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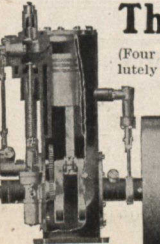
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The Yellow God

(Continued from page 15)

English face—as it might appear on such a background. Suddenly there, on the identical spot, he did see a face, though one of a very different character. It was round and small and hideous, resembling in its general outline that of a bloated child.

"Look there," he whispered to Jeeki in English; and Jeeki looked, then without saying a word lifted the shotgun that lay at his feet and fired straight into the bush. Instantly there rose a squeaking noise, such as might be made by a wounded animal, and the four porters sprang up in alarm.

"Sit down," said Jeeki to them in their own tongue, "a leopard was stalking us and I fired to frighten it away. Don't go near the place as it may be wounded and angry, but drag up some boughs and make a fence round the fire, for fear of others."

"Jeeki," said Alan presently as they laboured at the fence, "that was not a leopard, it was a man."

"No, no, Major, not man, little dwarf devil, him that have poisoned arrow. I shoot at once to make him sit up. Think he no come back to-night, too much afraid of shot fetish. But to-morrow, can't say. Not tell those fellows anything," and he nodded towards the porters, "or perhaps they bolt."

"I think you would have done better to leave the dwarf alone," said Alan, "and they might have left us alone. Now they will have a blood feud against us."

"Not agree, Major, only chance for us put him in blue funk. If I not shoot, presently he shoot," and he made a sound that resembled the whistling of an arrow, then added, "Now you go sleep. I not tired, I watch, my eyes see in dark better than yours. Only two more days of this damn forest, then open land with tree here and there, where dwarf no come because he afraid of lion and cannibal man who like eat him."

As there was nothing else to be done Alan took Jeeki's advice and in time fell fast asleep, nor did he wake up again until the faint light which for want of a better name they call dawn, was filtering down to them through the canopy of boughs.

"Been to look," said Jeeki, as he handed him his coffee. "Hit that dwarf man, see his blood, but think others carry him away. Jeeki very good shot; stone, spear, arrow or gun all same to him. Now get off as quick as we can before porters smell rat. You eat chop, Major, I pack."

Presently they started on their trudge through those endless trees, with Fear for a companion. Even the porters who had been told nothing, seemed more afraid than usual, though whether this was because they what Jeeki called "smell rat," or owing to the progressive breakdown of their nervous systems, Alan did not know. About mid-day they stopped to eat because the men were too tired to walk further without rest. For an hour or more they had been looking for a comparatively open place, but as it chanced could find none, so were obliged to halt in dense forest. Just as they had finished their meal and were preparing to proceed, that which they had feared happened since from somewhere behind the tree boles came a volley of reed arrows. One struck a porter in the neck, one fixed itself in Alan's helmet without touching him and no less than three hit Jeeki on the back and stuck there, providentially enough in the substance of the cork mattress that he still carried on his shoulders which the feeble shafts had not the strength to pierce.

Everybody sprang up and with a curious fascination instead of attempting to do anything, watched the por-

ter who had been hit in the neck somewhere in the region of the jugular vein. The poor man rose to his feet. Then he turned towards them, said something in a composed voice, and fell upon his face stone dead! The swift poison had reached his heart and done its work.

His three companions looked at him for a moment, and the next, with a yell of terror, rushed off into the forest, hurling down their loads as they ran. What became of them Alan never learned, for he saw them no more and the dwarf people keep their secrets.

One of their hideous little assailants, made bold by success, ventured to run across an open space between two trees, showing himself for a moment. Alan had a gun in his hand, and mad with rage at what had happened, he raised it and swung on him as he would upon a rabbit. He was a quick and practised shot, and his skill did not fail him now, for just as the dwarf was vanishing behind a tree, the bullet caught him and next instant he was seen rolling over and over upon its further side.

"That very nice," said Jeeki reflectively, "very nice indeed, but I think we best move out of this."

"Aren't you hurt?" gasped Alan. "Your back is full of arrows."

"Don't feel nothing, Major," he answered, "best cork mattress, 25s. 3d. at Stores, very good for poisoned arrow, but leave him behind now, because perhaps points work through as I run; one scratch do trick," and as he spoke Jeeki untied a string or several strings, letting the little mattress fall to the ground.

"Great pity leave all those goods," said Jeeki, surveying the loads that the porters had cast away, "but what says Book? 'Life more than raiment.' Also, 'take no thought for to-morrow.' Dwarf people do that for us. Come, Major, make tracks."

So Alan "cut" and the huge Jeeki blundered along after him, the paraphernalia with which he was hung about rattling like the hoofs of a galloping giraffe. When the light came on the following morning, however, they perceived by many signs and tokens that the dwarf people were all about them. Some arrows were shot even, but these fell short.

They got on as best they could, till towards midday the forest began to thin out. Now as the light grew stronger they could see the dwarfs, of whom there appeared to be several hundreds, keeping a parallel course to their own on either side of them at what they thought to be a safe distance.

"Try one shot, I think," said Jeeki, kneeling down and letting fly at a clump of the little men, which scattered like a covey of partridges, leaving one of its number kicking on the ground. "Ah! my boy," shouted Jeeki in derision, "how you like bullet in tummy? You not know Paradox guaranteed flat trajectory 250 yard. You remember that next time, sonny?" Then off they went again up a long rise.

"River other side of that rise," said Jeeki. "Think those tree monkeys no follow us there."

But the "monkeys" appeared to be angry and determined. They would not come any more within the range of the Paradox, but they still marched on either side of the two fugitives. "No, no, if say die, can't change mind to-morrow morning," gasped Jeeki in a hoarse voice. "Here top rise, much nearer than I thought. Oh, my aunt! who those?" and he pointed to several hundreds of big men armed with spears who were marching up the farther side of the hill from the river that ran below.

At the same time these savages, who were not more than two hundred yards away, caught sight of them, and

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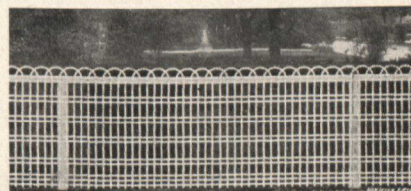
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