

THE MYSTERY OF THE GREEN RAY

By William Le Queux

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

The outbreak of war sends Ronald Ewart, a young London barrister, to the Highlands to say good-bye to his fiancée, Myra McLeod. On the train he meets Hilderman, who calls himself an American and a stranger in those parts, but later Ewart finds that he has built a hut on a cliff above the falls opposite General McLeod's lodge. While fishing in the river Myra is suddenly blinded by a flash of green light. Gen. McLeod tells Ewart of a strange experience at the same place, known as Chemist's Rock. Hilderman is very curious as to the cause of Myra's blindness. The famous London oculist holds out no hope and Ewart, after taking Myra home, brings Dr. Garneek from Glasgow. In the meantime Sholto is also blinded, and chloroformed and stolen. Garneek asserts his belief that Hilderman knew of Sholto's affliction. The next morning the two men find footprints and keel-marks on the beach, and Ewart telegraphs for his friend, Dennis Burnham. At Chemist's Rock, Garneek sees the green flash and Ewart is suffocated. While in the darkness where the two young men are developing snap-shots, Myra discovers that she can see in the red light. Ewart explains the situation to Burnham at the station.

CHAPTER XII.—(Cont'd.)

"I'm very glad you had Mr. Garneek with you," said Dennis at last, with a glance of frank admiration at the young specialist.

"Not so glad as I am," I replied fervently. "What should have done without him heaven only knows. I can't even guess."

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Garneek, in modest protest. "I haven't been able to do anything. Our one advance was a piece of pure luck—the discovery that Miss McLeod could see by the light of a red lamp. We have decided to keep that quite to ourselves, Mr. Burnham."

"Of course," agreed Dennis, so emphatically that I laughed.

"Why so decided, Den?" I asked, for I felt that I should like to climb to the topmost pinnacle of the highest peak in all the world and shout the good news to the four corners of the earth.

"I'm not a scientist, Ron," Dennis replied. "That may account for the heresy of my profound disbelief in science. I wouldn't cross the road to see a 'miracle.' The twentieth century is ungenerous to anything of that sort. Take it from me, there's a man at the back of this—not a nice man, I admit, but an ordinary human being to all outward appearances—and when we catch a glimpse of his outward appearance we shall know what to do."

"Yes, when we do," I sighed.

"You mustn't let Ewart get depressed about things, Mr. Burnham. He's very naturally looks at this business from a different standpoint. With him it is a tragic, mysterious horror, which threatens the well-being, if not the existence, of a life that is dearer to him than his own."

"I'll look after him," said Dennis, with a grim determination which made even Garneek laugh.

"When you two precious people have finished nursing me," I said, "I hope you'll allow me to point out that that very reason gives me a prior claim to take any risks or run into any dangers that may crop up from now on. If there is any trouble brewing, then it is my place to tackle it. I am deeply grateful to you fellows for all you have done and are doing and intend to do, but the nursing comes from the other side. I can't let you run risks in a cause which is more mine in the nature of things than yours."

"I fancy," said Dennis, "that even your eloquent speeches will have very little effect when it comes to real trouble. If danger comes, I'll come suddenly, and we shall be best helping our common cause by looking after ourselves."

"Hear, hear," said Garneek, and I could only mutter my thanks and my gratitude for the possession of two staunch friends.

"To get back to business," I said

CHAPTER XIII.

The Red-Haired Man.

"I'll send the glasses at once," said Garneek, as the train steamed out of the station. Dennis and I stood on the platform and watched him out of sight.

"He seems a good fellow," said Dennis.

"Splendid!" I agreed readily. "He's exceedingly clever and wide-awake and very charming. What we should have done without him heaven only knows. I fancy his visit saved the entire household from a nervous collapse."

"We've no time for collapses, nervous or otherwise," Dennis replied. "We shall want our wits about us, and we shall need all the vitality we can muster. But at the same time I don't think there is any cause for nerves. You're not the sort of man, Ron, to let your nerves get the better of you in an emergency, especially if we can prove that our enemy is a tangible quantity, and not a conglomeration of waves and vibrations."

"Hilderman and his friend appear to be waiting for us," I interrupted.

"You may as well introduce me," said Dennis. "I'd like to meet the man. Who is his friend, do you know?"

"Haven't the remotest idea," I replied. "I have seen him once before, but that is all. I don't know who he is."

"Is he staying with Hilderman, or does he live in the neighborhood?"

"That I couldn't tell you either," I said. "I'm sure he doesn't live anywhere near Invermalloch."

As we strolled out of the station Hilderman and his companion were standing chatting by the gate which leads on to the pier. As we approached, Hilderman turned to me with a smile.

"Ah, Mr. Ewart," he exclaimed, "your friend has left you, then. I hope you won't let his inability to help Miss McLeod depress you unduly. While there's life there's hope."

"I shall not give up hope yet awhile, anyway," I answered heartily.

"May I introduce my friend Mr. Fuller?" he asked presently, and I found myself shaking hands with the round-faced little man, who blinked at me pleasantly through his glasses. I returned the compliment by introducing Dennis.

"On holiday, Mr. Burnham?" asked the American. Dennis was so prompt with his reply that I was convinced he had been thinking it out in the meanwhile.

"Well, I hardly know that I should call it a holiday," he replied immediately. "I have just run up to say good-bye to Ewart before offering my services to my King and country. We had intended to join up together, but he has, as you know, been detained for the time being, so I am off by myself."

"We are very old friends," I explained, "and Burnham very recently decided to come here to see me as I was unable to go south to see him."

"Never mind, Mr. Ewart," said Hilderman. "I guess you'll be able to join him very soon. I wish you luck, Mr. Burnham. I suppose it won't be long before you leave."

"He's talking of returning to-morrow," I cut in. "I wish you'd tell him it's ridiculous, Mr. Hilderman. Fancy coming all this way for twenty-four hours. He must have a look round, to say nothing of his stings in depriving me of his company so soon."

"Well, I can quite understand Mr.

Burnham's anxiety to join at the earliest possible moment," he answered. "But I've no doubt Lord Kitchener wouldn't miss him for a day. I think he might multiply his visit by two, and stop till Wednesday, at any rate. Ah, here's the Fiona!"

I looked out to the mouth of the harbor and saw the steam yacht, which was in the habit of calling at Glasnabinnie, gliding past the light-house rock. I was about to make some comment on the boat when Hilderman forestalled me.

"How are you going back?" he asked.

"In a motor-boat," I replied. "I am afraid Angus is getting weary of waiting already."

"I'm sure Mr. Fuller would be delighted to have you fellows on board. Why not let your man take Mr. Burnham's luggage to Invermalloch, and come to Glasnabinnie on the Fiona? You can lunch with me, and when you tire of our company I will run you across in the Baltimore. Eh? What do you say?"

"I shall be delighted, of course," his companion broke in.

I hesitated for a moment, and glanced at Dennis. His face obviously said, "Accept," so I accepted.

"Thank you," I said; "we shall be very pleased. It will be more jolly than going back by ourselves."

"Good!" cried Hilderman, "and I can show you the view from my smoking-room. I hope it will make you go with envy."

So I gave Angus his instructions, and the four of us waited at the fish-table steps for the dinghy to come ashore from the yacht. She was not a particularly beautiful boat, but she looked comfortable and strong, and her clumsy appearance was accentuated by the fact that her funnel was a commodious deck dining-saloon, on the top of which was a small wheel-house. Myra had been right, as it turned out; she was a converted drifter. The two men who came in to pick up us wore the usual blue guernsey, with S. Y. Fiona worked in an arc of red wool across the chest. They were obviously good servants and useful hands, but there was none of that ridiculous imitation of naval custom and etiquette which delights the heart of the Cotton Exchange yacht owner.

We boarded the Fiona with the feeling that we were going to have a pleasant and comfortable time, and not with the fear that our setting of a leather shoe upon the hallowed decks was in itself an act of sacrilege. We were no sooner aboard than Fuller set himself to play the host with a charm which was exceedingly attentive and neither fussy nor patronizing.

(To be continued.)

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Cross-breeding among fishes must necessarily be limited to those which are not too distantly related. Trout, for instance, belong to the tribe of the Salmonidae. To attempt to cross the striped bass with the shad would be an absurdity, inasmuch as they represent different finny orders.

In Lake Erie there is occasional scarcity of "ripe" male whitefish at the season when the females are ready to spawn. This has led now and then to the use of the milk of the lake herring (another genus of the whitefish tribe) for fertilizing whitefish eggs; and it is said that, as a result, half-breeds are becoming rather plentiful in those waters, distinguishable by the long lower jaw which they inherit from their daddies.

Laboratory Experiments.

It is suggested that the dog salmon (of minor importance commercially) might be crossed with the much-esteemed "sockeye" to combine the flavor of the latter with the greater size of the former. If such an attempt were made the eggs would be hatched artificially and the fry "tagged" after raising them to fingerling length, in order to identify them three or four years later, when they should return from the sea to the rivers, and so get an idea of the results.

Would it be practicable to cross-breed the black bass with the striped bass or with the crappie? Could the same thing be done with the cod and the haddock or with the hake and the pollock? Naturalists reply that such experiments might be successfully carried out in the laboratory, but that they would have to value beyond satisfying scientific curiosity. Furthermore, as an incidental point, fish hybrids sometimes (though not always), prove to be "mules" incapable of producing offspring.

Suggestion has been offered that the oyster might be crossed to advantage with the long clam or with the "quahog," so as to produce a new kind of shellfish that might prove highly popular in restaurants and at clam-bakes. The notion is undeniably attractive, but here again the naturalists step in with a veto, declaring that the blunders concerned are "too far apart" in a zoological sense.

On the other hand, they say that a fish is a very "plastic" organism, easily modified by breeding, as illustrated in the case of the goldfish, which has been developed in form, beautiful and sometimes weird from a commonplace, dull-colored little member of the carp family. Similar "stunts" might be done with other finny species; and certainly it would be practicable to increase the size of some of them greatly.

Improving a Species.

Take the sunfish, for example. The blue sunfish attains a length of twelve inches. By breeding it might be made two or three feet long. Much might be done in the same way with the black bass. All the sunfishes are, like the black bass, nest-builders, and all of them are well adapted for pond culture. The yellow perch, the one white perch could probably be increased four to six times in weight by proper breeding.

There is hardly a farm anywhere that cannot have a fish pond. Damming a little stream will make it. If there is no stream, a fine pond for fish culture can be made by digging out a marsh to a depth of four or five feet, covering the bottom with gravel and sinking planks edgewise for banks. Experts say that a one-acre pond ought to yield 5,000 pounds of fish annually, if properly managed. At ten cents a pound that would mean \$500 a year.

Flame-Throwing Machine Melts Snow.

Very heavy drifts of snow, packed and hard to handle by any method of removal, are now being cleared away much more easily and rapidly by demolishing, instead of moving them. The snow is melted by a stream of flame thrown at it in much the same manner that fire is quenched by a stream of water from a nozzle. The flame thrower also has a nozzle, which is connected to a pair of pipes, one leading to a boiler with steam at 50 to 70-lb. pressure, and the other to a tank of crude oil, which is kept at a temperature of about 90 degrees F. by a coil of pipe connected to the boiler, the whole forming a unit mounted on a small motor truck. Behind the nozzle the steam pipe is spouted into the oil pipe, acting upon the oil in a manner similar to the action of the steam of the water of a boiler injector, thus forcing the oil out of the nozzle in a spray under high pressure. A kerosene torch, or other means, located beside the nozzle, ignites this oil spray, which consequently forms a stream of fire about nine feet long.

Women!

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For the busy woman who cannot spend as much time with flowers as she would like, but who still wants to beautify her home with summer annuals, a border bed along a fence is the most practical. A width of three feet makes a bed that is convenient to work with, and it can be any length, the longer the better. One of the prettiest borders of this kind I have ever seen was over ninety feet long, and contained about every tint of the rainbow.

The taller plants, of course, belong next the fence, making a splendid background for the shorter ones. It is best to start the seed in flats, transplanting later, thus getting the largest and best plants in the most conspicuous places. Much time can be gained in this way by avoiding all danger of frost.

One year I used cosmos for my backing with blue larkspur in front of them, and bush nasturtiums at the edge. These nasturtiums were the large flowering Tom Thumb variety, and stood erect, each individual plant a compact bush in itself. They bloomed abundantly from late spring until frost, the different shades of yellow blending well with the blue of the larkspur. Along a back fence that same year I planted dwarf sunflowers, which furnished feed for the chickens in addition to furnishing entertainment for the entire family. We loved to watch them turn with the sun.

Another quick grower giving splendid results is the old-fashioned zinnia. Seed houses are advertising a conical zinnia which, as the name implies, is cone-shaped, and rather blunted at the top. It grows to be about three feet tall, and comes in all shades of red, yellow, lavender, orange, and pink. A pretty combination with this is white candytuft, a low-spreading plant which, when covered with bloom, resembles a snowdrift.

A taller bed may be had by planting ten-weeks stocks, a flower something on the order of the hollyhock, using the double margold and the Chinese woolflower to fill in.

The summer kosha, sometimes called