

# The Advertiser's Saturday Pages For Moving Picture Patrons—

## John Fleming Wilson

By special arrangement for this paper a photodrama corresponding to the installments of "The Master Key" may now be seen at the Unique Theatre on each Wednesday and Thursday following its publication in The Advertiser. Thus it is not only possible to read "The Master Key," but also afterwards to see the moving pictures illustrating our story.

When breakfast had been dispatched in Faversham's camp the baronet called what he termed a council of war.

"So far we have managed to make good our escape from the fanatics," he said, when Ruth and John had joined him apart from the natives. "Now is the time for us to turn back and seek civilization again."

"But the plans!" ejaculated Dorr. "I am suggesting this for Miss Gallon's sake," Sir Donald said coldly. "Oh, I am good for any amount of this kind of travel!" she exclaimed. "And I am wild to go ahead and find the idol!"

"So far as we really know they—the plans—are in Bhala," Faversham remarked with some brusqueness. "I don't intend that you shall risk your life again in such foolishness."

John Dorr had steadily grown more suspicious of the Englishman's attitude; and he now bitterly resented his assumption of guardianship over Ruth, the more so that he realized that Faversham had already got them out of one bad mess and was undoubtedly right when he proposed to place them in safety. Yet he was so plucked that his first impulse was to insist that Ruth depend on himself, not on Sir Donald. Second thought told him that he would be playing an unworthy part.

"Where shall we take her?" he demanded. "So far it seems to me that she is safer with us," said Faversham.

"But who?" she demanded at last. "We don't know anyone!"

"I do," Faversham put in quickly. "I know some awfully jolly Americans, too, missionaries. Then there's your American consul, you know."

It was settled at last and they returned by easy stages to Bhala, and thence down the river. Sir Donald was as good as his word and with good people of her own race.

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ersham with finality. "She must go back down the river, to some city where there are Americans and decent people to look after her. Bombay would be best of all."

Ruth, who had not liked being made the subject of a conversation that apparently took into account of her own wishes, now protested vigorously.

"I know John will keep looking for those plans and it's all for me that he's doing it," she said. "I'm not in the way and I don't want to be left out of everything."

John Dorr joined Sir Donald in arguing that there was little sense in going on a wild goose chase and that she would be far better off with good people of her own race.

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didn't have to come," she responded promptly. "I understand that you are merely going on idle gossip, anyway. You shan't stir the girl out of my sight, I tell you! Go and find your plans and risk your own life. Miss Gallon stays here."

"And I'm sure there is no place I'd rather leave her," Dorr said gratefully. To the consul he confided briefly that he did still determine to find the idol and get the hidden plans.

"You may be too late," was the quiet response. "A man named Wilkerson and another man and a lady have already gone up country, and I am informed that they are on the same quest."

"All the more reason why I should hasten," Dorr answered. "Every hour may be precious. I must see Sir Donald immediately."

There was a struggle in Ruth's breast too. Yet the memory of her promise to Faversham stilled her. In that long and terrible moment she realized that she was bound to all in her.

Yet she was bound to all in her. She tried to look John bravely in the eyes, and the tears would come in spite of her. She bowed her head, and she could not speak what was in her heart.

John argued with some temper, but Sir Donald was immovable. Action he most evidently had sound common sense on his side Dorr could not afford to lose his temper.

"I suppose you'll help me out by letting me have that old servant of yours?" he said finally.

"Anything," said Faversham cordially. "But I must certainly warn you more than that I shall feel guilty in even letting you go."

John's jaw stiffened. "I guess that would be beyond your power to stop me," he said.

Faversham shook his head. "A word from me to the authorities and you would find yourself not only debarred from such a foolhardy expedition, but you would find yourself under arrest."

John grinned. "I suppose that's a bluff," he said. "But you won't be a baronet's son and not get her killed before now."

John tried to explain that Ruth was a western girl used to looking after herself and that she had insisted on going alone.

The consul's wife sniffed. "But you don't know what you are doing," she said.

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at her. Then the blood rushed into his face. Then the full meaning of her light evasion of his real meaning struck him like a blow between the eyes. His heart was filled with love for her, love that had grown and increased since the hour when he had first seen her at old Tom Gallon's door. He had thought that his devotedness to the idol and his constant attention to the slightest detail that could insure her future happiness, would have published that love to her. He was minded to let her not, to forego all else in order to woo her for himself.

"Ruth!" he began. But some subtle change in her manner froze the words on his lips.

"Well," he went on, controlling himself by a tremendous effort and trying to speak lightly. "I'll be off. Thank heaven you'll be here."

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"They mean business this time," Drake growled, as they did their best to barricade the single door and window. "I believe those hills are full of them."

"And our own bullets aren't up fighting with good grace, either," Wilkerson confessed. "These half whites have no sense."

"It's an odd thing," Drake said with the afternoon had passed without an assault, "that we hear firing but none of it is directed at us."

"That's so," Wilkerson responded thoughtfully. "I wonder who it can be?"

He was soon to know, for after midnight John Dorr and his men were discovered in the darkness of the night and tried for admittance. A few scattering shots told that they had been recognized by the natives.

For the moment Wilkerson did not recognize his old enemy, disguised as he was in native costume, but when he was sure he recognized him he opened the door and admitted John Dorr flung himself inside and jammed the door to just as a second hail of bullets rattled on its surface. Then he stared at "Wilkerson!" he gasped.

"Yes, it's me," was the snarling response. "What are you doing here?"

Drake explained. "We saw this hill and when it was dark enough to conceal our movements we made for it."

"And now you can make for some other place," Wilkerson said, handling his revolver manfully.

John laughed. "I feel myself that the place is too small for both of us. But it's white man against native now. If they get me I'll get you too. Our only hope is to stick together now."

"I'll see you dead first," snarled the other. "Drake spoke up and allowed him."

"While you two are fighting for the benefit of the natives, the hillmen are preparing to assault the hut."

A long look through a crack showed the hillmen closing up about them and Wilkerson gave in with a bad grace.

He was glad of the help, however; when firing grew hotter and they were hard pressed in the hut. The natives proved themselves arrant cowards and it depended on the three white men to defend the place.

This they did with such success that their assailants slowly withdrew, the last shot whizzed through the low roof and Wilkerson's head had time to look at each other by the dim light of a horn lantern.

"So far so good," Wilkerson panted. "Now is the time to end it for good. Answer me, Drake, do you want to clean away from here. Else will be worst off than ever."

Wilkerson angrily refused to make a sortie.

"You'll put us here sooner or later," remarked Drake, who had said nothing, but had kept his end up during the fight. "Let's drive them out and then a rush would be the thing."

Wilkerson cast his eyes about the hut and upon the men he had fired. He saw that he was helpless. Little stomach as he had for a dash into the darkness, his evil soul told him that he might as well chance the chance to forever still John Dorr, and put an end to his pursuit. Many things can happen in the dark.

So they went from the hut, leaving Achmet to defend it and watch the bearers. They had gone some distance before they descried their enemies, crouched in a hollow. Drake took the lead. "Now with a rush, boys!" he whispered, lifted his voice in a wild yell and started forward.

The hillmen scrambled to their feet, took one terrified glance at the three men leaping down upon them and fled. The immediate danger was past.

The three white men, Wilkerson, Drake and Dorr faced each other, but both were so weary that in silence they consented to a truce. Yet Wilkerson could not forbear to taunt his rival.

"It looks as if you were always a little late," he said, handing his rifle to Drake and throwing himself back against the wall, while John dropped on the single stool by the table.

"I heard you got the idol," John said in a low voice. "Yes, and what was in the idol, too?"

John nodded and Wilkerson, despite Drake's gesture of discomfiture, saw that his eyes half closed.

"I got the deeds, and the master key, and the idol and the plans Tom Gallon tried to murder me for. I guess I'm the only one to save them."

Again John nodded, his fatigue so great that he could not rouse himself even to reply.

Wilkerson watched him a moment and then said, in an altered tone, "Well, that's all right. We'll catch a needed sleep and get away before daylight. Time enough then to talk."

But in spite of this both men kept their eyes open until Wilkerson laughed and then got up and went to the back of the hut. "I'm going to sleep. You'd better sleep, too. Drake will watch."

John felt that his strength was at bay, and it didn't seem that anything much mattered now, except rest. Ruth was safe. Wilkerson could not resist very well. He dropped his weary head on his arms and instantly lost consciousness.

To test the soundness of his slumber Wilkerson waited a few moments and then got up and went to the back of the hut. "I'm going to sleep. You'd better sleep, too. Drake will watch."

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and he seemed again to feel the soft threads of the web she wove about him. She had found him a young man at the precise point where a woman may either make or mar one for life. He had been an easy prey for her tigerish desire for a slave. He had CAL POLY-MASTER KEY

spent his little money lavishly upon her, without thought of other reward than to be near her until Wilkerson had appeared out of the darkness of her past. Even then, he had still been faithful to her, obeyed her every behest, risked life and liberty in her service, even added Wilkerson in an endeavor whose success meant that he, Drake, would be cast aside as no longer useful.