

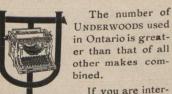


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The Yellow God

(Continued from page 15)

As he vouchsafed no answer to this question, although Sir Robert muttered an uncomplimentary one between his lips which Barbara heard, or read, she continued:

And you are all very rich and successful, are you not, and going to be much richer and much more successful next week. Now, what I want to ask you is—how is it done?"

"Accepting the premises for the sake of argument, Miss Champers," replied Sir Robert, who felt that he could not refuse the challenge, "the answer is that it is done by finance."

"I am still in the dark," she said.

'Finance, as I have heard of it, means floating companies, and companies are floated to earn money for those who invest in them. Now this afternoon, as I was dull, I got hold of a book called the 'Directory of Directors,' and looked up all your names in it, except those of the gentlemen from Paris, and the companies that you directfound about those in another book. Well, I could not make out that any of these companies have ever earned any money, a dividend, don't you call it? Therefore, how do you all grow so rich, and why do people invest in

"My dear Barbara, I wish that you would leave matters which you do not understand alone. We are here to dine, not to talk about finance," said her uncle.

"Certainly, Uncle," she answered reetly. "I stand, or rather sit, resweetly. "I stand, or rather sit, reproved. I suppose that I have put my foot into it, as usual, and the worst of it is," she added, turning to Sir Robert, "that I am just as ignorant I was before." was before.

"If you want to master these matters, Miss Champers," said Aylward, with a rather forced laugh, "you must go into training and worship at the shrine of"—he meant to say Mammon, then thinking that the word sounded unpleasant, substituted—"of the Yellow God, as we do."

"The Yellow God," she repeated.

"The Yellow God," she repeated.
"Do you mean money, or that fetish thing of Major Vernon's with the terrible woman's face that I saw at the office in the city? Well, to change the subject, tell us, Alan, what is that yellow god of yours, and where did it come from?"

"My uncle Austin, who was my mother's brother and a missionary, brought it from West Africa a great many years ago. He was the first to

many years ago. He was the first to visit the tribe who worship it; in fact, I do not think that anyone has ever visited them since. But really, I do not know all the story. Jeeki can tell you about it if you want to know, for he is one of that people, and escaped with my uncle."

Now Jeeki having left the room some of the guests wished to send for him, but Mr. Champers-Haswell objected. The end of it was that a compromise was effected, Alan undertaking to produce his retainer afterwards when they went to play billiards or cards.

Dinner was over at length, and the diners, who had dined well, were gathered in the billiard room to smoke and amuse themselves as they wished. It was a very large room, sixty feet long indeed, with a wide space in the centre between the two tables, which was furnished as a lounge. When the gentlemen entered it they found Barbara standing by the great fireplace in this central space, a little shape of

white and silver in its emptiness.

"Forgive me for intruding on you," she said, "and please do not stop smoking, for I like the smell. I have sat up expressly to hear Jeeki's story

of the Yellow God. Alan, produce Jeeki, or I shall go to bed at once.

Her uncle made a movement as though to interfere, but Sir Robert said something to him which appeared to cause him to change his mind, while the rest in one way or another signified an enthusiastic assent. All of them were anxious to see this Jeeki and hear this tale, if he had one to tell. So Jeeki was sent for and presently arrived clad in the dress clothes which are common to all classes in England. "You sent for me, Major?" he said,

addressing his master, to whom he gave a military salute, for he had been Alan's servant when he was in the

Yes. Jeeki. Miss Barbara here and these gentlemen wish you to tell them all that you know about the Yellow God."

The negro started and rolled his round eyes upwards till the whites of them showed, then began in his school-book English:

"That is private subject, Major, upon which I should prefer not to discourse before this very public com-

pany."
"Jeeki," said Barbara, "don't disappoint us."

"Very well, miss, I fall in with your wishes. The Yellow God that all these

wishes. The Yellow God that all these gentlemen worship, quite another god to that of which you desire that I should tell you. You know all about him. My god is of female sex."

At this statement his audience burst into laughter, while Jeeki rolled his eyes and waited till they had finished. "My god," he went on presently, "I mean, gentlemen, the god I used to pray to, for I am a good Christian pray to, for I am a good Christian now, has so much gold that she does not care for any more," and he paused.
"Then what does she care for?"

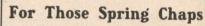
asked someone.

asked someone.

"Blood," answered Jeeki. "She is God of Death. Her name is Little Bonsa or Small Swimming Head; she is wife of Big Bonsa or Great Swimming Head."

"You want to hear Yellow God palaver?" he said rapidly. "Very well, I tell you, you cocksure white men who think you know everything, but know nothing at all. My people, people of the Asiki, that mean people of Spirits, what you call ghosts and say you no believe in, but always look for behind door, they worship Yellow for behind door, they worship Yellow God, Bonsa Big and Bonsa Little, worship both and call them one; only Little Bonsa on trip to this country just now, and sit and think in city office. Yellow God live long way up a great river, then turn to the left and walk six days through big forest, where dwarf people shoot you with poisoned arrow. Then turn to the right, walk up stream where many wild beasts. Then turn to the left again and go in cance through swamp. again and go in canoe through swamp where you die of fever, and across lake. Then walk over grassland and mountains. Then in kloof of the mountains. Then in kloof of the mountains where big black trees make a roof and river fall like thunder, find Asiki and gold house of the Yellow God. All that mountain gold, full of gold, and beneath gold house Yellow God afloat in water. She what you call queen, priestess, live there also, always there, very beautiful woman, with face like Yellow God, cruel, cruel! She take a husband every year, and every year he die because she always hunt for right man, but never find him. Oh! no, she no kill him, he kill himself at end of year. him, he kill himself at end of year, glad to get away from Asiki and go to spirits. While he live he have very to spirits. While he live he have very good time, plenty to eat, plenty wives, fine house, much gold as he likes, only nothing to spend it on, pretty necklace, nice paint for face. But Asiki, little bit by little bit, she eat up his spirit. He see too many ghosts. The house where he sleep with dead men who once have his billet, full of







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