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through Jeeki, "I found it on my finger. I cannot understand how it came there, I understand nothing of all this talk."

"Well, well, keep it, Vernon, only give me that other ring of yours in change."

"I cannot," he replied colouring. "I promised to wear it always."

"Whom did you promise?" she asked with a flash of rage. "Was it a woman, Nay I see, it is a man's ring, and that is well, for otherwise I would bring a curse on her, however far off she may be dwelling. Say no more and forgive my anger. A vow is a vow—keep your ring. But there is that one which you used to wear in bygone days? I recall that it had a cross upon it, not this star and figure of an eagle."

Now Alan remembered that his uncle owned such a ring with a cross upon it, and was frightened, for how did this woman know these things?

"Jeeki," he said, "ask the Asika if I am mad, or if she is. How can she know what I used to wear seeing that I was never in this place till yesterday, and certainly I have not met her anywhere else."

"She mean when you your reverend uncle," said Jeeki, wagging his great head, "she think you identical man."

"What troubles you, Vernoon?" the Asika asked softly, then added anything but softly to Jeeki, "Translate, you dog, and be swift."

So Jeeki translated in a great hurry, telling her what Alan had said, and adding on his own account that he, silly white man that he was, could not understand how, as she was quite a young woman, she could have seen him before she was born. If that were so she would be old and ugly now, and not beautiful as she was.

"I never saw you before, and you never saw me, lady, yet you talk as though we had been friends," broke in Alan in his halting Asiki.

"So we were in the spirit, Vernoon. It was she who went before me who loved that white man whose face was as your face is, but her ghost lives on in me and tells me the tale. There have been many Asikas; for thousands of years they have ruled in this land, yet but one spirit belongs to them all; it is the string upon which the beads of their lives are threaded. White man, I, whom you think young, know everything, back to the beginning of the world, back to the time when I was a monkey woman sitting in those cedar trees, and if you wish, I will tell it you."

"I should like to hear it very much indeed," answered Alan, when he had mastered her meaning, "though it is strange that none of the rest of us remember such things. Meanwhile, O Asika, I tell you I desire to return to my own land, taking with me that gift of gold that you have given me. When will it please you to allow me to return?"

"Not yet awhile, I think," she said again. "You are too comely, and I like you," and she smiled at him once more. There was nothing coarse in the smile, indeed it had a certain spiritual quality which thrilled him. "I like you," she went on in her dreamy voice, "I would keep you with me until your spirit is drawn up to my spirit, making it strong and rich as all the spirits that went before have done, those spirits that my mothers loved from the beginning, which dwell in me to-day."

Now Alan grew alarmed, desperate even.

"Queen," he said, "but just now your husband sat here; is it right then that you should talk to me thus?"

"My husband," she answered laughing. "Why, that man is but a slave who plays the part of husband to satisfy an ancient law. Never has he so much as kissed my finger tips; my women, those who waited on you last night, are his wives, not I—or may be, if he will. Soon he will die of love for me, and then, when he is dead, though not before, I may take another husband, any husband that I choose, and I think that no black man shall be my lord, who have other, purer blood in me. Vernoon, five centuries have gone by since an Asika was really wed to a foreign man, who wore a green turban and called himself a 'son of the Prophet,' a man with a hooked nose and flashing eyes, who reviled our Gods until they slew him, even though he was the beloved of their priestess. She who went before me would have married that white man whose face was like your face, but he fled with Little Bonsa, or rather Little Bonsa fled with him. So she passed away unwed, and in her place I came."

"How did you come, if she whom you call your mother was not your mother?" asked Alan.

"What is that to you, white man?" she replied haughtily. "I am here, as my spirit has been here from the first. Oh! I see you think I lie to you, come then, come, and I will show you those who from the beginning have been the husbands of the Asika," and rising from her chair she took him by the hand.

(To be continued.)

A PEER WHO BREAKFASTED WITH FRANKLIN.

VISCOUNT SIDNEY, who has just celebrated his eighty-fourth birthday, says M. A. P., comes of a very long-lived race, for his father, who was one of the few peers of the realm who have been ordained clergymen of the Church of England, was born in 1794 and died at seventy, whilst his grandfather, who was a Speaker of the House of Commons, was eighty-seven when he died. Lord Sidmouth himself has many interesting recollections of famous people of more than three-score years ago. He has the unusual distinction of having been soldier and sailor too, for, after eleven years in the Royal Navy, he became a most enthusiastic volunteer, and held a commission in the South Devon Rifles.

Lord Sidmouth is probably the only person living who saw the members of the ill-fated Franklin Expedition leave the Thames in the spring of 1845. Lord Sidmouth breakfasted with Sir John, and the other guests were Moncton Milnes and Lord Arundel, the father of the present Duke of Norfolk. After breakfast, Franklin took his friends to the map and, pointing out his route for the discovery of a North-West passage, said: "I shall return round Cape Horn in about two years."

A DICKENS MEMORIAL.

THE first statue erected to the memory of Charles Dickens is in Clarence Clark Park, West Philadelphia. It is the work of F. Edwin Elwell, and is really a group, as the novelist is represented seated in a chair with Little Nell beside him. Philadelphia, says the *Argonaut*, records with pride the fact that the first edition of "The Pickwick Papers" in book form was issued in that city in 1836 by Carey and Hart.

Toronto has a Burns statue in the Allan Gardens. Inspector James L. Hughes and the "Fellowship" should see that a Dickens statue is erected in the grounds of the Normal School.

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