made his initial bow to Belgravia in the salon of the Dowager Duchess of Shropshire, properly introduced and vouched for by Sir James Spottiswoode of the India Office, there wasn't a man in the great scarlet and purple room, nor woman either, who did not look up quite automatically when the big, bearded, turbaned figure crossed the threshold and bent over the wrinkled, perfumed hand of Her Grace.

There wasn't a person in that room—and people of all classes crowded the gossipy old duchess's Saturday night at homes, from recently knighted, pouchy, sharp-voiced barristers to gentlemen of the bench who hid their baldness and their forensic wisdom under tremendous, dusty wigs; from the latest East African explorer returned from a six-

months' unnecessary slaughter, to the stolidest novelist of mid-Victorian respectability; from the most Parisianized Londoner to the most Anglified Parisian; from the latest shouting evangelist out of the State of Wisconsin to the ungodly Yorkshire peer who had varied the monotony of last year's marriage to, and divorce from, a Sussex dairymaid by this year's elopement with a Gaiety chorus-girl; from Mayfair Dives to Soho Lazarus—there wasn't a person in all that mixed assembly who did not feel a shiver of expectation as the raja entered.

Expectation of something.

Waiting tensely, dramatically, silently, for something.

“Not waiting for something to happen,” Charlie Thorneycroft put it. “Rather waiting for something that had already happened, you know. Which of course is infernal rot and asinine drivel. For how in the name of my canonized great-grandaunt can you wait for the future of the past tense? But—there you are!”

And Thorneycroft, of London, Calcutta, Peshawar, Melbourne, Capetown, and the British Empire in general, vaguely attached to some mythical diplomatic bureau in some unknown diplomatic capacity,

would drop his monocle and look up with a sharp, challenging stare of his ironic gray eyes, as if expecting you to contradict him.

It was not that the presence of a raja, or any other East Indian potentate or near-potentate was an unusual occurrence in London. Rajas are more common there than Nevada plutocrats at a Florida resort, or black-cocks on a Yorkshire moor. London is the capital of a motley and picturesque empire, and pink turbans soften the foggy, sulfurous drab of Fleet Street; lavender turbans bob up and down the human eddy of the Burlington Arcade; green and red and white turbans blotch the sober, workaday atmosphere of East Croydon and Pimlico.

Nor was it anything in Martab Singh's appearance or reputation.

For, as to the first, he was good-looking in rather a heavy, simple, bovine fashion, with two hundred pounds of flesh and brawn carried by his six foot two of height, his great, staring, thick-fringed, opaque eyes, his melancholy smile, and his magnificent beard, dyed red with henna, which was split from the chin down the center and then curled up on either side of his face so that the points, which

touched his ridiculously small ears, looked like the horns of a combative ram.

And as to his reputation and standing, Sir James Spottiswoode had vouched for it.

There was also Charlie Thorneycroft's drawling, slightly saturnine corroboration.

"Tremendously swanky beggar in his own country," he said to pretty, violet-eyed Victoria de Rensen. "Descendant of the flame on his father's side, and related to the moon on the bally distaff. Cousin to Vishnu, Shiva, Doorgha, and what-not, and college chum to all the assorted and hideous divinities of the Hindu heaven. His principality is small, barren, poor. A mixture of rocks and flies and hairy and murderous natives. But he is the very biggest among the bigwigs of India. To two hundred million benighted Hindus he *is* the deity—Brahm, what?—all the gods rolled into one and topped by a jolly, crimson caste-mark. He's the gods' earthly representative, you know, Vic darling. Not only that. For"—he dropped his voice to a flat whisper—"this is the first time in the history of the world—hang it, before the history of the world—that a Maharaja of Oney pore has left his native soil."

“Why shouldn’t he?”

“Because by leaving India he pollutes his soul, he loses caste. And that’s just why I wonder—”

“What?”

“Oh, nothing!”

Quite suddenly he looked up, and his long, white fingers gripped the girl’s arm nervously.

“Did you feel—*it?*” he whispered.

There was no need for an answer. Nor, really, had there been need for the question in the first place.

For, as the raja, arm in arm with Sir James Spottiswoode, stepped away from the door and farther into the room, *it* came.

Nobody heard it. Nobody saw it or smelt it. Nobody even felt it, either consciously or subconsciously.

But again, through the mixed company that crowded the duchess’s salon, there passed a shiver. A terrible, silent, hopeless shiver.

Then noises: human noises, and the relief that goes with them. A distinct sound of breath sucked in quickly, of tea-cups clacking as hands trembled, of feet shuffling uneasily on the thick Turkish carpet, of the very servants, placidly, stolidly English, stop-

ping in their rounds of hospitable duties, standing stock-still, silver trays gripped in white-gloved fingers, and staring, breathless, like pointers at bay.

“Something—like great wings, rushing, rushing!” murmured Charlie Thorneycroft, dropping his usual slang like a cloak.

“Like—wings—” echoed Victoria de Rensen with a little sob.

Yet there was nothing formidable or sinister in the raja’s progress through the room, by the side of Sir James, who played guide, philosopher, and friend. A charming, childlike smile was on his lips. His great, opaque eyes beamed with honest, kindly pleasure. He bowed here to a lady, shook the hands of barrister and judge and artist, mumbled friendly words in soft, halting English, accepted a cup of tea from a servant who had regained his composure, and dropped into a low Windsor chair, looking at the people with the same melancholy, childlike expression.

Very gradually the huge, voiceless excitement died.

Once more servants pussyfooted through the salon with food and drink; once more the Paris cubist tore the artistic theories of the white-bearded

Royal Academician into shreds; once more the Wisconsin evangelist bent to the ear of the Mayfair débutante and implored her to hit the trail of salvation; once more lion growled at lion.

But Charlie Thorneycroft could not shake off the strange impression which he had received. He was still aware of the thing, whatever it was, and of the great rushing of wings. It came out of the East, from far across the sea, and it was very portentous, very terrible, very tragic.

“I didn’t hear the wings!” he exclaimed later on. “Nor did I feel them. If I had felt or heard I wouldn’t have minded so, you know. I felt *with* them—and I was sorry for them, awfully, awfully sorry. No sense to that? Of course not. There wasn’t a bally ounce of sense to the whole wretched thing from beginning to end—and that’s the worst of it!”

II

Such was the entrée of the Maharaja of Oney pore into London society; and for three weeks, to a day, an hour, a minute—"Hang it! To a bally second!" Charlie Thorneycroft commented—the impression which had accompanied him into the salon of Her Grace of Shropshire clung to him.

Not that people feared or mistrusted him. There was nothing personal about it, and indeed the man was kindness itself. He could not pass by beggar, by effusive, tailwagging street cur, or by mewing, rubbing, dusty, ash-bin cat, without giving what he thought was demanded of him—money or caress or soft word.

Nor was it because he was too foreign. For he improved his English rapidly, and, well-bred, a gentleman, it did not take him long to master European social customs, including the prejudices. He tried his best to become Western, in every sense of the word, and to that end he abandoned his

Hindu dress, his turban, his magnificent jewels. He even shaved off his split, henna-stained beard, and there remained nothing about him reminiscent of his native land except the expression in his eyes—melancholy, ancient, tired; more the eyes of a race than those of an individual—and the vivid, crimson caste-mark painted on his forehead.

It seemed rather incongruous, topping, as it did, his correct English clothes tailored by a Sackville Street craftsman.

Then, at the end of three weeks, the aura of suspense, the aura of waiting for something that had already happened which hovered about him, disappeared quite as suddenly, and quite as terribly as it had come.

It was on the occasion of a ball given at Marlborough House, and the rooms were gay with fluffy chiffon and stately brocades, with glittering uniforms, and the sharp contrast of black and white evening dress. The orchestra, hidden behind a palm screen, sobbed a lascivious Brazilian tango. Paired off, the young danced and flirted and laughed. So did the middle-aged and the old. In the buffet-room the majordomo was busy with the

preparation of the famous Marlborough champagne-punch.

At half past eleven the raja entered, together with Charlie Thorneycroft, who had attached himself to him, and at once the usual enormous shiver brushed through the assembly, like a wedge of ferocious, superhuman evil, with a hidden thunder of un-guessed-at immensity.

People stopped still in the middle of a dance-step. The music broke off with a jarring discord as a B-string snapped. The Marchioness of Liancourt swooned against a priceless Sèvres vase and sent it splintering to the waxed floor. The majordomo dropped his mixing-ladle into the silver punch-bowl.

Remote, gigantic, extended, the impression of voiceless fear gathered speed. It gathered breath-clogging terror. It stabbed the regions of subliminal consciousness.

Strident yet unheard, huge yet unseen, torrential yet non-existent, it swelled to a draft of sound—"sound beyond the meaning of the word—words are so inadequate—sound which you could not hear!" Thorneycroft put it—that sucked through the rooms with the strength of sky and sea and stars, with the speed of splintering lances thrown by

giants' hands, with a passionate, tragic leaping and yearning that was as the ancient call of Creation itself. It flashed outward with a wrenching, tamerless glory and savagery that fused all these London molecules of humanity into one shivering whole.

Two minutes it lasted, and at exactly twenty-eight minutes to twelve Thorneycroft, obeying a peculiar impulse, had looked at his watch, and he never lived to forget the time nor the date: the 15th of January, 1913—the nameless impression passed into the limbo of unremembered things.

It passed as enormously—by contrast—as it had come. It passed with an all-pervading sense of sweetness and peace: of intimate sweetness, too intimate peace. It passed with a wafting of jasmine and marigold perfume, a soft tinkling of far-away bells, and the muffled sobs of women coming from across immeasurable distances.

The raja smiled.

He raised a high-veined hand in salutation. Then he trembled. He gave a low sigh that changed rapidly into a rattling gurgle. His eyes became staring and glassy. His knees gave way, and he fell straight back, dead, white-faced, the crimson caste-mark on his forehead looking like

some evil thing, mocking, sardonic, triumphant.

“God!” Thorneycroft bent over the rigid form, feeling the heart that had ceased to beat. He spoke a quick word, and servants came and carried out the body.

But the people who crowded the rooms seemed quite unaware that death had stalked among them. Suddenly a wild wave of gayety surged through the house. They laughed. They chattered. They jested. They clinked glasses. The orchestra led away with a Paris waltz that was as light as foam.

That night champagne flowed like water. Half a dozen love-affairs were finished, another half-dozen begun. Scandal was winked at and condoned. Gayety, the madness of Bacchanalian gayety, invaded every nook and cranny of Marlborough House, invading the very servants' hall, where the majordomo balanced the third up-stairs parlor-maid on his knees and spoke to her of love in thickly dignified terms.

Two days later Martab Singh, Maharaja of Oney pore, descendant of the many gods, was buried in state, with twenty file of Horse Guards flanking the coffin, and all the purple-faced gentry of the India Office rolling behind in carriages, dressed in

pompous black broadcloth and smoking surreptitious cigars.

On the same day Charlie Thorneycroft called on Victoria de Rensen, kissed her pouting lips, and told her in his vague manner that he was off to India.

III

India came to Charlie Thorneycroft as it had come to him a dozen times: with a sudden rush of splendor, flaming red, golden tipped, shot through with purple and emerald-green, and hardly cloaking the thick, stinking layer of cruelty and superstition and ignorance that stewed and oozed beneath the colorful surface. He knew it all, from the Rajput gentleman's stately widow who gives herself to the burning pyre in spite of British laws, to the meanest half-caste money-lender who devils the souls of sporting subalterns amid the flowering peepul-trees of Fort William barracks; and so he yawned his way from the moment when the big P. and O. liner nosed kittenishly through the sucking sand-banks of the Hoogly to the Hotel Semiramis.

There he had a lengthy and whispered conversation with a deputy commissioner recently returned from Rajputana, who bowed low and spoke softly in spite of the fact that Thorneycroft was his

junior by twenty years and seemed to have no especial diplomatic rank or emoluments.

All the next morning he yawned away the hours that creep to the sweating west, took a late train for the north, and continued his bored progress through twelve hundred miles of varied scenery.

He had no eye for the checker-board landscape of neat Bengal, nor for the purple and orange tints of the Indian sky that changed the far hills into glowing heaps of topaz, the scorched ridges into carved masses of amethyst and rose-red. Rajputana, gold and heliotrope, sad with the dead centuries, the dead glory, interested him not.

His thoughts were far in the north, near the border, where Rajput and Afghan wait for a renewal of the old, bitter fight for supremacy when Britain shall have departed; and still, waking and sleeping, he could feel—he could feel *with*—the silent whirring of immense wings—“like the wings of a tortured soul trying to escape the cage of the dust-created body,” he put it with a lyric soaring that clashed incongruously with his usual horsy slang.

The whirring of wings!

And there was some accent in it of secret dread, of terrible, secret melancholy, deeper than his soul could perceive, his brain could classify. The terror of a mighty struggle was behind it: a mighty struggle awfully remote from individual existence and individual ambition and life, individual death even. It partook of India itself: the land, the ancient races, the very gods.

The farther north he traveled the more strongly grew the shapeless, voiceless impression. At times, suddenly, a light flashed down the hidden tunnels of his inner consciousness, and made visible for one fleeting second something which he seemed too slow to comprehend.

A whisper came to him from beyond the rationally knowable.

And so, two days later, he dropped from the train at a small up-land station that consisted of a chaotic whirlwind of stabbing sand, seven red-necked vultures squatting on a low wall and making unseemly noises, a tumble-down Vishnavite shrine, and a fat, patent-leather-slippered babu, who bowed before Charlie Thorneycroft even lower than the deputy commissioner had done, called him Protec-

tor of the Pitiful, and otherwise did him great honor.

“All right, all right!” came Thorneycroft’s impatient rejoinder. “I see that you got my cable. Is the bullock-cart ready?”

“Yes, heaven-born!” And the babu pointed at the tonga, the bullock-cart, that came ghostlike out of the whirling sandstorm.

“Good enough.” He swung himself up. “Ready. Chuck the bedding and the ice in the back. Let her go!” he said to the driver, who had his jaws bandaged after the manner of desertmen, and the tonga started off, dipping and plunging across the ridges like a small boat in a short sea.

The babu squatted by Thorneycroft’s side, talking softly, and again the Englishman yawned. But this time there was a slight affectation in his yawn, and affectation, too, as of one weaving close to the loom of lies, in his words:

“Yes, yes. I fancy it is the old story. Some jealous wildcat of a hill woman—”

“No, heaven-born!” cut in the babu. He winked his heavy-lidded eyes slowly as if to tell the other that he was “on.” “This time it is different. This time there is no woman’s jealousy brewing unclean

abominations behind the curtains of the zenana. This time it is—”

“Priestcraft?”

“You have said it, sahib!” came the babu’s reply in a flat, frightened whisper.

“All right!” Thorneycroft gave a short, unpleasant laugh. “Let’s go to Deolibad first and call on my friend Youssef Ali.” And a few words of direction to the driver, who grunted a reply, jerked the heads of the trotting animals away from the north and toward the northwest, and plied their fat sides with the knotted end of his whip.

All night they drove. They rested near a shallow river. But they did not tarry long. They watered the team, rubbed them down with sand, and were off again.

It was a long, hot drive. The silence, the insolent nakedness of the land, the great, burning sun lay on Thorneycroft’s soul like a heavy burden. Time and again he was conscious of the whirring of wings, and with each league it seemed to lay closer to the ears of his inner self. It seemed born somewhere in the heart of the purple, silver-nicked gloom that draped the hills of Rajputana.

The babu, too, was conscious of it. His teeth

clicked. His body trembled, and he looked at the Englishman, who looked back at him.

Neither spoke. Something utterly overwhelming enfolded them. For the whirring was at once of enchanting peace and sweetness, and of a mournful, tragic, sobbing strength that was like the death of a soul.

Once the babu put it into words:

“Like the death of a soul—”

“Shut up!” Thorneycroft whispered, and then silence again but for the pattering hoofs of the bullocks.

There were few signs of life. At times a gecko slipped away through the scrub with a green, metallic glisten. Once in a while a kite poised high in the parched, blue sky. Another time they overtook a gigantic cotton-wain drawn by twenty bullocks about the size of Newfoundland dogs.

Then, late one night, they reached Deolibad. They passed through the tall southern gate, studded with sharp elephant-spikes, paid off their driver, walked through the mazes of the perfume-sellers' bazaar, and stopped in front of an old house.

Three times Thorneycroft knocked at the age-gangrened, cedarwood door, sharp, staccato, with a

long pause between the second and third knocks, and then again three times in rapid succession.

It was as if the ramshackle old house were listening in its sleep, then slowly awakening. Came the scratch of a match, a thin, light ray drifting through the cracks in the shutters, a shuffling of slippers feet, and the door opened.

A man stood there, old, immensely tall, immensely fat, an Afghan judging from his black silk robe and his oiled locks, holding a candle in his right hand.

He peered at the two figures in front of him. Then he broke into high-pitched laughter and gurgling words of greeting.

“Thorneycroft! Thorneycroft, by the Prophet! Young heart of my old heart!”

And in his excitement he dropped the candle, which clattered to the ground, and hugged the Englishman to his breast. The latter returned the embrace; but, as the Afghan was about to renew his flowery salutations, cut them short with:

“I need your help, Youssef Ali.”

“Anything, anything, child! I will give you any help you ask. I will grant you anything except sorrow. Ahi! These are like the old days, when

you, with your mother's milk not yet dry on your lips, rode by my side to throw the dragnet of the British Raj's law around the lying priests of this stinking land. Heathen priests of Shiva and Vishnu, worshiping a monkey and a flower! *Aughrrr!*" He spat.

Thorneycroft laughed.

"Still the old, intolerant Youssef, aren't you? All right. But I don't need much. Simply this—and that—" He crossed the threshold side by side with the Afghan and followed by the babu. He said a few words, adding: "I hear that you are a much-married man, besides being an amateur of *turwaifs*, of dancing-girls. So I'm sure you will be able to help me out. I could have gone to the bazaar and bought the stuff. But there are leaky tongues there—"

It was Youssef's turn to laugh.

"A love affair, child? Perhaps with the daughter of some hill raja?"

"No. Not love. But life—and death. And perhaps—" He was silent. There was again the giant whirring of wings. Then he went on: "Perhaps again life! Who knows?"

"Allah knows!" piously mumbled Youssef. "He

is the One, the All-Knowing. Come with me, child," he went on, lifting a brown-striped curtain that shut off the zenana. "Sitt Kumar will help you—a little dancing-girl whom"—he coughed apologetically—"I recently encountered, and whose feet are just now very busy crushing my fat, foolish old heart. Wait here, O babu-jee!" he said to the babu, while he and the Englishman disappeared behind the zenana curtain.

There was a moment's silence. Then a woman's light, tinkly laughter, a clacking of bracelets and anklets, a rapid swishing of linen and silk.

Again the woman's light laughter. Her words:

"Keep quiet, sahib, lest the walnut-dye enter thy eye!" And ten minutes later the zenana curtains were drawn aside to disclose once more the Afghan, arm in arm with a middle-aged, dignified Brahman priest, complete in every detail of outer sacerdotal craft, from the brodered skull-cap and the brilliant caste-mark on his forehead to the patent-leather pumps, the open-work white stockings, and the sacred volume bound in red Bokhara leather that he carried in his right hand.

"Nobody will recognize you," said Youssef.

"Good!" said the Brahman in Thorneycroft's

voice. "And now—can you lend me a couple of horses?"

"Surely. I have a brace of Marwari stallions. Jewels, child! Pearls! Noble bits of horseflesh! Come!"

He led the way to the stable, which was on the other side of his house, and sheltered by a low wall. He lit an oil-lamp, opened the door, soothed the nervous, startled Marwaris with voice and knowing hand, and saddled them.

He led the horses out, and Thorneycroft and the babu mounted.

"Where to?" asked the Afghan.

Thorneycroft waved his hand in farewell.

"To Oney pore!" he replied. "To interview a dead raja's soul!" He turned to the babu. "We must hurry, O babu-jee! Every minute counts!"

And he was off at a gallop, closely followed by the other.

IV

The night was as black as pitch, but Thorneycroft rode hard.

He figured back.

The Maharaja of Oney pore had died on the fifteenth of January. To-day was the tenth of February. Twenty-five days had elapsed since the raja's death.

Would he be in time?

"Come on, babu-jee!" he cried, and rode harder than ever.

Once his stallion reared on end and landed stiffly on his forefeet, nearly throwing him. But that night he could not consider the feelings of a mere horse. He pressed on the curb with full strength and brought his fist down between the animal's ears; and, after a minute or two of similar reasoning, the Marwari stretched his splendid, muscled body and fell into a long, swinging fox-trot.

The road to Oney pore was as straight as a lance

and fairly good. They rode their horses alternating between a fast walk and a short hand gallop.

Thorneycroft had not eaten since noon of the preceding day, and was tired and hungry. But he kept on. For there was something calling him, calling him, from the ragged hills that looped to the east in carved, sinister immensity; and through the velvety gloom of the night, through the gaunt shadows of the low, volcanic ridges that trooped back to Deolibad and danced like hobgoblins among the dwarf aloes, through the *click-clanketty-click* of the stallions' pattering feet, there came to him again the whirring—like a tragic message to hurry, hurry.

Morning blazed with the suddenness of the tropics. The sun had hardly risen, but already it was close and muggy. A jaundiced heat veiled the levels—foretaste of the killing, scorching heat of March and April—and the birds, true weather prophets, the parrots and the minas, the tiny, blue-winged doves and the pert, ubiquitous crows, were opening their beaks with a painful effort and gasping for air—another week, and they would be off for the cool deodars of the higher hills.

In the distance a dark mass was looming up:

Oney pore—and the horses were about to give in. Their heads were bowed on their heaving, lathering chests, and they breathed with a deep, rattling noise.

Thorneycroft dismounted and stretched his cramped legs.

“Ride down there,” he said to the babu, pointing at a narrow valley to the west, black with trees and gnarled shrub, that cleft the land. “Wait until you hear from me. I fancy you’ll find some brother babu in the valley fattening his pouch and increasing his bank-account at the expense of the Rajput villagers. He will give you food and drink and a roof over your head. Tell him anything you wish as long as you don’t tell him the truth.”

“Of course I shall not tell him the truth,” replied the babu, slightly hurt. “Am I a fool or—”

“An Englishman?” Thorneycroft completed the sentence. “Never mind. I am English. But I learned the art of deceit in Kashmere, the home of lies, and Youssef Ali, too, gave me some invaluable lessons.”

And while the babu rode off to the valley, leading the other horse, Thorneycroft set off at a good clip toward Oney pore, which was becoming more distinct every minute as the morning mists rolled up

and away like torn gauze veils. It was seven o'clock when he reached the western gate, an ancient marble structure, incrustated with symbolistic figures and archaic terra-cotta medallions, and topped by a lacy, fretted lotus-bud molding.

Beyond, the city stretched like a flower of stone petals.

Oney pore!

The sacred city of Hindustan! The holy soil where the living descendants of the gods had ruled for over five thousand years—and one of them dead, on unclean, foreign soil—buried in unclean, foreign soil!

An outcast! He, the descendant of Rama, an outcast!

Oney pore! And it was a fascinating town, with crooked streets and low, white houses, cool gardens ablaze with mangoes and mellingtonia and flowering peepul-trees and, in the distance, a gigantic palace, built out of a granite hillside, and descending into the dip of the valley with an avalanche of bold masonry.

Toward it, without hesitation, Thorneycroft set his face.

He had to cross the Oney pore River, only second

in holiness to the palace: the river which, for centuries, had been the last resting-place of thousands of Afghans and Rajputs massacred in the narrow streets of the city or slain in fierce combats outside its brown, bastioned walls. Sorrowing widows, in accordance with the marriage vows of their caste, had sought the solace of oblivion beneath its placid surface. Faithless wives and dancing girls had been hurled into the waters from the convenient battlements and windows of the palace.

The river's sinister reputation, in spite of its holiness, was such that though the natives bathed in its limpid depth they never, knowingly, allowed a drop of it to pass their lips. River of grim tragedies—and its hour of grim glory came when a Maharaja of Oney pore died, and when his corpse, attired in its most magnificent costume, the arms encircled by jeweled bracelets, shimmering necklaces of pearls and moonstones and diamonds descending to the waist, and a huge, carved emerald falling like a drop of green fire from the twisted, yellow Rajput turban, was carried out of the palace, through the streets of the town, sitting bolt upright on a chair of state, and back to the banks of the Oney pore River, where the body was burnt and its ashes

thrown into the waters—while the women wailed and beat their breasts, while white-robed priests chanted long-winded litanies, while the conches brayed from the temples, and while the smoke from many ceremonial fires ascended to the sky in thick, wispy streams and hung in a ruddy, bloodshot cloud above the glare of the funeral pyre that lit up the palace and told to all the world that another one of the divine race of Oney pore had gone to join Brahm, his kinsman.

Brahm, his kinsman!

And Martab Singh had mingled the bones of his dead body with those of the *mlechhas*, the foreigners, the barbarians, the Christians—on foreign, Christian soil!

Something like a shudder of apprehension passed over Thorneycroft, but he kept sturdily on his way, returning the salutations with which the hook-nosed, saber-rattling, swaggering Rajputs greeted him because of his Brahman garb. He went up a steep ascent that led to the *chowk*, the outer courtyard of the palace, and the soldiers salaamed and stepped aside:

“Enter, O holy one!”

Like a man sure of his way, he passed through a low gate, through another courtyard crammed with human life, and into still another, which was lifeless except for the whir and coo of hundreds of blue-winged pigeons and for the figure of a very old priest, squatting on a goat's-skin rug and deep in the perusal of a massive Sanskrit tome.

V

The old priest looked up when Thorneycroft approached, and the latter gave an involuntary start, though rapidly suppressed.

In former years, pursuing his vague, mysterious diplomatic career in different parts of that immense block of real estate called the British Empire, but a good half of the time in India, he had heard about this priest, the Swami Pel Krishna Srina. He knew that the man was the prime minister, that before him his father had held the same position, before his father his grandfather, and thus back for many generations. For the Brahmans of the house of Pel Srina were cousins in blood and caste to the reigning house of Oney pore, and like them descendants of the gods.

Neither the maharaja nor his prime minister had ever taken much interest in the muddy, coiling politics of India. It was indifferent to them what particular foreign barbarian—English or Afghan or

Mogul or Persian—was overlord of the great peninsula. They seemed satisfied with ruling the little rocky, barren principality, with the faded glory of the dead centuries, and with the decidedly theological and just as decidedly unworldly fact that the Oneyepores were considered the living representatives of the gods by the vast majority of Hindus.

Thus Thorneycroft had never taken the trouble of meeting Swami Pel Srina, and now, seeing him for the first time, he was startled out of his customary English calm.

Nor was it a psychic impression. Here, in this sheltered courtyard—and for the first time since that day when the Maharaja of Oneyepore had made his appearance in the salon of the Duchess of Shropshire—he was unaware, quite unaware of the silent, gigantic whirring of wings.

What made him suck in his breath was the face of the swami.

“I wish I could picture it to you as I saw it,” he said afterward. “It would take the hand of some mad cubist sculptor to clout the meaning of it. The features? No, no. Nothing extraordinary about them. Just those of an elderly, dignified, rather

conceited Brahman. But the expression of the thin, compressed lips, the great staring, gray eyes! Gad! I am an Englishman, a Christian—and a public school product. Thus I'm a jolly good Episcopalian, take me all round. But when I saw those eyes—oh—the whole cursed thing seemed suddenly rational, possible—inevitable even! Right then—Christian, Englishman, and public school product—I believed the absurd claim of the rajas and prime ministers of Oney pore that they were the descendants of Rama and Vishnu. It was all in those eyes that were staring at me. They looked—oh—unearthly—that's the word!"

Perhaps the whole sensation, the whole flash of superstitious emotion lasted only a moment. Perhaps it was contained in the short time it took the swami to look up, to drop his book, and to raise a thin, high-veined hand with the words:

"Greetings, brother priest!"

At all events Thorneycroft was himself again. He bowed over the withered old hand and said—he had thought it all out carefully beforehand—that he had come to Oney pore to hear with his own ears, to see with his own eyes, the great miracle which the swami had performed.

“Ah!” breathed the swami, and he did not altogether hide a faint accent of nervousness—“then—it has been talked about—in the south?”

“No!” Thorneycroft replied quickly. “Not talked about. I do not even know what it is. But a voice came to me in the night—whispering, whispering; it was like the whirring of wings, and I followed, followed, followed! Straight on I followed until I came here, to Oney pore, to the palace, the courtyard, your presence, O swami! And now”—he really spoke the truth there, and he used to say afterward that it was doubtless the fact of his speaking the truth which made him so utterly convincing—“now the whirring of wings has stopped. Now there is sweetness and peace as there was”—he shot the words out suddenly—“that day, a few weeks back, on the 15th of January!”

“At what hour?” as suddenly asked the priest.

“At twenty-eight minutes to midnight!” replied Thorneycroft, who had never forgotten the day nor the hour when the Raja of Oney pore had died in the salon of Her Grace of Shropshire.

“Good!” said the swami, rising slowly and leading the way to a massive door.

He drew a foot-long, skewerlike key from his

waist-shawl, opened the door, and motioned Thorneycroft to enter.

The gate clicked behind them.

“Good!” he said again, stopped, and faced the other squarely. “You have wondered,” he went on, “as to the why and wherefore—you, to whom the voice of the miracle came in the night?”

“Yes,” replied Thorneycroft in low accents, his heart beating like a trip-hammer. “I have wondered indeed. I knew the thing—was done. I heard the whirring of wings. I knew the raja died—”

“But did he die, brother Brahman?” The swami looked at the Englishman, deep, brooding melancholia in his gray eyes. “Ahi! Did he die?” And he made a hopeless gesture and led on again through empty suites of rooms supported by double rows of pillars, past balconies which clung like birds’ nests to the sheer side of the palace, again through more rooms and up and down steep steps. Once in a while they encountered liveried, turbaned officials. But always the latter would salaam deeply and step aside.

Finally the swami stopped in front of a door which was a great slab of tulip-wood inlaid with

nacre and lac. He lifted his hand, and Thorneycroft noticed that it was trembling violently.

“Brother Brahma,” he said, “Martab Singh was my kinsman, my friend, my king. He was cousin to me, and cousin to the gods. I loved him greatly, and for years, with me by his side, he stepped in the footsteps of his ancestors, in the way of salvation, the way of the many gods. Then one day—shall I ever forget it?—madness came to him. He, the Maharaja of Oney pore, he, the incarnation of Rama and Vishnu and Brahm himself, declared that the desire was in his nostrils to leave India. To leave the sacred soil! To go traveling in the far lands and see the unclean witchcraft of the foreigners, the Christians, the English, the *mlechhas*! Gently I spoke to him as I might to a child. This and that I told him, quoting the sacred books, the words of Brahm, our blessed Lord. ‘This is lust,’ I quoted, ‘born of the quality of rajas. Know this to be a great devourer, great sin, and the enemy on earth. As by smoke fire is enveloped, and the looking-glass by rust, as the womb envelops the unborn child, so by this it is enveloped. By this—the eternal enemy of the wise man, desire-formed, hard to be filled, insatiate—discrimination is enveloped.

The senses and organs, the thinking faculty, as well as the faculty of judgment, are said to be its seat. It—enveloping the discriminative faculty with these—deludes the lord of the body! Thus I spoke to him, often, gently!”

“And he? Martab Singh?”

“Would laugh in his beard. He would say that, if Vishnu was his kinsman, so was Indra—and Indra was the god of travel. And so—”

“He traveled? He went to England?”

“No!”

“No?” echoed Thorneycroft. He felt his hair rise as if drawn by a shivery wind. His thought swirled back, and he remembered how the maharaja had entered the salon of the Duchess of Shropshire, how he had bowed over the withered old hand, how Sir James Spottiswoode, of the India Office, had vouched for him, how—

“No?” he said again, stupidly.

“No, by Shiva!” came the swami’s hushed voice. “He did not travel. He did not leave the sacred soil of India. He is—*in here!*” At the same time opening the door, drawing Thorneycroft inside, and shutting the door behind him.

VI

For a moment the Englishman was utterly lost, utterly confounded. He had thought. He had imagined. He had conferred with the babu and had spoken to him of priestcraft. But this—this—

The whirring of wings, which he had not heard since he had entered the inner courtyard, was once more, suddenly, upon him with terrific force, with the strength of sun and sea and the stars. He felt himself caught in a huge, invisible net of silent sound that swept out of the womb of creation, toward death, and back toward throbbing life. The whirring rose, steadily, terribly, until it filled the whole room from floor to ceiling, pressing in with ever-deepening strength. It was like the trembling of air in a belfry where bells have been ringing ceaselessly for days—but bells without sound, bells with only the ghost of sound—

He feared it.

It seemed to strike, not at his life, but at the meaning, the plausibility, the saneness of life.

It took possession of his body and his soul, and forged them into something partaking of neither the physical nor the spiritual, yet at the same moment partaking of both—something that was beyond the power of analysis, of guessing, of shivering dread even.

Quite suddenly it stopped, as caught in an air-pocket, and he became conscious of the swami's pointing finger, and his low words:

“Look there, Brother Brahman!”

And, stretched on a bed of state in the far corner of the room, he saw the figure of Martab Singh, Maharaja of Oney pore, as he had seen him that first day in London, with his large, opaque eyes, the melancholy, childlike smile, the split, curled beard, the crimson caste mark.

The figure was rigid. There wasn't a breath of life. It was like a marvelously painted, lifelike statue—yet Thorneycroft knew that it was *not* a statue. He knew that it was the maharaja—the same maharaja whom, on the 15th of January, he had seen die in Marlborough House, whom he had seen buried in an English cemetery, with twenty files

of Horse Guards flanking the coffin and all the gentry of the India Office rolling behind in comfortable carriages.

“But—what—”

He stammered. His voice seemed dead and smothered. He began to shake all over, feverishly; and again the whirring of wings rushed upon him, and again, a minute, an hour, a day, a week, an eternity later, he became conscious of the swami's low, sibilant voice:

“He wanted to travel. Nor could I dissuade him, and I—I loved him. Thus I said to him: ‘You yourself cannot leave the sacred soil of India. It would bring pollution unthinkable on yourself, on Hindustan, on the blessed gods themselves. But I am a master of white magic. I shall take your astral body from the envelope of your living body, and I shall breathe a spell upon it so that it shall be even as your living body, feeling, hearing, seeing, touching. Your astral self shall go to the land of the *mlechhas*—the land of the infidels—while your body, rigid as in death, shall await its return.’ ”

“And—” whispered Thorneycroft.

“So it was done. But I gave him warning that the spell would last only a certain number of days.

On the 15th of January his astral self must be back, here, in the palace of Oney pore. On the 15th of January! Three times I gave him warning! And he promised—and—”

“He broke the promise!”

“Yes. His astral self was caught in the eddy of foreign life, foreign desires, foreign vices—perhaps”—he smiled with sudden kindness—“foreign virtues. I waited. Day after day I waited. Came the 15th of January—and he did not return. For—”

“His astral self died—in England. It was buried in foreign soil,” Thorneycroft interjected.

“You have said it, Brother Brahman. And now”—he raised his hands in a gesture of supplication—“though I have prayed to Vishnu, who is my cousin, to Shiva, to Doorgha, to Brahm himself, though I have offered the slaughter of my own soul for the homeless soul of him whom I loved, the evil is done. He is neither dead, nor is he alive. His soul is a fluttering, harrowed thing, whirling about on the outer rim of creation, cursed by the gods, his kinsmen. His physical body is here—on this couch—and the spiritual self, his astral body, is in foreign soil—sullied, sullied!”

“And—there is no hope?”

“Yes!” Again the swami smiled with sudden kindness. “There is hope—the shadow of hope. Perhaps some day the great wrong shall be forgiven by the gods. Perhaps some day they will cause the two parts of his body, his physical and his astral, to blend into one. Perhaps some day they will permit him to regain caste—and to die! Daily I pray for it”—and, with utter simplicity, as he opened the door—“will you pray, too, brother priest?”

Thorneycroft inclined his head. He was an Englishman, a Christian—and a public school product.

But he inclined his head.

“Yes, swami,” he replied. “I will pray. Every day will I pray!”

And the door shut behind him with a little dry click of finality.

DISAPPOINTMENT

IT was Paul Mayol, the inimitable low comedian of the Scala, who started the ball rolling, as far as Paris was concerned.

Perhaps he had the original tip from the desk clerk of the Hotel Saint James, where Prince Pavel Narodkine had put up temporarily; perhaps he had it from his mistress, who had it from her sister, the laundress of the hotel, who, in her turn, had it from the prince's Italian courier; perhaps, even, he had brought it back from the green-rooms of Moscow, where he had filled a triumphant engagement the season before, and whence Narodkine had recently arrived.

At all events, it was Paul Mayol who was first to sense the tang of mystery which clung to the big, melancholy Russian, and who—since in Paris it is the stage, and not, as in New York, the yellow press which does the scavenger work for society—included him among the characters whom he impersonated and satirized in the new Scala Revue.

Mayol came on in act two, in the burlesque make-up of a Russian aristocrat which was a farcical mingling of whiskers, sable furs, vodka bottles, ikons, and an obligato knout, did a Cossack dance with Argentine excrescences and George-cohanesque frills, and introduced himself to the audience with a tense, cavernous “*Sh-sh!* I am Pavel Narodkine, the great Moscovite enigma!” after which he peered right and left with all the time-hallowed stage business of a conspirator, caused his legs and his whiskers to shiver violently, whipped the property calves of the chorus girls with his property knout, and then danced off to the *pizzicato* of a dozen balalaikas which were striving to syncopate the Russian national anthem.

Thus the beginning; and the boulevards caught the ball of rumor and mystery which Mayol had tossed in the air. They gilded and tinsel and embossed it. They flung it wide and caught it again.

The next morning, cut in below a screaming bit of editorial hysterics which accused the ministry of having sold the country to the freemasons, the atheists, and the stock exchange, the royalist *Gaulois* brought half a dozen lines about Prince Pavel Narodkine speaking with pontifical unction about

his great ancestry which partook of Rurik Vikings and Tartar Khans of the Silver Horde, and congratulating the legitimist clique of the Faubourg on the arrival of such a thumping blue-blood—and tossed the gossip ball to its editorial neighbor, the *Vie Parisienne*.

The latter weekly acted up splendidly. It printed a rotogravure portrait of the prince in a border of cupids, chorus girls, three-horse troikas, sacks of gold, and grisettes; mentioned that he was young, a bachelor, and immensely wealthy; and added that as yet he had not thrown his scented handkerchief at the feet of either *mondaine* or *demi-mondaine*.

“*Why?*”—demanded the final, tart, succinct word of the page in four-inch Gothic.

The next move was up to the *Revue Diplomatique*. In its personality column, entitled “Mustard and Cress,” and signed “Junior Attaché,” it alluded to the fact that even in his native Russia the prince was considered an engima. “The Sphinx” was the nickname by which he was known in the salons of Moscow and Petrograd.

And justly.

For he had no intimate friends; he had used all sorts of political influence until he was finally ex-

cused from military service; he never set foot in a dark place; he eschewed all sport; and he never went abroad without a body-guard of five heavily armed peasants.

“*Sic semper tyrannis!*” screamed the socialistic daily, *La Patrie*.

It stated boldly that Prince Pavel Narodkine was a reactionary, a leading member of the Black Hundred, a blood-gorged oppressor of the masses, and that it was his fear of becoming the target of a patriot’s bullet which caused him to shun the dark and to seek the protection of steel-girt retainers—a report promptly branded by the *Gaulois* as “a filthy and reeking falsehood sired and damed in the fetid gray-matter of our socialistic colleague.” The article added that the prince had no enemy either among the revolutionists or the reactionaries, that he had, in fact, never occupied himself with politics.

Here the *Vie Parisienne* scored again with a snapshot of the prince walking down the Boulevard des Italiens surrounded by his armed body-guard; the *Patrie* followed by demanding why “the titled blood-sucker” should thus be allowed to break the laws of the republic which enjoined the carrying of arms; the official *Mercure de France* explained that

the prince had applied for a special permit, and had been granted it—and thus Paris discovered that it housed a deep, mysterious sensation, and began to wonder what it was all about.

From Montmartre to the Quartier Latin, from the Porte Saint Martin to the Ternes, the great macrocosm of Paris commenced to stir and buzz like a beehive.

A string of would-be visitors besieged the desk of the Hotel Saint James—shirt-makers and boot-makers and English breeches-makers, perfumers and florists and jewelers, cranks and reporters and solicitors for charitable institutions, beggars, genteel and ungentle—they came, they were met by the urbane Italian courier, and were sent on their way without having gratified either their curiosity or their greed.

The great society ladies fared no better. They littered the prince's writing-desk with invitations to balls and dinners and receptions and garden fêtes and theater parties. Those with marriageable daughters made ready for a regular siege. They consulted with milliner and modiste, with Paquin and Viot and Doucet and Reboux; slim, clever fingers manipulated silk and lawn, satin and gauze, lace and

embroidery, canvas and whalebone; the granite paving blocks of the Place Vendôme echoed under the rapid feet of models and saleswomen and errand-runners; mothers and daughters stuck their heads together—they consulted—they sought the advice of ancient dowagers versed in marital and pre-marital warfare—and still more invitations were heaped on the prince's breakfast table with every morning mail.

But the crested notes were acknowledged by the Russian's secretary, who read them, threw them away, while regretting "the inability of Monsieur le Prince to accept *madame's* so charming hospitality"—and then the real-estate brokers came to the rescue of Mme. Gossip, though they only succeeded in deepening the mystery which enveloped the prince.

It became known that he had sent for MM. Dufour and Cazanet, a reputable and well-known firm of real-estate men who in the past had sold palaces and *châteaux* to Chicago pork kings, Welsh coal barons, and Oriental potentates. They called on Narodkine—flattered, delighted, expectant; and they left—sadder, but no wiser.

For the prince refused to buy the sort of show

place which befitted his rank and station in life. He asked, instead, MM. Dufour and Cazamet to get him a house somewhere in the most crowded quarter of Paris.

“No, no, no!” he exclaimed when Dufour spoke of an aristocratic old stone pile buried under the pink chestnut-trees of the Rue de Varenne. “I want light, gentlemen. I want crowds around me.”

Here Dufour thought of the armed retainers who accompanied the prince everywhere, and he winked at his partner; but the Russian did not seem to see the incongruity of his remark.

“Yes,” he continued, “I want to sense the stir and throb of life—life—right, left, everywhere!”

“But, Monsieur le Prince, I assure you this house in the Rue de Varenne is—”

“It is gray and dark and lonely,” the prince cut in. “I know. And I want life”—he shivered a little—“life and the dear breath of life!”

He bent over a map of Paris and pointed at a certain section.

“Here, gentlemen,” he went on in a tone which admitted of no further argument; “get me a house here—if not a house, then a flat, a hut, a hovel—

anything, anything! But it must be here—where there are crowds and light and life!”

The two Frenchmen looked at the prince, who had dropped trembling into a chair. Then they looked at each other.

Dufour shrugged his expressive shoulders and motioned to his partner.

“Very good, Monsieur le Prince.”

And they bowed themselves out of his presence and set about to fulfill his wish.

But of course they talked, and Paris listened and wondered—and laughed a little.

Society, still smarting under its recent defeat, tried to attribute Prince Narodkine’s choice of residence to stinginess—a report quickly given the lie when it became known that he had been the anonymous donor of a lavish contribution to Paris’s pet charity. The *Patrie* made sinister allusions to royalist intrigues; the *Vie Parisienne* to a tragic love-affair back home; but nobody could explain the prince’s choice.

For, as soon as the lease had been negotiated, he moved to a little house of the Cour de Rouen—the tortuous alley which branches off from the Passage du Commerce, and which, generations ago, had

been the Paris home of the Archbishops of Rouen—a packed, crowded, noisy alley where mansions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries lean against each other for mutual support; where the windows are spotted with bird-cages and linen hung out to dry and the frowzy heads of housewives; where there is no verdure except an occasional sickly fig-tree straggling along a rusty, bent water-pipe, and here and there a dusty bit of clematis and convolvulus stretching up—a neighborhood echoing to the shrill sounds and shouts of its motley population, news-venders and fruiterers, bookbinders and cobblers, dealers in all kinds of second-hand odds and ends, locksmiths and knife-sharpeners—a neighborhood made yet more noisy with the screams and laughter and jests of a school for little girls who file through the alley twice a day, copy-books and satchels under their arms.

Indeed, an alley clanking and beating with life!

And Prince Pavel Narodkine moved in, together with his armed peasant retainers—while Paris sat on its haunches and waited developments.

There were none.

Prince Pavel Narodkine lived in his little house of the Cour de Rouen as he had lived in the Hotel

Saint James, and as formerly he had lived in Moscow; never leaving the house after dark, never setting foot in a lonely place nor where the shadows were blotched and deep, never moving an inch without his armed peasants—big, lumpish, brooding men, savagely silent and intensely loyal, who shook their heads and gave no reply when curious people addressed and questioned them about their master.

So, with the slow, pitiless swing of time and the familiarity which time breeds, Pavel Narodkine became part of the city's contemporary history—he became one more of Paris's unexplained and, in a way, accepted mysteries; like the tall, white-bearded Highland Scot who for years has walked every afternoon from the Porte Saint Martin to the Arc de Triomphe, dressed in kilts and plaid, horn-handled dagger in his stockings, sporran swinging rhythmically to the skirl of an imaginary war-pipe; like the blind American who twice a week, rain or shine, takes his seat on the pavement outside of the Café de Naples and distributes gold-pieces to all passers-by; like the plum-colored, turbaned Senegalese who promptly, every morning at five, prays in front of the statue of Strasbourg, his hands spread out like

the sticks of a fan, his huge, round head bobbing up and down with the fervor of his incantations.

Another year came and passed. Another sensation boomed along and stirred the boulevards and set the tongues of Paris a-wagging; the personality of the prince blended still more deeply into the shadow of accepted things—and when strangers saw him walk down the street, accompanied by his armed servants, with his big body slightly trembling, his great purple-black eyes shooting anxiously from right to left as if expecting something or somebody to pop out at him from every corner and doorway, the people of Paris smiled—kindly and, too, tolerantly.

“Why, yes,” they would say; “it’s that Russian—Prince Pavel Narodkine—it’s a habit of his, you know”—as if that were sufficient explanation.

Perhaps the whole mystery would have been forgotten for all time to come if it had not been for Dr. Marc Henri, who explained it, but only after the death of the prince, and even then very gently and apologetically—quite on the side of the prince, you understand.

For the doctor, a short, stocky, ugly little man with a clever, narrow face which sloped wedge-

shaped to a pointed, inquisitive chin, was a Frenchman, with the sane, sweet logic and the sane, sweet sympathy of the Frenchman; a man who endeavored to understand everything and everybody, and to condone according to his understanding.

He lived just around the corner from the prince, in an old house of the Passage du Commerce, next door to Durel's quaint book-shop—a stone's throw from the spot where, many years ago, famed M. Guillotin had made experiments on sheep with the blade of his newly invented “philanthropic machine for beheading.”

The doctor was a busy man. The bell of his little apartment was forever tinkling; he had no time to read more than the headlines of either *Gaulois* or *Patrie*, and he had never had sufficient leisure to speculate about Prince Pavel Narodkine's strange habits.

And then, late one warm spring evening, a lumpish Russian, in tall, oiled boots and silken blouse, burst into his office and implored him, in a terrible jargon and by half a dozen assorted Greek orthodox saints, to come at once to the bedside of his master—“He is sick, sick, very sick!” The doctor felt there was no time to lose, and so he picked up his

ever-ready black leather case and was out of the house on a run.

“I am suffering! I cannot sleep!” was Narodkine’s thin, querulous greeting, and the physician smiled.

“I don’t wonder,” he replied tartly, with a comprehensive gesture which took in the whole of the bedroom.

For the windows were tightly closed, in spite of the warm spring air; every lamp—there were half a dozen of them—was lit; and the air was yet more hot and stuffy with the presence of the prince’s peasants—big, hulking men who filled the atmosphere with a tang of tobacco and leather and raw spirits.

The doctor was astonished, and a little angry, too, when he had finished examining the patient. He was in the habit of being called away from his house at all hours; but the prince’s messenger had led him to believe that his master was on the very point of death, and there was really nothing the matter with him except a slightly congested head and a corresponding rise in temperature—an ailment cured easily with a little aspirin, a sound night’s sleep, and, of course, fresh air.

So it was with something like impatience that he threw open the window and ordered Narodkine's peasants to leave the bedroom, and he was more than ever astonished when the latter remained stolidly where they were and when the prince backed their dumb, passive refusal with eager, excited words.

"No, no!" he cried. "They will remain with me—I need them—I—"

"You tell 'em to clear out!" the doctor cut in impatiently. "You have to do as I tell you if you want me to treat you!"

It was only when he picked up his leather case and threatened to leave that Narodkine spoke to his servants in purring Russian, ordering them out of the room.

They left—and the doctor, keenly tuned to observations and impressions, was positive that they had only gone as far as the next room, ready to return at their master's slightest gesture or word. But he paid no further attention to them.

"You need sleep," he said to the prince, "and a cool, dark room."

But when he lifted his hand to turn out the great Venetian chandelier which swung from the center

of the ceiling, a cry from the bed halted him. He turned—and he was aghast when he saw the prince's face. The man had suddenly turned a grayish yellow—"yellow as a dead man's bones," the doctor described it afterward—and his whole body was trembling with a terrible palsy.

"No, no!" he cried. "Leave the lamps burn—all of them!"

Then, in a sort of whine which was both ridiculous and pathetic, given the size of the man: "I will not have a dark room—by myself! The thing will come!"

"What thing?" asked the doctor, and he added jestingly: "You aren't afraid of the dark, are you?"

He was utterly amazed when he heard the prince's reply.

"Yes, doctor," in a hushed voice, but absolutely matter-of-fact, like stating a tiresome sort of truth, "I *am* afraid."

And when the doctor, who had no respect for titles, made a succinct allusion to "cowards," Narodkine told him.

Dr. Marc Henri never found out if it was because of a sudden liking Narodkine had taken to

him, or because of a sudden, crushing feeling of loneliness, that the other confided in him. But he *did* confide.

“It was terrible,” the doctor said afterward, when speaking of the whole happening to some colleagues of his at the Café des Reines; “it was dramatic, and it was true what he told me! You see, in a few words he gave me the reason for those strange habits of his which so intrigued Paris at the time.

“His choice of residence, there, in that packed, pulsing quarter—on the other hand, his refusal to take his share in the amenities of society—sport, dancing—anything in fact which in the slightest degree was connected with danger—yes, danger!—accidents, you see; his hatred of dark places and of the hours of night; his demand for bright lights; the armed servants who accompanied him everywhere—why, my friends, it was nothing but a huge and intricate stage-setting for his daily, continuous fight with death.

“Yes!—he feared death! Nor was it the everyday, shivering fear of the coward. It was something more terrible, more gigantic. It was something in a way primitive and sublime—” and Dr.

Marc Henri continued in the prince's own words:

"Doctor," had said the prince, "it is not that I love to live nor that I am afraid to die. I fear *death*—not *dying*. I fear that fraction of a second when my body will step from life to death, don't you understand? I dread the—ah—the utter uselessness of it—and, too, the utter ignorance! What is it? What does it feel like? What does the whole mystery consist in? Why are we so helpless against it?"

"I—I have felt this fear all my life—since I can remember—waking and sleeping my life has been a continuous martyrdom—and I have always tried to fight death—to fight sickness and accidents—with light and life and even with steel. So I shun sport, I shun darkness and loneliness, and my servants never leave my side. But what is the use, doctor? What is the use?"

"For death is a coward—death may be watching me even now—from the corner of the room—about to pounce on me and strangle me!"

"You see," the doctor went on as he told his colleagues across the marble-topped table of the Café des Reines, "the prince convinced me that there is a grain of truth in the Bible after all. His fear

of death was not the result of his character, his temperament, his mode of life, his education, or his ancestry—as we reckon ancestry. It was an atavistic throw-back to our first forefather—Adam or perhaps Adam's son, Cain—when he realized first that there was such a thing as cessation of life, but before his racial memory and instinct allowed him to coin the word or to feel the meaning of death. That was the trouble with Prince Pavel Narodkine—”

“*Was?*” demanded Dr. Ruoz, and the other inclined his head. “Yes—he died just a moment after he finished telling me about his fear of death—”

“But—why—you said he had only a slight congestion—”

“Exactly! But you know how it is with these big, full-blooded people. His confession excited him terribly—a blood vessel burst in his brain—”

“Did he realize that he was dying?”

“Yes,” Dr. Marc Henri smiled gently, “and he—why—he was disappointed! You see—right on the moment of death, when he knew that he had lost his life-long battle, he whispered a few words—to himself really—‘*Death!*’ he breathed; and then,

not with relief, but in an agony of disappointment, *'Is that all?'* ”

“Yes,” added the doctor, rising and calling for his check, “and he repeated it, I should say about a minute later—”

“When did he say it—just before he died, I suppose?” asked a young medical student who had joined the party. And the doctor replied rather wearily as he walked toward the door:

“No, no—he said it—just *after* he died, you know!”

TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR

IT was now his custom to sit by the open window.

He would look out into the mean, cramped streets, at the jerry-built houses, and up at the high, sharp-contoured sky, which seemed to be always packed with dirty clouds. Then he would pity himself, and hate the rest of the world.

He despised the present. Yet he clutched at it with both hands, and was surprised and irritated because he could not get away from the past.

And the tale of the past, the shame of it, was hot and acrid in his brain.

That's why he sat by the window. That's why he soaked his ears and his soul in the terrible, muffled noise of the great city—those sounds of death and hate, of love and joy, and the sharp drumbeats of thousand-armed business. At least, they spelled a living, pulsing world. There were men there, and women—and in a measure they com-

forted him, because he did not know them and because they did not know him.

So he felt safe with them. He could look at them without blushing.

It was only when he turned his back to the window, when he shut out the world from his ears and his eyes, when he felt the choking, mephitic solitude of the four walls that he thought. And he did not like to think.

For here, in the little gray room on East Eleventh, with his back to the world of strangers who crowded the streets, he saw the life which he lived as he was living it; and it was mainly expressed by the furniture which packed its corners—the iron bed, the gangrened deal table, the ridiculous spindle-legged bureau, and the horrible, fly-specked chromos on the walls.

Then he thought, of course, of the little cabinet in his mother's *salon*, back there in the castle of the Puy de Dôme; the little glass cabinet all filled with Tanagra statuettes, cups of Ming celadon, enamel from Norway, Meissen and Sèvres china, and boxes in Vernis-Martin.

Dry, lifeless things they were, representing so and so much money and so and so much skill and artis-

try. But to him they meant more. They meant the brave, clanking hopes of his youth. They meant the name and the pride of the family to which he belonged. His memory had ensouled them with a softness, a throbbing which was deeper than the heart of woman.

For they meant to him the things he had lost. They meant to him the things he had thrown away, the things he had hurt and cheated and polluted; the name he had disgraced, the escutcheon he had fouled—the mother, cold and haughty, dry-eyed and thin-lipped, who had given up everything for him, and given up in vain—the sister, bitter and dowerless, forced into the convent which she hated and feared—the younger brother who had to sacrifice the diplomatic career for which he had been trained, to go into the office of a fat *agent de change*, who patronized him and bullied him because of the noble name he bore.

Why, even the little glass cabinet had been sold; even the dun-colored Tanagra statuettes, the boxes in Vernis-Martin, the glasses of Gallé-Nancy, and the many other objects of vertu.

The forests had been sold, the fields, the paintings, the famed wine cellar; finally the house itself; the

huge gray castle, which had housed one of his name and race since the days of Pepin the Bold.

Only the keeper's lodge remained; and there, in the damp, flat-roofed hovel built of rough-hewn stones, his mother lived now—lived like a peasant woman.

And he was here in New York, worthless and nameless.

He clenched his fists. He gave a little cry of impotent fury.

Then he laughed. He thought of the life-insurance agent who somehow had drifted up to his room that very morning and had tried to insure him against death.

The fool! To ask a man to protect himself against the only hopeful, the only pure moment of life!

His memory swayed up into the past as the sea sways to the touch of the moon.

It had been cards at first; and afterward the little ivory ball which drops so noiselessly, so fatefully:

Vingt-quatre—noir—impaire—passe.

Those foolish words and the bits of gaudy paste-

board—what a tragedy they held—what a record of weakness and selfishness and self-contempt!

He felt a puling, selfish satisfaction in convincing himself that it had not been an inborn passion with him; that it had not even been his own fault. During his school years and during the years spent at the military academy he had never touched a card. Even during his first ten months of actual army life, after he had received his commission in the Forty-Third Infantry, he had never thought of them—had never used them.

Came the maneuvers. The long, heart-breaking marches, the bivouac at night; and then one evening the drawling voice of his company commander, Captain Xavier Lesueur, asking him if he played cards—baccarat by preference:

“Non, mon capitaine.”

Lesueur had laughed.

“Very well, my little innocent provincial, you must learn. We must have a little distraction. I’ll teach you baccarat. Nothing to it. Simply watch the nines, and look sharp after the naturals. You’ll get the hang of it in no time.”

The rules of the game had been simple indeed. He had mastered them inside of a few minutes,

and the other congratulated him on his quickness.

So he had played.

And he had lost.

“Never mind,” the captain had consoled him. “We must all stump up for our apprenticeship.”

The play had been small, and that first day he had not lost much—just a few gold pieces, which did not worry him.

But the next evening some cavalrymen had dropped in; they were wealthy men, sons of Norman farmers and Lyons bankers. They had forced the game again and again until finally the roof was the limit.

He had lost more than the rest. He had wired to his mother, and she had promptly remitted.

Her husband had been in the army, her father, her grandfather. She knew. She understood. She even laughed a little at the tragic wording of the telegram which he had sent.

“We must all grow up, my boy,” she had told him on his visit home in October, when he had taken a short leave to shoot birds. “A little cards will not hurt you. We’re not paupers.”

At the end of the maneuvers his regiment had been sent to Paris. There had been more cards.

More losses. Again he had been forced to write home. This time there was no ready money in the bank. His mother had been forced to sell some forest land.

He was the first son, after all. The estate was his.

And he had played again. He had tried to win back what he had lost; and that not because he was greedy after either money or cards, but simply because his people were not over-wealthy, and he wanted to recuperate what he had lost.

So he had made a study of cards. He had the cold, logical Latin mind, and set himself to do the thing in earnest. He learned poker, *trente et quarante*, and then he joined the Cercle Richelieu and passed night after night playing roulette.

Steadily he had lost.

Steadily his mother had sold acres and acres of forest land—then a few rich acres his family owned in Corsica, and finally the vineyard of her father in the Champagne country which had been her dowry, and which she had meant to pass on as a dower to her only daughter. That also had gone.

But she had not complained.

Cold and haughty—he was her first-born son—

his was the name, the title, the traditions—he must keep up his position among those shopkeepers who crowded the army since the empire had given way to the republic.

Let him play. Let him lose.

Presently he would settle down. He would marry a wealthy bourgeoisie, and with her money he would buy back everything he had lost in gambling.

She had already picked out a bride for him.

He had laughed light-heartedly.

“And what does she look like, the little one?”

“What difference does it make? You will not marry her for her looks. You will marry her because it is your duty to yourself and to your family.”

Then with light heart he had returned to Paris, and had gambled more than ever. *Enfin*, he said to himself, soon I shall have to settle down and marry. Then I shall have to quit the army and Paris, and all the fun, and cultivate my paternal acres in the Puy de Dôme, and wear gaiters and altogether be an animal of a farmer; therefore, *vogue la galère*. Let's play, and the devil take the hindmost.

The end of it all had been sudden, shockingly unexpected.

A large sum, gold and paper and I. O. U.'s, had been on the green cloth.

One more ace, he thought, studying his hand, and the pot would be his—enough to buy back every acre his mother had been forced to sell, enough to give back his sister's dowry, enough to give a decent life competence for the little brother who was studying for the diplomatic service, enough to release him from a loveless marriage.

Just the one pot, the one big gain—and he would never again touch cards.

Just the ace. That was all he needed.

And it was there in full view, in front of him. His right-hand neighbor had dropped out of the game, and had thrown down his cards upside down.

He had turned the trick very clumsily. There was a shout, a roar, a sharp-cutting word.

“You cheat, *monsieur!* You cheat!”

That had been the end of it all. Of course, there had been no court-martial. Nothing of that sort ever happened in the Forty-Third Infantry. That regiment never preferred charges against

brother officers. They washed their dirty linen in private.

Just the colonel's hard, dry words.

"Adieu! The Forty-Third does not want you. Nor does the army. Nor does France."

And his mother—haughty, stone-faced, thin-lipped, dry-eyed—had echoed the simple words.

"The Puy de Dôme does not want you. Your family does not want you." A little pause. "I do not want you, my son."

She had settled his debts, and it had ruined her. She had paid his passage to America. Now he was here, in the little gray room on East Eleventh, looking at the strangers who crowded the streets, and thinking of France, of his mother, of his regiment.

He picked up the afternoon paper. He studied the contents, though he knew them by heart.

They were fighting—fighting under the walls of Lille. They were hanging on by their teeth.

One report mentioned the Forty-Third Infantry, cut to pieces in a gallant charge. There were three lines devoted to the colonel—"Killed in action."

It was the colonel who had told him:

“The Forty-Third does not want you. Nor the army. Nor France.”

Oh, yes, he remembered that; would always remember it. He laid down the paper. His head sank on his breast.

Vague shadows seemed to come from the distance; they enfolded him; they took his breath away. He shut his eyes.

Somewhere—to the east—he thought it very strange—he could hear voices singing:

“Amour sacré de la Patrie!”

Oh, yes, the marching song of the Forty-Third. They were fighting down there, near Lille, hanging on by their teeth.

There was a sound like the tearing of fine silk, a shrieking and whistling; then a sickening thud.

Sergeant Castel wiped his powder-blackened brows. He inserted another cartridge in his rifle, drew a bead, and fired. Then he turned to Lagrange, the lance-jack.

“The end, *mon vieux!* Presently they will eat us up.”

Lagrange had no time to reply. His elbow was in continuous, jerky motion—load, fire—load, fire!

There was another tearing, whistling noise. Then a thud and a gurgle. This time it had done for Lesueur, the company commander.

Castel looked at the stark figure.

“The last of them—the last of the officers!”

Lagrange paused between shots. His rifle was red-hot. It needed cooling. Half a cigarette was stuck behind his left ear. He lit it, and blew the smoke into the air.

“Right, *mon bougre!* The last one indeed. And we need officers—God, what do I say? We need one officer, just one—to give the word—to lead—to charge.” He sobbed. The tears flowed down into his thick, matted beard. “Just one officer—one!”

His voice snapped off in mid air.

He stared open-eyed. A trim, boyish figure rose from the trench, sword in hand. He waved it in circles.

“Fix bayonets! Charge, my boys; charge!”

Lagrange rubbed his eyes. He was utterly bewildered.

“But it is the little lieutenant. But he had been kicked out of the regiment.”

He could not understand it at all. Again he

looked at the trim, boyish figure. Then he charged, together with the others. On toward that belching belt of fire.

The servant girl knocked at the door—twice, three times. There was no answer. The landlady came.

“Open up there—open up! You can’t play ’possum with the likes of me. You pay your rent to-day or—”

Suddenly a great fear engulfed her. She called the police. They forced the door open.

The Frenchman was dead. A bullet had pierced his heart. No weapon was found in his room. No trace of the assassin was ever found.

But the doctor who examined the body shook his head.

“Can’t account for it,” he murmured. “That bullet was fired from a great distance—from a very great distance. And yet there is no hole in window nor door nor wall.”

And then he entered the case in the little book which contained his private collection of inexplicable deaths.

TARTAR

It was only when Professor Barker Harrison was in his private study, on the top floor of the little house which overlooked a corner of the University Campus, that faculties in his soul, hitherto silent because none had known how to sound them, rose, singing and dancing, to the surface.

These faculties bred thoughts and dreams, and he did not speak of them to anybody; not even to his wife, whom he loved. They were free, unfettered thoughts, and since they were imaginary and quite unrelated to exact, academic science, he was slightly ashamed of them.

They seemed a direct throwback to the earliest germs of his racial development and consciousness, dealing as they did with clanking, half-forgotten centuries of savage memory: the days of stone pillars bearing the rudimentary likeness of an idol; the days when man killed man glorying in the deed of it, and drank fermented mare's-milk from the

blanched skull of his enemy; the days when Rome, jeering and rude, stole an alien civilization without understanding it, and when Gaul was the home of inarticulate barbarians.

Professor Barker Harrison was sane, academic and Anglo-Saxon. For he did not believe in mesmerism, table-moving, and other forms of occult acrobatics; he judged—and dismissed—poetry with a Spencerian smile of amused sympathy; and his family had lived in the same small Vermont town for more than three hundred years, after having thrived for the preceding seven centuries in the English Midlands.

Yet in his study, when his primitive Self disentangled itself from the pack-threads of his everyday life and surroundings, when his mind returned to the youth of his race and the beginnings of his Ego, he seemed to see himself a short, bow-legged, yellow man, with a square chin, heavy snub nose, angular jaws nearly piercing the hairless, cracked skin, slanting eyes, and pointed, wolfish teeth. He seemed to see himself a man on horseback, whose horizon was bounded by the endless plains of Central Asia, whose only reason for life was eating and drinking and rapine, whose highest aim in life

was to kill single-handed a Mongolian tiger or a Siberian bear.

And when, directly on the heel of such imaginative half-hours, he went for a stroll through the eastern part of the town, which housed many foreign factory workers, he felt a queer straining of sympathy and racial communion with the Finns and Letts who were returning from their work, and also with the red-faced, smiling Cantonese coolie who was smoking his long, purple-tasseled pipe in the doorway of his little laundry shop.

But—and this was most strange of all, since an old-fashioned Knownothingism was his political credo and since he was heartily in favor of a strict literacy test for European immigrants—he felt the greatest sympathy and, in a way, kinship at those moments for one Ivan Sborr, a man of unclassified Eastern European race who eked out a meager living by cobbling and who went on wicked, weekly drunks.

Ivan Sborr was a mild-eyed, timid man of huge physique who had once owed allegiance to the Tsar of all the Russias. Now he owed allegiance to anybody who looked in the least like an official. But during his periodic drunks he had been known

to give a bad half-hour even to Patrick O'Mahoney, the new Irish sergeant of police, who was kept in continuous training by encounters with victory-flushed members of the University football team.

Professor Barker Harrison became so used to his fantastic thoughts that finally they seemed more to him than mere projections of his racial consciousness run amuck. They whirled about his mind with a magnificent thunder of action, filling him, somehow, with deep, primitive longings which were oddly at variance with his chosen work and his day-by-day life.

Not that he disliked his life work. He took a massive pride in it; and in the small New England university, famed for its exact, scholastic accomplishments and its minute research work, his name was not the least known. He was an authority in Slavonic languages and literature.

But there came moments, after he had explained for the thousandth time the *baroque* mazes of the Cyrillic alphabet, after he had explained for the thousandth time that the Russian guttural *K* has the spirantal value of the German word *Dach*, when a certain impatience took him by the forelock and shook him . . . quite gently.

He would hurry through dinner, giving short replies to his young wife (they had no children), and walk up to his study. He would then close the door, light his pipe, and surrender himself to the backward sweep of his thoughts. And at those moments an age-old, unborn life seemed to come up from the pile of books and reviews which littered his desk, working subtly to bring about a transformation of himself.

He pondered with an ever-growing measure of bitterness over the fact that his wife, college-bred and, like himself, the descendant of three academic, well-laundried generations, did not understand these moods. She loved him with a fine, precise love; and he loved her. There was no doubt of it. For she was an honest, upstanding woman.

But in the depths of his soul he resented the fact that with the unconscious selfishness of the good woman she had folded him in completely, that day after day she tried to reach more deeply into the core of himself, without ever guessing or feeling that her mate had an imaginative quality and an imaginative double life which was as literally real to him as a house, a tree, or a flower.

Thus he blamed her because she did not compre-

hend the richness which ran in his blood undiluted.

Also he blamed her because he knew that, even given her understanding of his unspoken thoughts, she would discourage their trend and analyze them quite impersonally.

She on her side felt the blame without formulating to herself either the reason of or the possibility for its existence. And the unformed blame, trickling down into her heart, charged her manner with impatience and her lips with drooping bitterness.

So she nagged him.

This nagging was at first unconscious, unpointed; a simple and logical reflex action of her hurt femininity. But when she saw that her husband was perfectly indifferent to the change in the atmosphere about him her nagging became invested with driving, acrid purpose.

Yet never did the Professor by word or by deed lay himself open to the domestic challenge:

"Why did you do this? Why did you say that?"

It was true that he hurried through his dinner, that he took the cup of coffee which she handed him with an impatient gesture, that he lit his cigarette with fingers that trembled absurdly, and smoked as hard and rapidly as though his life depended on his

finishing it in a prescribed time. It was true that he left the dining-room as soon as he had finished his smoke, that he ran up the stairs to his study with a youthful rush of speed, and that on two occasions she had heard drifting down from there savage shouts and strange, barbarous chants which had made her blood run cold.

One day she forgot her pride and asked him point-blank:

“Are you doing any special work up there?”

He replied in the negative. Then he added, quite unconscious of what he was saying, but with a queer, thin whisper that conveyed the gravity of his conviction with a greater impressiveness than a loud-spoken word would have done:

“You would not understand, my dear. Nobody would. I—oh, well—”

“What?” she cut in acidulously.

“I—I—” He stopped, blushed painfully, guiltily; then continued with a rush: “I am living the days when my race was young and was about to conquer the world. I am living the days when my forefathers ate and slept and fought and loved on horseback, when they worshiped the god who was a naked sword, when they slaughtered a thousand

white stallions on the graves of their dead war-chiefs. Ho!" The last he pronounced with a high-pitched, throaty yell.

His wife paled.

"Good Heavens, Barker," she said tremulously, "don't give such yells. Your undergraduate days are over."

But he continued as if he had not noticed her interruption.

"I am living the days when a strong man killed and took to himself the cattle and the wives of his slain enemy."

This time his wife turned red.

"Cattle! Wives! Barker Harrison!" she cried sharply. "What do you mean? You speak as if you were a Tartar! And your name is good, sound Anglo-Saxon, thank Heaven!"

But she spoke the last words to the empty air. For already her husband had rushed up the stairs two steps at a time.

Upstairs in his study he sat down at his desk and lit his pipe.

It had been several months since first the idea that the understanding, the very reliving, of former phases of civilization and racial development,

of former individual lives, was a definitely knowable power, accessible to the trained mind of the *pandit*, had commenced to haunt him. As time went on the idea had grown on him until it was only thinly separated from actual belief, until finally it was accepted as true—not by his whole consciousness, but by some outlying tract of it which was inactive as long as he was in the company of others.

When he lectured at the University and when he was alone with his wife he suffered from spiritual nostalgia. Only here in his study he was at home, and he wandered deeper and ever deeper into himself, into some state of tremendous freedom, simplicity and brutality, toward a zone where he lost touch with all that had hitherto constituted Life to him—including his wife.

And to-day the belief was there, alive, palpable. Unconsciously his wife had touched the releasing spring when she had spoken of Tartars.

He trembled with a fearful joy.

For he was suddenly positive that the power which had haunted him was his, that it was flashing across his brain with a dazzling sheen that brought him to the threshold of ecstasy.

The past enveloped him. It possessed him completely.

He saw himself in the remote, untamed youth of his race. The past came to him, a record of the measure of his vision. A portion of his brain—very sane, very active—caused him to perceive himself as he had been before the Migration of Peoples, the earth-wide wanderings of Celt, Tartar, Visigoth and Scythian, and the subsequent crossing and mingling of races had tempered and changed the original germ which was his Ego into Professor Barker Harrison, Christian, Aryan, Anglo-Saxon, American.

He beheld himself on the banks of the Volga. He saw himself a warrior among warriors, fighting, riding, looting, burning; then, in the scanty shelter of a black felt tent, which was surmounted by a standard of buffalo hide bearing the rough cognizance of his chief, he saw himself at meal, tearing like a mastiff at raw lumps of horseflesh and quaffing down curdled milk poured into human skulls.

Shadowy figures were about him. Some of them reminded him of the high-cheeked foreigners, Finns and Letts, who worked in the factories of the town.

One, for all the blue tattoo marks on his forehead and on the roots of his flat nose, for all the loose tunic of Mongolian tiger which covered his massive body, was an exact double of the peaceful, red-faced Cantonese coolie who kept the little laundry shop. And another, famed for his great strength, his massive thirst, and his loud, hoarse, reedy war yells, was to him an incarnation of Ivan Sborr, the cobbler of Russian nationality and unclassified race.

Factory-workers? Laundry coolie? Cobbler? What did those terms signify?

To-night they were his equals, his friends, his tribemates, his brothers-in-arms!

He saw them in the twilight which grew from pink to green and from green to black. They were lifting their crude weapons to the naked sword which was their god, and shouting a barbarous song of triumph.

He joined in it, and his voice rose clear above the voices of the others.

“Ho!” he chanted.

“I have ridden through the desert which dried up my skin and burnt the feet of my horses.

I have made crimson war in the North where rivers roll waters that are solid and white.

And there I left a monument to my prowess;
A pyramid built of ten thousand heads.
No more will the North make war.
I have drunk from a thousand skulls set in gold.
I have slain the men and the women and the little
children of the many lands.
The cowardly Emperor of the East has paid me ran-
som.
But I took his wives for slaves.
The Emperor of the South opposed me with his
hordes clad in silver and in iron.
I smashed them as the whirling millstones smash the
dry grains of the field.
Beyond the flat lands of the West I have ridden, a
Conqueror, and the shivering men called me the
Scourge of God.
For I am Attila, the Hun!"

Three times he repeated the last line, winding up each time with a blood-curdling war-whoop. Then his imagination took another magnificent bound into the past centuries.

Attila? Only Attila? Of course he was Attila.

But he was also Attila's descendant. He was Genghis Khan himself, and, by a second magnificent, imaginative flight, he was also the Tartar Khan's great-grandson, Tamerlane, he whose mausoleum still stands in the ancient city of Samarkand.

"Ho!"

He gave another war-whoop, and turned to his friends, his tribemates, whose shadowy figures were crowding the narrow room. There was chiefly the red-faced warrior.

What was his name?

Oh, yes, he remembered—that was Jemchug the Tchuktche Chief to whom he had given as fief the Empire of Khorassan; and the other, he of the great thirst—why, it was Kublai Khan, his own brother—soon he would send him to the farthest East to conquer China and Japan—so, before the parting, once more a chant of triumph, brothers!

“Hai-yai-hai!” he yelled.

“From all the world men came and acknowledged me
Master.

They came from the broad plains of the Danube and
from China.

From golden Byzanze they came, and from the eternal
city whose founders were suckled by a she-wolf.

Bringing presents they came, the many envoys.

But I spat my contempt into their faces.

For I am Genghis Khan!”

Then he yelled as an afterthought:

“I am Tamerlane!

Also am I Attila, the Scourge of God!”

“Barker!” a sharp voice came from the open door. “Barker Harrison!” His wife came into the room. “For goodness’ sake, what are you shouting about? What *is* the matter?”

The Professor turned on her with a savage roar.

The impudent slave woman, he said to himself—for weeks she had been behaving as no woman should behave to her master—and now she had entered, unbidden, the tent of warriors!

He raised his right arm, about to strike her. Then he reconsidered. No, he would not sully his hand.

He turned to one of the many slaves whom he imagined about him.

“Urbeck!” he said majestically. “Have this impudent slave woman well beaten with knotted ropes!”

Mrs. Barker Harrison swooned dead away. The Professor looked at her huddled figure unmoved. Again he commenced his barbarous chant.

But suddenly it seemed to him that all the others had disappeared. Where were they, those yellow-skinned, high-cheeked men? And chiefly the two—his brother Kublai Khan, the great drinker whom he would send to conquer the farthest East, and

also Jemchug, the red-faced warrior whose massive body was covered with a loose tunic of Mongolian tiger?

Was there treachery in his army?

“Ho!” he shouted. “My trusty sword!”

And with a splendid gesture he picked up a light rattan cane which was leaning peacefully in a corner of his room.

Professor Barker Harrison, wild-eyed, bare-headed, his right hand tightly clutching the cane, rushed down the stairs and out of the house. He cleared the front step in one bound. It was late at night; it was lucky for him that the neighborhood was asleep and that nobody saw his martial exit.

On Cedar Street he had his first encounter with the enemy. He was swinging his cane in the air, chanting at the same time another song of triumph:

“Hai-yai-hai!” he chanted.

“I am the Chief of the Far Tribes!

Raw horse-flesh is my food!

Curdled milk is my drink!

I bathe my mighty limbs in the blood of my enemies!”

He made a stabbing motion with his rattan cane,

and something soft and human squirmed rapidly to one side, giving a loud howl of pain and passionate entreaty.

Professor Barker Harrison's blood was up.

"Ho!" he shouted. "Dog! Swine! Traitor!" He made another stab with his rattan, connected again, and caused another, louder howl of pain and entreaty. "To-night I shall drink from thy blanched skull!"

The man whom he had poked fell on his knees and held up both his hands. He was a peaceful, elderly negro by the name of George Washington Jefferson Ransome, and he was not, as a rule, afraid of undergraduates, drunk or sober.

But this one was dangerous, he thought. He was singing of eating raw flesh and of bathing his mighty limbs in the blood of his enemies.

"Lawdamessy!" he bawled. "I ain't done yoh no ha'm, suh. Fo' de Lawd's sake, doan' yoh do dis 'yeah thing to me. *I* ain't yoh enemy! No, suh. Please . . . doan' yoh go an' bathe yoh mighty limbs in dis po' niggah's blood!"

The Professor did not reply. He stabbed again with his rattan cane.

But the old negro did not wait. He jumped

backward and ran away as fast as his elderly legs would let him.

Barker Harrison smiled. He turned to an imaginary chief.

“Catch me this black man!” he commanded curtly. “To-morrow morning we shall crucify him to a wooden cross!”

Then he thought again of Jemchug, the red-faced one. Where was he? Had he really turned traitor? He passed his hand across his face. Why . . . he knew . . . the red-faced one was down there . . . in his shop, on the corner of Main Street.

Shop? Main Street? What was a shop? What was Main Street? *What, in the name of the many gods, was a street?* There was only the Volga, the plains, the tents and the skies!

Still . . . he must find him . . . his brother-in-arms, . . . so that together they could find his brother Kublai Khan, the mighty drinker. . . .

Professor Barker Harrison ran up Main Street and straight into the shop of Wu Kee, laundryman.

When the latter saw the strange, wild-eyed figure bounce in, cane in hand, his instinct advised him to beat a hasty retreat.

Although he had lived in America for over thirty years, he still considered the foreigners a mad race, who should be mistrusted on sight and who were moved by impulses which were partly savage, partly amusing, but altogether incredible. But he kept his seat and his sang-froid when he recognized the features of his visitor. For he had done his laundry for five years, had received payment promptly every Thursday morning, and had exchanged daily and very punctilious greeting with him.

So he bade him a pleasant "good evening."

But the next moment he wished that he had followed the original promptings of his instinct.

For the Professor lifted him bodily out of his chair, threw his arms about his shoulders, drew him to his bosom, and apostrophized him as "warrior" and "Jemchug" and "brother-in-arms."

The Chinese disengaged himself from the other's embrace.

"Hey? You dlunk?" he queried dispassionately.

The Professor did not reply. He embraced the Chinaman again, and so once more the latter repeated his words.

Only this time they were less a question than the statement of a calm, prosaic fact.

“You dlunk! You velly dlunk!” he said.

The Professor did not understand the meaning of the words. But he felt, he understood, the contempt which underlay them. For a moment he was hurt.

Could it, then, be that Jemchug, the great Tchuktche Chief to whom he had given as fief the Empire of Khorassan, had turned traitor?

Suddenly a great rage overcame him.

“Die, traitor!” he shouted, and he smote the Chinaman over the head with his elastic rattan cane.

Wu Kee became enraged in his turn.

“Wassahellamallayou?” he asked, all in one word.

He picked up a nearly red-hot pressing-iron and applied it with savage aim on the seat of the Professor’s trousers.

Barker Harrison yelled with pain and fury.

“Treason! Treason!” he shouted. “Kublai Khan! Brother mine! To the rescue! To the rescue!”

He rushed out of the shop.

He ran up and down the street, waving his rattan cane.

Where was Kublai Khan? Where was his beloved brother, he of the great thirst?

A vague remembrance came back to him. Why—yes—Kublai Khan was hiding in the land of the enemies—he was spying out the land under the menial guise of a cobbler. He went by the name of Ivan Sborr.

And there—was that not Kublai Khan's voice—calling—for help, for help?

Professor Barker Harrison followed the direction of the voice, and he was not mistaken.

For Ivan Sborr had gone that evening on an extra-luxurious spree, and was now engaged in savage battle with Patrick O'Mahoney, the Irish sergeant of police, who was trying to propel him toward the station house.

Professor Barker Harrison saw the scene and gave his war-whoop.

“Ho!” he shouted. “Take heart, lion-brother of mine! For I am coming to thy rescue!”

He came.

But by this time the sergeant had clubbed the Russian into unconsciousness and was ready for the new protagonist.

“So ye'll be afther helpin' them f'what's thryin' to resist arrest, are yez?” he cried. “Take thot for a starter, me lad!” and he paralyzed the Profes-

sor's right arm with a blow of his hickory, so that the rattan cane fell to the ground.

O'Mahoney jerked the Professor up by the collar.

"An' fwhat may yer name be, me bucko?"

"I am Attila, the Scourge of God!" chanted the Professor.

The Irishman smiled.

"Glory be—but it's a foine scourge ye are, me lad! Take thot then for bein' a scourge!" and he tapped him, not very gently, with his hickory.

But the Professor was not subdued.

"I am Attila!" he shouted again. "I am Genghis Khan! I am Tamerlane!"

O'Mahoney whistled through his teeth.

"Ye are, are ye? All three of them? Begorry, I think ye're a dangerous character, and the chief'll be afther wantin' ye."

And so he fetched him a wallop on the ear, whistled for the police wagon, tumbled both his prisoners inside, and made a long report to the captain.

"Captain," he said, "of course, I know old Ivan. It's just his weekly dhrunk, and divil a bit o' harm did he mean. But there's another lad—and I think he'll be wanted by the police in Boston. He gave me three aliases—wait till I write 'em down."

He took the blotter, and there, under the proper rubric, he filled in the following:

O'Dillon, Christian name unknown.

He looked up at the captain.

"Faith," he said, "and he added that the lads call him the scourge, the fwhich I think is one o' them blood-currin' names the Boston gangsters are afther givin' to each other."

Again he wrote in the blotter.

Alias Gennis Kahn.

"Sounds Sheeny to me, captain," he commented, "though, begabs, he don't look like one."

Once more the pen scratched over the hard paper:

Alias Thomas Lane.

"And that last one," concluded O'Mahoney, "may be his real name. For, faith, Lane's a Noo England name, and the lad looks to me more like a native than like O'Dillon, which is Irish, or Kahn, which is Sheeny."

"All right," said the captain. "Let's have a look at the prisoner."

He walked over to the cell and opened the door. The Professor was stretched out on the narrow bench, snoring quite peacefully. The captain gave one look. Then he let out a yell of surprise.

“Good heavens! It’s Professor Barker Harrison!”

He explained to the mystified O’Mahoney in a furious whisper.

The latter shook his head.

“Begabs an’ I can’t help it at all, at all. He assaulted me. He gave me them aliases. And I swear by the Blessed Virgin that he was sober as you and me, captain.”

The captain shook his head.

“Poor fellow!” he said. “Overwork—or I’m a Dutchman.”

So he quashed the charges and telephoned to the Professor’s wife, who by this time had come out of her swoon and was horribly worried over her husband’s absence.

She came. The captain explained to her. Together they awakened the Professor.

When the Professor came to he gave another war-whoop.

“Ho!” he said. “There is that impudent slave

woman again. Did I not give orders to have her soundly beaten?"

Nobody answered him. But they all stared at him, puzzled, wondering what to do. He stared at them in return.

Then, very gradually, a peculiar dislocation of ideas came over his mind. For a few moments he seemed to be taking part in a whirling gambol in which his own Ego, that of the people around him and twenty centuries of human history and civilization were madly mixed up together. Then a small fragment of his consciousness seemed to separate itself. It seemed to be watching, within his brain, the other fragments of his consciousness which were behaving in a perfectly incredible and perfectly insane manner. He saw and studied those fragments like detached and separate projections of his Ego.

Very slowly, he recognized his body. He recognized the body and the personality of his wife, of the captain of police, of the sergeant. His eyes traveled, and he recognized the body and the personality of Ivan Sborr who was sleeping out his drunk in the next cell.

And, suddenly, he understood. He put his hand to his head.

"Good Lord!" he murmured.

The captain touched him on the shoulder.

"Go home with your wife, Professor," he said in a kindly voice. "You've worked too hard. Nobody'll hear about your little escapade."

The Professor did as he was bid. He took ten grains of veronal and slept the next day until noon. He dressed, went downstairs, and took his accustomed place at the luncheon table.

His wife was mixing the dressing for the salad. She looked up.

"Barker!" she said.

The Professor was all attention.

"Yes, dearest?" he asked in a small voice.

"Will you do me a favor?"

"Yes, dearest. Anything! Anything!"

His wife smiled—and to his dying day the Professor did not know if the smile was sweet or bitter.

"Would you mind, Barker, the next time you live through a period of the past, picking out a character from Bishop Taylor's 'Lives of the Saints'?"

And she rang the bell for the maid to bring in hot plates.

RENUNCIATION

WHEN she came to him that night, forty-eight hours before he sailed for France with his battalion, she did so of her own free will.

For he had not seen her; he had not written to her; he had even tried not to think of her since that shimmering, pink-and-lavender noon of early June, two years earlier, when, in rose point lace and orange-blossoms, she had walked up the aisle of St. Thomas's Church and had become the wife of Dan Coolidge.

Her low, trembling "I will!" had sounded the death-knell of Roger Kenyon's tempestuous youth. He had plucked her from his heart, had uprooted her from his mind, from his smoldering, subconscious passion had cast the memory of her pale, pure oval of a face to the limbo of visions that must be forgotten.

It seemed strange that he could do so; for Roger had always been a hot-blooded, virile, inconsiderate

man who rode life as he rode a horse, with a loose rein, a straight bit, and rowel-spurs. He had always had a headstrong tendency to hurdle with tense, savage joy across the obstacles he encountered—which were of his own making as often as not.

He had been in the habit of taking whatever sensations and emotions he could—until he had met Josephine Erskine up there in that sleepy, drab New England village where, for a generation or two, her people had endeavored to impose upon the world with a labored, pathetic, meretricious gentility.

Heretofore, woman had meant nothing to him except a charming manifestation of sex.

Then suddenly, like a sweet, swift throe, love had come to him in Josephine's brown, gold-flecked eyes and crimson mouth.

He had told her so quite simply as they walked in the rose-garden; but she had shaken her head.

"No, Roger," she had replied.

"Why not?"

"I do not love you."

She told him that she was going to become the wife, for better or for worse, of Dan Coolidge, a college chum of his—a mild, bald-headed, paunchy,

stock-broking chap with a steam-yacht, a garage full of imported, low-slung motor-cars, a red-brick-and-white-woodwork house on the conservative side of Eleventh Street, a few doors from Fifth Avenue, a place in Westchester County at exactly the correct distance between suburbia and yokeldom; four servants, including a French—not an English—butler; and a mother who dressed in black bombazine and bugles.

“Yes,” she had said in a weak, wiped-over voice, “I am going to marry Dan.”

“Because you love him—and because you don’t love me?”

“Yes, Roger!”

He had laughed—a cracked, high-pitched laugh that had twisted his dark, handsome face into a sardonic mask.

“You lie, my dear,” he had replied brutally, and when she gasped and blushed he had continued: “You lie—and you *know* you do! You love—*me!* I can feel it in my heart, my soul, in every last fiber and cell of my being. I can feel it waking and sleeping. Your love is mine, quite mine—a thing both definite and infinite. You don’t love Dan!”

“But—”

"I'll tell you why you're going to marry him. It's because he has money, and I have no financial prospects except a couple of up-State aunts who are tough and stringy, and who have made up their minds to survive me, whatever happens."

"I must think of mother and the girls," had come her stammered admission through a blurred veil of hot tears; "and Fred—he must go to Harvard—"

"Right! You have your mother, and the girls, and Fred, and the rest of your family, and they'll all live on Dan's bounty and on the sacrifice you're making of yourself—not to mention myself!"

Then, after a pause, taking her by both her slender shoulders, he went on:

"I could make love to you now, my dear. I could crush you in my arms—and you'd marry Dan afterward, and somehow strike a compromise between your inbred, atavistic Mayflower Puritanism and the resolute Greek paganism which is making your mouth so red. But"—as she swayed and trembled—"I won't! I'm going to play the game!"

She said nothing. He laughed and spoke again:

"Confound it! You can put your foot on every decency, on every bully, splendid emotion, on the

blessed decalogue itself—as long as you play the game!”

So he had gone away, after being Dan’s best man, to his little plantation in South Carolina.

For two years he had not seen her, had not written to her, had even tried not to think of her—

And there she stood—now—on the threshold of his room in the discreet little hotel where he had put up, with a grinning, plump boy in buttons, his hand well weighted with money, winking as if to say:

“It’s O. K., boss. I’m goin’ to keep mum, all right, all right!”

Then the boy closed the door, and the bolt snapped into the lock with a little steely, jeering click.

She was dressed in white from head to foot; only her lips were red, and the long-stemmed Gloire de Dijon rose that she held in her hand.

She spoke in a matter-of-fact voice, as if continuing a conversation that had been interrupted just for a second by the entry of a servant or the postman’s whistle:

“Don’t you see, Roger? I had to come. I had

to say good-by to you—before you sail for France!”

He did not move from where he stood between the two windows, with the moonlight drifting across his shoulders into the dim, prosy hotel room, and weaving a fantastic pattern into the threadbare carpet.

There was surprise in his accents, and a keen, peremptory challenge.

“How did you know that I was booked to sail? Our orders are secret. I am here on a special mission until the day after to-morrow—incognito, at that. Josephine, how did you find me out? Who told you that I was here?”

She smiled.

“Of course I knew, dear. How could I help knowing?”

Suddenly, strangely, the explanation—what there was of it—seemed lucid and satisfactory and reasonable, and he crossed the room and bowed over her hand. He took the rose from her narrow, white fingers and inhaled its heavy, honeyed fragrance.

“A rose from your garden!” He heard his own voice coming in an odd murmur. “From your garden up there in the little New England village!”

“Yes, Roger.”

“Did your mother send it to you?”

“No, I picked it myself. It kept fresh, didn’t it, Roger dear?”

“Yes.”

He remembered the garden where they had walked side by side, two years earlier—where he had told her of his love.

It was the one splotch of color, the one sign of the joy of life, in the whole drab Massachusetts community, this old garden which the Erskine family had jealously nursed and coddled for generations. It was a mass of roses, creepers as well as bushes, scrambling and straining and growing and tangling in their own strong-willed fashion, clothing old stones with hearts of deep ruby and amethyst, building arches of glowing pink and tea-yellow against the pale sky, lifting shy, single, dewy heads in hushed corners, as if praying.

But he had always liked the scarlet Gloire de Dijon roses best.

They were like her lips.

He looked up.

“What about Dan?” he asked.

“Oh, Danny—” She smiled.

“He is my friend, and your husband. If he knew—”

“Danny won’t mind, dear,” she said.

Her words carried conviction. Somehow he knew that Dan wouldn’t mind.

He sat down on the hard couch that faced the windows, drew her down beside him, and put his arm around her shoulder.

Her hand, which sought and found his, was very steady and very cool.

He did not speak; neither did she. Twisting his head sidewise, he looked at her.

She was in shadow from the shoulder downward. Only her face was sharply defined in the moonlight. The scarlet lips seemed to swim to him along the slanting, glistening rays, and he leaned over.

There was hunger in his soul, in his mind, in his heart, in his body.

“I am going to play the game!”

The words came from very far, from across the bitter bridge of years, with the jarring, dissonant shock of a forgotten reproach.

“Dear, dear heart!” he whispered.

She did not resist. She did not draw back; nor did she say a word.

Only, just as his lips were about to touch hers, something—"an immense, invisible, and very sad presence," he described it afterward—seemed to creep into the room, like a winged thing.

It came soundlessly; but he felt the sharp displacement of air. It was as if a huge bird's pinions had cut through it, the left tip resting on the farther window-sill, the right on a chair near the bed, on which he had thrown his khaki overcoat and his campaign hat.

With it came a sense of unutterable peace and sweetness, strangely flavored with a great pain. As he leaned back without having touched her lips, the pain was mysteriously transmuted.

It became a realization, not a vision, of color—clear, deep scarlet with a faint golden glow in the center. Then began to assume a definite form—that of a gigantic Gloire de Dijon rose, which, as he watched, slowly shrank to its natural proportions until it rested, velvety, scented, where he had dropped the rose among the books on his writing-desk.

He rose to pick it up.

When he turned back again, he saw that she had left the couch and was standing on the threshold of the open door, a blotch of filmy, gauzy white.

She was gone before he could rush to her side. When he tried to cross the threshold, to run after her, he felt again the wings, and the feeling brought with it a sense of ineffable sweetness and peace, which enveloped his subconscious self in a rush of blind delight.

It was Captain Donaldson of his regiment who startled him out of his sleep early the next morning.

"Hurry up, old man!" he said. "The transport sails this afternoon instead of to-morrow."

Roger Kenyon tumbled out of bed and walked over to the desk where he had dropped the rose the night before.

"What are you looking for?" asked his friend. "A cigarette? Here—have one of mine!"

"No, no. I thought I had left a rose here last night—a scarlet Gloire de Dijon rose; but—"

"Gallant adventure, eh?" laughed Donaldson. "Say, you must have been drinking! Why, this isn't a rose—it's a white lily!"

He picked up the stiff, sweet-scented flower.

“By the way,” asked Donaldson, facing his friend over coffee and toast and eggs, “have you heard that Danny Coolidge’s wife died last night?”

“Yes,” replied Roger Kenyon.

KRISHNAVANA, DESTROYER OF SOULS

THIS is the story of the pale shadow of a forgotten love and of the death which therefrom came to the soul of a man. It is also the story of another man, a man of Hindustan, who took the soul of the first man for the sake of revenge, and squeezed it until it was as dry as a donut and as bitter as a Dead-Sea apple.

But, if the whole truth be told, it is the story of the jest which Allah made of the human heart, when he breathed life into one lump of clay and gave to it blue eyes and a white skin, and then, with a strange wink at the Fallen Angel, breathed life into another lump of clay and gave to it blue-black hair and a brown complexion.

Krishnavana, a young Hindu of highest Brahman caste, came to England thirty years ago, in the good old days when the word sedition was unknown in

Bengal and when even a nervous, overworked Viceroy enjoyed occasional nights untroubled by dreams of massacre and rebellion and the Seven Holy Rivers red with English blood.

He studied jurisprudence in the legendary days, when the dark-skinned Indian students who flashed the sharp colors of their turbans in the gray maze of Lincoln's Inn were apt to be more royalist than the king.

And Krishnavana was of Young-India. He had indeed a written pedigree reaching back to the time when the East was slowly emerging from its chrysalis, while the West was still in the throes of primitive erosion. But he freely acknowledged the power of the white-skinned Helots who had become masters overnight, while Asia was having one of her periodical naps.

And so he plucked with both hands at the fruit of the tree of Western wisdom; he steeped himself in English literature, history and political ideals; he deposed the many-armed, lust-scabbed gods of his ancestors and set up in their place brand-new, neat little idols, labeled Burke, John Stuart Mill, Topinard, and Universal-Brotherhood-Regardless-of-Race, Faith and Color.

He even became an adept at cricket, and the very day on which he made a "century" at the Oval, he gave a tentative tug at the Sacred Thread which was the secret emblem of his caste, and had qualmy thoughts of the gentle Christ, a house in Hempstead, a subscription to the *Winning Post*, admission to the English Bar, a potential Q. C., and English-born children, a little dark-skinned perhaps, but with the blue eyes of the Master-Beast and a thorough command of Public School slang . . . the last particular dream due to Miss Agnes Couzens, who loved him and whom he loved.

At least that's what they both claimed. It may have been that it was only the mystery of the Orient in his eyes which captured her, and the mystery of the Occident in hers which captured him. But they were eager to jump over the barrier which the prejudices of a dozen centuries have erected between East and West.

Unfortunately the girl had a brother, Oughtred Couzens, who was cursed with a malignant form of youth. He was a very young man, temporarily domiciled at Christ Church, Oxford, and his three chief deities were High Church, High Toryism and Old Port. He was not a bad sort, but simply one

of those young men about whom you may easily produce a false impression if you describe them at all. His education had been the ordinary education of English gentlemen: in other words, he ate well, and he knew things that were information, but he did not know things that were things.

He was positive only about the one fact, that the white race was *the* race, that Asia had not even a sporting chance, and that men like Tamerlane, Genghis Khan, Akbar, and Aurangzeb were "rum blighters with unpronounceable names."

And so there was a nasty scene when Krishnavana and Agnes mentioned their miscegenating intentions. Agnes's love for the Hindu could not stand up against High Church and Old Port; her brother won, and the Brahman took his medicine.

Only when he was about to turn the handle of the door, he said:

"Where is the religion of robbers; where is the forbearance of a fool; where is the affection of a courtesan; where is the truth of a Christian?"

Couzens, who was very busy with his sister who had fainted, made some remark about crazy Oriental metaphors. But perhaps he would have thought a little differently if he could have heard what the

Hindu was saying, over and over again, on his way back to his lodgings. It was a queer exclamation, and it ran:

“I pray God that there is a hell . . . for the sake of mine enemies, for the peace of my soul.”

Couzens should also have considered that the wise man guards against the vengeance of an elephant, a cobra and a Hindu. But Couzens was not a wise man. Also, what does a monkey know of the taste of ginger?

It was not really Couzens's complexional prejudice which infuriated Krishnavana: for if the White does not like the Brown from an esthetic point of view, the Brown replies in the flowery language of the Orient that fairer even than the white is the leper.

Krishnavana was chiefly outraged because Couzens had made gentle remarks about family, *mésalliance*, suitable marriage, and similar fetishes.

Now the Englishman was the descendant of a knight who had crossed the Channel with William the Conqueror in comparatively recent times . . . a matter of eight hundred years or so ago . . . while Krishnavana's father was a Tomara of Delhi, claiming kinship with the flame, and his mother a

Rathor of Kanauj, thus tracing her origin back to an indiscretion between the sun and the moon.

And then to be told that Agnes should marry an equal . . . that's what hurt.

It is easily understood that, when Krishnavana reached his rooms, he solemnly cursed Burke, John Stuart Mill, Topinard, and Universal-Brotherhood-Regardless-of-Race, Color and Creed, that he made a few unparliamentary remarks about Christianity, England, and the white race in general, and prayed long and fervently to Kali, the Mother, the great goddess of destruction.

He nursed no thoughts of killing; for he was of an old race and knew that blood cannot be washed out with blood. Also there is no sweetness in giving death, since the last moment of life is but as a quick, twisting lance-thrust, since the memory of pain is of the body and not of the soul, and since the man who is killed is born again in a child's body, free of wounds and blemishes.

To kill well, you must kill the soul. And the soul of Oughtred Couzens was the soul of the System which had conceived him.

Thus Krishnavana swore calm and terrible revenge against the System, cherishing his hatred as

Paricarika cherished her love for Sakka, the powerful god of ruddy color.

And so, when he returned to India, he declared war against England and the Cross.

It was a trial of patience, and knowing that to practice the patience of Job one must have the age of Noah, he nursed the health of his body and worked carefully and soundly.

He went amongst the villages, living on alms, and reciting in return the Abhangs and Tukaram and Namdev, and writing letters for the illiterate. But in every village he left behind him a tiny seed of poison-wheat in the hearts of the peasants.

For he had the strength of words which drives thoughts into brains as the wind drives a thin sheet of flame. The sight of the cold, arrogant Cross made his sword-arm ache, and knowing that a man cannot strangle a nation with the strength of his fingers, he used the strength of his steely, feline mind.

Of course he lied; but he lied in a masterly manner, for he lied like truth. And wherever he wandered, the snake of dissatisfaction and rebellion lifted its flat, ugly head . . . not striking, but poisoning its body and measuring its strength for the day

when one sudden strike would mean destruction to the sahib-log and humiliation to the Cross.

When he heard of abuse, he exaggerated the tale of it, and when he heard of good, clean reform achieved by the English, he would sneer and ask if a crow can become a swan by bathing in the Ganges. When loyal Hindus argued with him and asked him to treat the foreigners who ruled India, if not with love, then at least with fairness and understanding, he replied that only a fool pats a scorpion with the hand of compassion; and when he heard of young Rajputs enlisting in the regiments of the British, he demanded why people should give poison to the snake.

It has been said that harmful is a crow among birds, a rat in the house, a monkey in the forest, and a Brahman among men. And indeed, the Brahman Krishnavana was harmful to the men and the house of India.

As the sugar-cane has a sweeter taste knot after knot from the top, so his influence grew with each succeeding year, with each succeeding pilgrimage through the broad land of Hind.

Then, after he had acquired local reputation, he went in for religious revival; and if the worship of

Kali, the sanguinary goddess of destruction, and the cult of Shivaji-Maharaj, the Mahratta chieftain who in his day had humbled the pride of the alien conqueror, played a conspicuous part in this revival, why . . . there was nothing in the Indian Criminal Code taking exception to the worship of any particular deity.

Finally, after many years of preparation, he began to preach an aggressive doctrine. And the Government of India said two or three words to the Secret Service, and several well-paid servants of the Crown went on the Brahman's trail.

But they found themselves face to face with an enigma; for although nobody knew the past history of the man, although there was a look in his eyes which courted Third Degree methods, he was found to be very much like a jackfruit: full of juice inside, but very thorny outside. Also there was never a letter found, there was never a conspiracy hatched which pointed directly to him, there was never a plot discovered which compromised him.

And Krishnavana mentioned the magical words "Habeas Corpus," and went on his way, warring against the Cross.

So, when Oughtred Couzens came to India many years later, the Hindu was a power in the land. Oughtred did not recognize him when he met him. Years and a beard and native dress are a wonderful disguise.

Couzens had also changed. After the scab of youth had rubbed itself off in contact with the harsh corners of the world, he was still a baby overtaken by manhood. The place in his soul which had formerly been filled by Omniscience, was now empty except for a residue of diffidence, so that he was easily influenced, affected and swerved.

He had become a missionary after a brief spasm of religion due to the harangue of a North Dakota Evangelist who had swooped eagle-wise on Britain's unprotected shores, had obeyed the call and had gone forth to convert Asia.

His mind was incapable of concise and lucid statements; the fruit of his intelligence could only ripen in a congenial soil of mystery and suggestion, and his soul could only communicate with a strange soul by a sort of wireless psychic telegraphy. And so he was a fine subject for Indian mission work . . . but not the way he imagined.

Let it finally be understood that the Reverend

Oughtred Couzens was a sincere Christian, happy in his faith and happy in his faith alone, but that he prided himself on his broad-mindedness and his willingness to be convinced, and kept therefore in his soul a little reserve corner inoculated with a subconscious doubt of the very creed which meant his happiness and which he had come to preach.

It was good for the peace of India that the two met one evening in a Punjab village. For when the Hindu saw that the black-frocked missionary was Oughtred Couzens and that the recognition was not mutual, he decided to grant a little breathing-space to the Raj, and to busy himself with the particular destiny of the one man who had planted in his heart the seed of his crimson hatred for the Cross.

He took the Englishman's measure, and then he began to lay his plans, securely and smilingly. He knew that with the help of a little patience he would soon be able to sacrifice a writhing, smoking, blood-stained soul on the altar of Kali, the Great Mother.

Seeing that the weakest spot in his enemy's armor was a dormant northern love for the mysteries of Asia, he knew where to introduce the thin end of the wedge.

Couzens was charmed with the gentle, cultured, clever Brahman. He had never before met a man who could argue in such a strangely convincing manner.

And indeed, Krishnavana gave of his best. His speech was a butterfly which rests for a second on a trembling leaf; his sarcasm was a thousand splintering lance-points, and his knowledge of the mysterious roots which are the creeds and the hearts of men, was profound and astounding. His mental strength was a cat in climbing, a deer in running, a snake in twisting, a hawk in pouncing, and a dog in scenting.

And so he got beneath the Englishman's skin, and caused him to delve into the depths of his self-consciousness . . . and to find them empty. And then, gently and slowly, Krishnavana began to fill up the emptiness in Oughtred's heart with new wisdom, new suggestions, and the sweetly pungent odor of the Eastern mysteries which putrify the brains and plague-spot the hearts of Western men.

It is true that Oughtred fought hard for the old belief which was his happiness, his life, his very reason for existence. But he was as soft clay in a potter's hands.

And so the wedge of the East entered ever more deeply into his heart.

It was Couzens himself who first asked the Brahman about the practiced magic of India, about fakirs, yogis, gurus, and that Sixth Sense of the brown man which the baffled white savant dismisses as auto-suggestion and superstition, so as to save his face.

Krishnavana began by showing him the ordinary tricks of the veranda-fakir: the tricks of the basket, the rope, the mango, and the snake-stone.

Then one day, in a village of the Ahmednager district, he showed him a Sikh guru who came out of his tent, a drawn sword in his hand, and demanded to be allowed to cut off the head of any one who claimed to be a faithful and believing Bakhta.

And when the Sikh shouted "*Wahuwah*," and two or three disciples, quivering with excitement and drunk with *bhang*, had their heads cut off, only to be restored to life a minute later, the Indian Episcopal Mission came near to losing a promising missionary.

Later Krishnavana began to initiate the Englishman into the mysteries of the left-handed sects and the Vaishnavite cult. And at night, when Couzens

returned to his tent and opened the Bible with the idea of fortifying his wavering soul, he would read in the black-bound book tales of other miracles . . . similar to the ones he had seen in the afternoon, but weaker, cheaper, more prosaic.

Also there is a difference between the miracles of which you read, and the ones which you see with the eyes of your body, in the clear light of the sun.

It is not the claw of the man-eater, but the sting of the bramra-bee which drives the elephant mad and makes him kill his mahout. It is not the cloud-born hurricane, but the turning and dropping of a small pebble which hurls the avalanche into the valley on its journey of ruin and destruction.

And even thus it was with the soul of the Reverend Oughtred Couzens.

For it was a small, dun-colored turtle which caused his final spiritual downfall, and which later on shriveled his soul—a small, dun-colored turtle, held in the thin, masterful hand of Krishnavana, Hater of the Cross and Destroyer of Souls.

For one evening, when they were talking about the unseen forces of nature, the unseen energy which breeds what the priests call miracles, Krishnavana remarked in a gentle voice:

“An impossible thing should not be spoken; when it happens before the eyes it is seen: a stone swims in the river, an ape sings a Kashmiri love-song.”

Then he remarked casually that, thanks to fasting, torturing his body and submitting to the ordeal of fire, Shiva had given to him a certain wisdom which permitted him to cause living things to change as he willed them to, to increase in size, to expand, and then to shrink back to their original shape.

Couzens's revolted Christianity and outraged European common sense made one last, desperate stand. He doubted and sneered in a weak, half-hearted manner. And Krishnavana repeated calmly:

“When the impossible happens before the eyes it is seen,” and he proceeded to perform the miracle.

He bought a little land-turtle, one span in length, and he told Couzens that, with the help of certain incantations, he would cause the animal to grow every day for three days by a span; but on the fourth day he would recite another incantation, and then the turtle would decrease by a span every day for three days until, on the morning of the seventh day, it would have returned to its original size.

Krishnavana put the turtle into a wooden cage,

he moved his hands in a mysterious manner, and recited in a hollow voice :

“Bhut, pret, pisach, dana,
Chhee mantar, sab nikal jana,
Mane, mane, Shivka khahna . . . ,”

and the miracle happened as foretold by the Brahman.

Every night the turtle grew, and in the morning it had increased its length by a span, for three days in succession; then it decreased for another three days, until at the end of the week it was again a little animal one span in length.

And this took place although the cage was put underneath the bed in which Oughtred Couzens slept. And there was no explanation for it.

Only Krishnavana had taken the precaution to doctor Couzens's good-night cup of tea with a dose of hemp, to creep into the tent night after night, and to put a different turtle into the cage.

At the end of the week Couzens was a nervous wreck. His old creed was dead, his heart was empty, and he was eager to swallow the new belief, eager to absorb India and in the process become himself absorbed.

And the gentle Brahman pitied and helped him.

He took the empty soul of Oughtred Couzens and filled it with golden peace and happiness, he inoculated it with the ancient wisdom of India, and ever he made a point of dwelling on the fact that it was a little turtle which had worked the final conversion, which had destroyed the pagan belief in the Cross, which had opened to the Englishman the door of Asia's great, mysterious treasure-house. Thus had the many gods of India shown their might in the body of a small animal.

Couzens wondered and believed and worshiped, and even after Krishnavana had left him, he continued more and more to become an integral part of the land in which he lived, believing implicitly in the lessons of the land, and above all things happy in his new belief.

Never again could Christ come back to his soul.

But what of it? He had a new faith, a true faith, a faith which worked miracles, a faith in which happiness and wisdom mated.

And so the Reverend Oughtred Couzens became a Holy Man of Hindustan; he built a little temple near a village, and there, on an altar painted ocher,

he worshiped the greatness of Shiva in the shape of a turtle.

Several years passed through the land, and Krishnavana considered it was time to finish the revenge, and to make the promised offer of a living soul to Kali, the Destroying Goddess.

And so, late one evening, Krishnavana walked into the village where the "yogi-sahib," as the natives called him, had his temple. He found him doing *bhajan* in front of the turtle-image, and there was deep devotion and calm happiness on his face in the yellow-and-pink light of the dying sun.

When he had finished his worship and saw the Brahman, he rushed up to him, with love in his eyes, and took his hands and called him many names of honor and endearment; the East had gone into his blood and his speech, and so he called him a Vast Sea of Excellent Qualities; the Father and Mother of Brahmans, Cows, and Women; the Blood of his Liver, and several other fine things.

Then he turned again to the ocher-colored altar and bowed before the idol, and thanked Krishnavana, saying:

"I owe to you my happiness and my life. You

have opened my eyes to the mysteries of this world and of the next. You have given me peace and happiness. And you did it all through the miracle of the turtle . . . blessed be the Holy Name of Shiva.”

And Krishnavana replied :

“Yes, most dear. It was indeed the miracle of the turtle which lifted the veil of your old, foul creed and which gave to you the mantle of truth. It was the miracle of the turtle which filled the yawning emptiness of your heart. Without it you would be but the shriveled husk of an empty, jingling soul.”

Here he smiled and looked at Couzens, and then he continued gently :

“I shall now explain to you how the miracle of the turtle was done . . .”

That night Krishnavana sacrificed on the blood-stained altar of Kali, the Mother, the soul of Ought-red Couzens, and it was as empty as a dried tinduka fruit, as dry as a dom-nut, and as bitter as a Dead-Sea apple . . .

THAT HAUNTING THING

DIANA MANNING was the very last woman to whom such a thing should have happened. For there was nothing about her in the least psychic or spiritual.

She was matter with a capital *M*, and sex with a capital *S*; \$, rather, since hers was sex without the excuse of passion—sex dealing entirely and shamelessly with bank accounts, high power racing cars, diamonds, and vintage champagnes.

She was lovely, and she drove the hearts and the purses of men as a breath drives a thin sheet of flame.

Only her finger nails gave the mark of the east side tenement (she was a *née* Maggie Smith) where she had been born and bred; for they were too well kept, too highly polished, too perfectly manicured.

But men did not notice. They seldom looked farther than her hair which was like a sculptured reddish-bronze helmet, her low, smooth, ivory fore-

head, her short, delicately curved nose, her lips which were crimson like a fresh sword wound, her eyes which spoke of wondrous promises—and lied damnably.

Her life had been melodramatic—from the man's angle, be it understood, and not from her own since, sublimely evil, she was beyond the moralizing sense of bad and, of course, good.

There had been death in the trail of her shimmering gowns, suicide, ruin, the slime of the divorce courts, disgrace to more than one.

But she had never cared a whit.

She was always petting her own hard thoughts, puncturing the lives of strangers—who never remained strangers for long—with the dagger point of her personality, her greed, her evil; and men kept on fluttering around the red, burning candle which was her life, like silly willow flies.

Then more deaths, Requiems bought and paid for, and all that sort of thing.

Quite melodramatic. Incredibly, garishly so.

But—what will you?

It isn't always the woman who pays, stage and pulpit to the contrary. And—if she *does* pay—it's usually the man who endorses the note.

When she reached her home on the upper west side that Saturday night, she felt the *Thing* the moment she stepped across the threshold. She felt it shrouded, ambiguous, vague. But it was there. Very small at first. Hidden somewhere in the huge, square entrance hall and peeping in upon her mind.

She wondered what it was, and what it might be doing there.

So she called to her maid:

“Annette! Annette!”

She did not call to reassure herself. For the woman was not afraid. That was it exactly; she was not afraid from first to last. If she had been, she would have switched on the light.

But she did not. She left the flat in darkness. Deliberately.

And that, again, was strange since hitherto she had always hated darkness and half-light and seeping, graying shadow; had always wanted and gloried in full, orange bursts of color—big, clustering, massive, cruel lights. She had just that sort of complexion—pallid, you know, smooth, with her color rising evenly, dawn-hued and tender, and never in patches and blurry streaks.

"Annette! Annette!" she called again, a mere matter of habit; for she relied on her respectable, middle-aged Burgundian maid for anything and everything that troubled her, from wrestling with a cynical, inquisitive reporter to putting the correct quantity of ammonia in her bromo seltzers.

"Yes, *madame*," came the maid's sleepy voice.

"Has anybody called?"

"No, *madame*."

"But—"

She looked into the corner of the entrance hall. The *Thing* seemed to be crouching amongst the peacock-green cushions of the ottoman there.

"But, Annette—" she commenced again.

She did not complete the sentence. Somehow, it did not make any difference. The *Thing* was there.

And what did it matter how it had got in?

"I am coming, *madame*," said the maid.

"Never mind. Go to sleep. I'll undress myself. Good night, Annette!"

"Good night, *madame*!"

Diana Manning shrugged her shoulders, walked across the entrance hall, and put her hand on the door-knob of her boudoir. She said to herself that

she would open the door quickly, slide in, and close it as quickly.

For she sensed, rather, she knew, that the *Thing* intended to follow her. It radiated energy and vigor and determination. A certain kindly determination that, just for a fleeting moment, touched in her the sense of awe.

But the moment she opened the door, the moment her lithe body slid from the darkness of the entrance hall into the creamy, silky, perfumed darkness of her boudoir, she knew that the *Thing* flitted in by her side. She felt it blow over her neck, her face, her breast, like a gust of wind.

It even touched her. It touched her *non-physically*. That is the only way to put it.

Nor was she afraid then. On the contrary, she felt rather sorry for the *Thing*. And that touched in her once more the sense of awe—naturally, since to feel sorry was to her a new sensation, since never before in all her life had she felt sorry for anything or anybody.

The result was that she began to hate the *Thing*—with cold, calculating hatred, hatred without fear.

She locked the windows and doors. Quite instinctively her hand brushed the tiny nacre button

which controlled the Venetian chandelier. But she did not press it. She left the boudoir in darkness.

For she was familiar with every stick of furniture about the place. She knew the exact location of the great, carved, crimson-and-gold Spanish renaissance day bed between the window and the fireplace, the big buhl table in the center of the room, the smaller one, covered with a mass of bric-à-brac, between the two windows, the low divan running along the south wall and overlapping toward the fireplace, the three chairs at odd angles, the four little tabourets, and, in the northeast corner, the Chinese screen, inlaid with ivory and lac and jade, behind which she kept a small liquor chest. She knew the room, every inch of it, and could move about it, in spite of the darkness, like a cat.

The *Thing*, on the other hand, whatever it was, would find many pitfalls in the cluttered-up boudoir if it tried to get rambunctious.

These latter were the exact words with which Diana Manning expressed the thought to herself; in this very moment of awe and hatred. Remember—she was born and bred on the east side. Of course, since those days of sooty, sticky, grimy tenement chrysalis, she had learned to broaden her *a's*

and slur her *r*'s and to change the slang of the gutters for that of the race tracks.

But, somehow, she knew that the *Thing* would be more familiar with her earlier diction.

She lay down on the couch, staring into the darkness.

She had decided to watch carefully, to pounce upon the *Thing* suddenly and to throttle it.

For, somehow, the *Thing* had taken on the suggestion of deliberate, personal intention of an aggressive hostility—something which felt and hated, even suffered, yet which had no bodily reality.

The realization of it froze Diana into rigidity—not the rigidity of fear, but something far worse than fear, partaking of Fate—of—she didn't know what.

She only knew that she must watch—then pounce and kill.

“I must have matters out with it,” she thought. “One of us two is master in this room; it or I. And I can't afford to wait all night. At half past eleven young ‘Bunny’ Whipple is calling for me—”

Again, at the thought of Bunny Whipple, she felt that strange, hateful new sensation of awe blended

with pity. The *Thing* was responsible for it—the *Thing!*

How she hated it! She clenched her fists until the knuckles stretched white. What had the *Thing* to do with Bunny Whipple and—yes—with Bunny Whipple's little blue-eyed, golden-haired wife—the bride who—

Diana cut off the thought in mid-air and tossed it aside as if it were a soiled glove.

She watched more carefully than ever, her breath coming in short staccato bursts, her body tense and strained, her mind rigid. She tried to close her mind; she did not want the *Thing* to peep in upon it.

For right then she knew—she did not feel nor guess—she knew that the *Thing* had the trick of expanding and decreasing at will.

It made her angry. She did not consider it fair.

For it gave to the *Thing* the advantage of suddenly shrinking to the size of a pin point and hiding in a knot of the Tabriz rug which covered the floor and, immediately afterwards, of bloating into monstrous size, like a balloon, and floating toward the stuccoed ceiling like an immense soap bubble—

hanging there—looking down with that strange, hateful, rather kindly determination.

“Bunny Whipple’s wife—” she thought again. “I saw her yesterday—and the silly little fool recognized me. She would have spoken to me had I given her the chance. Spoken to me as she wrote me—asking me to give her back her husband’s love—*love*—”

Her mind formed the word, caressed it as if it were something futile and soft and naïve and laughable, like a ball of cotton or a tiny kitten—

The next moment, she whipped it aside with all her hard will. She sat up straight.

For, at the forming of the word, the *Thing* which a second earlier had been a pin-point sitting on the gilded edge of a Sèvres vase, bloated and stretched gigantically, leaped up, appeared to float, leaped again toward the ceiling as if trying to jerk it away from the cross beams.

Then, just as suddenly, it dropped on the floor. It lay there, roaring with laughter.

Diana did not hear the laughter. She felt it. She knew it.

Too, she knew exactly where it was; between the large buhl table and the divan. She’d get it and

choke it while it lay there helpless with merriment.

She jumped from her couch, her fingers spread like a cat's claws.

"I'll get you—you—you *Thing!*" she said the words out loud. "I'll get you! I'll get you!"

Her voice rose in a shrill, tearing shriek—step by step, she approached the divan.

"I'll get you—get you—get you—"

"Madame! Madame! Did you call me?"

It was the maid's voice coming from the hall.

"No—no! Go to bed, Annette! Go to bed—do you hear me?" as the maid rattled the door-knob.

"I don't want to be disturbed—"

"I beg your pardon, *madame.*" Annette coughed discreetly. "I didn't know that anybody—thought you had come home alone—I—"

"Go to bed! At once!" Diana shrieked; then, the maid's footsteps pattering away, she fell on the couch, panting.

She was in a towering rage. She felt sure that if it had not been for the maid she could have pounced upon the *Thing* while it lay there on the floor, roaring with laughter.

Now the laughter had died out and the *Thing* had got away. It had shrunk into a tiny butterfly—

that's how Diana felt it—which was beating its wings against the brass rod of the portières. But it was fluttering rather helplessly, blindly, as if it had lost some of its energy and vigor; and again Diana felt sorry and correspondingly her hatred grew. And her determination.

“I'll get you—you—”

She waited until her breath came more evenly, rose, walked noiselessly to the portières and rustled them.

The *Thing* was startled. Diana could feel the tiny wings flutter and beat. She could hear its terrible, straining effort to bloat into a huge soap-bubble and, not succeeding, to shrink into a pin-point.

But something was making it impossible, and Diana knew what it was.

It was the fact that, in one of the hidden back cells of her brain, the thought of Bunny Whipple's silly little fool of a golden-haired wife had taken firm root, refused to budge.

So Diana kept the thought. She nursed it. It seemed like a bait, and she thrust it forward.

She spoke out loud, her face raised up to the portières:

“Silly little fool of a golden-haired bride!” and she added, out of subconscious volition: “Silly Bunny!”

She had spoken the last words caressingly, as a naughty boy speaks to a cat before he catches her and tweaks her tail, and the *Thing* was about to fall into the trap. For a second it hovered on the brass rod, seemed to wait, expectant, undecided.

Then it came down a few inches. It fluttered within reach of Diana’s outstretched hand.

But when she closed her hand suddenly, viciously, it winged away again, breathless, frightened, but unharmed. It flew into the center of the room. It made a renewed terrible effort to bloat into a balloon.

And this time it succeeded—partly.

She did not feel exactly what shape it had assumed, but it was something amorphous, flabby, covered all over with soft bumps which were very beastly.

She followed, more determined than ever, and the *Thing* tried to leap into the air.

It had nearly succeeded when Diana, with quick presence of mind, thought again of Bunny Whipple and Bunny Whipple’s silly, golden-haired wife.

“She asks me to give her back Bunny’s love—his love! God! Does the silly little fool think that Bunny loves me? Does she call that—love?”

This time it was Diana who burst into a roar of laughter, and the *Thing* stood still and listened, its head cocked on one side, stupid, ridiculous, foolish; and when Diana neared it, when it tried to fly, to hover, to swing in mid air, all it succeeded in doing was to move swiftly about the room, just an inch or two away from the woman’s groping fingers.

Diana laughed again, for she knew that the *Thing* had lost its faculty of flying, that it would not be able to escape her for long with the chances all in her favor.

For the boudoir was cluttered with furniture, and she knew the location of every piece, while the *Thing* would lose itself, stumble, fall, and then—

“Wait! You just wait!” she whispered; and the *Thing* backing away from the center of the room toward the carved Chinese screen, she followed step by step, her fingers groping, clawing, the lust of the hunter in her eyes, in her heart.

“I’ll throttle you—”

Then she reconsidered. To throttle so as to kill, she would have to measure her own strength exactly

against the *Thing's* strength of resistance. And that would be hard.

For the *Thing* was non-physical. It had no body.

But it was sure to have a heart. She would stab that heart.

So she picked from the buhl table the jeweled Circassian dagger which she had admired the day before in a little shop on Lexington Avenue and which Bunny had given to her—with some very foolish remark, quite typical of him—she remembered. “I wish to God you'd kill yourself with it! Get out of my life—leave me in peace—me and Lottie—”

Lottie was the silly, golden-haired wife.

But when, dagger in hand, Diana took up the chase again, she was disappointed. For the *Thing* seemed as familiar with the room as she herself. It avoided sliding rugs, sharp-cornered buhl tables, tabourets and chairs placed at odd angles. It never as much as grazed a single one of the many brittle bits of bric-à-brac.

Once it chuckled as if faintly amused at something.

But Diana did not give up heart. She had made

up her mind, and she was a hard woman—her soul a blending of diamond and fire-kissed steel.

“I’ll get you!” and she thought of a new, better way. She would corner the *Thing*.

Again she advanced, slowly, cautiously, step by step, driving the *Thing* before her across the width of the room, always keeping uppermost in her mind the thought of Bunny Whipple and his silly fool of a golden-haired wife—the thought which was paralyzing the *Thing’s* faculty of bloating and shrinking and flying.

The end came very suddenly.

Watching her chance, she had the *Thing* cornered, straight up against the inlaid Chinese screen.

It tried to shrink—to bloat—to fly—to get away.

But Diana had timed her action to the click of a second. She brought the dagger down—with all her strength—and the *Thing* crumpled, it gave, it was not.

There was just a sharp pain, a crimson smear, and a very soft voice from a far, starry, velvety distance.

“You have killed me, Diana!”

“Killed—whom? Who are you?”

“The evil in your soul, Diana! The evil—” then

something which had been congealed seemed to turn fluid and alive and golden; something rose into a state that was too calm to be ecstasy.

The next morning, Bunny Whipple's silly, blue-eyed, golden-haired wife was sitting across from her husband at breakfast.

He was white and haggard and shaky. She looked at him, pity in her eyes.

"Have you seen the morning paper, Bunny?" she asked.

"No! Don't want to. More scandal about me, I guess—" he bit the words off savagely.

"Only—that—that woman—" she faltered.

"Diana Manning! All right! What about her?"

"She was found dead last night—by her maid. She had stabbed herself through the heart with a Circassian dagger. The—the papers say that a smile was on her face—a happy, sweet smile—as if—"

She picked up the *Star* and read the reporter's lyric outburst out loud:

"As if death had brought her happiness and salvation and a deep, calm, glorious fulfillment."

Bunny Whipple did not reply. He stared into his coffee cup.

Very suddenly he looked up. His wife had risen and walked around the table toward him.

She put her slim, white hands on his shoulders.

There were tears in her eyes—tears and a trembling question.

He drew her to him, and kissed her.

THE MAN WHO LOST CASTE

IN those days, when the first wave of Hindu emigration struck the Pacific Littoral, I had a little Oriental shop down Yeslerway, in the city of Seattle. My tiny show-window was crammed with the mellow, scented things of the turbaned places. There were rugs and laces and shawls from many lands, carved ivories and soapstones, white jade and green jade; and finally there were a few Hindu gods and many and various daggers, bolos and barongs and kurkrees and khyberees.

Then came the day when he walked into my shop, all the six foot four of him, straight as a lance at rest, bearded, hook-nosed, pink-turbaned, patient-eyed, and silken-voiced. He handled with reverence the little peacock god and the cruel, scissor-like Scinde blade which lay on the counter. And so I knew that he was a Mahratta and a high-caste.

He told me that he was the servant of a retired Anglo-Indian officer who lived in the Queen Anne's

Addition, and Moslim though I am and Mahratta though he was, we became friends, even if we could not break bread together.

Then one evening, when spring was white and pink, and the night air heavy with the musk of remembrance and homesickness, he told me his story:

“I am Dajee, the Mahratta. I am a high-caste. The peacock is sacred to my clan. We cannot kill that bird, and we worship its feathers.

“To-day I serve a beef-eating Englishman, a cannibal of the holy cow, though the coral necklace that I wear was handed down in our family from the time of my great-great-great-grandfather’s great-great-great-grandfather.

“But who can avoid what is written by Brahma on the forehead? Rajahs and *ryots* are alike subject to the sports of Fate.

“To-day I am in a cold land sodden with rain, and once I lived in a golden land pregnant with the beam of the warm sun. To-day I softly obey the voice of the foreigner, though my ancestors were warriors who gave the sword when it was red and a land hissing with blood.

“We are all the brittle toys of Destiny, even I, who am Dajee, a Mahratta, a high-caste.

“My father died when I was little, and there were a number of female relatives to feed. Then I borrowed forty-five rupees for my marriage. I married the daughter of Ranjee when she was tall enough to reach my waist. But my wife fell ill when she was still but a child. And she sickened and died. Then my bullock died, and there was the interest on the loan to be paid; and so the Sowcar from whom I had borrowed the money took my ancestral farm in the Moffusil.

“Thus was I alone.

“What should a man do?

“I sat down and awaited the words of Fate. And Fate spoke.

“The day after the Sowcar took the farm, some pilgrims with crimson banners passed through the village, and they visited the little shrine of Vithal, and in the evening they did *bhajan* before the images.

“There were clouds in the sky, and the sunset was red. And the redness fell on the whirling limbs and on the banners and on the feet of the gods and goddesses, and everything seemed bathed in a vast sea of blood. And the red lights and the wild sound of the *bhajan* turned my head. Madness

tugged at my heart-strings. So I leapt in and I joined in the dance.

“They were Mahars, low-castes, filth unspeakable and reeking. I was Dajee, the Mahratta, a high-caste.

“Thus I lost my caste.

“I had lost my farm, my bullock, and my wife. I was a poor man. And how can a poor man feast the many priests? How can a poor man regain his caste?

“I followed my *Karma*. I bought a piece of red cloth which I tied to a stick. I begged for food, and went with the pilgrims on the road to Phandarpur.

“I shall never forget the first festival—the stifling press of worshipers in the temple, the streams coming up and down the *ghats*, the frenzy of the *bhajan* at night, and the image of the languid full moon in the water of the river.

“The pilgrims returned to their own country. But what was I to do? Could I return to the Moffusil?—I had lost my caste.

“So I took stick and bowl and lived on alms. I went to various Vaishnavite shrines. True I was to the worship. Assiduously I repeated the name

of Hari, and all my thoughts were of release from worldly ambition, and of devotion to him.

“I wandered from the snows of Dhaulagiri to the *lingams* of Ceylon, and then I met the ascetic from Kashmere, the worshiper of the Lord Shiva, and I became his pupil and did bodily penance.

“Gradually I subdued my body. I submitted to the supreme ordeal of fire. I walked barefoot through the white-hot charcoal, I uncovered my head to the burning fire-bath, and I felt not the pain of the body.

“Only my tortured soul writhed with the anguish of my Fate. For I was alone and an outcast.

“I sat in the midday heat during the month of pilgrimages, with seven fires around me and the sun scorching my shaven head, and I turned my eyes toward myself and meditated on the mysterious way which is Life.

“Then I met the holy man from Guzerat who told me that to clear my vision and fatten the glebe of my understanding, I must do penance with the head hanging downward. I remember well when I started this penance.

“It was in the Grishna season, and behind the western mountains the sun was setting, shrouded

with layers of gloomy clouds tinged with red like fresh-spilt blood. One last look I took at mountain and plain, and never had the mountains seemed so high, never the plains so broad. Then I hang with my head downward and shut my eyes.

“When I opened them, when I saw it all upside down, the sight was marvelous beyond description. The blue hills had lost their struggling height and were a deep, mysterious, swallowing void. Against them the sky stood out, bold, sharp, intense, like a range of hills of translucent sardonyx and aquamarine, immeasurably distant; and the fringe of clouds at the base of the sky seemed a lake of molten amber with billows of tossing, sacrificial fire.

“After the penance I went on pilgrimage to the Seven Holy rivers of Hindustan, and I sat in cells in lonely shrines, gazing myself into stupefaction. And so, when I thought that I had freed my soul of fleshly desires, I joined holy mendicants of many degrees.

“But I found the holy men to be quarrelsome and jealous, greedy and lustful, kissing to-day the feet of the many-armed gods and to-morrow killing men and poisoning cattle: each following his own Fate, toward the bad or toward the good.

“So what was the use of fighting against Fate?”

“Then I met the Christian teacher, and he explained to me the system of his religion. I began to wonder if his was the right way, and so I got work on the railway so as to be able to watch the Christians. But I found them as gross and as carnal as all the others, and I saw no worship at all, nor heard any man repeat the name of God except to abuse.

“Also I spoke to the Christian teacher of having lost my caste. But he was angry and said that caste does not exist. Decidedly, he was a gray-minded son of an owl, of no understanding. And I left him.

“Then I became very despondent and hated Life. And I took to *ganja* smoking. And then, since I had lost my god, my wife, my farm, my bullock, and my caste, I stole.

“Several times I was convicted, and finally, two years ago, I got a long sentence in jail.”

The Mahratta stopped in the recital of his tale and looked straight into the distance. So I asked him:

“A long sentence in jail? But you are here, in America.”

Calmly he lit a fresh cigarette and replied :

“Why, yes. I am here. I followed my Fate.

“One day I remembered the strength of my sword-arm, and I strangled the jailer, and I took ship, and so I am here.

“What was I to do? In killing the jailer I but followed my *Karma*, and in gurgling out his last breath under the clutch of my hands, he but followed his. There is neither right nor wrong. All is *Karma*.

“I am Dajee, the Mahratta, and a high-caste. The peacock is sacred to my clan. But I work for the beef-eating foreigner in this cold land.

“In this incarnation Fate stole my caste, so what is it to me where and how I live?

“When I walk through the streets in the evening I think of the many ways of release which I tried and found to be vain, and of what will be the end, and what will be my next life.

“It comforts me to think that as in this life I do not remember the incidents of my last, so in the next one this life will be forgotten.

“For memory is of the body, and not of the soul.

“Once I spoke to the Englishman for whom I

work, but he wishes to live again as the same being after death. For he is a Christian.

“But why?”

“To remember that I am myself for one lifetime has oppressed me. To be the same being in another life would be worse than the torments of the *ruru* worm.

“To remember oneself forever and ever, with no chance of forgetting, is a thought too horrible for the mind to endure.

“So what should I do?”

“I follow the way of my *Karma*. Who can avoid what is written on the forehead?”

SILENCE

RAOUL D'ARGENTAYE, Marquis de Saint-Hubert, had the peculiar trick of spreading a sort of hush about him wherever he went; not a hush of dread, but rather one of uneasy expectancy as if he were waiting for the answer to a silent question—though at times he put it into thin, trembling words which nobody understood except Father Gustave, the old priest who officiated at the Church of Saint-Jacques-de-Grâce.

The marquis seemed to look for the answer to his question in the face of every man whom he encountered in his daily wanderings through the narrow, packed streets which converge on the Place de Thionville.

There, in the busiest section of Paris, he had lived for many years, ever since his return from Corsica, in one of those huge apartment barracks of red brick and white stucco, the front pierced with countless and unevenly spaced windows enlivened by bird-

cages, and flowers in pots, and rags hung out to dry, and—if the weather was warm—by the frowzy heads of housewives greeting each other in the raucous jargon of the neighborhood — “*Bonjour, la p'tite mère!—et la santé, ça colle toujours?*” —and then some Rabelaisian jest as one of the artisans looked up from his basement shop and joined in the conversation of the women.

At first the people of the *quartier*—the clock-makers and printers and metal-workers whose ancestors had plied their trade here since long before the Revolution—had wondered when the marquis had come among them, with his immaculate clothes, his silk hat with the eight high-lights, and his grave, old-fashioned manners. Some had asked him why he lived here, near the Place de Thionville, in preference to his palace of the Rue de Grenelle—to receive the never-varying reply:

“There are Corsicans here. And perhaps one of them will tell me some day!”

But years had passed, and now they were familiar with the strange habits of the marquis. They knew that every time he met one of those young, dark-haired, hawk-faced Corsicans, who came to the

quartier as apprentices to some ancient craft, he would stop him with the flat, trembling question, "*Monsieur*, did you by any chance recognize the—ah—the gentleman who called on my wife this afternoon?" and then he would walk down the street without waiting for a reply, while the children of the neighborhood, with the instinctive cruelty of the young, would run after him with loud shouts of—"*Monsieur le marquis! Monsieur le marquis!* You haven't got a wife!"—and gales of laughter which he did not seem to hear.

The story? Oh, yes—the reason for the dumb quest in the marquis's faded old eyes, for the hush which surrounded him, for the strange question with which he approached the hawk-faced young Corsicans—the tale of twenty years before which was known only to Father Gustave, the old priest who officiated at the Church of Saint-Jacques-de-Grâce.

In those days the marquis was young and handsome, the possessor of a princely fortune, and happily married to the young Countess Laetitia Pozzo-Paoli, the last descendant of an ancient impover-

ished Corsican house that had flourished and fallen in a gaunt castle which frowned above a little village on the west coast of the island.

She was superb and placid like a Raphael with a touch of Titian, and beneath the curly mist of her golden hair—the heritage, doubtless, of some Viking ancestor—black eyes looked out with the sort of feminine pathos which meant nothing in particular—except to M. de Saint-Hubertin, who adored her. She was not supremely brilliant, nor had she the sound education which a Frenchwoman of her rank would have had, but she was filled with something that took the place of both; something best described as a deep, luminous vivacity and a quick, trenchant wit which was slightly cruel at times.

After their marriage, when her husband wanted to take her away from the little Corsican village, to Paris, to the palace in the Rue de Grenelle, so that she should take the place in society due her by his name and escutcheon, she laughed with a flash of small, white, even teeth.

She replied that Corsica was her own land, the land which she loved and understood—the land which loved and understood her.

“Paris?” she added, in that dramatic southern manner of hers, “society?—no, no, my friend, I want nothing of it! Paris society is only the home of petty and despicable people, of petty and despicable emotions—a thing which swings half-way between a modiste’s shop and the gallows!”

“And what is Corsica?” laughed her husband.

“Don’t you feel it?” she countered—and then, “Why—it is this, this, this!”

And she pointed from the balcony of the crumbling old castle out to the sea, opaque and green and solid like a metal plaque; at the patches of tufted beach grass that turned from gold to silver as the hot south wind twisted them over, at the sky which was of such an intense blue that at times it quivered with black and purple lights.

Again, at night, when she and the marquis strolled through the tortuous, hilly streets of the village, she asked him to feel Corsica—the heart of it—and she pointed at the bold-eyed young girls, brown like Florentine bronzes, who were walking arm in arm, by threes and fours, with rhythmic, feline movements of their supple hips; at the keen-faced men with their staring eyes and the pose of head and body which spoke of love and hatred and pride—

which spoke, too, of the racial instinct which was theirs.

“I love it,” she murmured, breathing through her teeth in a strangely sensuous manner, and the marquis felt a tearing pang of jealousy—of the flesh, not of the mind—as if this harsh, hot land of Corsica were a man, with a man’s feelings.

For love of his wife he remained. For love of her he tried to identify himself with the land.

He took part in local politics, he gave largely to local charities, endowing a hospital, a school for orphans, a public library, building an ornamental fountain in the market-place of the little village—and he felt that though the people spoke thanks, they did not give thanks.

They doffed their caps and bowed; they stepped to one side when they met him in the narrow streets; they said “*bonjour, monsieur le marquis*” with their metallic southern voices; they brought him fruit and flowers on the days of the great saints.

Yet they made him feel that he was a Frenchman, a foreigner, an intruder, while they were Corsicans, sufficient to themselves, doing and feeling nothing in quite the same way as other people, and

placing themselves, perhaps consciously, apart from other people.

He noticed, too, that they never addressed his wife as "*madame la marquise*," but by her maiden name of Pozzo-Paoli, and when he mentioned it to her, half jesting and half bitter, she replied that they were right.

"Marriage," she said, "is the matter of one life—of two lives, rather—which begins with a priest's mumbled words and which stops at the grave. But my name, my clan, my blood—why, *mon pauvre ami*, it is like this land—eternal—the result of centuries and centuries and centuries!"

He loved her. In a way, he was happy. But he felt the barrier which was between him and her, and he tried to analyze and dissect it in his sane, logical French way.

At first he ascribed it to the difference in the sex relations which exist north and south—the difference which in the north, in France and England, gives the erotic superiority and aggressiveness to the man, and in the south to the woman, together with a sort of intense and grave adjustment of nervous energy.

But gradually he understood that, in the case of Laetitia, this analysis was wrong. He felt that the invisible barrier was not the result of inherited temperament and atavistic qualities and impulses, but due to the direct influence of the land itself—a land, he said to himself, which had the physical and spiritual attributes of Man; and he brooded on the thought until often, in his dreams, he felt like taking the land by the throat and throttling it as he would a man—a man who had stolen his wife's love.

As he walked through the village he imagined that there was laughter and mocking and enmity in the air—in the rustle of the trees, in the hot swing of the breeze, the dim stir of the dry beach grass, and the tinkling of the goat-bells.

He would have liked to ascribe it to some pathological disturbance, but he knew that he was perfectly sane—and so, early one afternoon in mid-summer, he spoke of it to his wife.

He tried to speak of it jestingly, like a man burdened by a conviction as certain as fate, and burdened, too, by the other conviction that confession and utterance would bring disbelief and stark, gaping ridicule; and so he was shocked—shocked and

afraid—when his wife confirmed his subconscious suspicion in a matter-of-fact way.

“Why, yes, my friend,” she said, “you are quite right. This land—this village—these rocks are living, living. I’ve tried to tell you so before. Corsica has a heart—and that heart does not love you—it does not like you—and I—”

“You—you—what *about* you?” he cried, suddenly furious.

She pulled his long Gallic mustache.

“Raoul,” she said in a burst of lean, wiry vivacity, and looking straight at him, “I am a woman—and a Corsican. And this—this land of mine—it will lie for me—it will kill for me, and”—she hesitated, then continued—“it will be silent for me!”

And when, quiet once more, but puzzled, he asked her to explain what she meant by her last words, she gave him a rapid little kiss and told him that it was time for his afternoon walk.

For, straight through the hottest months of the year, he had the habit of long, daily afternoon walks, at a time when all the villagers were taking their siesta behind closed shutters, and when nobody was abroad except himself and the little, pale-blue butterflies.

He walked down the length of the main street, past the little white, stone houses asleep in the sun, past the *mairie* where the pompous mayor was drowsing across from the pompous chief of gendarmes, past the great cast-iron fountain which he had given to the municipality; and again he felt the harsh enmity of the land.

It was hotter than usual—with a sort of hushed, dry, tense heat which sent the blood racing through his veins; and it seemed to him that, beneath his feet, from the heart of the land, he could hear a muffled, staccato breathing which was like the breathing of a huge, amorphous beast—a beast about to rise and stretch—and kill—as though, across the forests and rocks on its breast, the spirit of Corsica called to him—mocking, jeering, cruel, inimical—and currents of subterranean earth life tugged and jerked at his self.

The marquis dried his face with his handkerchief.

Once more he tried to tell himself that it was all the result of a pathological disturbance, and that what he needed was a trip to Paris, three hundred francs paid into the hands of Dr. Hector Lafrique, the alienist, and a brome prescription filled at the

nearest drug-store; but even as he tried to force the thought on his subconscious mind, he knew that he was only playing hide-and-seek with his sensations, that he was bluffing himself.

There was no doubt of it. The land was living, living!—just as his wife had said—and, beneath his feet, it bunched with a terrible power that sought to dispel and drive him through space—like something hated and useless which was not wanted, here, in Corsica.

His sense of hearing became tensely acute, and, in the hot, still air, the whisper of the earth grew—it flew up and called to him with a great, broken, rumbling shout.

He trembled, then lurched curiously to one side. The balance and adjustment of his physical frame seemed to shift and alter. Very suddenly a black haze shot with sulfurous-yellow, rose in the west. The ocean bloated and recoiled. The harried sun shivered out of sight. The ground writhed and groaned like a woman in travail. A wind sprang up, red-hot as from a gigantic furnace, and rattled all the million leaves.

Another writhe and groan, of unutterable suffering and unutterable loneliness.

Then he felt a strange, sinking sensation at the pit of his stomach and fell, face foremost.

An immense dark shutter dropped noiselessly, with the speed of lightning, across his mind; and, even at the moment of losing consciousness, he told himself that he had lost and that Corsica had won.

The first thing which he felt when he recovered his senses was that a star was looking at him; then two, then three, and finally he saw that it was night and that the heavens were clear again.

He staggered, rubbed his eyes, and stared. He touched his arms and legs—no—he was not wounded!

But what had happened?

He looked out, to the sea. It stretched, in a sodden, immobile calm; but suddenly it seemed to him that it had changed, that the edge of the horizon was more flat than it had been before.

Then he understood—there had been an earthquake. He turned quickly, toward the village.

It was not there.

There was only a ruined, broken mass, with pink and orange flame-tongues licking over it, while behind the stiff, lanky poplars which edged the *mairie*

a high-blazing, fuliginous whirl of smoke was touching the skies.

He stood quite still. His eyes sought the familiar silhouette of the gaunt old castle and, with a crash in his brain, he realized that that, too, had disappeared.

The land had taken toll—it had wiped out the home which had witnessed his love and his happiness.

And Laetitia—his wife? She must be among the ruins!

With the cry of a wounded animal the marquis stumbled through the battered, crumpled streets. As he passed the *mairie* the whole side of it gave way and came tumbling down in a mad, twisting, smoking heap. A flaming beam grazed his face. He brushed it aside as he would an insect, and kept on.

This land, he thought incoherently as he ran, this land of Corsica—it had killed his wife; and he shook his fists at the trees and the rocks while great tears blurred his eyes.

But he kept on in the direction of the gaunt, gray blotch where the castle had stood, stepping

here and there on shapeless, black things which writhed and moaned as his feet touched them.

The air was torn with the cries of animals, and of men and women and little children.

"Padre!" "Madre!" "O misericordia!" "Au secours!" "Dieu!" "Sangu Cristu!" came the shrill, agonized shouts in a mixture of French and Corsican; and he passed men who were staggering as if they were drunk, their hands stretched out in front of them; there were others who were sitting on the débris of their homes, still, vacant-eyed, as if turned into stone; and one woman had gone mad—she was dancing among the slow-lapping flames, her skirts kilted to her knees, a dead babe in her arms.

He ran on.

Would he arrive in time? Perhaps she was still alive, mercifully imprisoned by some stout stones or beams.

There was a choked, sobbing cry for help from a ruined mass to the left of the church, and he saw, sharp in the moonlight, the naked arm of a woman stretching from between a jagged pile of burning wood. The fingers, covered with rings, groped blindly, like the tentacles of an octopus.

But the marquis did not stop to help. His eyes saw; his brain registered the stark fact of the thing; but there was no meaning to it, nor was there pity in his soul.

There was only the thought of his wife, up there, among the crumbling, choking ruins.

When he reached the hill whence once the castle of the Pozzo-Paolis had frowned on the village, he saw that nothing was left standing except an old carved Gothic wall, and above it, supported by iron corbels which were twisted into the silhouette of some grinning, obscene maw, a balcony swinging crazily from side to side like a gigantic spider-web.

He stopped, out of breath, shivering in spite of the heat which fanned up from the burning village, undecided what to do and how to do it.

Of course she was down there, somewhere among the jagged stones and the charred timbers.

But where should he begin his search? He knew that he must find her even if she was dead—that he could not leave her dead body crushed and buried by Corsican soil, a trophy to the lust of this sinister, man-killing land; and so, very gently, with infinite precautions, clutching a broken beam here and a twisted, bent end of metal there, he swung

himself up to the ruins of the castle as if he were afraid to hurt the loved body through the heavy layer of stone and masonry which covered it.

So he worked with superhuman strength, tearing off wood and metal like so much paper, lifting massive blocks of smooth marble and coarse-grained granite, and tossing them over his shoulder as if they were pebbles, attacking with his bare hands beams studded with rusty nails and other beams still smoldering and hot.

Hour after hour he worked, stopping now and then to call "Laetitia! Laetitia!"

And when the young sun boomed up in the west he was still there, tearing, jerking, lifting, clawing, pushing—with his naked, frenzied hands, while the pulverized plaster ran through his fingers like water, and while occasionally a stone which he had braced up with terrible effort tumbled back into place—crushing him, wounding him.

Quite suddenly there was a shifting and heaving among the ruins. He saw that his labors had displaced a large mass of stones and masonry which slid to one side with a protesting rumble.

A hole, black, mysterious, yawned at his feet and,

sticking out of it was a bit of rose-and-silver brocade—the wall-covering of his wife's bedroom.

The marquis stooped and reached down into the hole. Then he gave a cry.

He had touched bare flesh—flesh which was soft and clay-cold.

Again he groped. His fingers strayed up. They encountered a tangled mass of curly hair.

He withdrew his fingers and, without as much as a groan, the marquis recommenced his work.

She was in there—perhaps she was still alive.

“Mary, Mother of God!”—the prayer surged in his heart; and with kicks and jerks, pushing and clawing, frantically, desperately, he bent to the task, and it seemed to him that he was ripping away the very intestines of this harsh land which had imprisoned his best beloved in an avalanche of senseless, cruel ruin.

Finally he summoned all his strength, all his love, and all his despair into a gigantic effort.

There was a crunching, protesting noise—a sudden recoil which sent the marquis spinning backward—broken stones fell with a whistling noise like musketry fire, and the hole gaped far apart.

The marquis stepped down into it. A haggard

sun-ray danced in, as if to show him the way; and there, stretched on a divan, dressed in a foamy, lacy negligée, was his wife.

He looked at her. He knew at once that she was dead; and he bent down to kiss her cold lips.

“Oh, Laetitia, my love, my wife!” he cried in a voice that was a barely audible croak. “Oh, my love—”

Then, suddenly, he drew himself up again. He stood quite still.

For, bending down, he had seen another body—the body of a man—a few feet away.

He looked again at the face of his wife. An ecstatic smile was playing about the cold lips—a smile of love—of desire—

And over there was the body of a man—not a servant come in to warn his mistress when the first rumbling of the earth had shaken the towers of the ancient castle—but a well-dressed man, a gentleman—and between his cramped fingers there was a spray of stephanotis, the sweet-smelling exotic which was his wife’s favorite flower—

The marquis was quite calm, quite silent. He accepted his fate.

Here, before his eyes, was the fact that his wife

had deceived him, and there was no challenging it.

It did not even allow of jealousy; for jealousy is bred by doubt—and not by knowledge

But, somehow, it seemed vital to him that he should know the name of this dead man.

So he stooped down and looked; and then he gave a cry; one of those long-drawn, quivering cries in which the soul tries to burst the bonds of the tortured mind and to find refuge in the madness of forgetting.

His wife had been right. She had said that Corsica would lie for her and kill for her and be silent for her.

Here was the proof.

For the soil of Corsica had crushed the face of his wife's lover into unrecognizable pulp.

Yes—Corsica had won—in life it had stolen the love of his wife, and in death it still shielded the dishonoring secret; and slowly, like a man in a dream, the marquis walked away from the ruin, back through the streets of the crumbling village.

He stopped every man with the same, flat, trembling question:

“Monsieur, did you by any chance recognize the

—ah—the gentleman who called on my wife this afternoon?”

But nobody replied, though everybody knew; and so, finally, he came to Father Gustave, the old priest who for years had officiated at the village church—the old priest who afterwards followed him to Paris and remained close to him, for the love of Christ and because of the pity in his soul.

KHIZR

AND thus it came about that twelve days after Beiram, the great King Suleiman—master of the seven climes, emperor of the winds, illustrious sultan of jinns and giants—took his youngest son, Aziz-Ullah, by the hand and led him into the golden hall of state where he made to seat him on the throne of the Caliphs. Then the King sent out black slaves, dressed in purple and silver, and commanded them to summon to his presence his thirty vezirs and his ninety sons; and when they had all assembled in the golden hall of state, he spoke to them, saying:

“My youngest son, Aziz-Ullah, shall be ruler in my stead, for he has shown himself to be as wise as Haroun-el-Rashid. Nay, he is as wise as Omar, the great Caliph, on whom be peace; and thus I shall cede to him the mastery of the seven climes, the empire of the winds, the sultanate of jinns and giants. To him I give the hand of the beautiful Princess Zoleidé.”

And Aziz-Ullah bowed humbly before his father, the great King Suleiman, and all rejoiced; slaves brought sherbet and coffee and pipes with long mouthpieces of amber and diamond, and then a story-teller from Egypt entered the golden hall of state and he told the story of the faithless wife and the just kadee, which is the story of Khizr, the mighty spirit, and Khassoum ibn Taib, the seeker for wisdom.

Yes, you children of Arab fathers, gladly I shall tell you the wonderful story, the true story which relates how wickedness was punished, how righteousness found its shining reward, and which also proves once more that woman is the mother of deceit and falsehood—Do not bite your mustache, young brother of my heart, even if your wife is young and the apple of your eye; well we know it, for did we not see you bringing presents to her father's house only two moons ago? Before you drain the wine of life, you will yet learn to remember the wise saying of the great King Solomon of the tribe of Israel: "Obedience to women is the entrance gate to Jehenna."

I shall tell you the story of stories, full of wis-

dom and as clever as the fable of the wolf and the fox; but, by the beard of the Prophet, on whom be peace, I am but a poor man and my children are many and starving. Alms are the wealth of the poor, my brothers; give me a handful of *piastres*, a little child's handful of small silver *piastres*, and may Allah never open to me the gates of Paradise if I do not delight your hearts with the true story of the just kadee and the faithless woman.

Alhamdulillah!—Blessings on him who is open-handed and kind to the poor—Thanks, my master, may Allah grant thee eternal happiness; may the hand of Ali protect thy children and thy children's children from the evil eye—

I am poor and my children are starving—thanks, son of noble sires, thou art indeed as generous as Mahroud, the great Sultan, and thou dost not look with indifference on thy starving neighbor—pass the bowl to the left, for I see another true believer ready to loosen the strings of his bulging purse to give alms to this poorest of story-tellers.

Praises be to the Most High!—Here is another and even another who know the words in the book

of the Koran: "O true believers, bestow alms of the good things which ye have gained to those threatened with poverty."

Ye are indeed Moslim; I take refuge in the cooling shadow of your generosity, and now I shall tell you the story which delighted the heart of Aziz-Ullah, of his noble father, his ninety brothers and the thirty vezirs; the story of the wisest of kadees and the most deceitful of women, which is the story of Khassoum and Khizr, the mighty spirit.

Know then, ye sons of Arab fathers, that once there existed a land which the unbelievers had not yet overrun with their merchants and their soldiers, their railways and their black-coated priests. In this land there was a town which the Prophet himself had honored with his presence; it was a town holier than Kairwan before the French—Allah's curse on them and their children—had desecrated its sacred buildings, and greater and richer than Stamboul itself, the home of the Caliph, the commander of the faithful.

This town was the asylum of knowledge and instruction, the abode of greatness, the home of justice and piety; the wondering gaze of the stranger beheld there three thousand public baths, built of

marble and granite; and the minarets of innumerable mosques pointing to the sky like so many thousands of masts in the port of Algiers—great mosques, white and dazzling in the yellow sunshine, prayers of stone, built to commemorate the holy names of the Most High King of men, the Almighty, the Everlasting who has created and disposed of thousands of worlds. There is no God but He.

In this town there lived two brothers, Nassim and Khassoum, the sons of Hadji Taib, a rich seller of perfumes who had come from Yemen, the home of his ancestors.

One day a marabout on pilgrimage bent, found hospitality in Taib's house, and he looked at the palms of Nassim and Khassoum who were playing in the courtyard and said: "Taib, thy son Nassim shall be rich and powerful; but he shall perish through his brother's love. Khassoum, thy second-born, shall be poor; but Khizr, the mighty spirit, shall be always at his right and shall teach him to seek for the innermost secret of Islam. He shall know the knowledge of books, the love of the flesh, the bitterness of deceit, the triumph of justice—and then he shall know Islam."

Taib listened to the inspired words of the holy marabout, and then he went to the harem and told the mother of his two sons what had been prophesied.

The two brothers grew up side by side, and when they had reached the age of manhood they went together on pilgrimage to behold the blessed towns of Mecca and Medina.

Now, Hadji Khassoum was a noble youth and a true Moslim; he was resigned unto Allah, pious and generous; he was an old man in prudence, but a youth in the might of his two strong arms; his face was as fair as the moon on the fourteenth day, and his body as slender and supple as a Damascan blade; his sword was triumphant in the cause of justice, and when he opened his mouth to speak, men would point at him and say: "Listen to the pilgrim whose words are like sweet liquid honey; he is indeed as wise as 'Asef."

Such was Khassoum, the son of Taib.

But his elder brother, Nassim, was shaped in the likeness of Eblis, the cursed father of lies; the fruit of his mouth was bitter and his sharp tongue darted forth venom like the unclean reptile found in the

grass; the poor starved at his door, and he bared his dagger only to further the rule of iniquity and of oppression; he was indeed like the snake which stings his mother and kills her even as she bears him. He, too, was a Hadji; but the circumambulation of the shrines had done him little good and he returned from Mecca as bad and cruel and greedy and faithless as on the day when he had donned the pilgrim's garb. Allah had sealed his heart, and whenever he was seen holding converse with another man, the little children would gather around him and say: "Who is the man whom you are duping to-day, O Nassim, son of Taib?"

But you know the heart of woman; and you know that in a mother's eye every scorpion is a fleet gazelle.

Thus you will not wonder when I tell you that the mother of the two brothers loved Nassim with a far greater love than the noble Khassoum. Her first-born was indeed the apple of her eye, and on him she lavished all her caresses; and when Taib, the father of her children, the rich seller of perfumes, lay on his death-bed, her woman's wit spoke to the great love which she bore her elder son.

She thought of the marabout's prophecy and trembled for the fate of her elder son; and she persuaded Taib to leave to Nassim all his belongings; his town house with its pillared courtyards of inlaid marble, its cooling fountain and its ceilings covered with green and gold arabesques; his country estate with its hanging gardens and its orchards of almond, date, apricot and orange; his rich shop in the Sukh Attarin, where his agents sold to the wealthy the perfumes of Arabia, essences of rose, of violet and of geranium.

Thus, when fate rolled up the scroll of Taib's life, Nassim inherited all his father's fortune, and he prospered exceedingly. Every enterprise he touched turned into gold: he made treaties with the pirates of the Barbary coast, and to him they brought the fairest and strongest of the Giaour slaves whom they captured; his caravans, guarded by armed Bedawin tribes, crossed the desert from the white Nile to the black ranges of the Atlas, from the sweet shores of Tripoli to the desert cities of the far bitter South; his ships brought merchandise from Stamboul, Oman, Damascus, and even from far off China, and the people looked up when he passed and said to each other: "There

goes Nassim, the son of Taib, the great merchant"; for let but a dog roll in gold, and the men in the bazaar will call him "Sir Dog."

His fame was great throughout the lands of the Moslim; and from the dazzling palace of the Sheriff at Mecca to the somber tents of the murderous Tauregs, all knew the name of Nassim, the rich.

And ever greater became his greed for the hard yellow gold; forgetting the commandments of the Messenger Mohammed—on whom be peace—he formed partnerships with the Jew and the Giaour merchants who lived in the coast towns and lent out money at usuring rates of interest. His wealth increased, and the more it increased, the more he tightened the strings of his purse; he endowed no mosques, no libraries rich in written knowledge, no shrines to commemorate the glories of Islam's fighting marabouts. He built no fountains and dug no wells to assure to himself the gratitude and the blessings of future generations; and the people in the bazaars who called him *Effendi* to his face, called him a pig, the son of a pig with a pig's heart, as soon as his back was turned; and the little children would run into the houses of their parents

when they heard his shuffling gait, and secure behind the latticed windows they would cry:

“O Nassim, son of Taib and grandson of a dog, thy feet are as thy knees, thy knees are as thy belly, thy belly is as thy face, and thy face is ugly and fat. Look at the Moslim whose beard is gray and dirty. Do not weep, or thou wilt make us laugh; do not laugh, or thou wilt make us weep. Behold the Moslim to whom was given a cursed stone instead of a heart. May Allah grant that thou mayest go to bed and never rise again.”

Such was Nassim, the son of Taib, who inherited all his father's fortune and who turned from his door Hadji Khassoum, his only brother, the noble child of the morning.

But Khassoum laughed the laugh of the free in mind and strong in body; he left the house of his father, and with his last purse he bought himself a fine white racing dromedary, a pedigreed animal, sure-footed and fleet. With a song and a prayer on his lips, he left the town of his birth and went into the desert.

He rode eastward across the yellow lands until he reached the green oasis of Bir Tefguia, and there he knocked at the gates of a great white monastery.

The holy derwishes of the brotherhood, the beloved ones of Allah, opened the gates and gave him food and shelter. They were old men, with the dignity of white beards, but they loved the youth who had come to them from the West, and they gave to him a little cell which opened towards a garden, rich with fruits and flowers of many colors.

For seven years Khassoum ibn Taib lived with the inspired ones of the Bir Tefguia; there were thousands of volumes in the library of the monastery, and the young Hadji would read and read, and think and think until his knowledge became as vast as time, as deep as the sea and as broad as the river Nile.

But ever and anon the voice of Khizr spoke to him, saying: "Khassoum, a pilgrim thou art and rich in knowledge, but thou hast not yet learned the lesson of true wisdom. Seek on!"

Khassoum listened to the voice of Khizr and he sought; he read and thought and read again, until his was the knowledge of a thousand generations; at his command the spirits of the soldiers, the saints, the scholars and the great men of the past would fly through the window of his little cell and keep him company. They talked to him and taught

him until it seemed that he had reached the limits of earthly knowledge.

Nature herself was his teacher, and nature taught him the language of the flowers and of the birds, the songs of the desert winds at dawn and the sayings of the gurgling water in the wells—but still the voice of Khizr said: “Khassoum, seek on.”

He sought—and one day a caravan passed through the oasis of Bir Tefguia, and Khassoum saw amongst it a girl; she was of those Bedawin who do not veil their faces, and he thought her fairer than the young day. He said to himself: “Now have I found what the voice of my mind has commanded me to seek. I have found love.”

He went to the girl of the Bedawin and said:

“I love thee and thee I must have. I have wandered far and wide; my roaming feet have brought me to Mecca and Medina, across the four deserts and even to the towns of Greece and of Hindustan, the home of the unbelievers. I have seen the women of many lands.

“I have seen the women of Baloutchistan, and their eyes were brown and moist like those of the timid gazelle. I have looked at the dark women of the Nubian plains, and I thought them as beauti-

ful as purple shadows of the dawning sun. My eyes have beheld the raven locks of Persia's maidens, and I compared them to Leila; I dreamt of Jamshid's love. I have heard the love cry of Circassian slaves, and it was like Damascan silk torn by Damascan daggers. But thou art fairer than the earth; thee I must have, be thou houri or peri.

"The moon rises only for thee. Thy voice is like the nightingale's, thy breath like the wild jasmine of Lybia's distant shore. My heart is in thy hands, as is the clay in the hands of a potter.

"Thou art sweeter than the roses of Ispahan, the roses of a thousand leaves; thou art as graceful as the waving pines on Syrian hills. I love thee, thou daughter of Bedawin; I love thee. Thee I must have, or I die."

These were the words of Khassoum's great love—and the voice at his right said: "Khassoum, seek on."

But love had sealed his ears and he did not hear.

Aziza, the daughter of the Bedawin, listened to the words of his heart; she looked at him and he seemed comely in her eyes.

Then there were loud rejoicings among the Beda-

win, and they prepared everything for the marriage ceremony.

But the hearts of the derwishes in the great monastery of the Bir Tefguia were heavy with sadness, and El Mansouri, their wise sheykh, took the youth aside and said to him: "Khassoum, thou art young and I am old; but the old heart loves the young heart. Thus I ask thee to remember the saying of the sage: 'He is a fool who marries a stranger.'" And Khassoum answered, laughing carelessly: "Great sheykh, thou art old and I am young; yet does the young heart love the old heart. Remember thou the saying of the Persian poet: 'Only he is wise who loves.'" "

Then the kind derwishes bowed their heads to the decrees of inevitable fate; and they talked amongst themselves, and out of their scanty belongings they gave to Khassoum, that he might send a suitable dower to the maiden's father.

And on the seventh day after the new moon, the marriage ceremonies began. There was feasting during four days; lambs were roasted whole and there were rivers of sherbet, coffee and unfermented palm-wine. On the evening of the fourth day the bride went to her master's tent which had

been prepared by the sheykh, El Mansouri. Her nails were stained with henna, her eyebrows were blackened, and she looked as fair as the rising sun. She was accompanied by her brothers and male cousins who wore branches of almond and jasmine over their right ears, and she became the wife of Khassoum, the son of Taib.

So they left the hospitable oasis of Bir Tefguia and rode for many a day. His love grew, and he thought of the poets of Teheran and he called her Mer-el-Nissar, the sun amongst women; but still he could hear the voice of Khizr saying to him at dawn: "Khassoum ibn Taib, seek, seek on, and thou shalt find." But Khassoum was deaf to the voice of Khizr, the mighty spirit.

One night Mer-el-Nissar said to him: "Khassoum, thy heart is marked with chastity and piety; thine is the strength of body and the clearness of mind. Thine eyes glow with the intense light of those blessed ones who are rich in wisdom. I love thee well. Sweet are the words which flow like honey from thy tongue, and thou callest me the sun amongst women, the loveliest rose amongst the blooming flowers. Thou hast allowed me to partake of the rich fruit of knowledge stored in thy

brain, for thou art as good as thou art wise. But tell me, Khassoum, where are thy people? My limbs are weary with the hard yellow desert, and fain would I rest in thy harem, thy one, thy favorite wife. Tell me, Khassoum, where is thy clan? Lead me to them that I may love them even as I love thee.”

And Khassoum answered saying: “Rose of my heart, my father is dead, my mother is dead. I have no relative but one brother, Nassim; he is richer than the Egyptian merchants who live in Jeddah, but his heart is as hard as the rock of Tarik.”

When Mer-el-Nissar heard the name of Nassim the rich, the black snake of avarice and greed reared his venomous head in her heart, and she cried: “O Khassoum, let us go to him as thou lovest me. He is thy only brother, and surely he will be glad to see thee, and give us shelter and food and riches.”

Thus she begged and begged until she had wearied his soul and he assented.

The son of Taib listened not to the voice of Khizr which whispered in his ear: “Khassoum, remember the words of Omar, the great Caliph: ‘Let one

take council of a woman and do the opposite of what she says.' ”

So they turned their dromedaries' heads to the West and rode for many a long night until they came to the village of El Jebwina, which is a day's ride from the holy town where lived Hadji Nassim, the rich merchant. When they reached El Jebwina, they had spent their last purse; so they sold their dromedaries and that night slept among the animals' hoofs in the courtyard of the Khan. The next morning they set out on foot, just as the sun appeared on Allah's tent, for they hoped to enter the gates of the great town before dawn spread its gray *bournous* over the land.

They walked and walked and walked until their feet were tired and sore, when a merchant overtook them. Rubies and diamonds flashed in his green turban, his cloak was of the finest Bokhara silk, and he rode a great white horse which was like Borak, the lion-headed horse of the Prophet, on whom be peace. And behold it was Nassim himself, the rich brother, the man with the heart of stone.

Khassoum recognized him and said: “Nassim, it is I, thy brother, who is speaking to thee, and this

is the woman who shall be the mother of my sons. We are on our way to thy great house. Wilt thou not give us food and shelter?"

Nassim looked at his brother, and then he looked at the unveiled features of the Bedawin girl; and the devil of lust arose within him, the devil of lust and cunning.

He jumped from his horse and embraced Khas-soum, even as Judas, the accursed, embraced Esa, the holy messenger of the house of Imram, and said: "All praise to the Most High God, Creator of the ten thousand worlds! All praise to the most Benign Lord, who weighs life and death in the hollow of His hand! Praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty who has granted me this day of days, who in his munificence has permitted that I may yet behold the beloved, the beloved features of Khassoum, the brother of my heart, before I die! Surely I shall give shelter and food to thee, my brother, and to the noble daughter of the Bedawin who walks at thy side. Gladly I would give to thee my horse, but I am a weak man, my feet are unused to the hard sand-grains of the desert. But my horse is strong enough for two. So let the daughter of the Bedawin mount behind me; and

thou, strong brother, canst follow on foot, until we reach the house of our father, where I shall prepare a great feast."

Joy and gratitude filled the heart of Khassoum; he helped Mer-el-Nissar upon the saddle behind Nassim, and he heeded not the voice of Khizr which whispered in his ear: "Khassoum, seek on, and do not listen to the words of those rich in iniquity."

Thus they proceeded on their journey and gradually Nassim increased the distance between himself and his brother until he was safely out of hearing. Then he turned slightly in his high saddle and said: "Girl of the Bedawin, remember the saying of the wise: 'Do not go with him who is poor and who cannot help thee; for in this world he cannot serve thee, and in the next world thou must be weighed by thyself in the balance-scales of right and wrong, and he cannot intercede in thy behalf.' Even such is my brother who is behind us dragging his tired feet in the sand. He can give thee nothing but the dry fruits of starvation and misery. But me, men call the rich Nassim, and well they may. The gates which bar the entrance to my palace are studded with golden nails and with the light blue stones my

caravans bring from Afghanistan. My divans are covered with silken rugs from Khiva and Bokhara, and even the meanest of my black slaves is dressed in purple and silver. Mine are the choicest pearls, and emeralds without flaws; mine are riches greater than those which Ali Baba found in the caves of the forty thieves. Say but the one word, and whatever I possess is thine. As to Khassoum—be not afraid; I have six Giaour merchants in my pay who will swear to anything I command them to. And who is the kadee who would dare to accept the testimony of the miserable Khassoum against that of Nassim, the powerful, the rich, and that of the six wealthiest unbelievers in the holy town which thou canst see looming in the blue distance?”

Sons of Arabs, did not Omar, the great Caliph, the successor of the Prophet—on whom be benedictions—say that the heart of woman is always mercenary? Even so; thus you will not be surprised to hear that Mer-cl-Nissar, the loveliest sun amongst the Bedawin, the beloved one of Khassoum’s heart, listened with joy to the words of Nassim and readily agreed to his evil proposal. Accordingly, when they came to a crossroad, the accursed elder son of Taib spurred his horse, and

soon he and the Bedawin woman were nothing but a little gray cloud of dust on the dim horizon.

In vain did Khassoum protest; they neither heard nor heeded his entreaties; black despair and sorrow and a great understanding came over him, and he heard the voice of Khizr, the mighty spirit, which whispered into his ear: "Seek on, thou son of Arab sires, and thou wilt yet learn wisdom. Thou hast learned one lesson to-day: Do not put all thy eggs into one basket, and if thou dost, give not the basket in keeping of a woman—her whom Allah has created without soul. Now go to the holy town and prostrate thyself at the feet of the wise kadee, Mohammed Ed-Din, and there thou shalt learn the lesson of justice and true wisdom. Seek on, Khassoum."

Wearily Khassoum continued his journey towards the holy town, and when he arrived here he went to the house of the kadee and told him what had happened to him.

Mohammed Ed-Din listened and said: "By the praised name of Hassan, the son of Ali—on whom be peace forever—justice shall be thine, and dire punishment the lot of those who dare to break the laws of the written word of the Koran. Did not

the Prophet—blessings on him—say that Allah will not wrong any one, even the weight of an ant?”

That night the kadee, the protector of the poor and the friend of the oppressed, gave hospitality to the son of Taib, the noble Khassoum, and the next morning, after prayer, he sent summons to Nassim and to the Bedawin woman and ordered them to appear before his divan. Nassim came and with him came the Bedawin woman and also the six Greek merchants who were in his pay and whom he had brought as witnesses.

The kadee told him of what his brother had accused him, and he answered: “O kadee full of wisdom, judge not before thou knowest and remember the saying of the wise: ‘Look first to the end of whatever thou undertakest, and then act accordingly.’ Khassoum is indeed my brother, but he is envious of my riches and he loves me not. Give not access in thy heart to his deceptions, and remember the words of the Messenger—on whom be peace—that lies and cunning deceptions are the forerunners of the accursed work of Satan, the evil one. Thou art just, O kadee, and the dirt of lying deceptions cannot sully the hem of thy white garments of knowledge and wisdom. Mohammed

Ed-Din, these are my witnesses, six merchants of this holy town, honored by every one and wealthy in the world's goods; they will swear to thee that they have known this woman for many years as the favorite inmate of my harem."

The kadee told the six merchants to approach, and the first merchant said: "Verily, O kadee, I have known this woman for long years as the Fatima of the Hadji's harem. Many a shawl and many a cunningly worked rug have I sold to her."

The second merchant said: "O kadee, truth is ever its own defense. This is the woman which long ago Nassim brought from amongst the tribes. Many a yard of silk have I spread at her feet, that she might choose and buy."

The third merchant said: "It is she, the apple of Nassim's eye. I remember well how, seven years ago, she came to my little shop in the bazaar, accompanied by two black attendants, and bought from me at a cheap price, be it said, an amber necklace which had once belonged to his eminent Highness, the great Effendi Bey of Tripoli."

The fourth merchant said: "Trade is needful for a poor man. Of me Nassim bought slippers and jewels and Turkish sweets when, many years

ago, he paid the dower to the father of this woman."

The fifth merchant said: "I am an ignorant man, and speech does not come readily to my lips. But may I never enter the Christian paradise if this is not the shining one of Nassim's harem, and if she has not bought many pounds of spices and sugar in my poor shop."

The sixth merchant said: "May my right hand wither as does the thirsty date-tree when the well dries up, if I do not speak the truth; verily I declare that this is the well-beloved favorite woman of Nassim's household! She is a Bedawin, and according to the custom of the tribesmen she came here unveiled; but she obeyed her master's wishes, and I am the merchant who sold to her the first black and gold Egyptian veil, to hide her chaste features from the impudent glance of the multitude."

Such was the testimony of the six Giaour merchants, and the kadee was puzzled; and though he knew in the inmost chamber of his heart that Khas-soum was speaking the truth, he did not know how to prove it.

He thought and thought and thought, O you chil-

dren of Arabs, until Ilyas, the great Kutb, heard his praying thoughts and left his abode on the roof of the Kaabah in Mecca to fly across the Western desert and to bring to Mohammed Ed-Din the inspiration which he needed. Ilyas spoke to the soul of the kadee, and the kadee exclaimed: "Hafiz, my faithful slave, go thou to the house of Hadji Nassim and bring to me the dogs which belong to his household."

The slave bowed and left, and soon he returned leading on a chain the two dogs of Nassim's house, two strong Kabyle dogs with black bristly hair and huge teeth.

The kadee ordered the woman to confront the dogs: "If thou hast been in Nassim's harem for long years, they will surely recognize thee." She obeyed trembling, and though she tried her best to talk to them with sweet words and gestures of blandishment, the dogs growled at her and showed their teeth and proved clearly that the woman was a stranger to them.

Then the wise kadee raised his hands and said: "Nassim, and thou, woman of the Bedawin, I sentence you according to the words in the book of the Koran: 'If any of the true believers commit

the crime of adultery, punish them both; produce witnesses against them, imprison them in separate apartments until death release them, or Allah affordeth them a way to escape.' And you, Greek infidels, remember the words: 'Woe be unto those who give false testimony.' Ye shall have your hands and feet cut off, and be thrown out into the yellow desert, until Allah takes pity on you and relieves you from your pains."

Then the kadee clapped his hands and slaves came, and they took Nassim and Mer-el-Nissar and the six merchants and did to them according to the judgment of the kadee.

Then Mohammed Ed-Din, the judge who was as wise as Haroun-el-Rashid, turned to the men who had gathered to hear him administer justice and punishment, and said:

"To-day I have proved that the testimony of two dogs is more to be believed than the testimony of Nassim, the rich, and that of six Greek merchants."

You ask me what became of Khassoum, ye sons of Arabs?

Khassoum bowed before the wise judge and praised him, and then he turned his face towards

Mecca; he wandered towards the rising sun, for the voice of Khizr was still whispering into his ear: "Go out into the yellow lands, Khassoum ibn Taib, and seek on, that thou mayest find Islam, that thou mayest find true resignation."

For many a year, he wandered in the wilderness, without sandals to protect his blistering feet, fasting and praying and avoiding the habitations of mankind, until he had become a holy Welee, a master in the true faith. Khizr was always before him, spreading his great silver wings, pointing the way like a shining guiding star and speaking to him at dawn.

Many a time Eblis and his host of evil demons tried to tempt him, but he was steadfast and practiced self-denial until he was a saint, holier than Esh-Shiblee himself.

One day, during *Dhu-l-Hijjah*, the holy month of pilgrimages, he wandered from the mountains into the desert until he came to the caravan road which leads from Timbuctoo to the oasis of the Northern Sahara. He spread his ragged *bournous* and lay down, his forehead touching the ground, and for three days and three nights he did not sleep, nor did he touch food or drink, but he repeated over and

over again the words "*La ilah illallah,*" until his mind had absorbed the deepest meaning of Islam: There is no God but the God.

On the evening of the third day, Khizr gently closed his eyes, but the eyes of his soul were wide open, and it seemed to him that he was in the courtyard of a huge palace, whose roof melted dimly into the silvery blueness of the skies; the walls of the palace were of pearl and red jacinth and yellow gold; and wherever he turned his eyes, he saw written on these walls the shining words: *La ilah illallah*. . . . From afar he could hear the rippling waters of Selsebil, the river that flows through Paradise, and he felt an indescribable happiness.

And Khizr summoned Azrael, the black-winged angel of death, and Azrael came and kissed lightly the lips of Khassoum, the pilgrim, the son of Taib, the Welee, the great saint.

FEAR

THE fact that the man whom he feared had died ten years earlier did not in the least lessen Stuart McGregor's obsession of horror, of a certain grim expectancy, every time he recalled that final scene, just before Farragut Hutchison disappeared in the African jungle that stood, spectrally motionless as if forged out of some blackish-green metal, in the haggard moonlight.

As he reconstructed it, the whole scene seemed unreal, almost oppressively, ludicrously theatrical. The pall of sodden, stygian darkness all around; the night sounds of soft-winged, obscene things flapping lazily overhead or brushing against the furry trees that held the woolly heat of the tropical day; the slimy, swishy things that glided and crawled and wiggled underfoot; the vibrant growl of a hunting lioness that began in a deep basso and peaked to a shrill high-pitched, ridiculously inadequate treble; a spotted hyena's vicious, bluffing

bark; the chirp and whistle of innumerable monkeys; a warthog breaking through the undergrowth with clownish crash—and somewhere, very far away, the staccato thumping of a signal drum, and more faintly yet the answer from the next in line.

He had seen many such drums, made from fire-hollowed palm trees and covered with tightly stretched skin—often the skin of a human enemy.

Yes. He remembered it all. He remembered the night jungle creeping in on their camp like a sentient, malign being—and then that ghastly, ironic moon squinting down, just as Farragut Hutchison walked away between the six giant, plumed, ochre-smeared Bakoto negroes, and bringing into crass relief the tattoo mark on the man's back where the shirt had been torn to tatters by camel thorns and wait-a-bit spikes and saber-shaped palm leaves.

He recalled the occasion when Farragut Hutchison had had himself tattooed; after a crimson, drunken spree at Madam Celeste's place in Port Said, the other side of the Red Sea traders' bazaar, to please a half-caste Swahili dancing girl who looked like a golden madonna of evil, familiar with

all the seven sins. Doubtless the girl had gone shares with the Levantine craftsman who had done the work—an eagle, in bold red and blue, surmounted by a lopsided crown, and surrounded by a wavy design. The eagle was in profile, and its single eye had a disconcerting trick of winking sardonically whenever Farragut Hutchison moved his back muscles or twitched his shoulder blades.

Always, in his memory, Stuart McGregor saw that tattoo mark.

Always did he see the wicked, leering squint in the eagle's eye—and then he would scream, wherever he happened to be—in a theater, a Broadway restaurant, or across some good friend's mahogany and beef.

Thinking back, he remembered that, for all their bravado, for all their showing off to each other, both he and Farragut Hutchison had been afraid since that day up the hinterland when, drunk with fermented palm-wine, they had insulted the fetish of the Bakotos, while the men were away hunting and none left to guard the village except the women and children and a few feeble old men whose curses and high-pitched maledictions were picturesque, but hardly effectual enough to stop him and his partner

from doing a vulgar, intoxicated dance in front of the idol, from grinding burning cigar ends into its squat, repulsive features, and from generally polluting the juju hut—not to speak of the thorough and profitable looting of the place.

They had got away with the plunder, gold dust and a handful of splendid canary diamonds, before the Bakoto warriors had returned. But fear had followed them, stalked them, trailed them; a fear different from any they had ever experienced before. And be it mentioned that their path of life had been crimson and twisted and fantastic, that they had followed the little squinting swart-headed, hunchbacked djinni of adventure wherever man's primitive lawlessness rules, from Nome to Timbuktu, from Peru to the black felt tents of Outer Mongolia, from the Australian bush to the absinth-sodden apache haunts of Paris. Be it mentioned, furthermore, that thus, often, they had stared death in the face and, not being fools, had found the staring distasteful and shivery.

But what they had felt on that journey, back to the security of the coast and the ragged Union Jack flapping disconsolately above the British governor's official corrugated iron mansion, had been some-

thing worse than mere physical fear; it had been a nameless, brooding, sinister apprehension which had crept through their souls, a harshly discordant note that had pealed through the hidden recesses of their beings.

Everything had seemed to mock them—the crawling, sour-miasmatic jungle; the slippery roots and timber falls; the sun of the tropics, brown, decayed, like the sun on the Day of Judgment; the very flowers, spiky, odorous, waxen, unhealthy, lascivious.

At night, when they had rested in some clearing, they had even feared their own camp fire—flaring up, twinkling, flickering, then coiling into a ruby ball. It had seemed completely isolated in the purple night.

Isolated!

How they had longed for human companionship—white companionship!

White faces. White slang. White curses. White odors. White obscenities.

Why—they would have welcomed a decent, square, honest white murder; a knife flashing in some yellow-haired Norse sailor's brawny fist; a belying pin in the hand of some bullying Liverpool

tramp-ship skipper; some Nome gambler's six-gun splattering leaden death; some apache of the Rue de Venise garroting a passerby.

But here, in the African jungle—and how Stuart McGregor remembered it—the fear of death had seemed pregnant with unmentionable horror. There had been no sounds except the buzzing of the tsetse flies and a faint rubbing of drums, whispering through the desert and jungle like the voices of disembodied souls, astray on the outer rim of creation.

And, overhead, the stars. Always, at night, three stars, glittering, leering; and Stuart McGregor, who had gone through college and had once written his college measure of limping, anemic verse, had pointed at them.

“The three stars of Africa!” he had said. “The star of violence! The star of lust! And the little stinking star of greed!”

Then had McGregor broken into staccato laughter which had struck Farragut Hutchison as singularly out of place and had caused him to blurt forth with a wicked curse:

“Shut your trap, you——”

For already they had begun to quarrel, those two

pals of a dozen tight, riotous adventures. Already, imperceptibly, gradually, like the shadow of a leaf through summer dusk, a mutual hatred had grown up between them.

But they had controlled themselves. The diamonds were good, could be sold at a big figure; and, even split in two, would mean a comfortable stake.

Then, quite suddenly, had come the end—the end for one of them.

And the twisting, gliding skill of Stuart McGregor's fingers had made sure that Farragut Hutchison should be that one.

Years after, when Africa as a whole had faded to a memory of coiling, unclean shadows, Stuart McGregor used to say, with that rather plaintive, monotonous drawl of his, that the end of this phantasmal African adventure had been different from what he had expected it to be.

In a way, he had found it disappointing.

Not that it had lacked in purely dramatic thrills and blood-curdling trimmings. That wasn't it. On the contrary, it had had a plethora of thrills.

But, rather, he must have been keyed up to too high a pitch; must have expected too much, feared

too much during that journey from the Bakoto village back through the hinterland.

Thus when, one night, the Bakoto warriors had come from nowhere, out of the jungle, hundreds of them, silent, as if the wilderness had spewed them forth, it was all quite prosy.

Prosy, too, had been the expectation of death. It had even seemed a welcome relief from the straining fatigues of the jungle pull, the recurrent fits of fever, the flying and crawling pests, the gnawing moroseness which is so typically African.

"An explosion of life and hatred," Stuart McGregor used to say, "that's what I had expected, don't you see? Quick and merciless. And it wasn't. For the end came—slow and inevitable. Stolid. Greek in a way. And so courtly! So polite! That was the worst of it!"

For the leader of the Bakotos, a tall, broad, frizzy, odorous warrior, with a face like a black Nero with a dash of Manchu emperor, had bowed before them with a great clanking of barbarous ornaments. There had been no marring taint of hatred in his voice as he told them that they must pay for their insults to the fetish. He had not even mentioned the theft of the gold dust and diamonds.

“My heart is heavy at the thought, white chiefs,” he said. “But—you must pay!”

Stuart McGregor had stammered ineffectual, foolish apologies:

“We—we were drunk. We didn’t know what—or—what we——”

“What you were doing!” the Bakoto had finished the sentence for him, with a little melancholy sigh. “And there is forgiveness in my heart——”

“You—you mean to say——” Farragut Hutchison had jumped up, with extended hand, blurting out hectic thanks.

“Forgiveness in my heart, not in the juju’s,” gently continued the negro. “For the juju never forgives. On the other hand, the juju is fair. He wants his just measure of blood. Not an ounce more. Therefore,” the Bakoto had gone on, and his face had been as stony and as passionless as that of the Buddha who meditates in the shade of the cobra’s hood, “the choice will be yours.”

“Choice?” Farragut Hutchison had looked up, a gleam of hope in his eyes.

“Yes. Choice which one of you will die.” The Bakoto had smiled, with the same suave courtliness which had, somehow, increased the utter horror of

the scene. "Die—oh—a slow death, befitting the insult to the juju, befitting the juju's great holiness!"

Suddenly, Stuart McGregor had understood that there would be no arguing, no bargaining whatsoever; quickly, had come his hysterical question.

"Who? I—or——"

He had slurred and stopped, somehow ashamed, and the Bakoto had finished the interrupted question with gentle, gliding, inhuman laughter: "Your friend? White chief, that is for you two to decide. I only know that the juju has spoken to the priest, and that he is satisfied with the life of one of you two; the life—and the death. A slow death."

He had paused; then had continued gently, so very, very gently: "Yes. A slow death, depending entirely upon the vitality of the one of you two who will be sacrificed to the juju. There will be little knives. There will be the flying insects which follow the smell of blood and festering flesh. Too, there will be many, crimson-headed ants, many ants—and a thin river of honey to show them the trail."

He had yawned. Then he had gone on: "Con-

sider. The juju is just. He only wants the sacrifice of one of you, and you yourselves must decide which one shall go, and which one shall stay. And—remember the little, little knives. Be pleased to remember the many ants which follow the honey trail. I shall return shortly and hear your choice.”

He had bowed and, with his silent warriors, had stepped back into the jungle that had closed behind them like a curtain.

Even in that moment of stark, enormous horror, horror too great to be grasped, horror that swept over and beyond the barriers of fear—even in that moment Stuart McGregor had realized that, by leaving the choice to them, the Bakoto had committed a refined cruelty worthy of a more civilized race, and had added a psychic torture fully as dreadful as the physical torture of the little knives.

Too, in that moment of ghastly expectancy, he had known that it was Farragut Hutchison who would be sacrificed to the juju—Farragut Hutchison who sat there, staring into the camp fire, making queer little, funny noises in his throat.

Suddenly, Stuart McGregor had laughed—he remembered that laugh to his dying day—and had

thrown a greasy pack of playing cards into the circle of meager, indifferent light.

“Let the cards decide, old boy,” he had shouted. “One hand of poker—and no drawing to your hand. Show-down! That’s square, isn’t it?”

“Sure!” the other had replied, still staring straight ahead of him. “Go ahead and deal——”

His voice had drifted into a mumble while Stuart McGregor had picked up the deck, had shuffled, slowly, mechanically.

As he shuffled, it had seemed to him as if his brain was frantically telegraphing to his fingers, as if all those delicate little nerves that ran from the back of his skull down to his finger tips were throbbing a clicking little chorus:

“Do—it—Mac! Do—it—Mac! Do it—Mac!” with a maddening, syncopated rhythm.

He had kept on shuffling, had kept on watching the motions of his fingers—and had seen that his thumb and second finger had shuffled the ace of hearts to the bottom of the deck.

Had he done that on purpose? He did not know then. He never found out—though, in his memory, he lived through the scene a thousand times.

But there were the little knives. There were the

ants. There was the honey trail. There was his own, hard decision to live. And, years earlier, he had been a professional faro dealer at Silver City.

Another ace had joined the first at the bottom of the deck. The third. The fourth.

And then Farragut Hutchison's violent: "Deal, man, deal! You're driving me crazy. Get it over with."

The sweat had been pouring from Stuart McGregor's face. His blood had throbbed in his veins. Something like a sledge hammer had drummed at the base of his skull.

"Cut, won't you?" he had said, his voice coming as if from very far away.

The other had waved a trembling hand. "No, no! Deal 'em as they are. You won't cheat me."

Stuart McGregor had cleared a little space on the ground with the point of his shoe.

He remembered the motion. He remembered how the dead leaves had stirred with a dry, rasping, tragic sound, how something slimy and phosphorous-green had squirmed through the tufted jungle grass, how a little furry scorpion had scurried away with a clicking tchk-tchk-tchk.

He had dealt.

Mechanically, even as he was watching them, his fingers had given himself five cards from the bottom of the deck, four aces—and the queen of diamonds. And, the next second, in answer to Farragut Hutchison's choked: "Show-down! I have two pair—kings—and jacks!" his own well simulated shriek of joy and triumph:

"I win! I've four aces! Every ace in the pack!"

And then Farragut Hutchison's weak, ridiculous exclamation—ridiculous considering the dreadful fate that awaited him:

"Geewhittaker! You're some lucky guy, aren't you, Mac?"

At the same moment the Bakoto chief had stepped out of the jungle, followed by half a dozen warriors.

Then the final scene—that ghastly, ironic moon squinting down, just as Farragut Hutchison had walked away between the giant, plumed, ocher-smearred Bakoto negroes, bringing into stark relief the tattoo mark on his back where the shirt had been torn to tatters—and the leering, evil wink in the eagle's eye as Farragut Hutchison twitched his shoulder blades with absurd, nervous resignation.

Stuart McGregor remembered it every day of his life.

He spoke of it to many. But only to Father Aloysius O'Donnell, the priest who officiated in the little Gothic church around the corner, on Ninth Avenue, did he tell the whole truth—did he confess that he had cheated.

“Of course I cheated!” he said. “Of course!” And, with a sort of mocking bravado: “What would you have done, padre?”

The priest, who was old and wise and gentle, thus not at all sure of himself, shook his head.

“I don't know,” he replied. “I don't know.”

“Well—I do know. You would have done what I did. You wouldn't have been able to help yourself.” Then, in a low voice: “And you would have paid! As I pay—every day, every minute, every second of my life.”

“Regret, repentance,” murmured the priest, but the other cut him short.

“Repentance—nothing. I regret nothing! I repent nothing! I'd do the same to-morrow. It isn't that—oh—that—what d'ye call it—sting of conscience, that's driving me crazy. It's fear!”

“Fear of what?” asked Father O'Donnell.

“Fear of Farragut Hutchison—who is dead!”

Ten years ago!

And he knew that Farragut Hutchison had died. For not long afterward a British trader had come upon certain gruesome but unmistakable remains and had brought the tale to the coast. Yet was there fear in Stuart McGregor’s soul, fear worse than the fear of the little knives. Fear of Farragut Hutchison who was dead?

No. He did not believe that the man was dead. He did not believe it, could not believe it.

“And even suppose he’s dead,” he used to say to the priest, “he’ll get me. He’ll get me as sure as you’re born. I saw it in the eye of that eagle—the squinting eye of that infernal, tattooed eagle!”

Then he would turn a grayish yellow, his whole body would tremble with a terrible palsy and in a sort of whine, which was both ridiculous and pathetic, given his size and bulk, given the crimson, twisted adventures through which he had passed, he would exclaim:

“He’ll get me. He’ll get me. He’ll get me even from beyond the grave.”

And then Father O'Donnell would cross himself rapidly, just a little guiltily.

It is said that there is a morbid curiosity which forces the murderer to view the place of his crime.

Some psychic reason of the same kind may have caused Stuart McGregor to decorate the walls and corners of his sitting room with the memories of that Africa which he feared and hated, and which, daily, he was trying to forget—with a shimmering, cruel mass of jungle curios, sjamboks and assegais, signal drums and daggers, knobkerries and rhino shields and what not.

Steadily, he added to his collection, buying in auction rooms, in little shops on the water front, from sailors and ship pursers and collectors who had duplicates for sale.

He became a well-known figure in the row of antique stores in back of Madison Square Garden, and was so liberal when it came to payment that Morris Newman, who specialized in African curios, would send the pick of all the new stuff he bought to his house.

It was on a day in August—one of those tropical New York days when the very birds gasp for air,

when orange-flaming sun rays drop from the brazen sky like crackling spears and the melting asphalt picks them up again and tosses them high—that Stuart McGregor, returning from a short walk, found a large, round package in his sitting room.

“Mr. Newman sent it,” his servant explained. “He said it’s a rare curio, and he’s sure you’ll like it.”

“All right.”

The servant bowed, left, and closed the door, while Stuart McGregor cut the twine, unwrapped the paper, looked.

And then, suddenly, he screamed with fear; and, just as suddenly, the scream of fear turned into a scream of maniacal joy.

For the thing which Newman had sent him was an African signal drum, covered with tightly stretched skin—human skin—white skin! And square in the center there was a tattoo mark—an eagle in red and blue, surmounted by a lopsided crown, and surrounded by a wavy design.

Here was the final proof that Farragut Hutchison was dead, that, forever, he was rid of his fear. In a paroxysm of joy, he picked up the drum and clutched it to his heart.

He gave a cry of pain. His lips quivered, frothed. His hands dropped the drum and fanned the air, and he looked at the thing that had fastened itself to his right wrist.

It seemed like a short length of rope, grayish in color, spotted with dull red. Even as Stuart McGregor dropped to the floor, dying, he knew what had happened.

A little venomous snake, an African fer-de-lance, that had been curled up in the inside of the drum, numbed by the cold, had been revived by the splintering heat of New York.

Yes—even as he died he knew what had happened. Even as he died, he saw that malign, obscene squint in the eagle's eye. Even as he died, he knew that Farragut Hutchison had killed him—from beyond the grave!

LIGHT

BENEATH the sooty velvet of the New York night, Tompkins Square was a blotch of lonely, mean sadness.

No night loungers there waiting for a bluecoat's hickory to tickle their thin patched soles; no wizen news vendor spreading the remnants of his printed wares about him and figuring out the difference between gain on papers sold and discount on those to be returned; no Greek hawker considering the advisability of beating the high cost of living by supping on those figs which he had not been able to sell because of their antiquity; no maudlin drunk mistaking the blur in his whisky-soaked brain for the happy twilight of the foggy green isle.

For Tompkins Square is both the soul and the stomach—possibly interchangeable terms—of those who work with cloth and silk and shoddy worsted, with needle and thread, with thimble and sewing-machine, those who out of their starved, haggard East-Side brains make the American women—the

native-born—the best dressed in all the world. Sweatshop workers they are: men from Russia and Poland, men from the Balkans, from Sicily, Calabria, and Asia Minor; men who set out on their splendid American adventure, not for liberty, but for a chance to earn enough to keep body and soul together—and let the ward boss and the ward association attend to the voting, including the more or less honest counting of votes.

Work—eat—sleep—and lights out at ten! Such is the maxim of the neighborhood, since lights cost money, and money buys food.

Thus Tompkins Square on that night, as on all nights, was sad and dark and tired and asleep. Just the scraggly, dusty trees, the empty benches, and a shy gleam of the half-veiled moon where it struck the fantastic, twisted angle of a battered municipal waste-paper receptacle, or a bit of broken bottle glass half hidden in a murky puddle.

On the north side of the square stood the tenement house with the lighted window—like a winking eye—directly beneath the roof, high up. The house was gray and pallid; incongruously baroque in spots, distributed irregularly over its warty façade, where the contractor had got rid of some

art balconies and carved near-stone struts left over from a bankrupt Bronx job. It towered over the smug red-brick dwellings—remnants of an age when English and German were still spoken thereabouts—with thin, anemic arrogance, like a tubercular giant among a lot of short, stocky, well-fleshed people, sick, yet conscious of his height and the dignity that goes with it.

He saw the lighted window as he crossed the square from the south side, and sat down on one of the benches and stared at it.

Steadily he stared, until his eyes smarted and burned and his neck muscles bunched painfully.

For that glimmering light, gilding the fly-specked pane, meant to him the things he hated, the things he had cheated and cursed and ridiculed—and, by the same token, longed for and loved.

It meant to him, life—and the reasons of life.

It meant to him humanity and the faith of humanity: which is happiness. The right to happiness! The eternal, sacerdotal duty of happiness!

Happiness?

He laughed. Why—damn it!—happiness was a lie. Happiness was hypocrisy. It meant the diet-

ing of man's smoldering, natural passions into an artificial, pinchbeck, thin-blooded puritanism. It spelled the mumming of the thinking mind—the mind that was *trying* to think—into the speciosities of childish fairy-tales. It was a sniveling reminder of pap-fed infancy.

The only thing worth while in life was success—which is selfishness. Selfishness sprawling stark-contoured and unashamed, sublimely unself-conscious, serenely brutal—a five-ply Nietzscheism on a modern business basis which acknowledges neither codified laws nor principles.

It had been the measure and route of his life, and—he whipped out the thought like something shameful and nasty, like a nauseating drug which his mind refused to swallow—it had cheated him.

Yes, by God! It had cheated him, cheated him!

For, first, it had given him gold and power and the envy of men, which was sweet.

Then, as a jest of Fate's own black brewing, it had taken everything away from him overnight, in one huge financial crash, and had made of him what he was to-night: gray, middle-aged, bitter, joyless—and a pauper. It had brought him here, to Tompkins Square, and had chucked him, like a worn-out,

useless rag, into this dusty, sticky bench whence he was staring at the lighted window, high up.

He wondered what was behind it, and who?

Three days earlier he had come to New York with ten dollars—his last ten dollars—in his pocket. He had taken a room in this tenement-house, and every night he had sat on the bench and had stared at the warty, baroque façade.

Always it had been dark. Always the tenants, the hard-working people who lived there, had turned out their lights around ten o'clock with an almost military regularity that reminded him of barracks and a well-disciplined boarding-school.

He knew most of them. For they had talked to him, on stairs and landings and leaning from windows, with the easy garrulousness of the very poor who can't be snobs since they are familiar with each other's incomes and flesh-pots. They had lifted the crude-meshed veils of their hearts and hearths and had bidden him look—and all he had seen had been misery.

He checked the thought.

No! That wasn't true!

He had also seen love and friendship, and fine,

sweet faith—and that was why he hated them—why he pitied and despised them.

Faith—love—friendship! To the devil with the sniveling, weak-kneed lot of 'em! They spelled happiness—and happiness did not exist—and—

Happiness!

The thought, the word, recurred to his brain with maddening persistency. It would not budge.

Happiness.

“Why, happiness is behind that lighted window!” The idea came to him—almost the conviction.

But what happiness? And whose?

He speculated who might be up there, in the garret room squeezed by the flat roof. He tried to picture to himself what might be shimmering behind that golden flash.

Perhaps it was Fedor Davidoff, the little hunch-backed Russian tailor, with the fat, golden-haired, sloe-eyed wife. He might be celebrating the coming of freedom to his beloved Russia. Or he might be sitting up late to finish some piece of work—to earn extra money. For his wife was expecting a child. He had three already, curly-haired, straight-backed. But he wanted more—“children make happiness, eh?” he used to say.

Or—wait! Perhaps it was Peter Macdonald, the artist, dreaming over his lamp and his rank, blackened pipe, and deliberating with himself where he would live—upper West Side or lower Fifth—when the world should have acknowledged his genius and backed up the opinion with solid cash. Peter had lived now for over three months in the tenement-house. “Like the neighborhood—bully atmosphere—marvelous greens and browns,” was the reason he gave. But the other tenants smiled. They knew that Peter lived there because his room cost him only two dollars a week, and because he took his meals with the Leibl Finkelsteins on the first floor for three dollars more.

Perhaps a pair of lovers. Enrique Tassetti, the squat, laughing Sicilian, who had taken to himself a bride of his own people. They would have spent fifty cents for a bottle of Chianti, another fifty for bread and mushrooms and oil and pepper to turn into a dish worthy of a Sicilian—or a king.

Again it might be Donchian, the Armenian, burning the midnight oil over the perfection of the mysterious invention of which he spoke at times, after having worked with needle and thread since six o'clock in the morning; or old Mrs. Sarah

Kempinsky, reading and rereading the letter which her soldier son had sent her from France; or—

What did it matter?

Whoever was sitting behind that lighted window was happy—happy—and the man's imagination choked, his mind became flushed and congested.

He was quite unconscious of his surroundings. The stillness of the streets seemed magical, the loneliness absolute. Only from very far came sounds: the Elevated rattling with a steely, throaty sob; a surface-car clanking and wheezing; a hoarse Klaxon blaring snobbishly; a stammering, alcoholic voice throwing the tail-end of a gutter song to the moist purple veils of the night.

But he did not hear.

He was conscious only of the lighted window, high up. It seemed to glitter nervously, to call to him, to stretch out, as if trying to communicate to him an emotion it had borrowed by contact with something—with somebody.

That was just the trouble. He wondered who that Somebody was, what that Something might be. Whoever it was, it seemed urgent, clamorous. Silently clamorous. His subconsciousness grew

thick with amazement and wonder and doubt. It surged up—crowded, choking, tumultuous.

The lighted window!

What was behind it? What was its riddle?

He knew that he must find out, and so he rose, crossed the street, entered the house, and was up the stairs three steps at the time.

He found the room without any trouble and opened the door. He did not knock.

He stepped inside; and there, on the bed, he saw a motionless figure, faintly outlined beneath a plain white sheet, a tall candle burning yellow at the foot of the bed, another at the head.

He crossed over, lifted a corner of the sheet, and looked. And he saw the face of a dead man. It was calm and serene and unutterably happy.

Then it dawned upon him:

The man on the bed was himself.

THE END