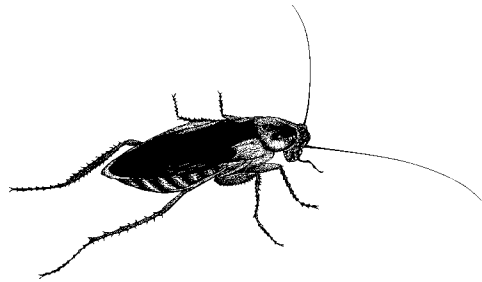


# **Strange Creatures V**

## Critters Great & Small

Edited by  
Chad Arment



## Arment Biological Press

This Electronic Publication includes short stories from a number of sources. The current publisher has attempted to retain all pertinent text, but format changes were necessary. Internal links have been created for the table of contents.

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## Editor's Note

This is the fifth anthology of cryptozoological short stories for this publisher, and will be the last published in 2000. While certainly not the final anthology planned of this nature, it does mark the end of a year of personal questing for material to include. This search was both frustrating and enjoyable, as I stumbled across stories I had never seen mentioned and found that a few tales were too elusive to locate. Hopefully, those "hidden" tales (cryptoliterature?) will be brought to light in the near future. Readers who would like to help in the search, or who may have come across other tales, are welcome to contact me through the website, [www.herper.com/ebooks/](http://www.herper.com/ebooks/). I am especially in need of a few tales published in the United Kingdom.

Thanks goes to Craig Heinselman who, beyond coining the term "cryptofiction," has enthusiastically provided tales to include in this series. He kindly provided "Spirit Island" for this collection.

As with the other collections, not all of the stories in this anthology are purely cryptozoological in nature, but the overall theme of strange beasts waiting to be discovered runs through all. Not all such creatures are enormous in size or ferocity. Sometimes the smallest organisms can surprise us in ways we never imagined.

Hopefully, this genre will become better recognized as modern writers work with it. They would do well to study the subtleties and varied (often conflicting) themes found in these classic tales. Enjoy.

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# Spirit Island

## Captain Henry Toke Munn

I have told this story to only a few people, and my attempt to get a hearing before the Natural History authorities, both in New York and in London, completely failed, the secretaries treating me in pretty much the same manner. 'Oh yes,' they said indulgently, looking at my card, 'that's all right. We have heard about it, and we'll take the matter up sometime. But don't call again; wait till we write you.' Then they rang, and one of the attendants was told to show me round, if I cared to see the place, and put me on the way to where I was staying. Of course, they thought I was a crank.

I publish the narrative, therefore, rather reluctantly, accepting the fact that it will not be believed, but with a hope that it may inspire some credulous and courageous naturalist, with a taste for adventure, to visit Spirit Island, and return with a live or a dead specimen of what I saw there. If he can do this, his name will go down in history, and the museums—and the circuses—of the world will grovel at his feet for its possession. But he needn't ask me to accompany him.

In 1914 I was sent to the Arctic by my employers (a London firm well known in the mining world) to investigate certain localities for alluvial gold, and others for tin ore. In 1914-15 I wintered at Ponds Inlet, the north-east end of Baffin Land—lat. 72.48° N., long. 76.10° W. I made the investigations according to my instructions, and in August 1915 returned to the depot to await the arrival of my ship. By 15th October no ship had appeared, and I knew I was in for another winter. I had with me a Scottish lad to look after the depot in my absence—for the Eskimo will steal if no white man is about, and we were not short of supplies.

In the event of the non-arrival of my ship, and a second winter being enforced, I had been asked to try to investigate a certain locality on the north coast of a large island, known as Prince of Wales Land, about five hundred miles west of my depot. This island lies at the southwest end of Barrow Strait, and between Peel Sound and Franklin Strait to the east and M'Clintock Channel and M'Clure Strait to the west. It can be seen on any Arctic map.

I set out from the depot in February, with seven natives and three dog-sleds, leaving orders for the ship to come for me to Leopold Island in Lancaster Sound

if I did not return before the ice broke up. My party were Panne-lou, my head man, who drove my sled with ten dogs; Akko-molee, who had his own sled and team of nine dogs; and Now-yea, who also had his own sled and eleven dogs, four of which were only three-quarter-grown puppies. Each man had his wife, without whom no native will make a prolonged journey, and Akko-molee had the only child in the party, a lad of about eleven years old, named Kyak-jua.

A word as to my natives. Panne-lou was a steady, reliable fellow, a good seal-hunter and dog-driver. His wife, Sal-pinna, was a disagreeable, cross-grained—and cross-eyed—woman, but capable and a good worker. Akko-molee was taken mainly because he was a native of Admiralty Inlet, two hundred miles west of my depot, and had hunted bear on the North Somerset coast. He was only moderately useful, and very inclined to sulk on any provocation. His boy, Kyak-jua, was a capital little fellow, the life of our party, full of energy, and a great favorite with all of us. I had given him a .22 rifle, and he was constantly getting me ptarmigan and Arctic hares with it when we were on the land. His mother, Anno-rito, was a quiet, pleasant woman, and entirely devoted to her boy.

Now-yea, my third native, was an active merry little man, willing and tireless, but irresponsible and very excitable. His number two wife (he had a couple), In-noya, was the best woman, and eventually proved to be the best man, in the party. I shall have more to say about her later on. Now-yea had left his number one wife and four children, all of whom were hers, at my depot, and I had agreed to provide for them till our return.

The pay, arranged before starting, consisted of tobacco, sugar, tea, and biscuit for the trip—or as long as our supplies lasted and to each man, on our return to the depot, a new rifle, ammunition, a box (twenty-two pounds) of tobacco, a barrel of biscuit, some tea, coffee, and molasses, and a spy-glass, or some equivalent if they already had one; also some oddments, such as cooking-utensils, day-clocks, needles, braid, scented soap, &c., for the women, and ten pounds of tobacco to each one. These were regarded as high wages by the other natives, of whom I could have had my pick, but they were fully earned, and many extras I threw in, as the sequel will show.

My outfit—besides the supplies already mentioned—consisted of twenty pounds of dynamite, some caps and fuse, also one of these new, very small, 'Ubique' batteries, six short drills, and a two and a half pound hammer. We had a rifle per man, and one spare one—all single shot .303 carbines, except mine, which was an ordinary English service magazine-rifle; plenty of ammunition; a

complete sailing-gear for each man, and two spare harpoons and lances; a hand-axe for each sled; native lamps for cooking and heating, and cooking-utensils. We had ogjuke (bearded seal) skins, for boot-soles later on, and seal-skins and deer-skin legs for cold-weather foot-wear, plenty of dressed deer-skin for stockings and socks, deer-skin blankets and heavy winter-killed hides to sleep on. We all had new deer-skin clothes, and expected to get young seal 'white coats' for wear on the return journey, when the others would be too warm.

My medicines were a flask of brandy, some tabloid drugs and antiseptics, a few bandages, and some surgical needles and thread. My personal luxury was a few dozen of the excellent 'Cambridge' soup-powders. I took a small kayak (skin canoe) as far as Leopold Island for sealing later, if we had to wait there, and also a tent.

One item of my outfit, a small Kodak camera, I was unfortunate enough to smash hopelessly a few days before starting. I shall for ever regret this disaster—for such it proved to be—and the irremediable loss it occasioned me.

This is not a story of Arctic travel, so I will omit the details of the journey. My route lay through Navy Board Inlet, and thence west along Lancaster Sound to Prince Regent Inlet, crossing to Leopold Island, and over the North Somerset Land—which is a flat tableland in from the coast—to Peel Sound and Prince of Wales Land. We had to make about six hundred and twenty-five miles of travelling, though, as I have said, it was only five hundred miles as the crow flies, and, of course, we had to depend on sea and land animals for ourselves and our dogs to live on, and for blubber for light, cooking, and warmth. Such journeys are made every winter by some of the Eskimo, either when visiting other parties or on hunting-trips, and are by no means unusual. The main, indeed the indispensable, thing being to find seals, halts of a day or two are made for the purpose.

Now, I want to emphasise the fact that Prince of Wales Land is by no means what literary people call a *terra incognita*, at least so far as the coast-line is concerned. Parry discovered it a hundred years ago, and Roald Amundsen sailed his famous little ship the *Gjoa* down Peel Sound and Franklin Strait when he made the North-West Passage. No natives have been found on North Somerset or on Prince of Wales Land, though hunting-parties visit North Somerset occasionally.

I had not told my destination to the natives beyond North Somerset, and

when we arrived at Leopold Island, and I unfolded my plans in the *igloo* that night, there was great consternation. We should starve; the ice would go out and leave us stranded there; and, lastly—here was the real hitch—it was a ‘bad’ country.

‘Why bad,’ I asked, ‘when you say none of you have been there?’

There was a pause before Panne-lou said reluctantly, ‘It is full of *Torn-ga* [bad spirits]; we are afraid of them.’

It took me half the night, talking and cajoling, before I overcame this absurd objection. Finally they consented to go on, but stipulated that we should travel close to the shore at Prince of Wales Land, to which I, of course, willingly agreed.

A small building, once full of stores, stands on Leopold Island. Naturally, it had been completely looted by the natives, but it served excellently to store our kayak and tent in, out of the weather.

I will relate one incident of the journey, as it shows the stuff one member of our party was made of. The day after we left Leopold Island we camped on the tableland of North Somerset, and I decided to stay a day there, and try for some deer, both as a change from seal-meat, of which we were all tired, and also to provide a ‘cache,’ or store of meat against our return.

I sent the three men off with all the dogs early in the morning; not feeling very well, I remained at the *igloo*. I had taken my rifle to pieces to clean it, and had all the parts in my lap, when I heard a cry outside, and Sal-pinna said, ‘Quick! He says a bear.’ My rifle was, for the moment, useless, so I plunged out of the *igloo* to get the spare rifle, which was always in In-noya’s care in the other *igloo*. Outside I saw little Kyak-jua, about a hundred yards away, running for his life towards the *igloos* with a very large bear within fifteen or twenty paces of him. In-noya was out of the *igloo*, with the rifle, running towards them. I did not think the boy had a chance, for he was directly between the rifle and the bear, and one blow of those formidable paws would have brained him, but suddenly In-noya called sharply, ‘*Tella-pee-a-nin; tella-pee-a-nin*’ (‘To the right; to the right’). The boy, instantly divining he was in the line of fire, doubled to the right like a hare. A shot rang out, and the bear roared with pain, then turned and savagely bit his hind-quarter, which had been hit. The next instant he was charging full tilt at In-noya. She had dropped on one knee to shoot, and, without moving, coolly levelled her rifle again. So close was the bear when she shot, and laid him dead with a bullet in his brain, that as she



sprang on one side the impetus of his charge carried him half his length over where she had knelt; the record was written plainly on the snow.

I asked In-noya later why she did not fire sooner. 'I had only taken two cartridges, when I ran out of the *igloo*,' she said indifferently, 'and I had to make sure of him.' It was as fine an exhibition of coolness and steady nerve as I have ever seen.

We reached my objective on 25th March, crossing Peel Sound from North Somerset in one day's travel of about forty-five miles. We kept very close to the Prince of Wales Land shore, and I noticed we always built our *igloos* now on the land, even if suitable snow was not so handy as on the ice, though we often had to negotiate some rough ground-ice before getting to shore.

A very disastrous mishap occurred the day after we arrived. Seven of our dogs, divided amongst the three teams, ate something poisonous they found along the shore, and died the same night; three more were very bad, but recovered. I cannot imagine what an Eskimo dog could find to poison him in his own country, but this was certainly the cause of death. The natives, of course, blamed the *Torn-ga*, and were greatly disturbed.

By 27th March I had seen all I needed to. The reported tin-vein was a vein of iron pyrite ore. I do not know who started this yarn about tin, but the description and locality of the vein agreed so closely with the data given me that I have always concluded the information was found in one of the private logs of the old Arctic voyagers, perhaps one of Parry's or Ross's crews.

Seals had been very hard to find since we crossed Peel Sound, and our dogs were getting hungry, so, after wasting the 28th looking for seals, which refused to come to the breathing-holes we found, we started the return journey on the 29th, and reached the north-east end of Prince of Wales Land on the 31st, only getting one small seal in that time.

About fifteen miles north of Prince of Wales Land lies a large island, and Panne-lou volunteered the information that the Eskimo name of it was 'Spirit Island'; but he could not, or would not, tell me anything more, the subject being strictly taboo by him, and also by the others.

When we left the next morning early, a south-east breeze was blowing up Peel Sound, and it looked as if it would be a fine day for the crossing. We had

made only about half-way over when one of those sudden Arctic storms swept down on us, shutting out all sight of land at once. The natives had a discussion whether to go ahead or return, and decided to push on. Panne-lou complained he was feeling ill, and was on the sled all day. Soon after the storm broke, the wind must suddenly have changed, for by five o'clock no land came in sight, and the storm was increasing in violence every minute. Panne-lou became very ill, so there was no alternative but to camp where we were.

Next morning it was blowing a blizzard, and Panne-lou was delirious and in a high fever. Even if it had been fit weather, it would have killed him to move him.

This part of the Arctic lies north of the Magnetic Pole, and the compass variation is nearly one hundred degrees; it is so sluggish and unreliable that it is quite useless for making a course in thick weather. We did not know, therefore, if we were north or south of our course.

That night—1st April—the first two dogs disappeared. My log says: 'At 11 P.M. dogs suddenly started howling; thought it was a bear, but dogs stampeded to igloo door much afraid. Suddenly one gave a queer stifled yap, and about same time door broke and dogs tumbled pell-mell into *igloo*...' The 'door' is a block of snow set up on the inside of the *igloo*. Now-yea and In-noya were sleeping in my *igloo*, to help nurse Panne-lou—for he had to be constantly watched—and as soon as the row started Now-yea, at In-noya's instigation, jumped up, and throwing his *kouletang* (deer-skin jumper) on the floor of the *igloo* from the snow sleeping-bench, stood on it naked—Eskimo always turn in thus—and held the snow 'door' till it broke in his hands, letting the dogs in.

Meantime I had slipped on my *kouletang* and some deer-skin stockings, and, as soon as the door was clear of dogs, cautiously crawled out with my rifle, expecting to find an unusually bold and hungry bear at our 'store-house,' a small snow-house built against the side of the *igloo*, containing the meat, blubber, harness, &c., which the dogs might damage or eat. As a rule rifles are kept outside, to prevent the frost coming out of them; but the natives insisted that they must all be taken inside that night.

I saw or heard nothing; it was a very dark night, and the drifting snow was blinding, stinging the eyes like sand. I crawled back, half-frozen, and we put up another snow door. The other *igloo*, fifteen or twenty yards away, had the same experience, so there must have been two visitors, as we each lost a dog at the same time.

The blizzard lasted three days, and though we built porches for the dogs in front of *igloo* doors and shut them in, we lost two dogs each night in the same mysterious manner. The 'doors' were always broken inwards, and a dog quickly and neatly snatched away. Obviously no bear was doing this, for his methods would have been more clumsy.

On the third night I made a hole in the *igloo* over the 'door,' and as soon as the dogs yelped put my rifle through and fired three or four shots into the porch. Next morning Akko-molee's dog was gone, but outside our porch our dog lay dead. His neck was broken and his throat torn out.

By this time the natives were completely demoralised, with the exception of In-noya. Now-yea sat shivering, as if with ague, the whole night, and Sal-pinna was little better. She had trodden on a knife-blade in the *igloo*, and cut her foot so badly that I had to put seven stitches in it. In Akko-molee's *igloo* they remained in their blankets all the time, and he would hardly answer me when I called to him.

Meanwhile Panne-lou improved but little, and I kept him alive on a few spoonfuls of brandy-and-water every hour. On the third day the fever had abated, but he was still wandering and semi-conscious.

There was good excuse for the natives. An *igloo* is not the slightest protection against an attack; an arrow or a lance would go through it like paper. It was a trying job, therefore, to sit inside expecting something—one could not tell what—to happen. For the natives, who believed implicitly it was the *Torn-ga*, it was worse than for me. In-noya, however, never lost her self-control, and she and I fed and watched Panne-lou in turn.

On the morning of the fourth day—3rd April—the storm had blown itself out, but there was a dense fog, and we could not see more than a hundred yards or so. The natives would have harnessed the dogs and left at once, in spite of my urging that it would certainly kill Panne-lou to do so, but until it cleared they did not know which way to go, for till we saw some land, or even the stars to steer by, we were completely lost.

Akko-molee said the fog showed there was open water not far away, and vaguely opined it was a bad sign. A pressure-ridge was behind the *igloos*; in fact, it was at this we found snow suitable for building. I asked Akko-molee to walk in one direction along it for a short distance with a sealing-dog to try to

find a breathing-hole, as we were completely out of feed, and the poor brutes were starving. I would walk down the pressure-ridge in the opposite direction for the same purpose. I arranged we should both return the moment the fog cleared. Now-yea, who was much too shaky to go away alone, was to remain at the *igloo* on guard.

Akko-molee demurred at first, but finally consented to go, adding, 'Only a very little way, though.' In-noya looked after Panne-lou, who was now sleeping quietly and in a profuse perspiration. I made some soup for him, gave her a few instructions, then left with my sealing-gear and rifle, leading a dog.

It was nine o'clock in the morning. I walked along the pressure-ridge for eight or ten minutes, when, to my surprise, I came to open water. The tide ran strongly in Barrow Strait, I knew, and the gale must have opened the ice up. We had, therefore, got far to the north of our course to reach the floe-edge, as the ice fast to the land is called. The water seemed to be of some extent, but the fog made it impossible to see how large it was. As the floe-edge is generally very irregular, deep bights forming in it where the moving pack exercises pressure, it would be very dangerous to move before we saw where we were.

It was a mere chance that we had not driven into the water or on to the moving ice in the blizzard. Seeing a seal in the water a short distance from the pressure-ridge, I let the dog go, as I did not need him, and he ran back to the *igloo*; I then sat down and waited for the seal to appear. Presently I shot one, but found the tide was running away from the floe, and I lost him, so I waited till it turned, which it did in about three hours. I then shot two seals; though I had to wait another hour before they came in to the floe. By this time a fairly strong tide was running under it.

As I was tying the seals together to drag them back to the *igloo*, I caught through the fog, in the direction of the pressure-ridge, a glimpse of a man walking down to the water's edge. It was only an uncertain impression, for the fog shut him out immediately. I rather wondered why Akko-molee had followed me, but remembering I had sent the dog back, supposed that had to do with it.

When I arrived at the pressure-ridge, I saw nothing of Akko-molee, but leading down to the water were large drops of blood, and at the floe-edge lay a little deer-skin mitten; it could only have been Kyak-jua's. The snow was packed as hard as a pavement by the gale, so it was no use to look for tracks on it, but

right at the water's edge, where it was softer and wet, was an odd-looking track, rather as if it had been made by some gigantic bird with webbed feet. The claw-marks did not show, as the toes overlapped the edge of the ice.

What did the blood mean? Flow came little Kyak-jua's mitten to be there? I felt sick at heart as I quickly thought it over. A tragedy had happened, I was sure. I ran back to where I had left the seals, about sixty yards from the water's edge; hastily buried one in the snow to keep it thawed, cutting a hole with my sheath-knife for the purpose; threw the other on my shoulder—they were both small seals—and ran towards the *igloo*. The tell-tale drops of blood stopped about three hundred yards from the floe-edge.

At the *igloo* I found Now-yea pacing back and forth before the door, shouting 'spirit-talk,' and nearly crazy; Anno-rito, the boy's mother, inside unconscious; and In-noya gray-faced and crying quietly, but faithfully tending Panne-lou as I had told her. My arrival upset her for a moment, however, as she cried out, 'I thought you had gone too.' I shut up Now-yea by cuffing him, and sent him into the *igloo*, where he sat and shivered.

In-noya told me the story succinctly. Kyak-jua had left his mother's *igloo* to come and see In-noya, for they were great friends. Now-yea was inside, warming himself, at the time; by-and-by Anno-rito called out, and In-noya replied the boy was not there. The poor mother rushed out shrieking for the boy, and on entering our *igloo* fell unconscious. In-noya did not dare to leave Panne-lou, who was very restless—Sal-pinna was useless—but she made Now-yea go out and look about. The tears streamed down her face, for she loved the little lad dearly. 'It is no good to look,' she sobbed; 'the *Torn-ga* have taken him.' Akko-molee's dog had returned, and In-noya said she feared for poor little Kyak-jua's father. 'I am going to fetch Akko-molee,' I declared; 'he is not far away.'

As I left the *igloo* I realised what had happened. Something had been lying hidden behind the pressure-ridge, and had crept close to the *igloo*. It had swiftly and silently seized Kyak-jua, and as swiftly and silently departed. The dogs, all asleep inside the porch, had given no alarm, the lad himself not made a sound. What manner of beast was this to do such a daring deed? It explained those drops of blood near the water. I at least, knew where the boy had gone, and a fierce anger surged over me when I thought of his merry face, and the happy smile with which he would bring me a ptarmigan, saying, 'For you, *kabloona* [white man].'

I thought of all this as I ran along the pressure-ridge through the fog, when suddenly I nearly fell over Akko-molee's body. He was lying on his face, dead, with a hole in the back of his skull, from which the brain was oozing. He had evidently been sitting at a seal-hole, and his assailant had crept up behind him. His right sleeve was torn open, and the artery under the arm had been ripped up, *but there was no blood on the snow from it.*

I felt sick when I realised what this ghoulish murderer had done; he had sucked the blood from the artery till it was dry. The sealing-spear, harpoon, seal-line, and lance were gone, but the rifle rested against a block of snow where Akko-molee had placed it. I left him lying there on the snow; my business was with the living.

I returned to the *igloo*, to find Anno-rito had been persuaded by In-noya to turn in under her blanket, which she had done, native fashion, with nothing on. She looked up when I took off my mitts and *kouletang*, and said dully, 'Akko-molee is dead. I have seen him. Is it not so?'

Then I did a fool thing, but I was overstrung and rattled. I nodded 'Yes,' and said, 'He is dead.' There was a silence while you might have counted ten; then, without any warning, Anno-rito sprang up, dived under the low exit of the *igloo*, and fled shrieking, '*Oo-wonga ky-it; oo-wonga ky-it*' ('I come; I come').

I was into my *kouletang* in a few seconds, grabbed my rifle (without which I would not have gone ten yards), and was after her, but, stripped naked as she was, she could keep her lead. She ran along the pressure-ridge, where I had gone in the morning, and I shouted when I realised a few minutes would take her to the water's edge. I was near enough to see her fling up her arms and spring into the water, and her despairing cry, '*Oo-wonga ky-it*,' was borne faintly back to me through the fog. Unhappy Anno-rito had joined her boy and her man.

It was now about four o'clock, and, live or die, Panne-lou must be moved in the morning. I would have left at once, but it was impossible to travel in the fog after dark. If it did not lift, I would try a compass course, uncertain as it was, in the morning, or steer by the breeze, if there was one, away from the open water. If the fog lifted, I would steer by the stars that night.

Meantime the dogs might as well be fed, and, with this in my mind, I pulled out the seal I had left in the snow. The fog was for a moment thinner than it had been, and I had just done this when I saw another seal in the water on the

far side of the pressure-ridge. Running to the floe edge, I sat down beside an up-ended piece of ice about ten yards from the water to wait for him to come up again. After a few minutes I leaned forward to look along the floe-edge, peering round the piece of ice. About sixty or seventy yard from me, standing on the ice, close to the water and looking intently at the seal lying near the pressure-ridge, I saw a man—or, rather, a two-footed beast in a man's shape.

He was but that moment out of the water, for it was dripping off him, and even as I looked his body began to turn white, as if the drops had been frozen on him in glistening little nodules. His head was thrown back and he was sniffing the air, as if using his scenting-powers. Suddenly he ran—rather clumsily, I thought, but swiftly and with unusually long strides—towards the dead seal. My brain started working again, and I knew I had him; I was between him and the water.

As he stopped and picked up the seal, throwing it over his shoulder very easily, I sprang out from behind the slab of ice, and he saw me. Without a second's hesitation, and before the seal fell from his shoulder on to the ice with a thud, he was running swiftly and silently at me, a short throwing-lance poised in his right hand. I covered him without haste, and pulled the trigger, but the cartridge missed fire. I jerked in another cartridge, and as I threw my rifle to my shoulder his arm shot forward like a piston-stroke, and I dropped quickly on one knee. As I did so, the hood of my *kouletang* was thrown back from my head and—it seemed to me at the same instant—I fired.

I suppose the lance, which had struck my hood, threw my aim off, for the shot went high, and broke my assailant's left shoulder, causing him to drop a second lance he held in his hand. But it did not stop him, and before I could jerk in another cartridge he was on me. Dodging the muzzle of my rifle, he seized my left arm above the elbow with incredible strength, for I felt the nails or claws sink deeply into my flesh through my thick deer-skin clothes. At the same time he pulled me towards him and tried to get at my throat with his teeth. I seized his neck with my free hand, and for some seconds we swayed back and forward thus, the blood from his wound drenching me. Flecks of bloody foam ran down from his mouth, and as we tussled he made a snarling growl, as a dog does when at grips with his foe. This was the only sound I heard from him.

We were unpleasantly near the water, so I bent my energies on working back from it, and was able to make some yards farther in on the ice. I soon

found it quite beyond my strength to squeeze his windpipe and choke him, the neck being very strong and thick; and although I had the advantage of at least five inches in height, and am over the average of my size in strength, it was all I could do to hold him off me. Had his other arm been whole, he would have torn my throat out with his claws.

We twisted and turned, struggling desperately, when suddenly he relinquished his grasp of my left arm, I suppose for a hold at my throat. As I felt him do so, I pushed him violently away and sprang back. He came at me again like a wildcat, snarling savagely; but I was readier now, and beating down his outstretched hand with my left fist, I landed him on the point of the jaw with all the weight and strength I could put into an upper-cut. It lifted him clean off his feet, and he fell backwards. As he dazedly and unsteadily recovered his feet again, I snatched up the lance he had dropped—for we had reached the place in our struggle—and rushing on him, drove it with both hands and all my might at his heart. He fell dead at my feet.

For a few minutes I sat down, feeling sick and giddy. I was blood from head to foot, and I saw for the first time some of it was my own, for my arm was bleeding freely enough for it to run down inside my sleeve over my hand. The indescribable horror of the Thing's appearance, the smell of his breath, and the ferocity and courage of his attack, badly wounded as he was, all affected me strongly. More and more I realised that I could have done nothing against him had he been unwounded.

Pulling myself together, I turned the *Torn-ga* over—so I call him, from this date, in my log, and the name will serve. Sticking out under his left shoulder-blade was a harpoon-head, lashed to the point of an ivory lance with sinew. I set my foot on the body and drew the lance out at his back, and, after cleaning it in the snow, examined it. The harpoon-head was Akko-molee's! I knew it instantly, for I had seen him filing it a few days before. I felt better, somehow, when I had seen this, and turned to examine more fully the body of my grim foe.

He was perhaps an inch over five feet in height, and was covered, except the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet, with short, fine seal-hair of a grayish-brown colour. The eyes were enormous, with no eyelashes, very like a seal's, the hips tremendously developed, and the legs disproportionately long; the instep was very broad and flat, and both the toes and the fingers very long, webbed, and ending in thick nails like claws. It struck me he would have been a truly formidable antagonist in the water. The face was hideous; it had a wide



receding jaw, with very prominent eyebrows overhanging the huge eyes, a low forehead, and small furry ears. I noticed, too, the teeth were sharp, the dog-teeth much developed, and the front-teeth of the lower jaw noticeably longer than the others. He had died with his lips drawn back in a savage snarl. Jets of very dark blood were flowing from his breast. The limbs and the body had a smooth roundness that could mean only one thing, but to satisfy myself I drew my knife and cut a gash in the thigh. As I expected, there was over an inch of blubber under the skin, exactly as a seal has.

Behind where I had knelt and fired, an ivory lance was sticking deeply in the hard snow. I looked at my hood—the lance had torn the top off it.

Acting on some impulse, I dragged the body to the floe-edge, and shot it into the water. It floated buoyantly, but the strong tide soon swept it out of sight under the ice; and as its blood-smearred, snarling face disappeared, I thought of little Kyak-jua, and felt glad that some, at least, of the account was paid.

Throwing the seal on my shoulder, I returned to the *igloo*. There was no one now to take counsel with but In-noya, for the other two only sat huddled up and moaning. Calling her outside, I assured her I was not hurt—she was horrified at the mess I was in—and related what I had done, and how I planned to leave the moment the fog permitted.

These Eskimo know more about this mystery than they will tell, because In-noya shook her head, saying, ‘Many will come to-night and kill us, *kabloona*.’ She told me she had put my revolver beside her, adding very quietly she wanted it to shoot Panne-lou and herself with if the *Torn-ga* broke into the *igloo*. ‘They suck your blood when you are alive,’ she said calmly. I had not mentioned what I had seen on Akko-molee’s body. How did she know this was their ghoulish habit?

I patted the plucky girl on the back, and told her we should come through the night all right as I had a plan. Fortunately, there was a spare *kouletang* in my kit-bag. Before I went inside the *igloo* I took off my blood-soaked garment and threw it away behind the pressure-ridge, explaining to the others that the blood on my foot-gear and deer-skin outer trousers was from the seal. These garments I took off, and started Sal-pinna thawing and cleaning them. My arm pained me, and was still bleeding. Examining it in the unoccupied *igloo*, I found five claw-like incisions, which had cut deeply into the flesh. I washed them with antiseptic, and In-noya bound them up.

I then shook up Now-yea, made him come out and feed the two seals—saving a meal for ourselves—to the dogs, and carefully ice the sledrunners and get all the harness ready. The dogs would need five or six hours after feeding, but I hoped that by midnight we should have the stars to steer by, and could make a start.

I thawed ten pounds of dynamite, wrapped it up in several pieces of deer-skin, and as soon as it was dusk laid it the full length of my wires along the pressure-ridge, making a track for the wires, and carefully covering it all over with snow. I brought the wires into the *igloo* through the wall, and connected them up with the battery. Then, shutting the dogs into the porch, I ran a reel of strong thread I happened to have with me round the *igloo* and porch about ten paces away, setting up blocks of snow some two and a half feet high, and driving into them bits of stick, to which I fastened the thread. As I was short of sticks, I used one of the two lances I had brought from the scene of the fight; the other I put away in a dunnage-bag. Midway between each of the blocks, I ran pieces of thread fastened to the thread circling us, and led them into the *igloo* through paper tubes, to keep them from freezing to the wall. I then pulled them gently taut, and fastened them to small strips of wood, so that when they were struck into the *igloo* wall they were bent by the pull of the line; there were five of them. In-noya helped me deftly and intelligently, asking no questions, except what I wanted done. When back in the *igloo*, I insisted on their finishing the seal meal, and we made a brew of strong tea. Panne-lou was now conscious and free from fever, but utterly prostrated.

It was a nerve-racking watch. I am not sure if I would come through another like it. I had seen now what we were waiting for, and if—as In-noya said they would—many came, if indeed only a few attacked us, I knew now we should have no chance at all, penned up inside the *igloo*. Yet we should be worse off freezing outside in the gray fog and darkness. I had seen their swiftness and savage determination. How many could we account for before the end came?

Suddenly I remembered there would be a young moon up about one o'clock, and I decided to start then and steer by it, if the weather was clear enough to locate it.

The hours dragged on till nearly midnight. Now-yea and Sal-pinna dozed fitfully, and awoke shivering. Panne-lou slept; In-noya sat beside him, gray-faced and self-possessed, occasionally trimming the native lamp, but with my revolver ever ready at her hand. We whispered once or twice, and listened, straining

our ears for some sound outside, till every minute seemed an hour, watching the little bent sticks, and waiting.

I kept my hand on the battery-handle, and my rifle across my knees. Suddenly a stick straightened with a faint click, and I nodded to In-noya, who touched the other two natives. I lifted the handle and pressed it down smartly. The roar of the explosion tore the silence of the night. The ice shook, threatening to demolish the *igloo*, and snow fell down on us inside. The dogs yelped with fear once or twice; then came silence. Presently an inarticulate, eerie, wailing cry rang out, distinct and very high-pitched; then silence once more, and we listened, listened. And then I knew how it is men go mad with the strain of waiting for some unseen danger to strike them.

At one o'clock we had some more tea, and I crept outside to see the weather. The fog was thinning fast, and I could see the young moon faintly, low down towards the open water. I knew it rose in the north-east, and gave the word to hitch up the dogs and start. It seemed certain I was giving Panne-lou his death-sentence, but there was probably a more terrible death for him, and all of us, if we delayed. Now-yea worked feverishly; the dogs were divided between two sleds; Panne-lou was rolled like a mummy in deer-skin blankets and lashed on; and we started.

With a match I hastily examined the snow outside the circle of thread, where I had purposely scraped it soft, and could see that only one track had been made. The lance to which the thread had been fastened was gone. The last thing I took out of the *igloo* was a deer-skin parcel containing the rest of the dynamite, thawed and ready for the fuse and cap, and the six drill-steels and the hammer-head. I put the dynamite between Panne-lou's blankets to keep it thawed. The fuse was marked in half-minutes. Panne-lou knew everything we were doing, and whispered to me, 'The land, *kabloona*; get the land. *Torn-ga* will not come there.'

Now-yea drove one sled with Sal-pinna on it. She walked with great pain, the cut on her foot being a deep one. Till daylight I led with the other sled, which In-noya drove. Now-yea had nine and I had eight dogs, but three on my sled were very weak from the poison they had eaten a few days before, and four of Now-yea's were puppies. In-noya handled the mixed team of dogs with wonderful skill.

By three o'clock it was light, and at half-past four the blessed sun rose,

dispersing the last of the fog—never did I welcome him more—and there to the south-east of us was the bold coast-line of North Somerset, some twenty-five miles or so away. Behind us lay the north-east end of Spirit Island, and near it, extending far to the eastward, a curtain of mist rose in the still, cold air from the floe-edge, a dark patch of water-sky behind it denoting a large hole of water. Our *igloos* were not visible, but they must have been very close to the north-eastern end of Spirit Island.

With the bright morning sun shining in our faces; our hearts rose to cheerfulness, and the horrors of a few hours before seemed like some bad dream, till I thought of merry little Kyak-jua, and how I had left his father lying out there on the ice. That was no dream, but a grim reality.

I told Now-yea to take the lead, warning him I would shoot him if he did not stick to his sled, but tried to run away. In-noya also shouted out the message to him, and added on her own account, 'And you know the *kabloona* does not often miss.' We walked and trotted alongside the sleds, not sparing the whip. In-noya handled it and its twenty-seven-foot lash as skilfully as any native I have ever seen.

Soon after sunrise we came to rather rough ice, which, though not bad enough to delay us seriously, quickly took the ice-shoeing off the runners of the sleds, so that they pulled heavily. The walking was hard and good, and by skilful handling the sleds were steered clear of any large rough hummocks; but this all helped to retard our progress.

By half-past six we were apparently fifteen or sixteen miles from the land and making a good five miles an hour, but some of our dogs were flagging, and presently one lay down, and had to be taken out of the team. Soon after this two of Now-yea's puppies were turned loose, but they followed on, and eventually made the land, unlike our dog, who did not rise again.

At seven o'clock I climbed a piece of ice and had a look back with the telescope. I speedily made out a number of black dots coming in an irregular line along our track; they were about five or six miles away. I ran after the sled and told In-noya quietly—it was no use frightening the others yet. She only glanced at the revolver lying in its case under the lashing, and applied herself to the sled and team. She was the bravest person (man or woman) I have ever met. We halted for two or three minutes to clear the traces, and while this was being done I took the dynamite parcel out, rolled it and the drill-steels and

hammer-head into one parcel with deer-skin, and adjusted the cap and fuse, slipping it all under the lashing, ready instantly to be taken out.

As we drew nearer the land I saw the cliffs ran sheerly down to the ice, and thought for a minute or two we were going to be trapped, for the only man who had known the coast was dead—Akko-molee. After a while, however, I picked up a little bay with my telescope, perhaps three-quarters of a mile wide and rather deeper, from the head of which the land sloped steeply back, so I ran forward and pointed out to Now-yea where to steer for. He seemed to have his nerves under better control now, for he answered 'All right' quite cheerfully. Perhaps he thought he could make a race for it, and reach the land alone, if the pinch came, though I may be doing him an injustice. The fact that the natives had dared to come to this region at all, knowing what they did, lent some colour to their reiterated assertion that we should be safe on the land. My reason rebelled, nevertheless, at the seeming absurdity of the idea. If our pursuers could travel on the snow of the ice, of course they could do the same on the land. Yet, somehow, among them the natives had imbued me with a quite unreasonable but firm faith in our salvation could we win *terra firma*.

At half-past eight the *Torn-ga* were about a mile away, and coming up on us fast. They were spread in an irregular line extending across our track, but I was glad to see a number of them were straggling badly. The pace was telling on them, for we must have had a long start. There seemed to be at least a hundred of them.

Presently we came to a small pressure-ridge, and as soon as we had passed it I took the time very carefully; to when the first of our pursuers appeared on our side, it was exactly six and a half minutes. I cut the fuse and lighted it, and laid the smoking parcel down on the ice, running on with my watch in my hand. Ten seconds or so before the charge was due to explode, I stopped and looked back with the telescope. The nearest *Torn-ga* had reached the parcel and were standing round it, more coming up every second. Those on the flanks had also stopped, and they all seemed to be waiting for one of their number, as they were looking back. Even as I took this scene in, a *Torn-ga*, fully a head taller than the rest, burst through the knot standing irresolutely about, and gesticulated violently in our direction. As he did so the charge exploded.

When the snow and smoke cleared, I counted six bodies prone on the snow, and saw several more limping away or sitting down, evidently badly hurt. I turned and raced after the sled.

When. I told In-noya what I had seen, she pressed her lips grimly together, saying, 'It pays a little of the debt for Kyak-jua and Akko-molee.' I inquired if she had looked at Panne-lou lately. I had not thought about him for some time, and it occurred to me that, if he were dead, we would cut the lashings and leave him. She nodded, saying, 'He sleeps,' then went to urging the dogs forward. I noticed the revolver was now taken out of its case and ready for instant action. We pushed steadily on for some time, improving our pace, as the dogs began to smell the land, and when next I looked back I saw about twenty of the *Tom-ga* five hundred yards or so in advance of the rest.

The dynamite had answered its purpose, and if it came to a fight close in on the land, I at first hoped we could handle these, for I knew I could depend on In-noya. But they drew up on us so steadily I saw this hope was vain, and, with a sinking feeling at my heart, thought of the savage determination the day before of only one of them—and he badly wounded.

Something must be done, however, and thinking it rapidly over, I decided to let the sled go on, and make a stand at a suitable hummock, with my magazine-rifle and the revolver, when they were about three hundred yards away. It sounds self-sacrificing, and all that sort of nonsense, but as a matter of fact it was only plain common-sense; it would be absurd to lose the advantage the firearms gave me by letting them get to close quarters before turning at bay. I should not have mentioned it, however, but for the part In-noya played. I told her my intention, whereon she said, 'Yes, *kabloona*, but we will take all the rifles, and I will stay and reload for you. The dogs see the land now, and will not stop.' I refused to allow this; but she was quietly obstinate, pointing out that she could do some shooting on her own account, and then reload my rifle while I used the others.

She took the revolver up and put the cord over her head, saying calmly, 'It is settled. Do not speak any more about it. I will take two rifles off the sled when you say the word; do you take the others and the cartridge-bag.' Suddenly she cried quickly, 'Where is the thing which smokes [the fuse]? It will delay them a little.' Fool! I had not thought of it. In half-a-minute I had wrapped the rest of the coil in deer-skin, lighted it at both ends to make more smoke—there was plenty of it—and laid it on the snow. It was quite harmless, but the bluff might go.

The nearest *Tom-ga* were about four hundred yards away from us, and when they saw the smoking parcel they halted a few seconds, and then made a wide detour on either side of it, allowing us to increase our lead considerably. About

this time another of our dogs staggered and fell, but In-noya had been watching him, and whipping a knife from the sled, severed his trace without stopping the others.

Then Now-yea, who was about one hundred yards ahead, called out something, and In-noya said, 'He says he can see the snow in the bay has been flooded—by the late spring-tide, of course—and it is all smooth ice.' She cast a glance back. 'We shall make the land, *kabloona*,' she said quietly. '*Koya-nimik*' ('I am glad'). Glad! Blown as I was, I shouted for joy. 'Hurrah! Hurrah, In-noya!' I said; but she only smiled back, and plied her skilful whip, and cheered on the weary dogs. We were running on either side of our sleds now, even lame Sal-pinna holding on to a lashing and limping gamely along.

I looked back, and could plainly see in the frosty air the smoking breath of the nearest *Tom-ga*, and got a glimpse of his savage face. He was obviously tired, and, I noticed, ran 'flat-footedly' and ungracefully, but with long jumping strides, which took him over the ground at a great pace. Some of his companions were lame.

When Now-yea reached the smooth ice he ran ahead of his dogs to encourage them—for a moment I thought he was deserting his sled—and they, knowing the land meant rest for them, broke into a tired gallop. Sal-pinna was able to ride on the sled.

Just before we reached the ice I took a snapshot at the crowd, and by a fluke hit one in the leg, and he sprawled over. The others did not stop or take the slightest notice of him, but came doggedly on. In-noya called on the team with voice and whip, and once on the smooth, almost 'glare' ice—save for a few frost-crystals which gave the dogs footing—they wearily galloped, and we could sit on the sled without slowing it down, so easily did it run.

We looked at each other; the hoods and breasts of our *kouletangs* were white with our frosted breath, and the perspiration was streaming off us. I was pretty well 'all in,' for I had not ridden on the sled since starting; In-noya, whom during the whole journey I saw on the sled only for a moment occasionally when looking at Panne-lou, seemed active and tireless yet.

She woke Panne-lou, and told him we should win the land, and the poor fellow's thin face lit up as he said, 'That is good.' I did not know till later how fully he realised our race from death—and what a death for him!

For the last mile over the smooth ice, which was also slippery going for our pursuers, we almost held our own, though at the ground-ice the nearest *Torn-ga* was not more than two hundred yards away. *Those behind him had stopped and were looking at us!* A wave of thankfulness swept over me, for I realised now the truth of the Eskimo's assertion: *They would not come on the land.*

We were too busy steadying and guiding the sled through the ground-ice to bother about the nearest *Torn-ga* then, but at the shore, as he still urged doggedly on, I took my rifle and turned. He was only fifty or sixty yards away, and I couldn't miss him. He pitched forward on his face—the same sort of savage, snarling face I had seen at the floe-edge—and lay still. As I live, his waiting companions turned, and trotted leisurely back the way we had come!

As soon as the panting, worn-out dogs had been urged over the shore and a few hundred yards up the rising ground, I stopped and looked back. Every *Torn-ga* in sight was lying prone. Those on the snow beyond the smooth ice were eating mouthfuls of it, as a dog does when thirsty in winter. A little cloud of steam rose in the air from their bodies. I called out, and both sleds stopped, the dogs flinging themselves down in utter exhaustion.

One more amazing incident occurred before we saw the last of the *Torn-ga*. As we started across the bay, a large bear came ambling round the southern point and headed for the opposite one. Instantly every *Torn-ga* was lying motionless, except that they raised their heads occasionally, and looked about as a seal does when out on the ice in spring for sleep. I could not have told the nearest of them from a seal without a telescope. A light land-breeze was quartering from the bear to the *Torn-ga*, and when he saw the—to him—welcome and, so early in the year, unusual sight, he evidently thought the supposed seals would soon wind him, so charged down at the nearest group, hoping to flurry one and catch him before he slipped down his hole through the ice.

Ten paces away from the bear the nearest *Torn-ga* sprang to his feet, and the next instant a dozen of them were at him, hurling their short ivory lances at his side, and leaping back with amazing activity. Each lance brought forth a roar of pain and anger. One of the *Torn-ga*, who slipped as he sprang away, came within reach of the bear's mighty paws, and was instantly killed by a blow which tore his head half off.

This did not check the others in the least, and in three minutes it was all



over. One of them ripped the bear up from throat to tail with a knife, whether of flint, ivory, or steel I could not see, but the next second they were tearing the smoking flesh with their teeth and drinking the blood. I could plainly see with the telescope their fierce blood-stained faces, like a pack of human wolves; it was a sickening sight.

I might have made some long-range practice on them with the rifle, but, to tell the truth, I had had enough of them; I only wanted to get away. They did not take the least interest in our movements now, though they had chased us relentlessly for forty miles or so. I can offer no conjecture why, but they dared not come on the land. Repulsive travesties of human beings though they were, they possessed courage of a very high order; some mysterious law of their being ordained they must live and murder only on the salt sea.

Turning my attention to the sleds, I found In-noya giving Panne-lou some weak brandy-and-water we had placed in a flask in his blankets. She was self-possessed enough, but a few tears stole down her cheeks as she replaced the revolver in its case and fastened the strap. That she would have turned it on herself at the last, when all chance was gone, I have not the slightest doubt. Lion-hearted In-noya, may you get a mate more worthy of you, and some day be the mother of many children filled with your own heroic courage, and cool, resourceful mind; it will be a great thing for your tribe and race.

We pushed on up the rise of the tableland, travelled over it for an hour, built an *igloo*, and turned in. We were foodless, exhausted, and our eyes bloodshot and red-lidded for want of sleep—but we were safe.

My narrative has already extended in length far beyond my anticipation, and to detail our return is unnecessary. We found deer plentiful, nursed Panne-lou back to life, and reached Leopold Island on 15th April. I might have gone on to the depot, short as we were of dogs, but Sal-pinna's foot required constant dressing, for the stitches had all burst, and neither she nor, of course, Panne-lou could walk. My arm, too, had become badly swollen, and gave me some trouble, the slight wounds I received in the fight at the floe-edge festering and causing me a lot of pain. It was fortunate I had attended to them promptly, as they were undoubtedly very poisonous.

I therefore decided to wait at Leopold Island for my ship. The kayak—In-noya's suggestion, by-the-bye—was most useful, and we were not short of food during our nearly four months' detention there. Personally, I felt I had had

enough of the floe-edge, and hunted deer on the mainland; but the natives were unafraid, asserting positively that nothing was ever seen of the *Torn-ga* east of North Somerset.

It was almost impossible to get the natives to talk about them at all, but during my stay at Leopold Island I dragged a little information out of Panne-lou.

The *Torn-ga* have been seen lying on the rocks off-shore, but never on the land. He said they bred on Spirit Island, which was 'their land,' but was very vague about it, and stated that no natives had ever come from there who had seen them ashore.

'Have any ever gone there?' I asked.

'*Ar-my*' ('I don't know'), he replied evasively, adding that they (the *Torn-ga*) were 'all the same as seals, and lived in the water.'

'Why don't they come here, or to Ponds Bay, if they live in the water?' I asked. 'I don't know,' he replied. 'No one knows about them but the Spirits of the Dead, and it is not good to talk about them at all, lest evil befall you.'

This was all I could get out of him, and I found it just as unsatisfactory an explanation of the mystery as, no doubt, the reader will; but it is all I have to offer from the natives.

On 2nd August my ship hove in sight, and I heard that the Great War had been raging for a year. A few days later we were back at the depot. It was sad news I brought for the Eskimos gathered to welcome their friends home. I do not know if Panne-lou told them the true story. I mentioned it to no one, white man or Eskimo.

I have tried to write this narrative as plainly and as straightforwardly as I could, always remembering it will be read by people most of whom are unfamiliar with Arctic conditions, and the mode of life and travel there. This must be my excuse for often being prolix. I might have added some more pages of details of my journey, but these had nothing to do with the main object—namely, making public the existence of a hitherto unheard and undreamt of animal in the Far North.

A scientific friend of mine returned me the MS. of this narrative with the

following pithy comment: 'Liven it up a bit; it's dull enough to be true.' Had I the gift of imagination, and some literary skill, I have no doubt I could improve the story and 'liven it up a bit' with some touches of thrilling incidents to make it far more sensational and exciting—and far less truthful.

Later the same friend commenced to demonstrate to me the absurdity of the idea that the human organism could exist in the water as its habitat. I do not claim the *Torn-ga* are human, and I know nothing of their organism. Eons ago, before life existed on the land of this planet, it was, we now know, in full swing in its waters, and the lineal descendants of the animals of those unknown ages are the seals, walruses, and whales, which in countless numbers make their home in the icy waters of the Arctic Seas.

I once read in some magazine an account of a fossil skeleton found in Java which was neither ape nor man. Pithecanthropus, they called him. Why may not the seas, where life first began, have some yet undiscovered secrets of primeval life hidden in these lonely Arctic waters, teeming as they are with warm-blooded life? Why! . . . Pah! what's the use? I am no scientist. I cannot prove my assertion with long words; but I know what I have seen, and fought, and killed. I know what gave me the five odd-looking little scars I carry on my left arm, and where I got the small ivory lance of narwhal horn which hangs on my wall. These are enough for me. And I know, too, what the terror of the hunted animal is when Death is following swiftly on its trail.

Let some naturalist winter where I have been, and bring home his specimens—dead or alive. But he will not get an Eskimo from Hudson Bay to Lancaster Sound to stay there with him; and for me—well I there is not enough money in America and Europe together to tempt me to visit Spirit Island again.

## The Shame Of Gold

Charles J. Finger

“L ‘Intransigent” recently printed a short account of the failure of the Franco-Brazilian ornithological expedition. Reading, you may have caught a hint of tragedy in it; but it may have escaped you, because our papers barely noticed the matter. I was specially interested because of a conversation I had had with a stranger who knew Brazil in a peculiar way.

Knowing Columbus, Ohio, you can not fail to remember the place where the C. D. & M. Traction crosses the main business street. It is crowded at the corner, for a newspaper office is there, and bulletins of the world happenings are posted every hour or so. On the day that I have in mind, Hall and I paused there for a moment. A new bulletin was being put up, which read:

Franco-Brazilian expedition formed to explore upper Amazon territory.

Hall made a remark laughingly as to new markets to exploit, and hurried on his way to Broad Street to meet his investment broker; but I, gazing upward, unaware of his disappearance, said:

“Yes, there are still spots on this little world untrodden by the foot of man.”

Turning, I discovered his absence, while from another man who stood where he had been came the words, very decidedly:

“I doubt it.”

“But why?” I asked, mildly interested.

“Good reason,” he replied, with a little shrug of his shoulders. There was a moment of hesitation, then, simultaneously, we both started off in the same direction, and for half a block walked almost side by side. At a word it transpired that we were both bound for the depot, for the Cincinnati train.

Later, on the train, he resumed the subject. “I know Brazil a little,” he said, “and far out of the beaten track, but I know it superficially. Others have been there—many others, and their lines are crossed and crisscrossed.”

“White men?” I asked.

“Certainly, white men. That’s how I was surprised into the remark I made there at the bulletin-board. Men poke everywhere about the world.” The man sketched out roughly on the palm of his hand, and with his pipe-stem, an imaginary map. “You recall the outline of South America,” he went on, “nearly pear-shaped, an elongated pear. Now, here is Peru, a little above the base of the thumb. Over here, under the little finger, is Cape St. Roque. I have been here. Cut across like this.” He drew a bold stroke entirely across, his hand. “That means Callao, into the Andes, and so north. North to strike the head-waters of the Amazon, and then trouble, fever and hunger. Wealth, too, in a way.”

“Love of adventure?” I hazarded.

He regarded me intently for a moment. I noticed his iron-gray hair and queerly wrinkled face. He was not yet middle-aged.

“No. I never tried to analyze. I don’t know. I’m not really adventurous. I like to be alone. Also, I drift, perhaps. When in a crowd, nothing seems to be worth while, and one is an ant in a hurrying mass. Alone, thoughts come with force. They strike one as bluntly as seen things impress themselves. I can’t explain.”

I was unwilling to press him with questions. He was not the kind of man that could be drawn out. When he spoke again there was a note of quiet, pleasant excitement.

“By the way, in Prescott’s ‘Peru’ there is a passage somewhere telling of one party of Spaniards crossing the Andes and discovering silver. Then, being unable to get back, they built a boat and floated down the Amazon, and presently turned up in Cuba again. It’s there somewhere. Or in Irving. In Prescott, I think.”

I told him that I had a faint recollection of something like that.

“Well,” he continued, paying little heed, “that was, roughly, four hundred years ago. No modern things to use, no chart, no map, no compass, no tools, or camp paraphernalia; just plain, dogged go-at-it and keep on. Keep in one direction, and you get somewhere. That’s how Magellan felt his way, and Columbus his. Then the old Norsemen in open boats. It excites me thinking of that. It was always that way, one man pushing on.”

Again he lapsed into one of his ruminating moods.

“But about Prescott—Once I was nearly all in. Over the Andes I’d gone, and if I didn’t hit the trail of the Pizarro men, I’m crazy. I never saw a helmet in my life until then, and I came across one under an overhanging rock. A mighty thing it was,—the rock I mean,—a kind of excavation under it that formed a cave.

“The helmet was there, and a few pieces of steel —short pieces; a broken sword, perhaps. I took the helmet and carried it for days, then threw it away. A man can’t be burdened with plunder like that.

“You see, I’d been on the trail for more than three months that time. Now and then I caught sight of an Indian, and once I got an arrow through my left shoulder. There were days and weeks in which I saw no sign of human life, but, by George! there was plenty of good company. Insects, you know, great glorious things. Butterflies, too—butterflies that run and make a little noise like a rattle when they fly away. It’s laughable. Living things are great fun to watch. And then the concerts at evening at sunset, crickets and things. I don’t know their names. Magnify insects, and I reckon you’d have a fantastic world.

“When I did see a human face again, it gave me a start. I’d found a good spot in the jungle to rest in. The stream ran clear there, this stream I’d been following, and the bottom of it was sandy. One does not often find a place like that. Thinking of an ideal spot, you imagine a stream in the shade of a tree, with grass all about. But when you get your stream, there is often mud, and where there is shade there is no grass. Here there was everything; a pleasant kind of spot, and I didn’t move all day. I just rested and smoked and bathed my feet and watched the insects. It was quiet, too, still as midnight, and the sun never pierced the leafy roof. It was just a great, green arch like a cathedral, with smooth, lofty tree-trunks, chamber after chamber of green, and, what was specially fine, the place was clear of lianas. So I rested there and read an old newspaper I had picked up in Callao and brought along. I’d read it before, dozens of times. Then my eyes would tire of the print, and I’d doze off. I did that dozens of times. The peace of the place was too much for me—too much both ways. The perfectness of it overcame me, and drove me to the little thing, the silly newspaper.

“Once I woke with the notion that someone was watching me. What I saw gave me a shiver. There was a big flowering bush not ten yards away. They

were great red flowers, meat color, like raw beef, and right between two of the flowers, as if it was stuck in a cleft, was a man's face, snag-toothed, red-bearded, shock-haired. It might have been a great ape. The eyes stared straight at me. Remember, I'd seen no natives for a long while, nor was there a settlement near, and it was a region as big as the State of Illinois, and no white man, I thought, had ever set foot there. Yet here was a face, and it was not the face of a native. I knew enough to keep still, and only peered through the narrowest slits I could make with my eyelids, so I judged that the face in the flower would think I slept. Believe me, I watched closely.

"It moved my way, but cautiously as a snake, and I saw a hairy chest, a hairy human being, and stark. He came on hands and toes, and I knew that he was a fellow used to the jungle and no native. Noiselessly he came, not stirring leaf or blade, hardly. The smell of his body assailed me unpleasantly, for there were sweetly smelling spicetrees, and the human smell was rank as poison.

"I sat up suddenly when the fellow was not more than five yards away. He stopped, rigid, expectant. Fear was in his eyes. Perhaps he saw it in mine. In such cases men hate each other. Each resents the presence of the other where white man should not be. Then he rose to his feet, turned without a word, his feet making no sound, and made for the flowering bush again. I knew in a moment, somehow, that he was ashamed of his nakedness in the presence of another of his race. So I hailed him. At that he stood, regarding me with doubt.

"Well, he was one of these queer fish found everywhere. He told me his tale that night. Of months and of years he had long lost count, and he wanted to know of things strange to me. Queer things he had been interested in, it seemed—a Londoner I guess, with the peculiar sharpness of interest in political things that they have. It must have been meat and drink to him, his interest in public affairs. He talked of Gladstone and wanted to know whether some fellow named O'Donnell who had killed some informer was hanged or not. From such things we located the date when he left his own country as about 1883. So he had been there nearly thirty-five years. Think of it!

"But as to the unbelief of people who are credulous on some things—tell people that for that length of time a white man, an Englishman, had lived with savages, and every single one would jump to the conclusion that he was chief among them. Naturally. On the general principle, I suppose, that it is better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven. But was he king? Boss? Chief? Not by a long chalk. And naturally. The man from civilization was the servitor. The

savages were the superiors. Such things as he once knew were useless in the wilds. Mind you, in civilization machinery is master, and man the servant of the machine. Take him away from the mechanical things and cast him on his own resources, and ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he starves. He can't make a fire, catch his food, build his shelter. He is afraid to test things as to their edibility. He cannot run, fight, or climb. Among animals he is a weakling. Face to face with nature he despairs. His education he finds to be ignorance. His overpowering fear is that he may be hurt. You see, in civilization man is protected; he does not have to struggle. All that he needs to do is to sell himself, his time, his life, for the best price he can command. So he becomes soft. He is unfit for liberty. Turn him loose, and he is as useless as a canary-bird or a common hen turned adrift. So was it with this fellow, Elfner. The savages were his superiors, and he was the servitor. He had ceased to concern himself about anything more than the needs of the body; and his brain had gone. Once, I gathered, he had told them tales of the city life, but the things he tried to picture they could not conceive; so he was lowered still further in their estimation and set down as a liar.

“From this Elfner I learned of the Chiqua tribe. He warned me against them as a vicious people that had no dealings with other tribes, and indicated their valley as farther east. That I was not to be led to his tribe was made very clear. Obviously, he was ashamed of his degradation. But really it was not degradation in one way of looking at it. There are almost no men who would not rapidly find their level in a savage tribe, and that level would be below its general average, because of the new valuations that the man from civilization cannot compass.

“There was a stranger tale he began to tell me—a tale of a swamp-land to the south-east and of monstrous, yellow earth creatures that heaved themselves out of the mire. Then I was sure he was crazed. I knew of the giant armadillos and great sloths, but it was none of these. He was loath to continue, and parried my questions. He wanted to know of things in the world that he would never again see. He wanted to talk about John L. Sullivan and Jake Kilrain, and of sordid crimes that had interested him. Above all he wanted to talk of eating, of ham and eggs, of bread and cheese and beer. Once, for instance, when he had begun to tell me something of the Chiquas, he broke off quite unexpectedly, and apropos of nothing went into a little rhapsody. ‘Say,’ he said, ‘this ‘ere is a dull place. I often think of colors, and there’s a bird all colors, and I always think of how it looks when you hold a glass of whisky up to the light. Lord! Lord!’ At that he fell into a reverie and sat hunched, his chin on clenched fist. Then he grew melancholy. ‘These ‘ere fellers in my tribe they got me goin’,



they 'ave. It's work, work, work. An' if I don't, it's punishment tied up to a ant's nest.'

“His talk was jumbled, disjointed, and I had much ado to get something from him relative to the country. Very little I got, after all. We had talked for perhaps a couple of hours when an ululation filled the air. ‘It's them blacks callin' me,’ he said, leaping to his feet. Now, while I was not anxious for his company, I felt an urge to invite him to go with me; but, to my relief, he refused on the ground that his masters would follow, capture, and kill him. When the ululation was again heard, he seemed panic-stricken, stood a moment irresolute, then turned and fled into the bush as a dog would on hearing an insistent call.”

The man stopped, and I hazarded the remark that it was strange to meet a white man thus, because the chances against an encounter were so numerous.

“That's so,” he said.

“And the reference to those strange earth creatures. Didn't you learn anything further?”

He looked at me and shook his head, doubtfully, and a little puzzled frown appeared and disappeared.

“No. But I may have seen one, too. I don't know.”

“May I hear?” I asked.

“There's nothing to tell, because I'm not sure. And yet—” He passed his hand over his brow. “I may have been mistaken. It was after I had left the gentle people, and I was not myself then. I was worried, grieved, half starved. It is all muddled.

“You see, after Elfner left I decided to find the valley he had told me of, and I did find it without any particular difficulty. It was a bird that attracted me, a quetzal. If I had not gone toward it, I might have missed the place. But I never could resist watching a quetzal, for it is the most wonderful thing that God has made, the most exquisite thing in creation. To see it, a living thing of metallic green—gold-green and scarlet-breasted, with tail feathers of jet and ivory, is an experience. You watch it and lose yourself in admiration. Nothing else is so gorgeous. I have watched as the light struck them, and have seen them change

from violet to steel-blue, but colors that live. Then the bird moves slightly, and the blue is blue-green, then again gold-green, and there are crimson flashes and purple. And there was the valley, and it was the valley of quetzals and butterflies, and in it lived the gentle people. I stayed there many months, peaceful months, only to leave in sorrow. A gentle people, indeed! Never did I hear a harsh word or see an ungentle thing. I do not think that they knew of war or of violence. To live was sweet in that valley of flowers and birds. There were sounds of living things as sweet as the musical ripples of a little brook, and the breeze was soft and laden with perfume. So I came to love the gentle people and their land.

“It may seem odd to tell you this, but I have told you much, and the mood is on me, and the place in which I tell it to you is odd, here where there is the noise of people and of the moving train and where there is glaring light or sooty smoke, and where every one is burdened with the stern anxiety of duty. And yet it all comes to me as the memory of a summer day may come to some poor fellow in prison—the memory of that spot where existence is facile and where trifles give joy and where people live as birds live. While there I knew a fresh vigor of soul. I always seemed to be on the point of grasping and understanding things, and the thought lived in me always that I should never do a thing to bring the sorrow of the outside world among this people. The memory is strong upon me now, and it came to me as a dull blow when I read the bulletin up-town. I felt as I imagine a prisoner might feel when the judge spoke the death-sentence. It seemed to mean that, you know.”

The man paused, and relit his pipe. He gave a puff or two and laid it aside again. Then he leaned back in his seat, folded his arms, and dropped his chin on his chest.

“All this noise about us must make what I tell you seem unreal. I appreciate that fully. Sometimes I think that out there I lost something well worth the losing, and found instead a precious thing. Looking back, I seemed to have touched the supernatural. I wonder if you understand. What I lost enriched me, and I seemed to have left forever my own people and the sins of avarice and anger and pettiness. It was no illusion. There was the valley of peace. There *is* the valley of peace. But I fear the ravening hand now stretched out. I fear the men of my own race and what must come in the search for new world-markets.

“There was a child there, a thing of beauty, who led me about at times after

I had been accepted as a visitor. Endol was her name, and she was a dancing creature, who weaved circlets of flowers, and often brought to me, laughingly, water to drink, bearing it in a flattish shell which held only a taste. I see her now, a bright fairy, dancing and chasing the cloud shadows on the green, playing with the birds, clapping her hands as she ran after butterflies, but never trying to catch them. Do you know, at such times the memory of my own land was as a dark and fearful dream. I remembered slum children. The memory of the things that clatter about us in houses and in cities, and the fret and the evil and the filth and the sickness—these things bore upon me and oppressed my spirit. Now, sitting here, remembering that valley of joy, it is as if I were in hell, and it is from that hell that I am trying to escape, for all has been dark and ugly since I left.

“One day Endol brought me a golden-colored flower, a new one to me. I saw that she bore a shell in her left hand. When I made a motion to take it, she prevented me. Playfully, I held her, and as I did so, she chanced to tip the shell, and a yellowish sand poured forth and lay lightly on a large leaf. Looking, I saw that it was gold-dust. At that Endol laughed, stooped, scattered the gold, and, gathering the grains that lay on the leaf, threw them afar.

“That naturally set me to wondering as well as wandering, for thus far I had confined my walks to the upper end of the valley. As it fell out, the next day I came upon a flat rock at the foot of a vine-hung tree, and there in plain view was a shell, much larger than that which Endol had held. It held gold-dust, and a few nuggets, the best of them not larger than a small pea. The shell had apparently been set there and forgotten with the carelessness of a child tired of a plaything. The gold was not free from iron dust, but I saw at a glance that the vein from which it had been taken must have been extraordinarily rich. So it came to me to think that this people knew nothing of the value of gold and perhaps used it as a plaything. I suppose I should have left it there, but I did not. Few men living as you and I have lived in a workaday world could resist the temptation to bear it away. So I took it to the bower in which I slept.

“Now, Endol and another child met me on the way and, chattering and laughing, reached for the shell. I handed it to them. Their actions astonished me. They drew slightly aside, their merriment fell from them, and they held a rapid, whispered conference. Endol’s friend, the older of the two, seemed the most urgent, and her counsel apparently prevailed, for they set off running down the valley with the gold. They seemed possessed of a new fear, one that I could not understand.

“Soon after they returned with others, men and women, and I could see that there was consternation. I was reminded of a crowd I once saw running to the pit-mouth when the news of trouble came.

“Sima, a handsome youth with a splendid head ornament of quetzal feathers, addressed me. He was gentle, almost persuasive. At first I could not understand what he was driving at. There were evidently references to a people and the setting sun, and in the midst of his discourse others came up and now and again tried to aid him in making me understand, as people will do all over the world when a foreigner is dense. Presently Sima ceased, and another, an older man, took up the parable. He grew excited in the telling of the tale and, as I gathered, was eager to impress upon me that there was an evil time when hate and murder and greed, until then unknown, had come into the land. But it was not until he roughly fashioned a cross with a couple of sticks and broke it to pieces that a light dawned on me. Then when he told me of white men from the north, it dawned upon me with clearness that here was a tribal memory of the coming of Pizarro into the land of the Incas. Understanding that, I could piece things together, the ancient wrong done to a gentle people in the name of the cross, the white man’s greed for gold, which had been a specific cause of strife and disorder, the hopeless resistance of an unarmed people, and the cruel acts of retaliation. From another point of view I saw what the lust of empire meant, and I saw how those who preached civilization, philanthropy, and religion came burning, shooting, destroying, and subjugating the weak, the simple, the harmless. The forefathers of this people had escaped. What wonder, then, that to them gold stood as an evil, something to hide and thrust away as unclean lest its glitter again attract these who bear death in their hands?

“I saw all that in a flash, and I understood the vague sense of imminent chaos that must have possessed the simple, happy folk when they pondered on what might happen if gold-mad white men again came ravaging. The wonder was that they did not slay me when first I came.

“The gold-bearing sand was exceptionally rich in the little river. Grubbing about, I found pockets in the bed-rock full of gold. I even amused myself for a time extracting some of it and piling it in little heaps here and there on stones, and once I dammed up a section of the stream, turning the current so as to expose the river-bed, thus laying bare a new and unexpected vein. But it meant nothing to me then, for I still enjoyed the sighing of the wind through the silky grass, the sweetness of the day, and the fullness of the earth. The water that dripped sparkling from my finger-tips was finer to me than the sifting gold.

“One day I found the cave. I had not found it before simply because I had not sought it. There was no attempt on the part of the folk to conceal its location, nor was there displayed any desire to keep me from it.

“It was an opening in a hillside almost six feet long and four high, a square, natural gap, and the chamber within was at least thirty by thirty. The rays of the western sun flooded the place. For over three hundred years, perhaps, the people had hidden their gold there. From that you may have some idea how things were. The stuff lay scattered over the floor of the cave. I worked my fingers through the gold near the opening, and it was knuckle-deep before I touched the rock. In the farther corner was a sloping heap of the stuff, and it had been there so long that the iron dust had blown away. It shone dully as the sun touched it. Here and there were small nuggets, some as large as a cherry. Leaving the cave, I found a pile of them, oddly shaped, laid along a large, flat rock. They were evidently the playthings of children. I remember noticing one, flattish and almost heart-shaped. It had a hole through it, and I strung it and hung it round my neck. Look at this.”

As he spoke he fumbled at his soft shirt-collar and pulled up a little nugget, which he handed to me.

“It’s all I have to show,” he said as he returned it to its place. “That night I did not sleep. Strangely enough, my mind took a twist. The life I was living fell behind me, as it were, and I was filled with a new desire. It was not really a desire for wealth, but rather a desire for power. That was it, a desire for power. That old newspaper I told you of came to my mind, with all that it stood for. I began to dream of walking into my native town, into Hillsboro, and showing off. Crazy, isn’t it? But it was so. They were day-dreams that might have pleased a boy, and it is almost too banal to tell, the rapid succumbing to temptation. I had a vision of becoming the local ‘big man,’ of buying out the banker, of building a fine house, of owning a splendid automobile, of servants, and all that kind of thing. Things! things! things! The pageantry of wealth! So dreaming, the quiet of the valley and the peace of it became a hateful thing, and I longed for the sound of a thousand footsteps and a thousand wheels, for the noise of streets, and the haste and the clatter and the excitement. Gradually the idea took possession of me that the gold was mine and that it was a weak sentimentality which would prevent a capable white race from using that which a brown-skinned folk knew not how to use. I planned and dreamed, planned and dreamed. The poison was at work.

“Weeks and weeks it took me to carry the gold to the hidden canoe. I thought at the time that I was unwatched, but I do not think so now. Some of the stuff I loaded direct from the river sand, but by far the greater part I bore from the cave. Of course there were days when I hesitated, half repenting. But, on the whole, greed had me.

“One day I saw Sima and Capaca, standing side by side, looking at me, and I was suddenly overcome with shame. Then fell away from me my desire to leave. The glamour faded. It was as if I had been discovered handling filth by those whose good opinion I valued, and the hot blood rushed tingling to my cheeks. I wanted to make my peace with the people again, but knew that to do so was hopeless now. So I stood irresolutely by my canoe, and I hated myself for my insincerity.

“Sima came down to me. He said no word, but, with a look of half-pity, half-contempt, handed me his spear, and with a gesture dismissed me and turned his back. For a moment I wished that he had thrust the spear through me.

“So it was that I came to leave the valley where I had known peace, and from then time was for me little but physical weariness. There were days when I lay half dead in the canoe on my bed of gold, tortured by flies and things that bit and stung— days and days of misery when I wished myself dead. Once, it seemed ages, a hovering cloud of insects followed me, sometimes settling on me so thickly that my arms were black. My bodily suffering was great, but greater still the suffering within.

“I think that day after day in that jungle drove me mad, and there were times when I was aware of nothing in the world but the rank smell of decaying vegetation and a black strip of water winding, winding, winding through a canon of dark-brown earth through which great roots thrust themselves like snakes. Days of impenetrable gloom there were, and there were days when all about me there seemed to be hushings, then hissing whisperings and pointing fingers and peering eyes. Again there was a sensation that music was about me, and I seemed to hear at a distance the opening chords of a brass band. I knew then that I was feverstricken.

“Once I dared to land at a place where the virgin forest seemed to end. There was a great green, open space, a mighty clearing, and a fringe of trees between that and the river. I was the victim of a strange hallucination, and it was as if the whole world were moving swiftly to the right, swiftly, horribly

swiftly, and I alone stood still. I fought against it, fought myself. Do you understand? It changed to a sensation of rushing backward. So dizzy I became that I was constrained to squat at the foot of a tree, pushing against it hard with my back, and press my temples until I felt the pain of it. Then I heard a sound, and looked up. I saw, or thought I saw, something. The earth seemed to tremble and heave. Out from it came swiftly a hideous thing, clay-colored and huge, a mighty mass of living flesh. The mud fell from it to right and left. I was breathless and unable to stir. The thing pushed upward and forward with clumsy, lumbering movements, side to side, extricating itself, growing huger each moment. Then I realized that what I saw was only the head and shoulders. The head turned slightly, so that I saw the upper part of it, blunt and triangular beyond the shoulder. The heavy-lidded eyes I saw. Then I noticed the mud dripping heavily, and part of the fore leg coming from the slime. My God! send that there are no such things on earth and that I was really mad!

“I remember rolling down the steep bank and falling into the river, so shaded and still, and then there was an awe-inspiring roar, dreadful to hear. I swam. I do not know. I cannot talk of it.”

The man sighed deeply. It was almost a stifled sob. He was ashen-faced. When he spoke again, his voice was perceptibly huskier.

“There is no more to tell,” he said. “There were weeks and weeks of misery in that jungle, and wanderings that I forget—wanderings in the swamp lands, and most wonderfully I came to Mannos and, in time, to Para, where the consul was good to me.”

He ceased suddenly and fell to smoking. It was a long time before I cared to speak, but I said at last:

“And you purpose to return?”

“I want to get back to the people, to where the superstition of gold is absent,” he said. “Only there is the world sane. Only there do people enjoy their days and love the earth and know the beauty of life. Gold blinds all others. So I must go to the gentle people again. That is, if they will have me. Then there’s this expedition.”

His voice was tense now.

“Suppose. You see, once I might have been a traitor to them. I dreamed of something of the sort, a betrayal to my own people. If this expedition is a success—Well, where white people go and where there is gold, sorrow and disease and death follow. The consul at Para knew something of my story. Would it not be a good thing to save a race, a gentle people, from destruction?”

The man’s story stayed with me. And, as I said, since learning of the failure of the expedition, I have wondered much.



# The Kraken

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Below the thunders of the upper deep;  
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,  
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep  
The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee  
About his shadowy sides: above him swell  
Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;  
And far away into the sickly light,  
From many a wondrous grot and secret cell  
Unnumber'd and enormous polypi  
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green.  
There hath he lain for ages and will lie  
Battening upon huge seaworms in his sleep,  
Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;  
Then once by man and angels to be seen,  
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.

# The Golden Rat

Alexander Harvey

What secret of her troubled soul could the youthful and lovely wife of old Gerald Lancaster be concealing now from me? She was decidedly the most baffling of all my patients. I was comparatively young, as men in the professions reckon age, yet I had devoted eleven arduous years to the practice of that department of psychology which goes by the name of psycho-analysis. It seemed obvious, from the very first appearance of the lady in my consultation room, that she suffered from the shock of an underlying emotional disturbance. Mrs. Lancaster, that is to say, had passed through a painful experience. She had striven to banish it from her consciousness.

Now what had been the emotional disturbance in her case? I could but conjecture vaguely. Her experience, whatever it had been, was not extinguished. It remained latent in her sub-consciousness, buried below the level of her waking mentality. The case of Mrs. Lancaster was, to use the technical phraseology one of repression, the experience or emotion which she strove to put out of her mind and her life being what we psychologists call a “complex.”

As I concentrated my gaze upon the large but troubled eyes of Mrs. Lancaster, it dawned upon me that the “complex”—the idea or sorrow she strove to annihilate—was emotional, sentimental. Had she formed some unhappy attachment which the fiercest efforts of her will failed to subdue? I made the suggestion which seemed to me the best possible under the circumstances.

“I shall have to hypnotize you.”

Speaking in the fluted accents which made her voice harmonize so perfectly with the sweetness of her face, Mrs. Lancaster objected to the very idea. She declined to be hypnotized because she feared the process might undermine the strength of her will. It was not difficult to reassure her on this point. To my surprise, however, I found my patient absolutely un hypnotizable. There remained only the alternative of imploring her to tell me frankly all that was in her mind, all that might be below the level of her consciousness, all that she would hide even from herself.

“I fear,” I remarked, as considerately as I could—“I fear you are concealing

something from me something of which you do not perhaps realize the importance or even the nature.”

She searched her memory in vain. I had, on the occasion of our last interview in my study, forbore to press her. It was my hope that in the course of a subsequent consultation I should elicit the mysterious cause of her nervous state.

How well I remember that summer afternoon! The wife of old Lancaster had taken her departure, and I stood absorbed in baffling reflections with reference to this most mysterious patient. Slowly, at last, I opened the door that afforded access to the garden stretching from my study window quite to the stables. The garden, like the stables themselves, was a luxury, a whim of mine. The value of improved real estate in my native city made the taxes upon my cultivated acres, anything but a trifle. I might have kept a motor car, but my love of horseflesh made it impossible to give up the stables for a garage.

“More rats, doctor.”

It was Boggs, the grim coachman. I found him rubbing down the most spirited of the steeds behind which it pleased me to spin through the streets of the city. Boggs indicated a pail near one of the stalls.

I gazed vacantly at the nestful of tiny young rats. My mind was still absorbed by the repressed “complex” of the puzzling Mrs. Lancaster. I still stared at the seven blind, feeble creatures, too young for even a growth of hair to be manifest upon their hides. Boggs had stepped over to my side by this time. He clutched the nozzle of a streaming line of hose.

“I’ll drown ‘em, drat ‘em!”

He would have flooded the wriggling nestful in a trice had I not stayed his hand.

“That little fellow there,” I remarked—“he looks different—lighter than the others.”

Boggs peered down into the bottom of the pail.

“Yes, doctor,” he conceded, his voice thick with the disgust and annoyance the sight of rats in the stables invariably caused him. “One there is yellow-like.”

To the amazement of the honest Boggs, I plunged my hand among the young rats and picked up the specimen that had caught my eye. There he lay now, in the palm of my hand, blind, weak, helpless. The hairs upon his odd little frame were sparse. They were sufficiently thick, none the less, to impart an aspect of fluffy gold to his coat. I was half inclined to drop him to his doom among his brothers when his tiny tail waved vaguely. It was covered nearly to the tip with a growth of down that made it look like a golden wand. Before Boggs had closed his mouth from sheer wonder at my behavior, I had slipped the baby rat into a pocket of my coat.

Slowly I retraced my steps across the grass from the stables to the study door. I was in some perplexity. Should I risk an experiment with the tiny thing breathing still in my pocket? The query vexed me as I paced from the desk in my little study to the door of the laboratory beyond. In this laboratory were stored the test tubes, the culture mediums, the beef broth and the apparatus for clarifying and sterilizing through the medium of which I enlarged the range of my biological knowledge by artificial cultivation of bacteria. Here, too, were the cages in which, at one time, I had bred three generations of white mice. The creatures were all dead long since. I was quite an adept, however, in the care of these rodents. Many a specimen had been inoculated in this laboratory with "cultures" of my own.

Lifting the little rat from my pocket, I laid him, seemingly more dead than alive, in one of my small cages. A spirit lamp had next to be set aflame. With its aid I soon heated enough milk to fill a small bottle, from the corked neck of which protruded a tiny quill. The little rat absorbed the first meal I gave him greedily enough. I had the satisfaction of seeing him curled snugly in sleep upon a litter of scrapped rags before the milk was half consumed.

Many days had not elapsed before I saw the hair upon his coat grow sleek and plentiful. To my surprise, the yellowish tint which had first attracted my attention to the young rat deepened into one of fine gold before I possessed him a week. In a fortnight he was strong enough to climb the side of the box which was his home in my laboratory. He ran about the floor so recklessly that I was forced to keep a careful lookout for stray cats and dogs. My original fear that he would prefer the freedom of the open air or of the cellarage to my laboratory proved groundless. He seemed to be destitute of the quality of timidity. Never in my experience of pets had I acquired one so recklessly tame. It was a source of perennial delight to him to spring from my shoe to the hem of my trousers and climb up to my shoulder. There he remained perched

contentedly while I read or wrote or even walked about. As day succeeded day, the exquisite golden color of his coat grew richer. I discovered his tastes in edibles, especially for roasted chestnuts, and gratified it to the full. He seemed to tire of bread and milk as he grew fatter and more golden of hue. I fed him upon cake and nuts. His place of refuge, when pressed for one, was the pocket of my coat. Again and again have I felt him stirring about there while I received a patient in my study. When we were left at last alone, he would peep forth prettily and give a little shriek of delight while returning to my shoulder.

Never was quadruped more careful of its personal appearance. The golden rat balanced itself on its hind legs to lick its belly clean, and it had a trick of wiping itself all over with its forepaws. One of these paws would be passed over the head and the ears and licked into an immaculate cleanliness at each wipe. Philander, for that was the name I bestowed upon the golden rat, was a dazzling spectacle when the light from my study lamp fell upon him. He slept for an hour at a time on the desk before which I sat to read, seeming motionless, a gleaming ornament that might have come in perfect beauty from the cunning of the hand of Benvenuto Cellini.

Philander was washing his golden coat as he sat on my shoulder one morning, when we were interrupted by the unexpected arrival of a patient. The rat—he was a good-sized animal now—took refuge in my pocket the instant old Pawkins was announced. Pawkins, I should explain, was one of the prominent bankers of the city, who had long been under my care because of his neurasthenia. It had not been easy for me in the beginning to trace the source of his disorder. It seemed due primarily to an idea implanted in his mind by the physician who first treated his symptoms. Pawkins had been told that he was threatened with Bright's disease. He had seized this diagnosis eagerly. His ailment was, on its physical side, solely due to a false suggestion. Unfortunately, however, I found it no easy matter to win my way to his confidence. There was in his mind, latent and unconquerable, a suppressed "complex," an idea he would not avow, a thought that held him prisoner. No effort of mine could bring it to the surface. In accordance with my practice, I did not force the revelation I sought from old Pawkins. I was content to bide my time, as I was biding my time with the wife of Lancaster.

The elderly financier had barely seated himself in a chair facing me when I got a sudden fright. It seemed as if he had brought a dog with him. I thought of Philander in my pocket and had difficulty in suppressing an impulse of alarm. A closer inspection of the crouching figure at the feet of old Pawkins sufficed to

correct my blunder. It was no dog that sat so near him. It was rather a shadowy outline than a reality, a suggestion of a shape. As I gazed the thing seemed to be a wolf—or shall I say the wraith of a wolf? A minute or two elapsed before I could withdraw my gaze from what I felt now must be a spectre. I had seen what was too evidently a ghost, for when I dropped my eyes once more to the floor the thing had disappeared.

It was easy enough to get rid of old Pawkins after a few perfunctory questions. When he had taken his departure, I gave myself up to a profound reverie. Philander had emerged from his retreat and was gorging himself on the floor with roasted chestnuts. It was borne in upon me at this moment, for the first time, that some connection must exist between the golden rat and a series of emotional and physical experiences and sensations in myself. I asked myself if the golden rat had not communicated to me the symptoms of that fevered state in which I now so often found myself. The state was one of exhilaration—like the first effects of some delightful stimulant. It was an exhilaration which wore away. It left, unlike the thrills that go with opium, no baneful consequences. It brought me a singular capacity to verify with my own eye—at intervals—the fact that practically all sources of illumination emit an ultraviolet light playing no part in ordinary vision. This is the result of the circumstance that the eye is sensitive only to a small proportion of the radiation reaching it. There were times, however, when my eyes became more than ever camera-like, detecting and measuring the intensity of what physicists call the infrared rays. I could see at such times by the aid of a light which physicists have pronounced invisible or at least discernible only through photography.

It occurred to me, after the departure of old Pawkins, that the wolf I had seen at his feet was an optical eccentricity in me. I recalled just then a fit of trembling in Philander while he lay concealed in my pocket. I recalled, too, the peculiarities of his conduct when certain other patients were in my study. The golden rat was subject to an inexplicable panic whenever the wife of a certain clergyman poured the tale of her neurosis into my ear. Philander took refuge under a bookcase or in the remotest recesses of a drawer in my desk. My eye chanced to light upon his frolicking form as I pondered these things. He held a walnut in his forepaws and, perched upon his hind limbs like an educated poodle, was devouring the morsel greedily. I waited until he had satisfied his appetite and then called him by his name. In a trice he was upon my shoulder.

The exigencies of a laboratory experiment that day required the use of a pair of black silk gloves. These were in my lap. The rat was creeping around

my neck as I drew one of these gloves over my left hand, fitting it snugly and carefully from force of habit, although my mind was engaged solely with the mystery of the Pawkins wolf. On a sudden I saw a minute speck moving against the blackness of the glove. It was a mere mite of a speck, but it shone in golden luster as it flitted and fluttered.

The darting and dancing mite in the palm of my gloved hand was a flea.

A flood of light was let into every nook and cranny of my mind the moment I had caught the golden insect on the tip of my finger with the aid of a dab of vaseline. Philander, then, was infested with fleas. They were like himself in their peculiarly golden aspect. I brought the rat from his place of rest on my shoulder down to my knee. The critical inspection of his fur to which I abandoned myself—not neglecting a microscope in the process—revealed a quantity of golden fleas. I was unable to identify the species. It is true that the varieties of flea already classified are infinite. I had studied a few in my student days. Here was a species as new as it was strange. There could be no doubt that the fleas on Philander had been the agents of the spread of some infection to me. My symptoms of late had been very puzzling.

I was quite certain that Philander could not have imparted to me the bacillus of any infection so dire as plague. That dread disease appears only in fleas which have bitten affected rats or persons at least twelve hours prior to death. The organism causing the disease itself must exist for a certain interval in the body of Philander, there to undergo a definite alteration, before it could induce an infection in me by transmission through the flea. And there was no known case of plague affecting a human being sufficiently near to involve Philander in the slightest suspicion.

The dilemma of my situation seemed greater on the following morning. I found my fever slightly higher, although the exhilaration was quite pleasant. I observed an accentuation of the eccentricity of my vision. I detected ultra-violet light without the aid of an instrument. There was one close friend to whom I could turn in this crisis. Having ascertained over the telephone that Thorburn, the renowned specialist, who had been my classmate at the medical school, could receive me at once, I hastened to his office.

My brilliant friend, whose researches in microbiology fill the world with his fame, had a touch or two of gray at the temples, I noticed. He received me most effusively, for we had not met in a long time. My eye was held for a

minute, as we shook hands, by the large stork standing gravely at Thorburn's side.

"Are you fond of storks?"

I asked the question smilingly. He looked at me in some surprise.

"Not particularly," he replied. "Why?"

It flashed through my mind at once that this bird by Thorburn's side was no more real than the wolf at Pawkins' feet.

"Why?" I repeated, a flash of inspiration rescuing me from the dilemma. "You have been married six years and you have no children."

His face clouded at once.

"You are a great psychologist," I heard him murmur, as if he were talking to himself. "You have guessed the longing that fills my heart, the preoccupation of my life."

I saw now what the stork meant. It was the symbol of the desire in my friend's heart, the thought that would not leave him, the longing he had put out of his mind. His wish for a child to bless his union with Florella had been put from the upper level of his consciousness into that lower level of forgetfulness where his "repressed complex" lay buried. All men living, I knew, bore in their minds the wishes, the aspirations, they had buried in the well of the subconsciousness. Not until this moment did I suspect that the longing buried in the mind, the fond wish one dare not avow but over which one gloated inwardly, was a wraith, a ghost. Thorburn's buried wish was haunting him. The stork at his side was its ghost.

Not a word of all this escaped me; no hint of the presence of the grave bird passed my lips. I laid my case before him to the extent of avowing my fear of some infection. He examined me from head to foot. He made every laboratory test possible in the circumstances. As he came and went, now peering into my eyes, again holding a tube aloft in the bright electric light of his laboratory, I saw the stork follow him, sit at his feet, flap noiseless wings or prepare for some wild flight that was never even attempted.



“There is no organic disorder,” was Thorburn’s report at last. “I see no evidence yet of the presence of any infection. I can let you know definitely in a week.”

The stork, invisible to Thorburn, eyed me gravely as I took my leave. In much perplexity I walked slowly to my home, letting myself in with my own key and repairing to my study with a profound problem on my mind. The first thing was to find Philander. He had a trick of fashioning a nest for himself out of old newspapers under a corner of my desk. I called him by name.

There was no response. At first I suspected him of hiding from me by design, a thing he was very prone to when he feared being shut up in his cage for the night. He had a great affection for the chimney. The soot in that retreat begrimed his coat most sadly, although he never failed to wash himself clean the moment he emerged. There had been no fire in my study since the spring. I thrust my head into the empty grate and called his name loudly. There was again no response.

I was not in any great alarm. He had a way of disappearing now and then, sometimes for as long as twenty-four hours. My one dread was that a stray cat or dog might pounce upon my pet. There was now nothing for it but to compose myself in my easy chair and ponder the events of this day.

My eye wandered vacantly over the papers and test tubes forming a litter in front of me until a gleam of something like light, a flash like the twinkle of a distant star, enchained my glance. The shimmer and slash were a series of stains upon a handkerchief. I picked up the silken article in some bewilderment at first. It looked like some fantastic flag with suns in gold designed upon its center. My own initials worked in a corner of the piece of silk brought back to my recollection a slight bleeding of the nose which had troubled me that morning. I had applied this silk handkerchief to my face. The slight hemorrhage ceased. I had given the matter no further thought. Now I saw spots of shining gold where in the morning my blood had stained this piece of silk a bright red.

In my bewilderment I took the handkerchief over to the window. There could be no doubt now of the brightness of the gold. Never in my experience had I heard of man or woman who bled gold. I resolved to despatch the handkerchief to Thorburn for an immediate analysis. The ringing of the bell, a voice at the door and the entrance of a visitor postponed the execution of this purpose.

“And how is our rising young psychoanalyst?” cried a cheery voice, as a burly form broke rather than appeared through the door. “Upon my word, that last talk of yours upon the mental mechanism of the banished idea has made you famous.”

My visitor carried with him, I saw now, a late number of the official organ of a psychological society. One of my studies was given a very prominent place in the periodical. I glanced at the printed page and then rose to greet old Graham. I dearly loved this man, for he had been one of my most honored preceptors in my student days.

“My dear Graham!” I cried.

A silvery dove fluttered about his head, but I was accustomed by this time to my capacity for this species of visualization and I betrayed by neither word nor glance the effect of the sight upon me. The dove, I could see, corresponded to the system of ideas making up the “complex” of this good and generous man. What a contrast to the predatory old Pawkins, whose repressed ideas emerged in spite of himself under the guise of a wolf—at least to my vision! It has been well said that in the psychical sphere complexes have an action resembling that of energy in the physical sphere. A system of ideas may lie latent in a man’s mind for a long time, becoming active only when stimulated. This explained, no doubt, why the dove hovering over old Doctor Graham flitted out of sight now and then.

“My boy,” said the old man, looking somewhat anxiously about him before he sank into the chair I brought, “are we alone?”

I nodded. There was an anxiety on his mind which became more manifest as he proceeded:

“You may have heard that one or two well-defined cases of plague came recently to the notice of the board.”

I recalled such a report. I had first heard of the matter at a gathering of physicians some time before. Graham who was in the service of the Board of Health, had taken the matter seriously at the time, but the affair had dropped out of my thoughts long since. The old man leaned forward to impress me with what he had now to say:

“The cases have been increasing. We have made up our minds to make war on the rats.”

“The rats!”

I spoke in a tone of some consternation. The words brought the missing Philander back to my memory.

“The rats,” repeated Graham solemnly. “We have actually discovered the bacillus in the bodies of no less than three rats.”

“Were they rats caught in the city?”

“In this very neighborhood. We have been quietly trapping here and there. We don’t want to start a plague panic until we are sure of our facts.”

I watched the dove flitting above his head and I thought of Philander. Had they trapped the golden rat? I had to steady my voice with an effort before I could put my question:

“These rats—they are the ordinary gray variety?”

The elderly physician looked troubled.

“Yes—and no,” said he slowly. “Our traps have contained gray rats as a rule. But in two instances we have captured a very peculiar variety of the animal gray rats with a spot of gold on the breast.”

He drew from his pocket as he spoke a small leather casket. It opened at the touch of a spring. I saw the stuffed skin of a gray rat, splashed in the spot indicated with gleaming gold.

“This rat,” explained old Graham, lifting the stuffed object up for my inspection, “was trapped in the house next door. It is one of six marked in this very extraordinary manner a species never seen before by any authority I have consulted.”

I took the stuffed rat from the grasp of my elderly friend and examined its aspect critically. Those who have never studied at first hand the habits of a rodent of such sinister fame can form no idea of the natural cleanliness of the

little animal. Apart from the tendency of the flea to infest the rat, it is one of the daintiest of quadrupeds, not, indeed, without a beauty of its own. The spot of gold between the forepaws of this specimen set off its gray coat effectively.

“Although we have trapped rats all over the city,” proceeded old Graham earnestly, “they are all of the usual gray type except those few caught next door. I have just been setting traps in your cellar.”

The thought of Philander made my blood run cold at these words. I gazed in blank dismay at the physician. What had become of the golden rat?

“Have you”—I faltered before I could speak the question completely—  
”caught anything here?”

“My dear lad, the traps have just been set—two of them. I can let you know the result in a few days.”

“You spoke just now,” I resumed, in as natural a voice as I could command, “of having isolated the bacillus in the blood of some of your rats. How about these?”

Graham took the stuffed rat from me and looked it over.

“We have isolated a most curious organism in the blood stream of this little creature,” he observed. “A golden microbe.”

“What disease does it cause?”

I tried again to speak naturally, but I remembered the golden blood I had shed and felt faint. What if I had acquired a new and strange leprosy from the bite of the golden fleas of Philander!

“Strange as it must seem,” I now heard Graham aver, “the microbe—it is really a bacillus with its nucleus and protoplasm—gives rise to no discoverable disease in the rat infected by it. Perhaps it is responsible for the gold spot.”

He touched the flaming breast of the stuffed creature.

“The remarkable thing,” the old doctor added, “is the golden element in the rod-like process of these organisms. One might almost say the blood of this rat was golden.”

My mind reverted to the analysis of my own blood cells which Thorburn was at that moment engaged upon.

“You don’t mean to say,” I rejoined, smiling, “that you have discovered a form of bacteria that is beneficial to the invaded organism?”

“I’ll know more about that when I have trapped more of these rats,” the old man told me. “I expect to get some here by the end of the week.”

The moment he had taken his leave, which he did almost immediately, the dove fluttering out with him, I rang up Thorburn.

“Come over at once, if you can,” he said at the other end of the wire. “I have news for you.”

I put on my hat and paced the streets hurriedly. I caught sight of a policeman at the corner taking a prisoner to the lockup. The man in the toils of the law was obviously a beggar. At his heels trotted a snow-white lamb. The policeman was followed by a hawk. I turned and gazed after the pair until both had disappeared around a corner. Was I doomed to see at the heels of every fellow creature the symbol of his suppressed idea, the ghost of his complex? I fairly raced to Thorburn’s door.

“There is something very remarkable here,” was his first utterance, as he led the way to his laboratory. “What do you make of that?”

He held up a glass slide of the sort used in experimental biology. It was stained with a golden spot.

“Your blood,” said he. “It has yielded a pure gold bacterium of the strangest character. Your blood is like the stream in which King Midas bathed—filled with golden sands.”

He had scarcely said the words when a movement of flapping wings behind him drew my eyes to the stork. It stood for a moment erect and then retreated to the remotest corner of the laboratory, where it regarded both of us with all its characteristic solemnity. Thorburn was unaware of the ghostly presence. He sat me down in a great chair and questioned me most minutely regarding my symptoms.

“You must have contracted a disease of some sort,” was his final verdict.

“Fatal?”

“I am using the word in a technical sense,” he laughed, seeing my sober visage. “Disease is, in one aspect, the invasion of one organism by another. Your organism has been invaded by a new and strange bacterium, all right. You say it does not debilitate you?”

“I never felt better in my life.”

I glanced unshrinkingly into his puzzled face. I had carefully concealed from him the fact that I had acquired the novel faculty of beholding the repressed complexes of my fellow creatures.

“Your disease,” he went on, “whatever it may be, is the effect of the interaction of two different organisms, just as plague is such an effect, or malaria.”

“A new idea?”

“Not at all,” retorted Thorburn. “It is not generally disseminated, of course, yet. Since disease is but the effect of one organism upon another, there is necessarily such a thing as an evolution in disease. A disease that has long been among men is a very different thing from the same disease when it first appeared on earth. The lizard is but the survivor of a far more powerful and far more intelligent creature.”

I had caught the idea in his mind. The sudden appearance of a new organism is a possible thing, as the mutation theory of evolution has convinced the world. May not a totally new disease make its appearance among men, thanks to the emergence of a fresh form among the bacteria? Has not Burbank evolved new forms of vegetable life by a seeming miracle of metamorphosis? But this was by no means all that Thorburn meant. May it not be that the bacteria which cause disease are prejudicial only because they represent types of degeneracy? They have been corrupted, that is to say, by passing in and out of the blood streams of a fallen human race. It is we who have poisoned the bacteria, not the bacteria which have poisoned us. In that event, science is on the wrong track. We must purify ourselves, in order that the microbe may regain its pristine purity and become the blessing it may have been to our prehistoric ancestors.

I remained in a profound reverie long after Thorburn had finished his elucidation. If what he told me was true, I had acquired an infection, but it was a benevolent process, a source of strength. The flea had transferred to me from the body of Philander an organism that endowed me with a more wonderful power than had been possessed before by any mortal man.

“By the way,” remarked Thorburn, suddenly changing the subject, “shall you be at Mrs. Lancaster’s dance to-morrow night?”

I started at mention of that name. It had been weeks since I had given a thought to my patient. I replied vaguely that I expected to dine at her house. My mind was running on Philander once more, and I bade him adieu with some abruptness.

There was not the least trace of the presence of the golden rat when I arrived breathless once more in my study. I called him by name more than once. In vain. I thought of the trap set by old Graham. Before visiting the cellars I resolved to peer up the fire-place.

“Philander!” I called. “Philander!” There was a faint sound up the chimney. In a trice I had thrust my arm up the sooty embrasure. Philander descended, clinging to the sleeve of my coat. What a begrimed and blackened aspect his body now wore! I set him upon my desk, where he fell to an assiduous licking and washing of his fur. I had the satisfaction of seeing him restored to his original color before he had completed his toilet. Then he frisked his way to my shoulder, upon which he perched with all his familiar sauciness.

It was vitally important to keep Philander out of reach of the trap set for him. I might have ordered the stableman to remove the horrid instrument, to be sure. Yet that might inspire too much wonder in the mind of old Graham. On the other hand, I must not let the golden rat out of my sight. He spent the night securely locked in his cage. He was not released during the entire next day. His squeaks of protest were incessant. I would have no mercy on him.

After some reflection, I resolved to attend the dinner and dance at the house of Mrs. Lancaster. It seemed the surest method of providing for the safety of Philander. It would be no difficult thing to take him with me, concealed in the pocket of my coat. The golden rat was always shy when strangers were about. I knew that nothing could lure him from the refuge my clothes afforded him if there seemed the least prospect that he might be handled by an unfamiliar acquaintance.

The hour appointed for the dinner at the house of Mrs. Lancaster was already chiming when I entered the dining-room. The guests were barely a dozen. I was already familiar with their faces. Philander was snugly ensconced in a breast pocket of my dress coat. He was fast asleep.

“What a stranger you are, doctor!”

The words were uttered by my fair hostess. I had never seen a more pensive melancholy upon her exquisite features: She sat at some distance from me at the foot of the table. I made my very best bow and smiled before I sat down to the oysters.

“Ha!” exclaimed Thorburn, who chanced to be seated directly opposite me. “You are looking very well—still.”

There was a meaning smile upon his kindly features, and I was at no loss to interpret it. The silent stork at his side peered myopically into my face and flapped a pair of wings. I saw the hideous wolf peering greedily from beneath the chair of old Pawkins, who absorbed champagne moodily. Old Lancaster had a fierce ferret on his shoulder, a circumstance to which I was inclined to attribute the restlessness of Philander, who stirred now and then in his sleep. The most interesting object at the dinner table to me was a hyena, which chafed and fretted at the back of a distinguished member of the judiciary. One old lady, whom I had met before, and who was a notorious gambler, revealed to my secret vision as her repressed complex a gigantic pike. The fish literally swam in the air over the dame’s head, darting every now and then ferociously at prey invisible to me.

“I hear,” observed Pawkins at last, “that there is a case of plague in quarantine.”

The wolf leered over his shoulder and licked its hideous jaw. The introduction of so dire a theme at that crisis in my life spoiled the dinner for me. I listened to the flow of talk about me, hearing much speculation regarding such things as fleas and the bacilli. Mrs. Lancaster seemed only half aware of what was transpiring around her. My attention was drawn particularly to her by the suggestion of a wraith upon her shoulder. I had looked eagerly in her direction more than once, hoping to descry the symbolized embodiment of her complex. That there was a form of some description outlined upon her shoulder seemed clear. I thought at first it might be a bird. Later it wore the aspect of a fish. At last, I had to abandon the effort to define to myself the shadowy thing moving



from her right arm around her shoulders to her left. The secret of my patient's repressed complex was almost mine. Again and again it eluded me. The vexation of that circumstance made the end of the dinner a welcome relief. I strolled into the smoking room, listening vaguely to the din of the violins, tuning for the dance.

Finding myself alone, I peered into my pocket. Philander was fast asleep. I hated to disturb the repose of the golden creature, and for that reason remained with my cigar alone to the last possible minute. In the end I was obliged to make my appearance in the ballroom.

There was not a dancer on the whole vast floor without his or her attendant creature. A member of the United States Senate was closely followed in the mazes of a waltz by an opossum, while his partner, a lady with some fame as a landscape painter, kept a porcupine in her train. The pastor of a church led a vampire in its flight among the dancers, above whom it poised itself, fanning sundry individuals with its wings. There was one gigantic crocodile in a corner which every now and then abandoned the shelter of the wall to cavort and caper after the founder of fifteen hospitals. In short, wherever I looked I beheld specimens of a zoology unsuspected by those who danced in and about among pelicans, pumas, guinea pigs and polar bears. One gigantic creature, symbolizing the repressed complex of the most famous lawyer in the country, was evidently an antediluvian monster. It appeared to my astonished gaze somewhat like a lepidosiren. These creatures were like the men and women they all haunted in turning, twisting and waltzing to the music. Now and then there were collisions of a significant sort. I beheld a fierce fight between two bantam roosters, one being the repressed complex of a well known novelist and the other that of a successful merchant. The repressed complex of the merchant's wife—a lily white hen—watched the struggle complacently. When the bird symbolizing her husband was routed from the field, I saw the lady begin a fresh dance with the novelist.

It occurred to me to seek my hostess. She had not appeared on the floor for some time. I felt an uneasy movement in the pocket of my coat. For the sake of Philander rather than to secure any repose for myself, I sought the shelter of the Japanese room. I was quite alone when I sank back wearily upon a sofa and looked at my watch. It would soon be time to go.

I was opening my cigarette case when Mrs. Lancaster appeared in the doorway. Her exquisite features wore an unusual gravity, even for her, as she

advanced. I divined that she had a revelation to make. Whatever I might have said remained unspoken, however, in the shock of discovering a golden rat perched upon her shoulder. For a moment the idea entered my head that Philander must have escaped from my pocket. I perceived, as soon as I had looked at the creature again, that I could not implicate Philander. The golden rat on the shoulder of Mrs. Lancaster was smaller than my pet. It was of less robust physique, softer in outline, more graceful.

I had placed my hand in Mrs. Lancaster's outstretched fingers, when a flashing form sprang from the pocket of my coat. There was a tiny shriek of joy. I saw Philander capering and shrieking on the floor with the diminutive creature that followed him from the shoulders of the lady who had so long been my most baffling patient.

"I think," I managed to say, my eyes riveted upon the gamboling creatures on the floor—"I think I have the key to your case."

I saw a flush spread from her cheek to her brow. She bowed her head and, still holding my hand, sank upon the chair from which I had just risen. It seems odd to me, as I look back upon all this, that I never suspected the mutual infatuation out of which our repressed complexes were built up. She loved me. I saw the avowal in the eyes she turned up to my face as I bent over her. As our lips met, I felt a convulsive shudder at my breast. I put my hand in my coat. There lay Philander.

To my profound amazement, the rat bit me. With an effort, I repressed an exclamation of pain. Thrusting the little creature, who seemed disposed to escape, back into my pocket, I literally fled the place.

There was no one stirring as I entered my dark study and turned on the light. How long I sat absorbed in my reflections I knew not. There was a patch of crimson in the sky when at last I got up from my desk and walked over to the window.

How long had this woman loved me? Through what circumstance had it become possible for her to identify me with the golden rat? I was, evidently, her repressed complex. As I stood at the window pondering these things, a figure moved across the lawn.

"Boggs!" I called.

It was that honest hostler. He had just set about the business of the stables.

“Have you seen Mrs. Lancaster?”

“She was here to see you last month, sir.”

“Why was I not told?”

“Why, sir, I thought the girl would tell you. She waited for you here an hour. She saw the golden rat.”

“You mean,” I interrupted, “that you showed it to her.”

“I told her how fond of it you had grown, sir.”

Here then was the explanation I sought. The mention of the golden rat reminded me at once of Philander. I had quite forgotten, in the bewilderment resulting from my experience with Mrs. Lancaster, to shut him up for the night in his cage.

“Philander!”

I called him again and again without effect.

“Boggs,” I remarked, “do you remember when Doctor Graham was here to set his traps?”

The stableman scratched his head with a most aggravating stupidity. Yes, he remembered the visit of the physician. He recalled the setting of the traps. He had not seen them placed. He did not know where they were. I lost no time in getting to the stables with a lantern. The search was fruitless. There were no traps that I could discover. Boggs remembered that the old doctor had talked of the cellar. Thither we repaired. I found no traps. The failure to discover the devices did not console me in the least. I knew the old doctor to be a cunning and experienced rat catcher. He might have hidden his deadly devices under a loose plank or in a remote closet.

The full dawn of that morning brought no Philander. I ransacked the house without avail. Neither trap nor rat resulted. The day following was but a repetition of the disappointment. I discovered to my dismay that Doctor Graham had left the city for a few days. The official of the Board of Health to whom I telephoned offered to send an inspector to my house at once. The doctor had

left at headquarters a list of every domicile in which a trap was set. I closed with the offer immediately. The result was another vain search of my premises.

The despair to which I was reduced by the continued disappearance of Philander led me to overlook, at the time, a curious circumstance connected with Thorburn. I saw him for a brief interval on the street. He was not accompanied by the ghostly stork. The detail made no impression upon my mind for an hour or more after I had parted from him. Then I hurried to the street. A week before, I would have beheld the repressed complex of any passerby. Now I saw dozens of pedestrians. No beast or bird attended any.

Turning back into the house with a strange giddiness in my head, I was halted by the arrival before my door of a motor car. Out stepped old Graham.

“The trap!” I shouted. “Where did you set it?”

I observed that no dove fluttered about him now.

“The trap?” he echoed. “In your study, of course.”

I staggered after him. He led the way to a corner of a bookcase into which I had not once dreamed of peering. With loud triumph, the old doctor lifted a trap on high. It held Philander, cold and dead.

“Very, very remarkable,” he observed. “Wouldn’t you say this rat has a golden color?”

His face reflected a grave anxiety. I spoke up savagely:

“It’s a golden rat. Are you afraid of it—it is dead.”

“I hear you’ve been looking for me,” he said, wiping his eyes with a handkerchief. “I was called out of town by the case of Mrs. Lancaster.”

“Is she ill?”

He lifted the dead form of Philander from the trap before replying:

“Her people had her committed to a sanitarium. She insists that she is followed everywhere by a golden rat.”

## The Sea-Serpent

Planché

All bones but yours will rattle when I say  
I'm the sea-serpent from America.  
Mayhap you've heard that I've been round the world;  
I guess I'm round it now, Mister, twice curled.  
Of all the monsters through the deep that splash,  
I'm "number one" to all immortal smash.  
When I lie down and would my length unroll,  
There ar'n't half room enough 'twixt pole and pole.  
In short, I grow so long that I've a notion  
I must be measured soon for a new ocean.

# The Lizard God

Charles J. Finger

It is not pleasant to have one's convictions disturbed, and that is why I wish I had never seen the man Rounds.

He seems to have crossed my path only to shake my self-confidence. The little conversation we had has left me dissatisfied. I look upon my collection with less interest than I did. I am not as pleased with the result of my investigations as they appear in my monograph on The Saurian Family of Equatorial America.

Doubtless the mood that now possesses me will pass away, and I shall recover my equanimity. His story would have upset most men. Worse still was his unpleasant habit of interjecting strange opinions. Judge for yourself.

It was when passing through the Reptile room on my way to the study that I first saw him. I supposed him to be a mere common working-man passing away an idle hour; one of the ordinary Museum visitors. Two hours later, I noticed that he was closely examining the lizard cases. Then, later, he seemed interested in my collection of prints illustrating the living world of the antediluvian period. It was then that I approached him, and, finding him apparently intelligent, with, as it seemed, a bent towards lizards, and, further, discovering that he had travelled in Peru and Colombia, took him to the study.

The man had some unusual habits. He was absolutely lacking in that sense of respect, as I may term it, usually accorded to one in my position. A professor and curator naturally becomes accustomed to a certain amount of, well, diffidence in laymen. It is a tribute paid to us. But Rounds was not that way. He was perfectly at ease. He had an air of quiet self-possession; refused the chair I indicated, the chair set for visitors and students, walked to the window, threw up the lower sash, and sat on the sill, with one foot resting on the floor and the other swinging. Thus, he looked as if he were prepared to leap, or to jump or run. He gave me the impression of being on the alert. Without asking permission, he filled and lit his pipe, taking his tobacco from a queerly made pouch, and using but one long taloned hand in the process.

“What I was looking for,” he said, “is a kind of lizard. Yet it is not a lizard. It is too hard and thin in the body to be that. It runs on its hind legs. It is white. Its

bite is poisonous. It lives in the equatorial districts of Colombia.”

“Have you seen one?” I asked.

“No,” was the reply. Then after a moment there came a staccato: “Why?”

“Because there is no such living creature,” I said.

“How do you know?” came from him swiftly, almost before I had finished.

“The lizard group is thoroughly classified,” I said. “There is nothing answering to that description. In the first place.”

“Does that make it non-existent? Your classification of what you know?” he interrupted.

“I have made a study of the Saurians,” I said.

“No, you haven’t,” he contradicted. “You have read what other men have written and that is not the same thing.”

“Really,” I began, but he broke in.

“I mean to say that you have never been in any new equatorial country,” he said. “Your manner shows that. You are too quiet. Too easy. Too sedentary. You would have been killed because of your lack of vigilance.”

That is, as nearly as I can repeat and remember, the opening of the conversation. There was an air of challenge about the man that I found unpleasant. Of course I admitted the fact that I was not an explorer myself, and that mine was the humbler if more tedious task of collecting and arranging data. At that he said that, in his opinion, organized expeditions were little more than pleasure jaunts taken at the public expense. His viewpoint seemed to me most extraordinary.

“Such an expedition,” he said, “must fail in its main purpose because its unwieldiness destroys or disperses the very things it was organized to study. It cannot penetrate the wilds; it cannot get into the dry lands. The needs of the men and horses and dogs prevent that. It must keep to beaten tracks and in touch with the edge of civilization. The members of such an expedition are mere killers on a large scale, and to kill or to hunt a thing is to not know it at all.

Further, the men in such expeditions are not even hunters. They are destroyers who destroy while keeping themselves in, safety.

They have their beaters. Their paid natives. Humbug! That's the only word to describe that kind of thing. Staged effects they have. Then they come back here to pose as heroes before a crowd of gaping city clerks."

I mentioned the remarkable results obtained by the Peary and Roosevelt expeditions and pointed to the fact that the specimens brought back and properly set up by efficient taxidermists did, in fact, give the common people some notion of the wonders of animal life.

"Nothing of the kind," he said. "On the contrary, the gaping fools are misled, if they think at all, when they look at your museum stuff. Look at that boa-constrictor you have out there. It is stuffed and in a glass case. Don't you know that in its natural surroundings you yourself would come mighty near stepping on one without seeing it? You would. If you had that thing set up as it should be, your museum visitors would pass the case believing it was a mere collection of foliage. They wouldn't see the snake itself. See what I mean? Set up as they are in real life they'd come near being non-visible."

The man walked up and down the study floor for half a minute or so, then paused at the desk and said:

"Don't let us get to entertaining one another, though. But remember this, you only get knowledge at a cost. I mean to say that the man who would know something really worth knowing can only get the knowledge at first hand. The people who wander around this junk shop that you call a museum go out as empty headed as they came in. Consider. Say a Fiji islander came here and took back with him from the United States an electric bulb, a stuffed possum, an old hat, a stalactite from the Mammoth cave, a sackful of pecan nuts, a pair of hand-cuffs, half a dozen packing cases full of things gathered from here and there, and then set the whole junk pile up under a roof in the Fiji islands, what would his fellow Fijians know from that of the social life of this country? Eh? Tell me that."

"You exaggerate," I protested. "You take an extreme point of view."

"I don't," he said.



His contradictions would have made me angry perhaps, were they not made in so quiet a tone.

“Take anything from its natural surroundings,” he went on, “and it is meaningless. The dull-eyed men and women who wander through this Museum of yours are merely killing time. There’s no education in that kind of thing. Besides, what they see are dead things anyway. You can’t study human nature in a morgue.”

He resumed his seat on the window sill, then took from an inner pocket a leather wallet, and drew from it a photograph which he tossed across so that it fell on the desk before me. I examined it carefully. It had been badly developed and badly printed, and, what was worse, roughly handled. But still, one could distinguish certain features.

It pictured the interior of a building which was roofless, and above the rear wall was what I recognized as tropical vegetation, mainly by its wild luxuriance. Against the rear wall there seemed to be something like a giant stone lizard standing on its hind legs. The one foreleg that showed was disproportionately short. The body, too, was more attenuated than that of any lizard. The thing was headless and the statue, idol, or whatever it was, stood on a pedestal, and before that again was a slab of stone. My attention was caught by the head of the thing, which was to be seen in a corner. It was shaped roughly triangularly. The jaws were broad at the base and it had, even in the photograph, something of the same repulsive appearance as the head of a vampire bat.

“It is the result of the imagination of some Indian,” I said. “No postdiluvian saurian ever existed of that size.”

“Good God, man, you jump to conclusions,” he growled. “This is only a representation of the thing itself. Made in heroic size, so to say. But see here.”

He leaned over my shoulder and pointed to a kind of border that ran along the base of the pedestal. Examining closely, I made out a series of lizards running on their hind legs.

“They,” he explained, “are cut into the stone. It is a sort of red sandstone. They are a little bigger than the living creature. But look at this.”

The particular spot that he indicated was blurred and dirty, as though many fingers had pointed to it, and I took the magnifying glass for closer inspection.

Even then I only saw dimly a something that bore resemblance to the carved figures.

“That,” he said, “is as near as ever I came to seeing one of the little devils. I think it was one of them, but I am not sure. I caught sight of it flashing across like a swiftly blown leaf. We took the picture by flashlight, you see, so I’m not positive. Somerfield, of course, was too busy attending to his camera. He saw nothing.”

“We might have another picture made,” I said. “It would be interesting.”

“D’ye think I’d be able to carry plunder around travelling as I was then?” he asked. “You see, I went down there for the Company I’m working for. I was looking gut for rubber and hard woods. I’d worked from Buenaventura. From Buenaventura down to the Rio Caqueta and then followed that stream up to the watershed, and then down the Codajaz. If you look at the map, you’ll see it’s no easy trip. No chance to pack much. All I wanted to carry was information. And there was only Somerfield along.”

“But Somerfield—he, I suppose, was the photographer, was he not? Did he not take care of the negatives?”

“Well, you see, he did take care of his negatives. But circumstances were different at the time. He had laid them away somewhere. After I killed him, I just brought away the camera and that was all.”

I gasped at the audacity of the man. He said the words, “I killed him,” so quietly, in so matter of fact a way, that for the moment I was breathless. Like most other men, I had never sat face to face with one who had taken the life of another.

It was, therefore, a startling thing to hear Rounds confess to having killed a fellow-man. It was awesome. And yet, let me say that at once I was possessed of a great desire to learn all about it, and down in my heart I feared that he would decide he had said something that he should not have said, and would either deny his statement or modify it in some way. I wanted to hear all the details. I was hugely interested. Was it morbidity? Then I came to myself after what was a shock, and awoke to the fact that he was talking in his quiet, even way.

“But those Tlingas held the belief, and that was all there was to it,” he was saying.

I came to attention and said, “Of course, it is natural,” for I feared to have him know that I was inattentive even for that short space, and waited for elucidations.

“It seems,” he went on, “that the tribe was dying out. Helm, who first told me something of it at Buenaventura, was one of those scientists who have to invent a new theory for every new thing they are told of. He said it was either because of eating too much meat, or not eating enough. I forget which. There had been a falling off in the birth rate. The Tocalinian who had lived with them, and who joined us at the headwaters of the Codajaz, maintained that there had been too much inbreeding. So there was some arrangement by means of which they invited immigrants, as it were. Men from other neighboring tribes were encouraged to join the Tlingas. And they did. The Tlingas had a fat land and welcomed the immigrants. The immigrants on their part expected to have an easy time.”

As Round talked, he became even more passionless, if that were possible. He moved from his place on the window sill and sat on the corner of my desk. I had forgotten my uneasiness at being in the presence of one who had taken his fellow’s life. He went on:

“When there’s a falling birth rate, things change. There are manners and customs evolved that would seem strange to you. There come laws and religions, all made to match current requirements. Celibacy and sterility become a crime. Virginity becomes a disgrace, a something to be ridiculed.”

“It seems impossible,” I said.

“No,” he said, and smiled, ever so slightly. “You have that in part. You ridicule what you call old maids, don’t you?”

Again I was too slow with my reply. If I ever meet him again, I shall show him the fallacy of many of his arguments.

“Men with most children had most power and wealth. The childless were penalized, were punished. The sterile were put to death. There grew up a religion and a priesthood, ceremonials, sacrifices and rituals. And they had their god, in the shape of this lizard thing. Of course, like most other gods, it

was more of a malevolent creature than anything else. Gods generally are, if you will consider a little. I don't care what creed or religion gets the upper hand, it's Fear that becomes the power. Look around and see if I'm not right.

“Well, Somerfield and I walked into that kind of thing. Now, like me, he had worked for the Exploration Company a good few years and had been to all kinds of places prospecting—Torres Straits, the Gold Coast, Madagascar, Patagonia. We prospectors have to get around in queer corners and the life's a dull one. All monotony, and worry mixed up. A kind of piebald life. But Somerfield had queer notions. He worked at the job because he could make more money at it than at anything else, and that gave him a chance to keep his family in Ohio in comfort. He was mighty fond of his family. Besides, the job gave him more time with the wife and kids than the average man gets. When he was at home, he was at home three months on end at times. That's better than the ordinary man.

“Now, this being so, Somerfield was what he was. He had ideas about religion. He was full of the notion that things are arranged so that if you live up to a certain code, you'll get a reward. ‘Do right, and you'll come out right,’ was one of his sayings. ‘The wages of sin is death’ was another. Point out to him that virtue got paid in the same coin, and he'd argue. No use. In a way he was like a man who wouldn't walk under a ladder or spill salt. You know the sort.

“Naturally, for him things were awkward at the Tlinga village. We stayed there quite a while, I should tell you. He lived in his own shack, cooking for himself and all that. He was full of ideas of duty to his wife and so on. I fell in with the local customs and took up with a sweetheart, things falling out so well that there was one of their ceremonials pretty soon in which I was central figure. Ista, it seems, made a public announcement. That would be natural enough with a tribe so concerned about the family birth rate. But it made me sorter mad to hear the natives everlastingly accusing Somerfield of being an undesirable. But they never let up trying to educate him and make him a Tlinga citizen. They were patient and persistent enough. On the other hand, I was looked on as a model young man, and received into the best society.

“About the time we were ready to strike west, Ista, that was my girl, told me that there would have to be a new ceremonial. She took my going in good part, for there was nothing more I could do.

They were sensible enough to know that man was only an instrument in the

great game, as they understood it. Ista had led me out to a quiet place to put me next. I remember that vividly because of a little thing that happened that doesn't mean anything. I often wonder why resultless things sometimes stick in the mind. We were sitting at the base of a tall tree and there was a certain bush close by with berries bright red when they were unripe. They look good to eat. But when they ripen, they grow fat and juicy, the size of a grape, and of a liverish color. I thought that one of them had fallen on my left forearm and went to flick it off. Instead of being that, the thing burst into a blood splotch as soon as I hit it. That was the first time I had been bitten by one of those bugs. They are about the size of a sheep tick when empty, but they get on you and suck and suck, till they are full of your blood and the size of a grape. Queer things, but ugly. Ista laughed as you would laugh if you saw a [negro] afraid of a harmless snake. It's queer that it should always be considered a joke when one person fears something that another does not.

“But that has nothing to do with the story. What has, is that Ista wanted to tell me about the ceremonial. She did not believe in it at all. Privately, she was a kind of atheist among her people, but kept her opinions private. She had thought out things for herself and had her own beliefs, but they were not the beliefs the Tlingas were supposed to hold. But after all she did not tell me much besides her own disbeliefs. When you think of it, no one can tell another much. What you know, you have to discover alone. All she told me was what was going to be done, and that was about as disappointing as the information you might get about what would take place in initiation in a secret society. Something was lost in transmission.

“Well, at last the ceremonial started up with a great banging of drums and all that. It was a fine scene, let me tell you, with the tumbled vegetation, glaringly colored as if a scene painter had gone crazy. There were the flashing birds—bloodcolored and orange, scarlet and yellow, gold and green. Butterflies too—great gaudy things that looked like moving flowers. And the noise and chatterings and whistlings in the trees of birds and insects. There were flowers and fruits, and eatings and speech makings. As far as I could gather, the chief speakers were congratulating the hearers upon their luck in belonging to the Tlingas, which was the greatest tribe on earth and the favorite of Nao, the lizard god. We capered round the tribal pole, I capering with the rest of them of course. Somerfield took a picture of it. Then there was a procession of prospective mothers, with Ista among them. Rotten I thought it. Don't imagine female beauty, by the way, as some of the writers on savage life would have you imagine it. Nothing of the kind. White, black or yellow, I never saw a stark

woman that looked beautiful yet. That's all bunk. Muscular and strong, yes. That's a kind of beauty in its way. True as God, I believe that one of the causes of unhappy marriages among white folk is that the lads are fed upon false notions about womanly beauty and when they get the reality they think they've captured a lemon.

“Presently the crowd quieted down and the men sat around in a semicircle with me and Somerfield at the end.

“Then a red-eyed old hag tottered out and began cursing Somerfield. She spat in his face and called him all outrageous names that came to her vindictive tongue. Lucky it was that he had been put next, and so, forewarned, was able to grin and bear it. But, Lord, how she did tongue-lash him. Then she took a flat piece of wood shaped like a laurel leaf which was fastened to a thin strip of hide, and showed him that. It was a kind of charm, and on it was cut one of the running lizards. She wanted him to rub it on his forehead. Of course, with his notions of religion, he wouldn't do it. That's natural. When she passed it to me, I did what she wanted done. I never was particular that way. Symbols mean nothing anyway and if fools are in the majority it's no use stirring up trouble. It's playing a lie, of course, but then that's the part of wisdom, it seems to me, sometimes. It's in a line with protective coloring. You remember what I said about the proper mounting of your specimens, don't you? Well, it's like that. That's why persecutions have never stamped out opinions nor prohibitions appetites. The wisest keep their counsel and go on as usual. The martyrs are the weak fools. But let's see. Where was I? Oh, yes. The old woman and the piece of wood.

“She began running from this one to that, kind of working herself up into a frenzy. Then she started to chant some old nonsense. There was a rhythm to it. She sang:

“‘Nao calls for the useless.’

“Then the rest of them would shout:

“‘Nao calls. Nao calls.’

“There was a terrible lot of it. The main purport was that this Nao was the ruling devil or god of the place. It called for the sacrifice of the useless. Many men were needed so that the one should be born who would lead the Tlingas

to victory. That was the tone of it, and at the end of every line the old woman crooned, the crowd joined in with the refrain:

“‘Nao calls. Nao calls.’

“Of course they became worked up. She handled them pretty much the same as a skilful speaker does things at a political meeting or an evangelist at a revival. The same spirit was there. Instead of a flag, there was the tribal pole. There was the old gag of their nation or tribe being the chosen one. I don't care where you go, there is always the same thing. Every tribe and nation is cocksure that theirs is the best. They have the bravest and the wisest men and the best women. But I kept nudging Somerfield. It was hard on him. He was the Judas and the traitor and all that. ‘Damn fool superstition,’ he muttered to me time and again. But of course he was a bit nervous, and so was I. Being in the minority is awkward. The human brain simply isn't strong enough to encounter organized opposition. It wears. You spend too much energy being on the defensive.

“After a time, when the song was done, the old hag seemed pretty well played out. Then she passed the piece of wood I told you of to a big buck, and he started to whirling it round and round. He was a skilful chap at the trick, and in a little had it making a screaming sound. Then presently some of the birds fell to noise-making just as you will hear canaries sing when someone whistles, or women talk when a piano commences to play. I saw something of the same down in Torres Straits. They call it the Twanyirika there. In the Malay peninsula they use something of the kind to scare the elephants out of the plantations. They've got it on the Gold Coast as well. It's called the Oro there. Really it's all over the world. I've seen Scotch herd boys use something like it to scare the cattle, and Mexican sheep herders in Texas to make the sheep run together when they scatter too far. Of course there's really nothing to be scared of, but when it comes near you, you feel inclined to duck. To me, it was the feeling that the flat piece of wood would fly off and hit me. You always duck when you hear a whizzing. Still, the priests or medicine men trade on the head-ducking tendency. So, somehow, in the course of time, it gets so that those that listen have to bow down. Oh yes! You say it's ridiculous and fanciful and all that sort of thing. I know. I have heard others say the same. It's only a noise and nothing to be scared of. But then, when you come to think of it, most men are scared of noise. They're like animals in that respect. What is a curse but a noise? Yet most men are secretly afraid of curses. They're uneasy under them. Yet they know it's only noise. Then look at thunderings from the pulpit.

Look at excommunications. Look at denunciations. All noises, to be sure. But there's the threat of force behind some of them. The blow may come and again it may not.

“As I said, everyone bowed down and of course so did I, on general principles. Somerfield didn't, and the old buck whirled that bull-roarer over him ever so long, and the red-eyed hag cursed and spat at him, but he never budged. That sort of conduct is damned foolishness according to my notion. But then you see, in a kind of a way he was backing his prejudices against theirs, and prejudices are pretty solid things when you consider. Still, he took a hell of a chance.

“On the trail next day, for we left the following morning, I argued with him about that, but he couldn't be budged. He said he stood for truth and all that kind of thing. I put it to him that he would expect any foreigner to conform to his national customs. He'd expect a Turk to give up his polygamy, I said, no matter what heartbreakings it cost some of the family. But he had a kink in his thinking, holding that his people had the whole, solid, unchanging truth. Of course, the argument came down with a crash then, for it worked around to a question of what is truth. There you are. There was the limit. So we quit. As I tell you, the human brain is not constituted to do much thinking. It's been crippled by lack of use. We are mentally stunted in growth. I remember that I began to say something about the possibility of there being several gods, meaning that some time or other men with imagination had deified some natural thing, but it came to me that I was talking nonsense, so I quit. Yet I know right well that many tribes have made gods of things of which they were afraid. But it's small profit to theorize.

“It was near sun-down when we came to the building shown in that photograph. The vegetation was so thick thereabouts that the temple, for I suppose it was that, appeared before us suddenly. One moment we were crawling like insects between the trunks of great jungle trees that shot upwards seventy feet or more without a branch, as if they were racing for dear life skyward, and then everything fell away and there was the old building. It startled both of us. We got the sensation that you get when you see a really good play. You forget your bodily presence and you are only a bundle of nerves. You walk or sit or stand, but without any effort or knowledge that you are doing it. We had been talking, and the sight of that building, so unexpected, startled us into silence. It would anyone. Believe me, your imperturbable man with perfect, cool self-possession does not exist. Man's a jumpy thing, given to nerves. You



may deny it and talk about the unexcitability of the American citizen and all that bunk, but let me tell you that your journalists and moving picture producers and preachers and politicians have caught on to the fact that man is jumpy, and they trade on their discovery, believe me. They've got man on the hop every which way and keep him going.

“There had been a gateway there once, but for some reason or other it had become blocked with a rank vegetation. The old gap was chocked full with a thorny, flower-bearing bush so thick that a cat could not have passed through. Somerfield switched on one of his theories as soon as he got over his first surprise. Worshippers, he held, had brought flowers there and the seeds that had dropped had sprouted. It looked reasonable.

“Above the lintel was carved one of those running lizards. That we noticed early. You can't see it in the picture because we took that from the edge of a broken wall. You see, all the walls stood, except the one to the left of this doorway, and that had partly fallen and what was left was chin high. We saw at a glance that the people who had built that temple were handy with tools. The stones of the wall were quite big—two feet or more square—and fitted closely. There was no mortar to hold them, but the ends had been made with alternate grooves and projections that dovetailed well. The stone was a kind of red sandstone. But I told you that before.

“When we looked over the broken wall and saw that stone lizard, we had another shock. I don't care how you school yourself, there's a scare in every man. That's what annoys me, to see men posing and letting themselves be written up and speechified over as fearless. Fearless General this and Admiral that. Our fearless boys in the trenches. It sickens me. Why the whole race has been fed up on Fear for ages. Fearlessness is impossible. Hell-fire, bogey-men, devils, witches, the wrath of God—it's all been fear. Things that we know nothing of and have no proof of, have been added to things that we do know of which will hurt, and on top of that there has been the everlasting 'cuidado' lest you say a word that will run foul of current opinion—so what wonder that man is scary? It's a wonder that he's sane.

“After we took that picture we debated for the first time where we should camp that night. A new scare possessed us. In the end, we decided to camp inside the temple because of the greater security afforded by the walls. The truth is that some half fear of a giant lizard had gotten hold of us. So, as it was the lizard that scared us, we decided to stay in the lizard temple. Man's built

that way. He likes to keep close to the thing that he fears. I heard a man who was a banker once say that he always mistrusted the man who would not take a vacation. As I take it, his idea was that the man who knew some danger was nigh, wanted to be around where he could catch the first intimation of a crash. But then, too, besides that, there is a sense of comfort in being within walls, especially with a floor paved as this one was. Besides, it was a change from the trees with their wild tangled vines and their snake-like lianas. So we decided on the temple.

“That night I was a long time getting to sleep. The memory of the old hag and the bull-roarer was in my mind. I kept thinking of Ista too. It was a warmer night than usual, and, after the moon dropped, pitchy dark. I slept stripped, as I generally do, with a light blanket across my legs so that I could find it if needed without waking up.

“I awoke presently, feeling something run lightly and swiftly across my face. I thought it was a spider. It seemed to run in a zig-zag. Then feeling nothing more, I set it down to fancy and dropped off to sleep again, my face turned towards that idol. Later, I felt the same kind of thing run across my neck. I knew it was no fancy then and my scare vanished because there was something to do. So I waited with my right hand poised to grab. I waited a long time, too, but I have lots of patience. Presently it ran down my body, starting at my left shoulder and I brought down my hand at a venture, claw fashion, and caught the thing on the blanket. I felt the blanket rise and then fall again, just a little of course, as I lifted my hand with the beast in it, and by that knew that it had claws. You bet I held tight. It seemed to be hard and smooth. It was a wiry, wriggling thing, somewhat like a lizard. But it was much more vigorous than any lizard. I tried to crush it but could not. As to thickness, it seemed to be about the diameter of one of those lead pencils. It was like this I had it.”

Rounds picked up a couple of lead pencils from the desk and took my hand in his. He told me to close my fist and then placed one pencil lengthwise so that an end of it was between my first and second finger and the rubber-tipped end lay across my wrist. The other pencil he thrust crosswise so that the pointed end stuck out between the second and third finger and the blunt end between the index finger and thumb.

“There you have it,” he said. “That’s how I held the little devil. Now grip hard and try to crush the pencils and you’ll have something of the same sensation I had. Holding it thus, I could feel its head jerking this way and that violently, and

its tail, long and lithe, lashing at my wrist. The little claws were trying to tear, but they were evidently softish. I could hear, or thought I could' the snap of its little jaws. It was about the nastiest sensation that I ever experienced. I don't know why I thought that it was venomous, but I did. I tried to smash the thing in my hand—tried again and again, and I have a good grip—but I might just as well have tried to crush a piece of wire. There was no give to it. It tried to wriggle backwards, but I had it under its jaws, tight pinched with my knuckles. So there we were; it wriggling, writhing and lashing, and me lying there holding it at arm's length. I felt the sweat start on me and the hair at the nape of my neck rise up, and I did some quick and complicated thinking. Of course, I dared not throw it away, but I got to my feet and, as I did so, tried to bend its head backwards against the stone floor. But the head slipped sideways. I called on Somerfield for a light then and he struck one hurriedly and it went out immediately. All that I saw was that the thing was white and had a triangular-shaped head.

“Somehow I ran against Somerfield before he got another match struck and he swore at me, saying that I had cut him. I knew that I had touched him with my outstretched hand that held the beast. I drew back my hand a little and remembered afterwards that I then felt a slight elastic resistance as if the thing that I held had caught on to something, as it had before to my blanket. Afterwards I found that the thing had gotten Somerfield's neck. As he struck another match, I saw the low place in the wall and flung the beastly thing away with a quick jerk. You know the kind of a motion you'd make getting rid of some unseen noxious thing like that. That's how I never really saw the creature and can only conjecture what it was like from the feel of it.

“On Somerfield's neck, just below the angle of the jaw, was a clean-cut little oval place about half an inch in length. It did not bleed much but it seemed to pain him a lot. He maintained that the beast was some kind of rodent. Anyway we put a little chewed tobacco on the place and, after awhile, tried to sleep again. We didn't do much good at it, neither of us. He was tossing and grumbling like a man with the toothache.

“Next morning the bitten place had swollen up to the size of an apple and was a greenish yellow color. He was feeling sick and a bit feverish, so I made him comfortable after looking around to see whether there was anything to harm him in the courtyard, then went to hunt water. I remember that I gave the head of the idol a kick with the flat of my foot for spite, as I passed it. Like a kid, that was, wasn't it? Now I was running back and forth all the morning

with the canteen, for he drank a terrible quantity. His eyes grew bright too and his skin flushed. Towards noon he began to talk wild, imagining that he was at home. Then I judged it best to let him stay there in the temple, where he was, so to speak, corralled. Coming back shortly after from one water-hunting trip, I heard singing, and, looking over the wall, saw him sitting on the slab in front of the idol. He must have fancied that he was at home in Ohio and had his kids before him, for he was beating time with his hands and snapping his fingers and thumbs and singing:

“London bridge is fallen down,  
Fallen down, fallen down.’

“It was rotten to hear that out there, but I was half way glad to see him that way, knowing that he wasn’t miserable. After a little, he quit his babbling and took more water; emptied the canteen in fact, so back I had to start for more.

“Returning, I found things changed, He was going around crouched like a hunting Indian, peering here and there, behind the idol then across to the head, as if seeking someone. He had the facon in his hand. ‘Rounds stabbed me,’ he was saying. ‘It was Rounds, damn him, that killed me.’ Over and over again he said that. He was talking to invisible people, creatures of his mad brain. One would have thought, if one had not seen, that the temple court was crowded with spectators. Then he rose to his feet and, with the knife held close to his breast, began walking round and round as if seeking an outlet. He passed me once, he on one side of the wall and I on the other, and he looked me square in the eye, but never saw me. So round and round he went with long strides, knees bent and heels never touching the ground. His eyes were fixed and staring and his teeth clenched. Now and then he made long, slashing stabs in the air with the facon.

“Suddenly he saw me, and there was a change. The blood lust was in his eyes. He was standing on the slab in front of the idol, then made a great leap and started for the broken wall where I was. I saw then that the lump on his neck had swollen to the size of a big goitre. His whole body was a-quiver. There was an animal-like celerity in his movements that made me shudder. Then I knew that I dared not let him get on the same side of the wall with me. But he leaped at the gap from a distance that I would have thought no human could compass, and hung on to the wall with one arm over, snarling with teeth bared and slavering lips. I smashed him over the head with the canteen, gripping the strap with my right hand. He fell back with the force of the blow

but immediately came at the gap again, then changed his mind and went to tearing around the chamber with great leaps. He was a panther newly caged. He sprang on to the head of the idol and from that to the pedestal, and then to the slab in front of it. Then he went across and across the floor, sometimes screaming and yelling, and then again moaning and groaning. One side of his face was all bloody where I had smashed it with the canteen. Seeing him so, a thing not human, but with all the furtive quickness of an animal and its strength too, I felt sorry no more. I hated him with a wild hate. He was dangerous to me and I had to conquer him. That's fundamental. So I stood, gripping the strap of the canteen, watching, waiting. He came at me again striding and leaping. That time he got one leg over, with both hands gripping the top stones. The facon he dropped on my side of the wall, but I had no time to stoop for it just then. There were other things to do. He was getting over. It took some frantic beating with the canteen and he seemed to recover from the blows more quickly than I could get the swing to strike again. But I beat him down at last, though I saw that he had lots more life in him than I, with that devil of madness filling him. So, when I saw him stumble, then recover and begin that running again, I picked up the knife and leaped over the wall to settle the matter once and for all. It was an ugly thing that I had to do, but it had to be done and done quickly. At the root of things it's life against life."

Rounds ceased and fell to filling his pipe. I waited for him to say more, but he made as if to leave, though pausing a moment at my desk to pick up and examine a piece of malachite. I felt it incumbent upon me to say something to relieve the tension that I felt.

"I understand," said I. "It was a horrible necessity. It is a terrible thing to have to kill a fellow-creature."

"That wasn't a fellow-creature," he insisted. "What I killed was not the partner I knew. Don't you understand?"

"Yes, I understand," I replied. Then I asked, "Did you bury him?"

"Bury him? What for? How?" Rounds seemed indignant. "How could I bury him in a stone-paved court? How could I lift a dead man over a wall chin high?"

"Of course! Of course," I said. "I had forgotten that. But to us who lead quiet lives, it seems terrible to leave a dead man unburied."

“Do you feel that way about the mummy you have out there?” he asked, indicating the museum with his thumb. “If not, why not? But if you want the story to the bitter end, I dragged him to the only clean spot in the place, which was that slab in front of the idol. There I left him, or it. But things take odd turns. By the time I got back to the Tlinga village, they knew all about it and the priests used the affair to their own advantage. Mine was incidental. Yet I did reap some benefit. According to the priests, I had accepted the whole blessed lizard theory, or religion, or whatever it was, and had sacrificed the unbeliever to the lizard god. Ista helped things along, I suspect, for with me as a former mate, there was some fame for her. Anyway they met and hailed me as a hero and brought tribute to me. Gold dust they gave me. I wanted them to quit their damned foolishness and tried to explain, but it was no use. You can’t teach a mob to have sense. Well, adios. But remember this. Don’t be too cocksure.”

# The Great White Moth

Fred M. White

## Chapter I.

The thing savoured of mystery and possible adventure, and Drenton Denn, Special Commissioner, was ready for the fray. Anything was better than loafing in the forest behind Shaz waiting for the transports that never seemed to come, in company with Glasgow, who was engaged in the up-country trade and had just returned from one of his adventurous expeditions.

“Here is the back door of Central Africa,” remarked Glasgow. “There is no occasion to knock. Will you come in?”

“Got anything fresh on show?” Denn asked.

Glasgow smiled. Not in vain had he taken his life between his teeth for the last five years. The brawny Scot was burned a deep copper bronze; his beard was ragged as a goat's.

“I can promise you the sight of a thing or two you have never seen in your life before,” he said. “And this is about the last trip I shall make through the great forest of Ulu. It has been dangerous work, but I have done pretty well. What do you think of this?”

From a cowhide bale amongst his stores Glasgow produced a feather. It was a magnificent white plume, some two feet in length and of the most perfect texture. It was soft, almost elusive, to the touch, and as Glasgow shook it out the thing gleamed like a gossamer spray of falling water.

Denn was loud in his admiration.

“My word,” he cried, “the finest ostrich tail in the world is a mere scrubbing-brush compared with this. Got any more?”

“Got ten thousand of them in that bale. Oh, you can laugh. Though that feather when shaken out covers a small table-cloth, you can put half-a-dozen of them in your waistcoat pocket easily. See.”

The exquisitely beautiful plume was rolled up into a ball no larger than a marble. When shaken out the shimmering gloss and dainty loveliness of its down were absolutely unimpaired.

“Takes eight of them to weigh an ounce,” Glasgow went on. “Nothing injures it. I calculate these things will make a sensation in England.”

“You can pile up the stamps on that,” Denn replied. “I’d give a trifle to see the bird that feather came from.”

“Man, that feather came from no bird at all. What kind of creature it belongs to I know no more than the dead. The Ulu natives are on the best of terms with me now; they bring me these feathers, but whence they come I can get no information. My man Chan will do anything for me, but one question touching feathers sends him muttering an incantation to some Obi god and reduces him to sulky silence for the day.”

Denn sat up briskly, despite the heat that beat down in waves.

“Bully for you,” he said. “I’ll come to Ulu with you and I’ll see that bird, or whatever it is. This is going to be an adventure after my own heart.”

Glasgow was quite agreeable. He little realized the peril and danger his volatile companion was breeding for him, otherwise the cautious Scot would have traversed the forest alone.

“Have you never tried to see the bird?” Denn asked.

“Not I,” Glasgow replied. “I came out here for money, and I have made it by leaving the natives alone. There are queer things, evil things, out yonder, and there are bones of white men bleaching in the sun who have sought to know too much. Curiosity doesn’t pay yonder.”

They started at dawn the next morning, leaving the camp in charge of two trusty natives, and taking Chan, Glasgow’s faithful servant, with them. The latter was a fine specimen of his class, yellow of skin and lithe of limb, with hair straight and black as ebony.

It was cooler in the forest, but the track was narrow, and there were many snakes about. Denn could hear them writhing and wriggling in the dry scrub,



and caught the sullen flash of scales from time to time. He had no regret for his leather gaiters.

“That chap of yours will get into trouble in a moment,” he muttered to Glasgow. “Seems like asking Providence to tread on the tail of one’s coat to come through a snake-infested jungle like this with nothing on but a loin-cloth. Hanged if that isn’t a cobra.”

It was. The wicked head was raised, the hood uplifted to strike at Chan as he strode carelessly on at the head of the procession. Denn felt the hair pricking and bristling on the back of his scalp.

“Look out, you fool!” he yelled. “Don’t you know a cobra when you see it?”

Chan turned with a sweet yet pitiful smile. As he did so the cobra struck, and Chan caught him coolly by the throat. The next instant the slimy back was broken and the limp body cast aside.

“Well, I’m dashed!” Denn exclaimed. “But the brute struck you.”

The statement was correct. There were two red punctures in the thick of Chan’s thigh. Already the limb was commencing to swell. Half an hour at the most and Chan would cease to be. Denn’s face was expressive of sickening horror. Glasgow smiled, and Chan showed two glistening rows of teeth in the grin of the man who courts approval successfully.

“No make fuss,” he said; “me all lite in minit gone by.”

From his loin-cloth he took a tiny brown substance about the shape and hue of a dried bean. This he wetted with his tongue, and proceeded to rub the bean more or less carelessly on the punctures, after which he resumed his onward march with absolute easiness.

“Some fetich, of course,” Denn muttered. “But nothing can save him.”

Denn resigned himself to melancholy and the development of the tragedy. But, in his own vigorous metaphor, the tragedy didn’t develop worth a cent. The hours went on and the camp was fixed for the night, and, like the monks and the friars at Rheims, Chan did not seem one penny the worse. Denn watched Chan with a glassy eye. Pipes once lighted and the native moved out

of earshot, Denn began to speak.

“It seems to me you have missed a pretty short cut to fortune,” he said. “Chan’s got an infallible cure for snake-bites. If you could get hold of the recipe, you could afford to give those feathers away.”

“If I could get hold of it. But I can’t. All the Ulu natives carry one of those little brown beans; in fact, I have one myself. Chan gave it to me, and he took his life in his hands in so doing, let me tell you. The thing is mixed up in a way with the feathers, and some religious ceremony with a little tin god of sorts tacked on to the end of it. It’s a kind of freemasonry. I’d give all I possess to obtain that recipe, but I know when I am well off, and so keep my fingers out of that pie. If you take my advice you will keep this discovery to yourself.”

Denn fell back on a policy of silence. As a matter of fact he had not come all this way to see and be dumb. The *New York Post* did not pay him the salary of an ambassador for that. Besides, it was a distinct duty to humanity to obtain that recipe.

A six-bladed knife and a promise of an apocryphal revolver later on shook Chan’s dense religious fanaticism to the marrow. Denn was fishing for secrets it was peril to the soul to reveal, and Chan was troubled. Still, Heaven was far off as yet, and the revolver was so near.

“No dare tell,” said Chan. “God Gnew make the juice that keep the snake fangs out. God Gnew have the papyrus in um belly and the priests guard it in the temple at Ulu. Every full moon they make more juice in the temple, then um put papyrus back in Gnew belly again.”

“Let me have a squint at that show and you shall have a silver watch, Chan.”

Chan shivered and his lips grew grey. His bony knees clattered together and his mouth watered.

“Say that again and me kill you,” he said, hoarsely. “Big fool white man; he not know what he talk about palaver so.”

And Chan flatly refused to say any more. Still, he was clearly shaken to the pith of his soul, and many a longing glance did he cast at the chain Denn had displayed across his canvas shirt. That the poison was getting in its work the astute Yankee knew well. He had quite made up his mind to see that ceremony.

Secret rites, freemasonry, and papyrus in the internal economy of a god called Gnew! The smartest “special” on earth was not to be baffled by a fanatical native with no clothes on. Denn said no more till over in the valley towards night on the third day the huts and stockades of Ulu rose in sight.

Denn stood up alongside Chan.

“What about that watch?” he whispered.

Chan’s teeth clicked and his lips quivered with a sort of nervous paralysis. His eyes gleamed as a cat’s might in the dark. Then he fell to sobbing, and the big tears rolled down his cheeks. It was not a pretty spectacle, and Denn was not without a sense of shame.

“So it’s to be,” he said. “The question is, when?”

Chan’s lips framed rather than said, “Tomorrow afternoon.”

## Chapter II.

Glasgow lay in the hut assigned to him with the air of a man who mourns for wasted hours and yet bears the loss of them philosophically.

“No business done to-day,” he said. “They’ve got one of their bobberies on, some fool nonsense or other at the temple which takes place once a month. They’re quiet and peaceful chaps as a rule, but when the periodical madness comes on they are apt to be dangerous. It is only by lying low and not evincing the slightest curiosity that I have got on with the Ulu so well.”

“I should have pulled all the inside of the business out by this time,” said Denn.

“Yes, and by this time you wouldn’t have any inside to pull out,” Glasgow replied, drily. “I’m going to have a siesta.”

A minute later and Glasgow was asleep. Denn crept quietly out of the hut and made his way to the spot where he had arranged to meet Chan. Not a single Ulu was in sight anywhere.

Chan was looking downcast and troubled, with a furious gleam in his eyes

that caused Denn to slap his hip-pocket significantly.

“None of your confounded nonsense,” he said. “This is a case of no song, no supper. The question is, how are you going to disguise me so that I can watch the circus procession without any chance of being fired out of the show?”

“You go as pilgrim,” Chan explained, sullenly. “Pilgrim come from beyond Shaz to the shrine of Gnew. Holy things for pilgrims to do like Mahomet fellows down Cairo way say of what call Mecca.”

“That’s all right. But I don’t look like a pilgrim to any considerable extent. What are you going to do with my face?”

Chan proceeded to unfold a long robe made of coloured grasses fashioned like a sack. This he placed over Denn’s head, leaving him with two holes wherewith to see. A pair of moccasins of the same material completed his outfit.

“There pilgrim’s dress for you,” Chan remarked. “Taken from a dead pilgrim, un had cholera. No other one get. Perhaps you die cholera too.”

Denn shuddered slightly. A natural desire to tear the flimsy structure in fragments came over him.

“There is a drawback to every pleasure,” he said, grimly. “What time do the doors open?”

With a swift critical glance at his companion, Chan pointed the way. Up to the present a strange silence had been observed, and no single Ulu could be seen. Then a queer, grotesque figure came forth into the main street of the village and commenced to blow vigorously on a horn.

From the huts, up from the grass, out of the shelter of the forest, men and women seemed to rise as from the dead. The fierce mob, uttering yells and cries, pushed forward. Their gleaming eyes and set faces were eloquent of the frenzy of fanaticism that possessed them.

An ugly crowd—no mistake about that; a crowd drunk with religious fervour, which is a dangerous thing to the scoffer even in civilized climes. No reason to warn Denn that he would be torn limb from limb on the slightest suggestion of his presence.

It was therefore some comfort to him that there were hundreds of pilgrims besides himself. He and Chan were soon in the thick of the stream, and a greasy, evil-smelling stream it proved to be. As the crowd surged along the cries and yells ceased and a strange, strained silence followed. They were eager and yet strangely reluctant, as a man who is compelled to witness an execution. Fear and curiosity were mingled. Denn could hear his companions breathing heavily, like runners who have come far and fast.

Presently the procession arrived at a huge mass of rocks that thrust themselves out from the hillside. Carried on by the living stream, Denn found himself hustled down a flinty gorge and thence through a pair of massive bronze gates, beautifully modelled and finished.

“Well, this beats everything,” he muttered. “Now, where on earth do those magnificent gates come from? Nothing finer was ever cast in Greece or Rome. It seems to me I’m going to have value for my money.”

The gates closed right up to the rugged arch of the roof. Inside was a huge natural temple, faintly illuminated by a dozen or more windows cut through the living granite. And each one of the windows was filled with the most delicate bronze tracery.

The place was so vast that there was room and to spare. Denn found a gloomy corner, where he stood with Chan by his side so that he could observe everything without being seen. No previous adventure had been more fascinating than the present one.

Denn’s keen eyes took everything in. One surprise tripped over the heels of another so fast that the American grew quite accustomed to the whirl of sensations. He looked down from the roof to the floor at his feet. He saw that he stood ankle-deep in some white feathery substance that glistened purely in the filtered light.

The whole temple was carpeted with the marvellous feather that Glasgow had shown him a day or two before. There were literally hundreds of them, the pilgrims and Ulus trampling them under foot as if they had been grass. As Denn bent for closer inspection Chan grasped his arm.

“Nothing touch; dead certain fool white man,” he whispered.

Denn accepted the hint. And, indeed, there was something else to occupy his attention beyond the beautiful feathers. At the back of the temple there stood a gigantic idol of unusually repulsive aspect. In the centre of the forehead was one gigantic eye behind which a lamp had been lighted. The whole thing was grotesque to the last degree.

At the feet of the idol on a platform a mass of priests, or medicine-men, had gathered. They were old and withered, every one of them, and clad from head to foot in some coarse white cloth. On a table at the foot of the idol Denn could see a wicker basket containing a dozen or more cobras in a state of lively indignation.

Then the priests began to sing, grouped in a semi-circle. At first their chant was low and wailing and monotonous, and to Denn's great surprise he recognised it as familiar and Gregorian. A dreamy sensation of having been there and having done it all before came over him.

"Nothing new under the sun," he muttered. "White men must have been here before. Otherwise, how on earth did those gates get here?"

Presently the chant grew louder and more fierce. Up and up it rose until there was one screaming cry of passion and supplication, till finally the rocking, reeling priests prostrated themselves before the altar.

Instantly the whole assemblage did the same. Denn felt himself dragged down by Chan's powerful hand. After the fearful din the silence was strange and almost painful. And yet Denn had never seen anything more thrilling and impressive before.

Denn lay half smothered in those luscious clinging feathers, soft as down and diaphanous as sea-foam, wondering what was going to happen next. He had some dim conception of the way in which the ceremony pointed. This music was doubtless an incantation and an appeal for mercy from the god. They were waiting before they had courage to proceed.

A quarter of an hour passed, and then the leader of the priests raised his head cautiously. Another and another, till at length they were all on their feet once more. Loud yells of triumph followed.

Slowly, by reason of the weight of his years, the chief priest proceeded to climb up the frame of the great idol. He looked like a white fly on the head of

a Sphinx. The action was nothing in itself, apart from the feebleness of the chief performer, and yet it was followed by almost painful silence. Then the arm of the priest was plunged up to the elbow in an orifice in the idol, to emerge a moment later waving a faded strip of parchment.

Instantly the throbbing silence was broken by a manifestation of mad delight. The pilgrims tossed, and rocked, and yelled in a species of intoxicated delirium. Denn knew enough to grasp the meaning of this. The parchment was doubtless the sacred papyrus containing the recipe for the snake cure. Probably these poor folk always gathered there under the impression that some day the great god might destroy the papyrus in a fit of rage.

However, here it was, passed from one priest to another and perused eagerly. Then fires were lighted on the platform, and upon them gourds were placed, and filled with some liquid that caused a great and acrid smoke to rise. Whilst the gourds were boiling and bubbling the priests danced around them with a solemn, stilted step that tried Denn's gravity to the utmost. The absolute wooden stolidity of those around him did not tend to seriousness on the part of the volatile American.

Presently the dance ceased and no further smoke arose from the gourds. The contents of the whole of them were poured into a large brass vessel to which water was added. A big reddish lump like putty was extracted from the brass pot and handed from priest to priest for inspection.

A great burst of triumph followed. The religious function had been eminently successful. Denn felt that the end had come. Then, as he looked about him, he became conscious of the fact that night was coming on. A minute later and it shot down like a blanket on the place.

As if in a paroxysm of fear the whole of the audience made a rush for the gates. Chan plucked at Denn's sleeve.

"Come!" he whispered, hoarsely. "The white dumb devil! Quick!"

Denn eluded the grasp. If there was anything more to be seen he made up his mind to see it. He drew back into a dark corner so that the stream of frantic, perspiring humanity might pass him by and leave him high above the flood.

The flood went roaring on. Denn, by the feeble light in the eye of the idol,

watched the stream ebb away. He saw the papyrus restored to the body of the god, and the stuff the priests had made carried away. And he also saw as the pilgrims hurried out that every eye was turned upwards with shuddering fear.

“Something gone wrong with the works,” Denn said, *sotto voce*, “or why should they clear out like that with the darkness? Doubtless the ceremony took more time than usual. If I do happen to come across the white dumb devil I shall have had a pleasant afternoon.”

By this time the place was absolutely quiet. Denn felt no uneasiness. Chan, of course, would imagine that he had been swept out with the crowd. Even when Denn discovered that the great bronze gates were fast and that he was a prisoner he felt no fear.

If the worst came to the worst he could remain there for the night and trust to luck to slip out when the temple was open in the morning. That nobody would molest him till dawn he felt certain, for the fear of the darkness had been on priest and layman alike.

Therefore Denn felt at leisure to explore about him as he pleased. It did not take him long to discover that behind the great idol was a huge cavern going right away into the hillside. So far as he could see the whole floor was carpeted with those peerless white feathers. They had been trodden under many a score of grimy feet, and yet they were still as light as thistledown and seemed to shake off corruption as water runs off a rose.

“I never saw anything more exquisitely lovely,” said Denn. “I would give a trifle to see the creature they came from. Now, I wonder if this bird or beast lives in the cavern behind me? It looks like it.”

It did indeed, for high above Denn’s head, where no human being could possibly go, one of the feathers hung on a jagged ledge of rock.

“Extraordinary thing,” Denn went on. “It *must* be a bird, unless there is such a thing as a flying beast. Upon my word, it begins to look like it. If the creature is here I shall most assuredly drop a card on him.”

The idol still glared down at Denn. The idea of taking possession of the papyrus instantly possessed him. It might be useless; on the contrary, it might be in a formula known to science. There was just the chance.



As Denn started forward to carry out his intention something seemed to glide by him and brush his cheek softly, gently, as the touch of a mother's hand. And yet the rush of air that followed was as a strong breeze. In the feeble light of the gleaming eye high overhead something darted like a swallow in the twilight. It was vague, ghostly, yet tangible.

Denn forgot all about the papyrus. A treasure was there beyond rubies, but it slipped from the American's mind. The great white shadow swooped down and stood still in the air quivering before Denn's astonished eyes.

What was it? Something greater than an albatross, more massive in the body and wider across the wings, which vibrated so swiftly that their motion was impossible for the eye to follow. Not a bird or a beast, but a great white moth with an eye soft and mournful, and yet so vaguely terrible that Denn stood paralyzed before it.

This, then, was the dumb white devil that Chan had spoken of. But surely the thing was harmless. The soft, mournful eye, the noiseless, snowy wings, pointed to a gentle, timid thing. Yet as it quivered closer and closer to Denn he backed away. He had heard before of a huge moth unseen by any white man's eye, and here it was.

He backed farther and farther away. The thing followed in the same terribly noiseless manner as if it were floating on the air. Denn could see into the soft, mournful grey eye, he could catch a faint perfume like musk, and with a flash the wings were about him.

There was no pressure, no cruel claws cut into the flesh, no serrated teeth met in the flesh of the affrighted man. A certain weight bore him to the ground, and then his eyes and throat and ears seemed to be filled with something that seemed like warm snow, exquisite and glowing to the touch and yet soft as satin.

Denn fought it off as best he might. As a matter of fact, he knew quite well that he was being suffocated to death in a mass of feathers. Try as he would he could find no way out of the white sea surrounding him. He gripped for the body, but only succeeded in burying his arm to the shoulders in the tangle of silken plumes. He could hear a heart beating under it all. Still, it was no time for speculation. A little longer of this and Denn's interest in mundane matters would be finished.

He fought and gasped and struggled for breath. His heart was hammering

painfully against his ribs, a cold sweat broke out over him. He began to feel himself floating away on a boundless sea towards oblivion. The strong man was growing weak as a little child.

Then, without warning, the white, fluttering mass lifted. Denn, dazed and confused, lay on his back, looking upwards. He saw the cause of this diversion. High over his head he could see, not one of the great moths, but two of them. They were darting round one another in dazzling flashes faster than a swallow cleaves the air, and yet without the slightest noise. Denn crept away to the shadow and made his way on all fours to the gates.

He looked up again. As he did so he saw the two moths come with a flashing wheel and dazzling circle in full contact with each other. For an instant it seemed as if they had burst like two bombs, for a white cloud, growing wider, enveloped them. As the cloud commenced to fall it resolved itself into a shower of feathers,

The moths were fighting a duel. Great as the rain of plumes had been, there was no sign of loss of plumage in either insect. Again and again they came together with the same wheeling motion, and again and again the showers of diaphanous plumes flecked downwards. Then, as they charged once more, one of the moths avoided the other and darted with amazing swiftness into the purple gloom beyond the great idol. A fraction of a second later and the other moth had disappeared also.

Denn crouched there, gasping and panting. Idol, papyrus, the boon to mankind, everything was forgotten in the mad desire to be beyond those bronze gates. Tangible dangers Denn knew and appreciated—dangers he could grapple with and hold on to; but the silent terror of this danger frightened him. Small wonder that the Ulus had fled at the coming of the night.

Doubtless in the caverns beyond were hundreds of those ghostly moths. And they might return to the attack at any time. One was bad enough, but to be beset by a score of them—to be buried under the crushing weight of those white plumes that filled eyes and throat and ears—

Denn cast the thought shuddering from him. The thing was to get away now before danger returned. Still, that was easier said than done. There was no escape save by the great bronze gates, glittering now in the moonlight that bathed the whole place in a silver flood.

Denn looked outside as a prisoner does through his bars. As he did so a figure crept out of the long grass. To Denn's delight he saw the white, fearful, sweat-bedabbled face of Chan.

"White dumb devil not there?" he whispered.

Denn hastened to reassure the other. Chan pressed on one of the ornaments of the great gates, and they slowly yawned open far enough for Denn to step through. There was no further danger now.

"Fool white man no want any more go yonder," said Chan, recovering himself, as the temple was left behind. "Guess you stay there when others gone. White dumb devil stay in, hide in daylight, and only come out at night. Lots um in cavern yonder. You see um?"

Denn responded that he had done so. Then he fell to asking questions. Some years before, he found, the big white moths had come to this temple. More than one priest had been found mysteriously suffocated before the real truth had come to light. Then it was discovered that the big white moths only dared to come out after sundown, and there was consequently no occasion to leave the temple. After dark it was a different matter. Hence the flight of the Ulus and pilgrims at the fall of night, the ceremony having taken longer than usual.

"But where do those moths come from?" Denn asked.

Chan pointed towards the distant hills.

"Over there," he said, "in the valley of caverns. No dare go there after dark. Many mans killed there. Sen um self every times. No go there time some more not for revolver no, not for *silver watch*."

Denn laughed at the pointed speech. He laid upon Chan's shoulder a hand that still shook slightly.

"No occasion for the hint, my simple savage," he said. "You shall have the best watch and the best revolver that money can procure."

Chan smiled and he sighed. For he was fearful for the anger of the gods, and his soul was heavy within him.

## Last of the Race

William Fryer Harvey

Little Billy Mungo, who kept the Accommodation House on Jackson's Sound, refused to believe in them. Flinders, who had prospected the whole country for coal, and was besides a naturalist, had seen them himself. He said that they were the footprints of a large apteryx.

But old Macnaughten, whisky sodden and argumentative, still held to his original opinion, that somewhere between Te Anau and the sea there was a new bird—rather a bird so old that with its death the race would become extinct.

And though in Pembroke, where Macnaughten spent his money, the man's story was taken for what it was worth, there was something in it that rang true.

So at least thought Tradescant, as he sat listening to the fellow, watching his reserve thaw beneath the combined influence of the whisky and the naturalist's congenial company.

"I ought to know," said Macnaughten; "I've seen apteryx by the hundred in the North Island, and I've killed them too before the Government made their regulations. I've seen the mud by the lake shore covered with their footprints, and I'll bet my bottom dollar that not a single one was over three inches long. Why, those I saw in the bush that spring were twice as big. And Flinders says it's an apteryx! I measured them myself, and that'll tell you if I lie!"

He took out of his pocket a slip of brown paper with two marks in pencil about eight inches apart. To Tradescant the proof hardly seemed conclusive.

"I'll tell you how I first came across them," he continued. "I was working on my own, trying to find a new route to the West Coast Sounds from this side. It was just at this time of the year, and the weather was cold, and there was rain. I'd been out all day, and when at night I came to the place where I was camping, there were footprints everywhere. The bird had been looking for something to eat. I've seen them every year since, barring last year. This much I'll say. They're not so common as they were. Have you ever seen a feather like that before?" He took out of his leather purse a scrap of newspaper, and a little piece of down lay on the table.

Tradescant took it up, held it in his hand, and after carefully scrutinising it with his lens, handed the feather back to Macnaughten.

“My dear fellow,” he said, “I’ve seen hundreds of feathers like that. Open your pillow case when you go home, and you’ll find a few more.”

“By God!” exclaimed Macnaughten, “you mean I’m a liar?”

“Hardly that,” the other replied. “I mean that I don’t believe you. I should be glad to listen to anything more you have to say when I’ve seen your footprints.”

There was silence in the room, silence broken only by the ticking of the cheap alarm clock on the mantelpiece.

Then Macnaughten spoke.

“Look here,” he said; “I’m a poor man, but I’ve got brains, and I know how to use them. When I left England, a thick-headed fool could always earn a shilling a day and his keep by standing outside the barrack doors. Give me what your blasted Tommy gets for a week, and I’ll show you them. If I don’t, I’ll call Flinders a gentleman to his face!”

“Very well,” said Tradescant, and he drank to the bargain.

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He was standing alone in the heart of the New Zealand bush. Macnaughten had left him three hours ago. He had done what he had promised to do, and it was no business of his, if the conceited English fool lost himself before he reached Mungo’s Accommodation House.

As for the bird, Macnaughten had no fears of it ever being discovered by a man who took that feather for goose’s down, by a naturalist who called a kea a hawk, and who asked if there had ever been kangaroos in the island.

Macnaughten could have laughed in his face; but then he never saw Tradescant as he knelt in the mud, scanning eagerly that faint impression on its surface, smelling it like a dog. He had only donned for a short week the unpopular but effective disguise of ignorance.

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Tradescant had taken stock of his belongings. In his knapsack was food that might at a pinch last for three days. He had his maps and his compass.

“One cigarette,” he said, “and then my last little bid for fame.”

His whole life was traversed, from the time between the lighting of the match to when, five minutes later, the glowing stump burned his fingers.

His whole life was traversed. Perhaps that was why the cigarette was not so pleasant as it might have been.

He had made so many mistakes.

There was the mistake of ever being born, that all the future honour of his family should have been left to him alone to augment or mar. There was the mistake of his marriage; though perhaps that was not a mistake, but only a tragedy. Then there was that awful failure of his scientific career. It was intolerable that, after spending the ten best years of his life in perfecting his discovery, an American, with all his nation's luck, should have proved and published the identical thing six months before his work was finished. He who should have been first, followed with the rest of the honourably mentioned.

It was a mistake Jack dying as he did at Eton, just the boy any man would have wished for an only son.

Perhaps the least of all his mistakes was this wild goose chase.

For Tradescant had sickened of the laboratory. The vibrations of the ether which had fascinated him of old, had become too intangible. And here he was in the heart of the primeval forest with the old ancestral passion for nature strong upon him.

A Maori carving had first put the idea into his head, and then he had seen a paragraph in an evening paper at Christchurch.

“My boy's dead,” he said to himself, as he gazed at the grey cigarette ash, “but I'll hand my name down to posterity somehow, and this bird shall do it. ‘Apteryx Tradescantii, Number 999 in the catalogue. Unique.’ Yes, little bird, I'm afraid your days are numbered.”

He shouldered his knapsack and followed the footprints into the bush.

The evening of the third day found Tradescant wet through, sitting at the foot of a giant totara. He had lit a fire of the driest twigs he could find, and was warming himself before the spluttering flame.

It was a foolish thing to do, for the bird was not far away now; all day the footprints had been fresher, and he knew that the smoke might frighten it.

But he was chilled to the bone, and felt certain of his success.

His face, as he bent over the flame, glowed; he was beginning almost to enjoy the cleansing feel of the three days' rain. And all the time his hand never left the barrel of his gun. He fondled it, stroking the dull metal lovingly.

What days those had been! The mid-day gloom of the forest with its wealth of timber, the rippling of the streams, English streams where English trout would thrive far better than in limpid Hampshire waters or brown North Country becks.

Then the scarlet wonder of a late flowering rata, that giant parasite of the forest; the scramble up the slopes where the tree ferns no longer showed their shabby dressing of faded fronds, and nothing but shrub and thorn found root on the shelving screes.

Was it yesterday or the night before that he had camped high up on the hill, and had seen to the eastward the snow-clad range of the Southern Alps rise cold and ghostly against the blue night with its strange stars?

Then there was the moment when, kneeling to pick a gentian, he had found the feather, and the feelings of love and wonder which the flower had aroused in him, suddenly changed into one of strange lust and hate, as he held the grey little piece of fluff in his palm.

There was the wonder of the rain, too. The torrents that scoured the hillsides, the shrouding mist. And, best of all, three hours ago, when he had come to an impenetrable thicket of some dark-leaved thorny plant, to find more feathers, and, how his heart had exulted, a little patch of blood.

Tradescant was fondling his gun as twenty years before he had fondled his boy.

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He arose in the morning stiff and with a fever. There was only half a round of bread in his wallet, and this he kept, breakfasting on the contents of his flask. From his sodden maps he calculated that he could not be more than twenty miles from a civilisation, represented by ten tin roofs and a beer and spirit licence. This was to be the last day's hunt.

The rain had not ceased all night, the streams were rivers, but Tradescant did not heed. He could hear now and then a monotonous piping ahead, and now and then the cracking of twigs.

The bird was leading him into the valley, and by mid-day he had reached the spot where two streams joined, a narrow tongue of land jutting between. Here he stopped, uncertain what course to pursue. Then he felt a sudden throbbing in the arteries of his neck. A tree had fallen across the smaller of the two streams, forming a natural bridge, and in the centre stood his bird. Of this much he could be sure, that no bird like this had ever before been seen by a white man. It was perhaps four feet high, almost wingless, as Tradescant had surmised, and covered with a softly-dappled plumage.

The man waited till the bird had reached a point where its body would fall clear of the water, took steady aim, and fired. The shot rang through the bush sharp and clear; the bird gave a shrill pipe, and half-fluttered to the tongue of land.

“Missed!” said Tradescant, “but I’ll kill you yet.”

It was no easy thing to cross the river, swollen with the three days' rain. The only way was to follow the bird.

Creeping on hands and knees, clutching the slippery bark with bleeding fingers, he had almost reached the further side when there was a cracking underneath him.

The bridge had broken. A minute's frantic scramble, with the water rushing below his dangling legs, while branches struck him in the face, and he was on firm ground again.

Then a mighty log, carried down in mid-stream, crashed against the broken tree and bore it away.

Of a truth the floods were out.



The spit he was on was low and sandy. There was little to hinder the flight of the bird. Tradescant began to run.

He ran a hundred yards, and then he burst out laughing, for he was on an island. The bird had gone into a death-trap. There it stood by the water side, flapping the useless wings, uttering its monotonous pipe. Tradescant had laughed, now he smiled, his old sarcastic smile, for he realised that if the bird had walked into its death-trap, it was to be his own too. Between the island and the further bank, there was a brown flood three hundred yards across, and he was no swimmer.

“But I’ve got the bird.”

It did not resist. The bird opened its long, thin beak and made a faint hissing sound, as Tradescant, after tying the legs together, swung it over his shoulder. At the end of the island stood the stump of a tree, hollowed, and affording shelter from the rain. The ground around it was higher than elsewhere.

There he sat and waited. After a time he felt in his pocket for a piece of cord. He was no fisherman, and had always been clumsy with his fingers, but he finally succeeded in making a running noose to his liking, and slipped it over the bird’s neck.

It was not perhaps the simplest way of killing it, but the body would not be spoiled. He tightened it, and the bird opened its mouth and began to gape, beating its wings.

“Come,” said Tradescant, “no fuss, and don’t look at me in that pathetic way, as if you’d never deserved this. It’s the way of the world! Confound it!” he said, “the bird struggles too much. I shall have to postpone the operation,” and he loosened the knots. “Cheer up, bird!” he said, addressing the beast. “I have no wish to put you to unnecessary discomfort. Now no shamming! When my boy carried on as you are doing now, I used to call him Charles Edward, known to history as the Young Pretender. Pluck up courage, Charles Edward, the date of your execution for the time being is postponed.”

The south wind was bitterly cold; it might have come straight from the Antarctic icebergs, and the rain was turning to sleet.

Late in the afternoon, Tradescant awoke with a sense of warmth he had not felt all day. The bird had crept within his coat and now lay nestling close.

“A remarkably good idea, Charles Edward,” he said. “I appreciate your returning good for evil in this way, and overlook the fact that your ulterior motive was probably selfish. If you’ll excuse me one moment I’ll ring for tea. I beg pardon, I was forgetting where I was. But I can still offer you refreshment. I have here,” he continued, “brandy and bread. The brandy, I am informed, will cause a temporary dilation of the skin capillaries, accompanied by a feeling of warmth, which, however, is shortly followed by slight cardiac and nervous depression. As a stimulant it should only be used under exceptional circumstances and with moderation. I think we may call these circumstances exceptional. The state of the flask forbids excess. You decline the brandy? Let me call your attention to the bread, I believe a large part of its nutritious constituents has been removed in the process of manufacture, but it contains a percentage of carbohydrate varying from 55 per cent. in the best white bread, to 40 per cent. in the coarser varieties. The sample I hold in my hand would be classed among the coarse varieties. As a food, it far exceeds the value of the alcohol. Estimable bird! You choose the bread. It would have been my own choice, but you are my guest.”

The bird pecked greedily at the crumbs Tradescant offered it, and showed the whites of its eyes every time it swallowed.

As the brandy reached the brain, the man began to laugh.

“Charles Edward!” he said, “has it ever struck you how grotesque it is, that I, the last of my family, should be sitting talking to you, the last of yours? We came over with the Conqueror. Tell me something about your ancestors!

“My dear bird, if you must yawn in that shockingly rude manner, do put your flapper in front of your mouth. If you have no objection to make, I now intend to go for a short stroll.”

He had hardly walked a dozen yards when he came to the edge of the island. While he gazed, he saw the water rising inch by inch. Out in mid-stream the sodden body of a sheep was carried by. It was held for a minute entangled in the branches of a tree; then the eddy swept it clear, and bumping against logs and boulders, the yellow water washed it downwards. Far up the glen Tradescant heard the bleating of a solitary lamb.

After ten minutes, Tradescant walked back to the hollow trunk; the fever was still upon him. He was delirious now.

“There’s no sign of the carriage yet,” he said, addressing the bird, “so we must shelter here as best we can. You’ll have to sit close. I’m afraid your feet will be simply sopping, and you’ll catch your death of cold, but if you were such a goose to come out—” Then he broke off laughing.

“Not goose,” he said, “I’m forgetting myself, *Apteryx. Apteryx Tradescantii*. That’s what I meant.

“And by the way, that reminds me I wanted to ask you about your wings. What’s the use of having wings if you can’t fly with them? I’ve often been told that I have wings myself, and my friends tell me that I ought to try and fly, and all I can do is to flop, flop, along the ground just like you. There’s something wrong there, you know, Charles Edward.”

Tradescant laughed again the high-pitched senseless laugh of delirium. He no longer saw the water rising inch by inch, making the ground at his feet a sponge-like mass. It was of the past he was thinking, of the other Charles Edward, his boy. And amid the rain thresh, his voice drowned by the turbulent cry of the stream, he talked to the phantasms he saw.

The bird crept nearer to its strange companion, it no longer seemed to fear him. And he putting out his hand, drew it towards him, wrapping it in his coat.

“Keep close, and don’t gape, Charles Edward. One of us may weather it yet. Half a minute though; I was forgetting there are advantages in the appurtenances of civilisation, even in the bush!”

He searched in his pocket-book and took out a card,

Mr. Montague Tradescant,  
9 Ilsley Gardens, W.

On the back, his half-numbed fingers scribbled

*Apteryx Tradescantii.*

He tied the slip of pasteboard to the cord around the bird’s throat.

“It’s awfully cold,” he said. “I’ll tuck you up, and then we’ll both go to sleep, and I think I owe you an apology for hustling you so, the last three days. Good-night!”

# The Blue Cockroach

Edward Heron-Allen

Dora was responsible—the Dora who punctuated her name after the manner of the plural of Mouse as affected by Civil Engineers. D.O.R.A. Primarily responsible, that is to say; for this is a story of one of the very few instances of that *Ersatz*, which devastated Germany during the Late Unpleasantness, but of which our more favoured Nation suffered but few aggressions.

From another point of view perhaps the responsibility lies with Itha and Armorel. They are the imperious nieces of the Professor of Applied Chemistry in the University of Cosmopoli. Itha was twelve at the time, and Armorel eight, but, having no wife to rule him with a rod of iron, the Professor had, by the dire progression of a process for which he was unable to account, gradually become as a slave beneath their ferrule, and in the most meagre days of Dora's sumptuary regulations Itha and Armorel had demanded Bananas.

Well, Bananas were at that moment as Snakes in Iceland—apparently, and many a rebuff did the Professor endure from 'proud young Porters' at Stores whence of old he had been accustomed to supply his nieces' demands.

Of course the Professor ought to have been married. So ought Pamela, but the youth of the Professor had been spent, not only in consuming the midnight oil and other illuminants, but in abstract researches into their nature, composition, and adaptations. He was an acknowledged authority on Coal-tar Products, Inverted Sugars, and their derivatives commercial and prophylactic. Pamela had waited; and she had waited too long. By the time the Professor had become a Member of Council of the Chemical, and a Fellow of the Royal Societies he was a confirmed bachelor, and Pamela had reached the age which used to be labelled in their series of photographs of Celebrities (female) by the Strand Magazine as 'Present Day.' They corresponded at long, and met at longer, intervals, when Pamela, growing fragrant with the fire of forgotten suns, like a Winter Pear, came up from Wiltshire in a spirit of revolt against the limitations of the Provincial Milliner.

In the meagre days above referred to, Pamela was in town, and the Professor, rather grudging the expenditure of time involved, had bidden her to lunch with him at the Imperial. A visit to Kingsway, in search of chemical glass,

had the result that his way back to the Imperial lay through Covent Garden Market, at that time a dreary vista of empty windows and derelict packing cases, where erstwhile the fruits of distant lands had been wont to overflow in polychromatic luxuriance. But in one of the windows lay a small bunch—a ‘hand’ they call it—of home-sick and weary Bananas, and the Professor remembered the grey reproachful eyes of Itha and Armored, who could never believe that he could possibly fail them if he really made an effort.

He went in. An adolescent representative of an Ancient Race—who had escaped conscription—received him with scarcely inquisitive apathy.

“Are those the only Bananas you have?” asked the Professor.

“And all we are likely to,” replied the Merchant elliptically.

“I am in trouble,” said the Professor. “I have a little niece who is eagerly desirous of Bananas—and she is very delicate,” he added as a mendacious afterthought, blushing as he thought of Itha in a dilapidated Scout uniform perched in the highest branches of a tree, or careering along the sands ‘bareback’ on a repatriated Army remount. “Do you think you could help me?”

The Adolescent Oriental looked him over with a scrutiny which became, in the end, sympathetic. Perhaps he had a niece—or something and understood.

“Bill!”

A subterranean noise as though the dirty floor were in labour, and from a square hole in the planks at their feet half a human being emerged. This was evidently part of Bill—a sinister figure, midway between Phil Squod and Quilp. A vision of strabismus and a fustian cap.

“Could you find this gentleman a hand or two of Bananas out of that case?—you know.”

Disappearance of the upper half of Bill, a sound of rending timbers, and presently his reappearance with two ‘hands’—beautiful golden Bananas, and the nether portion of his person.

“Beauties,” remarked Bill, “come yesterday.”

“How much?” enquired the Professor.

When he recovered he saw himself, mentally, a poorer, but a better man. The Merchant was delivering a lecture upon the economics of War, and the iniquities of Dora. And as he turned the ‘hand’ over, that its excellence might act as an anaesthetic to the operation of extraction, there ran out upon the counter the Blue Cockroach.

Unconsciously the Professor—like the Poet in the Den of the Scarabee—recoiled, but no Scarabee was there to murmur without emotion ‘*Blatta*.’ But Bill was there.

“Ah!” said he, “I’ve seen *him* before—queer things we get sometimes in the cases—lizards—snakes—and what-not. Once I found a Monkey. Jolly little beggar—he was all right, lived on the fruit. We used to take them to the live-beast place at the end. Shut up now.”

“Don’t you ever get bitten—or stung?”

“No—we’re careful. This fellow’s harmless.”

It was a most lovely beast. In shape and size identical with the cockroaches which stray among one’s brushes on board ship, and architecturally indistinguishable from the larger members of the Kitchen family, the Blue Cockroach was clad in a pure, pale azure, as if a cunning artificer in enamels had fashioned it, and had given to its surface a texture of the finest smooth velvet. Its long antennae waved enquiringly back and forth, its tiny eyes sparkled black with crimson points, and then it began to run. The Professor caught it in his hand as it toppled from the edge of the counter.

It bit him.

A curious sickening little puncture like the nip of an earwig. A sensation of heat, and then of cold that ran all over him, and Bill and the Merchant grew nebulous—and waved about. The Professor had never fainted in his life, but he said to himself: “This is how they must feel.” In a moment it was over. He had shaken off the insect, and true to the scientific instinct he took out of his pocket one of the corked tubes he had just acquired, and drove the Blue Cockroach into it.

“One of the fellows at the Museum may like to have it,” he said.

The Merchant shrugged his shoulders. A boot-heel, not a corked tube, seemed to him to be the appropriate climax to the Odyssey of the Blue Cockroach. For some inexplicable reason, however, he reduced the price he had quoted from the limits of Chimaera to within the bounds of Extravagance, and the Professor went upon his way, the Bananas in his hand and the Blue Cockroach in his pocket.

A tiny point on his right palm showed where the insect had attacked him, but beyond that the incident was closed.

As he proceeded along Coventry Street the Professor became aware of a great calm—an undefined happiness. He had regarded his appointment with Pamela more in the light of a kindly duty than as an occasion for pleasurable anticipation, but now he suddenly found himself looking forward to their meeting with a keen sense of curiosity and satisfaction. It was too long since they met last. He felt sure she would have come to town sooner had he expressed a wish in that direction in his letters. What a handsome creature she had been when he was a student! What a shame it was that she had never married. The Professor found himself quietly wondering why—if—whether?

“I am fifty-four,” said he to himself. But he smiled frowningly—or frowned smilingly.

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‘She’s a wonderful woman!’ was his first thought as she rose to greet him from the big chair in the vestibule. Indeed, Pamela seemed younger than he remembered her to have looked a year ago. She seemed to radiate that impression of delicate strength and ultra-feminine self-reliance which constitutes the undefinable charm of many middle-aged spinsters.

Their lunch was delightful. Pamela seemed as though she were starting fresh. The Professor seemed to have shed his professorial armour, and to have become once more a human being. He entertained her with descriptions of his war activities, no longer as of yore skimming over the subject, but letting her into the secret chamber of his ambitions, his aspirations, his work. When a man of the Professor’s intellectual eminence exerts himself to charm, the charm is dangerously subtle. An element of flattery pervades the exercise, which is—

or should be—irresistible. Pamela did not resist—she had never been called upon to resist, and was not going to begin now. Thirty years fell away, as time wasted in sleep. It is not a disagreeable admission—indeed, there is a curious emotional joy predominant when two people who should have been lovers find themselves saying in their hearts, ‘What fools we have been!’

By the time that the arrival of coffee and cigarettes had cleared away the last barriers which had erected themselves upon their voyage of re-discovery, the Professor was virtually identifying Pamela with his life-work.

“It is not all explosives and bacteriology,” he confided to her. “I have been at work upon substitutes for sugar, and I have found one which will be a god-send to the people who properly detest saccharine. I have brought here a little tube of my finished article. It has all the sweetening properties of the finest cane sugar. Will you try it?”

Of course she would. If it had been a dangerous poison she would have gladly offered herself as a martyr to Science—his Science.

“You need not be afraid of it. It is not only a wonderful sweetener—it is also a powerful prophylactic. It acts like an atoxyl that would kill with extraordinary rapidity any pathogenic organisms in the system. I look forward to trying it as a remedy for Sleeping Sickness, Yellow Fever—any of the tropical diseases carried by insects which inject death-dealing bacteria—trypanosomes—into our blood by their bites. My dear”—she quivered—“I believe I hold here one of the greatest discoveries that has ever been made in prophylactic medicine!”

They sweetened their coffee—each with a tiny pellucid crystal.

“It is just like real sugar,” she said dreamily, “not harsh like saccharine. My dear”—his eyes grew narrower—“I do believe you are right. I am so proud of you.” She ended with a little contented sigh which was half a laugh, and looked round the restaurant, which was by this time gradually becoming empty and wondered whether anyone else there looked out upon their worlds with so supreme a sensation of satisfaction and fulfilment as she. What fools they had been!

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The Professor also finished his coffee and leaned back in his chair, looking



round the room with a sudden sensation of discomfort. He had just thought again of the Blue Cockroach—the reason he had thought of it was that he had suddenly experienced, as it were, a return of the sensation which came over him at the moment it bit him. It was, however, only momentary, though, casually glancing at his hand, it seemed as if the little puncture were more visible than it had been.

And then a remarkable thing happened. He turned again to Pamela and saw her with new—or rather with old—eyes. He found her eyes fastened upon him with a mingled expression of apprehension and curiosity, and as he returned her gaze she blushed vividly. He felt strangely uncomfortable, and without any conscious volition on his part he found himself going rapidly over in his mind their conversation of the previous hour. It was surely waste of time to orate for an hour to this dull but worthy person, upon a subject which could have no interest for her and of which she could not possibly understand a single word. He was dissatisfied with himself, and naturally blamed her vaguely for his dissatisfaction and discomfort.

“Well!” he said, “it has been very pleasant seeing you again, Pamela. We must—er—not let it be so long again—before . . .” His stereotyped phrases lost themselves in embarrassed silence.

He asked for the bill. It seemed to him rather excessive. However, just for once...

Pamela had not ceased looking at him. She was puzzled; it seemed to her as if a newly opened door had been quietly but relentlessly shut in her face. The Professor certainly had aged a good deal since she saw him last; she had not noticed it before. An uncomfortable sensation crept over her that she had been expansive beyond warrantable limits with this grave grey man, and she felt a little hot under an impression that she had allowed the conversation to stray beyond what was quite seemly and decorous—at her age. She was rather relieved that he seemed in a hurry to get away. She had all an intelligent woman’s horror of an anti-climax.

An hour later she was in the train. At that moment the Professor laid down his pen in his study and looked before him out of the window. The same thought struck both of them simultaneously.

“What fools we were!”

. . . . .

*“Now whether there be truth or no in that which the native Priests do aver, I know not, nor may I make more curious enquiry, but if it be indeed the fact that the sting of divers of their Flyes do engender Passions as of Love, Hate, and the like, then the matter is curious and worthy of enquiry, but such as I did make enquiry of did postpone me with shrewd cunning and avoiding answer, nor would they be come at to speak further upon it at that or any other time.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> “The True Accompt of the Travels into Distant Lands of the learned Doctor Franzelius Bott, wherein many curious Customs and Wisdom of the Inhabitants are truly set down.” (Leyden: 1614, p. 117.)