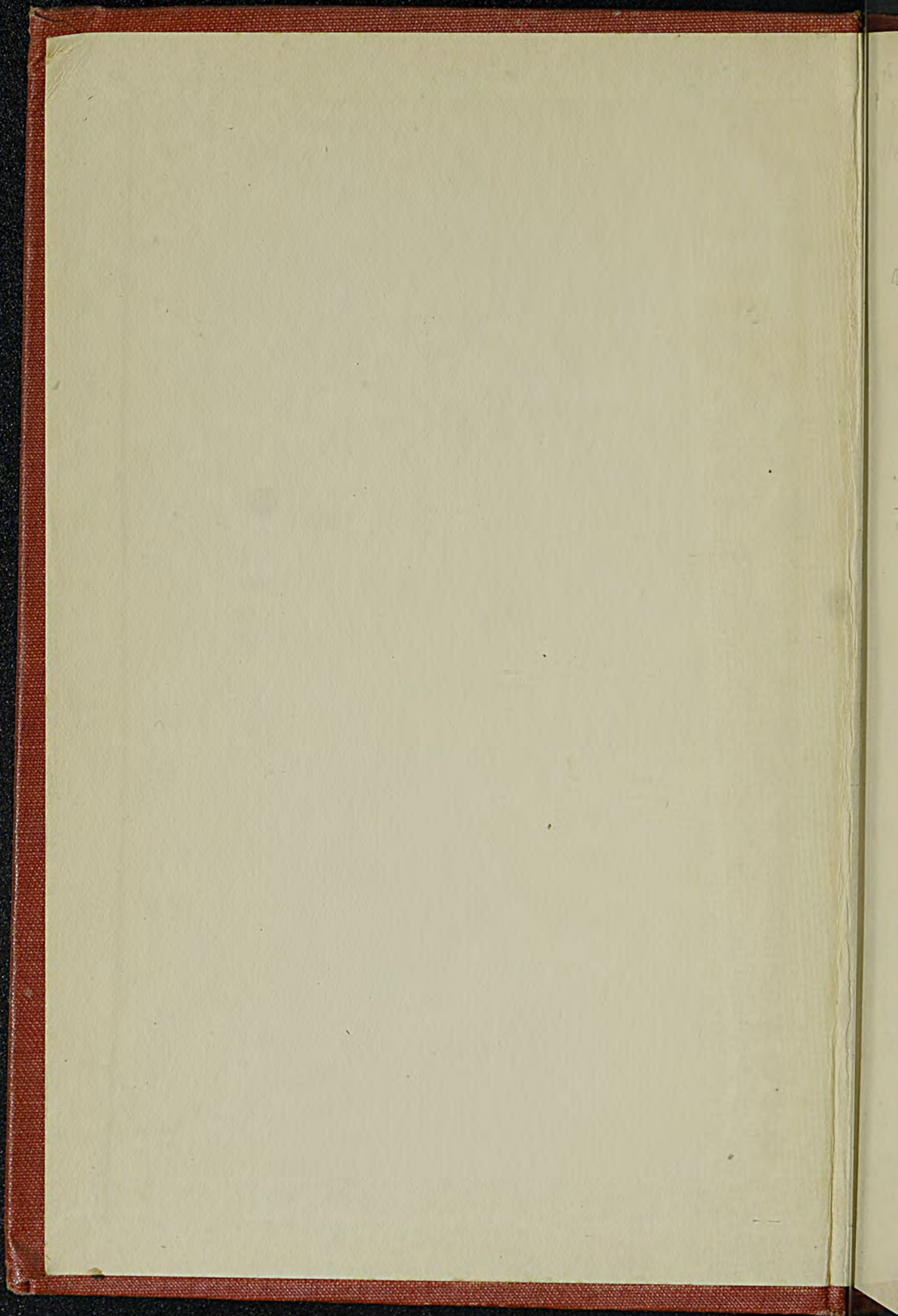




*For the Defence*







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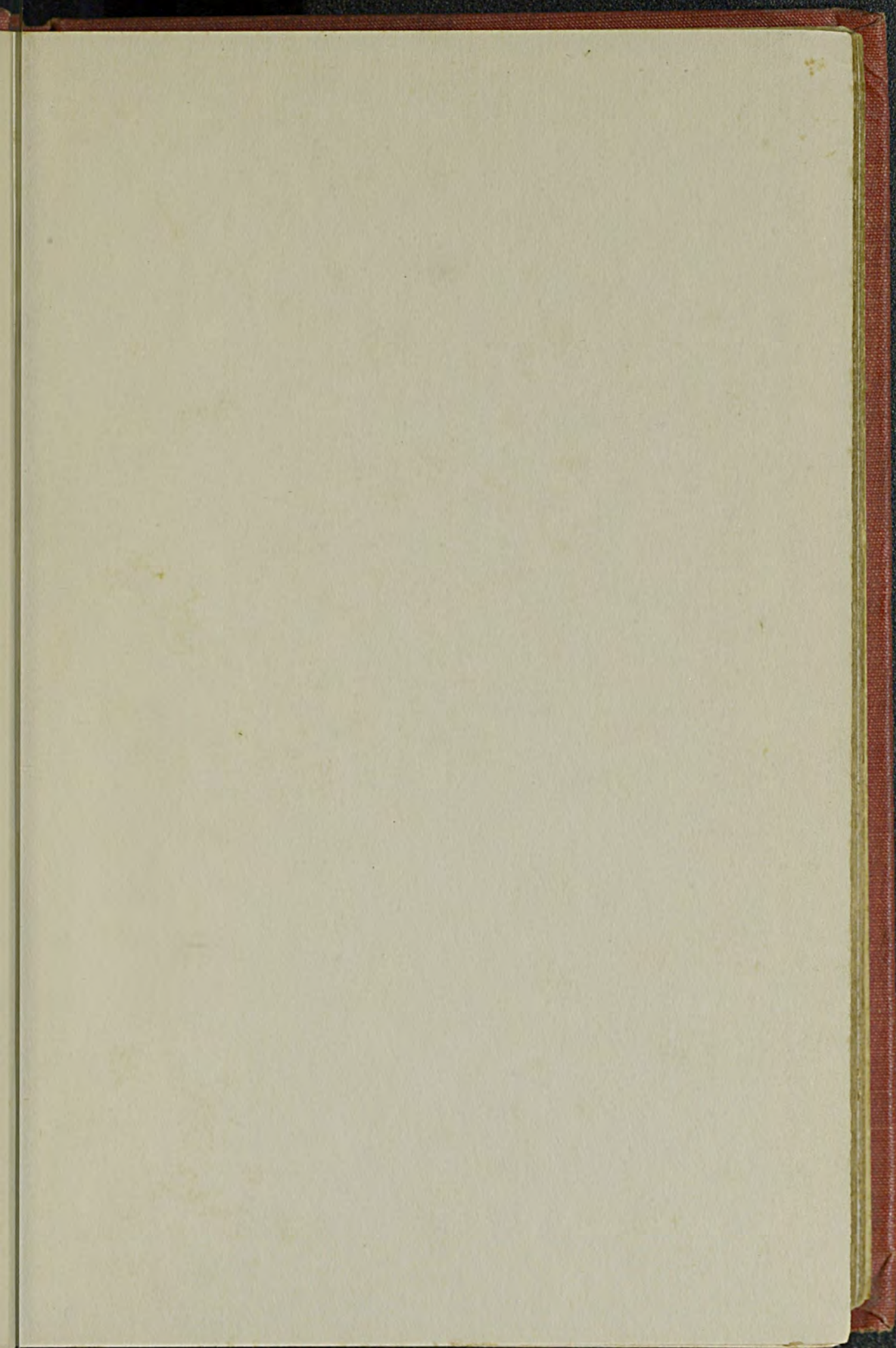
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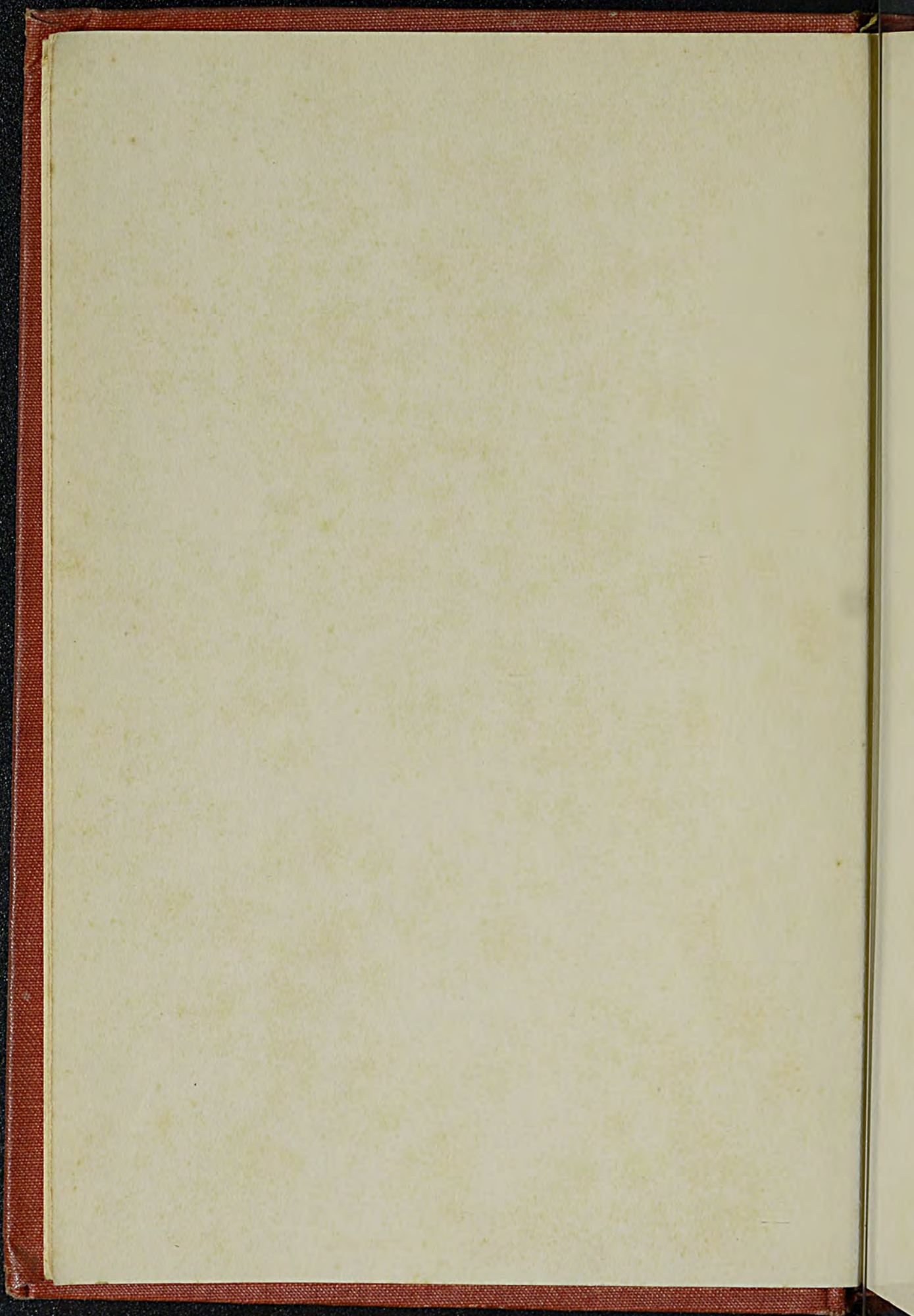


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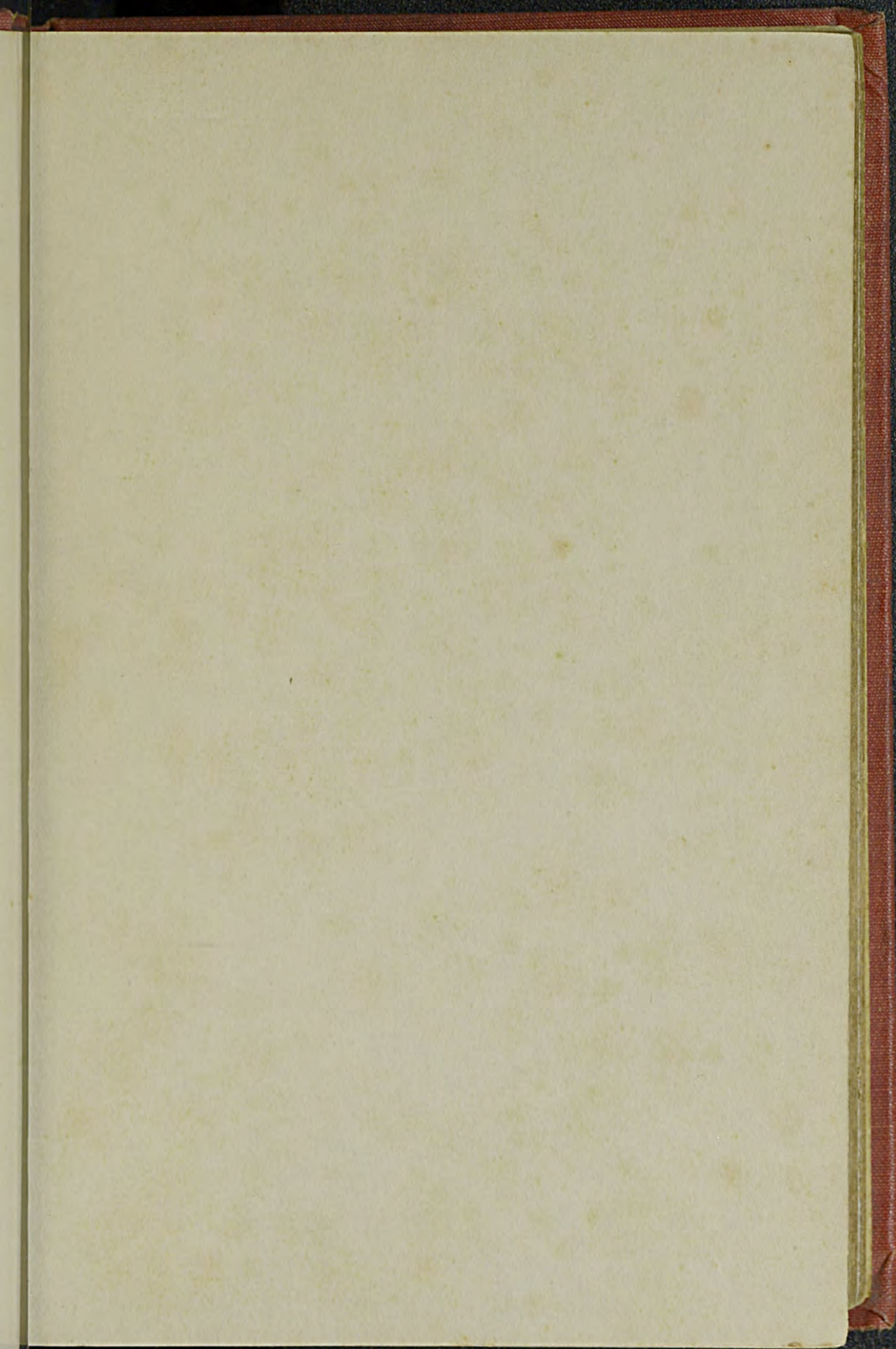




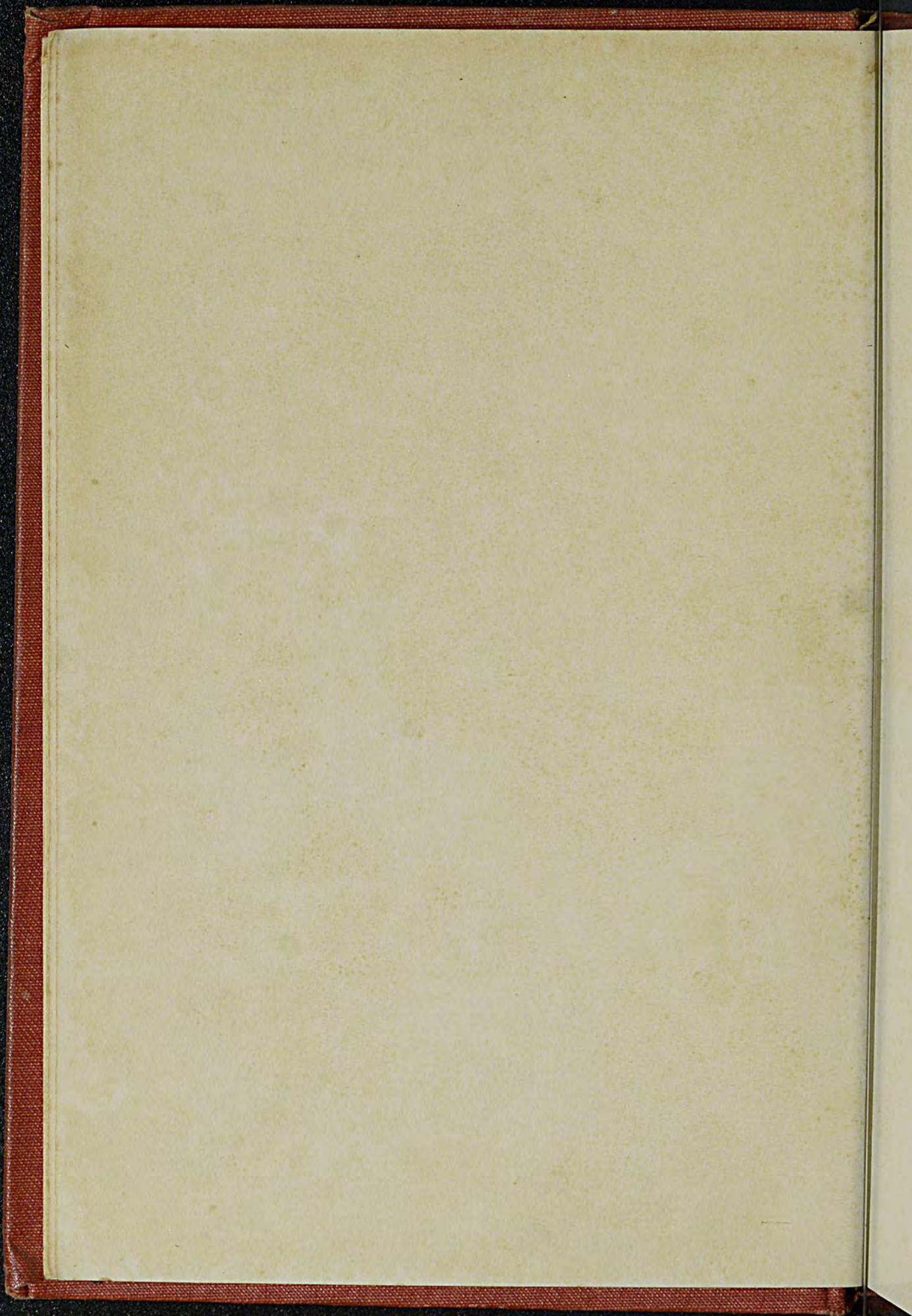




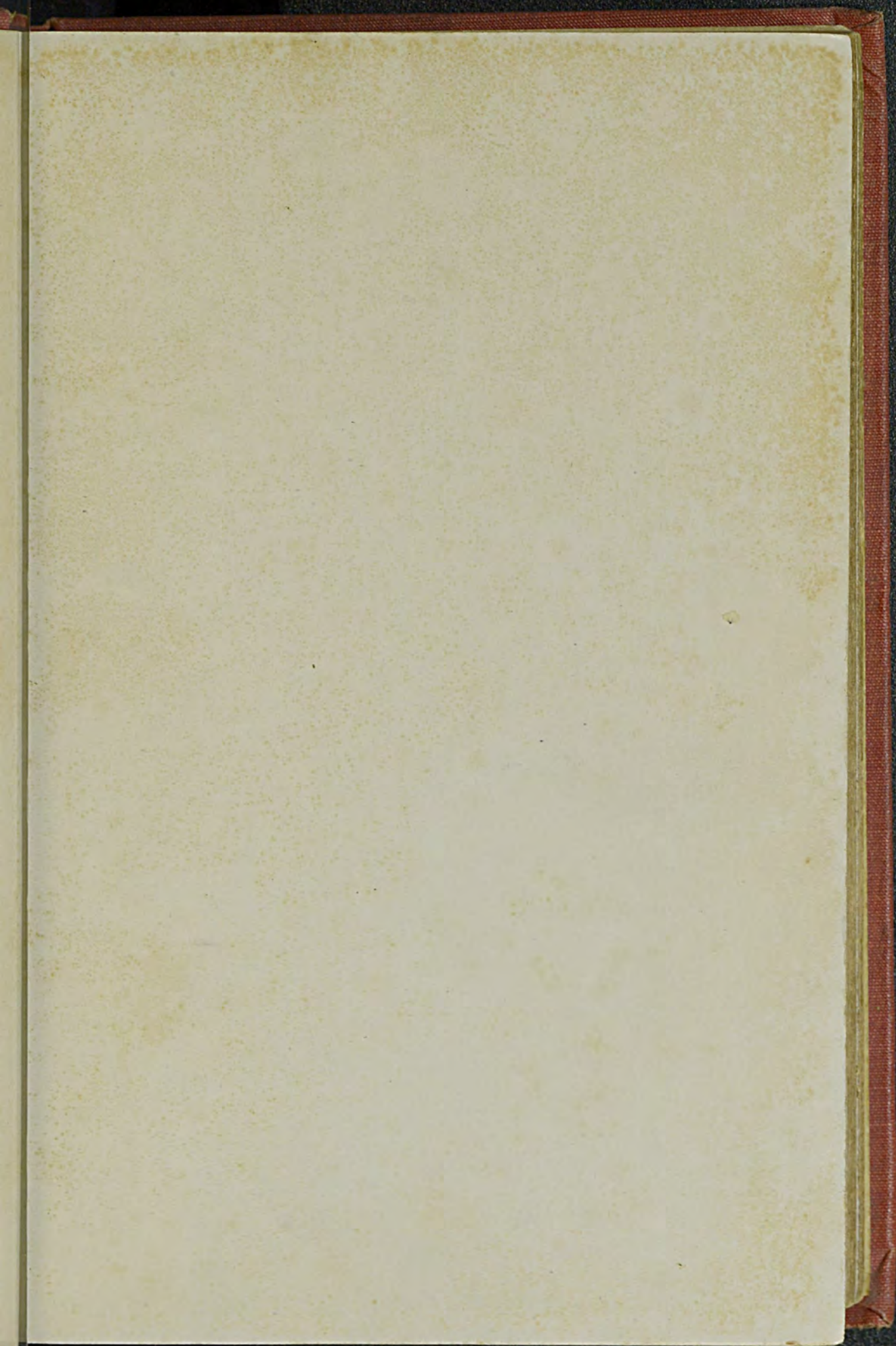




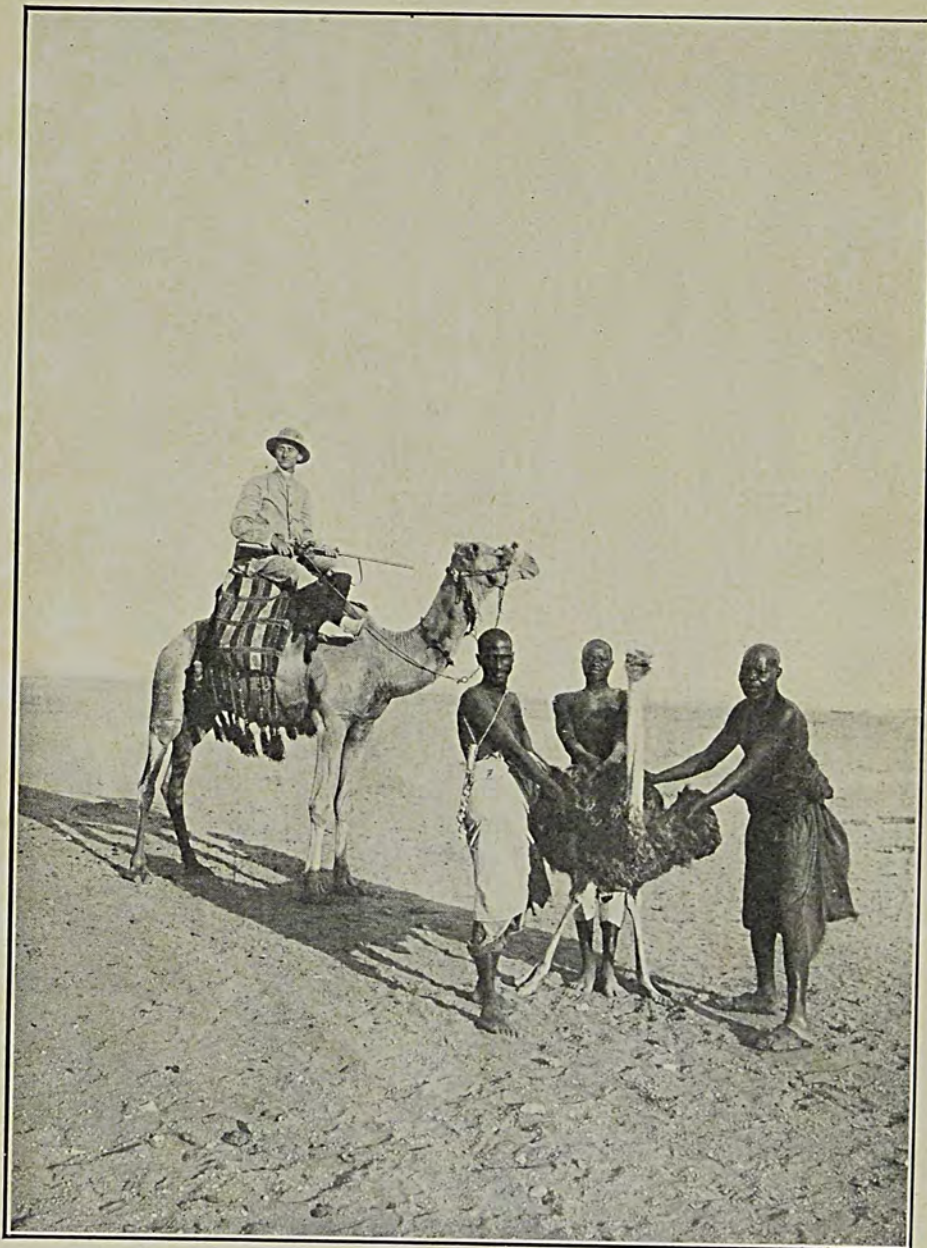












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# THE OSTRICH

FOR THE

# DEFENCE

BY

WILLIAM H. HILE

BOSTON

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1912



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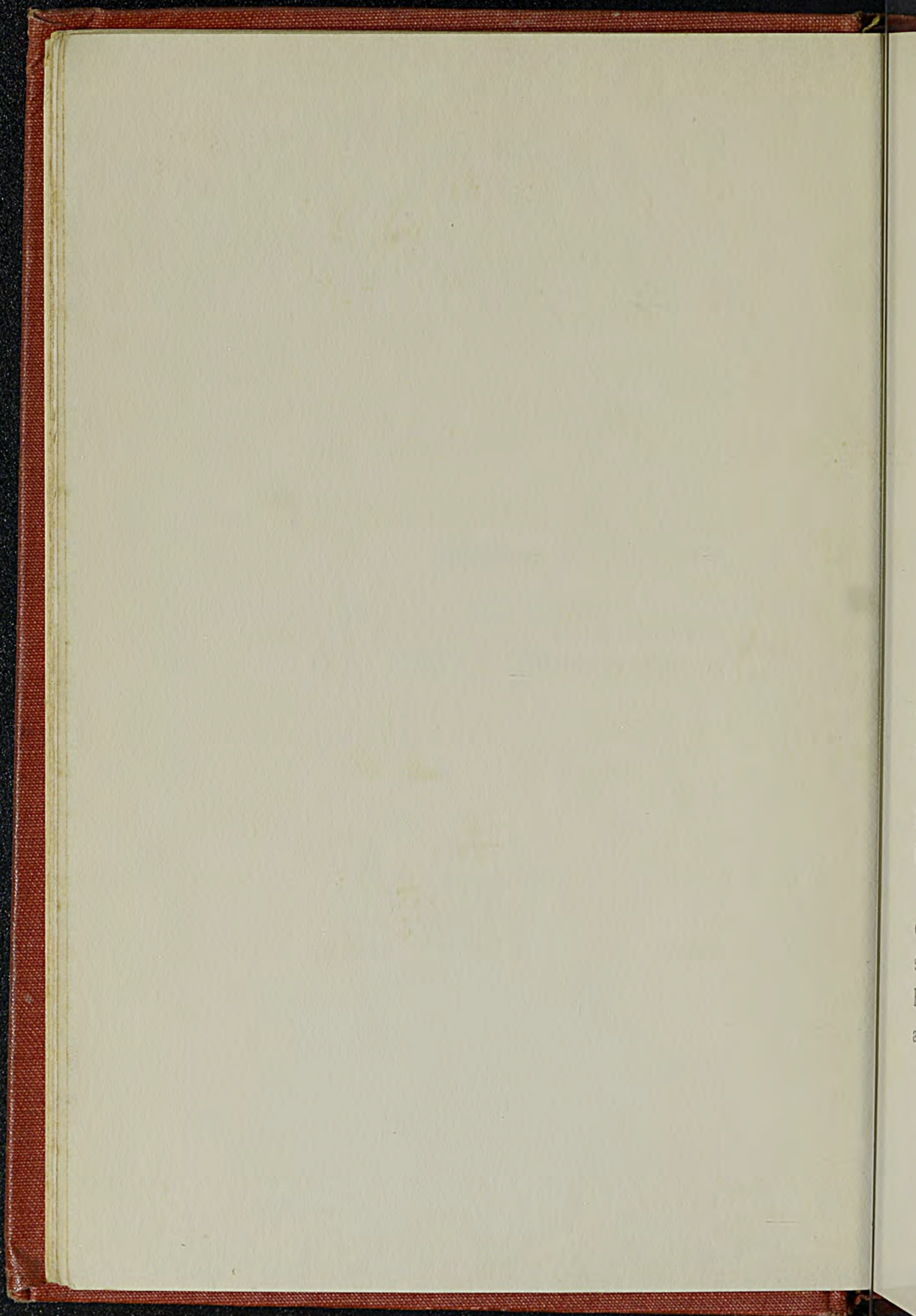
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*To My Friend*

THE EMINENT MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY PROFESSOR  
WITH WHOM I TRAVELLED OVER THE WORLD  
STUDYING THE PROBLEMS OF GEOLOGY AND OF MEN







## PREFACE

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THE following pages have been written that those who read them may be both entertained and drawn closer to the increasing number of men and women who have found co-operation to be "The Lighted Way" to a true freedom of living.

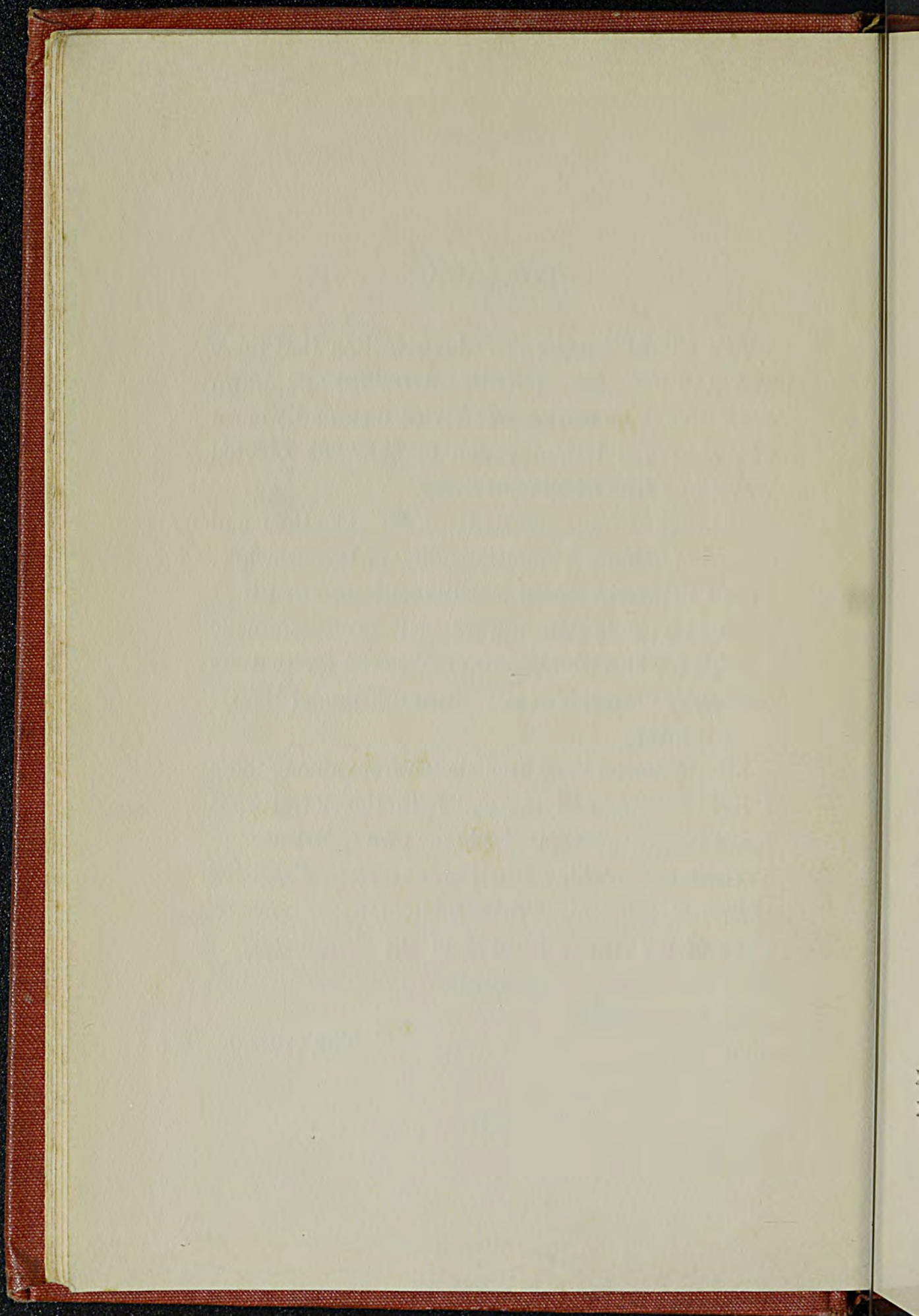
Although I have devoted considerable time and service to gaining an understanding of this principle, I shall be amply repaid for all that it has cost if so much as a single step forward shall have been made possible for him who longs to realize the joy that accompanies harmonious work with others and the reward it brings.

My characters have been chosen from among those I have known, and the action in the narrative is based largely upon episodes in my own experience.

These pages will, I trust, also serve to dispel the charge of being mysterious brought against me by some of my friends because of the silence which I have maintained concerning my frequent journeyings around the world.

THE AUTHOR.





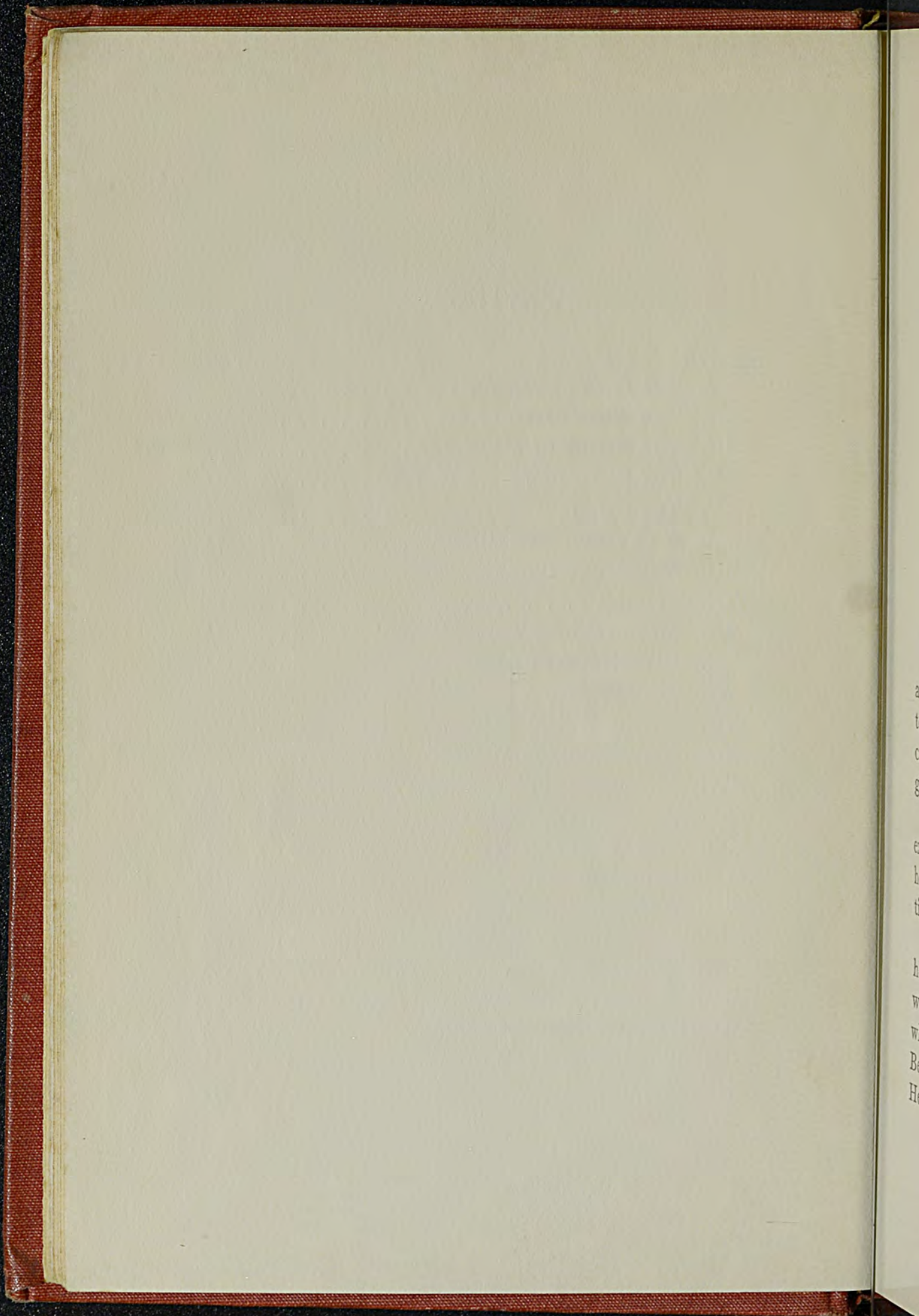


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# THE OSTRICH

*FOR THE DEFENCE*

## I

### THE CALL OF THE AGES

It was a day anachronous in Palestine, when tourist and Turk alike kept under cover, leaving the muddy, torrent-stricken streets to stray beggars, barefooted camel drivers and an occasional Moslem guard, hugging the building walls as he strode past.

Peter Stuyvesant Rutledge, sitting with his feet extended before a small open fire in the lobby of a hotel at Jerusalem, found the psychology of this particular morning distinctively oppressive.

Sailing from New York on his thirtieth birthday, he had arrived in Jerusalem after a novel and somewhat adventurous six months' tour of the East during which his companion, for the most part, had been a Bedouin guide, and his method of locomotion a camel. He was clear-eyed and sun-tanned, so brown as to



## THE OSTRICH

almost outrival the bronze-faced Arab who had accompanied him.

Following a breakfast of grapes, rolls and black coffee, the downpour in the streets, unexpected after so many glorified days in Palestine, had given him the blues, which in the temperamental so often induces a sense of impending events. Inherently an optimist, for the first time in his life he was unable to shake off a premonition that something unusual was about to occur. What it was he could not guess, and it annoyed him. He yawned; he rose from his chair, and with hands thrust deep in his pockets, strode up and down the hall; he sent a little Arab boy scurrying out into the rain to fetch cigarettes; he read the week-old papers lying about; he stared out of the windows at the sappy and bedraggled looking passers; and finally he went back to his seat by the blaze. There he had settled down to his tobacco and book in gloomy silence when the sight of a woman's figure, clad in a gray travelling gown, entering from the corridor, brought him to his feet with an exclamation of boyish surprise and delight.

"Agatha!"

The woman, who had instantly caught sight of him, came swiftly forward, stretching out both slim, white hands toward his brown ones.

"It's Peter, bless my soul! Did you drop from the clouds?" and Agatha Van Siddons, his god-mother, and the woman who, since his mother's



## THE CALL OF THE AGES

death when he was a baby, had filled Lucia Rutledge's place as few women could have done, beamed a joyous and affectionate greeting upon him.

He hastened to draw another seat up to the fire.

"I got in from Damascus, last night," he said. "And you—"

"Alicia and her father are with me."

"What luck!" he cried.

"Ann and I met them while shopping in Naples and as we all meant to see Gethsemane and the Sepulchre, we came on together."

"Ann"—he looked puzzled.

"Ann Newman," she replied. "She's a New York state girl of German parentage who has been studying pianoforte in Berlin. After one or two public performances there, the papers mentioned her as 'The' Fräulein Newman. Herr Schlafler handed her over to me as a sort of protégée:

"We can teach her no more here. She is the Find of the season. Take her back to New York where your countrymen can bestow on her the praise that her genius deserves,' were his words. That was unbelievable praise from such a famous teacher. But Ann is indeed a remarkable girl.

"Then I met her and loved her for her own sake. I was glad enough to take her with me. She's our own kind, Peter. Her father and mother were of that sturdy descent that caused New York to be named the Empire State.



## THE OSTRICH

“But neither her beauty nor her talents are altogether the reason for her charm. There’s something deeper and more profound than either looks or art in her life, that draws you to her. Her creed embraces the idealism of the altruist and the unselfishness of the true humanitarian. She believes that an inspirational power actuates her, and sometimes when you feel her giving of her best, wakening the recesses of your soul with the divine touch of her fingers, you are convinced that it’s not an obsession, after all.”

Peter had listened in astonishment. Such praise from his conservative godmother was unusual. He knew Agatha to be a social campaigner of many seasons. Her friends were almost as numerous on the Continent as in America, and not infrequently she was royalty’s guest abroad. But she loved virtue, and he knew that Ann Newman must be indeed a remarkable girl.

To him, the coincidence of the meeting seemed almost too strange to be real: to thus discover, in this far corner of the world, a much-loved instructor of years past, who had more than once jeopardized discipline to save him from the results of college escapades; the daughter, with whom he had never ceased to correspond since those same ardent days; and Agatha, whom he began to love when he was a drooly, squally, pink and white specimen of infancy in bib, tucker and knitted socks.

There was a wide difference between him and his



## THE CALL OF THE AGES

godmother. Perhaps fifty, perhaps a little more, she was still slim, well rounded of figure and scarcely touched with age, even in the masses of her sun-colored hair which, with her finely pencilled eyebrows, slender nose and beautiful fingers lent her an unmistakable air of breeding. She had always belonged to the ultra-conservative class and in spite of the publicity which her movements often gained, she hated notoriety with all her soul. Peter often wondered how they had remained such good companions, for in spite of an ease of manner inherited along with the same social status as that of the woman, he was palpably untamed and filled with enthusiasms, ideals and a restless, strident sort of masculine energy much at variance with Agatha's code. Yet a great fondness existed between them, and neither his sister, Helen, nor his devoted old Dad was able to comprehend the depths of his nature as did Agatha.

At last they were interrupted by the advent of a gray-eyed slip of a girl and a pleasant-faced, scholarly-appearing, oldish man, both of whom halted in amazement at beholding Peter.

The latter's pleasure at seeing the new-comers was not to be mistaken. Since freshman days, a dozen years back, he had been fond of Alicia Seabury. Once, after a particularly wonderful performance of the divinely gifted Melba, in "Faust," his overwrought emotions had found expression in a



## THE OSTRICH

marriage proposal which the nicely balanced Alicia had declined with a tact so subtle that Peter completely failed to understand how well she understood him.

As he gave his hand to the girl, drinking in the gay raillery that cloaked her surprise and turned to greet Professor Seabury, Peter felt that he had quite forgotten his premonition of a previous hour.

Then, while he stood chatting with these friends, his glance, directed over Alicia's shoulder, took in the figure of a girl descending the stairway in the gloomy corridor, and unconsciously his attention was arrested by a haunting sweetness about her face and the gleaming shadows of the hair above it. Without realizing it, his eyes followed the course of her slender figure across the room to where Mrs. Van Siddons still sat, just beyond them.

"Ah, you have yet to meet Ann!" cried Alicia, suddenly, her eyes following his mystified gaze. "Has Mrs. Van told you of her wonderful performances in Germany, to which she summoned the lame, the halt, the blind, and the little children from the streets, while smart Americans, and music-loving Germans of the better class had the choice of staying away or mingling with the great unwashed? It must have been rich, though it seems perfectly typical of Ann."

Then he heard Agatha's voice:

"Peter, here is some one I want you to know and



## THE CALL OF THE AGES

be very nice to." He smiled as he covered the few steps between them.

"This is Peter Rutledge, Ann dear." The girl bowed.

Peter looked into her uplifted eyes. He had never seen a woman so beautiful, with such an exquisite symmetry of face and form. Her hair was brushed straight back, a radiant mass of copperous silk which, even amid the sombre tones of the room, seemed to catch and retain the flickering lights of the feeble hearth-blaze. The contour of her face—a perfect Mona Lisa type he thought—was enhanced by the velvety softness of her skin, a delicately chiselled nose and an incarnadined mouth with a dazzling hint of a droop at one corner of the lips.

He sought to conceal his admiration with an assumed lightness of speech:

"They say you have dared to set Americans in Germany by the ears with a new kind of charity, Fräulein?"

"Ann's playing long ago would have made her the favorite of royalty had she not insisted upon lavishing her talent upon the people of the highways and byways instead of upon their royal highnesses," put in her chaperone, affectionately.

"You have your defenders. Knowing them well, I am ready to do anything—even implore you—for the privilege of enjoying your gift," he said, his eyes still fixed upon the girl.



## THE OSTRICH

"Perhaps I will play for you to-night," she replied. "But you must not call it a gift. It is only a loan—this power to closely touch the hearts of others. Do not think me a poser because I choose to play to the beggar as well as to the rich," she added, earnestly. "I would not have you misunderstand. Such a loan as mine is either a power for good or for evil, and I feel that I can do the most good, and bring the most happiness into the world by sharing it with the poor, the unfortunate, and those whose lives are seldom made brighter by music. I have this loan to answer for, to develop, and to hand on to others in the most helpful way possible."

As the girl ceased speaking a tense silence, for a moment, pervaded the group. Then the tact of the oldest woman came to the rescue of these two young people, and with a deft interruption and a renewal of her half-bantering air, Mrs. Van Siddons appropriated Peter again, while Alicia Seabury drew her arm through that of Ann and moved away with the latter across the room.

Late that afternoon all gathered in the music-room of the hotel where Ann was to play. The rain had ceased. A pallid opalescent glow, already merging into twilight shadows, hinted at the fall of evening. This sudden, soft beautifying of the day after hours of sodden street and sky turned the conversation upon the charms of the East and the multifold monuments and historic spots in Jerusalem, sacred even



## THE CALL OF THE AGES

to the tourist, because of their claimed association with the memory of Christ.

Each member of the party had traversed the narrow streets and environs of this world Mecca, drinking in the inspiration of that hallowed atmosphere which, for ages past, had pervaded sepulchre and mosque alike, and where, amid the ever-changing, ever-restless, cosmopolitan throng of peoples, the Ethiopian and the flowing-robed dweller of the desert mingled side by side with the graceful Greek, the Armenian, the Russian and the Jew. All had visited the Holy Sepulchre, and regardless of the doubt cast upon the authenticity of its sacred traditions, each, for a time at least, had been thrilled by that religious fervor which yearly thronged the streets of Jerusalem with a host of pious pilgrims.

As the twilight deepened, an uplifting of soul not unlike that roused by the charm of a master's brush or the silences of a cathedral nave settled itself upon each one present. Then trembling waves of melody flooded the room as Ann, having taken her seat at the piano, touched the first chords of Liszt's "Love Dreams" in A-flat major. Each listener felt himself drawn to the borderland of those realms in which it was plain that Ann's spirit dwelt when such floods of passionate harmony gave expression to her genius.

As Peter sat enthralled by the exquisiteness of the interpretation, a strange thing happened. At first



## THE OSTRICH

faint and far off, then gradually coming nearer until they seemed to fill the whole room, angelic voices took up the words of the piece that the girl was playing and wove into loveliness of melody a twofold intensity of emotion. Amazed, he scanned the faces of the others. All eyes were focussed upon the player. Evidently, he alone heard the singing.

Suddenly Peter felt that a mysterious, spiritual force was translating itself from the girl's soul to his. Those angel voices—might they not be the voices of her deep consciousness speaking to him! He was spell-bound. Yet impressed though he was, he did not realize that the influence of that hour and what it held was to change his whole being, that the music and words of that song were to remain engraven upon his memory for all time:

“Oh love, Oh love, as long as e'er you can;  
As long as yet you may!  
Oh love, Oh love, as long as yet you may;  
As long as yet you may!  
The hour will come—the hour will come  
When you at graves shall weep, some day.  
The hour will come when you at graves shall  
weep, some day.”

As she ceased playing, intense stillness pervaded the room. The others now realized that something unusual was occurring. The girl's spiritual magnetism thrilled all. Her music had brought tears to every eye.



## THE CALL OF THE AGES

With her fingers inert in her lap, Ann turned slightly in her seat so that she faced Peter. The others found themselves looking at her profile—a cameo in ivory and rose. To Peter the inspirational power shining in her dark, lustrous eyes seemed to pervade her head as with a halo. It was as if some deeper force had taken possession of her—a force not unlike that which must have inspired Raphael in his portrayal of the transfiguration.

He could only stare into the widely distended pupils before him, his fingers pressing the arms of his chair until a line of white grew under each of his nails. Every muscle and nerve of his body was rigid. Alicia, who had been leaning forward, remained poised and listening in that attitude. Mrs. Van Siddons, seasoned materialist and woman of the world though she was, found herself breathless in the thrall of the girl, while the older man, leaning back motionless in his chair, seemed to have lost consciousness of all save what was now transpiring. Shadows from the dying embers in the fireplace, as they flickered upon the walls in quick irregular movements, accentuated the stillness. A breathlessness seemed to have gathered itself there.

Suddenly Ann began to speak:

“A voice from the infinite calls to thee, Peter Rutledge, a power mightier than thought, more compelling than life, or death or love. It summons thee to thy destiny through these mortal lips.



## THE OSTRICH

“A mighty task is laid down for thee. In its performance thou art to be an ambassador only, through whom this Call of the Ages is to work out its purpose.

“Heed this then: Seek the truth! Give all that thou art to the search! Forego all thy present pleasures! Abandon all the accustomed idlenesses of thy life! Merge self in effort!

“Henceforth thou art to be dedicated to a new era in which the doctrine of man’s brotherhood and the Golden Rule are to bind men’s hearts and sway their purposes and in which the religion of the Nazarene, stripped of superficialities and the veneer of dogma and ceremonial, shall guide the world.

“Search everywhere! Study men! When the time is ripe for fulfilment, thou shalt understand. Then will the Call of the Ages speak through thee. Thou shalt be its servant and mouthpiece. Men hearing its voice through thy lips, shall understand.

“Then shall the pathways of the future meet; a new world-kingdom shall spring up and flourish. Truth and equity between men shall triumph, for man is to know the reality of peace and good will to all.

“It is to be the era of co-operation of thought and action. Those who heed its call shall become mightier than potentates and rulers.

“This sign is given to thee in thy task: Study the ostrich—the mighty desert bird!

“The spirit now speaking to thee, shows me a sacred



## THE CALL OF THE AGES

scroll, and as it unfolds I see upon it the likeness of this mysterious bird, and beneath a message reads: '*The Ostrich is the Key to the future Development of all Mankind.*'

"The spirit has spoken! It is thus decreed for thee. It is Destiny. Seek not to shun its summons. Escape is impossible. If thou shirk the task, oblivion will engulf thee."

As the girl ceased speaking, Peter felt a revolution of mind and soul going on within. Each sentence as it fell from Ann's lips had added to a new motive force that now drove the blood racing through his arteries and seemed suddenly to have illumined all the hidden places within him. The message, a little complex and unreal to the others, seemed to him a divine injunction. He questioned its portent no more than he doubted his existence.

The ensuing hush was again broken by the girl's voice, this time quite natural in tone, but clearly denoting perplexity:

"What has happened?" As if suddenly propelled to life, Mrs. Van Siddons rose from her seat, hastily crossed the room, and gently placed an arm around Ann's shoulder.

"You have been talking of strange things, my dear," was all she could find to say for the moment. The girl looked at her puzzled.

"We are none of us quite sure what you meant. I think that you are overwrought."



## THE OSTRICH

Then Peter spoke:

"You have given me a message, Fräulein, the strangest message in the world."

Ann rose, and disregarding the older woman's solicitude, took the chair beside Peter.

"Tell me all that has happened," she commanded. He repeated, almost word for word, her mystical utterances, also telling her and the others of the angel voices and the verse they sang while she played. Far from showing surprise, when she had grasped the full import of his words, she said:

"Is it then so strange? I have always felt that a power greater than my conscious self inspired my playing. Might not that same power speak through my lips to you?"

"But the ostrich?" he interposed, "what has that to do with it all?"

"That is the riddle which you must solve," she answered.



## II

### THE SHEIK'S REVELATION

A CERTAIN finality in Ann's reply caused Peter to look searchingly into her face. At once he understood that she regarded the message as a sacred injunction, the fulfilment of which lay upon him, alone.

"Shall you turn sociologist?" asked his godmother, laughingly.

Before he could reply, Professor Seabury spoke:

"It's plain that Fräulein Newman was inspired by a psychic force for which neither science nor religion has yet been able to satisfactorily account. The world is constantly receiving fresh evidences of such phenomena. We no longer ridicule them, for we now feel certain that, to a degree, they influence human affairs. The main question is: what weight shall we give them?"

"Let Peter confer upon his misgivings, if he has any, the benefit of the doubt. Let him go ahead. No harm can be done. This injunction may indeed lead to the beginning of a world upheaval. We are coming to a new order of affairs. Far-sighted students believe that its advent is close at hand.



## THE OSTRICH

Great opportunities have been born of incidents which seemed insignificant at first, because men failed to divine their deeper potency. Belief is what we all need, belief in ourselves and our purposes."

"It rests with Mr. Rutledge to determine whether the message has struck a responsive chord in his heart," said Ann.

"I shall assuredly determine how much it all implies, no matter how great the cost may be," was Peter's answer.

"But how can you do that?" broke in Alicia. "Aren't we taking Ann's words all too seriously? Aren't we making too much of them, as if a great deal depended upon this message? Isn't it all being made too significant to you?"

Peter spread out his hands in mock gravity:

"Here entereth our little skeptic. Weren't you impressed?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, "I don't think anyone could have listened to Ann and doubted what she was saying was out of the ordinary. But for all that I'm not imaginative enough to accept a mission and give my entire life to it without something very definite upon which to base my resolves."

"To me, nothing could be more definite," said Peter. "Fräulein herself doesn't understand the full nature of what she has revealed. None of us do. But just now it seems to me as if I had been pledged to a lifelong search for truth. The obligation



## THE SHEIK'S REVELATION

is as binding as if the President of the United States had sent for me and put me under oath to undertake an important task for my country. Indeed, it seems as if this were a cause even higher than that, for it promises the betterment of all mankind."

Alicia was silent.

"Well said," came the voice of Professor Seabury. "Why not begin your self-imposed mission at once? Cross over into Africa—you are already here in the old world—and investigate the ostrich. We will all go with you, and while you are finding out what the bird possesses that may aid you, we will explore the Nile country."

The suggestion was approved by all, and before "good-nights" were exchanged it had been decided to start for Egypt the following day.

Arriving at Port Saïd, the five friends proceeded by boat to Ismailia, and thence by train to Cairo where, for a week, numberless excursions were made in and around the city, Peter, with an Arab guide, conducting the three women and sometimes the Professor through the bazaars, flower-shops, mosques, and the more remote quarters of this strangely fascinating and exotic metropolis. There were trips to the Pyramids and the Palace Gardens of Gîza, a visit to Mohammed Ali's mosque on one of those nights of Ramadân, when a vast throng of grotesquely-robed and bizarre dervishes wakened the spaces of this beautiful, high-minaretted sanctuary with their



## THE OSTRICH

wild noises and gyrations. There were frequent spectacles of Allah's devotees marching in procession through the streets, and lastly the ceaseless and ever-changing panorama of that restless horde of eastern peoples, among whom always predominated the burnoused, dusky-skinned Bedouin, his face touched with the wildness of the desert and betraying beneath the veneer of dignified bearing the fanaticism of the fatalist.

Peter with his trained mind and keen acumen gained much that was new—he had once before been in Africa—from the scenes and incidents of that week, but more than any acquisition of knowledge, he recognized a new incentive to effort growing up within him which spurred him on like the touch of a magic wand. He began to realize, too, that the proximity of Ann was a further stimulus. He had not as yet analyzed his feelings towards her, but he knew that, if only because of the strange command laid upon him through her lips, she would always remain a person of more than ordinary importance in his career. That was inevitable.

During the week of excursions he made plans to go farther into the southwest where, he learned, the ostrich had its habitat and was bred in captivity. But before he did so, an unusual episode occurred that, for the time being, changed his intentions.

With Abou Halfa, a young, native guide whom Peter had chosen for his unusual intelligence, he



## THE SHEIK'S REVELATION

started, one night, for a somewhat notorious café near the Esbekiya Gardens where it was reported that a Dervish of the desert was creating a sensation with his seemingly incredible, sleight-of-hand tricks. Abou Halfa's warning to restrain all curiosity, no matter how unusual an occurrence might seem, had prompted Peter to slip a well-proportioned revolver into his jacket pocket before starting out.

The café was situated a little way up a narrow street which led off the Gardens. The darkness of the place was too much, even for the dignity of Abou Halfa, for he cursed roundly several times as they stumbled along toward the dimly lighted entrance. As the guide finally pushed open the door of the café and they strode through the narrow passage leading into the broad courtyard, Peter was conscious of a rush of air in which the aroma of incense mingled with the fumes of hashish smoke.

A good-sized crowd of men with a sprinkling of women and girls, most of whom were either smoking or drinking, were clustered about the numerous tables in the tiled area. The place resembled the ordinary Cairo café except that in the centre a considerable space had been left vacant. Besides those at the tables, a dense group of turbanned Arabs squatted on the floor a short distance from, and facing the central space where sat the Dervish.

Fantastic shadows from a flaring torch fixed upright in the floor played about this strange creature



## THE OSTRICH

who, as Peter entered, was leaning over the burning coals of a brazier in front of him, stripped of his scarlet burnous, bareheaded, and naked to the waist. Peter could easily count every rib in the man's emaciated figure. From the depths of a gray, wispy tangle that entirely covered his face in gorilla fashion, the eyes of the Dervish, whenever he glanced round, seemed to burn like blazing lights.

Peter and his guide joined those sitting on the floor, Peter settling himself rather uncomfortably on the tiles beside a giant Arab who, from his bearing and the texture of his garments, was evidently a person of consequence.

Abou Halfa had barely time to light a cigarette when the figure in the centre, unfolding itself, and swaying erect from side to side, began a series of contortions which seemed to jerk and tear at the snake-like form until each separate cord and muscle quivered.

Instantly every eye was turned toward the man, but as the gyrations continued, the interest of the spectators wandered and the murmur of conversation again rose. Just as Peter realized that in this whirling dance he was witnessing mere preliminaries, he saw the giant sheik beside him start and quickly raise his head.

The magician had halted and was bending down before the burning brazier. Suddenly he thrust a claw-like hand forward, seized a handful of red-hot



## THE SHEIK'S REVELATION

coals in his fingers, stretched out the glowing lumps for all to see and then, one by one, placed them in his open mouth.

Instantly murmurs of astonishment filled the room. But they had hardly ceased when the onlookers beheld the hairy visage with its glittering eyes begin to revolve on the long, thin neck, first to one side and then to the other, back and forth for all the world like the head of a wired manikin, and finally, as if having gained sufficient momentum, it suddenly spun round a full half-turn, so that the man's body fronted one way and his face was skewed in exactly the opposite direction. In this hideous position, the head remained fixed for several seconds before it turned back.

Peter had hardly recovered from his amazement at the incredible feat when a youth, naked save for a loin cloth, lithe and beautiful of form, leaped into view from a doorway at one side of the café and joined the conjurer. A gesture of the latter's claws materialized a long, spindle-legged table upon which the young Arab gracefully stretched himself, at the same time ostentatiously placing his right arm so that his wrist rested on a small block that had been fixed to the table when it appeared.

Spreading a cloth over the reclining subject, the conjurer now grabbed from the floor a keen-bladed scimitar of large size, and again threw himself into a series of wild dances, all the while waving the sword



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above his head. An element of madness in the man's burning eyes and fleshless, whirling body caused Peter to reassure himself that his revolver was still handy.

At last in the midst of his neurotic gyrations, the dancer halted abruptly before the shrouded figure, lifted the scimitar above his head, poised it there for an instant, and then brought the sharp edge down upon the spot where the boy's wrist apparently lay upon the block of wood beneath the cloth. Then amid a ghastly silence, the Dervish reached down and drew forth a hand dripping with red.

Murmurs of horror, even from the stoical Arabs, filled the room. A scarlet-cheeked woman, seated just in front of the grewsome spectacle, shrieked and fell to the floor. As her companion, a black-bearded native, was dragging her toward the door, the youth on the table came to life, threw off the covering, and holding up his arms to show that both hands were intact, ran laughing out of the area.

Whirling furiously in ever-widening circles, and still brandishing the bloody scimitar, the semi-nude fanatic now commenced a whining, animal-like chanting.

During the dance preceding the last trick, Peter had twice noticed that the conjurer glared balefully in his direction. Now the man was looking toward him again. For a few seconds an uneasy feeling



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obsessed Peter that perhaps he had been singled out to become the next subject for some such uncanny bit of necromancy as he had just witnessed. But happening to glance at the giant beside him, he saw that a look of cold scorn hardly less forbidding than the glare of the Dervish had settled upon his neighbor's visage. Plainly no love was lost between these two.

The circles of the dance broadened more and more, while the area rang with the throaty noises of the dancer. Suddenly, in the midst of a frenzied evolution, the maniac stopped, lowered his shaggy face, and with weapon upraised and eyes glaring like those of an infuriated rat, made straight for the six-foot Arab beside Peter.

The latter, seeing the look of hate in the magician's eyes and convinced of the man's insanity, was the only one in the room to comprehend instantly the significance of the new move. Thus when the Dervish rushed forward with the huge blade in air, Peter whipped out his revolver, took hasty aim, and sent a bullet into the madman's arm.

As the sword fell clattering to the floor amid the shrieks of the injured victim, confusion woke in the room. Seizing Abou Halfa by the wrist, Peter took advantage of the commotion to gain the street and at once set out for the hotel. But as he emerged into the light of the Esbekiya Gardens, a voice at his elbow said:



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"Effendi has saved El-Hamed's life. Henceforth it is his to command. Effendi shall be rewarded; let him ask what he will."

Turning, Peter found himself looking into the magnetic eyes of his neighbor of the café.

"It is the great sheik who owns much cotton land on the Nile and who is the famed breeder of ostriches," whispered Abou Halfa. Instantly, Peter's interest was roused.

"I should like much to learn about the ostrich. Will El-Hamed teach me?"

"Let effendi accompany El-Hamed to his home where a flock of these wonderful birds now feeds beside the Nile. There he whose life effendi has saved will reveal secrets concerning the ostrich such as are known only to one other person alive. Will effendi come? Let him, then, fix the hour for setting forth."

"We will start to-morrow at noon," said Peter, and he handed the other a card bearing his hotel address.

Two days later after journeying across the delta to a small town a few miles from Alexandria, Peter became the guest of one of the wealthiest sheiks on the lower Nile, a man of much erudition and wide knowledge who, more as a hobby than for profit, maintained a great flock of ostriches on his farm.

When he found that Peter, in spite of his great interest in these birds, refused to accept any as a



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gift, El-Hamed, in deep gratitude for the service rendered him, decided to confer a boon upon his guest such as never before had been extended to white man.

"Listen, effendi," he said, "El-Hamed means to make it possible for you to know all the truth concerning the ostrich and its marvellous possibilities. There are facts about the bird which, if rightly understood and employed, will prove a force of unparalleled future power.

"In past centuries, when strange inhabitants, long since dead, built mighty cities and temples along the banks of the Nile and made great battles near the borders of the deserts to the southward, the ostrich was one of the sacred birds of the land. Before the sway of the renowned Cleopatra, a wonderful queen, Arsinoë by name, governed millions of subjects by the power that went with this bird. This queen often rode through the streets of her capital seated on the back of an ostrich, reputed to stand fifteen feet high, and having feathers that gleamed in the sunlight like the meshes of spun silk. A statue of Arsinoë, mounted upon the sacred bird, has been found erected on Helicon, a range in the ancient Bœotian land of Greece.

"During such shadowy periods as that of the eighteenth dynasty, at a time contemporaneous with the Moses of your Bible, the inhabitants of the then mighty Thebes venerated the ostrich above all other



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animals and many carvings of the bird in stone are to-day found on the walls of the sepulchral chambers near the ancient site of the city.

“But that was not all, effendi. The ostrich feather stood for justice and truth. Justice in those olden times was the balance wherein all actions were weighed. It was as highly prized as it is to-day. The web of the ostrich feather, being of equal breadth and equally balanced on each side of the shaft, fittingly symbolized justice. And from being such a symbol the feather likewise became the token of truth among those old Egyptians. In the hieroglyphic writings many ostrich-feather representations occur. The Nomad of earlier days, and even to-day in some sections of the country to the south, wears the white ostrich plume in sign of victory, and so prized is the feather as a token of triumph that one tribe wears the black plume when the white cannot be obtained. The Somal calls the feather ‘Bal’; the Arab, ‘Rish.’ It is worn in the back part of the hair by the majority of the southern tribes, though each clan has its particular rules as to just how it shall be displayed.

“Of the origin of the ostrich, no one knows. Even before the days of Queen Arsinoë and Moses, ancient writings show that the bird was to be found in the land in great numbers. The mighty warrior, Tristran, had a skin of an ostrich which he claimed to have killed on the Belka close behind the hills of



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Moab. The bird dwells in the steppes of Kordofan on the White Nile, and to the south of Neuwerlandi on the Blue Nile. It is found in the interior along the borders of the Kalahari desert; in Beschari and in Shukurich. The Turkoman knows the ostrich as 'Töje Kushu.'

"Whether in earliest days it lived in the grass veldt or came there only when the barren droughts of the dryer lands drove it forth, is shrouded in mystery. It is looked upon as being essentially the desert bird. Religion, since peoples first dwelt in Africa, has paid the ostrich tribute. Kings, queens, and warring nations have done it reverence. Images of it are found in the ruins of the famous Temple of Karnak and all up and down the Nile region where antiquity was born.

"Out of all this, effendi, it shines clear that the bird is of more than ordinary consequence. El-Hamed knows of the ostrich far better than his brothers of the Nile country. But there is one, a great and all-wise queen, to the south in the Abyssinian land where the waters of the sacred Blue Nile run as a rivulet, who excels all mankind in knowledge of the bird.

"Queen Zar, effendi, knows all. Her wisdom is greater than the wisdom of many ages. She has tamed a horde of subjects who once were wilder than the beasts of the forest. Her knowledge of the deep and hidden mysteries of life surpasses the book



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lore of the most renowned scribes of learning. In breadth of mind and soul she transcends all.

"If effendi would learn the profounder mysteries of the ostrich, let him seek this marvellous queen.

"Since pride prevents effendi from accepting the ostriches which El-Hamed would bestow upon him, let him, then, receive this talisman." The planter took from the bosom of his burnous a tiny silken bag suspended about his neck by a blue cord, drew out of it a ring set with a blood-red stone, and placed the circlet upon one of Peter's fingers.

"This signet will enable effendi to acquire as many ostriches as he may wish from the great queen. She will show him where the birds breed plentifully. Indeed, because effendi wears the talisman, the queen will know of his coming and will be waiting at the borders of her country to welcome him. The hospitality of her land will be offered effendi. He will behold her, upon whose face no white man has ever looked, and into whose land no white man has ever penetrated.

"The talisman will prove his preserver. Let him guard it with care. Without it he would perish ere he found the great Zar. The ring is her signet of friendship sent to El-Hamed long years ago because of the sheik's endeavor to help uplift and better the people of his own race.

"The Arab is poor because he does nothing for himself. His philosophy of life is that of Naishapur's



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poet of eight centuries ago. He is sunk in the folly of fatalism. He has been misled by priests who falsely interpret Mahomet's teachings. But chiefly he is the victim of himself, without purpose and without initiative. El-Hamed has spent many years endeavoring to expose the frauds which the priests are constantly imposing upon his people. But his work has proven fruitless. Twice his life has been attempted by fanatics. He has suffered many persecutions. Yet some day the truth will rise like the morning sun and waken the children of the desert." With a pious movement the old man bowed his head in sadness. Then, looking up again, he proceeded:

"May the blessings of Allah go with effendi. Should he persist in his purpose to learn all the truth concerning the ostrich, he will never regret it."

Later the Arab explained many facts of practical value in rearing the ostrich which, supplemented by a first-hand study of the flock at his farm, furnished Peter with a knowledge of the bird such as few could hope to possess.

"One would hardly think that there could be so much to learn on the subject," he remarked to his godmother after he had rejoined her and the others at Alexandria. "And it seems that I have only made a beginning. I am interested to know how it will end."

They were all sitting at dinner after a day of excursions about the old metropolis. An Arab messenger



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glided across the room and thrust a yellow envelope into Professor Seabury's hands.

"A cable!" cried Alicia.

Tearing open the missive, the older man read aloud:

"Securities threatened by crisis. Start at once. Andrew."

"Sounds serious," said Peter, observing the frown on his friend's face.

"What can it mean?" put in Alicia.

"I'm afraid our vacation is over, little girl. It's important, otherwise your uncle never would have cabled."

The daughter rose and put her arms round her father's neck:

"All right, daddy dear; only don't worry."

"You nice child," said Mrs. Van Siddons. "Ann and I will return with you, for that." Then she added: "What joy it will be to behold a clean bathtub once more, and to be able to go walking without having to dodge beggars at every step!"

"I'm going to join you," said Peter. "There's a boat to-morrow, I believe."

"What, are you homesick too?" asked his god-mother.

"Perhaps," he answered with a grin. "I've some lessons to learn, too. I shall be back again—afterwards."



### III

#### THE BLIGHT OF A PANIC

PETER's decision to return to America was the result of a rapidly crystallizing resolve to sift the strange message of the Ages to the end. He had already learned enough to convince him that it bore more than ordinary significance. His time was his own. At home he would go deeper into the investigation.

"Seek the truth! Search everywhere! Study men! When the time is ripe for fulfilment, thou shalt understand!" Those commands recurred to his mind often.

The next morning, following the usual excitement of embarking for home, he and his friends watched the shores of Africa fade in the soft blue of sea and sky. Then ensued the voyage to Naples, the Azores and across the Atlantic, during which acquaintanceship flourished as it only can on shipboard when the ocean remains constantly sun-kissed beneath cloudless skies. When Sandy Hook was sighted, Peter and Ann were the best of comrades and friends. Only a few hours later his father and sister were welcoming him home from his long absence.



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Thus Peter was at hand to profit by a study of one of the most extraordinary economic dilemmas of modern times, when, the next morning after his arrival, a great financial panic burst over New York. A premonition of this crash had been the reason for Andrew Seabury's summons to his brother in Egypt.

Within an hour the long-impending disaster made itself felt, not only in all sections of Manhattan, but in every great money centre of the world. Bankers, financiers and stockholders hung with feverish interest over the reports that, from time to time, flashed forth from the vortex of war, for all felt that this mighty struggle of the money giants which had at last been loosed, was indeed a warfare.

Never before had there occurred such a mighty avalanche in values. Old line stocks declined until the panic laid hold of great and small alike, and a mad and reckless selling began, which terminated in the most wholesale collapse of holdings on record. Offers of a thousand per cent. for loans went begging. The newsboys, waving scare headlines everywhere, proclaimed the varying fortunes of the battle that raged upon the floor of the stock exchange. Failures of business houses by the score, the closing of the doors of half a dozen banks including the mighty Williams Trust Company, and the mysterious disappearance of its president, two suicides and the prospect of worse to follow because of the ever-increasing shortage of money, had already turned New



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York into pandemonium. The air was rife with wild rumors, one of which hinted at a mighty conspiracy of the "interests" which was generally discredited because of the very audaciousness of its conception.

As Peter rode down town on the second day of this tragic period, he was struck by the tenseness of action and manner that seemed to pervade the thousands upon the streets. He had sensed the advent of the panic from the context of press despatches abroad. His curiosity, now that he came near to the heart of it, quickened into deep interest.

Thus he was doubly pleased upon entering his club to discover Max Reinhart, a classmate of college days, sometimes jestingly referred to by the club members as "The Muckraker," sitting alone by the fireplace in the smoking-room dividing his attention between a plate of pretzels and a cigarette.

Peter was fond of Max. He had secured his admission to this, one of New York's most exclusive clubs. He liked him particularly because of the earnestness which, long since, he had discovered lay beneath "The Muckraker's" accustomed cynicism of manner. Max's views upon many questions of the hour, which during college days Peter had thought rabid and extreme and which he had then felt were the result of egotism rather than of conviction, now deeply interested Peter.

Max's outward response to Peter's unceasing



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friendship was a persistent and mocking skepticism of the other's acts, a continuous fusillade of criticism against a long list of beliefs and institutions with which an environment such as Peter's had been, would naturally keep the latter in harmony. It mattered not to the redoubtable Max that Peter had essayed several declarations of independence in the past. "The Muckraker" took not the least stock in an independence which entailed a compromise, and he mockingly voiced his cynicism on every occasion when he and Peter met.

"Ah, Stuyvie, back again from lotus-eating in the land of Kismet!" he cried, springing to his feet at sight of his friend. "You're just in time to witness the slaughter of the innocents. For it's begun." Then in compliance with Peter's nod of assent at his suggestion, he despatched the servant for scotches and soda.

Peter tossed his coat aside and stretched himself out in a lounging chair, smiling whimsically across at the other.

"Still picking upon your friends," he said, good-naturedly. "What caused the panic, Max?"

"Upon my word, Stuyvesant, you are more like an ingenuous butterfly each year. With New York in the thick of a financial cataclysm, filled with bankrupt business houses, closing banks, not to mention a million or more people who stand to lose their all because of your stock juggler and wholesale gambler,



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and a bread line, daily growing longer, you make your début from foreign lands, through the doors of a highbrow club, from the cushions of an expensive touring car and serenely ask what it's all about! Why, son, a world tragedy is taking place under your nose. The town is a hotbed of sane people gone mad, and if many more of your wildcatting trust concerns nail up their doors, the mob will begin to see red and—God help us then! Values have shrunk a billion dollars. To-day is the last straw. Take a drink, Peter, and think it over," urged the speaker in a mocking drawl as the servant appeared with glasses, decanter and siphon. Then he added maliciously and with a sardonic smile as he turned to light a fresh cigarette:

"At least you appear as if you might wake up, some day."

"I'm surely more interested than you make me out," replied Peter with a frank grin at his companion's bombardment. "Many of my friends, as well as yours, Max, are wavering between the pistol point and poverty to-day. A panic like this means that there's a rotten spot somewhere in our social system. I'm in dead earnest to discover what can make such a horror possible. Leave your denunciation for another day and come down to particulars."

The scorn in the other man's eyes proved his lack of faith in Peter's protestations, but he said:

"Two hours ago I saw a man on a street corner



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opposite one of the barricaded wildcat trust companies take a pistol out of his pocket and send a bullet into his brain. He was a bally coward to do it, for a woman stood right there with him when the thing happened, and a youngster too—the little kid wasn't over four—and the woman fell down on the breast of that bloody thing that had been her love and screamed and screamed until people standing near stopped their ears in horror. But when they took the body down to the station with that woman still clinging to it, crying and sobbing and alternating her caresses between the dead one and the child, a policeman finally found a finger-smooched bank-book in the suicide's pocket showing deposits for three thousand dollars that the poor devil had worked sixteen years to get together. The bank had swallowed his little pile and the cruelty of it went to his head.

"I was on the floor of the stock exchange, yesterday afternoon, too, just before the gong struck for closing, when two guards and three others including myself, struggled for a full five minutes with Bill Atherton—'Big Bill' of the class of '90, you know—before we got him handcuffed and tied up. The guards insisted on putting the twisters on him for fear he might do murder. He was stark mad—bit and clawed and laughed—I wonder if you ever heard a laugh like that—just as if everything inside had caved in and gone to smash. God, I can hear it



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now! And when they finally got him quiet and lugged him off the crowded floor, it was so still there for awhile that you could hear the clock tick.

"You should have seen the mob of men and women, too, fighting and clawing at each other like harpies in their mad rush to get into the different banks before the doors closed!

"The cause of the panic—it's everywhere. It's social greed. It's the rabid craze for acquiring wealth under a system where one's gain is always another's loss. But you will never understand it, Stuyvie. You can't. You weren't brought up that way."

A hint of a frown appeared on Peter's face, but before he could answer he was interrupted by a servant:

"Telephone, sir, in number four."

"Who wants me?"

"A lady, sir."

As Peter rose and went out, Max reached forward and chose a copy of the afternoon edition of the "Daily News" from the pile of papers which the servant had laid on the table. As he glanced over the headlines of the front page, "The Muckraker's" eyes were suddenly caught and held with horror as he read:

"Noted Professor Stricken. World-Famous Teacher of Pierson University said to be dying from Paralysis caused by Shock of financial Losses. Had just returned from Europe. Daughter at Bedside."



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He had barely finished the details of the story when Peter appeared in the doorway.

"Professor Seabury has had a stroke," he cried, tersely. Plainly he had received the news at the telephone. Dropping the paper to the floor, Max sprang forward:

"Come on!" he exclaimed, and in another minute the two friends were breaking the highway speed laws in their haste to reach their old instructor's home.

"Even now Alicia doesn't know what caused it," Ann Newman informed them after Peter had introduced her to Max and she had led the way into the drawing-room. Ann was the first whom Alicia had sent for after her father's seizure. "The professor was sitting in the library"—motioning toward an apartment whose book-filled shelves could be seen through an open doorway—"when he dropped his paper and without a word fell to the floor. The doctor says it's paralysis, that he may improve, but that there is small chance of his ever being well again. He doesn't know any one now, though he did recognize Alicia for a moment."

"Where is the paper that he was reading?" asked Peter.

Ann handed him an edition of "The Transcript" that lay on a table nearby. In startling headlines at the top of the sheet was the announcement of the closing of the Mercer Trust Company. On the same



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page also appeared the news of the failure of Hersey and Weld with an account of the disappearance of John Weld with half a million of the firm's cash.

Peter stared in silence at the page for a moment. Then he shook his head sadly. He knew that Professor Seabury's savings were largely invested in the stock of the Mercer Trust Company and he was aware that Hersey and Weld were the old man's bankers.

"I don't wonder that it proved a shock to him," he said.

Just then Alicia, her cheeks tear-stained, entered the room.

"The doctor thinks he will pull through," she said, giving her hand to each of the new-comers, "but the shock has left him hopelessly shattered. He will never be himself again." Then pointing to the paper in Peter's hand:

"Why should he have taken it so hard! I don't mind being poor, not in the least, but this"—she turned and hid her face in her hands. Ann rose to comfort her but before she could reach Alicia's side, Max had taken one of the weeping girl's hands in his, and was saying:

"Come and sit down, dear. You are fagged out."

Peter was marvelling over the gentleness of "The Muckraker's" voice, when Ann turned again:

"It is terrible," she said, "to think that such evils



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can come to pass. It is terrible that the wrongs of the great can so wreck the lives of the helpless."

She stood where a ray of the afternoon sun glinted amid the burnished threads of her hair. Her eyes, looking before her, were filled with a depth of tenderness and compassion such as Peter knew only the most beautiful in soul could feel for the wrongs and sufferings of others. It suddenly seemed to him as though he understood the softness that had crept into the voice of Max. But his only reply to the girl near him was:

"It shall not always be so. Those of us who are in earnest will help fight against such evils and some day we shall succeed in overthrowing them."



#### IV

#### THE SPIRIT OF MERLE WATER

THE usual racing banter and cynical repartee greeted Peter's ears as he stepped from his touring car to the grassy terrace of the fashionable Merle Water Club on the forenoon of the day of the annual horse races.

It was almost a month since the morning when he had seen Ann Newman off on a visit to her old home in the upper part of the state. A brief missive—her first letter to him—had brought the joyous news that she was now en route to New York and already he was planning to spend the following day in the country with her.

Meanwhile, for the first time since his return from abroad, he had ridden out to Long Island to renew some of his club acquaintanceships and to witness the yearly Merle Water meet, for which the club had long been noted. He was also much interested to learn how the wealthy men and women members regarded the recent panic causes and effects. Even though Max Reinhart put him in the same class with these people, Peter himself knew that he was no longer a worshipper of Mammon. He had a curious habit,



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now, of studying others to know whether they too were learning to sympathize with their less fortunate fellow-beings.

As he was dismissing his chauffeur, he heard a familiar voice saying:

"Why, there's Stuyvie!" and the speaker, a tall, athletic-shouldered girl, and two other women and a man, quickly surrounded him.

"Hello, Mrs. De Pris!" he exclaimed in his cheerful, optimistic voice. Then eying a younger, girl member of the group who kept whacking at her gray riding-skirt with an ivory-handled hunting crop, he remarked:

"Victoria's been placing a bet, I'll warrant."

Miss Merton, the girl referred to, glanced at him quizzically:

"How did you guess?" she asked.

"Dead easy. You're trying so hard to look happy," said Peter.

"I placed a thou' on Nankin. Has she a chance, Stuyvie?"

Peter noted the suppressed eagerness beneath her assumed nonchalance.

"You'd better look out for King Richard. He found a lot of you napping a year ago."

"We were sound asleep," drawled the third woman, the Countess Cranford. "Montie was the only one of us in on the ground floor, and he left even his dearest friends to slumber sweetly on." The dark eyes



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of the speaker turned accusingly to Montague Rensselaer's face.

"I needed the money," grinned the latter youth. Then a second later, catching sight of a new-comer, Rensselaer abruptly detached himself from the group and hastily stepped across the terrace. The others heard him hail an older man, somewhat ponderously making his way toward the club-house steps.

"It's Jed Miller," exclaimed Sally De Pris.

"I wonder why Croesus has deserted his Wall Street citadel to come out here?" queried the countess.

"I have it!" Miss Merton's eyes flashed. "King Richard is his horse. He's entered again, to-day. That's why Jed Miller is here. That's why Montie runs after him. We all wondered what brought Miller here last year. Now I know. It's a shame! Why can't they keep hands off our sports—these money lusters! By and by there'll not be a single chance to win an honest wager, just because such men as Jed Miller load all the dice. First they leave us without a leg to stand on in the stock market and then they strip us at the track. Women without any one to protect them have got to exist," she went on, "but how can we, if some Jed Miller takes all there is—marks every card? They say the panic made him three millions. Mama and I lost about everything, from no fault of ours. Jed Miller was to blame—he and others just like him.



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"He doesn't give the other fellow a chance, even when the other chap is one of his own kind." The girl still kept switching her riding crop to and fro.

"Oh, I suppose he has his code," put in Mrs. De Pris. Before Victoria could reply, the countess' voice broke in:

"They say he finally saved a half-dozen of the big banks."

"His own banks," said Victoria scornfully. "He launches a panic and nearly breaks us all. His wealth, and the power it gives him over us, he uses to satisfy his whim. And his whim is always to take away what the other fellow has. Whether he does it down in Wall Street, or whether his hundred thousand dollar horse does it on the race track, at his own private club, it's the same to Jed Miller. He never loses. We're all his playthings. He's destiny shuffling us about at will."

"Stop squealing, Vic!" put in Mrs. De Pris. "You're only guessing. I don't believe King Richard belongs to him. Jed Miller isn't a horse man. What does he care for the winnings he might make here, this afternoon? I don't believe he came here to trim his friends. Besides, the betting favorite is Nankin. Sam says she's done a quarter in two less than King Richard's best, last season. He's got ten thousand on her and I've got three. She's sure to win. Sam knows. He sold a car and had me let two maids and a butler go because Jed squeezed him so. He



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says we've got to make a few thousand on the races to-day or go broke. Poor Sam!"

Sally sighed as she lifted her jewel-handled lorgnon and stared at a plump, smiling-faced youth who was towing toward them a spectacled companion, taller than himself by two feet, and whose rather long hair was topped by a broad-brimmed, mouse-hued sombrero.

"Here's little Weston Morse with that clever Sidney Appleton," she said. Turning, Peter found his hand seized in the friendly grip of the tall man who, after a brief greeting, said:

"I say, Stuyvie, I'll play you against the 'cunnel'?"

Peter glanced at his watch. It lacked more than an hour before the races began.

"All right, Sidney!" he assented, and nodding to the others he walked away toward the caddy house behind the smooth strip of lawn.

Peter's game proved too fast for Appleton, for there was still a good half-hour to spare when he holed out at the sixth green, leaving Sidney pegging away, two bunkers in the rear.

Most of the racing crowd had drifted over to the grandstand back of the club building, where a band was already playing, when Peter reached the veranda steps; though a group of the younger male contingent still lingered about the piazza.

Amid casual greetings, Peter picked his way among the loiterers and entered the club-house. It was an



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enormous structure, two and a half stories high with double wings, in one of which were the racquet courts, billiard rooms and other amusement apartments. The other extreme was for the servants and the cuisine. The central part of the building, on the ground floor, was occupied by two spacious rooms, one facing the front, the other, lighted by English windows, overlooking an extremely wide, tiled terrace, at one end of which was a pergola shaded with masses of wistaria vines.

Selecting a seat at a small writing-desk in the farther corner of the rear of these two rooms, Peter wrote a note, addressed it to Fräulein Newman and rang for a servant. The letter contained a request that she come with him and his godmother for a day's outing on the morrow.

As a rule Peter was not susceptible to women. After college days his life had centred chiefly on business affairs. Still he admired a pretty face and was fairly well known in a good many New York drawing-rooms. He believed himself to be whole-hearted, though of late the thought of Ann persisted in obtruding itself upon him. He felt a positive delight in the anticipation of seeing her once again.

After handing the servant the note, he lingered for a moment in the great room which then happened to be unoccupied. The window at his elbow was open, and he heard the footsteps of two people crossing the terrace to the pergola just outside. There



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they evidently found seats. Then the voice of Jed Miller came to him:

"We've settled his hash, damn him! He would have it and we gave it to him—a large dose in panic form." There was a wrathful brutality in every inflection of the man's voice. Peter wondered vaguely, and rather absent-mindedly, who had come in the way of Jed's anger, for the man was a colossus in power and wealth. Indeed, to a small dozen financiers, among whom Jed was conceded to be the leader, were ascribed half the money deals of the market. He was the head of what the newspapers had dubbed the "millionaire star chamber." Hitherto Peter had regarded him and his satellites with approbation, principally because of the courage and daring which he knew they must possess to be able to concentrate such titanic powers as were theirs.

Peter heard the snap of a match and caught the pungent aroma of good tobacco, before the other man drawled:

"Yes, he's been too busy squaring himself since the smash came, to stay on our scent." It was the smooth voice of Seth Belden, one of the country's greatest bankers—a good second to Jed Miller in power and in riches.

"Out to get us, was he!" growled the other. "Hammered and slashed at the system that made him—manhandled us from coast to coast, and finally laid a trap to catch us napping. He couldn't believe



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it when the panic was sprung, thought we lacked the nerve to strike that way!"

"Is he going to keep hands off, now?" the other man interrupted.

"He's learned his lesson this time, from A to Z. He'll muckrake, no doubt, but take it from Jed Miller, he's had his teeth drawn." A gentle chuckle came from the other.

"It was beautifully played!" Belden said. "We couldn't lose. But it cost a few good men, Jed."

"Only one man in a thousand has sense, Seth. The rest are imbeciles. The run of the herd don't think; they're too lazy, too uninterested in themselves to do anything for themselves. They let the newspapers mold their ideas. They're just sheep. That's the reason we, who do use our brains, make good. It's as clear as daylight!" Jed's former bellow had now modulated to a strongly earnest tone:

"We all know the thing's got to end some day. The few can't rule the many forever. It's against nature. But the ignorant and the stupid have got to wake up and learn to use their heads, before they can ever beat us down and out, Seth. If we've got them where we fatten on 'em, it's their fault, not ours."

"What brings you here?" inquired the other.

There was a brief pause, long enough for the man addressed to have taken a cautious glance about if he chose to do so. Then Peter caught his reply uttered in a sort of chuckling undertone:



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"A little joker."

The answer evidently perplexed Belden for he did not speak. After a pause, Jed went on:

"I'll let you in, Seth. I'm going to trim some of the smart set here at the Merle Water, to-day. Three years ago one of my agents down in the 'Blue Grass State' picked up a promising stallion. We kept him hid a year and tried him out for the first time at Saratoga. He proved to be a whirlwind, a better goer than any of us had guessed.

"Last year that horse, King Richard, took two heats down here, but Neilson, the jockey, had his orders to hold him back. He's got four seconds more under his collar than any one here dreams about, and to-day we're going to let him have the bit. He'll clean 'em all up. It's your chance to make a little pocket money, Seth, and to settle old scores if you have any, for everyone's staking Nankin and she hasn't got a chance."

Suddenly it occurred to Peter that his position might be considered that of an eavesdropper. His growing interest in this gilt-edged philosophy and divulging of secrets between two of the country's high-handed financiers brought this reflection. Instantly he rose, walked through and joined the younger club members, still in front.

Flippant prophecies on the results of the races and a desultory haggling over small wagers were being interspersed with remarks relating to the late panic.



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Indeed, the cataclysm was still dominant in every mind, although its crises were conceded to be well over. There was not a man in the group, save perhaps Peter himself, who had not won or lost heavily during the smash. These were all typical New York business men, stock brokers, bankers, speculators, all gamblers of the class so willing to strain the fine points of both ethics and the Constitution, if by doing so they might transfer the wealth of others to their own pockets. Yet, whether he won or lost, each one in this crowd knew how to conceal every trace of emotion beneath a veneer of outward coolness or flippant banter. That was a part of the stock in trade of each.

"Did you bury Bogey?" queried Peter, with mock gravity as he chose a seat beside Appleton, who had finally holed out and now sat sipping a rickey. The other grinned:

"The colonel has always had six on me, and hang it, the harder I try the worse duffer I get to be. It's like trying to beat the game in the street."

"I say, Sid, you hole out in Bogey there, every time," put in Weston Morse. "I heard John Merri-man tell Miller that, for a young 'un, you'd made a bunch of the bears look like croquet players at a pink tea."

"That's because I pocketed a slice of his profits when he tried to dump that F and K stock on the public, panic week," said Appleton. "I fancied his



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respect for me would go up, for I beat the old man by sixty minutes—got rid of six thousand shares—a hundred a minute—before he came to and discovered that the price had sagged three points and was still dropping. He hasn't found out yet how I got wind of his carefully laid plans."

"How'd you do it?" asked a blond, vandyked man at Appleton's right, abruptly. "I got pinched to the tune of thirty thousand on that deal." Sidney Appleton's grin broadened.

"You're not the only one, Heswick. The miscarriage of Merriman's plans put out two brokerage firms, closed up the Pilgrim Trust—Charlie West disappeared then, and they found what was left of him, later, floating in the harbor—and a dozen or so chaps that I know had to cut out their extra chauffeur and close up a villa or so down country on account of that little coup. And it was all because Rhineland, the 'Daily News' man, got drunk and blabbed the tip in my private office. How he dug it up the Lord only knows! I locked him in, and then handed it to Merriman."

"I say, Appleton," drawled one of his listeners, "who put you wise to the panic? What sort of a game was it?"

The question trailed off into a silence, which somehow suddenly fell on the little group. The same query had been propounded on street corner and behind closed door a thousand times during the recent



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weeks. Its answer, too, had been discussed in whispers and bruited abroad in flaming headlines ever since the opening day of the never-to-be-forgotten crash. Every man sitting there on the fashionable club veranda leaned forward, or fell into some other listening posture, to better catch the reply of the awkward-appearing, self-contained Appleton who, though hardly thirty years of age, was already known as one of the cleverest operators in Wall Street.

As if aware of the significance of his answer, the youth paused for the fraction of a minute, and looked about at the collected faces and many pairs of eyes all coolly fixed upon himself. Indifference, good-natured cynicism, frank dislike, clearly discerned friendship, were all depicted there. He spoke slowly:

“It was a well-planned trick—all the dice were loaded. The whole thing was framed up to the fraction of an hour, and its purpose was to save half a dozen men—you know them all—from twenty years or more in stripes. The government secret service men were hard after them, pressing at their heels. And it did save them. It summarily checkmated the plan of the man who has done more to beat the combinations of wealth and the stock trader’s game than any other single human being. You all know that man, too. It was Theodore Roosevelt, the most dangerous foe the big crew has ever had to down.”



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For a moment following this declaration not a person spoke. Then suddenly from the doorway behind came the roar of Jedediah Miller's voice:

"Got that all fixed up, young man? Destiny needs no sacred oracles as long as we have our infant prodigies with us. Drop it! The races are starting. We didn't come here to talk shop. Make your play, gentlemen, make your play!" and with a dramatic flourish Jed made off pompously toward the race track.

Peter found himself in the midst of a riot of color and gay excitement as he picked his way to a seat in the huge grandstand. Beneath the cloudless sky the oval track was a dull, red-gray ribbon looped about its emerald enclosure. Here and there in the crowd glasses were being trained upon the five thoroughbreds whose drivers were now jockeying for position in front of the judges' stand, below.

The air was warm, but not oppressive. From the bandstand rose the exhilarating strains of one of the latest pieces in ragtime. Conversation, sparkling with wit and humor, effervesced on all sides, while men and women everywhere—many with gilt-edged tablets and gold-tipped pencils—were exchanging bets at varying odds.

Although the afternoon's entries included nearly two dozen equine stars, interest centred chiefly on the initial race in which Nankin, a flashing little bay filly, and Thundercloud, a handsome chestnut



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stallion, were easily the grandstand favorites. King Richard, Zuzu and Alfred B., the other three entries, were finding takers, but at good-sized odds. King Richard, last year's winner in the same race, was considered the best of the latter three.

Upon the stalwart Nankin, however, hope generally centred. Everywhere red and white, the little mare's colors, predominated.

Peter heard Sam De Pris, who sat at his right, place an enormous bet on the filly at odds of two to one. Then he heard Sally's voice wagering at two to three on her husband's choice. A little farther over Victoria Merton was busy registering bets on the same mare in the dainty tablets of several friends.

Something tense in the manner of all three showed itself in spite of the exchange of jests that occurred while the wagers were being made, and it caught Peter's attention. He was fond of all three. Hitherto he had refrained from acting upon what he had learned, by accident, concerning King Richard. Now he leaned forward and informed Sam De Pris of what he knew. The other turned a little pale, whispered to Sally, jumped up from his seat, and instantly began seeking takers on Nankin. Peter watched Sally impart the secret to Victoria. Then he resumed his seat and began following the horses which were now jockeying back and forth at the starting line. By the clock in the pavilion nearby there was still five minutes before the getaway—time



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enough for Sam, Sally and Victoria to cover all their wagers on Nankin if they chose. He wondered how many others would get wind of the tip and hedge.

Suddenly the judges' pistol cracked, there was a blaring of instruments in the bandstand, a sudden handclapping and flutter of colors everywhere, and he beheld the five horses go flashing, neck and neck, down the first quarter of the oval stretch. It was a wonderful start. For what seemed an incredibly long period the positions of the five remained the same. Then as they swung round the turn, a shout from the grandstand proclaimed that the red and white of Nankin and the blue of Alfred B. were creeping into the fore, leaving Thundercloud a half-length behind, with King Richard and Zuzu a length still farther back.

On flew the gallant little fighters down the long outer stretch. At the second quarter Zuzu had shifted well behind; a full length had stretched itself out between the coal-black gelding and King Richard. Thundercloud had nosed well up onto Alfred B.'s flank.

Now occurred an event which sent a premonitory thrill through each of the hundreds of onlookers in the densely packed bleachers. As the filly was nearing the third quarter mark, the arm of the green-capped figure behind King Richard was lifted and the thong of a whip slashed down across the flank of the stallion. Instantly the nose of King Richard



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began to crawl up on the struggling Alfred B. at a rate of speed which seemed little less than marvelous.

A whoop of surprise escaped the lips of a man in the lower row. Then in a body, men and women were on their feet, leaping upon the seats, breaking into a wild storm of cheering.

For a second the heroic Alfred B. held out. Then, in the twinkling of an eye it seemed to the excited onlookers, King Richard had whirled past, swept down upon the flying Thundercloud, overhauled the big chestnut, and was hard on the withers of Nankin.

Pandemonium now reigned among the spectators. Cheers surged, in strident waves, across the field. Could the stallion wrest the laurels from the little bay? It seemed impossible! With every muscle and nerve straining beneath her glossy skin, the beautiful filly was working like a splendid machine.

Thirty—twenty—ten yards from the finish, and she still held out, flashing on through the red dust like a wind-blown cloud.

Then, when it seemed as if neither horse could gain an inch upon the other, the lash of King Richard's driver cracked again. As the blow fell, the mighty stallion surged ahead, and, in a whirlwind burst that drove the bleachers mad, caught the wire a full half head over the mare.

Cheers still swept the field when a hand was laid



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on Peter's shoulder, and he glanced round to find Sam De Pris at his elbow.

"God knows where you got the tip, Stuyvie," he said, "but you've saved my life," and the big six-footer gripped the other's hand.

Later, when the rest of the races had been run off and Peter stood waiting at the foot of the club-house steps, he heard the growl of Jed Miller's voice addressing Belden as the two rode away:

"The horse is a wonder, but a lot of wise ones found it out at the last minute and hedged. If somebody hadn't blabbed I'd have trimmed the whole bunch!" And Peter smiled as he seated himself in his car and started back for New York.



V

THE CRISIS

PETER'S mood perplexed him.

With his godmother and Ann Newman he had set out from New York bent upon making the day a memorably enjoyable one. Everything external seemed to conspire toward that result: the azure sky overhead; the russet, crimson and gold leaves that made each roadside grove and foliated vista a bit of enchanted landscape; the invigorating freshness of the October forenoon; the presence of the two women, both in the best of spirits.

It was Peter himself—a new presence within him—that proved restless and perturbed. His buoyant nature labored under a repression which neither the auspicious surroundings, his happy companions, nor the soft, rhythmic purr of the powerful automobile could dispel.

A series of events, which had made the days unforgettable since his arrival in New York, had wrought in him a crucial change of viewpoint. His was a revolution of mind and spirit.

Half an hour before, he had welcomed his godmother and the beautiful girl now sitting beside her



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with a cheerfulness that belied his present inner commotion. He had heroically endeavored to stick to banter and his accustomed optimism, but his vein of seriousness would not be diverted. It held firm sway over him.

And the initial source of it all was Ann's first inspired utterance to him. He could not forget that evening in Jerusalem. Her message had kindled a flame in his consciousness which he had sought to extinguish in vain. However esoteric and mystical her words had seemed to him since, there was no gainsaying their potency upon his spirit. An evolutionary process had been started. Little by little his mind had begun to surge forward into new paths. His subsequent meeting with his friend, Max, and the latter's satirical arraignment had quickened this awakening. Then the distressing events of the panic period, including the paralysis of John Seabury, had followed in rapid succession. One problem after another had crowded upon his mind. It was an awakening. Old convictions were being uprooted. A riot of new ones filled his thoughts.

Each step in this mental turmoil brought him face to face with new flaws in the code of that social class to which he had hitherto felt that he belonged. He was well aware that it was one thing to recognize the evils of a social standard and quite a different matter to discover a remedy for such evils. But he had definitely reached a turning point. The per-



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sistency of his present agitation made that clear. Whither the next pathway was to take him and how he was to be guided were still unsettled problems.

Mrs. Van Siddons, with her quickness of intuition and her intimate knowledge of Peter, divined something of his perplexity, and she tactfully endeavored to keep the conversation upon the lighter subjects.

It was Ann who opened the way for Peter to unburden his mind. They had been riding for some time through a rolling country where the level and smooth road bisected vast areas of arable fields and woodlands, in which the landscape artist had taken advantage of every cunning of his art to reproduce the most resplendent aspects in nature. Formality of hedge, wall, sun-dial, statuette and potted ferns was relieved by a prodigality of foliage that ran riot in the transcendent hues of late October, and amid which there flashed into view, now and then, glimpses of one or more of those sumptuous, many-winged abodes of granite and brick to which the New York millionaire is wont to refer as his country place. The girl's eyes had been intent upon the scenery.

"What lavish expenditures of money are here!" she exclaimed.

"But not extravagant if we credit the rich with an appreciation of beauty. Nothing is extravagant to the true lover of art," said Mrs. Van Siddons.

"When I compare the squalor and wretchedness of the poor with the luxury of these costly mansions



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and surroundings, I find it hard to forgive a society that breeds such a shocking contrast," said Ann. "If wealth can be poured out as it is here, to pamper the whims of the few, why are there so many thousands of suffering mothers and babies—why so many families that lack for the bare necessities of life? The greatest wrong in our country, to-day, is the poor."

"What is your remedy for such conditions?" asked Peter, leaning forward. "You who are so conscious of the sufferings of the needy must have in mind some cure. I want to do something to help mend the world's mistakes. If the possession of wealth so upsets the social balance, how can one help to change it? There are thousands of other evils, too; I find them on all sides. Is there no panacea?" His unmistakable earnestness was his tacit tribute to the girl's breadth of mind.

"There is a way to upbuild society which will unite men in a lasting bond of fellowship," she answered. "Such a plan calls for the application of truth along new lines. Those who search until they find out and are guided by this plan will indeed share in the glory of a great achievement.

"God has conferred how many blessings upon human beings! Nature's world stores are sufficient for the comfort and enjoyment of all men to the last individual. Yet what a host of suffering and needy there are always!



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“The rich number eight hundred thousand—less than one per cent. of all the people in the country—yet this small fraction owns more than ninety per cent. of all the wealth. Less than ten per cent. is left for the rest.

“The wealth of a certain, single capitalist is said to equal the combined labor earnings of all the people for a year.

“Is it not hard for the great mass of human beings to do right or to think right under such conditions? Is not the better side of man naturally submerged when the fight is so intense to keep the head above water? Because of the oppression of riches, is not the incentive always toward wrong-doing? Only the making-over of society will destroy this evil. Such a reconstruction is a colossal task. It means the uprooting of great systems—systems which, perhaps, have been necessary to progress in the past, but which now blight the advance of mankind.

“Each year thousands of men and women suicide or go insane because of poverty; tuberculosis, induced by lack of proper food and care, claims its army of unfortunates; a host of young and middle-aged women are sacrificed annually to the terrible social curse. The increase of crime here is said to be far greater than in other countries of the world.

“We know that the fundamental purpose of government is to insure to all the ordinary guarantees of civilization and to protect life, property and liberty.



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Yet if you will compare our country with others of relative importance, it will be found that we are at the bottom of the list of those nations which thus justify the purpose of government.

“In this country there are one hundred murders to every hundred thousand persons. That is ten times more than the murder rate in England; twenty-three times more than it is in Scotland; fifteen times more than it is in Canada. The number of murders here in the past twenty years equals a greater number than all the Northern soldiers killed in the Rebellion.

“And this is by no means all,” the girl continued, her mind seeming to yield its wonderful resources more and more lavishly as she proceeded, “think of the loss of individuality which this bondage of wealth has wrought!

“Where is the man who does not wish to be his own master—to originate, to plan, to achieve of himself? Yet no longer is the pathway free for men to do this. The ranks of every trade and every profession are becoming more and more overcrowded. Marvellous machines perform the work which formerly engaged many men. Avenues of individual achievement are becoming fewer and fewer. Great aggregations of wealth now make it impossible for the man of limited means to undertake a business of his own with any hope of success. Even though he is fortunate enough, or clever enough, to discover a process in trade whereby he can undersell others, his



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handicap of small capital renders him still an easy prey to competing combinations of great wealth. The very rich man has secured himself in a hundred ways, each of which adds a new fetter to the bondage of the poor man. The millionaire owns the railroads, the sources of production, the raw materials, the fundamental products and the industries. This absolute control eliminates all the poor man's chances of rising. He must remain a subject—a paid workman, with no hope of being anything else. Even the diminishing few who are thought to head small independent concerns are in many cases the playthings of the capitalist's will. No one is his own boss. Personal initiative is well nigh impossible."

"I have noticed that this passion for riches has overshadowed even the vision of those who, it seems to me, ought to retain their clearness of sight," said Peter.

"It is like a dreadful disease; it has infected the thoughts and the utterances of those to whom we look for guidance—the preachers," agreed the girl. "Too many ministers already have been contaminated, though I often feel that the tainting process, in many cases, has occurred unconsciously. Yet demoralization exists in every great centre and has affected many of the leaders in every faith. Not only has church direction been brought under bondage, but in different ways religious faith has come to be subverted to the same domination. I mean, the practice of the Golden Rule, which ought to be the



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basis of religion, has come to be more and more unusual. The great mass of the people are so engrossed with the worries of getting their meagre living that they have lost the inclination to develop the spiritual side which religion should foster."

"Would you criticise the church for that?" asked Peter.

"I believe that the church should give up dictating a set of opinions to its members," was her reply. "The church should help to develop each one in his own best life. Instead of being a union of those of the same opinion, it should be a union of those who desire to cultivate to the fullest their moral and spiritual natures.

"The religion of the to-day, the religion that touches men's hearts closest and deepest, is that which contains the essence of all truth, regardless of creed or cult. The doctrine of humanity is the first tenet of true religion. The church should not lose sight of that fact. I believe that the religion of the future will combine the best in every great faith of the past, recognizing that all contain great and soul-satisfying truths, and that the great teachers of each were inspired by divine convictions. Layman, priest, rabbi or minister will be honored then only in proportion as each serves humanity and teaches that harmony with God is love, and that love is harmony. He who preaches discord will be discredited. Useless ceremonies and sectarianism will disappear.



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Whatever the color or the nationality of the worshipper, he will know that one God of love overrules all. Amount of service for humanity will be the measure of every man's worth."

Both Mrs. Van Siddons and Peter had listened to the girl's utterances with close attention, greatly astonished to hear from Ann's lips such a store of sound and convincing philosophy regarding the problems of human existence. Peter thought of the labor, concentration and effort that it must have cost her in order to so clearly understand the rights and wrongs of humanity. His ambitions were quickened. He felt that he, too, must arrive at convictions, not by the study of theory, but by investigation, and by seeking far and wide, until he found a satisfactory answer to each question that demanded an answer. He was eager to begin. The girl's words were a two-fold inspiration, because it was she who had first roused this new longing in him to better himself and others.

"Fräulein," he said, "I mean to emulate you. I shall leave nothing undone that will aid me to help correct the perplexities of human life and the hindrances to human happiness. The many evils that you have studied so closely, it shall be likewise my task to analyze. I will devote my life to this Call of the Ages. I will traverse the earth, from corner to corner if need be, to fit myself to become the instrument of its summons."

To the girl his voice had a prophetic ring. For the



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first time she guessed at the doggedness of purpose that lay beneath the well-groomed exterior of Peter Rutledge. She knew that the great crisis had come in his life: she knew, too, that he was ready to face it. Because of her love for the lowly in life, she rejoiced. He would work, henceforth, for them. It pleased her, too, to think that her own earnestness of purpose had been the means of winning him to the highest of all causes.

Mrs. Van Siddons's voice interrupted the trend of their thoughts:

"Professor Seabury apparently is fated to remain a helpless cripple for the rest of his life. But penniless though they are, Alicia refuses to accept help, even from her dearest friends. She has arranged to take a little tenement in the East Side, and as soon as her father is well enough to be moved, she declares that they will both go there to live."

"Surely he had something left—a little property?" queried Peter.

"Not a penny," replied his godmother. "His finances were in very bad shape when he went abroad. The absconding of John Weld stripped him of everything."

"But Alicia is very brave and determined. She is already interesting herself in some poor girls of the East Side," said Ann. "At my concert, to-night, about fifty of them, who work in the sweat-shops, will come to hear me under her sponsorship."

"So you are to begin your performances in New



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York?" asked Peter. "Shall I be permitted to come as a spectator, to-night?"

"As the proceeds are for a new social club-house for the working-girls, you will be doubly welcome. Come and bring all your friends; the more, the better." As she concluded, the automobile stopped before a quaint, old-fashioned inn where a few minutes later they all sat down to a splendidly served luncheon. Then, after another delightful ride, this time along the seashore, they returned home, Peter putting Ann down at the Seabury home, and dropping his godmother at the fine, old Van Siddons family mansion where so many of New York's brilliant social gatherings had been held in times past.

"You are abandoning all your old idols?" asked his godmother as he was assisting her out of the car.

"Agatha," he replied warmly, clinging to her cool hand for an instant, "if I can serve the millions who are now so enslaved by the oppressions of wealth, I intend to render that service to its fullest—just as she is striving to render service to them every day she lives. I cannot do less than she."

"But, Peter, have you counted the many burdens that will have to be shouldered, the many irksome tasks that will need be performed? It will not be all sunshine and pleasure."

"Godmother, I mean to give all that I possess to the work," he responded.

This determination still possessed him when he



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found a seat beside Mrs. Van Siddons, that evening, just as the curtain went up in the Empire auditorium, disclosing Ann Newman, seated at the piano.

The great, high-arched hall was crowded. To Peter it was a strange mingling of faces and of social castes. Directly in the centre, and very close to the front, sat the group of working-girls who were to profit by the performance. Alicia, a little pale, but smiling with her gray eyes, sat with them. To the right of these, and half-way back in the room, another space was occupied by a crowd of mothers, working-women, and dwellers of the tenement district, who, like the group of girls, had been admitted free. The rest of the seats, including those in the balconies and the boxes, were filled with such a horde of New York's rich and fashionable society women, with a sprinkling of men, as Peter had never seen together at once, outside the opera or the horse show. In fact, the gathering here of so much wealth and splendor greatly perplexed him, until his godmother cleared up the mystery:

"I have been coaching New York to attend this performance, since the day we got back," she said. "I sent out two thousand personal letters for tonight's recital. Max, who has been made Ann's manager, of course aided also."

Peter glanced at her, admiringly:

"Agatha, you ought to have been a man," he said, grinning.



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"After to-night I mean that there shall be small need of serious, press-agent work for Ann," she said.

Fräulein Newman was dressed all in white, with a single, soft red rose in the bodice of her gown. The mass of her burnished, clustering hair set off her flushed cheeks and tapering neck. Her eyes were serene; her attitude, that of one remote from the audience and all her immediate surroundings, as her beautiful, tapering fingers touched the first chords in one of Debussy's marvellous dream impressions.

From that instant Ann Newman became the fair idol of all New York's music lovers. As she wandered through theme after theme, interpreting Gounod, Wagner, Chopin and Mendelssohn, with a skill which even those great masters would have admired, wave after wave of applause, each more enthusiastic than the preceding one, proved conclusively that New York was welcoming her as a great artist.

Peter sat enthralled: his heart beating loud; his senses thrilled by her exquisite and inspired interpretations. At last he heard a voice nearby, saying:

"O, it's great! it's great! She's taken the town by storm! This is a day long to be remembered by us," and turning he descried the impulsive Max, a huge chrysanthemum in his buttonhole, beaming upon Mrs. Van Siddons.

"Your work is surely being made easy for you," was her reply.

"It's the greatest demonstration that New York



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has witnessed in a decade," "The Muckraker" went on, "but that is not all: it's a spectacle like this," he nodded toward the group of girls and working-women in the front of the room, "that sets the best possible example for humanizing work. Give this crowd of fashionables a few more such illustrations, and they may become convinced that the poor have hearts and temperaments too."

And as Peter looked down from where he sat and beheld the selfsame rapt expression of interest on the faces of the women of fashion and the countenances of those whose lives were usually consumed in damp basements or illy-ventilated tenements, he marvelled at the levelling force of nature when the heart is touched by the inspiration of genius.

After the thunder of applause had subsided amid many wild echoings of "brava, brava!" Peter at last found himself face to face with Ann, his emotions so wrought up by the influence of her playing that it required much self-control to restrain the extravagant words of praise that came to his lips. What he finally said, was:

"I have never heard anything like it, Fräulein."

She donned her cloak, slipped her hand beneath his arm and was guiding him toward the limousine at the entrance, before she replied:

"To-night I played from inspiration, for the sake of the poor, but it was you of whom I thought and to whom I tried to speak."



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"And what was the message of the music?" he asked, his pulses throbbing.

"I wanted to help you—to make the task ahead of you seem easier."

"And why do you tell me this? May I always look for such interest and friendship from you?" he asked softly, as the car stopped and the door swung open.

"Think only of the work that lies before you now," she answered, letting her hand rest for an instant in his. Then she turned and ran up the steps of the Seabury house.



## VI

### A CRUSADE THAT FAILED

"By their deeds ye shall know them. Let your influence, mothers, your votes, fathers, put an end to wholesale corruption, machine control in politics, and an unmoral condition such as seldom has been duplicated in any city of the world!

"The saloon must go. And who here would be counted on the side of evil? I will answer: not one among you. Am I not right? Let all stand up who will support this crusade against error and crime!"

It was the voice of Dr. John Northup, the great evangelist, thundering forth his rallying call. As he ceased speaking, a vast concourse of men and women rose as a single person. Hundreds of tear-stained faces were uplifted.

Peter Rutledge thrilled at the spectacle. For the first time he beheld a great metropolitan revival, one of a series which had been launched in a city of over a million people, and which was attracting the attention of the entire country because of its size and purpose.

Seventy-five of the world's most renowned revivalists, and the foremost corps of temperance reformers



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in the country, composed the army of specialists. The doors of sixty churches welcomed them. Contributions were lavishly outpoured. Two and sometimes three meetings were held daily, in the different houses of worship, theatres and other semi-public buildings. Seldom was standing room, even, to be had at any of the services. At the Central Church, where Dr. Northup usually presided, waiting lines that stretched a block or more from the doors were the rule. The city throbbed with emotionalism. Each day witnessed hundreds of conversions. Newspapers far and wide, in both editorial and news columns, discussed the crusade. Indeed, the importance ascribed to Dr. Northup's campaign by the New York newspapers had first enlisted Peter's interest. He had come on to see for himself.

Now as the fervor of the great revivalist's appeal brought response from thousands, he felt that his journey had not been in vain.

"Here is one of life's truth-inspiring forces," he told himself.

At the close of the service he introduced himself to Dr. Northup, and offered his aid in the work.

The great evangelist was interested. His marvellous powers of analysis were focussed upon Peter for a moment. Then he thrust out his hand, saying:

"Some day, perhaps, you will welcome others as gladly as I do you, now."



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Thus Peter became a figure in the revival, contributing and performing personal service wherever he could.

Always bent upon getting at the truth, he continually studied the fundamental motives that actuated the movement, with a keen eye to election day, when it was predicted that the city would rise up, almost to a man, and unburden itself of intemperance and its allied forces of corruption. Failure in the face of what appeared to be an unprecedented wakening of the voters seemed impossible.

Week after week the outpourings of people continued. That he might the better keep his fingers on the pulse of the movement, Peter chose his quarters at the same downtown hotel where Dr. Northup, Dr. Altman and the most noted of the evangelists stayed. He was a constant attendant at the meetings. He met scores of the city's wealthy and prominent business men who, being church members and church trustees, were liberal promoters of the cause of reform.

All warmly commended the crusade, but none more so than Jackson Woods, president of the Bussey National Bank, and the donor of ten thousand dollars toward the revival fund.

"It means a wholesale house-cleaning—the routing of corruption, inhumanity and crime throughout the city," he enthusiastically told Peter, who was much impressed at this heartfelt utterance of the broadclothed, conservative banker.



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Woods' eulogy had preceded a combined temperance and religious rally for men, held at noon in Broad Theatre, in the heart of the down-town district. Peter and the banker had met in the lobby.

When the rally opened, every seat in the auditorium and galleries, and the standing-room spaces even in the lobbies, were filled.

Dr. Blarot, a distinguished temperance worker, was the leading speaker, and as he set forth, one by one, vivid, heart-compelling pictures of experiences in the drunkard's home, a gradual hush settled upon the listening throng, until every word could be heard in the most remote corner of the room:

"It is the bitterest cup of humanity. Sixty thousand souls a year is the price we pay for drink—sixty thousand, besides that countless number of innocent children—babes, little ones just clinging to a mother's skirts, and impressionable small boys and girls, whose inheritance is the sordid misery and poverty of the drunkard's child.

"Shall you permit such a curse to prey upon you? Shall the saloon destroy the irresponsible and the weak, because of your indifference? Shall an army of mothers and children pay toll in suffering, because you neglect to help them at the polls?"

The speaker's voice had risen. His words fell like blows upon the senses of his hearers. At the height of the climax, he ceased speaking, leaped from the platform, sprang down the aisle, and lifting a little



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girl from her father's arms, he bore the child back to the stage.

"Though you should fail, I shall surely cast my vote to save such little ones as this." His eyes flashed over the sea of upturned faces. The flaxen hair of the child shone like a mesh of silken strands upon his coatsleeve. A soft smile of delight, at thus becoming the centre of attraction, suddenly curved the baby's lips in a scarlet bow and caused her blue eyes to dance exultantly. Dr. Blarot's arm gently enfolded the small, silent figure.

"For of such is the kingdom of Heaven." As the words fell from his lips, not a man of all the multitude present but felt the force of that graphic appeal. It went straight to every heart.

Peter still carried with him the memory of that innocent child in Dr. Blarot's arms when, after he had left the hall, he found his progress suddenly blocked by a ragged newsboy of about thirteen, whose thin frame was convulsed with a paroxysm of coughing.

"Pretty bad cough, son," he said, resting his hand for a moment on the boy's shoulder. The youngster pulled himself together.

"Paper, mister?" His eyes lighted eagerly.

Peter took the news sheet extended to him—it was the boy's last one—and placed a dollar bill in the small hand.

"Can't change dat, sir." Another coughing fit seized him. Peter waited a moment. Then he said:



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"Never mind the change."

The boy straightened up in amazement.

"Yer don't mean th' whole dollar's fer me?"

Peter nodded. Heedless of consequences to himself, the newsie let out a sudden whoop and danced half a dozen jig steps on the concrete.

"Gee, dat'll square de rent ter-morrer," he cried, at last. "Dad was shy a bone and de rent guy don't stand fer shortage."

"Where do you live?" asked Peter, impressed with this picture of affairs.

"On Third Street," answered the boy. Peter hesitated an instant.

"Come on, I'll walk home with you," he said, finally.

Ten minutes later, emerging from the darkness of three, damp-smelling flights of stairways, the little conductor pushed open a door, and darting eagerly forward, cried:

"Father, look, a visitor!" Peter saw the boy press the dollar bill and a few pennies—the return of his afternoon sales—into the hands of a stoop-shouldered man who looked prematurely old, and very gray.

The room was about twelve by fifteen feet square, lighted only by a single, small, dirty-paned window overlooking an alley. It was plain that the sunshine never crept in here. It reeked with the staleness of stagnant air.

Besides the father, a hollow-cheeked, pallid woman, with feverish eyeballs, a boy of about eight, and a



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little girl nearing five, with sightless eyes, occupied the room.

When the door opened, the man and woman were huddled together near the window engaged in sewing together parts of unfinished garments, several others of which lay on a table in the centre of the room. The boy sitting nearest the door was occupied in drawing the basting threads from one of the completed pieces of work. The blind girl sat in a farther corner of the apartment, upon a torn and much-worn mattress.

Hermann Romwitz, with an arm round his son, rose and courteously greeted Peter. His wife and the younger boy remained seated, but the little, blind girl came forward, feeling her way along the wall until she could reach out and touch her father's arm. There she halted, her baby lips mutely interrogating, her face upturned in questioning curiosity.

Peter caught his breath. The horror of the child's affliction appalled him. He hesitated to speak of it lest he wound her feelings.

Hermann transferred a caressing hand from Felix to the girl. Then turning to Peter, he said:

"She used to help us with the bastings, like that—" pointing to the boy who sat silently at work. "But that's all over now." The man shook his head sadly.

"How did it happen?" asked Peter.

"The point of the scissors slipped," he replied. "You see, we sew here all day, and sometimes 'till very late at night. We have to work all the time;



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even then, there is not much to eat and we are never free to go out.

"It was nearly dark, but we hadn't lighted the lamp. We have to save the oil—" he spoke apologetically. "Baby was bending over her task, hurrying to strip out the threads, because it was the day when we return some of the finished garments.

"We all heard her cry out. I jumped up from my chair.

"What is it, Rosie?" I cried. When I reached her side, I was horrified at what I saw. The sharp steel had slipped and terribly wounded her right eye. It was awful." The father lowered his head and tenderly pressed the little atom of sightless humanity to his side.

"Oh, sir, if you had ever had a baby girl that grew up from your arms—and then had to see her suffer so!" It was the mother's voice sobbing out her love for her child. "We did not dream of such a thing; if we had—" she spread out her hands—"perhaps God knows best."

"But," asked Peter, turning to Hermann, "why are both eyes destroyed? I thought you said that only one had been injured."

The little girl had been listening, attentively. Suddenly her childish voice broke the silence:

"The hospit'l doctors made Rosie all blind."

"The hospital doctors?" echoed Peter. "Why, you poor, little mite, what had they to do with it?"

"I don't 'member just how, 'cause it hurted so at



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first; 'n then they tied a band 'round bof eyes. When they took it off, it was all dark, 'n Rosie heard a doctor man whisper 'too bad.'

"Then Mrs. McCarthy an' Sergius took me home 'n when I got here mama put her arms round me an' cried, 'n that day she didn't work; she just held me in her arms, 'n rocked me; 'n when she didn't cry, she sang like she used to, when I was a little baby, and it was bedtime."

The little voice stopped, breathless.

The mother was weeping over the remembered bitterness of that hour. The elder Romwitz stood looking out the window, with shaking shoulders. Peter's own eyes were blurred, and the flower-like face was indistinct to him, as he turned and glanced down, in response to the cool, little hand that had been slipped confidently into his own.

"Will I be like this, always?" she pleaded. "When I ask mama, she says: 'pray God, not!' 'n I pray, and pray. Will I?"

Peter felt a lump rising in his throat.

"Perhaps, some day, you will see again," he said gently. Then turning to the father:

"I don't understand it yet," he said.

Hermann scowled as he spoke:

"Those young doctors in the hospitals—the free ones, where we, that can't pay, have to go—make mistakes with us poor people. They experiment on us. They forget that we suffer and feel.



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"When Rosie was hurt, we didn't know what to do at first. We are very poor, here. Look—" waving his hand about the room—"it is all we have. Even this costs us eight dollars a month.

"Mrs. McCarthy, who lives in the next room, heard Rosie scream. She is a widow and poor like us; but she is our best friend; and she stood by us. She told us of the hospital; she helped us to get our little girl taken there; and she went to see Rosie for us."

"Couldn't you go sometimes?" asked Peter.

The father shook his head. "The sewing has to be ready on time or else we are docked. The boss, who gives us the work, takes off for every mis-stitch, and he deducts more if we are behind. Then we have to go hungry. The most we can earn, when we both work, is thirty-two dollars a month. After the rent is paid, there is hardly enough to keep us alive. You see, the work passes through the hands of three different agents and dealers, before it is delivered to the firm that sells it."

As he ceased speaking, Hermann was seized with a fit of coughing.

Peter stood reflecting, in silence.

Hardly a stone's throw from this hovel of disease, the learned pastor of the rich and influential Central Church each Sunday proclaimed the gospel of charity toward mankind. At that very moment the edifice was probably echoing with the exhortations of Christian evangelists.



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"Do you ever go to church?" he asked Hermann.

"Church ain't for us," answered the father. "What place have we there, with all the swells in their fine clothes!" The man's voice betrayed a bitterness of spirit.

"Do you never wish to know about God?" The inflection of Peter's voice was intended to be soothing.

"We have only time for this." Hermann held up a half-stitched garment. Then another fit of coughing seized him. Peter's eyes wandered about the room.

The floor, uneven and worn, was littered with bits of cloth, threads and dirt. Spiders had spun cobwebs across the window-panes. The mattress, from which Rosie had risen, was apparently the sleeping convenience for four members of the family. Felix's bed consisted of a bundle of rags in another corner.

Never had Peter witnessed such squalor. With no fresh air—for the window was kept tightly closed—dwelling in constant gloom in the daytime, and provided with only one small lamp at night, forced to work twelve to sixteen hours daily, for not enough to provide even a semblance of comfort, the family led an existence appalling beyond belief. Besides there was the cough. He noted that all five were affected. It made him sick at heart.

"Of course, you go out for exercise?" he asked the father.

"I have been out only once in two weeks," answered



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Hermann. "Felix buys our food. We stay here and work. There is no other way. It is hard for these, and for her"—indicating the three children and the mother—"but we have learned to take things as they come. It's the only way." The submission and passivity betrayed by his words shocked Peter. Had the man lost all sense of initiative, all imagination, all hope, to speak thus—and then Peter started at beholding a tear glistening in Hermann's eye. Instantly the visitor's heart warmed.

"I am going to help you. I am going to begin now," he said. "To-morrow I am going to take you to church—" he held up a hand as the father made a motion of protest—"we will all go together; and be sure that you will not be docked for loss of time. I will see to that." Then pressing a bill into the father's hand, he bade the family good-bye.

At the foot of the stairs on his way out, Peter found a rotund man, with twinkling blue eyes, sitting on the doorstep in his shirtsleeves puffing a short-stemmed pipe.

"A pretty bad case upstairs," said Peter.

"You mean them Romwitzes," responded the man. "They won't last long—none of 'em."

"Who owns the place?"

"This 'ere's one of Jackson Woods' tenements, bad luck to 'im!"

"Jake Woods, the banker?" queried Peter, in surprise.



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The smoker removed the pipe from his lips, spat vehemently on the ground, and snorted with wrath:

"It's such as him that shows us poorer ones just what a hypocritical gang some of them big fellers can be. Jake Woods is responsible for them five upstairs, starving, and plague-smitten. It's enough to make a decent man glad of his poverty, so long as it sets him apart from Jake Woods' class."

"But surely, he can't know about them!"

"Don't he, though!" snorted the other in scorn. "Just let 'em get behind, rent day, and see! It's pay in advance, or get out, every time, with Woods."

"See what he done to th' widow MacLaurin, with three kiddies, not countin' a baby two months old, and her husband dead in an explosion in the foundry, only a week!"

Peter was listening, attentively.

"Pat MacLaurin lived here in three rooms, goin' on six year. Woods give her a week to get her things and her three babies out o' the house. When she finally found another place for the childer and was lyin' there sick, from cryin' over Pat and from havin' to move so sudden, the villain Woods followed her up, and had the agent hound her for the week's rent she hadn't paid."

As Peter turned to depart, he felt a disgust as deep as the other man's.

The next day he led the little blind girl to church, with the father, mother and two sons following



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behind. It was a monster mass meeting at which the speaker chose for his text:

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

Probably none among the thousands in that high-arched edifice listened with closer attention than did Hermann and Rachael Romwitz. Neither father, mother, nor children had heard anything like the soft refrain of the anthems which filled the great recesses of the nave as the choir rose and sang. After the music, the preacher's words held the parents spell-bound.

“Ye who strive after the great things of this world and ye who seek the high places and power over your fellow-beings, study the meek and lowly living in darkness and desolation about you! These are they who set before us examples of patience and courage, such as the spirit of Christ has taught.”

Such utterances at times caused the tears to course down the mother's face. Not infrequently the man, too, gave way to quiet sobbing. They were lifted up. This was a wonderful episode in their barren lives.

The same afternoon Dr. Randall, a noted physician whom Peter had summoned, called at the little tenement room and examined the different members of the family.

Tuberculosis as a result of lack of air and sunshine, poor quarters, underfed bodies, and overwork, was his verdict upon each, from the father down to little



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blind Rosie. Though this was what Peter had anticipated, the finding, coming from the physician's lips, shocked him anew, and he set about having the five moved at once to a small farm in the country, where the disease might at least be mitigated by more cheerful surroundings.

Meantime, six consecutive weeks of appeal from all the pulpits had wrought a religious crisis, during which fifteen thousand conversions had occurred. Two hundred thousand dollars had been spent.

The final services, held throughout the city at noon of election day, in size of attendance proved a fitting climax to the crusade. Never had such a seeming religious fervor been roused in a great city. Local option was believed to be an assured fact. The reform movement, by means of the ballot, was confidently expected to overwhelm all the pernicious political influences.

On the evening of the election day a group of the leading evangelical and temperance workers gathered in one of the parlors of the hotel where Peter was stopping. The latter had been invited to attend this watch meeting, and as he entered the room, a little late in the evening, he was astonished to learn that the outcome of the day's voting was still in doubt. The telephone disclosed the fact that, instead of the expected heavy balloting, the vote was unusually light in nearly every ward.

It seemed incredible. Peter, with the rest, was



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unable to understand. Then, a little after midnight, the final returns came:

With eighty-five thousand church-goers in the city, only twelve thousand ballots had been cast. Local option was defeated. The old line rule of politics had again proven triumphant.

As the significance of the news spread, a silence, pregnant with the bitterest disappointment, fell upon the handful of men gathered in that hotel room with its high-studded, ornate ceilings, its thick red-velvet carpet, and stuffy upholstered chairs.

This, then, was the end, the shattering of hope after six weeks of constant exhortation and the winning of thousands to repentance.

A host of perplexing questions suddenly invaded Peter's mind. Since joining the cause, he had noticed many curious and disturbing inconsistencies.

He knew of one contractor and builder, a generous giver towards the crusade, who built houses by the row, filled them with persons called "flitters" who paid no rent, but who were kept as tenants to deceive prospective purchasers into the belief that by buying they would gain large interest-bearing investments. As soon as the houses were thus disposed of, the "flitters" were placed in another, newly built row of houses, and so on.

A second such instance was that of the Rev. Dr. Borert who refused to sign a petition necessary to secure a candidate on the prohibition ticket in his



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ward, his excuse being that he would have to support that ticket; and he meant to vote the straight Republican ticket at the primaries. Still, as Peter knew, Dr. Borert prayed publicly for the temperance movement.

"Dr. Northup, how do you account for such signal failure after such earnest effort?" It was Peter's voice seeking the why of the perplexities besetting his mind.

"It is His will," responded the great evangelist.

"But my reason tells me that some fundamental truth has been overlooked." Everyone present turned at the words. "Is there not an inconsistency between our preaching and what we practise in daily life, that leaves others unconvinced, even though they have been emotionally wrought up to the point of tears? Has not this attempt to rouse all the best in a million people's hearts failed, because religion, as it is now practised, fails? Is it not tangible, actual, every-day help; sympathy in the form of a hand-clasp; and willingness to share pain, as well as joy, with others, that best unlocks the human heart?"

"Amen to that!" exclaimed Dr. Northup. "'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' is the shibboleth destined to lead all men in years to come."

The words brought again to Peter's mind the memory of those broken lives of the Third Street tenement. The thought of their miseries had of late often caused him to grow sick at heart. Why were those



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human beings left submerged in such abject poverty; the father not past middle life, and yet seared with age; the silent mother, hour after hour, straining her eyes in the gloom, to help eke out the most meagre of pittances; the children, pitifully wan, and prematurely old; one sightless, and all, from the oldest to the pinched-cheeked, brave Felix, victims of the great white plague? How it all wrung his soul!

Why did those who strove for reform, and for the upbuilding of good, overlook such as these? It seemed to him as though there was a wide deviation from the gospel of the square deal when leaders and teachers, in their zeal to hold up the rewards of a life to come, forgot such derelicts, and left them to starve in squalor and pain.

Was it because these wretched ones were the toilers, not to be feared like those who occasioned such cheap labor and misery in order to grow richer themselves? It was the millionaire's purse that paid the preacher's salary—that made and unmade the holders of high places in the churches.

Such thoughts added to his quandary. He knew that he must go deeper if he would discover the true gospel of humanity. The past six weeks had proven that it was not based upon mere appeals to the human emotions.



## VII

### MAX MUCKRAKES

THE next morning while still beset by the many queries born of the change from tolerance to a definite and concrete interest in vital questions, Peter's thoughts were interrupted by a sudden and furious pounding at his door, and in response to his cheerful "Come in," his old friend, Max, burst in upon him.

Following their mutual greetings, "The Muckraker's" first words plainly indicated his perplexity at Peter's recent movements:

"What new hobby has caught you, Stuyvie? It must be something serious to detain you here for six weeks, when New York is gayer than ever in its frantic endeavor to recover from the panic depression. Alicia and the Fräulein will have it that you are a man with a mission and at last have set out to make your mark in the world. But I'm still loyal to you, Stuyvie. I won't believe a word of it."

"What brings you here?" asked Peter, ignoring the other's sarcasm.

"Fräulein Newman opens at the 'Broad' to-morrow for two weeks. Two thousand seats have already been sold in advance."



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"Ah, so She's coming!" Peter spoke aloud, momentarily forgetting the other's presence. Max's eyebrows lifted with the surprise of sudden enlightenment:

"But the Fräulein will be far too busy to receive callers," he said, a little maliciously. If Peter noticed the grin on his friend's face, he gave no indication of having done so.

"I've found out that I have a mission, Max." As "The Muckraker" opened his lips to interrupt, Peter lifted a detaining hand, and went on: "I'm just beginning to get a new view of things, the view of the man who hasn't a chance, and the more I learn, the greater incentive I gain to know more. The past few weeks have taught me much—I'll tell you how much!" and he launched into a recital of the events that had terminated with the ignominious failure of the evangelical crusade. In a voice trembling with feeling, he detailed the horrors of the tenement room with its blind baby and diseased victims of the sweatshop system.

At the beginning of the story Max had lighted a cigarette and found a seat in one of the great chairs of the apartment. Thus comfortably cushioned, he listened with narrowing eyelids as the story progressed.

"So you are really discovering the iniquities of our misguided system," he commented when Peter had finished. "There is only one way to do that—by studying conditions at first hand. Book knowledge



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fails here. Many a callous-conscienced capitalist would reconstruct his attitude toward the weak, if he were forced to look upon some of the appalling spectacles of the slums of New York's East Side.

"Every large city in this country has its quota of 'Romwitz' families. It would seem more tolerable if such an army of innocent and unoffending ones didn't have to stand the brunt of it. After years of legislative effort toward reform, a round two million is a conservative estimate of the number of children under fourteen who are underfed. Only recently, among forty thousand children examined in four of the largest cities in the country, it was found that over thirty-six per cent. went to school in the morning either without their breakfast or with only a bread crust and a cup of tea or coffee.

"What's the cause of all this, you ask? Society is a hollow lie—a travesty upon the teachings of Christianity and the Golden Rule.

"I don't wonder that it cut you up to see how poor children suffer in their homes. Sometimes I think that the child problem will ultimately prove the crucial turning-point for a new order of things. It presents the most heart-rending side of poverty.

"Recently the oyster packing trust in Florida, employing little tots as young as six or seven—think of it, almost babies—put forward the plea that whatever evil might result from the trust's employment of children harmed only little foreigners from



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Baltimore, and did not injure the children of Florida. And with its millions and paid lobbyists, the trust won out on such a plea as that—as though it made a difference where the defenceless little kids came from.

“It seems unbelievable, until you begin to investigate for yourself, that in some of the cleanest states, where the reform workers have really bettered conditions, the child still gets such little protection.

“In Massachusetts, for instance, the hours for fourteen-year-old children have been lessened only four a week in forty-one years, and the little girl or boy on his fourteenth birthday, or as soon as he can make people believe he is fourteen, becomes a day laborer in a mill for ten and a quarter hours a day—and he gets fifty cents a day to start, and perhaps a dollar and fifty cents a day when he has reached thirty.

“Think of it, Stuyvie, while the state refused an eight-hour day to those little kidlets, her legislature granted a forty-eight-hour week for men employed on public works. What more iniquitous example of the pernicious, almost fiendish power of the moneyed men can one ask? For it was the wealth of the textile magnate that fought against, and succeeded in defeating, an eight-hour law for children in Massachusetts.

“The same thing, to a worse degree, goes on in the South. In two of the biggest cotton manufacturing states there, the manufacturers recently killed a



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fourteen-year age-limit bill. An army of twelve-year-old children work in the Southern cotton mills sixty hours a week. In the past year or so laws for the betterment of working children have been defeated in nearly a dozen states; and these laws aimed merely at briefer work hours and a higher age limit. Such things make a man sick at heart. They reflect disgrace upon society as a whole, and upon each separate person that belongs to it.

“I can cite a hundred examples that have come under my personal observation where the lives of little boys and little girls are being utterly blighted because we don't protect them.

“In Pennsylvania, after a boy is sixteen, they let him go down inside the mines and work—that's the law—but everyone who knows the real conditions realizes that hundreds of children younger than that are employed daily in the mines. And mind you, I'm considering the industries for children that have had the most careful attention. There are scores of other occupations which employ the child, where supervision by law is by no means so carefully looked out for. Some occupations have no supervision at all. Tens of thousands of boys and girls in the fruit, vegetable and sea-food canning industries, throughout the country, are practically exempt, as yet, from child labor restrictions. In many states, young boys who have not begun to get their growth, work in the coal mines and quarries. Hundreds of



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little ones are being sacrificed in vaudeville and moving picture shows. The eight-hour-a-day standard, now commonly held to be fair for adult men, has been secured for children in only ten states.

"And then there's the host of little ones, like those you found, shut up in sweat-shops where the air is often sickeningly foul, and those in the department stores, too."

"I've often thought of the messenger boy," put in Peter, "and wondered what protection he gets—running up to the club at all hours of the night and chasing about the streets with messages from fellows too intoxicated to get home to their wives and on, the Lord knows, what other sorts of errands."

"The messenger boy is an excellent example of the child whose career is ruined early by contact with evil conditions. He goes into gambling halls, houses of ill-repute and shameless dens of all kinds," replied Max. "One little fellow who was cross-examined recently, said:

"It's a lot of fun to be out on the street and around meeting people and seeing places, so we like the job. Some messengers are never satisfied to leave the tenderloin after they have been there awhile!"

"Thousands of these little youngsters, bright, clear-headed and intelligent are being ruined annually by the demoralization of their vocation and its lack of supervision by law.

"Then there's the case of the defenceless girl who



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is lured away. The things I've seen in New York and the things I know of through others are enough to make a decent man revolt. Too many people forget the horror of the white slave's degradation and the tortures and misery to which poverty has brought her."

"Are we going to lay that up against society or against the individual?" asked Peter.

Max flung up one hand impatiently:

"It's up to all of us, Peter. Only in a society where the terrors of starvation are bred by poverty can such evils flourish. If you cure poverty, you cure this evil.

"I wonder if you've ever heard how girls, little things from fifteen up, are bought and sold for prices, from sixty dollars to hundreds of dollars a head. Estimates made in New York show that the number of women white slaves imported, and those bringing them in, run well into the thousands each year. In one case it was found that over a thousand dollars was paid for an exceptionally attractive girl. Hundreds of innocent girls in every large city and in scores of the smaller ones, according to facts recently gathered, are annually inveigled into lives of degradation through a great system of traffic which spreads from one end of the country to the other, and which, through the insidiousness of its methods, it is almost impossible to wholly ferret out. In fact, so highly has the white slave traffic been developed that each



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year it grows more difficult to stop it. Take up your paper any day and you will read of the distraction of a father or a mother over the disappearance of a daughter."

"I've often wondered what became of such girls," said Peter, thoughtfully.

"In scores—yes, in hundreds of instances, the girls become enrolled in that army of women who lead lives of shame, too often not from personal choice but because they are lured away.

"These are only a few of the instances of the mal-constructed system under which we live, Stuyvie."

"I begin to see that it's all wrong, Max—that things as they are, and things as they ought to be, are exceedingly far apart," said Peter, laying aside his cigar and leaning forward earnestly:

"But how are we going to change it? It's hard to teach men unselfishness."

"The day of a common brotherhood is coming," said Max. "A movement is already on foot to bring it about. It has kept me interested in my fellow-men ever since college days. It is a movement that has been steadily gaining ground in spite of the mighty warfare against it directed by hundreds of powerful and rich men. It is a movement the principles of which contain more of the essence of freedom, justice and brotherly friendship among men, than any ever proposed. Under it capitalism becomes a thing of the past and you, Stuyvie, and I,



## MAX MUCKRAKES

and our brothers, meaning every human being in society, will possess equal rights—a condition wholly non-existent to-day. Then there can be no more white slave traffic, no more wasted lives of little boys and girls. Drunkenness, insanity, suicide, the bread line and all such curses of poverty will be evils of the past.”

“Whatever the remedy, Max, its foundation must be truth, not something in the guise of truth. It must be a square deal alike for all men,” said Peter. Then he continued:

“I mean to search until I have found and can apply a remedy that does all that.”

Springing from his chair and crossing the room, Max placed his hands on Peter’s shoulders.

“Upon my word, Stuyvie, I believe you’re on the right track now!” he exclaimed. “You and I may agree after all on the great humanizing principles of life. I never before thought we could.

“A new era is coming. It is going to mean a revolution. This old order is going out just as feudalism and witchcraft have passed. It will be a revolution against injustice. Perhaps it may mean bloodshed, the sacrifice of thousands of lives, but whatever the process, out of the ashes of the old will rise, newly robed, a society of real brothers.”

“It will not be a revolution of blood but one of love,” interposed Peter. “The very idealism of its purpose is opposed to strife and bloodshed.”



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"You may be right. I hope so," Max said. Then a twinkle crept into his eyes as he asked:

"Will you be here, to-morrow, when Fräulein Newman comes?"

Oblivious of any humor behind the query, Peter, who had risen, began to frown and run his fingers through his hair, as if Max's simple question had raised up a problem of tremendous importance. There ensued a moment of silence as though an inward struggle were going on. Then he said:

"No, I must go on. Delay would be inexcusable. I shall leave for the West, to-day."



## VIII

### CLARISSA

"YOU'RE elected," flung out Ted Morley to the red-cheeked, square-jawed man in the gray, suède gloves and jaunty, pearl-gray hat who, after paying the driver of an open landau liberally from a generous roll of bills, swung up the Minster Abbe Hotel steps, and took a seat beside Peter Rutledge and his jeering friend.

"What d'ye mean by elected?" drawled Weston Harwood, biting off the end of a long and particularly black stogie, and fixing an eagle eye upon Morley, "is it some kind of a new game or just—"

"A game! That's it, exactly, Harwood! You've struck it, first time. Sometimes I'm half inclined to think that you possess almost human perspicacity. It's a game of tag, and you're it, me boy. That fascinating drawl of yours, the way you wear those nifty gloves and pearl spats has, for sure, settled your hash with the widow. Oh, she's got you going. Clarissa is out for the dough—in large red letters—and she has you blazed as the real trail to safety deposit vaults with coupons and silver plate. She'll have your name on her front door yet and—"



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"Aw, cut that! You're jealous because I'm beating you to her—or is it Kady MacDown that's punctured your heart?"

Teddy Morley leaned forward and fixed the other with a withering glance:

"Keep her name out of this other one's class. Kady is a thoroughbred, don't forget that, son, a blue-stocking, as true, and square, and white as any that ever ran wild out in this section. Comparisons aren't in my line, West, but Clarissa with that son of hers can't weigh in with me. I might stand her—yes, if it weren't for that kill-joy human thing she calls Mylie. He's well nicknamed 'The Brute.' And the way she coddles him! Mylie—the name's enough to choke you, when it's tacked to that young baboon, with his ugly habit of snarling and growling every time one happens to find him loafing round the verandas. Study 'The Brute,' my boy, and you'll be a little less prodigal with hothouse flowers and carriage drives for Clarissa."

"You make me tired, Morley, with your cataloguing and classifying. Who gave you a monopoly in female botany, hereabouts? I know a few things about picking 'em apart, myself. You—"

"Hear, hear! What does it all mean? Shall I call the police, or run you both in, myself?" The intruder, a pink-and-white-skinned, wholesome-looking girl, with square shoulders, hair brushed back from a high forehead, wide-set, but spectacled, gray



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eyes, and a full, red-lipped mouth upon which there had gathered a whimsical smile, made her début from the open doorway. She was attired in a blue sailor waist and skirt, the former with a wide collar in the corners of which were embroidered red and white anchors, and a pair of low-cut, tan, summer shoes above which there peeped the slimmest and most bewitching of ankles in tan stockings.

Barely had she spoken ere the three men, hats in their hands, were upon their feet, each deferentially offering her his seat.

"They weren't quarrelling over you, Kady," exclaimed Peter.

"I'll wager it concerns a woman." She kept them all standing, while she searched the eyes of the two disputants. "Men of your sort, good men, shouldn't raise ructions among themselves over good women. It isn't chivalrous. All we ask is courtesy—the kind you're showing me, this minute—a little praise, some petting, and all your respect."

"How about—love?" asked Harwood, a little banteringly.

Kady MacDown shook a finger at the questioner:

"I'll nae tell ye o' love, for 'tis too bonnie a thing to analyze. But wi'out the rest I've told ye o', 'tis nae good," she proclaimed, lapsing prettily into the canny tongue of her native heath, for the moment.

She made an exquisite picture standing there with her lips apart, her chin tilted, the soft, little tendrils



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of her hair curling round her ears. Admiration, frank and sincere, shone in the eyes of the three men.

"Kady, ye bonnie, little innocent, 'pon my word, I dinna believe ye ken what love means, after aw," mimicked Harwood.

The girl nodded gayly and had opened her lips to fling back a retort, when a second woman emerged from the doorway, just in time to witness this tableau.

In a pale green gown of sheeny fabric, with the skirt extremely tight-fitting at the hips, and scant about the ankles, Clarissa Wedgewood, satirically referred to by the hotel guests as "The Widow," proved a decided contrast to the other woman.

"Ah, here you are, Weston! How love-l-y it was of you, d-e-a-r, to wait so patiently until I had changed for our walk," she exclaimed, sweeping across the veranda and coyly tucking a lean, long-fingered hand beneath Harwood's arm. "You naughty men are so dreadfully apt to neglect us poor helpless women."

Peter, Morley and Kady exchanged covert grins while Harwood fumbled uncomfortably with his watch-fob and, impelled by the woman, meekly allowed himself to be dragged down the steps and out toward the esplanade now crowded with gay and fashionable pedestrians.

Peter Rutledge, after saying farewell to Max, had come direct from the East to Los Angeles. During the fortnight of his residence at this rather exclusive



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hotel he had not only become fast friends with Ward Hodges, the genial, English manager, who had directed him how best to pursue his sociological studies, but he had also formed a warm attachment for Harwood, and for Morley, the proprietor's son. Teddy was just now acting in a sort of plenipotentiary capacity for Morley senior who, though a church-goer and a loud-lunged advocate of temperance in general, had, to Peter's disgust, proved his moral delinquency by selling liquor, *sub rosa*, for the benefit of his guests.

Peter had begun an exhaustive study of the social and industrial conditions in the West and he meant to prosecute this work until he had satisfied himself thoroughly regarding the different phases of life there. He was now resting, preparatory to continuing his journey, and the farcical drama in which the chief characters were Kady MacDown with all the freshness and loveliness of youth, the sinuous and voracious Clarissa recently down from the North where husband number one had made a million and then obligingly passed on, and Harwood, a reputedly wealthy young man from the East, furnished him and many other guests with a momentary diversion.

The widow was, by all odds, the leading lady; Harwood, broad-shouldered and nonchalant, the hero; Kady, the ingénue. Peter had dubbed Morley the chief trouble-maker.

Clarissa's evident purpose to match her dollars



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with those of a single, stray male who could go her one better in the matter of money had developed a situation in which the social philosopher found elements of both humor and pathos.

Because of her disregard for many petty conventionalities, the unchaperoned Kady MacDown had incurred the distrust of many of the women guests. Yet, within a few days after her arrival, she had come to be the best liked by the younger male set of any of her sex there, because of her ingenuousness and frank, companionable manner. Harwood was one of her adherents, and for that reason Clarissa's plan to carry him off was supplemented by an intense jealousy of Kady. The latter did not seem to bear the widow any ill-will on that account. A good fellow, and willing for any diversion that promised innocent amusement, she held no grudges against either man or woman.

That did not serve to lessen Harwood's growing fondness. Neither did it serve to diminish the widow's hatred, nor her conviction that she must eliminate Kady MacDown if she was to win Harwood.

As Kady, Peter and Morley sat amusedly watching this strangely assorted pair walking away, Clarissa was secretly revolving a plan, wherein by a final masterly stroke she hoped to gain for good the young giant beside her.

Two days later Harwood furnished Peter and



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Morley with the details of how Clarissa tried to carry out that plan.

"Weston dear," she now began, casting a fetching and coy glance at her companion, "it seems to me as though you found it a little stupid here, sometimes. Is that so? Are you tired—of—me?"

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Harwood. "Nothing of the sort. That is—you are—divine, Mrs. Wedgewood." She ignored the extravagance.

"But I'm almost sure I've seen you looking bored, more than once of late."

"Oh, no!" protested the man.

The widow uttered a sigh as loud as seemed to her practicable under the circumstances. Harwood glanced down. A tear, which the fair enchantress had somehow managed to summon, rolled down one cheek.

"I say now, what's the matter?"

"Oh dear! Oh dear! if you aren't bored, I am—dreadfully. This p-p-pl-lace tires me, so-o-o. Wouldn't it be sweet, just too sweet for words, if we—that is, if I could run away for a day or so, you know—up to 'Frisco, say?"

"Why don't you do it, then—and stop crying?"

"I would, but it's so aw-wf-ful lonesome travelling alone—I'm not c-c-rying." She began to snivel, audibly.

"You could take Mylie."

For the fraction of an instant, a steely glimmer



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flashed from the widow's tear-laden eyes, but she only said:

"The d-d-e-a-r boy can't stand riding on the t-t-r-a-i-n, ever. Since he was a b-a-b-y, I've had to look out for that. Oh, it's too bad. I'm so-o-oo lonely! so l-o-o-n-e-l-y!" The tears were dripping from her cheeks now. Several passers turned to stare at the couple. Harwood began to feel embarrassed.

"But surely there's someone who would run over with you—"

"Dear, dear Weston, I'm so neglected! so-o alone!"

"There, there," comforted Harwood, awkwardly patting her hand, himself taken in for the moment:

"I might go over with you—if you wanted me?"

A smile broke through the tears:

"Oh, could you, c-o-uld you, Weston! I'd be s-o-o happy!" Another deep sigh ended the sentence.

Thus the following morning Peter and a number of the other hotel guests were much amazed to behold Weston Harwood, immaculately groomed, assist Clarissa into a waiting carriage and drive away.

After the pair had boarded the north-bound, vestibuled flyer, Harwood devoted himself so assiduously to his companion that Clarissa beamed a benignant assent when he pleaded a desire to seek the smoker.

Though there were occasions when Harwood waked



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up and gave proof that he possessed dynamic energy, his ease-loving nature ordinarily rebelled at making decisions of any kind. Rather than endure Clarissa's tears he had offered to accompany her—which was what she desired. Once embarked on the journey he endeavored to make it as pleasurable and as eventful as possible.

Thus when he was accosted by a loud-voiced neighbor in the smoking-car, who introduced himself as "Cunnel" Drayton of "St. Loo, Mizoo," Harwood made room for the other beside him and smilingly held out a cigar.

In the Colonel, Harwood recognized the man whom one of his fellow-members at a New York club had once entertained. The "Cunnel," as he remembered, had the name of being a gay sport and was considered entertaining because of his many eccentricities.

That he still retained the qualities attributed to him previously was evidenced in the glow of joy that lighted his face when he learned of Mrs. Wedgewood's presence on the train. Instantly he was scurrying about for a porter and five minutes later he announced to Harwood that he had arranged for a private dinner for four.

Colonel Drayton introduced a youngish woman, whom he escorted from a rear vestibule, as Miss Sils.

It was plain that Mrs. Wedgewood, at first, looked with disfavor upon Miss Sils, fearing that Harwood



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might be taken with this new face, but a little later after all had been seated at dinner, and the second bottle of "Ruinat" had been ordered and opened by the Colonel, Clarissa's exuberance of spirits overtopped all such petty trivialities as jealousy, and after the next succeeding bottle, during the consumption of which the Colonel proposed that all stop off at Milo Ris, a small watering place, and see the sights, Mrs. Wedgewood's enthusiasm exceeded that of the other two in seconding the suggestion.

Then ensued the climax of this little adventure which Harwood, upon his return, painted with many chuckles:

"It was, for fair, the funniest party that ever broke into the atmosphere of Milo Ris," he said with a grin, after he had related the meeting with the Colonel. "It would have been disgusting, if it hadn't been so ridiculous.

"The 'Cunnel' was plain soused. Whatever project he had had in mind when he introduced himself to me on the train was completely drowned out. Miss Mattie Sils—the Colonel called her 'Meg' for short—a little thing in a green hat, brown skirt and yellow shoes, clung onto his arm, admonishing him whenever he tried to extinguish the noise of the street cars with his eloquence.

"The widow's hat had dropped down onto one ear and she kept bursting out into snatches of song



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and poetry. She held the Colonel a close second in the extent to which the flowing bowl had wrought havoc with her mental vibrations, but she stuck to yours truly like a—burr.

“Well, a circus happened to be doing business in the town, and the Colonel began to lead us toward it, chanting songs en route, and admonishing the populace as to his virtues.

“Somehow the widow and I got separated from the other two for a little, and we were nosing among the crowds around the side-show tent, and along a sort of fakirs’ row, when all of a sudden Clarissa—and take it from me, she was grotesque, saddled with a tip-tilted hat, a disordered green gown and a desire to weep—halted, and gripped my arm, and screamed in my ear:

““Oh, look there, Weston d-e-a-r, look!” I looked. She was pointing a finger at a sign that stuck out of a little tent beside the road, on which was printed in large letters, the words: ‘Marriages Performed Here.’

“Just then along comes the ‘Cunnel,’ chanting as usual. Something in Clarissa’s attitude caught his attention, for he roared out, suddenly:

““Oh, ho! ha, ha! Want ter git married, little ‘un?” Then turning to me he shouted: ‘Why don’t cher marry the lady?’ A sentimental look crept over his face. The little green-hatted girl was hanging to his arm and he looked down at her a-blinking:

““Le’s all git spliced. Wh’ you shay, ole man?”



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"The noise that he made had already attracted a small-sized crowd, and a little man in a round, black cap and a striped, seersucker coat poked his head out between the tent flaps and beckoned the Colonel to enter.

"'Ef you ladies 'n gents would like ter git hitched, this 'ere's th' place,' he explained after we had walked in. 'We furnish th' license and pervide th' parson. They ain't nothin' fer ye ter do but dig up two bones; jist stand up 'n say th' word.'

"His brisk, business-like manner caught the Colonel's fancy.

"'All right, son, put 'er through with me 'n this gal,' he said. Then, looking over his shoulder at me, with the widow hanging closely to my arm: "'n then tackle them two behind.'

"By that time the crowd from outside had begun to swarm in just like bees. There was some horse laughter, but no one said very much, and it was evident that everybody felt a good deal of curiosity. The widow had steadied up a little—I think the excitement of the proposition sort of charmed her half sober, for she made a heroic attempt to straighten her hat, aimed a jab or two at her hair, and while a tall, sallow-looking man wearing a black coat and a white tie was reading the ceremony that made John Whittier Drayton and Mattie Maria Sils man and wife, Clarissa somehow loosed her grip on my arm, let go altogether, and raising herself on her



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tiptoes, looked over the bride's shoulder, all strung up with interest.

"It had all seemed a huge joke to me. But now, all of a sudden, I began to do some rapid-fire thinking. Then, while everybody's eyes were centred on the parson who was declaiming: 'I pronounce thee man and wife,' I scooted down, wriggled through the crowd around me, and lighted away from that tent like a gazelle pursued by the Devil.

"A loud scream that sounded fearfully like Clarissa starting in on one of her tear storms echoed in my ears as I dodged towards the railroad station, but you can bet I didn't stop to look back and by the fortunes that followed the blessed, I managed to get a strangle hold on the train just as it was pulling out."

Harwood had barely finished his story when the voice of the widow, raspingly sharp and cutting, was heard outside the open window.

"Get things moving now, Miss. We have only a little time." And the three friends, looking out, to their astonishment beheld Kady MacDown, preceded by Mylie, being herded into a carriage evidently bound for the railway station.

Later Peter learned that Kady had suddenly received word that her tiny income had been cut off by the death of her guardian and uncle, and being too proud to accept aid from her friends among the



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masculine contingent, and without women friends, the girl had taken a position as travelling companion with the widow.

The same day Peter himself, gathering together his traps, and bidding good-bye to his acquaintances, again set out on his travels.



## IX

### AN ADVENTURE WITH BEARS

FOR over a year after his departure from Los Angeles, Peter's whereabouts were known to his friends in New York only through occasional letters whose postmarks varied from San Antonio and El Paso to Denver and Tacoma.

One afternoon in middle March the elder Rutledge received a long letter from his son which closed with the following:

"I have decided to wind up my tour out here with a trip into the far North. I ran into Craig Winter the other day. He is out here cruising about in the Corsair, his father's yacht. In some ways, Craig needs a nurse as much as he ever did. But you know what chums we were in college, and since our meeting last week the impression has grown on me that he has a purpose somewhere in the back of his head which, sooner or later, will make a man of him, and incidentally help the world.

"To-morrow the Corsair will come here, to Seattle, to take on fresh supplies and a hunting outfit. At first I refused to have anything to do with the trip, but Craig offered to give me a free hand to map out



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sailing directions and the whole itinerary as I chose, so in the end I decided to take him up with thanks.

"I am longing to see you again, but I feel that my journey out here lacks completion without a voyage to Alaska. I will write you frequently and will be there to see you before winter comes again. Your affectionate son, Peter."

Three days later found Peter and his friend, Craig, running out of Seattle Harbor on board one of the trimmest, and at the same time one of the stanchest bits of nautical workmanship that the millions of an Eastern banker had ever been able to acquire.

Ten years before "Old Man Winter," as he was known in Wall Street, had pursued a hobby for hunting in the North and, with his accustomed extravagance, he had had the Corsair built on the west coast for that special purpose. Now she was his son's plaything, to do with as Craig chose.

As this luxuriously fitted, glistening-white steam yacht nosed her way among the beautiful and picturesque islands of Puget Sound, leaving behind a stretch of silver upon the silent and otherwise unrippled surface of the water, and here and there putting to flight flocks of sea-fowl and wild ducks, Peter and his companion felt at once the wonderful charm of the locality.

Their first stop was at Metlakatla, the little government reservation on Annette Island, where a visit was paid to Father Duncan.



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The miracle which that heroic missionary had wrought upon his "children," a band of less than a thousand Indians who were cannibals when he found them, remained impressed upon Peter's mind ever afterwards.

"Christian," as the priest was popularly spoken of by the natives, showed Peter and Craig over the store, cannery and saw-mill where the inhabitants were working co-operatively, each man doing his best, and happy in the work. The two friends were also invited to inspect the governmental system which provided for the regular election of administrative officials and a police service, and which imposed and enforced a curfew law.

The houses in Metlakatla, the priest explained were all built by the natives, and it was a law of the community that no young man should marry until he had built his own home.

Peter and Craig remained here for some time studying this unique experiment in sociology before they bade farewell to the kindly and venerable missionary and his adopted people and sailed northward.

At Old Kasaan they got their first view of the region of totem poles which, beginning with this deserted Indian village, and extending all along the northern passage, have made southeastern Alaska famous.

Then they went on, exploring the notable old towns of Wrangell, Petersburg, Juneau and Skagway, getting



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glimpses of the wonderful Auk and Eagle glaciers, en route, and finally making their way back to Baranof and Sitka Harbor.

Sitka, formerly a celebrated fur-trading post, has the distinction of having been the capital of Alaska, and the mellow, quaint, old-world atmosphere pervading the place charmed both the travellers. Here they found a treasure-filled cathedral, so beautiful in its picturesqueness as to bring vividly to the mind of each the memory of those ancient, ivy-clad churches that render entrancing the sleeping lanes and cliffs of Brittany.

Above Sitka hangs the snowy crater of Edgecomb. Strange faces, as foreign in appearance as many of the buildings, thronged the streets, and it was like a welcoming to Peter and Craig when they came upon a detachment of Uncle Sam's troops swinging across the parade grounds of a station there. For a moment their hearts beat faster, and each youth instinctively lifted his hat to the familiar colors floating from the masthead above the post building.

And now, early signs of spring indicating that the big brown bear, Alaska's most dangerous and noble game, was awake, the Corsair's nose was headed for Admiralty Island where finally Captain Swift, the sailing master, came to anchor in Chapin Bay, a beautiful land-locked harbor just off the dangerous Chatham Straits.

The next morning at dawn, accompanied by Jim,



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a six-foot tall, leathery-skinned guide brought from Sitka and four sailors equipped with three days' rations for all, the two sportsmen were rowed round the reef that reached out for a mile into the straits and finally landed in Murderer's Cove, an inlet that got its name from a series of homicides committed by a madman who, until he was finally slain by a bear, was accustomed to attack and behead every person who landed on the island. Because of the precipitous nature of Admiralty's coast line, Murderer's Cove was the only spot where it was possible to disembark in safety.

Leaving the four sailors to wait their return, Peter and Craig, each bearing a thirty-pound kit besides his heavy rifle, set off behind big Jim.

Admiralty with its spruce-timbered cliffs and ravines abounding in skunk's-cabbage, the bear's favorite tidbit in the early spring, was reputed to be a bruin's paradise.

However, an all-day tramp beneath tundra-festooned boughs and over what seemed to both Peter and Craig miles of mountain underbrush failed to reveal traces of the big game and, that night when Peter unstrapped his kit and sank down on top of it to listen to Craig's grunts of weariness and watch Jim build a fire, he was inclined to doubt the wisdom of their choice of hunting grounds.

"I say, old man," said Craig, "we're getting our money's worth of this—a full day in the wilds and



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nothing in sight larger than half-wild deer and a few grouse."

The guide, who was breaking dry twigs and tossing them upon the now crackling flames, allowed a grin to spread over his lean cheeks.

"You get heem, by'm by, ter-morrer."

"You're darn sure of it, Jim," said Winter, sarcastically.

"Wait, you see," replied the guide laconically, as he selected a tin dish from the kit and proceeded towards the nearby spring.

Following a meal of roasted partridge, the two friends lost little time in seeking their blankets, but before daylight Jim had marshalled them in line again, and they resumed the hunt. For two hours, until the sun had well risen, nothing occurred and Peter, who was the tougher of the two, was finally on the point of supplementing Craig's pathetically humorous appeals to Jim, to cut it out and return to the Corsair, when suddenly, as they broke into a little clearing beneath a mountain ledge, the guide stopped, turned round and significantly motioned upward. Looking up, Peter saw what was evidently the entrance to a cave, well above his head. But hardly had he noted the aperture when Craig, who in spite of his dislike for climbing was a true sportsman, suddenly flung aside his rifle, jumped ahead, and began scrambling up the side of the precipice.

It took but an instant to solve the mystery of this



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wild manœuvre. A pair of bear cubs of perhaps twenty pounds' weight had poked their noses out of the cave. A moment later the surprised youngsters were seized by Craig and sent tumbling down onto the leafy moss at the feet of the other two. But as Peter sprang forward to lay hands on the squealing cubs, Jim became suddenly animated:

"Run queek! Old bear come—mad!" he shouted.

Hardly had he spoken when a snarling roar wakened the echoes and not one, but a pair of the most villanous brown bears ever seen on Admiralty Island crashed into view at the right.

Craig, who had reached the level and snatched up the cubs despite Jim's warning, instantly dropped them, seized his rifle and with the other two took aim at the onrushing animals.

Simultaneously three rifles cracked. Neither of the bears halted. Jim's shrill voice steadied them:

"Agin!" he screamed, "heet front of foreleg!"

Once more the rifles spoke. Then, as the three scattered toward the nearest trees, the male bear with a roar that reverberated across the mountain valley was seen to rise on his haunches, frantically paw the air for a moment and with a grunt fall over on his back and lie still.

Each man had retreated to cover now. The mother bear, with blood dripping from her foam-flecked jaws, and despite two gaping holes in her breast and flank came on with a whine of rage.



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Pausing beside her cubs only long enough for a reassuring sniff, she made straight at the tree behind which Craig had sought shelter.

Crack! The guide's rifle spoke, sending another Mauser bullet into the animal's hide. But she still kept her feet and had almost reached Craig's refuge when the latter, with his gun raised, stepped out to take aim. As he did so his foot struck a projecting root, he slipped, tried to recover and fell on his back with the bear upon him.

Then the guide made the shot of the day.

Already on one knee, Jim cast a single swift glance along his rifle barrel and as his gun spurted flame bruin, now in the act of bringing down her paw with deadly force upon Craig, suddenly swayed, shivered and crumpled up in a lifeless heap.

Three hours later Jim had stripped the hides from the two giant carcasses and, with the most mischievous cubs ever captured in tow, the trio were on their way back to Murderer's Cove. It proved a long tramp to the boat where they found the waiting crew anxious to put off to the yacht.

Night was well at hand and the sky had grown sombre and overcast when the boat was launched and headed into Chatham Straits. And now ensued a startling episode, and one which, had it not been for cool heads assisted by what afterwards seemed to all in the boat to be the kindness of Providence, would probably have cost the lives of everyone on board.



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Chatham Straits are a terror to all mariners in the North because of the glacial hurricanes, known as "woolies," which are apt to sweep down upon them at a moment's notice.

When the dory with its seven occupants started out on the row back around the mile-long ledge, the water in the inlet was fairly smooth but the whisper of the rising wind could be heard plainly out in the straits. As the boat progressed, it was plain that a storm was rising. With the wind cutting across the mouth of Murderer's Cove, it was also clear that the row out into the straits would have to be lengthened to a good two miles if the boat was to go clear of the ledge when the moment came to turn and head with the gale into Chapin Bay.

Night had fallen before the dory nosed out into the full sweep of the straits. Then suddenly the real gravity of the situation dawned upon all. Darkness made it impossible to see the reef. The waves had become mountains. A terrific "woolie" was blowing.

Jim yelled to Peter to put back but the latter, who held the tiller, knew that the advice had come too late and he kept the boat's head well up into the wind. Craig and the guide, with the cubs between them in the bow, received the brunt of the spray which drenched all on board.

The situation had become extremely critical.

The ledge, with the breakers combing over it, lay somewhere to the left. If they went too far beyond



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the end of the reef, the boat would be swept down Chatham Straits and would probably founder. If they turned too soon, the frail dory would dash all to death upon the ledge. Safety depended largely upon the judgment of the helmsman. The task of coming about when it became necessary also called for a cool hand and head, for in Chatham Straits the waves drive in "threes," a small billow coming first, then one of middle height and finally a mountainous swell.

In coming about in the darkness, Peter not only had to guess correctly when they had rowed out far enough to escape the reef but the turn had to be executed when they were on top of the largest wave of a "three." Otherwise they were likely to founder.

The wind was now a terrible roar. Realizing the peril each of the four men at the oars was heroically bending to his task. No one spoke.

Every heart beat faster as Peter's voice rang out suddenly ordering all to prepare for the turn. Then the dory was flung up on the summit of a great billow; Peter uttered a sharp command; the port oars caught and held for a moment; the spray ceased to fly; and instantly all on board felt the easing of the strain as the boat swung off with the wind.

The roar of the breakers now seemed to be rising directly ahead. Were they driving to death?

The little craft was lifted on high; then she eased into the hollow beneath. As she did so there was



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a dull scraping against the side, an oar was unshipped, a huge rock loomed up for a moment out of the darkness and then was gone. The boat with its seven occupants was barely shaving the end of the deadly reef. Instantly every rower bent with redoubled energy to his oars. All on board knew that this was the crisis. The roar of the surf at the right seemed to thunder on all sides for a few moments. Then as the oar-blades and the wind drove the craft steadily forward into Chapin Bay there was a perceptible lessening of sound, gradually the seas diminished and half an hour later they made out the anchor lights on board the Corsair.

The next morning Peter directed Captain Swift to run back to Sitka where the guide was landed, and from whence Peter shipped the two bear cubs to his sister in Philadelphia. Later when he returned to New York he learned that the bears had proven so troublesome to Helen that her husband had presented them to Dr. Carson the head of the Zoölogical Gardens in Philadelphia where the two animals, now full grown, are still on exhibition.

From Sitka the Corsair sailed for Cordova, the newly risen town of the Alaskan copper kings, where it had been arranged to receive mail from home. A surprise in the form of a wired message from Craig's father waited them there. Winter, senior, requested his son to take on board an engineer whom Mr. Winter was employing to investigate ore properties in the



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Copper River region and whom, the message ran, it was particularly desired to have rushed back to New York.

The banker had written Rogers, the man in question, for Craig and Peter had barely received the message when Rogers appeared. There was nothing to do but to comply with the father's request, and after the two had taken a hasty survey of this Alaskan town which has its being in the railroad terminus that has opened a channel there through which billions of dollars in coal and ore are to flow out of the great Northern Peninsula into the pockets of a few of the world's money barons, the Corsair was headed southward with the new passenger.

Young Rogers, who was a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, had spent a year and a half inspecting territory which was the cause of one of the nation's most notorious land-grabbing scandals.

On the day before the arrival of the Corsair in Seattle, the wind-tanned engineer sat beneath the awning in the stern of the yacht explaining to Peter and Craig what he termed the most colossal plot ever devised to deprive the American people of billions of dollars' worth of natural resources.

"One of the government's earlier geological surveys indicated that there were twelve thousand square miles of the finest coal land up there," said Rogers.



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"Later explorations show that there may be more than ten times that coal area, worth to the people of the country an incalculable sum. The mushroom city of Cordova has sprung up from nothing through the ramifications of those who expect to acquire control of this wealth of coal and of a fortune in copper and other metals equally as great. Of course, these men claim that they are wholly within the law, but they are in reality a gigantic robber trust."

"But if what they do is legal—" Peter interrupted.

"It's legal according to the laws which the paid servants of these plunderers get enacted," answered Rogers. "Otherwise it's too criminal to discuss. These men also mean to gain possession of all the water power rights in Alaska and the Cascade range. Their plan is, first to be able to exercise autocratic power over all shipments out of the country by acquiring control of the harbor frontage all about the mouth of the Copper River, and secondly to discourage all competitive mining by having their paid engineers declare all ore property not their own to be valueless."

"But if it's a steal and everybody knows it's a steal, why can't we make 'em quit—just fire 'em out?" asked Craig.

"It can't be done in these times," replied Rogers. "They get control by subterfuge, stealth and the power of wealth, and you can no more dislodge them than you can pull down the mountains."



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"I don't agree with that," interjected Peter, quickly. "You know what is said about fooling all the people all the time. Some day Americans will wake up in a body, change their system, and then—well, every such colossal theft will have to be undone—"

The sun-swept face of the young engineer turned quickly. His eyes gleamed:

"But that 'some day' is, very likely, a long way off!"

"Perhaps not as far as we fancy," responded Peter.

That evening the Corsair dropped anchor in Seattle Harbor whence Rogers hastened ashore to catch the night flyer East while the other two climbed out of khaki suits into civilized garb, and for the first time in many weeks conventionally joined a procession of theatre-goers, after which they sought out the grill-room of a first-class hotel.

"Well, Craig," said Peter finally, glancing across at his clear-eyed companion who was now revelling in the delights of a thick beefsteak well spread with mushrooms, "what's the moral of all our fun? Has there been any?"

"Moral," drawled the other, pausing in the act of taking a particularly luscious mouthful, "you don't mean to say, Stuyvesant, that you've been hunting for morals along with bears and totems?"

"Yes," rejoined Peter, "I have, and I've found one. It's just this—Rogers gave us the cue—you



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can't humanize men as long as their industrial system puts a premium on greed and looting. Down in lazy Mexico, in the soft temperature of Los Angeles, out on the plains of the central West and up North amid the winter rigors of ice and snow, it's all the same. There's only a little humanity to be found anywhere. Broad humanity is lacking. The well-spring of business motives has got to be changed. I don't know just how that is to be accomplished, but I intend to learn."

"When you find out, let me know, Stuyvie. I'm a bloomin' stray one myself, a sort of untethered goat, but before I'm too old to masticate steaks like this I'll get together and maybe give things a little push that'll help 'em along."

The next morning these two friends bade each other good-bye, Craig going southward to join the ranks of the tarpon colony at Avalon, while Peter sought out the banker to whom he had been recommended in a letter from home.

Garrulous little Amos Metcalf was one of Seattle's foremost citizens. He had fox-like gray eyes that gleamed when he spoke, and a cold and clammy hand which caused Peter to shiver when he touched it. But it was plain from the first that the man regarded Peter as one of his own kind—a member of that class called the privileged, only the banker's all too evident obsequiousness proved his reverence for New Yorkers of that brand.



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"Seattle isn't what it was before the panic," he volunteered during a general conversation wherein Peter had remarked on the city's apparently advantageous location with reference to the business of Alaska and the rest of the country. "A good many people here fell by the wayside then—couldn't meet their mortgages and such like, when we felt obliged to call in our loans. So, you see, property sort of went to smash."

"I don't quite understand you," said Peter.

Amos smirked and spread out his white, claw-like hands upon the top of the mahogany table between them.

"Naturally some of us bankers profited by the panic. We had a little warning beforehand."

Peter, paying close attention, suddenly felt amazement and indignation boiling up inside.

"Yes, ye see," went on Amos, "the big operators of Wall Street sent us secret code wires offering unusually large interest rates for loans on six months' paper. We're a long way from Wall Street here but we knew well enough that something was up and we kept our ears and eyes wide open. Naturally we were glad to lend funds on such advantageous terms to men of such high prestige in the money world, so several of us bankers got together here and began to call in our outstanding loans."

"But," broke in Peter, "wasn't that just what those telegrams were for—to trick you into calling



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in your local loans, that those New Yorkers might secure the money to help them out when the bottom was struck?"

"I expect that was about it," replied the other, smacking his lips with satisfaction. "Naturally when our borrowers couldn't pay us we just had to take over a good deal of their realty."

"It must have put a lot of your property owners down and out," said Peter. The banker mournfully shook his head, at the same time rubbing his hands together briskly.

"Yes, it did some. But, you know, we bankers have to use our best judgment—that is, protect our stockholders up to the very limit—that's imperative—and take advantage of every fair opportunity for increasing our interest earnings. Naturally, there have been some hard times here in Seattle since the crash."

"But not for the banks?" interposed Peter.

"No, not for the banks," said the little man, winking gleefully.

"That is, you mean that you deliberately robbed your own home people of their holdings, took them unexpectedly, forced them out of their possessions and into insolvency, in order to loan money to a half-dozen or more high-handed thieves in Wall Street?"

Amos Metcalf suddenly jerked himself up in his chair and stared at Peter.

"Why—why—that's putting it pretty strong—I thought—"



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"Yes, you thought I would sympathize with your methods of getting rich at the expense of hundreds of others—by ruining your own neighbors to get a few per cent. more interest from these ruthless plutocrats in New York who have but to lift a finger to own such men as you."

The little man had risen to his feet.

"Sir, your language is insulting. I pursued only the usual and legal methods of business."

"You've forgotten your humanity," replied Peter, "or you never possessed any." Without another word he turned his back upon the nonplussed little rascal and leaving the bank returned to his hotel. There he found a message waiting him from Dr. Randall informing him of the critical illness of Hermann Romwitz.

Instantly all of his deepest sympathies were wakened. He resolved to start immediately for the East. Many times during his recent travels he had thought of poor Hermann and his family, and several letters, badly spelled but brave, cheerful and teeming with optimism had reached him from little Felix, who evidently felt himself to be the mainstay of the other four because of his success in caring for the little truck garden attached to the country home where Peter had placed the family.

"I will do all in my power to lighten the last days of these unfortunate people," was his thought as he watched the last lights of Seattle flash past the



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windows of the train that was bearing him homeward. Then again his mind went back to Amos Metcalf's disclosures of how this Western city that he was leaving behind had received a staggering blow. He knew that the craft of the country's great money kings had inflicted the wrong. It flashed upon him that Seattle was one of the arms of an octopus of greed whose ramifications extended from Alaska to Mexico and from San Francisco to New York. It was sucking the very life-blood from the entire land. The baby in the sweat-shop, the rancher on the plain, the humble house-owner in the city, all were its victims.



X

“THE HOUR WILL COME”—

FROM boyhood Hermann Romwitz had struggled and fought against poverty. Jan, his step-brother, who collected rags and bottles and to whom the baby, Hermann, was left before he could lisp a word, was terribly poor. But Jan spoke English and so Hermann grew up to use that tongue instead of the mixed Yiddish of his immigrant forbears.

Shortly after Hermann first went out to service in a little tailor's shop, Jan died from the same cough that had taken off his parents.

Thus at nine years of age Hermann was thrown upon his own resources. He managed to get along. He was permitted to sleep in a corner of his employer's workroom, a dismal, little apartment in a gloomy basement always draughty and damp. The dollar and a half that he got every Saturday night paid for his food and sometimes he even saved a little out of that.

He worked there nine years, and when he was receiving eight dollars a week he met Rachael Novitch and they were married. Life was filled with golden dreams then for Hermann and for Rachael, too.



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It was almost ten years before little Felix came and in the meanwhile, with Rachael's slender earnings and his own increased by dint of working late at night after he returned home from the tailor shop, Hermann managed to hoard a small sum. But one day, through the defalcation of a cashier, the bank that kept this money failed and he was unable to recover a cent of the savings.

That was a dreadful calamity. In addition to this loss the death of his employer, a little later, threw Hermann out of work. He and the frail Rachael now began an existence such as the poorest seldom encounter.

At first it was not so bad. There was only one small mouth to feed. Hermann secured work that could be done at home and Rachael helped on that. But as the years slipped by the other babies came—first Sergius and then Rosie. Still the mother and father dreamed of days when a stroke of good fortune would permit them again to set aside a little money. As time flew however such anticipations were less often the subject of conversation.

Then too there was the cough. At first Hermann put it out of his thoughts. It would pass. Hundreds of his people working in the factories, sweat-shops and tailoring establishments were similarly afflicted. Every man coughed in the place where he had worked so long. Then he noticed that Rachael had acquired the habit of interrupting the silences with a dry,



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irritated hack. Fear seized him but he made no comment. Only when he discovered that each one of the babies, as it began to grow up, had the same affection, was hope extinguished like the flame of a snuffed out candle.

Even the advent of Peter and his kindnesses into Hermann's life, and the subsequent transference of the family to a farm in the country kindled no illusions in the father's heart. For Rosie's sake he wished to live. It terrified him to think of what might happen to her if he were gone. Now that the terrors of starvation no longer stifled all other reflections, the helpless child was constantly in his thoughts. They had grown so close together since the day when they were freed from city slavery and left to themselves in their new home!

He never ceased to thank God for that home. It was a pleasant place to live in—with its garden patch, a little flock of barnyard fowl, the rose-bush climbing over the porch and a sheltering hedge in front. He would gladly have helped Felix plant and weed and hoe and carry water for the vegetables and the flowers but he coughed so when he undertook exertions like that. Twice after such attempts, when he wiped his mouth his hand came away red.

Though he grew weaker every day he perceived that Felix, kept continually out of doors by his boyish zeal to make their garden pay, became brown-skinned and sturdier. Sergius, always the silent member of



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the family, changed less perceptibly; indeed Hermann felt with a shudder that this wonderful, health-restoring life had come too late for the younger boy, and for the mother as well.

Rachael was heroic. Her patient endurance of terrible odds against poverty for so many years had taught him a deep reverence for her. However God decreed, he knew that she would go on to the end maintaining the same uncomplaining, cheerful and courageous front towards himself and the children.

When he was able to get out of doors Rosie always went with him, clinging to his hands, her lips ever questioning him of the sunlight on the flowers, the brook-riven meadow below the house and all the living things of this beautiful country that she so acutely sensed but could not see. In the intervals between his terrible paroxysms of coughing, his heart contracted so often at the thought of her pathetic blindness! His yearning to help take the place of that irretrievably spoiled eyesight was his one longing for life. He blamed himself. Why had he permitted her, his baby, the gentlest flower of his and Rachael's heart, to suffer this frightful affliction!

The constant burden of such reflection served to shorten the span of his days. The morning after Peter's arrival in New York a telegram reached him announcing that the elder Romwitz was dying.

“Come quickly, if you wish to see him,” was Dr.



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Randall's message. Instantly Peter hastened to the railway station.

An hour's ride and a brief walk brought him to the farm and the bedside of the invalid. He was shocked at the sight of the wasted form and hollow cheeks. Rachael, the mother, grief-stricken and herself greatly emaciated, sat by the bedside, her feeble hands smoothing the bedclothes or caressing the curls of the blind child who stood sobbing close to the dying man. Felix, with tear-dimmed eyes, but pitifully smiling, came first to greet him; the younger brother followed hesitatingly.

A shadowy smile crossed Hermann's lips as he caught sight of Peter.

"You're kind to come, sir. God will repay you." Then he went on:

"Let me kiss them all before I go." The racking cough had mercifully fled. His burning eyes beckoned Felix:

"Little boy, little boy, you will take papa's place! Be brave. Take care of Mama and Rosie and Sergius." Felix held his lower lip tightly between his teeth.

The feeble voice failed for a moment. Then—

"Kiss papa, Rosie! He's going away—but he will wait until you come—there are beautiful things there; you shall see them! you shall see them! Sergius—Rachael—" tears streamed down the woman's face as she silently leaned closer to catch his words:



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“Beloved, thank God—for you! His love and yours were worth all.”

Sergius burst into bitter sobbing. Rosie, frightened at the spectre of death, caught at her mother's arm with trembling hands. The brave mother, with an arm sheltering the helpless girl, gently clasped the dying man's fingers in her own.

“I shall come,” she whispered softly.

“And Rosie?” only the mother's ear caught the words.

“God will protect her,” she responded.

Hermann's eyes flickered. The lids drooped and were still.

Suddenly Rachael released the inert fingers, and folding the two boys and the girl closely in her arms, mingled her quiet sobbing with that of the children. Reverentially, Peter and Dr. Randall withdrew and closed the door.

Two days later, when Rachael led her children home from the peaceful village cemetery, the grief-stricken woman was met at the door by Mrs. Josephine Thatcher, a white-haired, sweet-faced, elderly woman to whom Peter had related the story of the family's hardships. From the moment this motherly soul looked into the saddened, tired eyes of Rachael and felt Rosie's soft girlish hands inquiringly pressing her own, Aunt Joe, as she was universally known, lost her heart.

“The poor dears,” she told herself as she closed the



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front gate and hurried down the street to her home after having wept with Rachael, praised Felix and petted the younger boy and blind Rosie, "the Lord surely has afflicted them beyond understanding. Brave little woman! how dreadfully she coughs! and such a sweet little blind innocent!" Aunt Joe's kindness shone principally in deeds, but sometimes when she was alone its expression overflowed in gentle soliloquies. From the day when that first little mound was heaped up in the graveyard she became an angel of comfort to the feeble mother and the fatherless children.

Two months later when Rachael Romwitz lay on the same bed where the father had whispered farewell, and in her turn bade the three little ones good-bye, it was into the arms of gentle, weeping Aunt Joe that little Rosie flung herself in shrinking fear for her mama. It was Aunt Joe too who kept Sergius from throwing himself wildly upon the bed, comforting the little ones with her soothing words, bringing a last smile to the lips of the dying woman.

Peter, as well as Dr. Randall, was there again, and after Aunt Joe had brought them all back from the cemetery and had gathered them under her wing in the brightly lighted sitting-room, it was agreed that she should serve jointly with Felix in looking after the two youngest ones.

During the succeeding months before Sergius died, Rosie Romwitz and Aunt Joe became such friends



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that the gentle little child made the foster-mother her confidant in every tribulation of her shut-in life.

“You see, Auntie,” she would say, “even now I don’t remember quite how dear papa looked before—I was blind. Isn’t it worse than all else, to lose eyes? I wanted to see awfully—oh more ’n I can ever make even you, dear Auntie, understand! Before mama went away I wanted to see her—I wanted to see her so! But now somehow I don’t mind so much. Is Sergius going to die too, Auntie? Will I die?”

“There, there, Rosie!” Aunt Joe would reply, a lump rising in her throat, “you mustn’t talk of such things. We’re going to be happy and pray that we all may be well and strong.”

“You are so good and kind, Auntie—just like mama—that I have to do what you tell me; but Sergius does cough worse ’n papa did; and he’s only a little boy. He didn’t get out of bed once, yesterday; and I heard him praying to go to mama.”

Aunt Joe, at this remark, turned her head aside to wipe her eyes with a corner of her apron:

“Jesus will take care of Sergius, dear.”

The blind child slipped a slender arm around the other’s neck:

“I don’t know Jesus very well yet, Auntie, but if you say he will take care of mama and papa and Sergius and us all, I know it must be true.”

Only a week after this conversation, Peter came



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down from New York again to attend the funeral of the quiet, little boy who suffered in silence until the very last, uncomplainingly giving up at the end and bravely bidding adieu to Felix, Aunt Joe and little Rosie with heart-breaking cheerfulness.

"I don't like coughing; it hurts too much," he whispered to his foster-mother. "I'm going to papa and mama. No one coughs where they are—do you think so?" and the sobbing woman gently assured him that there were no ills or coughs in that far-away, sweet Heaven for little ones like Sergius.

From the beginning, Dr. Randall had despaired of the mother, father and little boy. While he had done everything in his power to soothe and make easy the months left to each of them, Rosie had continued the person of greatest professional interest because of the possibility that in her the disease might be conquered. Felix was now out of danger, and after Sergius died the little house was thoroughly renovated and cleansed and every resource that medical ingenuity could devise was adopted to save the blind child. Instead of spending only a part of her time with Felix and the blind sister, Aunt Joe closed up her home and came to live permanently with them.

From this big-hearted woman, Rosie learned many things. She listened to Aunt Joe's childhood stories; she spent hours with her in the woods and fields learning about the birds and animals and such beautiful and sentient things out of doors as Aunt Joe knew



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how to make interesting to youthful imaginations. During the evenings Felix read to her—for he was now studying under the tutelage of Aunt Joe and Peter, who frequently came down to visit his little charges—and Aunt Joe told them both many interesting tales.

Until the close of a long summer of careful attendance, Dr. Randall was hopeful that Rosie's lungs might get well again. But at last he gave up. The little girl began to fade, Felix said, just as the wild flowers outside the hedge in front of the house faded. She coughed only a little, but each day her lassitude of body increased.

Aunt Joe, with breaking heart, fought against the alarming symptoms.

“Shall we go down to the river and listen to the skylark, this afternoon?” she would ask.

“Auntie dear, I want to, oh, so bad; but I just am too weak; I feel like I was all worn out. My body doesn't want what I want. Besides, Auntie dear, sometimes I'm tired of the dark. Why couldn't I have been let to see, like Felix, Auntie?”

“Perhaps you will see, some day, Rosie,” Aunt Joe replied to this, seeking to divert the child's mind.

“No, Aunt Joe,” the little one responded, “you oughtn't to say that. Your voice says it only—your heart knows it isn't true.”

“But, darling, many people who don't see are happy. You can be happy, too.”



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"Most always I'm too tired now, Auntie. I think of papa and mama and Sergius and it makes me feel as if I must hurry and go to them."

"Hush, Rosie! You must stay and be a good sister to Felix who needs you. Felix is going to be a fine farmer one of these days and he will want Rosie, very much."

"He will be married, some day, just like papa and mama were, won't he?" the little one answered. Such precociousness amazed Aunt Joe.

All through the winter blind Rosie kept up, going out for a sled ride with Felix, sometimes, but more often too weak to move out of the house. Just as the rose-vine clambering over the porch lattice began to shoot forth soft tendrils, the end approached. Aunt Joe with tearful misgivings had for some days been obliged to hold the frail little atom in her arms whenever Rosie wished to be near the window to feel the out-of-doors. Dr. Randall's visits became more frequent. One day the child called to Aunt Joe:

"Auntie dear, come here!" The heart of the other throbbed violently at the solemnity of the child's request.

"What is it, darling?" she asked.

"I'm going away—to dear mama and papa and Sergius."

"No, no, child!"

"Yes, Auntie! good, dear Auntie! I'm going soon, too. I'm not afraid. I want to go because I'm tired



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of having to stay here in the darkness—I'm tired—and I wonder too, Auntie; tell me, why did papa and mama and Sergius and all of us have the dreadful cough? and why were we so poor in the big city?”

“Many people are poor, little girl—many, many people. We can't help that.”

“But why, why?” insisted the childish voice. “Lots of other people aren't poor. You, Aunt Joe, never knew what it was to be poor like us and have a dreadful cough.”

“It's because men don't live quite as they ought to, dear. I couldn't make you understand about that. I'm not sure that I understand it myself. But I know it wouldn't be so if everyone did what Jesus commanded when he lived on earth. He said, 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.' Men don't obey that. I guess it's because others were disobedient that your papa was so poor and went away to Heaven.”

“If everybody did what Jesus said, would everybody be well, and not poor and sick?”

“That would help very much toward it, dear.” The little head lay back on the pillow, motionless for a minute. Then—

“Auntie Joe, if I did what Jesus said was right, do you suppose he would take care of me when—when I go to find papa and mama?”

The woman's lips quivered:



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"Jesus can do all things," she answered. "He will care for you now and always."

After the faint but steady breathing of the pallid nostrils betrayed that the little one had fallen asleep, the tender-hearted woman slipped out, crying softly, and despatched messages to the physician and to Peter, while Felix was ordered to keep within calling distance.

At sunset, the little head nestling among the blond curls moved again.

"Aunt Joe! Aunt Joe!" The woman came quickly and kneeled down beside the bed.

"What is it, my precious?"

"Where is Jesus, now?"

"In Heaven, dear."

"Did he live here once?"

"Yes, child."

"Tell me about him when he was here?"

"He went about among people doing good. He touched the sick on their heads and hands and they became well. He cured the lame and the blind and—"

"The blind, Auntie—the blind, like me?" A childish eagerness thrilled through the weak voice.

"Yes, Rosie."

"And he will cure me in Heaven so I can see papa and mama and Sergius there? Oh, Auntie, tell me, tell me, will he do that?"

"In Heaven, Rosie, you will see again just as you



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once did. There will be no darkness for you there. Jesus will kiss your poor eyes and the light will shine through.”

“Oh, Aunt Joe! Oh, Aunt Joe!” Weakness could not quite hide the ecstasy of her childish joy. Then sleep again enfolded the strength of spirit within the frail body.

When Rosie wakened again, Felix and Aunt Joe were together beside her, while the doctor and Peter stood a few feet away. Her mind sensed the latter two first.

“Uncle Peter,” she said plaintively—even then the divine motherhood of the woman-child shining out in her—“you’ll take care of Felix?”

“Yes, Rosie, I’ll take care of Felix.” She waited a minute, groping for strength.

“Aunt Joe, mama came just now—I felt her in my sleep. Kiss me dear, dear Auntie! I’m going to them and—and to Jesus.” One wasted arm crept slowly around the sobbing woman’s neck.

“Felix, brother, shall I remember you to them—to Jesus and mama and papa—and—Sergius—give them—your—love?” The manly little boy lay with his head buried in the bedclothes, his body shaking with grief.

“Oh, Aunt, I see—” an instant’s silence ensued, broken only by the quiet weeping of Mrs. Thatcher—“Aunt Joe—Jesus is coming—I—feel him—he is



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going to kiss my eyes—oh, the light—the beautiful, beautiful light—I see; I see—papa! mama!”

Suddenly a hush fell upon all. Then broken sobs burst from the woman's lips. Felix wept silently, a hand resting tenderly upon one cheek of the now inert little face. Even Dr. Randall shook with emotion.

“It is his will, Felix.” Aunt Joe's voice found itself at last in seeking to comfort the bereaved brother.

“Perhaps,” he responded slowly—a little bitterly, “but how about them that took 'em all from me like this?”

It was the implication in that crude reply that returned again and again to Peter's mind during the later services over Rosie's body, and it still rankled in his thoughts when, as the sun began to fade behind the distant hills, with his arm about the boy's shoulder, he gently drew the broken-hearted, lonely youth away from the grave newly made beside the other three in the cemetery.

“Father, mother, brother, sister—all dead as the price of the selfish, wanton heartlessness of covetous men willing for gain to wring from humanity its very heart's blood!” Peter reproached himself for his own too small part in the work to help right such wrongs.

As they entered the empty house, his heart went out to the silently weeping Felix. Suddenly his own



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pent-up emotions gave way, sweeping before them every remnant of self in the thought of those helpless thousands staggering beneath such unequal burdens as Hermann and Rachael Romwitz had borne. Then with startling force the words of Liszt's "Love Dreams" came back to him:

“—The hour will come when you at graves shall weep, some day.”

In the same moment when he recognized the fulfilment of this prophetic line, he felt again the mighty appeal of the "Call of the Ages," and he knew, though it should mean the loss of name, friends—even life, that he would follow that Call to the end.



XI

TRANSFERRING A CHARGE

“A MESSAGE for you, sir.”

It was the next day in New York. Peter sat alone before an open blaze in the reading-room of his favorite club and the only one which he now frequented. Leaving the boy with Aunt Joe, he had returned immediately, intent upon at once arranging for the youngster's future. The more he thought of that important responsibility, the more it puzzled him. Felix had reached the formative period of character-building.

Tearing open the envelope handed him by the servant, he read:

“Ann is back again in New York. Will you come and dine with us to-night? You shall have a dinner worth eating and sympathy for your troubles—if you have troubles. Telephone if you cannot come, but I shall expect you. Your devoted Agatha.”

After he had sent the man away, he sat for some time staring into the fire, old memories suddenly roused by the mention of Ann's name.

It had been nearly four years since he had seen her for she had been playing abroad when he returned from



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Alaska. The thought of meeting her again stirred his pulses, not because she was now a world-wide celebrity whose name and fame and what the newspapers called "philanthropic eccentricities" were constantly being heralded far and wide, but because he had come to feel that she meant a great deal to his happiness. Her wisdom and the purity of her soul were endearments far beyond her musical talents. He knew well enough that desire for publicity was not among the motives prompting the concerts and liberal donations for the poor, of which she had given so many. She had never been quite out of his thoughts during the long separation.

Of late Peter had lived much at home, reading, writing, taking notes and studying social conditions about him in the intervals between his visits to the Romwitz family. The list of his social acquaintances had greatly fallen off. Max Reinhart had been away managing Ann's campaign. Professor Seabury, a pitifully broken wreck and Alicia, grown a little more serious-faced and a little less bantering but still brave and calm and unafraid, were the friends he had gone oftenest to visit. They were now living in a tiny, four-room tenement in a rather humble section of the city, but Alicia had wrought wonders in this little home. The old man was unable to walk—in fact he seldom spoke or moved—and the girl guarded him as tenderly as a mother would have sheltered a child.



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The friendship between her and Peter had increased greatly. They discussed all subjects save that of love, with the candor of a brother and sister. From the untiring devotion and ardor with which Alicia played adviser, intermediary, nurse, mother and disciplinarian to several hundred idolizing mothers and children in her capacity as a social settlement worker, and between times ministered to her father's needs and wants, one would scarcely have believed that love ever entered into her thoughts or her plans. Yet Peter noticed how the pink came to her cheeks when he spoke of his old friend, Max, or brought her fresh news of the latter's whereabouts.

If Ann was in New York, he suspected that Max would also be there, and he tried to picture the meeting in the little tenement of his college chum and the brave Alicia.

Then as his eyes went back to the open note before him he felt anew a thrill of pleasure at the perusal of Ann's name.

The same emotion shone in his face a few hours later, when after fondly kissing his god-mother, he turned to greet the beautiful pianist in the brilliantly lighted dining-room of the Van Siddons mansion.

Both in construction and beauty of furnishings the latter dwelling was a wonderful place. Everywhere were massive and quaintly carved pieces of furniture, costly pictures and beautiful tapestries and rugs



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without number picked up in every corner of the world by four successive generations of ancestors. A workmanship in cupboard, fireplace, panel and ceiling typifying the painstaking idealism of a past generation was evident at every turn and corner.

"Don't call me misanthrope, if I admit that I came partly to unburden my worries," Peter said. "I took you at your word, Agatha. Your generous offer to lend me a sympathetic ear lured me here—and joy at the thought of seeing you both again," he added.

"It's well you included that," she replied. But Peter refused to be decoyed into badinage. When they were seated at dinner, he said:

"I've a protégé with whom I don't know what to do."

Both women leaned forward at once interested.

"It's a long story," he continued.

"You've piqued our curiosity. Tell us all at once," ordered his godmother.

"Felix is only a youngster now, but he's growing up rapidly. He's known great hardships and sorrows. His father, mother, sister and brother have died. He's all alone." Then Peter launched into the life recital of Felix and the rest of the Romwitz family.

"The boy must grow up with right principles," he finally proceeded. "I want him to understand just how it happened that those he loved were neglected and crushed. I mean for him to acquire a thorough



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understanding of the many evils of injustice. He's a responsibility that puzzles me."

"Send him to school here in New York. He needs an education first," suggested Mrs. Van Siddons.

Peter shook his head. "I want him to begin right. He sha'n't be hampered and coerced by the sort of educational routine that the average child of to-day has to endure."

"You wouldn't try to bring him up yourself, Peter? It might prove more than you bargained for," said the godmother.

Hitherto Ann had sat a silent listener. Once during the period of his long recital Peter had seen a tear steal down her cheek. Now she leaned forward and spoke earnestly:

"I'll take the boy and rear him just as you want him educated. Ever since I've been away I've been making money—oh, more money than I ever dreamed of being able to make and much more than I need. There's enough for Felix and me and for the expense of the opportunity which you and I will give him. I'm sure I understand what you wish for him. You want him to have what boys of his class almost never have—an unbiased conscience; and you want him to be trained from the very beginning, that he may always know how to choose and make decisions unprejudiced by false ideas. Isn't that it?"

Peter's eyes sparkled.



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"How well you understand," he said.

"What idealists you two are becoming!" exclaimed Mrs. Van Siddons.

"You're wrong, we're realists, dear Agatha," said Peter. "The ideals of yesterday have become realities. The world moves along a notch every day. The moral level, as well as custom and the ambitions of men, is as unstable as the fashions in clothes; but the motive tendency is upward. We are growing constructive. A part of mankind is already realizing ethical aims that once seemed chimerical and Utopian. The other and larger part will reach them too some day."

He turned to the girl.

"What have you in mind for the boy?" he asked.

"There's a school, here in New York where we will start him," she said. "Max drove me there once. It's a private school but it seems to me to be based upon ideal principles. The system is much like a physician specialist's method of treatment. Each child is regarded as an individual case. Temperament, physical endowment and inherited traits and inclinations are all carefully considered in the training process. The pupils are encouraged to pursue the studies which each seems most to enjoy. Coercive lessons are not in the curriculum. I have not seen anywhere among children such spontaneity of effort, and such true pleasure in studying, as I saw there. It was perfect."



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"It sounds excellent. We'll take him there," acquiesced Peter.

"To-morrow?" she asked.

He nodded. "The sooner, the better. I'll notify Aunt Joe. It will wring her heart to part with Felix, but she will make any sacrifice for his good."

They had left the table and were gathered about a driftwood blaze in the great drawing-room, the two women seated and Peter standing, when suddenly hurrying steps sounded in the entrance hall and Alicia Seabury, with Max Reinhart just a step in the rear, appeared in the doorway. Mrs. Van Siddons and Ann had risen to greet the unannounced pair when something alight in the faces of both caused a silence to fall upon all. Then Max wearing the triumphant expression of a lover slipped the hand of the now crimson-cheeked Alicia beneath his arm and with a low and formal bow proclaimed with twinkling eyes:

"As betrothed we are come to receive your felicitations, dear friends. Wish us great joy—"

His further words were lost amid surprised exclamations and in the rush of the two women and Peter who pounced upon the lovers and thrust them down, side by side, on the silk-cushioned settle by the fire.

For half an hour thereafter the voluble lover's recital of the romance which the three friends insisted upon hearing from beginning to end usurped



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all other conversation. Max made no pretence of restraining his joy, while the radiance of a supreme bliss shone in Alicia's eyes. The wedding day had been fixed to take place in the succeeding month when the couple were to remove at once with the invalid father to more spacious and comfortable quarters.

"However," finally asserted the girl with a soft glance at her lover, "I'm going right on with my work among the poor mothers and children. They need me. I couldn't give them up—even—for anything—though of course Max wouldn't have me do that either."

That night after Peter reached home he betook himself to his study and sought to immerse himself in work. But his mind refused to concentrate on the lines of his book.

The memory of Alicia's warm and smiling face and Max's unalloyed ecstasy quickened old emotions in his heart. He remembered Ann's serene and undisturbed smile as she listened to the flow of lover's raptures from the lips of Max. It vexed him to think that she had not betrayed a trace of self-consciousness. He recalled too that he had not had a single opportunity to be alone with her that evening. He wondered if that had been an accident, or if his godmother or the girl herself had prearranged it. It pained him to think of going away from her. She was an inspiration. His reunion with her had roused anew the longing to be near her and



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to have her for an intimate friend and companion again. Her seeming aloofness increased this ardor. A thousand tender thoughts filled his mind concerning her. He wondered if he would ever be able to inspire in her a soft passion like that which had lighted Alicia's face when Max stepped forth and proclaimed his love.

Distracted, he rose and strode back and forth across his study. In his peregrinations his coat brushed from the table an unopened package which evidently had come by mail that afternoon. Stooping to recover it, his curiosity was roused by the foreign postage-stamps on the wrapper and he hastily tore it open. It proved to be a consular report from Uruguay, one of the South American republics and he idly wondered who had sent it as he began to turn the leaves. Suddenly his attention was drawn to an introductory passage printed in full-face at the top of a page.

"In this district the ostrich is found in great numbers," he read. "The feathers are a source of constant income and the eggs form one of the chief staples of food for the country people."

The paragraph roused a new train of thought. Since that fateful evening in Jerusalem, it had come to be a conviction with him that the ostrich in some way was to help solve the great problem of poverty.

According to this authority, here was a country abounding in ostriches that could be studied and



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probably brought back to his own land if he wished to bring them.

Since his return from the far North he had been storing up such knowledge as would be likely to help him most in further travels. Only his wish to make the last days of the different members of the Romwitz family as happy as possible had kept him in New York for so long. Now that Ann had promised to oversee the education of Felix, he was free once more. He found an evening paper and looked up the steamer sailings south. Afterwards, resuming his seat, he picked up his pen and began writing. It was almost two hours before he stopped. Then he folded a dozen or more closely written sheets of paper, sealed them in an envelope and addressed the letter to Ann.

The following afternoon at the moment when Mrs. Van Siddons placed this letter in the girl's hands, Peter was leaning over the rail of a coastwise steamer watching New York Harbor slowly drop behind.



XII

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"I SHALL not see you again for a long time—perhaps for years. But what difference can that make to you or to me, if our friendship has grown deep enough and broad enough to be real? Neither time nor distance can separate us then.

"You will no doubt be surprised at my sudden departure, but I owe to you much of my eagerness to be off. I have been restless to go for a long time. Only the sufferings of the members of that poor family whom I learned to love kept me here. Now they are all gone, save Felix, and you are to become his mentor. I could not leave him in better hands. He promises to grow up a splendid, fine specimen of a youth and under your tutelage he cannot fail to fulfil that promise.

"I am going to South America. I have learned by chance, to-night, that ostriches are found there. You and the old sheik near Alexandria have convinced me that I must study this bird closely. If I should find ostriches in South America, it might save me a trip to more distant parts of the world, and thus I may arrive the sooner at the great



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truths that we both so eagerly long to see laid before mankind.

“I shall never give up the work that I have undertaken.

“Because I feared that to see you again would cause me to waver—even put off my journey altogether—I am writing you my good-bye. I shall not return until I succeed in my aims, but I want to tell you, if you do not already know, that whatever I accomplish I always shall owe a debt to the influence of your spirit and your mind.”

Ann sat for a long time in silence when she had finished reading the letter.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a perfect day in the tropics, mild and balmy and with a gentle breeze blowing from the uplands when Peter, sitting astride a mule, rode past the last of the thatched huts that marked the boundary line of Piedmos, a tiny Brazilian village, and gazed along the level highway stretching ahead.

He was entering the promised ostrich country where he had high hopes of obtaining a flock of the birds to take back with him to the states.

After three months of travel, partly by train and partly by muleback among the natives and Latin-Americans he had begun to experience a sense of congeniality with his tropical surroundings.

He had come by way of Barbados, first to Para at the mouth of the Amazon. Besides Bahia, Victoria,



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San Salvador and Rio Janeiro, he had visited many lesser cities and towns, progressing from place to place by slow stages and observing carefully both the peoples and the industrial conditions as he went.

On every hand he had found surprises.

Being a geologist and well versed in botany and mineralogy, it had not taken him long to realize the marvellous richness of the forests and mines of Brazil. He learned from personal observations that the country held inestimable resources of precious woods and other forest products of great value, and he soon discovered that these sources of wealth as yet had hardly been touched. Besides there were the illimitable Brazilian plains stretching for hundreds of miles in every direction, that afforded pasturage for countless thousands of sheep and cattle.

During his trip down the coast he had been the guest of coffee planters, rubber growers and lumber and mining magnates whose wealth had grown in a few years from practically nothing to millions. He also observed the thousands of shiftless, half-caste peoples who had to be driven to perform the labor of the country. The rich land owners and these peons were a contrasting object-lesson in the superiority of personal initiative and intelligent effort over laziness and lack of thought.

Leaving the village behind, he had ridden for more than a mile along a dusty road fringed with palms and other tropical trees that grew thinner as he



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advanced, when all at once there burst into view a low-lying, hacienda residence, white-painted and half-surrounded by wide, cool-looking verandas.

Beyond the farm buildings was an extensive plain with a background of trees, and close to the edge of this grove appeared a large flock of huge birds feeding or moving about.

"The ostriches at last," Peter thought, and his conviction was soon confirmed.

Don Miguel, the owner of the plantation, proved a most hospitable host. The Castilian had difficulty in restraining his curiosity, however, when Peter declared that he had come from the north, chiefly to see and study the South American ostrich.

"Do not dismount. We will go at once and you shall inspect the birds as long as it pleases you," the Don declared, after sending a servant for a mule.

Driving across the fields, they approached to within less than a hundred yards before the host reined in his animal and motioned Peter to halt. All at once the birds seemed to become curious. Far from displaying timidity, one by one with bobbing heads the great bipeds began to stalk calmly toward their visitors. Soon the flock had gathered about the two men. It required only a brief glance for Peter to satisfy his interest, for he perceived that this short-feathered, three-toed biped was not a real ostrich, but an emu, a member of the same family and much resembling the ostrich, but of a commercial



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value infinitely inferior to that of the large-plumed bird. Turning to his host, he said:

“Señor, your ostrich no longer interests me.”

“You thought that our birds were like those of Africa and the eastern countries?” questioned the host, beginning to understand. “Our ostriches are of quite a different sort. The peons use the feathers for rugs and the flesh and eggs for food; otherwise our birds have a comparatively small commercial value. It would be a great asset to the country if they were worth more, for there are thousands throughout the south and west here. In many places they are so tame that they prove a great nuisance.”

A little later Peter bade his host farewell, and made his way to the railroad station in Piedmos, whence he reached Rio Janeiro late that evening.

In spite of the dashing of his hopes concerning the ostrich, he decided to spend several weeks longer in this country of opportunity.

A day or two later he sailed on a small steamer for Santos where he was the guest of one of the largest coffee growers in Brazil, his host owning five hundred thousand coffee-trees and employing over five thousand laborers and servants.

While on this trip, Peter got an insight into the methods used to manipulate the price of coffee. In Brazil, producing three-fourths of the supply of coffee used and capable of a production which would overstock every market of the world, he found that a



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drastic law prohibited the further planting of coffee-trees for several years to come. As an example of the methods used by the coffee growers' combination to lessen the export supply, Peter saw whole trainloads of the aromatic berry, that had been purchased from independent growers at four cents a pound, shovelled overboard into Santos Harbor. And he also got a new object-lesson in Yankee shrewdness in the ingenious Cape Cod captain who took advantage of the situation to load his vessel with free coffee drawn up from the harbor bottom by means of a suction pump.

Proceeding to beautiful Buenos Ayres, he toured the great wheat fields and stock farms of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Never before had he beheld such seemingly inexhaustible possibilities for wealth as Argentina alone presented with its hundreds of millions of cattle and sheep and its two hundred and forty million acres of unequalled wheat and corn land—enough to supply half the world if it were all utilized for crops.

Later he travelled by train six hundred and fifty miles over the fertile pampas to Mendoza, whence he crossed the Andes and journeyed through the states of Chile and Peru.

It was at the close of this expedition, and just before he set out for the eastern coast again to sail for London, that he took part in the most exciting episode of the journey.



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He was visiting the owner of a great plantation near the foothills of the Andes. When his host, Señor Ouyella, mentioned that a man-killing, wild boar had recently been proving troublesome, Peter, who had never hunted one of these animals, proposed that he and his host go after the beast.

"He's a devilishly nasty-tempered brute," the señor declared. "Five times the Indians who have tried to pot him with clubs, have brought back one of their number either badly mangled or dead. The beast is a fox, too. He won't run in the open. If you want to get a shot, you've got to hunt him on foot. Then he gets you. Besides, he's hard to kill. The Indians think his hide's bullet-proof." This story of the boar's prowess increased Peter's wish to make the hunt, with the result that the planter finally despatched six half-breeds to locate the whereabouts of the quarry. Then, in the late afternoon when the heat of the woods was beginning to diminish, the two set out armed and mounted.

Soon they had entered a wonderful forest. Festoons of tropical vines with scarlet, yellow and white blossoms everywhere filled the air with an intoxicating fragrance, while high above the intertwined branches of the primeval trees arrayed themselves like the arches of a mighty cathedral. Occasionally a leafy pathway, green with moss and tender shoots, would stretch out ahead. Then the underbrush



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would grow denser and again thicken above, increasing the late afternoon shadows.

"The men will take to the trees if the brute rushes them. They will look after themselves. Stick to your mule. Don't go where the fox can ambush you or your animal; he's got a pair of dangerous hoofs." Such admonitions from his host caused Peter to smile secretly, though he held firmly to his rifle and kept close vigilance on the path ahead.

They had proceeded about a mile when suddenly the narrow path broadened into a clearing, from the opposite end of which ran two aisle-like vistas, separated by a wall of foliage. The planter, who was a little in advance, turned his animal into the left-hand pathway, thinking that Peter would follow. The latter, however, catching a glimpse of one of the bush-beaters crossing the right-hand aisle, forgot his host in the excitement of the moment, and digging his heels into the mule's sides, started in the direction of the black.

He had ridden perhaps twenty yards when his attention was attracted by a sudden commotion in the bushes at one side, and slowing down, he caught sight of a fawn, evidently but a few days old, entangled in a mass of vines and bushes, struggling wildly to extricate itself.

Forgetful of his host's previous warning, Peter jumped to the ground and ran to capture the frightened baby, but hardly had he laid hands upon it when



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his ears were assailed by a succession of hideous roars behind him. Turning, he beheld his mule galloping away with a frightful bellowing, while a beady-eyed, villanous-looking wild boar, its brownish-gray body humped up with rage, stood over the rifle which he had dropped in his eagerness to capture the fawn.

When Peter looked round, the boar had not seen him, but as he let go the fawn, the frantic tugging of the frightened little animal instantly drew the attention of the quarry.

Peter had barely time to swing himself into the lower branches of a nearby tree when the infuriated brute charged.

And now occurred an encounter such as few have ever witnessed.

Peter had barely settled himself safely above the danger on the ground, when a new sound resembling the hiss of escaping air as the brakes are released on a railway train, rose above him. Looking up, he was horrified to see a monster boa-constrictor stretched out upon the branches with its mouth agape and its eyes ablaze with such a rage as made the fury of the lank brute below seem insignificant by comparison.

For a moment Peter felt himself lost. Then he noticed that the reptile's eyes were fixed not upon himself, but upon the ground below him. Looking down, he saw that the wild boar, in tossing up the dirt



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and moss with its sharp hoofs, had inadvertently unearthed a trio of baby snakes, evidently the children of the reptile above. But not content with having disturbed the snakes, the mad animal was now bent upon destroying them.

What ensued happened with incredible swiftness. Just as the boar had fixed its teeth in the back of one of the baby snakes, a black streak suddenly shot down through the air from an upper branch, and in the twinkling of an eye a double coil had been gathered squarely round the belly of the boar. Taken by surprise, the beast had barely time to emit a final half-roar, half-scream, when a sudden tightening of the snake's folds crushed the tough, hairy body as easily as if it had been an eggshell.

Peter, who had dropped to the ground, was running toward the spot where his gun lay when the sound of a rifle-shot followed by the "ping" of a Mauser bullet caused him to turn. As he did so, he saw the snake's tail loose itself from the limb above and fall limply. Then suddenly the great folds relaxed their vise-like grip upon the dead victim, writhed and twisted on the ground for a moment and finally grew still.

Then Peter heard the voice of his host saying:

"A lucky escape for you, señor."

The next morning he bade the planter good-bye and started for Buenos Ayres, whence his long journey across the ocean was to begin.



### XIII

#### SOME EVILS AND A CURE

NEARLY six months later Peter Rutledge, dusty and somewhat lean and gaunt-cheeked from the tedium of much study and travel, but pleased with the results of his investigations, alighted at the railway station in Naples.

Ann Newman, her face wreathed in smiles, came forward to meet him.

Ann was on her way to Switzerland to join Mrs. Van Siddons, having landed from the New York steamer the night before. In a letter from America she had mentioned her intention of going abroad, and Peter, being then almost ready to start on his long-planned journey into lower Egypt and Abyssinia, had suggested this meeting. The girl had planned the details of their day's outing, the night before.

After the first greetings, they entered the motor car that stood waiting, and soon were riding between vine-clad hills along the road leading to the ruins of an ancient Italian castle which the girl wished to explore. The structure proved to be an interesting relic of bygone days, and the forenoon was more than half-gone when, a little breathless from following the



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garrulous Latin guide up and down gloomy stairways and through ancient banquet-hall, ducal chamber and rat-infested dungeon, the two friends sat down together upon a moss-covered parapet overlooking the beautiful blue of the distant bay of Naples.

"Felix is growing into a splendid type of youth, clear-headed and intelligent. You will be impressed with my preceptorship when you see him again," the girl gayly boasted. "Your godmother is still at Bern; I am to meet her there. Max and Alicia are at home, as happy and contented as turtle-doves." Thus disposing of the essentials at one and the same time, she suddenly looked up at him seriously, from beneath the broad brim of her rose-colored hat, and exclaimed:

"And now tell me of yourself. Tell me everything that you have seen or done."

It thrilled him to note the interest which her direct words and the earnestness of her manner indicated.

"I am beginning to understand what is the greatest thing in the world," he replied. "Since I landed in England last year, I've held close to one purpose, and that was to see human conditions as they really are. In doing that, I've learned some useful truths. I'm glad that you and I have always believed there was an infallible remedy for poverty. There is. Listen, and I'll tell you what has made me so certain.



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"In London I was introduced to Sir John Kirk, president of the Ragged Schools. He is a remarkable man whose life is being spent in behalf of the children of the slums. His kindness enabled me to study at first hand the dreadful and almost unbelievable conditions surrounding the poor wretches of London. I wonder if you would like to hear of what I saw in the English slums?" he asked, pausing.

She nodded in reply.

"There are no slums anywhere else like them. I suppose it is partly because England is so over-populated," he continued. "The 'Land of Promise' Street is twelve feet wide and fourteen hundred feet long, but Sir John Kirk and his friends of the missions take as many as six hundred poor children from the 'Land of Promise' Street alone, when the annual summer vacation trips are allotted among the slum children. You can guess from that how many people live there.

"As you enter the street, you find a beer saloon at each corner. A few days before my visit, a policeman was murdered there in broad daylight. If you were to travel that short fourteen hundred feet in the winter time, you would see swarms of children clad only in pieces of old bagging or a few rags. Winter and summer they go half-naked. Everybody is destitute. Everybody is starving. Nothing thrives there except the grog-shop and vermin. The people live mostly in one-room tenements, six, eight, and



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nine in a room, and some of these rooms are underground with only a small aperture overhead for light and air. It costs five dollars a month for a room like that, eight feet long and ten feet wide.

“If you went into London’s East Side at noon-time when the whistle blows announcing the free noon meal, you would see these poor wretches pouring like rodents, tattered and gaunt, from underground cellars and dreadful dens of gloom and filth, rushing frantically to obtain the precious tickets which entitle the lucky holders to a free dinner.

“It is a pitiful sight to witness two or three thousand starving wretches madly stumbling over each other in their eagerness to obtain the warmth and comfort which the building where they are served provides them. It is the only joy that they have in life.

“In ‘Land of Promise’ Street, in Hoxton Street, in Kingsland Road and over a vast area that resembles a plague spot in the heart of London, these scenes of squalor, misery and degradation are of daily occurrence. Yet millions of dollars are annually poured out by the English societies and church people for the saving of souls in foreign lands.

“As bad as they are, these loathsome quarters of destitution would be a thousand times worse, were it not for such men as Sir John Kirk and the brothers John Burt and Lewis Burt. John and Lewis Burt run a saddler’s shop in the heart of the slum quarter,



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but they give all they earn and all they can beg for the sake of the poor about them.

“What makes all this seem doubly terrible is that hundreds of fathers and mothers, and children also, go day after day and month after month vainly looking for work.”

“Is it so hard to find employment?” asked Ann.

“Let me tell you about the chemical workers of St. Helens and the chain workers of Cradley Heath; that will help you to understand better the awfulness of the bondage that lays upon these overcrowded people in England.” He seemed almost to have forgotten her presence now. He was talking rapidly, as if the pictures which he brought up had burned themselves into his mind.

“In St. Helens there are eighty thousand people who produce principally coal, glass, pills, chemical products, cripples and paupers. There are a great many cripples and paupers, thousands of them, men who at forty have been wrung dry of health, strength and spirit. Twenty-five per cent. of the poorhouse inmates there are former chemical workers. I had not dreamed that Hell could be as bad as the house of death where the chemical workers of St. Helens are employed.

“The place reminds me of a picture in Dante’s Inferno. The clouds of half-consumed gases that always hang over the city obscure the sky. Sunshine is as rare as gold there.



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“The chemical men work in a temperature often as high as 120 degrees. The air they breathe is saturated with the poison of many gases which, in a few years, breaks down the health of the strongest person. It rots the workingman’s clothes; it burns away his shoes; it destroys his teeth, hair and skin. To supply courage to keep himself at work and to lessen the anguish of his task, he is driven to consume large amounts of beer and whiskey. These workers, if they can stand the pace, labor from twelve to fourteen hours a day, and they make from seventy-five cents to one dollar and ninety cents a day. Yet there is never a dearth of chemical workers and when one falls or plays out there are always others to take his place.”

“Those are terrible facts,” she said.

He went on as if he had not heard her:

“Some of the things taken for granted in England are ghastly. The spectacle of the men and women chain workers of Cradley Heath seems worse than that—it beggars description.

“At Cradley you see white-haired old women bending beneath fifty pounds or more of chain borne on their shoulders; they wield great hammers before blazing furnaces; and they are happy if by doing so they can earn four cents an hour. You see mothers there working at the chain-making business with nursing babes in their arms.

“The men of Cradley who stand all day long in



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the terrific heat of many roaring furnaces and seething cauldrons think themselves lucky if they can make eight dollars for a full week's work. The strain is so terrific that few men can hold out over four days a week. As at St. Helens, men at Cradley Heath are worn out by the time they reach forty; some give up when younger.

"These are the physical horrors that accompany what they term high-wage work. In what is called the domestic workshop at Cradley, the women earn a maximum of one dollar and a half a week of six work-days of twelve hours each. One married couple there works one hundred and twenty hours a week to earn four dollars and fifty cents. Women often work to within an hour or two of childbirth."

"But surely such conditions do not prevail all over England?" interposed Ann, horrified at this picture of servitude.

"So many thousands still have to endure such things that, though the evil is not universal, it is indeed mighty and menacing," he answered. "As a matter of fact, high wages are unusual in England. Just before I left London one of the large printing-houses there had a compositor arrested on the charge of defrauding the firm out of twenty-five cents. At the trial it was brought out that the man's wages were three dollars and eighty-five cents a week. He had a wife and three children. He cheated to get medicine for a sick baby."



## SOME EVILS AND A CURE

"What is the cause of all this?" asked the girl. "It seems as if there must be some very definite reason for it."

"The cause, in England, is easy to ascertain," replied Peter. "Poverty conditions are sapping the vitality of the Empire because of the appallingly erroneous economic system of land ownership. No octopus of wealth ever more completely throttled the growth of a country than does the land trust of the English lords. It can be called hardly less than a trust. Five hundred and twenty-five English nobles own over one quarter of all the land in England. Seven lords own more than thirty-two hundred acres in the heart of London. That land is estimated to be worth three billion, two hundred million dollars. In many places in England young men and women cannot marry because there is nowhere for them to build a house, and this happens often where there are miles of splendid forest and unused lands lying all about. The land is impossible of acquisition because it is retained as a game preserve by the lords of the manor.

"But there is a brighter side to living conditions in England," he went on. "A host of the people have lost all sense of resentment against the evils which press them down. Indeed, their inertia has continued so long that they have reached the condition where the idea of helping themselves does not appeal to them in the least. But those minus



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such initiative are diminishing before the thousands who have learned the secret of living co-operatively.

"I have endeavored to make a comparative study of methods employed in different countries to better the condition of the poor and my observations indicate that the same general principle actuates every effective plan for helping the great mass of the people.

"The beginning of England's present-day army of co-operative workers embodies a story of the heroism of a few men who thought for themselves. What they did launched a great force which is now penetrating to every land and helping to lighten the hardships of all who choose to profit by it. The story of these men interests me, and I think it will interest you.

"In 1844 twenty-eight flannel weavers in Rochdale decided to start a co-operative store. They were terribly poor; wages were exceedingly low and work was scarce; but they managed to get together twenty-eight pounds, two and three pence at a time, and opened their little shop.

"They had at first only four articles to sell—butter, flour, sugar and oatmeal, for there was not enough money to buy anything else. But the influence of that little store began to spread at once. Anyone who wished could take out a share and with a small payment down, the profits from the shareholders' purchases could be left to complete the



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payment on the original stock. Every share drew interest at five per cent. The rest of the profits were divided in proportion to the amount of purchases of each stockholder. The first share or two, while transferable, could not be withdrawn, but the profits from purchases could be left in the business until they amounted to about a thousand dollars.

"The experiment proved a success from the start. In fifteen years it had resulted in a seventy-five-thousand-dollar co-operative business, and now co-operative stores, factories, mills and wholesale houses are wide-spread in England.

"The co-operative wholesale society of Manchester alone, employing over fifteen thousand persons and having more than one thousand one hundred and fifty retail societies, represents a membership of over a million and a half of people and a total annual profit of more than twenty millions of dollars. This society owns its own steamships, foreign depots, tea estates in the Far East and a number of creameries and farms. All over England the same principle has wakened the workingman to a sense of personal power."

The girl had sat silently listening to his words. Now she asked:

"And you say that you found this principle in operation in other countries?"

"Yes," he replied, "at every step in my travels, as often as I began to analyze an industrial situation



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which promised material advantages to all, I found that the co-operative idea was involved.

“Let me give you a picture of a man in Germany, one of the humble philosophers of a few years back, who caught the spirit of co-operation from the weavers of Rochdale and set himself to the work of helping his countrymen. His name was Raiffeison—Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeison, a burgomaster in barren Westerwald, in the Rhine country. He was twenty-six years old when the Rochdale weavers started their store. As soon as he realized what their experiment could be made to mean to his neighbors, he set about putting it into practice for their benefit. These men, mostly farmers, suffered terribly from lack of capital and the ruinously high prices paid for fertilizer; they were being constantly robbed by money-lenders and cheated in the markets; they had no money with which to buy modern machinery.

“In 1849 Raiffeison came forward with his co-operative loan bank by means of which it was made possible for those who needed money to borrow small sums upon the joint responsibility of all. The bank was a little association of neighbors. In five years Raiffeison established another of these banks, and in eight years still another. Finally, they began to spread and now they are counted by the thousands in many lands.”

“And what about Italy?” Ann asked.

“I would like to take you on a visit to Milan,” he



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answered. "After having seen Naples with its atmosphere of neglect and poverty, the beauty and cleanliness of that lovely city in Lombardy would teach you what the intelligent Italian has accomplished by working co-operatively. Milan is one of the clean cities of the world. Its streets are splendidly paved and spotless; it is replete with handsome parks and public buildings; but what you notice there more than anything else is the spirit of industrial happiness that pervades all classes. The principle of co-operation permeates business thoroughly. No better illustration can be had of what people can achieve, working together, than is presented by Milan.

"It is the same wherever the co-operative idea has been tried: men and women seem to have progressed in the social scale and are the happiest. Agricultural co-operation has made Denmark, next to England, the richest country, in proportion to its population, in Europe. In France the influence of productive co-operation is rapidly knitting together the working classes and bringing the whole nation up to a plane of greater intelligence and prosperity. Indeed it is a world principle which can be applied to all classes for the advantage of all."

"Is it a remedy for poverty in our country?" asked Ann, turning her eyes gravely toward him.

"It is a remedy for people everywhere," he answered.



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Suddenly a startled expression flashed over the girl's face as her eyes focussed upon an automobile crawling up the roadway toward the castle:

"Look, our chauffeur is returning! How fast the time has gone! Shall you come with me to Bern?"

"No," he answered, looking at her intently, "I am off to Brindisi to-night. From there I shall go to Port Saïd and then on to find the mysterious queen of whom the sheik told me. Do you remember?"

Ann's eyes grew round with interest, and he saw her press her hands together.

"You are going to solve the mystery of the ostrich?" she asked.

He nodded.

"You are brave," she said, "and determined. I am glad that you are going and yet I shall be anxious until you return, for Africa is full of dangers and when your life is in peril—"

They had both risen, and the man now took a step toward her, his eyes alight with happiness and hope. But as he did so, she raised one hand, saying:

"Do not forget our agreement." Then with downcast eyes: "It is time that we were hastening back."

A little ruefully he followed her down over the moss-carpeted stairways of the castle and out into the courtyard where the car stood waiting.



#### XIV

##### “I FORBID YOU, MONSIEUR”

HAVING seen Ann safely ensconced on the night express, Peter had barely time to collect his baggage and fling himself into a railway compartment before his own train started for Brindisi.

As he lay wrapped in his travelling rug, he found it hard to detach his thoughts from the girl to whom he had just said good-bye. Yet there was a grim determination in the set of his jaw now. He realized that he was bound upon an unusual quest. The great principle which had gradually been unfolding itself before him during his travels on the Continent had become an inspiration to him. He was more than interested—he was filled with eagerness to find out all about the ostrich, no matter what perils the work of gaining that knowledge might entail.

During the trip across the Mediterranean and down the Red Sea to Aden he was buoyed up by his determination. When the steamer left him at the latter place, standing on the wharf with his baggage beside him and with many curious eyes set in foreign faces staring at him with suspicion from all sides, he began to realize that he was facing an experience in which



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much would undoubtedly depend upon the decision of the moment. Beckoning to a weather-beaten Arab and accosting the man in the native tongue, Peter asked for a captain to take him to Shaliti.

The latter place, since it was the gateway to the heart of Abyssinia, was to be his point of departure into the desert. Come what might, he intended to follow out the directions of the old sheik who had bidden him seek the mysterious and all-wise queen at the head waters of the Blue Nile.

Replying to Peter's inquiry, the old man, who was plainly nonplussed at finding himself addressed, in his own tongue, by this white-skinned American, hastened to explain that he would take the sahib to Shaliti in his own packet, which at that moment was ready to set out on a fishing trip.

After a minute of bargaining, a price was agreed upon and Peter was conducted on board an unpainted and dilapidated little sloop which lay tied up at an exceedingly dirty and ill-smelling, nearby wharf.

Peter had learned from the chance remark of an Englishman with whom he had become acquainted on his way across the Mediterranean that, for diplomatic reasons, a strict oversight of all arriving strangers was being maintained along the east coast. Peter's informant, however, had not made clear what the reasons were for this surveillance.

Just before the leaky, little sloop, with much creaking of rusty blocks and yelling of naked sailors,



## “I FORBID YOU, MONSIEUR”

dropped anchor in the harbor of Shaliti the captain furnished the answer to this riddle. Upon hearing Peter assert that he intended to cross the desert and hunt in Abyssinia, the grizzled Arab had spread out his hands and said:

“Unless the sahib is very powerful and rich, the military will not allow him to make the journey. The great governors across the water intend to forbid the export of the ostrich. While the conference over this is going on between the French, the Italians and the English, it is necessary that no one shall take out any birds. That is, sahib, the great law covering all the land has not been made, but it is all the same as if it had.”

Thus, at the first step, Peter found himself facing what might prove a most serious hindrance to his plans. He was exceedingly glad that the Arab had forewarned him. It would undoubtedly aid him in getting started on his journey.

After being rowed ashore in full view of the government buildings and the military post, there remained nothing for him to do but to openly make his way to the governor's office. There he found a thick-set, iron-gray man, clad in white linen, cut à la militaire, sitting before a large desk in a cool, well-ventilated office on the second floor, busily engaged in writing.

Introducing himself, Peter explained that he wished to make a journey into Abyssinia. Instantly the governor's face lighted with interest.



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"Would monsieur object to telling his reasons for undertaking this dangerous journey?"

After Peter had explained that he wished to explore the country and try his hand at big game shooting, the other asked:

"How many men do you propose to take with you?"

"Oh, a guide or two," replied Peter.

"Monsieur will do well to take my advice and forego his journey." The man's curiosity was growing: "Has monsieur ever travelled across the desert?"

Peter shook his head.

"There are many risks."

"I beg that Your Excellency grant me a permit to proceed."

"It is a folly that you suggest, Monsieur Rutledge! The wild tribes of the desert are very dangerous now. To undertake this incomprehensible trip with only a guide or two and minus the protection of fighting men is madness."

Peter shrugged his shoulders.

"It is courting death," the man continued. "White men, especially those unused to the dangers of the desert, fall easy victims to the lawless Bedouins. They are greatly enraged with the Christians just now because of troubles in the south. These men attack and plunder with great courage. Our troops seldom dare to travel far in squads of less



**"I FORBID YOU, MONSIEUR"**

than fifty. Savage encounters have grown frequent of late."

"But I am willing to risk it, Your Excellency." The stubborn note in the American's voice seemed to irritate the older man. For a moment there was a dead silence in the room. Then with a hardly repressed scowl, the Frenchman said:

"We have discussed it enough. I forbid you to attempt this foolhardy trip, monsieur. I cannot grant you a permit to leave Shaliti. I shall be obliged to arrest you if you disobey."



XV

ALONE IN THE DESERT

THE hint of a frown still lingered on His Excellency's face as Peter bowed and withdrew to the street. He was still puzzling over the perplexing situation created by the dictum of the governor when he heard a voice at his elbow saying:

"The white sahib wears the signet ring of friendship bestowed by the great queen of Rhadan. Arnak knows the token well." The dark eyes of a tall, slender, grave-faced Arab were fixed upon him as he turned.

"The great queen—" he asked.

"The sahib wears her gift and yet knows her not?" There was perplexity in the voice. "Zar is revered by Arab and Black alike. Neither the wise men of the desert nor the medicine men of the hill tribes possess the wisdom of Zar. Her word is law to thousands."

Peter thrust a hand beneath the Arab's arm. "The white sahib would learn more of this wonderful Zar. Come, let us find a place where we can talk unobserved," he said.

The native silently led the way through the narrow



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streets, finally halting before a shadowy doorway through which he ushered his companion into a small and rather squalid room lighted by a single diminutive window and a brazier of burning coals standing in the centre of the floor.

"The sahib seeks to find the great queen," said Peter, seating himself. "Will Arnak show him the way to Zar's domain?"

The other man, who had squatted before the brazier, looked up quickly:

"More than a hundred leagues to the southwest, across the desert and deep in the wilds of a country little known and much feared, Zar rules. Death in many forms lurks along the path to her land."

"The white sahib means to find this queen of whom Arnak knows," said Peter, gravely. "He has come thousands of miles on this quest. Neither danger nor hardship can deter him now."

"The way lies over lonely wastes, pest-ridden valleys and rock-strewn defiles that too often hide savage bands waiting to prey on travellers," said the Arab. "Sometimes, for days, no water is to be had. The bones and skulls of many hapless men lie bleaching along the trail. And when the sahib has passed the lowlands and penetrated beyond the mountain range that fringes the tropical Abyssinian fastnesses, many strange-tongued and bloodthirsty tribes of savage men who feed upon human flesh infest the forest. In the timbered foothills, too, man-eating



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lions, panthers, elephants and crocodiles are to be met with everywhere. Has the white sahib counted all the dangers?"

"They matter not," Peter responded, with a shrug. "Will Arnak guide the sahib? He shall be well paid."

The Arab paused only for a moment:

"Arnak has no choice but to obey him who speaks with the authority of the all-wise Zar."

Thus, just as the moon crept past the zenith of the sky that night and when his all-day confinement in the stuffy Arab dwelling—where he had taken refuge to avoid the governor's spies—had almost exhausted Peter's patience, he felt a light hand on his shoulder and heard Arnak's voice saying:

"Let the sahib follow quickly."

Traversing the inner courtyard and mounting two flights of stone stairs leading up between dark walls of masonry, the guide finally reached the roof of the dwelling. Halting there, he pointed to a long, narrow timber-piece bridging the flat roof of the building upon which he stood with the one directly across the street.

"Two spies are watching the house, sahib. It is the only way."

For a minute Peter paused. Overhead millions of stars and a crescent of silver lighted a cloudless sky; beneath lurked the dark shadows of the narrow street, a murky abyss where probable death waited



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him who slipped from the frail bridge. At last he dropped to his knees and cautiously began the perilous passage, realizing now that he had indeed begun a journey beset with danger.

Twice his nerves tautened like steel wires and twice the throbbing of his pulses almost choked him as the unevenly balanced timber shook beneath him. A gasp of relief swept over him as he finally reached the other side and again felt solid masonry under his feet.

Arnak, picking his way across the treacherous bridge with an almost feline agility, now led on over the roofs of three buildings, down into another inner courtyard, and finally out into the darkness of a narrow street which, after a few minutes' walk, brought them to the beach close to one end of the city's wall.

"Listen, sahib," said the Arab, halting here, "the military keep careful watch at night. No one is allowed to depart from Shaliti after sunset. Fifteen yards away, on the other side, two soldiers are on guard. Others keep watch beyond them. Here, close to the water, less vigilance is maintained, for the wall projects into the harbor a hundred yards and no boats are permitted out after dark. To escape, Arnak and the sahib must swim out and around to the other side. Let the sahib go first. Arnak will follow with the garments."

The man had already flung off his burnous and



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tossed it upon a rude raft which plainly had been prepared for this emergency. Peter, always a good swimmer, was not long in gaining the other side of the wall. There he had halted, waist-deep in the water, refreshed by the bath and smiling at the thought of having so easily and pleasantly outwitted His Excellency, when the little raft supporting the clothes suddenly shot past him and he saw the Arab, now close behind, lunge forward with all his might. Instantly there was a mighty swirl of waves and Arnak, guiding his companion by the arm, gingerly waded ashore, clutching in his fingers the handle and broken blade of an Arab knife.

"It is well! Allah is good to the sahib. The tiger sharks are hungry for blood. The white skin of the sahib draws them into the shallows."

Peter shuddered as he hastily drew on his clothes.

"Come." Arnak now strode forward along the shore line. The other had barely finished dressing and caught up with his shadowy form when suddenly the guide halted, stood listening a minute, and then threw himself into the deep shadows of the bluff, at the same time dragging Peter down with him.

"Diable! What was that!" The exclamations were in French.

"Your ears deceive you, Pierre. There is nothing."

A khaki-clad gendarme sprang over the bank and stood outlined in the starlight, peering up and down



## ALONE IN THE DESERT

the beach. Both the Arab and Peter held their breath. A match snapped, flamed up and went out, leaving behind the glow of a burning cigarette.

"You are right, Jaques, it was nothing." The man passed within five feet of the crouching pair and climbed the bank again.

"A Yankee arrived to-day who asked the governor for permission to cross the desert alone to hunt, he said, in Abyssinia. Everyone knows it is suicide to travel unaccompanied on the Haud. Singularly enough, the man could not be tricked into divulging his real purpose, so His Excellency forbade him to leave the city except as he came. Spies have been set to watch the fellow."

"But these Yankees are very devils for getting about," said the other voice. "I'll wager this one gives the governor the slip. What business he possibly could have had—" The voice trailed away in the distance.

Without a word the two crouching figures under the bank straightened up and sped along the shore line to where, half a mile further on, two kneeling camels and a donkey in charge of an Arab waited their coming.

Fifteen minutes later Peter and Arnak had left the camel-man to find his way back to Shaliti, and with the donkey trailing behind, were speeding deep into the heart of the desert on the backs of their fleet-footed hygeens.



## THE OSTRICH

For seven cloudless nights and days these two now played at hide-and-seek with a succession of dangers such as men seldom encounter at one time, even in the most remote and uncivilized corners of the world. The murderous attitude which the southern Bedouins had assumed toward all travellers greatly increased their peril.

On the first day of the march they crouched for hours with the kneeling camels and carefully hobbled donkey behind a sheltering knoll, watching the movements of a troop of circling horsemen, plainly bent upon the trail of some fugitive. Peter suspected that his disobedience to the governor's command had already become known. They usually hid among the rocks at night, thus minimizing the danger of detection, so much greater in the pleasanter, but more frequented mimosa and palm-tree groves. On three different occasions their lonely camping-places were beset by bands of half-starved hyenas whose boldness obliged the two men to take turns keeping guard during the entire night. Once a lioness stalked their larder and undoubtedly would have ended Arnak's career while he slept, had not Peter wakened in the nick of time and sent a carefully aimed bullet between the pair of yellow eyes blazing in the darkness.

There was no moment of the day when they felt secure from the nomadic desert pirates who, Arnak declared, plundered and murdered both Christian



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and Mohammedan alike. It was, indeed, a band of these same fanatical marauders who wrought the catastrophe which created a terrible crisis in Peter's affairs.

Just before sunset on the seventh day's march, when the peaks of the Abyssinian border had begun to loom out of the far-off horizon, he mounted the donkey and rode in search of water toward a cluster of trees a little over a mile from the sheltered ravine selected by Arnak for the night's encampment.

The charm of the mimosa grove, so cool and fragrant after the long day of torturous heat, tempted Peter to linger beside the oasis well. The twilight shadows were beginning to deepen when he swung the goatskin bags over the donkey's back and started on his return to camp.

As he strode on beside the patient, little, long-eared beast, his soul awed by the silent immensity of sky and wastes and his mind pondering upon the problem of his strange predicament, the faint sound of wild cries, followed by the unmistakable crack of a rifle-shot, startled him to a realization of very near and actual peril.

He halted the donkey and strained his eyes ahead. Perhaps half the distance to camp had been covered, but it was now too dark to make out what was happening there. He whipped up the donkey, running by the animal's side until he could dimly make out the rising edge of the encampment gully, ahead.



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Since the rifle's crack he had heard nothing. The silence was ominous. Leaving the animal, Peter ran swiftly forward and glanced down into the sheltered valley.

It was empty. Camels, baggage, provisions, cooking utensils, Arnak—all were gone. He leaped into the enclosure, reckless of hidden foes. The smoking remains of the Arab guide's fire, scattered on every side, were all that was left of the camp.

He knelt and scanned the ground. Instead of the familiar imprint of camels' feet, he beheld everywhere traces of horses' hoofs—many of them—and in one place scattered blood drops stained the surface of a rock.

For a few minutes he sat horror-stricken at the tragedy. With only the loaded, six-chamber revolver in his belt, a donkey and two skins of water, he must now push on alone, blindly groping his way amid murderous men and savage beasts whither—

Arnak had referred to the foothills and mountains in the distance as a barrier between them and Zar's domain. Might they not indeed prove an insurmountable barrier to such an impoverished and helpless traveller as he now seemed to be! As he puzzled over his quandary, his fingers came in contact with the talisman which El-Hamed, the wealthy sheik of the lower Nile, had given him so long ago, and he suddenly recalled the old man's assurance:

“The ring will protect effendi from harm and its



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magic charm will assure the hospitality of all the queen's subjects.

"Because of the talisman, Zar will come to meet effendi at the boundary of her country."

The signet felt warm and strangely electrical to his touch. But he was no mystic and he thought with sinking heart:

"Must I, then, be compelled to trust precious purposes and even life to the magical power ascribed to an oriental stone?" Sitting awake there, listening and staring with intent and watchful eyes into the desert night, it flashed upon him that all his future and the future of those plans that had grown to be as the fibre of his being now hung upon the thread of such vague hopes as this talisman held forth. It was too late to retrace his steps; he would not have done that in any case. He must push on, relying upon fate, chance, accident, decrees of mysterious words, any portent that held out a ray of hope.

At early dawn he started on foot towards the summits ahead. Beside him trudged the donkey, laden with the water-bags. He speculated much concerning the fate of Arnak. Hunger overtook him, but he pressed his lips together and grimly drove it back. His thoughts ran ahead to his meeting with the much-praised queen. He pictured himself greeting her. Was she so marvellous after all? Might not her greatness have been exaggerated? Might she not prove disappointing?



## THE OSTRICH

The mountains had grown much nearer when at nightfall, famished and foot-sore, he tethered the donkey in one of the ever-increasing stretches of woods through which he was beginning to pass.

With much foraging he secured a scanty meal—his only one for that day—consisting of a few wild berries of an unrecognized species which he ravenously swallowed after a cautious test had proven them harmless. Swarms of bloodthirsty insects now added their tortures to those of hunger. He heard the roaring of two lions ahead in the denser thickets, but by maintaining the fire which he had built to drive away the villanous winged pests he felt that he would be comparatively safe from wild beasts.

At last from sheer exhaustion, and in spite of troubles of mind and body, he fell into a light slumber; but a little after midnight a blood-curdling braying by the donkey, that had been tied to a nearby sapling, brought him quickly to his feet. Almost before he could gather his scattered senses the animal's bellowing was drowned in the thunderous roar of an Abyssinian lion.

A single stick still flamed in the bed of glowing coals. Snatching it up as a torch and drawing his revolver, Peter dashed in the direction of the uproar only to discover, much to his chagrin, that he had arrived too late to rescue the unfortunate mule. For as the blazing brand, flung forward, sent the huge forms of a snarling lion and lioness slinking into an



## ALONE IN THE DESERT

adjacent thicket, he perceived his little four-footed companion lying lifeless on the ground.

For the remainder of the night he sat awake near the fire, his thoughts filled with many forebodings. Behind lay the desert; ahead were vast stretches of jungle beset with perils, even for the forest-bred savages; beyond those fastnesses was the towering mountain range. Of the route to Zar's kingdom he knew nothing. But a strength of purpose which he instinctively felt was stronger than himself possessed him and conquered the despair which beset him in those dark hours.

The early gray of dawn found him searching the dense woods for more life-sustaining berries. At sunrise, with a water-bag slung over his shoulders, he was beating his way through the lowland undergrowth and amid serpent-haunted jungle paths towards the peaks ahead.

When, gaunt-cheeked and foot-sore, he approached the more elevated country, he frequently caught glimpses of herds of antelope and gazelle, and late in the afternoon he burst suddenly upon a young tetel, devouring the leaves of a bush less than ten yards away. Heedless of all now save the cravings of hunger, he took hasty aim with his revolver and fired.

But hardly had the sound of the shot echoed across the little wooded plateau where he stood, when the giant figure of a man clad in a neat-fitting khaki suit and helmet of the same material stepped from behind



## THE OSTRICH

a nearby tree and advanced toward Peter, saying in good English as he nodded toward the dead animal:

"A good shot, white man!"

For a moment Peter could only stare in amazement. He even pinched himself to make sure that hunger had not bereft him of his senses.

"Our Zar has long expected thy coming," the man continued. "Many men scour the woods in all directions seeking thee. Follow Tamaran and thou shalt soon behold the queen."

An hour later, ragged, fatigued, famished and with his face and hands bearing blood-stained witness of the hardships of his wanderings, but with high-beating heart, Peter Rutledge, accompanying his strange guide, stepped into a great forest clearing where lay the encampment of Queen Zar.

Never before had Anglo-Saxon beheld a scene in the heart of the African wilds like that which spread itself before him.

Forming a semicircle about the open space, stood a white city of tents of varying sizes from the pinnacle of each of which floated a silken flag with an emblem representing two hands clasping in the centre of a field of gold. In all directions glimmered pungent campfires about which men, in stature and attire resembling Peter's guide, busied themselves over steaming kettles or smoking spits of food. Others were arranging long tables upon wooden horses, or spreading those already set up with white cloths and



## ALONE IN THE DESERT

modern eating utensils. Before several tent-openings in the centre, giant Amazons sat leisurely at work, some sewing or weaving, others plying spinning-wheels not unlike those which Peter's ancestors had brought from Holland to Manhattan two centuries before.

So amazed was Peter at this spectacle that he had quite forgotten his own dishevelled predicament when he beheld a woman emerging from a tent set a little apart in the centre of the half-ring, the sight of whose stately mien and features glowing with sun-warmed tints, instantly caught his attention and held him spellbound with admiration.

"It is the great queen," he thought, and before Zar spoke, and while he was advancing with much-battered helmet in one hand, he felt an acceleration of his tired pulses and a sudden, strange thrill of awe at the wonder of her noble presence.



XVI

THE GREAT QUEEN

NEVER had he beheld a face that irradiated such strength of character as did Zar's. Her wide-set, serene, gray eyes mirrored a look of conscious power. He felt the nearness of a mind, all-wise and prophetic. The tranquil bearing of her regal figure, robed in a grecianly girdled gown of white, seemed an idealist's conception of feminine grace. He knew at once that had others of his kind been there, they too in a single glance would have interpreted Zar as a woman of marvellous qualities.

Suddenly a fleeting something in the poise of her head caused him to wonder how old she might be above the clear white of whose forehead tumbling masses of hair, that refused to be brushed back, still retained their sun-colored tints. She seemed young and yet, as paradoxical as the thought might be, he felt that she was old—much older than himself, much older than any of those about her.

He was perplexed; he was impressed, too. The reverence which the old sheik, El-Hamed, had shown for her no longer seemed strange to Peter. It was not now amazing that the sight of her signet ring



## THE GREAT QUEEN

upon his finger had at once won the loyalty of the ill-fated Arnak. Instinctively, Peter divined that he also was destined to plight fealty to this remarkable queen.

He had forgotten his weariness of body when she spoke:

"Welcome, my friend! Thou art expected." A strong, white hand was stretched toward him. He felt both sympathy and gentleness in the tones of her voice. Again he marvelled at the sound of English, perfectly enunciated.

"Your majesty," he said, kneeling and touching her slim fingers with his lips, "I have come a long way to find you, over the seas and across the desert. I seek your aid in a great task. Behold this token, your talisman given me by the sheik, El-Hamed, which he promised should win me your interest." He held up his right hand on the second finger of which glowed the red stone of the mystic ring.

"Rise, my friend, and kneel no more to Zar. Thou art not less than she, nor she than thee; we are all friends here." As she spoke she drew back the hand that he had kissed, saying as she did so:

"Thou hast encountered many dangers and endured many hardships. To-night thou wilt satisfy thy hunger and rest. To-morrow when thou art refreshed, we shall journey together back to the city of my people. There we will discuss much that thou wouldst learn. I, too, have much to tell thee, my



## THE OSTRICH

friend—thoughts that lie close to my heart and which it shall be thy special mission to carry back to thy people across the water. But thy immediate comfort and well-being is now our first care. Yonder tent is thine and our Tamaran who brought thee hither shall attend to thy wants." She pointed toward one of the smaller shelters.

"Your majesty, before I say good-night I would ask a question. I am, indeed, curious. What signifies the flag flying from the tents? I have seen many banners, but none before like this." He pointed towards the nearest emblem as he spoke.

"Our flag stands for a great purpose," she replied; "an idea that one day shall actuate all men and women in their daily lives and hopes. It is the token of the brotherhood of man."

During and after a refreshing bath and a supper of venison and wheat cakes, and even as he sank to sleep amid his novel surroundings, this last response of the queen recurred again and again to his thoughts.

The brotherhood of man! Could the significance of that shibboleth, then, be clear to these people and to this remarkable queen, here in darkest Africa as it was called? It was the incentive of his own purposes—the brotherhood of man; its call had brought him here into the forest wilds. He fell asleep, wondering.

Tamaran's English broke in upon his dreams the next day at dawn:



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"Our Zar sends for thee, white man. We begin the march to Trebut in an hour."

"How does it happen that you speak English?" asked Peter.

"Our queen sent Tamaran and other Rhadanians to England when all of us were boys. We were educated there and learned the ways of the English and their speech. There we also learned the trades, each one a different trade, and one that would be useful in this country. Now all except the older people are being taught the language in the schools."

Peter stared at the giant.

"In the schools?" He wondered whether he had heard aright.

"We have good schools in Rhadan," the other answered. "Our Zar started them many years ago, before Tamaran's day, before the day of those much older than Tamaran."

Here indeed was a new marvel. While he sat at the breakfast brought him by the servant, a multitude of queries beset Peter's mind:

Who was this white queen who taught a savage tribe civilized ways and whose wisdom even the Arabs of the desert acknowledged and respected? He thought again of the two hands joined fraternally, signifying brotherhood. It was all incredible and yet it was real. He felt himself a discoverer who had come upon an unexpected and wonderful thing—a new and undreamed of type of civilization.



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Had this Zar, seemingly so untouched by age, yet indefinably old, somehow learned the answer to the question of the ages? Were her people being led from savagery to enlightenment and culture by the application of that knowledge? Profound wonder filled Peter's thoughts. He had already become convinced that poverty could be cured, that working together men could lift themselves up to the enjoyment of happiness and universal well-being. Was he to find here an object-lesson that would enable him to end his wanderings and begin the ultimate accomplishment of his mission?

Suddenly the conviction that success was to crown his efforts dominated him. He was lifted up, exhilarated, made hopeful.

Final preparations for breaking camp were going on as he stepped from his tent. The mules and camels required to transport the camp paraphernalia and equipage made up a great caravan. Already the plain had been swept of all its tents except his own and those of the queen and a few of the women.

As Tamaran and a companion appeared leading two richly caparisoned mules, Zar stepped forth ready for her journey. Though still in white, the shortness of her riding attire showed her silken-clad feet shod with sandals of plaited straw secured with straps of silver braid. About her head was wrapped a turban of white interwoven with threads of gold.

As Peter stood there marvelling at her great beauty



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and the repose of her bearing, she caught sight of him and waved a beckoning hand.

"Wilt thou mount with me, my friend?" she asked as he came up. "Our Tamaran and our Zoeb shall accompany us in advance of the caravan and thus, less disturbed, we may discourse during the journey to Trebut." As she spoke, she seated herself on a stalwart little mule and started forward. A few minutes later Peter was riding beside her through the solitudes of a mountain defile.

"Your majesty," he began, but her hand, raised in gentle admonition, interrupted him.

"Shall we not make a better beginning than that?" she asked. "To mine own people in this remote country, I am still queen. But to thee who comest from a land where civilization is older, let me be sister, one equal with thee, who loves thee and cherishes thee. Thou art indeed my brother. For are we not all brothers and sisters, children of the same god-like source, watched over and guided by the same great and all-wise spirit of good! As the snow vanishes beneath the warm rays of the sun, false distinctions between man and man will disappear when the true understanding of life begins to prevail."

"My sister," he began, marvelling more and more at her wisdom, "how was it that you were waiting here for me when I came to the borders of this land? El-Hamed long ago predicted that it would be so.



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Yet I am puzzled. By stealth I escaped from Shaliti. Since then I have travelled like a fugitive, hiding and fleeing and always endeavoring to escape detection. How could you know of my approach?"

"Hast thou never believed in the deeper visions?" she asked by way of reply. "There are certain subconscious pulsations of the inner self that men too often confound with impulse or with instinct. To me those deeper visions are real and as plain to read as the simpler thoughts of the mind. An inner voice speaking to me foretold thy coming. Years ago that voice was vague and indistinct, but as time passed it grew clearer. Long ago I instructed my people to keep watch for thee. Month by month the premonition of thy coming grew stronger until, three days since, I was impelled to take my hunters and come in search of thee. I knew I should find thee."

"Such things savor of the mystical, my sister," said Peter. "As yet we trust little to those psychic forces in my country, though I believe that interest in the power of subconscious thought is increasing."

"The great mass of people are not yet prepared for the weightier responsibility toward others that the gift of this inner voice entails," she replied. "But it will become the precious endowment of every soul in the centuries to come."

They were now riding over a broad plateau. "These are the boundaries of Rhadan," she said, pointing to a long border of trees through which they



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had just passed. "Eight leagues beyond lies Trebut. There we will talk of the practical purpose that brought thee hither."

"That is briefly told," he said. "I come in search of the ostrich, and to beg you to tell me of it."

In her eyes suddenly dawned the light of a deep emotion, as if his reply had kindled a great hope.

"So, then, thou hast heard the great and mighty Call of the Ages, my brother? And thou hast braved dangers and valiantly faced death to respond to the call? It is well! Thou shalt not regret it! Those to whom thou returnest shall likewise profit immeasurably by thy endeavor."

Again Peter's mind was filled with a tumult of bewildering thoughts. She knew, then, this Call of the Ages. It seemed supernatural.

"Much indeed will Zar tell thee of the ostrich," he heard her saying; "for this bird is destined to establish a new order of things. I will send thee on thy way with as many ostriches as will wholly suffice to fulfil the bird's purpose and thine."

"Will it require long to do all this?" he asked eagerly.

She was quick to note his seeming impatience.

"The restlessness of thy spirit is pardonable, my brother, for, if thou didst but know it, thy return is waited by many to whom the possessionship of these precious birds will prove the beginning of an undreamed of era of prosperity and happiness. Haste



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is further to be desired because the difficulties of getting out of Africa with the birds increase with every week. Thou shalt remain in Trebut until Zar hath gathered together a caravan and found a way for thee to conveniently transport the birds from the forest. Then thou shalt set forth on the hunt. The delay will not be long.

"But tell me," she asked, "how camest thou, my brother, upon the secret of the great possibilities of the desert bird? El-Hamed is indeed a wise old man, one of the few followers of the true teachings of the great Mahomet. Long years ago much knowledge of his earnest work among the misguided desert races came to my ears, and I sent him the signet ring as a sign of my approval. He prized it greatly. Thou must have served him well to have gained so dear a gift."

"A madman would have slain him, but I was there and prevented it," said Peter.

"Thou art modest, my brother. I pray you, relate fully how thou didst succor El-Hamed and what other happenings preceded thy coming hither? Thus we may the better understand each other's heart and mind. That Zar may know what thou wilt be, let her know what thou hast done."

Obediently Peter recited what had occurred since that momentous evening in Jerusalem when the inspired message fell from Ann Newman's lips upon his ears. A deep and absorbing interest shone in the



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queen's eyes as he proceeded. Sorrow and joy, like shadow and sunlight, found reflection there as the story unfolded. Peter saw that she, too, wept over the wrongs of others and sympathized with their joys, and he was profoundly moved.

He had barely completed his story when they emerged from the forest and he saw that they now rode upon a smooth, well-kept road which, a little way ahead, ran between handsome and intelligently built dwellings of timber and stone. He stared in amazement.

"My brother," said the queen, divining his thoughts, "yonder is Trebut, Zar's home and that of many of her people. The dwellings that thou seest are perhaps not unlike those in thine own land. Comforts and many of the simple luxuries of life all have been provided for us here, as thou shalt presently see. I think thou wilt wonder much at the progress of my people, but when thou doest so remember that fellowship between man and man and the principle of self-help and mutual co-operation have wrought all that seems strange. Here the effort of a few years has accomplished what the rest of the world is taking centuries to achieve, because our effort has been rightly directed. Zar's people once lived in the most abject ignorance.

"Dost know that thou art the first white man upon whose face I have ever looked?" she asked. "It is truly good to behold thee, my brother, and



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pleasing to hear thy voice. A multitude of truths crowd my mind; the story of thy search for a means of helping others has stirred the depths of my being. After thou hast rested, our Melu will conduct thee to the great hall in the palace. There we will talk together."

At last they drew rein at an arching gateway in a low, wooden wall beyond which rose the red-tiled roof of a spreading two-story structure of stone and wood. An Arab boy with curly hair and alert face sprang forward in obedience to the queen's gesture.

"Show the sahib to the room in the west wing overlooking the courtyard and attend closely to his bidding, my Melu," she said.

A smile of pleasure displayed the youth's twin rows of glistening, white teeth.

"It is forever as your majesty, our Zar, commands." He bowed with much native grace and, turning to Peter, motioned respectfully toward the gate. Thus as Tamaran and Zoeb led away the mules Peter passed into the vast, fenced-in area which answered to the name of the courtyard to the queen's palace at Trebut.

Though the exterior appearance of the city's dwellings had impressed him much, he was doubly amazed at the masterful accomplishments of Zar's subjects, as his eyes took in the interior of this tasteful, roomy, awning-windowed structure with its mystifying maze of airy corridors and living apartments



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and its enchantment of simple, yet singularly harmonious works of art, costly rugs and handsome furniture.

The room into which Melu finally conducted him was a high-ceilinged apartment overlooking the rear of the palace grounds. Happening to glance out of one of the windows, he noticed a number of natives, evidently citizens of the place or else planters from the outlying country, some leading mules or camels, coming from a huge and unusually massive building which stood in plain view.

"What is all that?" he asked.

"It is one of the great stores, sahib, at which the people procure what they desire to live by."

"And what do they sell there?"

"Everything that is needed," replied the youth.

As Peter changed to the cool, white linen which the Arab brought him, and stretched himself out in a wicker chair where he could look out on the scene of these people visiting their storehouse, he realized that he had indeed come upon a situation without parallel in the world. His mind was besieged by a thousand questions each of which was seeking for a reply when, in response to a royal summons, he rose, followed Melu through the palace again and entered the room of state of Her Majesty of Rhadan.

It was a large apartment, unusually long and wide, in which rafters of mahogany and an enormous,



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high-mantled fireplace built in the centre of one side lent to it the atmosphere of an old colonial hall of justice. Light, stuccoed walls and rug-strewn floor enhanced the freshness, simplicity and inviting comfort of the place.

Around three walls of this apartment stood a hundred or more chairs of mahogany and wicker. On the fourth side, at the end, where the light from two enormous windows streamed in on either side, stood a high, stiff-backed, mahogany arm-chair in which, upon a snuff-colored silk cushion, sat Zar, still in white, with her feet resting upon a velvet hassock. Several chairs were scattered about near her own and a few steps down the room, and running widthwise of it, stood a low, but ample-topped, mahogany table well littered with papers and other writing material. Against one corner of this table leaned a rather old and slightly gray-haired Bedouin Arab.

The queen was looking toward Peter as he approached.

"My brother," she said, finally breaking the silence, "behold our great Ras Jemel, a wonderful hunter and a brave man whom we love much. He tells us that there is great danger in setting out after the ostrich."

Peter thrust out a friendly hand.

"We will conquer all those dangers, Ras Jemel," he said earnestly. "We must go, in spite of perils. I could not turn back now."



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The old man's eyes clung intently to Peter's features for a moment. Then turning to Zar again, he said:

"Your Majesty, it shall be as you bid; Ras Jemel will collect a hundred hygeens and have built many large cases for the easy conveyance of the birds." He looked at Peter once more:

"It shall be done quickly, sahib," and with a last scrutinizing glance at the American, he bowed and withdrew.

As the door swung softly together behind him, Peter looked toward Zar, intent upon fathoming the mystery of a condition of affairs which, while it grew more amazing with every hour of his residence here, seemed to conform closely to his own ideal of a society in which neither poverty nor the sin of great riches could endure.



## XVII

### ZAR'S PHILOSOPHY

HER first words thrilled him with a sense of her strange divinative power:

"Be seated, my brother, and Zar will make clear these perplexities which beset thee."

"How can you read my thoughts so easily?" he asked as he drew up a chair quite near and facing her.

She began speaking, slowly at first, not looking at him but unconsciously staring straight ahead as a person might if swayed by a deep inner concentration:

"Those of us who have not learned to see clearly walk ever in the midst of secrets. Once we fathom our subconscious selves and that veil of mystery is lifted. The deeper the mind penetrates, the clearer it becomes. Thy thoughts are not difficult to translate.

"Thou dost not guess how long Zar hath dwelt with these people of the forest, her book of life their simple faces. Long ago she learned to transcribe unspoken desires and emotions and the hidden impulses of one of her own in a single glance. Is it a task



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so much greater to thus interpret the thoughts of our brother who comes from another land? Hast thou never heard that one need not go beyond his door to know the world? In this isolated spot Zar hath learned truths that fit into the lives of men and women everywhere. Thou too shalt know them."

Peter leaned forward.

"I am amazed at the things I see," he said. "Here is a race reputed to be ignorant and bloodthirsty living in what appears to be the true enjoyment of life, possessing modernly built dwellings, good roads, schools and stores, and going about modernly attired. It is incredible! How came this culture of theirs and of yours, my sister? What is the secret of its being?"

Her eyes lighted as she spoke:

"The principle that has lifted the savage man here from degradation to intelligent achievement is the key to the future enjoyment of life and usefulness of thine own people and of all mankind. It is the principle that creates a society founded upon a truth—not a half-truth, nor an evasion, nor a shadow of the real, but a simple and plain verity as perfect as refined gold. It is the principle of loving thy neighbor as thyself and of expressing that love in practical co-operation between man and man. It is the principle which rouses the inner self in each human being to a sense of self-appreciation and to a desire to unite and to stand shoulder to shoulder in



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harmony with other men, for the highest attainment of living.

"To-morrow thou wilt walk through Trebut. Then thou wilt see an ideal condition of society founded on the practice of this principle. We have skilled workers here, artisans of many types, carpenters, masons, road-builders, tanners, weavers and dyers besides the great number of trained men who farm and herd the flocks. All our children are sent to school and each one is left to choose, according to inherent tendencies and inclination, the vocation that he prefers."

"What of your indolent and poor?" asked Peter.

"The fear that accompanies poverty does not exist here because there are no poor. The difference between the intrinsic abilities of individuals diminishes continually under co-operation and a right system of education. When men receive all the benefits of their labor, it requires but little labor for each to live in plenty. The drones, the incompetents and the sluggards soon disappear from a society whose members not only are not impeded by poverty but are inspired by the many blessings which co-operation brings."

"Writers in my country have depicted such a condition of society but many people call them Utopians," said Peter; "and yet," he added, "there is growing up a tendency toward the belief that co-operative effort will some day prove the salvation of



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the world. I can scarcely believe that you have accomplished what my own countrymen have hardly begun to think seriously about."

"Perhaps thou canst understand the significance of the picture that rises before me," said Zar. "I see vast armies of poverty-stricken wretches so enslaved by a prolonged tyranny of plunder and so blinded by the low order of morals begotten by the process of their own subjugation that they and their masters no longer realize the value of a single high principle of life. I see the many who have grown rich by constant cheating. I see a society, the entire business fabric of which is interwoven with falsehood. I see a world-wide army of men of both high and low degree daily resorting to trickery, subterfuge and a thousand and one petty artifices to make gain at the expense of others. From the plunderer of colossal wealth to the shivering and hungry outcast, men practise this philosophy of pillage. It is a philosophy that poisons right thinking and all the virtues of the soul, and wherever it prevails human beings are degraded and enslaved. Only when truth stands chief, not least, among the cardinal virtues, and when it is realized that the uplifting of the many lies in the necessity for each one to first seek to better himself, shall poverty give place to an equity of peace and happiness for all. Then shall men advance upward together." In her earnestness she had leaned slightly forward and now a waning ray of sunlight



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fell upon her face and drove the shadows from it. She was as one inspired to the man near her.

"Listen, my brother," she went on. "As thy heart hath sorrowed over the forlorn, the poor and the helpless of thy country, so Zar hath wept for those about her—the thousands of ignorant and savage people beyond the borders of Rhadan who have set themselves against all her endeavors to teach them better methods of living. They are all close and dear to me. I would have them turn to better ways of life but they are obstinate. Yet thy people and all civilized nations everywhere who persist in living in darkness are equally at fault. For do not such deliberately refuse what is best day after day and year after year? Is not their sin even greater, indeed, than that of the African savage because of the latter's lesser advantages?"

"'Think for thyself and love thy neighbor' was the first precept which I taught my people. That injunction shalt thou also proclaim broadcast, that it may become the summons to a new and higher life everywhere."

Peter was sitting rigidly erect, all his senses intent upon her words.

"O marvellous sister," he exclaimed, "how came you by such a power of truth? Where in wilds like these is hidden such wisdom concerning right living?"

Quickly her answer came:

"Beyond me, about me everywhere are spirits that



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continually overrule my thoughts. They are about thee too my brother. They pervade every walk of life and every grade of men. They are constantly seeking to bring about reforms, to waken humanity to higher thoughts and to a higher consciousness of good. Hast thou never felt their influence in thine own soul?"

Peter nodded his head.

"I have been guided by mysterious forces," he said, "but not as you have, my sister. Few have gained so clear an insight into the higher wisdom as have you."

"That is because few desire to know and to learn," she answered. "I safeguard my people with the aid of this spiritual force. It is ever at hand. It communes with me. It is undying and dwells in and around all. After we are dead it will still exist.

"The living live always. To deny that were to deny immortality. Without an existence to continue, there could be no use of ever having been. Life, not death, was ordained for human beings. Let man but cease to resist and to antagonize the helpful intent of the ministering spirits about him and he is ripe for all things. Then indeed shall all his subconscious being waken and act as his guide and stay. Then shall the day of higher aims grow full.

"Even in this supposedly unprogressive country we are going ahead as thou canst perceive. Out in



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the larger world, on all sides, truth is dispelling ignorance. Laws of nature and of science have put an end to much superstition. Thou hast said, my brother, that the minds of thine own people are beginning to solve the deeper meanings of the soul. The social consciousness everywhere is waking. Religions, dogmas, the old order with its many differing ethical and moral disciplines are being bent to the one principle of fraternal love. All are beginning to recognize the need of a religion of man for man. Look forward, my brother, and hail the coming of this joyous era!

“Lofty achievements await him who casts hate and fear and jealousy out of his life. Such a one shall distinguish himself, for then will he know what infinite love is; and infinite love is infinite power. Men should not strive to be kind; they should be so filled with love that kindness is inevitable. It is the losing of one’s self in endeavor that frees one from discord. Knowest thou not that torment and bliss are states of mind? Humanity must learn, no matter how slowly, that co-operation, not competition, is best for all. Then, and only then, shall human beings know, feel and express that great principle of love; then shall they give, and in the giving it shall be returned to them again; then the social parasite, now living by the sweat and toil of others, shall no longer exist. Service alone shall distinguish man. Ability to serve shall be the true



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test of education. Man's intelligence shall be as great as the good he accomplishes, not while in the business of doing good, but in the simple performance of his daily tasks. All religious faiths shall unite in the single compelling thought of man's brotherhood and the fatherhood of the one God, who was before, and who will be after all. As the years unroll the nations of the world, realizing that all men are brothers, shall come to serve beneath this banner. Ah, my brother, I am filled with unutterable joy when my mind wings forward to that glorified day of the future. I see peace and harmony. That dreadful error, poverty, then shall have been banished from the earth. Those of my neighbors who live in ignorance and thy people now dwelling in a like darkness all shall see and understand. It is an ineffable thought. Then shall the teachings of the Nazarene and of all the prophets find a true and perfect expression; false interpretations shall be eliminated from worship; hypocrisy and vain outward show shall disappear.

"The world has wandered long and far amid the confusion of many faiths. Century after century much knowledge and truth have lain hidden amid a verbiage of man-made dogmas. Human beings have quibbled over the letter of the law while its practice in spirit has been forgotten. But the end of all perplexity and futile discussions is in sight. In men's hearts the great principles of truth are at last beginning to take root. 'Learn to serve thyself and



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in doing so thou shalt serve others,' 'learn to love and love shall be returned to thee,' 'fellowship between men,' and 'man's oneness with God'—such precepts and thoughts are to sum up the religion of To-morrow.

"Is it not to be wondered at, my brother, that centuries of time have been necessary for a mere beginning of the understanding of such plain and simple doctrines?"

For a moment the queen leaned back in silence. The man too was quiet, enthralled by what he felt was the force of those pervading spirits about them both. He knew that wisdom which analyzed so broadly emanated from a source deeper than that of the mental powers. Suddenly a similarity between the utterances of Zar and the prophecy of a brotherhood of man which had come to him from the lips of Ann Newman flashed into his mind, and he instantly understood that in some strange and inexplicable manner the two women had been inspired by the same immutable source. Finally, Zar spoke again:

"Thou then art he who has come in search of the ostrich?" Her words caused him to start, self-consciously. It was as if she were suddenly regarding him from a new standpoint.

"Before it was known to her that one would come, Zar divined the value of this great bird to mankind," she continued. "The ostrich embodies the motive



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force of a movement that shall endure forever. When thou, my brother, shalt return and begin to advocate the doctrine of the Golden Rule in business, thou shalt encounter great opposition. Benighted humanity, even while it realizes the beneficence of that injunction, contends against its practice. Men will fight against one who advocates the establishment of universal co-operation, for there is still a host of those who are too gross, too lacking in the finer sensibilities, too unspiritual to grasp the importance of this principle. But the effort with the ostrich as a material factor behind it shall prove invincible, for this bird alone has been specially appointed to advance the cause of the brotherhood of man."

"I do not understand you, my sister," said Peter, mystified by her last assertion.

"Thou hast no doubt already learned, if thou hast studied the ostrich, that the bird lives a hundred years, and that, contrary to the rule with so many animals, no ailment or plague affects it. But more than all this—and thou, my brother, art the first dwelling in the outside world to learn this secret—the ostrich will thrive even better in a climate of extreme cold than it does in the tropical wilds. Thou art to convey a great flock of these birds to thine own land where the truth of this secret shall be proven for all. Moreover, when thou dost leave this land to begin thy work, destiny hath decreed



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that no other person shall ever take an ostrich from Africa's borders. Thou art to be the last.

"Yet before even thou shalt succeed in escaping, heart-breaking discouragements and terrible dangers will threaten thy success. But thou must be brave and persistent. No harm shall mar thee and thy work, then."

"Your confidence and assurance inspires me," said Peter, as Zar paused. "But tell me how I am to enlist men in this constructive purpose for which the ostrich is to be used? In my country hundreds are continually exploiting schemes claimed to be for the benefit of the many, but which in reality are for the aggrandizement of the few. My people have been tricked and deceived so often that now they are no longer easily won to a new cause."

"The evil done by others is one of the obstacles ahead of thee," she answered. "But in spite of that and of all other hindrances the principle of co-operation shall continue to spread. With the ostrich thou hast the means for establishing it irrevocably, for the bird shall prove a material aid of which no one can deprive thee and those who join with thee.

"Already the ground is ready for the hand of the sower. The way for thy success has been prepared by a dawning knowledge among many people that fraternal effort is needed.

"At first only a few shall join with thee, and among that few there shall be some hesitant and doubting



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and weak; but little by little enthusiasm shall grow; then thousands shall fall into line, until the influence of their earnestness and of their principles shall make itself felt in every corner of the globe. In that day the business world shall waken to the new truths and be guided by them. Past errors, the systems that now produce great strikes and great monopolies, shall disappear. Christ's promise, 'All things are yours,' shall be fulfilled then, and not until then, for to realize those words man must rise in his intelligence and understanding and become a united brotherhood.

"Men have wandered astray. In every part of the world they have been misled by false teachings and misinterpretations of truth. Greed and covetousness of power, since the beginning of time, have greatly obscured the teachings of such prophets as Moses and Mahomet whose words were intended to lead men to a higher life. But with the motto of self-help and universal brotherhood before them human beings are to break away from enslavement and ignorance and walk in the light, upright and unafraid.

"Then warfare shall cease between nations. Then all peoples shall be in accord in thought and action, recognizing the one and only God as father. Then there shall be no more castes. The same tongue shall be spoken by all. Waste, idleness, indolence, usury, begging and living upon others shall cease. Harmony



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shall succeed inharmony in business. It shall be a day of great happiness."

At her last words the queen rose and stretched out her hand toward Peter.

"Now I must bid thee farewell for a brief time, my brother. Duty calls me to attend to the needs of my people. To-morrow we will journey about the city and thou wilt see what we have done here and how we live. Meanwhile Melu will attend to thy wants. Possess thyself with patience." Then gently pressing his fingers she left him, vanishing through one of the doors that led from the room.



## XVIII

### A TRUTH MADE REAL

PETER lay awake late that night, endeavoring to reconcile his mind with the influx of new thoughts and emotions which Zar's words had roused. He was curious to inspect the industrial and social régime of Rhadan, for that régime seemed likely to prove a remarkable example of co-operation.

It puzzled him to understand just how the queen had made the principle practical in this country. Co-operation had gained a permanent foothold in England, in Germany, in Italy, among the people of nations where civilization was well advanced; but in those countries it had been born of long-continued poverty and oppression. In Rhadan, a single woman had conceived and applied the principle to an entire people reputed to be grossly ignorant, and a well-developed civilization had resulted.

Thus he was prompt to respond to Zar's summons the next morning, and shortly after breakfast he set out with her in the royal phaëton drawn by two milk-white horses and driven by a tall, snowy-clad native.

Trebut proved to be a well-kept municipality of



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several thousand people. The residential section, consisting of many structures of the bungalow type with a scattering of two-story buildings, was grouped in one section along paved streets lined with trees and foliage. Here he also noticed another storehouse similar to the one behind Zar's palace, rising above the broad-sloping roof-tops. Three school buildings made of brick and ornamented with carved stone were also located in different parts of this section.

In the centre of the same area lay a vast park containing hundreds of seats arranged in semicircles around a raised platform. This park, Zar explained, was the forum for public discussions, meetings and religious gatherings.

Christianity, long the religion of the whole country, found its expression among the people of Trebut in out-of-door gatherings at which the best and highest thoughts of the world's great men were studied and learned. The forum was also the sanctuary. Vast urns filled with flowering plants, and streamers of green foliage which, Zar informed him, were replaced from week to week, and which hung festoon-like from the overhanging limbs of trees, took the place of gilded vestment and stilted ceremonial. A fountain in the midst of a pond, sprayed with a million diamonds the masses of multi-colored flowers that bloomed amid green lily-pads. These people chose only the fragrance, beauty and sweetness of nature with which to hallow their place of worship.



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Finally, they were driven to what Zar called the section of industries, a division of the city removed from the residences. There Peter's wondering gaze beheld a small-sized manufacturing centre in which nearly all the occupations of the people except farming and cattle raising were located in different factories and workshops. Another school also stood in this working centre where advanced instruction in the trades was accompanied by practical work in the factories.

Here was a tannery where hides were tanned and finished, and a busy shoe-factory where the finished product was turned into footwear. A small cotton and woollen mill, a brick kiln behind which stood a great pit with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of clay, a large furniture factory, a wood-working shop, a cannery where meats and fruits were preserved, and structures for carrying on the lesser occupations such as the making of dye colors, beads, baskets and rugs were numbered among the enterprises here.

Even after spending several hours inspecting this remarkable centre, Peter was loath to return with his royal guide to the palace. When he and his hostess were together again in the room of state, he said to Zar:

"The accomplishments of your people are little short of marvellous, my sister. My countrymen would doubt my honesty if I were to tell them of all



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the wonders that I have seen to-day. For who would believe that a people in the very heart of the world's wildest country could achieve such results!

"You assert that co-operation has been your guiding principle. In the outside world co-operation is being practised by different groups of men, but nowhere is there to be found such a perfect example as here. Not a part, but all your people have been united. I have not seen a single beggar nor a drone of any kind during our journey about the city. Every one seems to be actuated by the same spirit of progressiveness.

"It is the method by which you have succeeded in making co-operation practical that puzzles me, my sister. Will you explain it?"

The queen smiled.

"Thy question is not unexpected," she said. "In thy country thou hast witnessed the growth of great combinations of capital subscribed by men who recognize the economy to be gained by the concentration of many businesses under one management. These trusts have absorbed one enterprise after another until thy people, fearing their rapaciousness or dreading their power, have rallied to do battle with them.

"Hast thou ever guessed what the end of this trust epidemic will be, my brother? Hast thou thought of what would happen if these trusts continued the process of combining until all businesses



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were taken in? The result would be a single great corporation that combined all the wealth and managed all the industries of the country."

"That would be a terrible plutocracy," put in Peter.

"It would indeed prove a calamity if a few were to possess the ultimate control of such a combination. But that will not be the case.

"Let us suppose that the people, all of them, owned such a corporation—and they could easily do so—then you would have an ideal social and industrial system of affairs."

"I do not understand," said Peter. "How could such a result be brought about? How is it so easy for the people to gain possession of what is now in the hands of a chosen few?"

"By subscribing a part of their earnings for the purchase of shares in a corporation which has for its purpose the gradual absorption of the securities of all the great trusts," was her reply. "But first permit Zar to tell her brother just how she has established in Rhadan a community which he has been pleased to find excellent. Many years ago, when her subjects were much lower in the scale of progress than they are now, a group of the most intelligent youths were sent abroad to be taught the sciences and the civilization of Europe. When these returned Zar made them the teachers of the rest of her people.

"At first there was rebellion. The old-time inertia



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prevailed. Very few had learned of the incentive that comes with self-help. But Zar did not punish those who objected to being taught. Instead, she summoned all to the forum and showed them what could be accomplished if they wakened and learned to work together. For many weeks these meetings were held. It was only when every one understood the principles of co-operation that the gatherings were discontinued.

“Then began a period of individualism. Every one was taught to find out his own accomplishments, to gain a knowledge of self and his power to accomplish. It was indeed quite astonishing to observe the rapid advancement of each one under the influence of this doctrine. Even Zar was amazed at the progress which her people made.

“The time was soon ready for the next step. A company composed of all the subjects of Rhadan was created. The people were mostly very poor then, though during the preceding years of advance all had begun to understand the true value of economy and thrift. Still the material possessions and wealth had largely remained in the hands of the government.

“All were now told that the opportunity had at last come when every person in the kingdom was to be made a copartner in all the wealth and in every enterprise which should thereafter be undertaken.

“The people listened and were greatly pleased.



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Zar told them how the proposal was to be carried out.

“The then primitive tannery, the furniture industry, and the herds of cattle, goats and sheep, farmed with money from the royal coffers, were to be capitalized into a corporation and each subject was to be allotted shares in the capitalization. That is, every family became a stockholder in a corporation which had for its object the ownership and management of all the natural resources and the industrial and agricultural activities of the nation.

“That the people might act together and with intelligence, nothing was done until another series of meetings at the forum had so clearly elucidated and explained this principle of incorporation that there was not a man but understood. It must be borne in mind that this was an advanced step for the people of Abyssinia and one which had to be undertaken with the greatest care.

“Finally, on an appointed day, every citizen was allotted his shares. This was done by issuing a certificate of ownership to each.

“Of course only a small part of the people were able to purchase their shares outright. The majority received them without making any payment at all, or for small deposits. All such became debtors to the nation until such time as they should pay in full for their shares either in the medium of exchange or else in labor value equal to their indebtedness.



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"With all this accomplished as a beginning, Zar's people commenced to grow. It is indeed astonishing, my brother, to see how men will advance when once they realize that they are receiving the full benefit of their labor. In a comparatively brief number of years every shareholder in Rhadan had paid for his stock and all were beginning to realize returns upon their investments; for you see when these people realized that working collectively they could accomplish so much, a new spirit of energy was born, new industries were proposed and started, and the returns upon the capital invested began to increase rapidly.

"To-day the Rhadanians are looked upon by the people of the adjoining nations as being amazingly prosperous. Indeed, that prosperity has been the cause of no little trouble with envious neighbors.

"Corporation has been the road to co-operation and co-operation has brought peace and harmony within Zar's country, if not without. The queen believes that some day all the surrounding tribes will be led to profit by the achievements of Rhadan."

Peter had listened intently.

"Then the so-termed trusts in my country are benefits rather than evils?" he finally asked.

"Assuredly," she replied. "Your great business combinations point the way to the day when all the people of your land will be owners in the one great corporation that shall own and control all others.



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Imagine a national corporation of this kind in your country. The capital stock represents the ownership of every industrial and commercial activity that is carried on. The evils of competition with its attendant loss by waste have yielded to a perfect unification of all business under one corporate management. The people are the corporation. They own all the shares collectively and perform the thousand and one different kinds of labor, both professional and commercial, that industry necessitates. There is neither waste nor wage-slavery. Each worker receives a return in proportion as the industrial machine prospers.

“Since supply and demand can be adjusted with perfect accuracy, labor troubles will be at an end. Each person will advance in the industrial scale in proportion as his knowledge earns him such advancement. Under such a system, my brother, hope, peace and liberty will prevail. Every one is spurred on to do his highest and best.”

“The picture is an inspiration. I should be glad if it might some day prove an actuality,” said Peter.

Zar bent toward him and as she spoke the light of a strange prophecy shone in hereyes:

“The day of such a corporation is coming,” she declared. “Out of the combinations of power that now exist in thy country it shall materialize. And its advent shall fill men’s hearts with love. It shall banish poverty and all its attendant evils. It shall



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prelude the dawn of truth and prosperity throughout the world—for this incorporate working together of men shall not end with the people of thy land, but it shall spread until it includes those of all the world. For long years Zar hath foreseen that day. Indeed since her childhood, before the time of these, her subjects, the conviction that this new birth of mankind was to occur has been growing in her thoughts.”

Peter sat staring in amazement into her face.

“You speak as if you were very old in years, my sister. How does it happen that your wisdom reaches so far back?”

“It may seem incredible to you, my brother,” she said, “but Zar remembers when the oldest men and women among her people were children. Even the faces of grandsires long dead are familiar to her memory. Who knows why such longevity is brought about or from whence it descends!

“Zar is indeed of illustrious lineage. The father of the Ethiopian noble whom Philip met and converted on the road to Jerusalem and who afterwards brought Christianity into Abyssinia was her ancestor. For he was given in marriage by a monarch of old to a royal princess from whom the records show that Zar is directly descended.

“All the tribes of this land revered Queen Zena for her wisdom and piety. Many years ago this famous monarch of Rhadan taught Zar, her grandchild, many things. Zena lived to be so old that her



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son, Zar's father, died before the old queen, and thus Zar came to power after her.

"Yet, my brother, the span of Zar's years has been lengthened because of that strength which the love of a deep purpose has afforded her. Mayst thou, my brother, likewise find many years of joy in bending the powers of mind and soul to high aims."

Something in her words suddenly recalled to Peter's mind the purpose that had brought him to this land.

"Will the hunters soon be gathered for my quest of the ostriches?" he asked.

"All has been arranged," she answered. "Be thou ready to-night, when Melu summons thee."

She had risen and stood gazing at him.

"Our friendship hath pleased Zar, greatly," she said. "A memory of thee will go with her always. If she hath said that which will spur her brother to greater and higher achievement, no dearer reward can be sought.

"Amuse thyself, as best thou mayst. Now must Zar leave thee until the hour when she bids thee God-speed on thy journey."

A minute later she left the room, and Peter rose and sought out Ras Jemel. He found the latter in conversation with Sheik Aram, another leathery-skinned Arab, who had just returned from gathering together the camels, and with these two he sat for some time, discussing the plans for the morrow.



## XIX

### KILLING A MAN-EATER

WAKENED by Melu before the new moon had cradled her silvery horns in the crystal glow of the Southern Cross, Peter sprang from his couch and hastily dressed for the journey south.

In the courtyard below subdued commands and calls of the desert hunters and the soft padding of restless feet mingled with snarls of the newly arrived camels. The pallid sheen of the Abyssinian night lay, a gleaming mantle, upon treetop, tower and clustered roofs.

"The queen awaits the sahib in the great hall," said the Arab, an obsequious note in his mellifluous tones betraying his respect for the white sahib whom even Zar, obeyed by the wildest outlaw tribes of the Haud, honored so highly.

"I will go to her at once. Are the mules saddled?"

"Yes, sahib."

"Bid Sheik Aram have the two hunters and the guns ready and be prepared to start at the first light of dawn."

The youth bowed and went out.



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A few minutes later Peter entered the lofty room of state and stood in the presence of Zar.

"Come, sit here, brother," she said the moment he entered, graciously beckoning him to a seat near her. "We will breakfast together before thou dost start. Hunger is an unsteady steed to drive. I have seen that all is in readiness for thy journey." As she spoke, three tall attendants entered and began spreading a small table before her, laying the snowy linen with plates of barley bread, ripe pears, seeded cakes, honey and cups of aromatic coffee.

"I had thought to breakfast in the saddle. You are as gracious as wise, dear friend," said Peter, seating himself before the tempting repast.

"Eat, my brother. Waste no idle words. Kindness brings its own reward. Listen! Dawn will soon be here. Ras Jemel will lead thee forty leagues to the southwest. The camels, a hundred in all, with skilled hunters and shikaris will follow. In the valley of Metan shadowed by the Amou plateau thou wilt discover a tiny lake whose crystal waters, vapors, boiling up from far down in the earth, keep always warm. This is one of the sources of the ancient Blue Nile that no white man has yet visited. It is the home of the Blue Nile Ostrich. There thou wilt behold the finest specimens. Bid the hunters hasten to take as many as seem wise and return with speed to Rhadan. Then I will instruct thee how to reach thine own land in safety with



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the birds. Now I must go to confer with Ras Jemel."

"But Your Majesty—"

Already risen from the table, she leaned towards him, placing a finger upon her lips:

"Dost forget? Are we not brother and sister? Danger will run beside thee, my brother, but thou shalt come back in safety with thy task in Metan fulfilled."

His eyes followed her until the door at the farther end of the room hid her from view. Then he hastily finished his meal and went out into the area above which faint gleams of dawn now shimmered across the sky.

Ten minutes later, accompanied by gray-haired Ras Jemel, Aram, Melu and two swarthy shikaris each astride a well-laden mule, Peter similarly mounted made his way through sleeping Trebut and began his perilous journey.

The next day the caravan of camels laden with cases for nearly two hundred ostriches would take the road which he was now following as far as the Digon River whence Peter and Ras Jemel were to pursue the shorter water route to their destination, leaving Aram, the boy and the two hunters to push on with the mules and rejoin them at Metan, ahead of the slower caravan.

With many shakings of the head, Ras Jemel had protested against this plan, but Peter's eagerness



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to begin the round-up of the birds before the caravan arrived had won against the caution of the guide.

Across miles of plateau-land, level and grassy, descending into lower wooded tracts that finally skirted downward to the dry bed of a river, thence through a deep and shadowy defile between precipitous sides and out onto stretches of luminous sand, blighting in its burning heat, the six travellers pressed on to the southward.

At first the route, lying across the land adjacent to Zar's kingdom, traversed the feeding grounds of sleek, well-fed flocks of sheep and goats whose shepherds greeted them with courtesy. No danger threatened them there at night, for the great queen's kindly and all-wise influence had spread beyond the borders of her land. But as the trail penetrated deeper into the south and hot, pest-ridden, densely foliated fastnesses became more and more frequent, Ras Jemel ordered many precautions taken at nightfall against both wild beasts and human marauders.

"Only one white man has ever been in here before," he said, "and he did not come out. There are bad men over there," with a wave of his hand to the right, "and there," pointing in the direction in which they were going. "We will need take much care."

On the fifth day of their trip Peter began to catch glimpses of strangely scarred and pitted faces, black as night, that vanished in the jungle almost as soon



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as they came into view. Once an arrow, light as a feather, dropped with the stillness of a bird in flight on the path in front of him, but as he reined in his mule and took swift aim at a naked form that showed for an instant among the trees, Ras Jemel's fingers clutched his wrist and stayed his hand and the old man shook his head warningly:

"Better not stir up trouble. It was only a stray scout. He will not shoot again."

That night a leopard suddenly bounded over the low cereba wall that had been rudely constructed as an encampment defence and before a shot could be fired had disappeared again with several pounds of tinned meat which had been cut off and left over from supper. Lions roared constantly in the darkness about the camp, and the next day before the start was made, Ras Jemel grimly cautioned everyone to be ready for a sudden attack.

"The Charl-dikus, eaters of men, dwell over yonder," motioning in front and a little to the right. And with this laconic assertion the old man led on deeper into the forest. As the heat became more intense and the air, now always filled with blood-thirsty insects, more and more overladen with damp and fetid odors, Peter began to doubt his zeal in urging this advance expedition. Now they were in the midst of the mighty tropical wilds. Often the undergrowth presented an impenetrable wall behind which danger from wild beasts, venomous serpents and



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savage human beings constantly threatened. Two days, Ras Jemel promised, would bring them to the banks of the stream which had its source in Metan valley. But would they live to get there? Twice a band of elephants went crashing off before them. Herds of antelope, gazelle, and reedbuck often fled across their path. Once a small regiment of giraffes shambled by at a tremendous pace, whisking their long tails as they ran.

About mid-day Peter sighted a monster, long-tusked boar, waddling nonchalantly into range. As he lifted his 400 D. B. hammerless to pot the beast, he was suddenly startled by a distant sound of wailing which, as he listened, drew nearer and nearer swelling in volume until it filled all the arches of the forest. Then suddenly a great throng of huge black men followed by as many more women and children swarmed into view in front. As the leaders of this strange procession caught sight of the little caravan there was an instant halt and the echoing shrieks and lamentations quickly died away.

Cursing softly, Ras Jemel slipped from the back of his mule to the ground and with a hand upraised began making a series of strange and mystical passes in the air. Evidently, these were accepted as an indication of good-will, for after a brief conference among the ranks of the blacks, an old man, plainly the king, and two young Ethiopians, all naked save for a small strip of leopard's skin tied about the loins of each,



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came forward. With the two warriors marching gravely on either side, His Majesty, after proceeding to within a few feet of Ras Jemel, knelt down in the red dust. The Arab guide promptly assumed a similar position. Now for several minutes the preliminaries of introduction including many excited gestures engrossed the attention of both. Then suddenly Peter beheld this wrinkled and grizzled old monarch bend low, dig his long, claw-like fingers into the soft ground and begin throwing the earth over his bared head and breast. At the same time he broke into a barbaric bellowing, instantly taken up by his attendants and echoed back by the throng in the rear until the arching branches of the thick forest rang again and again with an incredible uproar increased fourfold by the chattering and screaming of myriads of frightened monkeys and paroquets.

"What is it, Ras Jemel?" shouted Peter in amazement.

"It is King Manek's tribe. A man-eating lioness who has already killed and devoured four women and three children has slain his son. This is the mourning procession. He will have to abandon his village and lead his people away from their homes unless something is done soon to stay the ravages of the beast."

Instantly Peter's inward laughter at the old negro kneeling in the dust, howling at the top of his lungs, was changed to pity. In spite of Ras Jemel's gesture



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warning him to keep his seat, he jumped to the ground and stretched out a sympathetic hand toward the king.

Then a strange thing happened. The wailing ceased as if by magic; the monarch agilely sprang up out of the sand, with his two warriors bounded back to the company behind him and the whole crowd, men, women and children, took to their heels and vanished as though swallowed up by the forest.

"Well, what do you know about that?" cried Peter, turning with a look of blank astonishment. Consternation and dismay had overspread Ras Jemel's features. Throwing up his hands, the old man exclaimed:

"We must leave at once, sahib. You have declared war on King Manek. To stretch out one's hand in front of the king's face is a deadly insult to the whole tribe. Come, let us get away," and suiting action to word the old man thumped his heels into the sides of his mule and started back at a brisk pace along the route over which they had just come.

"Halt!" It was Ras Jemel's voice again ten minutes later.

"Look!" He pointed to the forest ahead. Grim and savage visages of naked warriors showed from behind tree and thicket. Long glistening spears and shields of tawny lion's hide appeared everywhere. Ras Jemel groaned. Aram, brave on the desert, now shuddered with fear at this threatening



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host. Melu, pushing his mule up to Peter's, whimpered like a small child, while the two shikaris hung close to Aram's side.

Peter realized the gravity of the crisis. Turning to Ras Jemel, he said:

"Follow me. It is the only way to save us." Then jumping from his mule and waving back the trembling Melu, he laid his gun down on the ground, folded his arms, and calmly walked towards the formidable force ahead.

Not in all his adventurous life had the wise, long-headed, old Ras Jemel witnessed an action that seemed so utterly mad. Inured to the dangers of desert and forest and bearing the scars of many deadly encounters with men and wild animals, nevertheless he shook with fear as he heroically advanced behind the white sahib.

A deep silence had settled over the woods. The very animals in the trees above seemed to sense the suspense of the moment. The black men were plainly puzzled by this display of daring. Savage curiosity overcame savage ferocity. Little by little shadowy forms pushed into view until fully a hundred armed braves stood staring at the advancing pair.

"Come up, Ras Jemel," said Peter in a low tone. "Make a sign of peace."

Stepping forward and throwing himself upon his knees, the guide commenced waving one hand above



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his head, Peter all the while endeavoring to imitate each movement.

Suddenly King Manek strode through the ranks into view, and this time followed by the entire crowd of fighting men, he again approached Ras Jemel and Peter, a ferocious scowl now darkening his wild features.

"Tell him," whispered Peter to Ras Jemel, "that the white sahib comes to bring the spirit of good to King Manek—that the white sahib can destroy the spirit of evil that snatches away the king's son. Say that if he will take the white sahib to the spot where the man-eating beast dwells, the white sahib will slay the lion."

With throbbing pulses, Peter and the four Arabs in the rear now hung upon Ras Jemel's efforts to renew amenities. For minutes that seemed hours the scowling monarch responded to each suave utterance of the kneeling guide with cold impassiveness broken only by an occasional growl. But at last Peter's heart leaped with relief as he beheld the lines of the stubborn, black visage soften into a grin when Ras Jemel, at the termination of a particularly enthusiastic and lengthy series of gutturals and mad gesticulations, reached out and slipped a huge brass watch into the lean fingers of the king. Nor was this feeling of relief lessened when, with a grunt of approval, the king came forward and, dropping upon his knees before Peter, thrust forward his oily and



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evil-smelling features and calmly rubbed his nose against that of the surprised American. Then turning round, he briefly addressed the waiting warriors, all of whom at once began crowding round Peter, fixing their eyes in mingled awe and respect upon the countenance of the strange sahib with the skin like the glistening sand in the deep pools. Yet, in spite of this childlike display of savage curiosity, Peter sensed a certain, cool craftiness in the manner of the king which he knew boded little good for the whole party. Thus when he found himself corralled in Manek's little mud-built capital, he discovered that both his own and the safety of the five Arabs lay in the success of his meeting with the lioness; for the wily king, notwithstanding many suave protestations of good-will, kept them all vigilantly guarded by a dozen of his fleetest and most stalwart warriors, armed to the teeth.

The wailing ceremonies for the dead prince continued until the first signs of dusk. Then warriors and women drew together, the mothers catching up their infants and driving the older children indoors with shrill cries. The king, reclining upon a mat of rushes before his palace door, scowled constantly and at intervals passed his wasted hands through the air above his head, often glancing from one side to another towards the dense thickets around the edge of the clearing. Even his interest in the white sahib and the cheap pocket mirror with which Peter



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presented him, finally yielded to the same uneasiness that had affected the whole village. When the roar of a lion sounded from the adjacent woods this suspense suddenly crystallized into a wild stampede. Men and women dashed for the open doorways. Manek, with a grunt, whisked his lean figure out of sight; the armed attendants of Peter and his companions made frantic haste to get indoors; and the Arabs themselves, catching the contagion of fear, dragged the mules along into a thatched dwelling in the centre of the village where all except Ras Jemel huddled, panic-stricken. Assured that the animals were safe, the old chieftain finally rejoined Peter and the two, going to the monarch's fifteen-foot thatched palace, knelt down before the entrance where, when His Majesty's countenance at last peeked out at them through the aperture, Ras Jemel prayed:

"Oh, King Manek, now that the hour has come when the death-dealing spirit of evil seeks its prey, have a young goat brought alive or the bloody carcass of a freshly killed animal. Let all the king's people remain inside and keep the doors shut. The white sahib will destroy the dark spirit that slays the king's subjects."

Nearly an hour later with his back against a giant mimosa tree-stump, Peter sat with ears alert, peering into the fringe of the forest before him. Between himself and the thick woods the reeking neck and foreshoulders of a young gazelle dangled just above



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the ground from the limb of a small sapling. Daylight had given way before the dawning rays of the moon and the glimmer of those wonderfully bright points of the great cross overhead. The silences of the tropical nightfall were now broken only by the twittering of drowsy birds and monkeys in the trees, and the occasional distant crashing of some huge beast blundering through the underbrush.

Suddenly the same hollow, thunderous roar that had sent the whole village scuttling indoors again rose on the air, this time near at hand.

A puzzled frown clouded the features of the young American, as his fingers tightened about the stock of his powerful hammerless.

"What a brazen hussey to roar like that!" he thought. He turned his head for a minute as his ear caught the soft, catlike tread of Ras Jemel approaching from a hut behind.

"'Tis the man-eating she-devil. The king knows her voice. She defies all mankind with her bellowing. If the sahib slays the beast, all will be well. If not—" The old man completed the sentence with a quiet shrug.

"Are you armed?" Peter asked.

"The king has the rifles," the other answered, "all save the one carried by the sahib. Shoot straight if you would live." Then turning, he strode back and Peter heard the rush door gently scrape together as he entered a hut.



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The night breeze fanned gently against the face of the watcher. The beast would miss his scent. Not a sound came from the huddled dwellings behind him but he knew that a hundred pairs of eyes were strained towards him, and he knew too that many timid, savage mothers with quaking hearts and children drawn close were hoping for the success of the white sahib out there in the dark.

“Oof!”

The sound came from the darkness, perhaps half a hundred yards beyond where Peter sat. The underbrush crackled. A moonbeam shining through the treetops revealed a spot where the leaves of a magnolia bush swayed strangely. A lighted space lay between the first fringe of foliage and the bloody bait suspended from the sapling.

Now the stillness became intense again. The leaves ceased to move. From the remote depths of the jungle rose the sweet notes of a nightingale. For several minutes the bird's wonderful melody pulsed and throbbed through the night. Then the warbling came to an end. A ground-mole popped out of its hole at Peter's feet, sat up, stared with cocked head at the motionless figure of the man and then with a tiny squeak of apprehension dived head-foremost into its den.

“Swish! Swish!”

The noise was very faint. The magnolia bush moved again.



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Suddenly two gleaming balls of fire appeared; there was another pause, a crackling of twigs, a tense gathering, a sudden swift rush through the air and Peter beheld a magnificent queen of the jungles bound across moonlighted space and with a single, lithe leap bear the head of the suspended gazelle crashing to the ground.

He waited only the fraction of a second. Then as his eye caught the light under the brute's fore-shoulder, the sound of the big hammerless was answered by a scream of maniacal rage followed by a succession of ear-splitting roars.

"A hit," thought Peter, springing up, as he beheld the man-eater madly clawing great furrows in the ground. But hardly had he stepped out into the light when the animal, now infuriated with pain, caught sight of him. Then on the very instant that the quivering beast launched herself at the spot where he stood, the D. B. spoke again and, as he leaped aside, Peter heard a last wild scream and saw the muscles of the lioness collapse and the great body crumple up in mid air.

"The sahib has done well." It was the voice of Ras Jemel.

Suddenly a new commotion burst forth. Shouts rent the air. The black forms of men, women and little ones poured forth into the moonlight. A dozen giant savages raised Peter upon their shoulders and bore him with wild acclaim to the king's palace where



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the monarch, with an unmistakable display of emotion, threw his arms around the American and insisted upon repeatedly rubbing noses with him and each one of the Arabs. Other negroes lighted a huge bonfire upon which the carcass of the lioness, stripped of its skin, became speedily exorcised of evil spirits. Until far into the night the celebration in honor of the release of the villagers from the terrors of the man-eater continued about this sacrificial blaze.

At dawn the king and half his warriors, chanting the tribal song of victory, accompanied Peter and his companions as far as the banks of the Digon, a beautiful stream that wound northward until it finally joined one of the great feeders of the Nile.

Though he had already bestowed upon Peter his own amulet and a shield made from the skin of a white lioness—the highest mark of tribal esteem conferrable—King Manek, as soon as he learned of his guest's intention to go up the river, insisted upon bestowing upon him a handsome canoe made with a covering of hippopotamus hide.

Thus after Peter had seen the two shikaris and Melu set forward with Aram on the more roundabout land route to the valley of Metan, it took only a few hours of work at the paddles to bring Ras Jemel and himself to the enchanting spot, deep in the very heart of Africa, where, between great flower-decked terraces flinging out crimson and purple streamers of fragrance above a beautiful silver stream, he saw in the



## THE OSTRICH

distance the flashing surface of the thermal lake and upon the meadows and in the woodlands surrounding it thousands of snowy-plumed ostriches, already running wildly here and there because of the approach of himself and Ras Jemel. The spectacle overjoyed him. He saw that the animals were penned in a bottle-like enclosure formed by precipitous bluffs surrounding the lake meadows, the only outlet of which was the defile through which he and the guide had approached.

Ras Jemel showed Peter how the small army of birds might be handled at will by building a low wall of sticks, easily gathered on the heights above. The same evening Aram with his three companions and the mules arrived, and the next forenoon found the large caravan also encamped at the mouth of the ravine.

Then for four days the Eden-like enclosure presented a spectacle without parallel.

Grinning Arabs pursued great flocks of giant Abyssinian ostriches to and fro from one side of the Basin to the other, driving the long-legged bipeds round and round through the stretch of tall woods under the bluffs and out again into the level, garden-like plain until at last, spent and frightened by the shrill cries of their pursuers, the birds would run blindly into the narrow pass where they were deftly garnered into the fenced-in area built to receive them. After that it became only necessary to starve them a day



## KILLING A MAN-EATER

and a night to induce each one to take its food in a civilized way, and to enable the Arab hunters to transfer the struggling animals, blindfolded, to the cases built for their journey to civilization.

On the fifth day the work was finished. The last unwieldy, ostrich-laden case had been slung upon the baggage camels. Somalis, camel-men and attendants had been marshalled for the journey back through the wilds to Trebut.

Peter stood close to the incline that led down to the river's slope, leaning against his flea-bitten little mule, a look of satisfaction upon his face. Thus far there had been no hitch in the task to which he had set himself. The spectacle before him gave him a thrill of pleasure. Momentarily he forgot the hardships and dangers that still might lie ahead and his mind ran on to that day when he should again set foot in New York and with other men and women take up the consummation of the great purpose which spurred him on.

Then he heard a light step behind him and turning he beheld approaching a brawny, six-foot Ethiopian whom he at once recognized as one of the chief warriors of King Manek's tribe.

"What is it?" he asked, as the black dropped on his knees, but noting the man's look of incomprehension at his English, Peter turned and called Ras Jemel who stood near.

"Find out what the man wants," he said.



## THE OSTRICH

For several minutes a conversation, meaningless to Peter, went on between the two. At last, as the messenger with a final wave of his hands, softly withdrew and disappeared below the river's bank the Arab turned and exclaimed:

"The Shal-dikus, eaters-of-men, have risen; so have the Sams and the Erolus, both makers-of human-sacrifice. All three tribes have joined together and now lie in wait in the forests for the return of the caravan. A terrible death threatens the sahib."



## XX

### A JUNGLE BATTLE

THE old man's words brought Peter again close to the realities of his situation.

"We will teach them a lesson, Ras Jemel. We are all well armed. All the men carry guns and can shoot."

The old guide threw him a respectful glance.

"You are brave, sahib, but these bushmen with huge bodies and hearts that lust for blood are crafty. They know the forest well, and they fight from ambush; bullets seldom pierce the tough shields they carry and sometimes their arrows are poisoned. We will have a hard fight to drive them off. If it goes against us—" he shrugged his shoulders—"they make slaves of their prisoners, or kill and devour them."

Peter heard the last words with unbelieving ears.

"Bid the headman warn all the camel-drivers to be prepared, and have Aram keep a sharp lookout with the shikaris. How many in all can we count on?"

"A hundred and ten, sahib. We may have to fight three times that number."



## THE OSTRICH

"To remain here will be to gain nothing. There is only a single route back. If there is to be fighting, it is best to have it out at once. Let us start as soon as the camels are ready."

That night the well-guarded peace of the encampment was disturbed only by the snarling of a band of hyenas fighting over the bones of an antelope shot by Aram for the evening meal.

The stop had been made at the edge of a level and grassy plateau, the last open stretch between the Metan valley and the approach to Zar's domain.

Before sunrise the next morning the long line of loping camels descended the incline into the Abyssinian jungles. With the advance of the day the hardships of the journey began to make themselves felt. As the sun rose higher, at first beating well in through the trees and foliage, the heat of the lowlands became terrific. Swarms of bees, seroot flies and other winged pests held high carnival with the caravan animals. The bite of a snake, incurred by one of the camel-men, caused a delay of several hours. The mule carrying Peter's personal baggage stepped into a hole and broke its leg, necessitating the shooting of the animal and the transference of the luggage to a camel. At the noon stop an ostrich, frightened at feeding time, badly lacerated its body in a fruitless struggle to escape, and Peter was obliged to have the bird killed.



## A JUNGLE BATTLE

His spirit chafed at the delays and slow progress of the march.

Anxiety over the possibility of an attack by savages impaired his oversight of the care and feeding of the ostriches—a task which needed his own and Ras Jemel's undivided attention.

The trail at last became shut in to such a degree that the sun's rays barely penetrated the arching recesses. Shortly after the noon start, the line reached the spot where Peter's ears had first caught the lamenting cries of King Manek and his tribe. No wailing now sounded in the woods. It was ominously still. Only the chattering of a few monkeys disturbed the solitudes. Riding ahead of the line to where Aram and his Somalis were performing scout duty, Peter learned that as yet no savages had shown themselves. But he had barely turned his mule back when he heard Aram riding up behind him and even before the man spoke he knew that danger was imminent.

"Il Ramad has just returned with the report that the forest ahead is alive with negroes. All are armed with spears and shields and some of the chief men carry guns."

"How many are there?" asked Peter.

"Il Ramad saw many—perhaps two tribes, perhaps more. They hide behind the thick wall of vines beside the trail and it is impossible to count them. Il Ramad escaped without being observed, but it



## THE OSTRICH

is likely that the savages suspect the approach of the sahib by this time."

"Remain here with your men and keep close watch, Aram. I will return presently." Then digging his heels into the donkey's sides, Peter hastened back, ordering each driver, as he went, to halt his animal and wait for further orders.

Ras Jemel's lips tightened grimly when he heard the news.

"Il Ramad did well to discover them and to get away unnoticed. It will be a hard fight, sahib; but our men are good in battle; I know them all. Much raw blood will flow before these cannibals beat us back." The old man at once began ordering the camel line to the rear, and in a short time Peter beheld the last of the beasts trailing past the spot where he sat mounted on his mule. Going forward again, he beckoned to Aram and his companions and all returned to the caravan which Ras Jemel had halted in a forest clearing.

Just outside this great drove of kneeling animals which were left in charge of the mule-boys and half a dozen competent Somali hunters, the camel-men were divided into three groups under Aram, Ras Jemel and Peter and laden with forty rounds of cartridges each hunter silently crept away behind his respective chief towards the spot where the enemy lay.

A few minutes later a rifle-shot wakened the echoes



## A JUNGLE BATTLE

of the forest. It was instantly succeeded by an ear-splitting yell as a giant negro, who had stood half-exposed at the edge of a thicket, tossed his arms above his head and crumpled up like a crushed egg.

The ensuing stillness lasted just long enough for Peter to catch Ras Jemel's grunt of satisfaction as the old man lowered his rifle. Then the din of wild conflict burst forth.

The savages, skilled in the finesse of jungle fighting, clung to their protecting barricade of almost impenetrable vines until the daring Arabs had rushed forward close to the wall when a horde of black forms, armed with long spears and shields, poured from cleft and opening, launching their weapons as they came.

The snappy rattle of large bore guns was drowned in the terrific yells of the blacks. Three Arabs dropped in the first encounter while more than a dozen of the enemy tumbled backward or sunk down as if struck from above during the brief moments of this first rush.

Realizing the error of fighting at close quarters, Peter shouted to his men to withdraw to the protection of the trees. A minute later both Ras Jemel and Aram, seeing the wisdom of this move, followed suit.

Now for a time the battle became more desultory. Occasionally an Arab's rifle elicited a screech of terror and pain as a leaden missile found its mark. Only a few of the savages carried guns and these, for the



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most part, proved ineffective because of the poor marksmanship of the blacks. The contest bade fair to test the strategy of both sides.

And now a trick of the blacks served to increase the peril. Suddenly, and with cries that drowned all other noises of the contest, a body of savages rushed into view in front of all the lines and advanced in numbers equal to the full strength of the Arab defence. At the same time, through a thin opening in the vines at one side, a giant satyr, scarred, pitted and minus an ear, made a dash forward with fifty odd followers and succeeded in cutting off Ras Jemel's force from the others.

Finding his men assaulted from both sides with spears and arrows driven with alarming accuracy, the old guide ordered a hasty retreat. But when his handful of followers endeavored to obey, it was found that the force behind was too strong to be overcome.

Aram and Peter grasped the situation at the same time. The old sheik had only to lift his voice and point out the penned-in company, to his Arabs. Peter and his men were already running from tree to tree toward the imperilled force, each man stopping on his way only long enough to now and then push home a handful of cartridges. But as these two companies moved forward to the assistance of Ras Jemel, the line of savages in the latter's front, reckless of danger, began to rush in on the trapped Arabs. A quick



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dash now seemed to Peter the only method of extricating them. As he crept forward, planning how the rush could best be made, a sense of danger caused him to turn. A grinning black stood ten yards away in the act of launching a wicked-looking spear at his head. He dodged and the huge shaft buried itself in a tree-trunk. Then almost before his gun spoke, bringing down his assailant in his tracks, he saw a horde of naked forms wriggling like snakes through the wall from which his men had just turned to aid Ras Jemel.

For the fraction of a second the youth paused. Then warning his men of the danger in the rear he levelled his rifle at another of the oncoming bushmen.

It was Aram's force that for a moment stayed disaster. With a wild Mohammedan cry, the old sheik and his men sprang forward into the midst of the line of blacks that barred those with Ras Jemel from freedom. For a full five minutes the woods rang with blood-curdling death-cries, as shot after shot from the Arab rifles woke the echoes, or as some one of the savages found a live target for his spear.

At last a giant black sprang from behind a tree-trunk only a few feet from Ras Jemel, and with a look of triumph levelled his spear at the stalwart guide. As the brawny arm lunged forward, the old man seemed to sense his danger and lurched back, but not in time to entirely evade the weapon which



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crashed through his shoulder, carrying him senseless to the ground.

"Crack!" the rifle of an Arab behind a nearby tree emitted a tiny tongue flame and the savage dropped dead.

The peril of the three companies was now great. The result of Aram's heroic sortie had reunited the caravan forces, but now all, instead of a single company, were compelled to fight the savages on two sides. Realizing their advantage and superiority of numbers, the negroes pressed on furiously and, in spite of the slaughter wrought by the desperate Arabs, at last drove the men into a closely massed body.

Peter comprehended the desperate straits of all. The rushes of the wily savages were growing more determined. Deprived of the leadership of Ras Jemel, who had been carried back by two Arabs, a number of the old guide's men lost their heads and began to shoot wildly. Several fell in the rushes. All were now being pressed into the open stretch of the trail where tree-trunks no longer afforded protection. It had become almost a hand-to-hand fight in which the weapons of the savages proved more effective than the rifles. Peter's heart sank. Was all this effort for nothing? Were the murderous designs of African savages to thus thwart a great purpose? He beheld the camel-men's resistance growing more feeble. A spear whirling through the air pinned a young shikari



## A JUNGLE BATTLE

to the ground. A well-aimed shot brought down the negro who had hurled the weapon, but instantly two more blacks took his place.

Suddenly above the noise of the struggle, Peter's ears caught the sound of a new and strange tumult. Savage cries, ringing high in the woods, swelled in the air from the rear. For a moment his heart stood still. Was the chance of retreat, even, to be cut off by an assault directly from behind? Then suddenly as his eyes glanced down the trail, a mighty shout of relief burst from his throat. For, as he felt the last straw of hope being swept away, he saw a great force of black warriors swing into view and at their head marched his sworn friend, King Manek, now martially bellowing the battle-cry of his tribe. On they dashed, leaping to join the Arab forces in the fight.

Instantly pandemonium broke loose. Arab and black ally, shoulder to shoulder, tore through the enemy's lines, the camel-men in many cases fighting with clubbed rifles.

Step by step the cannibals gave way, at first stubbornly, then wavering until, as Manek's huge warriors pouring through the jungle walls invaded the last defence, panic seized many of the enemy, and with wild cries of terror they fled in all directions through the dense woods.

Peter, leading his Arabs side by side with Aram and the battle-loving old monarch, had with difficulty clambered through a vast sweep of trailing



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vines. Finally he stood with lifted rifle about to take aim at three negroes crouching behind a mass of underbrush. All about in this mighty forest echoed sounds of the running fight. To his right he saw two Arabs each pick off one of a pair of blacks who had sought to escape detection by swinging themselves into the branches of a low tree. Unnoticed by the trio in front of him, Peter had brought his rifle to his shoulder, when the snap of a branch above his head caused him to glance quickly upward. In the fraction of that instant before something smote the top of his head with the force of a sledge-hammer blow, he caught a glimpse of a huge arm stretched in front of a devilishly grinning and scarred countenance, from one side of which a black ear was missing. Then darkness engulfed him.



## XXI

### AMONG THE CANNIBALS

PETER wakened to the consciousness of throbbing temples, an aching and tortured body and bruised limbs. Attempting to lift an arm, he discovered that tightly corded thongs were cutting into both wrists and ankles. Then a medley of strange noises assailed his ears. He opened his eyes.

Two satin-skinned negroes armed with formidable hippopotamus-hide whips stood facing each other inside a ring of yelling savages. Dripping with perspiration, the two warriors simultaneously bent forward, leaped and swung their whips. The hide thongs, as they bit into the quivering flesh, left a streak of red that flowed slowly down each naked waist, coloring with livid stains the loin-cloth below. Back and forth they sprang, the shrill "aies" of the women and children rending the air as the duellists balanced, tiptoed in that intervening second between blows, and then swung again. Not for an instant was there a waning of the hideous smile fixed upon each pair of thick lips.

Peter saw that each combatant wore upon his right wrist the trio of gold, silver and leaden bracelets



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that designated the rank of chieftain. The two lashes again whistled through the air and one of the men, in turning for a moment, showed a horribly scarred profile minus an ear. The face was the same which Peter had last looked into before he lost consciousness in the forest.

The thought roused him. How long had he lain senseless? Where was he now? What might this brutal contest mean? With an effort he glanced about.

Like a meal-sack, he had been dropped on a gentle incline looking down upon an African village whose hundred or more conical-shaped dwellings were the background of the scene before him. The verdure of towering, forest trees fringed all the clearing except where a single cliff, apparently of clay or granite, formed a splotch of gray. A number of rectangular openings in the side of this unusual bluff, indicating that it might be used as a temple or place of habitation for the savages, momentarily stirred Peter's curiosity. Then his eyes went back to the duel.

The slenderer contestant with features regular and un mutilated, evidently the younger of the two, was beginning to weaken. Suddenly he dropped his uplifted arm, lowered his head, leaped through the wild circle about him and dashed towards Peter. After him sprang the whole crowd of yelling blacks.

Running easily, the pursued man reached the prisoner well in advance.



## AMONG THE CANNIBALS

"Togolo come back." The man's eyes rested on the face of the other for an instant. Then with motions as lithe as those of a panther, the lacerated form disappeared in the shadows of the forest.

Past Peter now straggled the pursuers—huge-limbed warriors led by the marred-faced chieftain, and a mob of screeching women and children. His mind was still busy with the riddle of the duel and the mysterious message, when he heard the baffled cries of this returning crowd. Then the feverish agony of throbbing head and cramped limbs was resolved into a twofold torture, when amid howls of fiendish glee, a naked foot sent him helplessly rolling down the incline into a briar-strewn gully below. While half-naked, savage women and impish children leered into his face, and with spear stocks and clubs endeavored to heighten his tortures, the warriors gathered close by in a circle and held a discussion, which from the frequent glances cast in his direction, Peter knew concerned himself.

Presently a bent and emaciated black emerged from a distant house. As Peter's tormentors caught sight of him, a chorus of feminine screeches reinforced by a mighty howling of the males swelled into a loud tumult. Now ten youths rose, walked slowly toward the dwelling from which the man had issued, entered and presently came out again, each bearing a white-robed figure in his arms. Peter knew that the funeral rites of the tribe's dead battle-heroes were to occur.



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Amid terrific howlings the corpses were strung along the ground in the centre of the clearing. Then scattering to the different dwellings, both men and women presently reappeared, their bodies painted in such hues as to represent different wild beasts, while each wore over his features the head of whatever animal he represented. Though it was still forenoon, a great bonfire was now lighted and about the blaze all except a few of the older persons and the children threw themselves wildly into the mourning dance.

Peter's interest in these gyrations and his forebodings of what they meant to himself quickly yielded to physical suffering. Lying helpless with his face upturned to the African sun during the long mid-day and early afternoon hours, those panting and savage forms continually whirling—whirling with frenzied sounds—became actors in many strange pictures that crowded his mind. Unconsciously he clung to hope of rescue. Even when parched and bleeding lips and swollen tongue prevented utterance to the ravings of his agonized mind, a grim tenacity of purpose, as if depths of his being still fought on, shone in his blood-shot eyes.

The frenzy about the funeral pyre at last reached its height. Scores of the women, spent with their exertions, lay moaning on the dirt. Several men had given in. Infuriated and demoniacal yells indicated that madness had seized many over-drunk with the powerful "tetch."



## AMONG THE CANNIBALS

Suddenly each of the ten warriors again seized a dead body, slung it upon his shoulder, hurried across the plain and one after another filed into a lower opening in the cliff temple previously noted by Peter.

When these corpse-bearers emerged, empty-handed, a new access of shouting, this time angry and menacing, swelled over the plain, and in one of his brief intervals of pseudo-sanity Peter fancied himself the cynosure of a thousand, sardonically-grinning, black faces and leering eyes.

A brutal blow dealt his blistered face by an ugly negro elicited from him only a chortle of raucous laughter.

"Ha! Ha! The other side—the other side, Ras Jemel! Pin him down! Good work!" His head bumped against the ground. "Pigs—ha—for just one shot—just one. Who'd have thought the black devils'd get us? We'll beat 'em—yes, Rosie, we'll take good care of him. Yes. There, there—ha-ha!"

The madness of his voice for a second stilled the mob. Even these wild men superstitiously drew back, afraid of this "evil spirit." Then just as his senses were fading the one-eared chieftain reached down with a knife, slashed the thongs about his wrists and ankles, and began to drag his limp form toward the corpse temple.

A sense of suffocation brought Peter gasping back



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to consciousness. Freed of his bonds, bodily relief had stayed the delirium, but now each breath wheezed dryly in his throat and every nerve and muscle in his body seemed racked with pain.

Save for an almost inappreciable crack of light at his left, the place where he lay was in darkness. The intense heat that had wakened him, convulsive and stifling, seemed to emanate from the floor. He felt little thermal waves rising round his body. Painfully he climbed to his knees and finally staggered to his feet, groping at the walls for support. Before he had time to reach the orifice of light, his flesh began to feel feverishly parched. He was much puzzled at this. He kneeled down to place an eye to the crack and the heat of the cement-like floor stung his bare knees and hands.

The light crack was an infinitesimally narrow one, not an inch in length, a tiny irregularity in the edge of the clay or cement casing of what was presumably a door of similar material, but with much twisting of his head Peter found he could get glimpses of the outside. One of the native houses was within his range of vision across which now and then quick shadows moved. Faintly his ear caught an occasional yell. He sucked in the air with his lips.

The heat was increasing. The floor was now painfully hot to his feet, yet he felt that if he removed his lips from the air vent he would stifle in a few minutes.



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Terrifying fancies filled his thoughts. What was this thing? He could hardly stand upon the clay floor. Lines of pain furrowed his face. In a moment of suspense he sensed rather than heard a soft, faintly distinguishable sound of burning wood. It came from beneath. He started up with a frightful conviction obsessing him. Was he then in an oven—baking—to be eaten? Panic seized his mind. His reason toppled; he giggled. Then he struck his lacerated hands against the walls and shouted—hoarsely, madly—flinging himself, regardless of pain or burning heat, against the solid door. His scream echoed through that closed dungeon of fearful, hideous death—echoed again and again—until, just as the door swung inward admitting a soft rush of air and the panting form of Togolo, the savage chieftain, something snapped in his head and he dropped with a final cry, senseless and inert.

\* \* \* \* \*

As the young warrior dragged the unconscious body of Peter through the orifice of that catacomb, his eyes fell upon a scene which caused even his stoical negro features to wrinkle with wonder.

Across the brow of the incline up which he had fled that same day now gleamed a long line of white-clad, helmeted, native soldiers, each standing armed at martial attention, the sun glistening and glinting upon their shining rifle barrels, while in front of this



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array, mounted on the back of a milk-white mule, Zar, queen of the Rhadanians, dispenser of justice among scores of Abyssinian tribes, sat erect and motionless.

At the left of the queen's lines, with spears suspended and respectful faces, stood a throng of naked blacks in front of whom was old King Manek on his knees, his glances divided between the queen's face and a much-scarred, one-eared chieftain advancing alone up the hill from the basin clearing below, where another cluster of warriors stood sullenly glowering.

As the chief halted, Zar, lifting one hand, pointed across the valley to Togolo standing outside the cliff vault holding the limp body of Peter Rutledge in his arms. Then she began to speak, addressing the savage in low tense tones.

Having listened all the while in an attitude that clearly spoke defiance, the negro threw back his head and swung out his arms untemperingly as the queen finished.

For a moment Zar seemed to reflect, her serene face studying the man closely. Then she turned and nodded toward the line behind her and a group of young warriors darted across the grass, seized and bound the snarling savage and bore him to the rear.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Peter again opened his eyes, he was lying upon a litter borne by four blacks, each attired in cool



## AMONG THE CANNIBALS

white linen. From beneath his sheltering awning he could make out the helmeted heads and shoulders of many more men both in front and behind him, all in the same spotless white raiment. Walls of vines, flower-spangled, trailing from towering tropical trees on either side, indicated the presence of a surrounding forest. Great bandages swathing not only his hands, but his legs, head and part of his body, and giving off a pleasing odor, prevented him from rubbing his eyes in surprise.

"My brother is awake at last. All then is well!" Looking up, he beheld the calm, gray eyes of Zar fixed upon him with affectionate interest.

"Do not talk—" as his lips feebly moved. "Thou hast come through safely. The ostrich-laden caravan is safe and waits for thee at Trebut. All is ready for thy departure. In a few days the oil will have soothed and healed thy wounds. Then will Zar, thy sister, send thee on thy way."

She rode beside him on her handsomely caparisoned mule, holding up an edge of the canopy with one hand while she spoke.

"Now thou hadst best sleep, the more to lighten thy sufferings and hasten the time of farewell to which my heart tells me even now thou lookest forward with impatience."

Three days afterwards Peter lay a convalescent in an airy apartment of Zar's palace. The tall, gaunt figure of Ras Jemel, his shoulder wrapped



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in many bandages, was seated near the foot of the bed.

"These cannibal dogs, sahib, in some way learned the secret," the old man was explaining. "In their houses they sometimes have ovens made of this substance, harder than clay and capable of standing great heat. But for Togolo, whose quarrel with the one-eared Mentabu is of long standing, the sahib would surely have been roasted to a crisp in that oven of death; for beneath the floor a great shut-in fire of burning coals is kept alive for three days when a meal of man flesh is being prepared."

"But what about the duel with whips?" asked Peter.

"Disputes in Abyssinia are often settled that way. It is a test of the groom's bravery in marriage, too. Togolo not only refused to help lead his followers, but he also opposed the attack on the caravan. When the sahib was later brought in stunned and bound, Togolo would not consent to a cannibal feast. He held out against all the tribe and Mentabu. The duel was to decide which of these two head fighting men should yield. The sahib owes his life to the quick thought of Togolo in leading King Manek to the rescue.

"Four of our men were killed and many injured in the fight, but the ostriches are safe and well cared for. When will the sahib be ready to begin the journey back?"



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"Can't you curb your impatience until your wounds heal?" asked Peter with twinkling eyes.

"This hurt—it is nothing," replied the Arab. "All will be in readiness on the second day hence."

The old man rose and with a bow withdrew, leaving the younger one to sleep. A few hours later Peter wakened much refreshed to find Zar standing near the window looking towards him.

"In two days my brother from across the seas is going away," she said. "Triumphing over many dangers and hardships, he first came to Trebut. By those conscious waves of thought which, in minds attuned, reach out across the spaces, flashing back knowledge of events and things and presaging future happenings, Zar knew her brother's coming far ahead. Through that same spirit force she was apprised of his danger in the forest. Again the power mysteriously reveals its purpose. In thy going, brother, Zar goes too—but not with thee. The wings of evening, the silence of stars, the shadows now beckon about her, presaging death."

Peter lifted his head from his pillow, raising a protesting hand.

"It must not be so, my sister," he said. "Who then would carry on your work here?"

"Zar's task is fulfilled when thou goest. My people have learned to stand alone. Thou and others after thee are henceforth to carry forward destiny's design. We are each but the fashioner of a



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link in the great chain of circumstances that one day shall reunite all mankind in co-operative accord. Once our work is done, the need of us ceases. Others, there are always, to fill the places we vacate.

“And now give heed, my brother. The secret of thy mission has been betrayed. A troop of French soldiers ride along the border, seeking thee. Both the English and the French have become suspicious. Thou art known far and wide as the ‘Yankee poacher.’ Unless thou dost slip away secretly, thou wilt risk the seizure and loss of all thy birds.

“Therefore lead thy caravan by night into the desert where runs a secret trail known only to a few of all the Arab tribes. Ras Jemel will guide thee. Thou shalt hide at the coming of each dawn and rest all day, waiting patiently until the stars glimmer and the great cross creeps once again up into the sky. Let Ras Jemel lead the caravan to the borders of that bay ten leagues to the north of Shaliti. Then go thou alone, disguised, and seek aid in that city.

“Escape is assured thee if thou dost heed all these things.

“I see a man with sun-tanned visage, broad of chest and neck, and wearing a beard thick and full. When he speaks, ’tis like the rough west wind that roareth in the mountain caves. But his deep blue eyes are as gentle as a child’s. Once thou hast come to the coast, seek him out. He will guide thee on.”



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"How do you know all these things, wise sister? I will not believe that you are not to live with your people many years."

The pensive look returned to her eyes.

"Just as I knew of thy coming and that death threatened thee, so are other events revealed. To-morrow afternoon thou shalt come and see that all has been rightly arranged for thy desert journey. To-morrow night if thou art well enough, thou shalt ride away upon my favorite camel at the head of the caravan. Dost that not please thee, impatient one?" she asked, and smiled at the look of eagerness in Peter's eyes.

Still limping a little but with his strength almost wholly recovered, Peter, clad in his khaki suit, strode into the great square before Zar's palace the next day, ready for new adventures. Before him long lines of ungainly, wooden cases standing in front of a row of tents, and many noisy animals and camelmen, indicated the presence of the ostrich camp. The spectacle gave him a feeling of profound thankfulness and joy. Once again he felt himself giving reign to delightful imaginings. Alive after so many dangers, might he not now hope to go on to the end! He beheld Zar and Ras Jemel, the latter with a bandaged arm, each mounted upon a mule and escorted by four white-clad attendants armed with spears, coming toward him. His heart swelled with gratitude toward both the old man who had stood by him so



## THE OSTRICH

stanchly and the wonderful woman of wisdom and mystery. Inexplicable though it was, Zar, whose knowledge seemed to have rightly solved every perplexity of human life, had proved herself a predestined instrument in the carrying forward of his purpose.

He felt the weight of his debt to her; he revered the greatness of her character; above all, he respected her reliance upon those spiritual forces by means of which in the large things she proved herself so astonishingly accurate in prophecy. But he was unwilling to believe that her life was to cease now that his path and hers were to divide.

He lifted his helmet and standing bareheaded in the sun helped her to dismount when she stopped beside him. Then together, with Ras Jemel, they went the rounds on foot, visiting the wounded men and making sure that the camels and ostriches were all in readiness for the start.

Never, Peter thought, had the great queen appeared so spiritual. Though her lips smiled often, he felt that a deep inner concentration possessed her. And he knew, all during that last afternoon with her, that a presentiment of her own death was in her mind.



## XXII

### DODGING THE POWERS

THAT night, just before the moon rose and while peaceful Trebut was falling asleep, Peter, with Ras Jemel and Aram as his chief advisers, set out with the long line of camels and Arab drivers toward the eastern horizon of the star-powdered sky.

Zar's farewell had been brief but earnest:

"Push on without delay. Otherwise thou wilt not escape with thine ostriches," was her warning. Then:

"My heart rejoices because thou didst come. My spirit shall follow thee; my hopes shall go with thee. Be brave and persist. Thou shalt succeed. Farewell, my brother!" Her hands for a moment had pressed his. Then they were withdrawn. Afterwards he had mounted and ridden away.

During many days thereafter his mind reverted again and again to that parting and to the events that preceded it. Since his meeting with Zar, destiny, or was it Providence, had guarded each step. Circumstances, events, even human life, seemed to have bent themselves that his designs might find fulfilment.



## THE OSTRICH

For three days the march forward proved uneventful. Then, at sunset, one of the Somali guards reported that a squadron of soldiers mounted on camels had crossed the line of their route a few miles ahead.

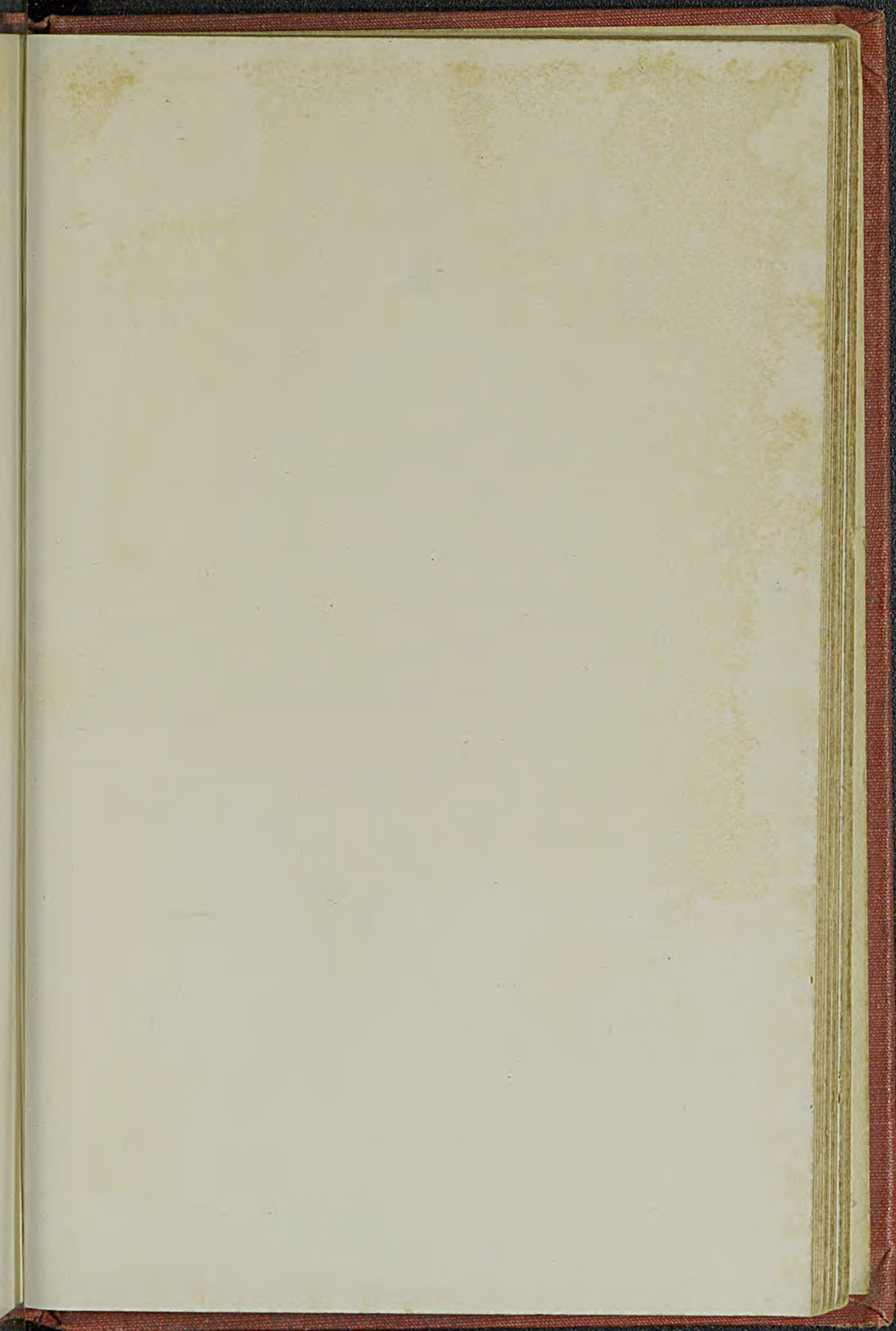
The caravan's course lay several leagues to the north of the regular trail from lower Abyssinia to the coast. Since setting out strict watch had been maintained to prevent discovery of the case-laden animals by nomadic or military bands. Zar's advice still guided Peter in every detail of the journey though much depended upon Ras Jemel who alone knew the direct route to their destination on Onota Bay, a miniature arm of the sea about thirty miles north of Shaliti.

Following the scout's report on the proximity of soldiers, Peter delayed the evening's start until the night had well settled.

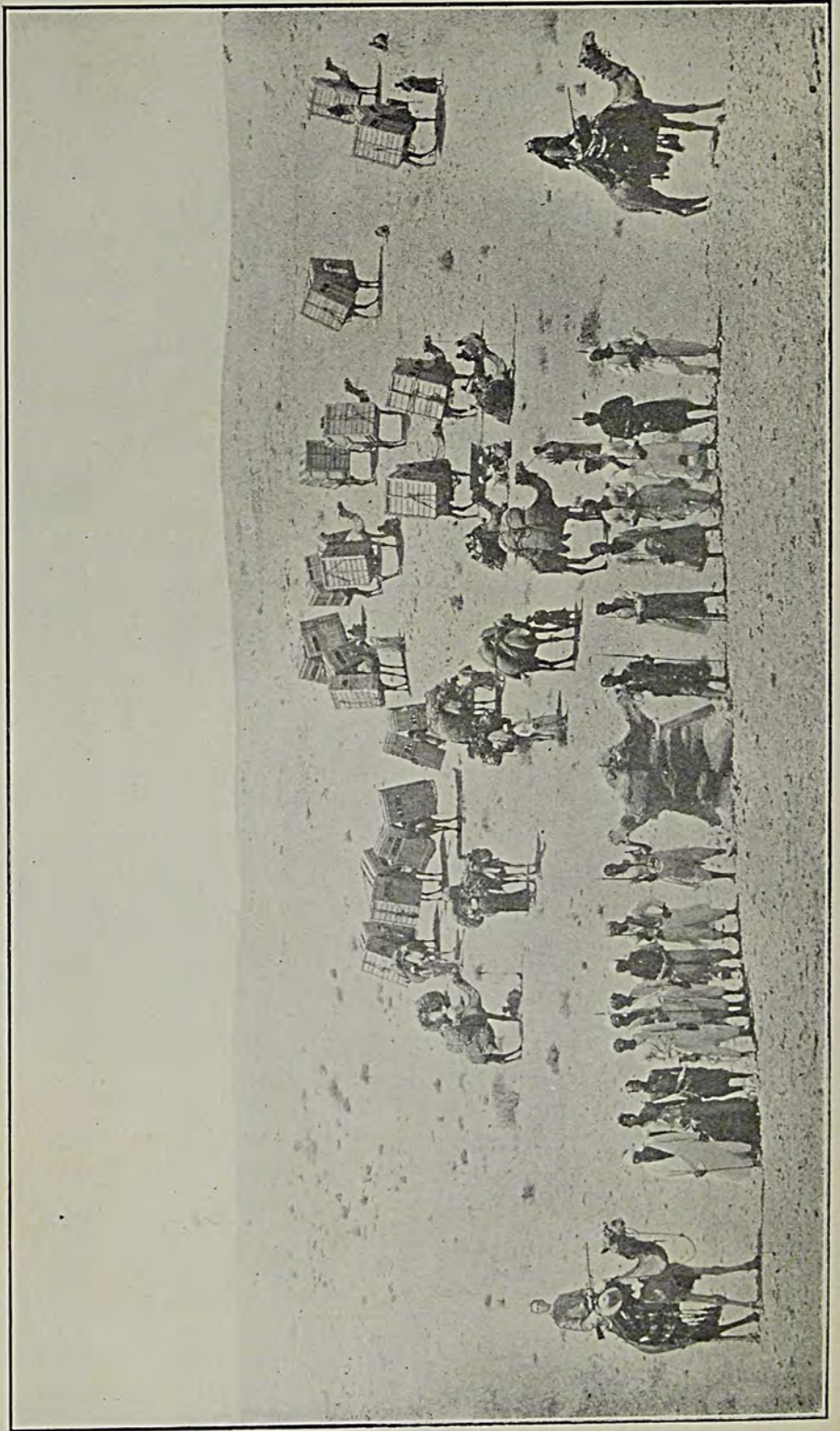
Four more days passed before he was again alarmed. Then, in the early dawn, sheik Aram dragged before him a yellow-skinned, one-eyed specimen of humanity whose cries of fear were mingled with fervid protestations to Allah to witness his good intentions.

"A rascal," declared the sheik, gazing with scornful eye at the wretch, wriggling about, snake-like, in the sand. "El Rofu, the Somali, seized him lying in the halfa grass, watching the caravan like a fox. He is either a thief or a spy."









ON THE DESERT



## DODGING THE POWERS

Peter looked down at the man.

"What do you wish?" he asked in Arabic.

The prisoner grimaced, rolling his eyes toward the horizon.

"O gracious effendi, Abou Emu's lips are parched with long journeying in the desert. He has travelled far and found no well. If the kind effendi will but give him water and permit him to proceed on his way, Allah will bless effendi and all his family."

"Loose him," said Peter to the sheik.

Aram, grumbling, seemed about to obey, when suddenly his hand darted into the folds of the stranger's ragged burnous and drew out a ribbon bearing the impress of a yellow cross surrounded by four golden stars on a background of black.

"It is the sign of the military; he is a spy," cried the old Arab, triumphantly.

Peter gazed searchingly at the man.

"We will hold him until the end of the march. Keep close watch over the fellow, Aram."

On the succeeding day one of the scouts again discovered a squadron of cavalry, this time on horseback, but before it had ridden near enough to detect the hill-sheltered caravan, it swerved to the left, and passed from sight, without suspecting the presence of the ostrich bearers.

The narrowness of the escape again heightened the trepidation of Peter's mind. Only when he at last beheld the caravan encamped in the shade of a grove



## THE OSTRICH

of mimosa trees overlooking the curved line of Onota Bay's silvery shore, did the thought of the next step in the journey occur to him.

"Then go thou alone, disguised, and seek aid in Shaliti." He remembered Zar's charge and likewise her strange prophecy regarding the unknown, bearded man who was to aid him on his journey. Hardly had the animals and men been assembled in the seclusion of the woods, when he set forth on this quest, mounted on a mule and accompanied by Melu.

Turbanned, burnoused and with the color of his sun-tanned face deepened with the stain of berry juice to an Arab brown, Peter's appearance was that of an alert young Bedouin sheik rather than of a white-skinned Anglo-Saxon when he finally sent Melu hurrying back to the caravan with the two donkeys, and himself set off on foot towards the little port just now in front of him.

Avoiding the military garrison and government buildings, he nonchalantly strolled through the narrow, filthy streets of the Arab quarter until the azure expanse of the harbor and sky opened before him. A dozen or more small fishing-boats bobbing at anchorage, a grimy side-wheeler from Suez loading dates at one of the wharves and the low-lying, gray-bodied hull of a cruiser just dropping out of sight over the horizon's edge were the only signs of life on the water.

Disappointment shadowed Peter's features. He



## DODGING THE POWERS

recalled the accuracy with which Zar had described the man who was to guide him to safety. With sinking heart he asked himself whether, after all, he had not overestimated the great queen's power of prediction. Indeed, it seemed as if good fortune had at last deserted him, for, without ship or captain, how was he to escape the prying eyes of authorities determined to forestall any attempt to export the ostrich?

Then he suddenly forgot his misgivings; the sense of disappointment lifted; his pulses throbbed quickly and he stood straining his eyes toward the horizon. A huge, ungainly hulk, from the twin funnels of which trailed a film of black smoke, was slowly materializing out of the distant sky line, heading straight toward the little gulf port where stood the excited watcher.

When he was satisfied that the steamer was bound into the harbor, a motive force quite impossible of analysis suddenly spurred Peter to action. Striding down to the waterfront, he beckoned to a half-naked fisherman who like himself had been gazing toward the steamer with anticipating eyes. Holding out a piece of silver, Peter said in Arabic:

"Take me out to the ship yonder, at once."

Captain Seth MacCracken had barely finished scowling with impatience at having permitted an "old woman's whim," as he called it, to lure him into the out-of-the-way, flea-infested port ahead, when his ear caught the sound of good New York English coming up over the port quarter.



## THE OSTRICH

"Ahoy, Captain! Let down your ladder. I want to come on board."

With an ejaculation of surprise Captain Seth thrust his whiskered chin over the bridge rail. As his eyes lighted on the figure of the man who had hailed him, he roared back:

"Wall, what'd ye want, anyhow?"

Peter recognized the excellence of berry stain and his flowing garb, as a disguise. The captain mistook him for an Arab. Snatching the turban from his head, he cried:

"I'm an American looking for a captain who wants a cargo."

Captain Seth squinted downward for a second. Then he let out a large mouthful of tobacco juice, and something akin to a bellow of astonishment reached Peter's ears, as the great blades beneath the stern kicked up a riot of foam and finally brought the Glendower to a standstill. Flinging his Arab oarsman another coin as the man brought the boat alongside the steamer, Peter scrambled up the rope ladder that had been dropped over the side, and shortly afterward, much to the amazement of the officials at Shaliti, the big tramp steamer churning up a geyser of silver in the outer harbor, turned tail and steamed off to the northward.

It had taken Peter only a few minutes to strike a bargain with Captain MacCracken. It required the full two hours before the Glendower dropped anchor



## DODGING THE POWERS

in Onota Bay for Captain Seth to reconcile the meeting of Peter and himself with natural occurrences in every-day life.

"We'd have headed for Cape Town—straight—if the Deevil's own blow hadn't druv the Glendower clean up into Aden Straits. Why we put into that sultry little hole back there's a mystery, my lad. Somethin' told me to come; 'twarn't natural. Ten days ago Captain Seth MacCracken'd have called the man crazy that said he'd be wild-goosin' off the Araby coast takin' on ostriches for a rapscallion Yankee tryin' to dodge a forrin' bluff.

"But here we air, lad. Whether it's Providence or just sheer luck, I'll help ye out," and the big-hearted, blue-eyed, old veteran yanked vigorously at his long beard and spat tobacco juice with much profusion, as he sought vainly to leaven the new mystery with the salt of sea-faring common sense.

Peter's heart beat high when, a little later, he saw the laden camels being driven one by one to the water's edge where, with the Glendower's crew pressed into service, the cases containing the ostriches began to be loaded upon the ship's boats and transferred to the steamer's deck. Hope thrilled him again. He thought of the triumph of getting away with his precious prizes under the very noses of prying officials.

"To-morrow at sundown will see the job cleaned up," declared Captain MacCracken after watching for some time the tedious process of taking aboard



## THE OSTRICH

the novel cargo, and Peter, going ashore, sought Ras Jemel in the encampment to tell him the news.

As he approached the guide's tent, he beheld a dozen shikari hunters under Aram, dashing off towards the south, while Ras Jemel with a scowl on his face stood near a campfire blaze staring at a piece of paper which he held in his fingers.

"What is it?" Peter felt his mind grow suddenly tense with apprehension.

"The spy has escaped. Look! The rascal dares to mock the sahib."

Peter's eyes quickly deciphered the rude Arabic scrawl:

"Abou Emu forgets not," it read.

The note, the guide explained, had been found sticking out from under the saddle of Peter's camel, a few minutes before.

Peter silently stared for a moment at the cryptic phrase.

"How long has the man been gone?"

"No one seems to know, sahib. It could not have been long. He has stolen the sahib's best mule. Aram seeks to seize and bring him back, but the desert night cloaks well the hunted."

Peter reflected: by pushing hard, the spy could reach Shaliti in time to bring the French troopers down on him by early dawn. If by any chance the man should fall in with a stray squad before he reached the town—



## DODGING THE POWERS

Peter's aggressive self wakened. Was he to be beaten at this hour—when success was already dawning! Hurrying on board the Glendower, he informed Captain MacCracken of the threatening danger.

"The man will bring a company of French soldiers down on me by sunrise. No law yet actually forbids exportation of the birds but both the English and French colonial garrisons here have been ordered to block all ostrich shipments until the prohibitory statutes are passed. That may occur any day. Then it'll all be off. Of course it's mere bluff now, but they'll make it mighty uncomfortable for me to get the rest of my cases on board if they arrive in time."

Captain Seth tugged at his beard.

"What'll ye have me do, lad?"

"Load in the dark. With smart work we can have every case aboard by daybreak. I'll add a week's pay to the wages of every hand that helps."

The older man held up a broad palm in protest.

"Seth MacCracken'll tend to that." Then rising from his arm-chair and jamming a generous pinch of "Nonesuch" into his mouth:

"Ye be a true son of Yankee Doodle, lad. There's Cap'n Seth's hand on that. We'll heave every case on deck by morning or know the reason why!"

Thus the first streaks of breaking dawn were lighting the last case-laden boat off to the ship's side



## THE OSTRICH

when a sharp command ringing over the desert notified Peter that the soldiery had arrived.

He had finished settling his accounts and was bidding farewell to Ras Jemel and Aram. A small boat manned by two of the Glendower's crew waited for him on the beach. Captain Seth strode to and fro in the distance across the steamer's bridge, making frequent inroads upon his pouch of fine cut as he walked.

The murmuring voices of the tired Somali men became suddenly hushed. Peter saw the troopers halt and dismount. Through the soft mists of the morning he beheld the figure of their chief officer, still on horseback, riding toward the mimosa grove. No sign of Abou Emu, the spy, was evident. Had these men found the caravan by chance or had the spy been left behind by the soldiers in the rush to apprehend the Yankee poacher. In either case Peter knew that a tiresome and undesirable interrogation was likely to ensue. He knew that embarrassing questions would be asked about the two huge cases just then vanishing over the Glendower's rail. The man responsible for those cases and their contents might be invited to pay a visit to the French governor at Shaliti.

Many of the camel-men now grouped themselves expectantly at the edge of the grove. The light was still faint. About a hundred yards, partly through the grove and partly across the open beach,



## DODGING THE POWERS

lay between Peter and the waiting boat. He was calculating whether he might cover the distance before a good runner, starting from where the troopers stood, could reach him, when he heard the soft voice of Melu at his elbow saying:

"If the sahib will wear the burnous of Melu, and this—" pulling off his somewhat soiled, but finely woven, turban and offering it to Peter—"the military may mistake the sahib for one of the Somali hunters."

Instantly Peter caught at the suggestion. He remembered that his face was still berry-stained.

"Melu, you're a prize," he exclaimed in English to the uncomprehending, but plainly pleased youth.

Barely had he donned the head-dress and wrapped the flowing garment of dirty brown about his figure when he heard the voice of the officer ask in Arabic:

"Where is the chief sahib of the caravan?"

Unconscious of Peter's suddenly conceived purpose to attempt concealment by disguise, the solemn faces of fourscore or more of Arabs turned in his direction. In a flash Ras Jemel understood.

"The chief sahib has gone on board the great ship," he cried. "Ras Jemel will send him word that the officer sahib comes to speak with him," and without waiting for a reply the crafty old man waved at Peter a commanding hand, pointing toward the small boat on the shore and the steamer beyond.

"Bring the chief sahib," he ordered authoritatively.

As Peter bowed, and, turning, began to stalk gravely



## THE OSTRICH

through the trees, he felt the twinkling eyes of half a hundred or more loyal camel-men fixed upon him.

Would the ruse succeed?

Hindered from divining the trick both by the gloom of the grove and an affection of near-sightedness, the French officer settled down in his saddle to wait the return of the supposed messenger. The cavalrymen, attentive but likewise unsuspecting, stood a little to the rear, stretching their limbs after the night's tedious ride.

Meanwhile Peter walked unmolested out of the grove and started across the wide stretch of beach. But he had proceeded barely a dozen steps in the open when the morning stillness was rent by a donkey's raucous braying, instantly succeeded by a shrill voice, crying out in bad French:

"It is the white sahib! Stop him!"

Peter recognized, all too well, the familiar tones of Abou Emu. The spy had arrived at last!

Without a pause the American bounded forward, running with all his might. Forty, perhaps fifty, yards of shelving beach lay between himself and the waiting boat. Awake to the situation, the oarsmen were springing into the water on each side, prepared to push off the instant he arrived. He caught the sound of their encouraging shout before the pandemonium of hoarse cries mingling with snappy French commands and Arab cheers rose from behind and at his right, wakening all the echoes. Out of the tail



## DODGING THE POWERS

of his eye he perceived a full dozen uniformed men on foot, racing madly toward him over the beach. He squared up his shoulders a little and sucked in deeper breaths between his teeth. The turban slipped off exposing his thick, straight hair and Yankee profile. The distance had considerably lessened between himself and the boat. He was running rapidly. He would beat them all. He was almost there—another second—

A little wizened, yellow, one-eyed face leering between the ears of an ugly donkey suddenly blocked his path. For an instant Peter's heart sank. Fifteen yards away a swearing trooper was running toward him. Then, almost before the bit of pointed steel in Abou Emu's hand had had time to poise for a lunge, the heavy, flat blade of an oaken oar in the hands of a sailor struck the spy behind the ear and he dropped senseless to the sand, while Peter, dodging the donkey, seized the stern gunwale of the boat and flung himself aboard just as the two rowers thrust the craft away from the beach and dipped in with strong sweeps of their oar-blades.

Again a feeling of well-won triumph swept over the panting American. Standing up in the stern of the boat, he cried out in French to the enraged officer now at the water's edge:

"Monsieur allows a Yankee to teach him to run?"

"Diable! thief! I will arrest you! Come back!"

The man shook his fist wildly in the air.



## THE OSTRICH

"Calm yourself, monsieur. It is a serious affair to arrest an American without reason."

"Reason! reason! Name of a dog! Pig! Are you not a thief—have you not stolen the ostriches?" and drawing his revolver, he took aim and fired.

Luckily for Peter and the sailors, the bullet flew wide of its mark, and before the officer had made up his mind to risk possible international trouble with another, better-aimed shot the boat swept alongside the *Glendower* where Captain MacCracken stood on the bridge, roaring orders and shaking his fist at the now madly gesticulating company of soldiers on shore.

A minute later, even before the steam windlass had hove the anchor short, Peter from the ship's deck beheld the French troops suddenly mount and dash across the desert in the direction of the garrison at Shaliti. He remembered the cruiser that he had seen from the shore of the port. He remembered also the antennaed arms of the wireless tower reaching into the air over the office of the governor's building there. In three hours' time, if the squad rode hard, a message would be flashing over the gulf to the captain of that speedy French cruiser, warning him to watch for the *Glendower*.

"Ten hours and we are safe, lad," declared Captain MacCracken when Peter had imparted the cause of his anxiety to the old sailor. "Don't ye borrow trouble about this 'ere man-o'-war. The *Glendower's*



## DODGING THE POWERS

got a pair o' heels better'n half the second-rate, fuss-makin' government vessels afloat."

In spite of this display of cheerful optimism, Peter noted soon after that the throbbing of the great engines below began to increase and he saw, too, as the afternoon waned that much interest among members of the crew centred about the frequent binocular studies of the horizon by Captain Seth from the bridge.

They were heading for Mosa on the Arabian coast, nearly two hundred miles from Shaliti to the northeast. There all except about sixty of the precious birds were to be landed and left until the successful test of a long sea voyage on the smaller lot proved the advisability of transporting the remainder by steamer to America. There also suitable food supplies for the birds for the long Atlantic trip were to be procured. Arabia laid no taboo on the ostrich traffic. Once in Mosa Harbor, the prizes were safe from the interference of jealous governments. Early evening would bring into view the lighted headlands of the little coast city. It was now an hour before sunset. Lack of proper food, added to the intense tropical heat, had harassed the caged birds until the need of making port within a few hours had at last become imperative.

Pausing after a wild struggle to force a refractory biped back into its wooden prison, Peter was a little startled at beholding an enormous cloud bank rolling



## THE OSTRICH

up in the steamer's wake. The heat also seemed to be increasing. "A hurricane," he thought.

A trio of sailors leaning against the forward capstan, in conversation, frequently looked toward the darkening sky. Captain MacCracken's frown deepened each time he glanced at the barometer.

The old man's interest in searching the skyline had plainly yielded to a study of the growing cloud bank and the indubitable signs of storm, when Peter saw him suddenly pause in his pacing, grasp his binoculars and cast a long and searching glance to port. Then he turned and roared a sharp command into the engineer's speaking tube. A second later the increased vibrations of the steel hull told Peter that more pressure had been diverted into the great cylinders below decks.

Straining his eyes he finally made out the evident cause of the captain's trepidation—a gray speck behind which streamed a cloud of black smoke, and which, as Peter continued to look, visualized into the outlines of a long, low hull.

"The cruiser at last! Intent on cutting us off," he thought. The vessel was coming up on the quarter. He glanced upward. It lacked an hour of sunset—more than that of darkness. The clouds astern were rolling up ominously. He heard Captain MacCracken shouting new orders from above and he saw the sailors, singly or in pairs, pouring from the companionways. After a time the whole crew was



## DODGING THE POWERS

on deck staring at the approaching war-vessel. The latter was now less than two miles away.

In attempting to cut off the Glendower, however, the cruiser had fallen slightly behind, and the pursuit—for it was clearly that—soon promised to become a stern chase with the man-of-war well in the background of clouds, now stretching from horizon to zenith. Yet because of the oblique course that the cruiser had been obliged to take, it was at first difficult to tell which of the vessels was making the greater speed. In fact, as the Frenchman swung more directly astern, it seemed for a few minutes as if neither had the advantage of the other. Then Captain MacCracken's voice went bellowing through the speaking-tube, a fresh tremor began to shake the already overdriven frame of the Glendower, and a perceptible widening of the distance between the two vessels began to be apparent to everyone.

A sailor who had been sitting near the captain's bridge, watching the race with eager eyes, opened his mouth to cheer—but instead of shouting he gulped and turned pale. Another man forward threw himself down on the deck and covered his face; still others dodged behind the Glendower's rail; an ejaculation of something more than wrath escaped Captain Seth's lips, while Peter could only clutch his fists together and stare in consternation at what he saw.

For just as a gust of wind was wakening the dead mirror of the sea, a flame flash and a ball of woolly



## THE OSTRICH

smoke rose from the cruiser's forward quarter, and an instant later, travelling with the speed of a swift wind, the ripping, shrieking sound of a shrapnel shell rose until it filled all the air, and then suddenly lost itself in a geyser of churning foam that surged high out of the sea, not fifteen yards ahead of the Glendower's bow.



## XXIII

### FULFILMENT

IN spite of this unexpected attack and the unquestionably good marksmanship of his pursuers, Captain Seth gave no signals for slowing down.

"Bluff," he muttered, "they wouldn't dare hit us," and he again levelled his binoculars at the cruiser. But owing to the storm clouds he could barely make out the group gathered about the long gun on the warship's port quarter.

Suddenly he glanced astern. As he did so an expression of satisfaction escaped him: "Now we'll see, consarn ye."

Just then another shell came screaming across the water, this time dropping not more than five yards astern. But hardly had the sound been swallowed up by the sea when the squall burst with the roar of a hurricane, blotting out sky and pursuer in torrents of rain and a darkness like that of night.

As the captain turned back to the speaking-tube, he again heard a shrapnel scream, but this time a long way to starboard. After that only the whistle and roar of the wind disturbed his serenity during the three hours before his keen eyes made out the lights off the little Arabian port toward which he was heading.



## THE OSTRICH

Drenched though he was, Peter's relief at the Glendower's escape left him in high spirits. After the steamer had cautiously nosed her way in and found a berth off Mosa's twinkling waterfront, he had the satisfaction of seeing all his unruly charges well supplied with fresh food rushed across the harbor by noisy Arabs from the little town.

It was almost twelve o'clock that night when he dropped into his berth in Captain Seth's cabin, tired out, but inexpressibly happy. He had won. Dangers lay behind him now. After the delay necessary in order to send ashore part of the birds at Mosa and a later brief stop at Port Saïd, he would be on his way to New York Harbor with sixty ostriches. He was sure there could be no miscarriage in the transportation of the birds. And then—he would hurry direct to Bloomington and launch the summons for men and women to join him. All who did so would help to build up a community in which the principle of co-operation was to be made real and perfect—an example after which all future mankind might pattern. Even while fatigue crept over his senses his mind exulted in that day of great achievement. With the ostriches as a commercial basis for material growth, failure was impossible.

\* \* \* \* \*

On a certain evening some time after the preceding events, Peter stood before an audience of workingmen



## FULFILMENT

in the city of Williamsbarrie launching the work to which he was now irrevocably pledged.

After landing in New York he had sent for a cousin of whom he was very fond, and together they had taken the ostriches to Bloomington, the ancestral seat of both. Bloomington was the one place dearer than all others to Peter because, during the happy days of his childhood and youth, he had learned to love many of the warm-hearted and honest people who dwelt there and in the country surrounding it. In Bloomington he had immediately plunged, heart and soul, into the task of wakening men and women to the advantages of self-help.

Then gradually the field of his work had widened. His summons was now being made to people in many places. That afternoon he had come to Williamsbarrie, a city about forty miles from Bloomington. As he began to speak, an intense silence fell upon his hearers.

“Workingmen of Williamsbarrie,” were his opening words, “you must awaken! You must organize! You must think! You must put your thoughts into action!

“The world’s wealth and all that goes with it—education, the joys of travel, the happiness of comfort and of deserved leisure, all are yours if you will but use your minds.

“It is because men have not thought but have permitted their brains to grow dull and inactive



## THE OSTRICH

that there are millions in this country whose only hope is to get food and clothes enough to allow them to go on working their lives away.

“What does this procession of the impoverished and the famishing mean? What does it mean when the average compensation of each one of the army of workers is four hundred and seventy-three dollars a year, while each produces an average of twenty-five hundred dollars a year? It is because men have forgotten to think.

“I call upon you now to step from the ranks of thralldom and, by uniting your dollars for the erection of mills, factories and other enterprises—all of which shall belong to you—to proclaim yourselves the leaders of a new epoch-making era.

“Only when you have taken this step—and it is the only way left—can you face your wives, mothers, sweethearts and children with the assurance that you are free men.

“A thousand cults have been proposed for your relief; a thousand schemes of philosophers and reformers have been advanced; a thousand political parties, in times past, have put forward as many panaceas for the betterment of all; but since the world began all such efforts have failed because men have not thought and acted as individuals—because the many were too willing to pin their hopes to a faith or to a political belief. Thousands in the slums of London live lives lower than those of beasts because



## F U L F I L M E N T

of the abandonment of all personal initiative. Thousands more in the Far East are sunk in abject destitution because of having blindly followed inane superstitions.

“I will leave it to you to determine how fast people in your own land are marching in the same direction, when it is borne in mind that because of poverty less than two per cent. of the children in America reach college and not five per cent. reach the first grade in the high school.

“I will leave it to you to weigh the pitiful inertia of the people, when it is remembered that forty per cent. of the three hundred and sixty odd thousand children under five years of age, who die annually, could be saved with ordinarily intelligent preventive measures.

“To-day two hundred thousand children in the public schools are rated as backward because of the conditions of poverty under which they have been nurtured. Among the eight hundred thousand persons living in New York's terrible East Side, one person in eight is more or less dependent upon alms. Thousands upon thousands of children are being broken down by consumption, spinal curvature, anæmia and neurasthenia because poverty forces them to work in the dirt-laden and poisonous air of overheated textile mills, factories, dye-houses, laundries, paint-works, sweat-shops and other places of toil.

“I will leave it to you to judge whether the toll



## THE OSTRICH

we pay for poverty is not too high when it is borne in mind that New York is now the acknowledged centre of the white slave traffic of the whole world; when it is agreed that the system of cadets and procurers of innocent girls here rivals the most notorious similar organizations anywhere; when it is certain that tens of thousands of girls, broken by cruel social pressure and lack of training, are the victims of this awful system.

“In one of this country’s greatest cities it was recently proven that ten women were offered for sale every week at prices ranging from fifty to seventy-five dollars each. In this same city one dealer made one hundred thousand dollars in a year from this horrible traffic.

“How long would little children be forced to work out their lives in sweat-shops and mills; how long would this grewsome white slave traffic live and draw recruits from the ranks of the children of poverty; how long would the strike, the lockout and the bread line exist, if the workingman in this country were to imitate the capitalist and unite his dollars in self-protection?

“You who are coal miners, think what it would mean to each one of you, if each one were to subscribe a dollar a week from his wages for the purpose of self-help. There are over four hundred thousand of you.

“At the end of a single year you would have,



## F U L F I L M E N T

collectively, over twenty millions with which to purchase coal mines of your own. In ten years you would have over two hundred million dollars which would represent the price of the liberty of each one of you. You would all be free men. You would have forever smashed the chains that bind you to servitude.

“In the last analysis you can depend alone upon no political party, no church, no society, to save you. It is you yourselves who must do that. You must work together, shoulder to shoulder, intelligently, knowingly, sanely, with your united dollars, and in the understanding that all are brothers. The ostrich shall be the beginning of a great movement in America. We will purchase lands and begin the establishment of many enterprises. Our factories, mills, workshops, banks, industrial and business institutions of all kinds, shall furnish a great lesson for the world. Our success will grow until its example shall attract men everywhere.

“For centuries man has been looking for aid from the outside. He has been asking for a loaf—and receiving a stone. Has he deserved any more? For has he tried to help himself?

“Many have realized the need of self-help. The hearts of many have longed for the dawn of a better and a brighter day, but they have remained too timid and too afraid to take the initiative themselves. They are waiting for a body of valiant, true and determined men to lead the way.



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"I ask you, my brothers, to prove yourselves such men! Be the advance-guard of this mighty army whose watchword is the bringing of happiness to all through practical co-operation."

As Peter ceased speaking, a burst of applause filled the great hall. Then almost before the noise had ceased a broad-shouldered, stalwart man rose.

"You men know James Bridden," he began. "Not an easy man to convince, but he tells you now, boys, that here lies the salvation of the workingman. When we move to help ourselves, our troubles will settle themselves. The world to-day is what we, who are in it, have made it. The rich man gets the loaf because he goes after it, while we fight among ourselves and lay down. United, our wealth and strength will prove invincible. I believe that, working together, we can do anything; and what man will not follow us when he learns that by so doing he reinforces his own power to better himself with the co-operative aid which men united will provide?"

"As we grow, so our strength will grow. The more who take part, the easier it will be for all. Let us all join, and then go out and bring in others! If we act, we have our chance to at once begin to rise above the serfdom that our own stupidity now imposes on us. It is the mightiest doctrine that has ever been preached. It is above all other doctrines in the world for the workingman."



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Hardly had the speaker resumed his seat amid cheers, when enthusiasm burst forth on all sides. Amos Beyers and Peter Caster, two leaders among those present, each earnestly addressed their companions, and they were followed by other speakers of different nationalities. At length after the numerous speeches seconding Peter's plan, the meeting closed in a general demonstration of approval as all present rose and began to crowd toward the platform.

This meeting was typical of many wherein Peter had begun to appeal to people everywhere. Although he had been settled in Bloomington only a few months, the fame of the ostrich farm and of the cause it stood for had aroused great interest and discussion.

As in the little hall at Williamsbarrie, so in other cities and towns the slogan of co-operation drew an army of courageous people to the standard of self-help. Far and wide the newspapers devoted much space to the growing organization with its headquarters at Bloomington. Letters from all parts of the country and from across the water poured in upon Peter Rutledge.

Coincident with this awakening of interest, the increasing body of adherents began building up the industries destined to supplement, in a material way, the principle with which each man was imbued. Hundreds were becoming interested in the practical idea of self-help.



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Peter's work was at last fully started, and he stood one day addressing a good-sized crowd of enthusiastic and happy workers who had come to Bloomington for a stockholders' meeting, when a group of five persons entered the offices of the association and paused to listen on the outskirts of the throng present. Actuated by the same spirit, namely, to discover at first hand the meaning of the many reports concerning the ostrich farm and the part that Peter was taking in the enterprise, Mrs. Van Siddons, Ann Newman, Max, Alicia and Felix had taken a holiday trip to Bloomington.

"We have become the leaders in a new era of progress," Peter was saying when his friends came within hearing. "Our fame has spread broadcast. The unassailableness of the ostrich as a commercial factor in our work has been proven already. Our success is attracting men from far and wide. We are beginning to disseminate the spirit of our great cause.

"How many of you are dissatisfied with the progress that we have made? Not one, I warrant."

"No, no!" came the reply simultaneously from many throats.

Peter, with his shoulders squared back and with his sun-tanned face alight with enthusiasm, smiled from where he stood upon the slightly raised platform.

"Are you all eager to go on?"

"Yes, yes!" came again from all.



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“The first step has been taken. To-day we are going to view our own industries. The union of our dollars, our efforts, have created them. They are ours. The ostriches that we own will go on increasing. Our incomes will go on increasing. Our success will go on increasing.

“It is a happy day for us all. We are not empty theorists. We have built up a conquering movement which has kindled new life, new hopes, new convictions in the hearts of men. We are constructors in a transition from the old system of wage-slavery to a new society of brotherly co-operation.”

As he ceased speaking a shout went up, filling the whole room and the stockholders swarmed round the speaker, shaking his hands and those of each other. Happiness, good-will and joyousness were predominant in the tones of every voice. It was like the enthusiasm of a great religious meeting.

As his five friends stood there looking on, they were deeply impressed with the profound significance of the spectacle before them. Then suddenly Peter caught sight of them and came elbowing his way forward.

A little later when the crowd dispersed to visit the farm and the mills, Peter recounted to these friends the details of his long absence, describing his meeting with Queen Zar, her amazing wisdom, how he had learned the secret of the ostrich's value to mankind, and how he had brought home his flock of birds.



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"When I arrived, I felt that all things, even friendship's social claims, must be made subservient to my work, so I hastened here with my ostriches. Since then I have not had a day that I could call mine. It has been real work, and the ways of it have been indeed devious.

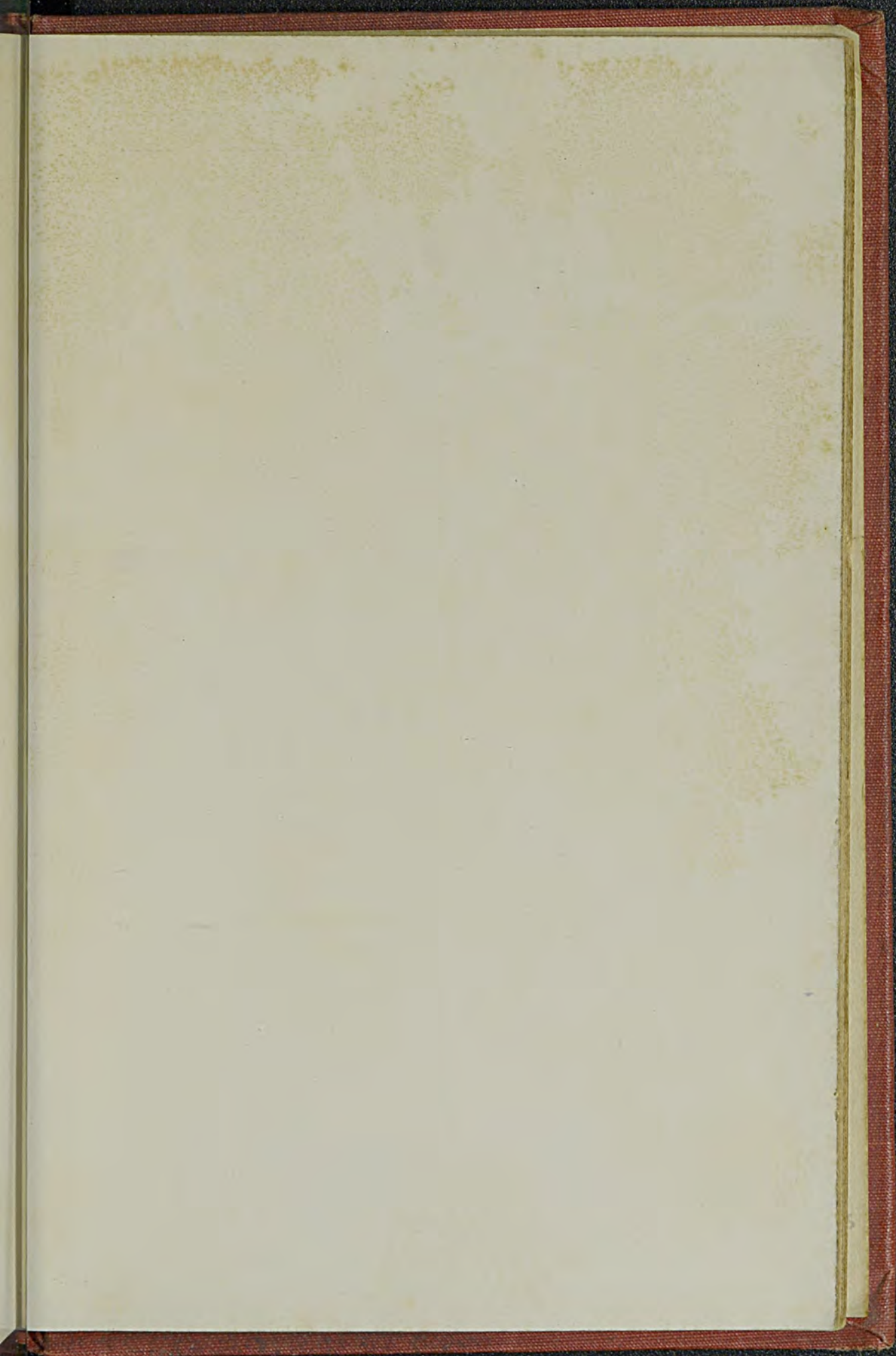
"I have been searching for real men and real women willing to take their places in this great movement, and I have found them. Three women school-teachers were the first ones to lead the way in Bloomington. Their allegiance proved an inspiring example, for enthusiasm here was weak. Many who said that they wished to help fell by the wayside. They were the faint-hearted and those incapable of understanding.

"But little by little others began to fall into line. The doctrine of the brotherhood of man has come to stay. My heart is filled with joy. Hundreds now realize the importance of self-help so completely that they have allied themselves with us. We are all on the fighting line and every week our strength grows greater."

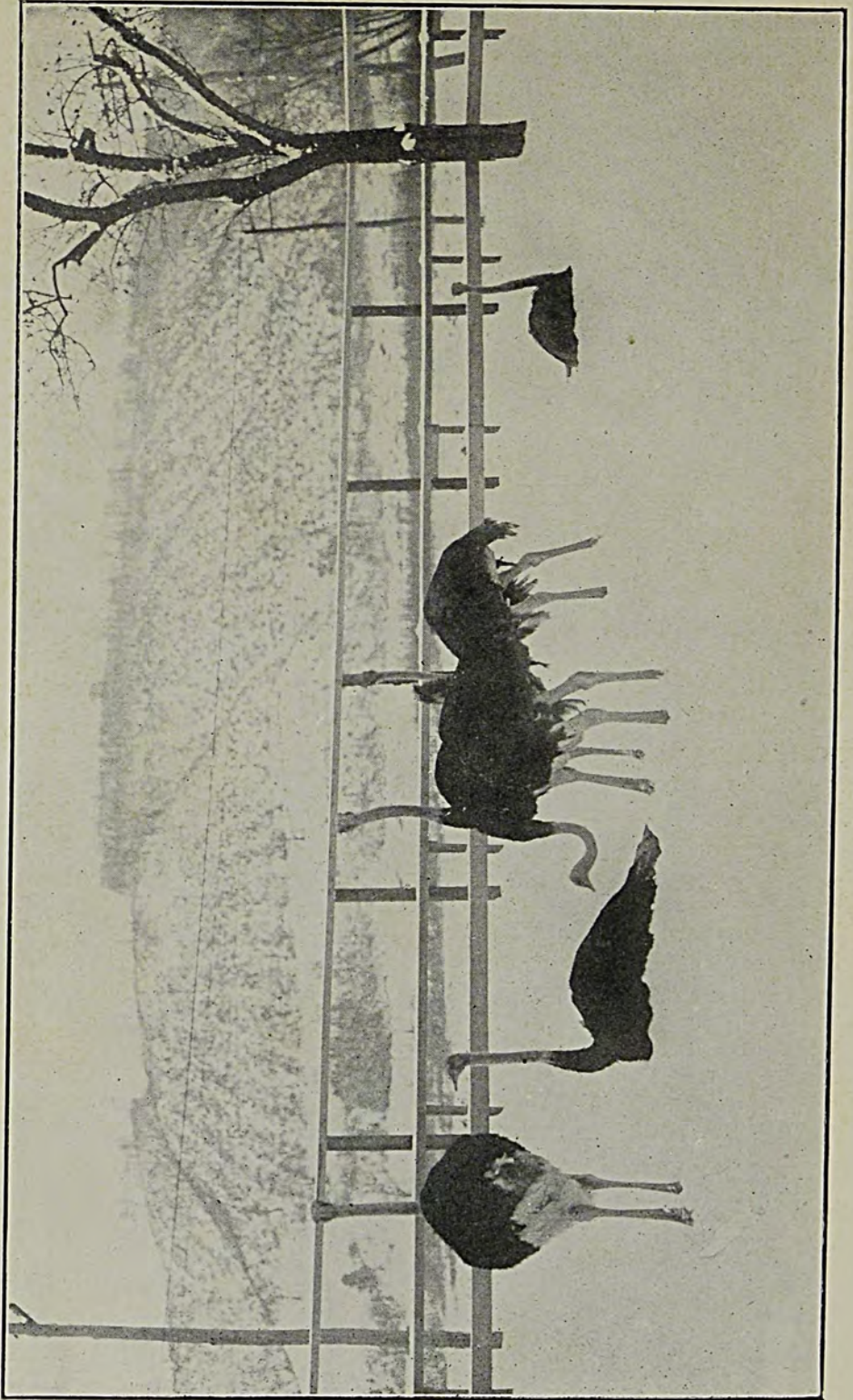
"I am glad," his godmother remarked, "for now, though you may be so absorbed by your work that you neglect us, you are at least safely away from the dangers of savages and jungle beasts."

Later, under Peter's guidance, his guests were taken to the ostrich farm and were also given a chance to view at first hand the undertakings that









ENJOYING THE SNOW AND ZERO WEATHER



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had been started. Buildings were being constructed and factories were in process of erection. He showed how they were already manufacturing a complete fertilizer; how limestone mined on their own land was being reduced into merchantable products; how coal needed to supply their enterprises was being taken by their own dredges from the river in front of the farm. He took them to see the handsome snowy-plumed birds at the ostrich pens and showed them the extensive fields of crops, their horses, imported cattle and other features, all of which spoke plainly of prosperity, achievement and success.

To Peter's five friends this series of accomplishments seemed wonderful—and not less so because the work was being carried on by means of the love, sympathy and harmony which co-operative effort makes possible.

Max Reinhart, once so skeptical of Peter's ideals, was now overwhelmed at the magnitude of these results. He knew at once that Peter had learned the great secret of bettering humanity. Indeed, he saw that his college chum was now preaching for the very conditions for which formerly he had not had the least sympathy. Moreover Peter was urging his appeal with such earnestness that both humble and great responded. Max realized that the old and provenly ineffective social order was being displaced by a sound one. Peter had put his theory into practice. He not only demonstrated to his fellow-



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men a great truth, but he made it possible for them to act according to that truth by using the ostrich as an attracting medium and a tangible thing upon which to build. Max realized that the magnitude of the work and what it had cost Peter was tremendous.

Felix likewise, boy though he was, comprehended clearly for the first time the power of harmonious, collective effort. He who had known so much grief and loneliness felt the peace and serenity of the place and with all his youthful enthusiasm he pledged himself to devote his life to the advancement of this new work. When he found Peter free to talk it over, he begged to be allowed to enlist in the cause, and permission being willingly granted, the youth thus began his work for humanity.

Finally obliged to leave his guests to their own entertainment for a short time, Peter, on his return, came upon Ann Newman alone in the apple orchard at the farm, her hat lying upon the grass near her.

Only a minute before she had left the others at the ostrich pens. Standing where the sunlight softly kissed the wind-blown strands of her lovely hair, she made a wonderful picture to Peter's eyes—a picture which caused his heart to throb with joy. All through the period of his journeyings he had constantly carried her in his thoughts, and many times he had dreamed of this day and hour, now arrived.



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She had spoken only a little since they had met, but that pleased him, for he felt that her reticence betokened at last a consciousness of self in his presence.

Now as he approached, she was looking away across the river that threaded the meadows below the farm. She did not hear him until he spoke:

“Ann, Ann, I am glad I have found you at last—and alone!”

She turned, her eyes serene and smiling.

“I am glad too, Peter,” she said, simply.

“Dear,” he went on abruptly, but with an earnestness which his trembling voice did not conceal, “I have done my best. Have I not succeeded? It has been for others, Ann, but it has been for you, too, Beloved. And now, I come to ask my reward. It is a great one. I want you to marry me. I want you to be my wife. I want you to go on and on, always with me. I need you. From the day of my great awakening in Jerusalem you have been my inspiration. Will you not remain the incentive of my life? Tell me that you will, my dear!”

She stood with her eyes looking into his.

“I love you,” she said simply. Then, as he took a step toward her: “Because of your unswerving loyalty to the spirit of the Call of the Ages, I have always been with you in heart. A power stronger than all else which employed you as the instrument to inaugurate this mighty work, has bound me to



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you forever." Her eyes suddenly fell as his arms enfolded her.

"Sweetheart," he said, "the pathway of duty and labor for others lies ahead, but its tasks shall be pleasant, for we shall pursue it hand in hand—always together."



## XXIV

### APPENDIX

THE first co-operative store, opened in Rochdale sixty-eight years ago, has resulted in co-operative stores, banks, factories and societies everywhere. The growth of co-operation has been amazing.

At a conservative estimate there are six million co-operators in the world to-day, representing twenty-five millions of people.

Co-operative effort, generally speaking, is divided into four departments under the headings: consumer's co-operation, which has been most highly developed in Great Britain; credit co-operation, which finds its highest development in the co-operative banks and credit societies of Germany; workshop, or productive co-operation, which is best typified by the co-operators of France; and agricultural co-operation, which is embodied in the success of the farmers in Denmark.

In England the co-operative movement now has a membership of over two and a half millions of people and that membership is increasing at the rate of from 75 to 100 thousand people each year.

The sales of the co-operative societies of England



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in 1910-11 amounted to over 557 million dollars, an increase over the previous year of more than 13 millions. The profits for the year 1910-11 were over 60 millions.

In the same year the annual report of the Co-operative Congress shows that over 48,738 people were engaged in co-operative production in England and that the wages which they received, exclusive of their bonus, was over 13 million dollars. The total production of the co-operative movement in England, that is, the value of goods that were made where people worked in co-operation, amounted to over a hundred million dollars.

In the labor copartnership concerns the workers in England receive the agreed wages of capital, then they receive a dividend on their own wages, and if they are purchasers of the goods which they produce, they receive a dividend on their purchases. In England the dividend on the wages of those producing co-operatively is about 25 cents on every pound (about \$5) which they earn.

Co-operators in England are now engaged in the production of many industrial commodities, including cotton, linen, silk, wool, boots, shoes, leather and hardware. They also manufacture building materials and do printing and binding work. In 1910 over three and a half million dollars were included in the co-operative bakeshop production in England and Scotland and over a million was represented



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by the co-operative laundries of the same two countries.

The co-operative retail societies in England stand for an enormous financial interest, representing more than fifty millions of profits annually with that sum increasing every year.

The English Co-operative Union, Limited, which includes a representation of about all the co-operative societies in Great Britain and Ireland, expends fifty thousand dollars annually in the publication of literature and in exhibitions. The Co-operative Union had 17,606 students enrolled in the year 1910-11. In the different schools such studies as co-operation, industrial history, citizenship and economics are taught by trained teachers. The co-operative employees are also provided with training courses which include classes for apprentices, junior employees, saleswomen and salesmen, general managers and high executives. Besides the regular courses, the Co-operative Union, Limited, provides training in other ways. There are classes for teachers; there are co-operative circles for young people; there are co-operative trips abroad and numerous other half recreative, half educational departures for young and old alike.

The Raiffeison Banks and the Schulze-Delitzsch Banks typify the co-operative principle as it is expressed in Germany.

These two forms of the co-operative bank, while



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differing in method, both stand for what is known as co-operative credit for production.

The Raiffeison banks which began to spread in 1880 are now counted by the thousands and exist in many lands. In Germany they are federated in a monster union which has a general agency and also a great central bank with a capitalization of two and a half million dollars. It is said that since the birth of the Raiffeison bank neither any of its members nor its creditors has ever lost a penny through it.

Franz Hermann Schulze established his first bank in Delitzsch, Prussia, with the idea of assisting the small mechanic and artisan to save money. Schulze, who was a judge, induced a number of craftsmen each to take a share in the bank. For these shares, costing as high as from two to three hundred dollars, only a little was paid down. The rest became an obligation and an incentive to the worker. With this backing, the bank proceeded to receive savings and to let money out to its members only, at the highest rate that could be obtained. At stated times the profits were divided among the co-operating shareholders. These banks to-day divide dividends as high as thirty per cent. among the co-operators.

There are thirty thousand co-operative credit and building societies now in the world. Germany has fifteen thousand local credit societies and sixty central



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co-operative credit associations which lend nine hundred million dollars a year. Italy, Austria and Hungary have many of these banks.

Sixteen years ago it was estimated that 750 millions were being loaned in Europe on the co-operative credit plan. Eight years later the sums similarly loaned in Europe had swelled to a billion and a quarter.

Even in Russia a central co-operative bank exists which is endowed with twelve and a half millions of the public money.

Besides her co-operative banks, Germany is making great strides in co-operative production and the establishment of co-operative retail societies. The Central Union of German Retail Societies has a million and a quarter members and its total sales amount to over seventy-five million dollars annually. One of the features of this Union is a pension fund to which already 5,000 co-operators have subscribed and which now amounts to one and a half million marks or about 375 thousand dollars. The first pensions were paid in 1911.

The Dutch Co-operative Union is represented by about 55,000 co-operators, and last year the sales of its wholesale department amounted to over a million and a quarter dollars.

The farmers of Denmark to-day are attracting the attention of the whole world by their success in agricultural co-operation. From once being the



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poorest people, the Danes, with the exception of the English, are now the richest, in proportion to their number, of any people in Europe. This extraordinary rise in prosperity is universally attributed to the success of the co-operative agricultural societies in Denmark. Thirty years ago Denmark established its first co-operative dairy. There are now more than a thousand in the country. Four-fifths of its great milk supply is gathered and distributed co-operatively. Forty-five million dollars is the profit on butter alone, which is divided among those who supply the cream, in proportion to the amount that they supply. Denmark has co-operative societies for managing the business of collecting and sending to market eggs, bacon, fruit and honey, and for purchasing fodders and manures. Sometimes a single Danish farmer, in order to the better dispose of his products and to get the full benefit of his profits, which co-operation enables him to do, belongs to as many as ten different societies. Besides that, he usually belongs to one or more farmers' clubs.

France has many co-operative production shops which do an annual business of millions of dollars per year, returning to the workman, not only his wages, but the profit dividend on his wages. Through co-operation 2,000 agricultural co-operative banks have been established in France. Butter factories and distilleries are run co-operatively and there are



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co-operative associations for threshing and for the sale of fruit, wine and oil. France also has, as a result of her co-operative societies, 8,000 mutual insurance societies.

Belgium is noted for its extensive co-operative bakeries and its distributive societies, shared in by thousands of co-operative workingmen.

One of the features of Italy's co-operative methods is the co-operative labor gang whereby bodies of workmen associate together and contract to undertake great projects. Italy has 2,000 co-operative societies.

In 1910 the societies allied with the Norway co-operative organization made a net profit of \$100,000, small when compared with the figures of co-operative profit in some other countries, but showing an increase of nearly a half over the amount of business done the preceding year.

As in Denmark, Sweden's co-operative movement is largely expressed in the agricultural co-operative idea. There are about 700 co-operative retail societies there, however.

Switzerland showed an increase of over a million dollars, or 29 per cent., in its co-operative business in 1910 and this increase is steadily continuing. The Swiss co-operators have a printing society and an inquiry office, schools where teachers and managers are trained and the principles of co-operation taught. The Swiss co-operators also print four newspapers



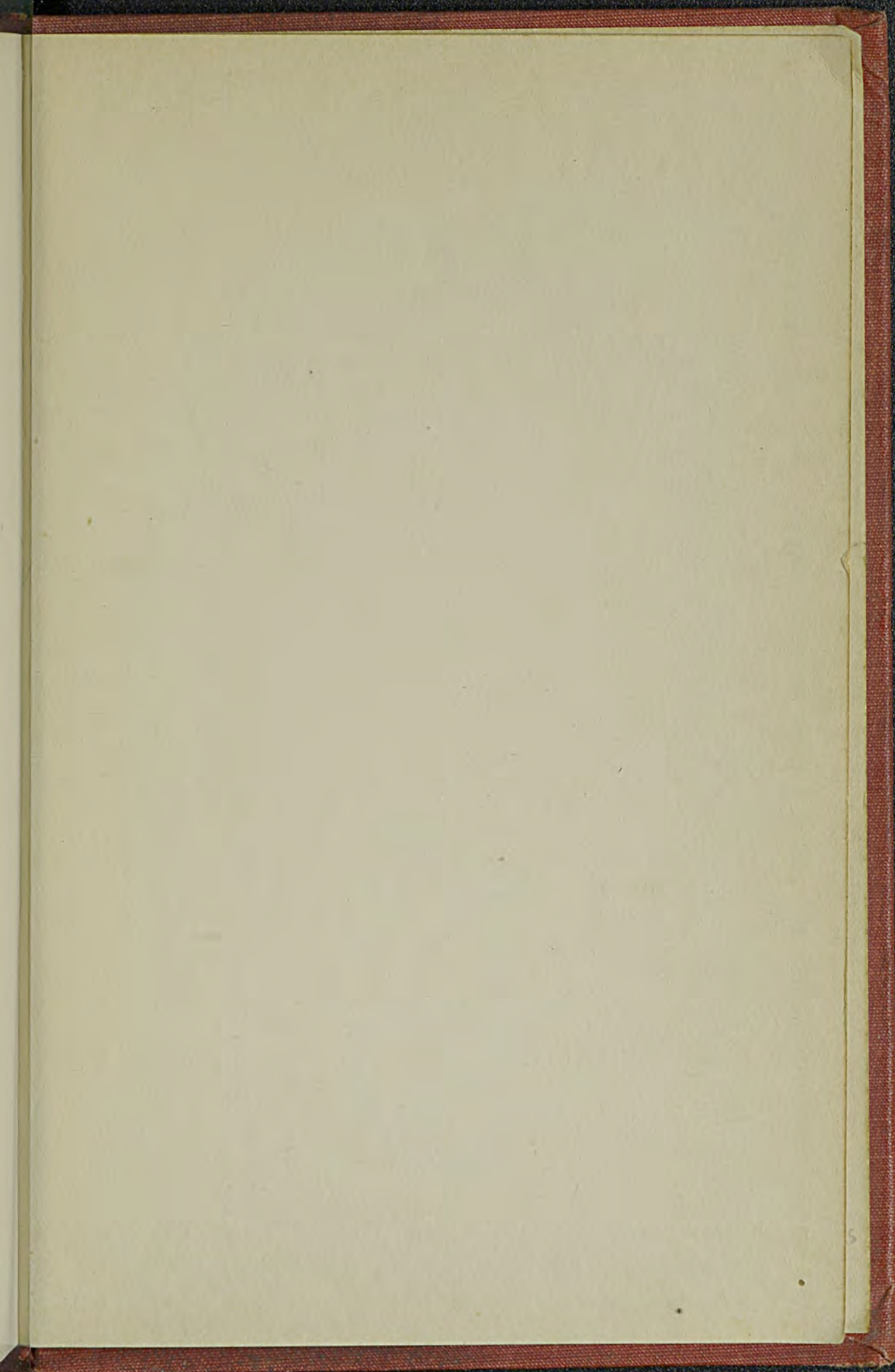
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and are continually visiting among each other and studying co-operative methods.

Japan has 7,000 co-operative societies.

Roumania is imbued with the spirit of co-operation. Credit banks and distributive societies by the hundreds have sprung up there.







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