

A King in Babylon

(Continued from preceding page.)

the girl in his arms. "Take her when I lift her up to you—she's not heavy."

As I bent forward and passed my arms under her knees and shoulders, I caught, from within the tomb, the regular chip-chipping of Davis's chisel; and I shivered, for there was something curiously ominous in the sound—as though he were closing a sepulchre instead of opening one. And then the light fell on the girl's face, and I stared down at it in horror.

"She's dead, Creel!" I gasped, for it was ghastly, and across one cheek was an ugly bruise, already turning blue.

"Nonsense!" snapped Creel. "Don't lose your nerve, Billy," and he clambered through. "Mustafa," he called, "you will tell your men that the lady has fainted, but will soon be all right again. Then help Digby bring that stuff over to the tent. Now, give her to me, Billy," and he lifted her from my arms. "You bring your camera. We've got to guard that film—we'll never make another like it—not if we live a thousand years!"

As we mounted the steps, we could hear Mustafa imparting Creel's assurance to his men—that the lady had only fainted. But had she? As I looked down at her, lying so limp and ghastly in Creel's arms, I was shaken again by a great fear.

"Look at that bruise, Creel," I whispered. "Do you suppose that was where Mustafa struck her?"

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Creel, grimly. "It's an ugly bruise, I know—but the film was worth it. I know she'll think so! The bruise will heal in a day or two, but that scene will make her famous! And maybe it wasn't Mustafa at all—maybe she struck it when she fell. Anyway, she hasn't anything to complain of—she buried her teeth in his arm."

"I know," I said. "I saw it. Do you think—it was—just acting?"

"No," said Creel shortly. "It was better than acting. I think she went mad—I think she imagined she was really being buried alive; maybe that's her method—to let herself go."

"She made my flesh creep!" I said. "It was gorgeous," Creel agreed; "and this is the reaction. It was bound to come."

I glanced again at the ghastly face. "If she only comes around all right," I began.

"Of course she'll come around all right," broke in Creel angrily. "A little ammonia, or something of that sort. My wife will know what to do—women are used to this sort of thing."

And indeed Ma Creel took charge of the case in a matter-of-course way which was most reassuring.

"You men run along," she said, after Creel had laid the girl on the bed. "You're only in the way here. But I'm surprised at you, Warrie, letting her work herself into this state."

"Letting her!" echoed Creel. "Why, good lord, Mary, I couldn't have stopped her if I'd wanted to. She was like a wild-cat!"

"It's a shame, just the same! What made that bruise on her cheek?"

"I guess she struck it when she fainted," said Creel.

"Well, all I can say is I'm ashamed of you! Now you and Billy get out of here. Mollie and I will look after her."

Creel and I left the tent like a pair of criminals. Outside we came upon Jimmy, stretched at his ease in a canvas lounging-chair, and smoking a cigarette. To my surprise, he still wore his Oriental costume, though it must have been suffocatingly hot.

"You can get out of those togs, Jimmy," said Creel, shortly. "We're through for to-day. I thought you understood."

"I wanted to be sure," said Jimmy. "It's an infernal nuisance getting into this rig. Mlle. Roland all right?" he asked carelessly.

"She fainted," said Creel. "That final scene was too much for her. You certainly took it coolly enough."

"Oh, yes," said Jimmy; "I've got past the fainting stage."

Creel shot him a curious glance; as for me, I turned away with something very like disgust, for the conviction suddenly flashed upon me that his callousness during the burial scene had not been assumed; that he would have looked on just as calmly if it had been in deadly earnest instead of make-believe.

I went over to the property-tent and sealed up the film in an air-tight case,

and labeled it. The heat made me a little uneasy about all the films. If anything should happen to them—but I didn't dare think of it.

Jimmy came in as I was putting my camera away, and began to strip off his robes, whistling softly under his breath. The sound enraged me, and I was about to tell him so, when Creel called me from outside.

"Billy!"

"Yes," I answered.

"Davis has sent word that he's ready to open the sarcophagus. Don't you want to go over?"

"I surely do!" I said, and hurried out and joined him.

Davis was waiting for us at the entrance to the tomb, his face convulsed with excitement.

"Come along!" he cried; "I've got the lid loose—I wouldn't have waited much longer!"

He led the way along the passage into the inner chamber. Four natives were waiting there, armed with long crowbars, and at a sign from Davis, they set to work prying up the great granite lid. Slowly it rose—an inch—two inches—and I caught a sudden gust of spicy perfume.

"Now, slide it over!" said Davis, hoarsely, and I could judge of his excitement by the way my own heart was hammering in my throat. "Careful! Careful!" And then he was clinging to the edge of the sarcophagus, staring down into it. "I've found it!" he whispered hoarsely. "By heaven, I've found it!"

For an instant I was dazzled by the glow of light and color which burst from within the tomb, under the rays of the torches; then I saw something vaguely like a human form, gilt from top to bottom; and a face staring up at me with wide-open eyes.

"Look at it!" gasped Creel. "Look at it!" And he pointed at the face with a shaking finger.

And my heart turned to ice within me, for the face was the face of Jimmy Allen!

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF the moment that followed I have no distinct recollection. I vaguely remember clinging to Creel, and I could feel his vise-like grip on my arm; and I suppose I must have closed my eyes, for when I opened them and looked again down into that staring face, that startling likeness had vanished. All that lay there was a dark hued countenance, with wide-open eyes of glass gazing placidly up at us. It was like a dissolving view, or a puzzle picture, which changes as one looks at it.

Then I saw that it was not the mummy I was staring at, but the outer case, or coffin, moulded to the lines of the human form inside it; and that it was upon one end of this outer case that the face—a portrait, presumably, of the man whose body lay within—had been carved and then carefully painted.

"Did you see it?" asked Creel, relaxing his grip and wiping the sweat from his face.

I nodded mutely.

"See what?" demanded Davis.

"The first glimpse I had of that face," said Creel, "I'd have sworn it was Jimmy Allen."

Davis squinted down at it.

"It's a portrait of Sekenyen-Re," he said, "if this is really his mummy; and it doesn't look the least like Allen." Then he looked at it again, and I could see by his startled expression that he had caught the likeness. "By George, it does, though!" he said.

"Better not let Jimmy see it," said Creel. "It will only send him off again."

"Better not let Jimmy see what?" demanded a voice, and there was Jimmy behind us. "I heard Creel invite Billy over," he explained to Davis, "and I came too, as soon as I got off my war-paint. I hope you don't mind?"

"Not at all," Davis assured him, and turned back to an inspection of the coffin.

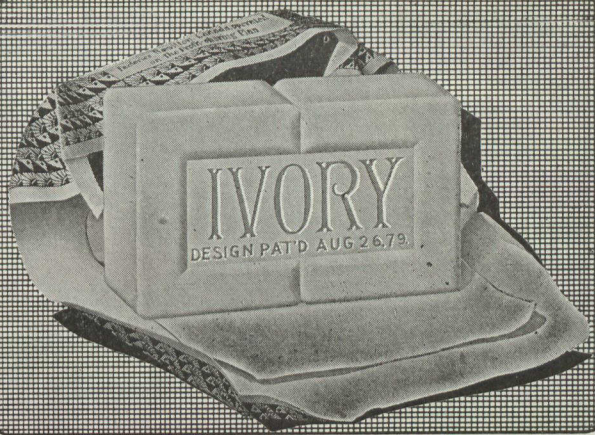
"Now," said Jimmy to Creel, "what was it I wasn't to see?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Creel nervously.

"What was it, Billy?" asked Jimmy, turning to me. "Come, I'm not a child. What was it?"

"When we first saw it," I explained, "we thought that face painted on the coffin looked a little like you. Of course it doesn't really."

"Why shouldn't it look like me?"



The Baby

It is very easy for a baby's skin to become chafed and sore either from the bathing or from garments that have lost their softness in the wash, and it always is a troublesome matter to keep nursing bottles and other utensils sweet and clean.

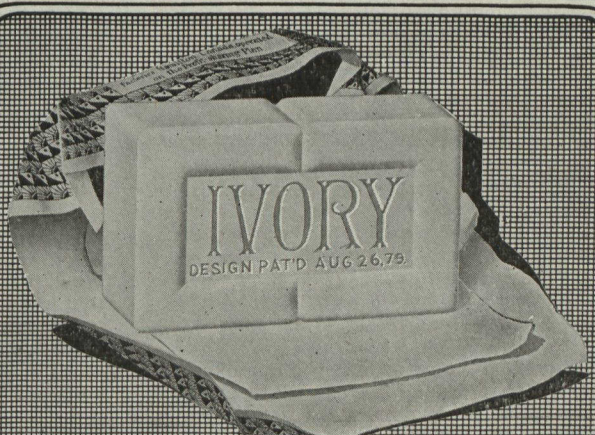
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