



THE YELLOW GOD

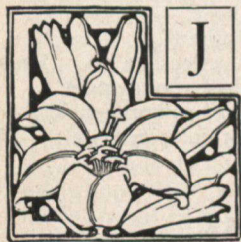
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"KING SOLOMON'S MINES",
"THE WITCH'S HEAD", ETC.

Resume: Major Alan Vernon withdraws from partnership with Sir Robert Aylward and Mr. Changers-Haswell, promoters of Sahara, Limited, because the editor of "The Judge" has informed him of the company's dishonorable methods. Vernon refuses to sell to Sir Robert a curious idol which has been a feature of the office for over a year, and which seems to have a talismanic quality. Vernon spends the week-end at "The Court," Mr. Changers-Haswell's home, and while there Jeeki, the negro servant, tells the story of the idol, the "Yellow God," which was brought from Africa. Miss Barbara Changers, the niece of the host, is the object of Sir Robert Aylward's and also Major Vernon's devotion. Alan finally wins Barbara's promise to become his wife but their engagement is to be kept secret. Sir Robert becomes Alan's bitter enemy on learning of the betrothal. Alan and Jeeki set out for Africa in search of treasure from the worshippers of the Yellow God, "Little Bonsa." In their African adventures, Major Vernon and Jeeki are attacked by dwarfs, armed with poisoned arrows, who are driven off by a cannibal tribe, the Ogula, who take Alan and Jeeki prisoners but treat them kindly on account of the Yellow God.

CHAPTER X.

THE DAWN.



JEKI looked up and down the river, and saw that in the centre of it, about half a mile away, there was an island, on which grew some trees.

"Little Bonsa will camp yonder," he said. "Go, make her house ready, light fire and bring canoe to paddle us across. Now leave us, all of you, for if you look

too long upon the face of The Yellow God, she will ask a sacrifice, and it is not lawful that you should see where she hides herself away.

At this saying the cannibals departed like one man and at top speed, some to their canoes, and others to warn their fellows who were engaged in the congenial work of hunting and killing the dwarfs, not to dare to approach the white man and his companion. A third party ran to the bank of the river that was opposite to the island, to make ready as they had been bidden, so that presently Alan and Jeeki were left quite alone.

"Ah!" said Jeeki, with a gasp of satisfaction, "that all right, everything arranged quite comfortable. Thought Little Bonsa come out top somehow and score off dirty dwarf monkeys. They never get home to tea any way; stay and dine with Ogula."

"Stop chattering, Jeeki, and untie this infernal mask, I am almost choked," broke in Alan in a hollow voice.

"Not say 'infernal mask,' Major say 'face of angel.' Little Bonsa woman, and like it better also true, if on this occasion only, for she save our skins," said Jeeki as he unknotted the throngs and reverently replaced the fetish in its tin box. "My!" he added, contemplating his master's perspiring countenance, "you blush like garden carrot; well, gold hot wear in afternoon sun beneath Tropic of Cancer. Now we walk on quietly and I tell you all I arrange for night's lodging and future progress of joint expedition."

So gathering together what remained of their few possessions, they started leisurely down the

slope towards the island, and as they went Jeeki explained all that had happened, since Ogula was not one of the African languages with which Alan was acquainted, and he had only been able to understand a word here and there.

"Look," said Jeeki when he had finished and turning, he pointed to the cannibals, who were driving the few survivors of the dwarfs before them to the spot where their canoes were beached. "Those dwarfs done for, capital business, forest road quite safe to travel home by; Ogula best friends in world; very remarkable escape from delicate situation."

"Very remarkable indeed," said Alan, "I shall soon begin to believe in the luck of Little Bonsa."

"Yes, Major, you see she is anxious to get home and make path clear. But," he added gloomily, "how she behave when she reach there, can't say."

"Nor can I, Jeeki but, meanwhile I hope she will provide us with some dinner, for my meat is lost."

"Food," repeated Jeeki. "Yes, necessity for human stomach, which unhappily built that way, so Ogula find out, and so dwarfs find out presently." Then he looked about him, and in a kind of aimless manner lifted his gun and fired. "There we are," he said, "Little Bonsa understand bodily needs," and he pointed to fat buck of the sort that in South Africa is called Duiker, which his keen eyes had discovered in its form against a stone, where it now lay shot through the head and dying. "No further trouble on that score of grub for next three days," he added. "Come on to camp, Major. I send one savage skin and bring that buck."

So on they went to the river bank, Alan so tired, now that the excitement was over, that he was not sorry to lean upon Jeeki's arm. Reaching the stream, they drank deep of its water, and finding that it was shallow at this spot, waded through it to the island without waiting for a canoe to ferry them over. Here they found a party of the cannibals already at work, clearing reeds with their large, curved knives, in order to make a site for the hut. Another party, under the command of the chief himself, had gone to the top end of the island, a hundred yards or so away, to cut the stems of a willow-like shrub to serve as uprights. These people stared at Alan, which was not strange, as they had never before seen the face of a white man, and were wondering, doubtless, what had become of the ancient and terrible fetish that he had worn. Without entering into explanation Jeeki in a great voice ordered two of them to fetch the buck which the white man, whom he described as "husband of the goddess," had "slain by thunder." When these had departed upon their errand, leaving Jeeki to superintend the building operations, Alan sat upon a fallen tree, watching one of the savages making fire with a pointed stick and some tinder.

Just then from the head of the island where the willows were being cut, rose the sound of loud roarings and of men crying out in affright. Seizing his gun Alan ran towards the spot whence the noise came. Forcing his way through a brake of reeds, he saw a curious sight. The Ogula in cutting the willows which grew about some tumbled rocks, had disturbed a lioness that had her lair there, and being fearless savages, had tried to kill her with their spears. The brute rendered desperate by wounds and the impossibility of escape, for here the surrounding water was deep, had charged them boldly, and as it chanced, felled to the ground their chief, that yellow-toothed man to whom Jeeki gave his orders. Now she was standing over him looking round her royally, her great paw upon his breast which it seemed almost to cover, while the Ogula ran round and round shouting, for they feared that if they tried to attack her she would kill the chief.

This indeed she seemed about to do, for just as Alan arrived she dropped her head as though to tear out the man's throat. Instantly he fired. It was a snap shot, but, as it chanced, a good one, for the bullet struck the lioness in the back of the neck forward of and between the shoulders, severing the spine, so that without a sound or any further movement she sank stone dead upon the prostrate cannibal. For a while his followers stood astonished. They might have heard of guns from the coast people, but living as they did in the interior where white folk did not dare to travel, they had never seen their terrible effects.

"Magic," they cried, "Magic."

"Of course," exclaimed Jeeki, who by now had arrived upon the scene. "What else did you expect from the lord of Little Bonsa? Magic, the greatest of magic. Go, roll that beast away before your chief is crushed to death."

They obeyed and the man sat up, a fearful spectacle, for he was smothered with the blood of the lion and somewhat cut by her claws, though otherwise unhurt. Then feeling that the life was still whole in him, he crept on his hands and knees to where Alan stood and kissed his feet.

"Aha!" said Jeeki, "Little Bonsa score again. Cannibal tribe our slave henceforth for evermore. Yes, till kingdom come. Come on, Major, and cook supper in perfect peace."

The supper was cooked and eaten with gratitude, for seldom had two men needed a square meal more, and never did venison taste better. By the time that it was finished darkness had fallen, and before they turned into sleep in the neat reed hut that the Ogula had built, Alan and Jeeki walked up the island to see if the lioness had been skinned as they directed. This they found was done! even the carcass itself had been removed to serve as meat for these foul-feeding people. They climbed on to the pile of rocks in which the beast had made her lair and looked down the river to where two hundred yards away, the Ogula were encamped. From this camp there rose a sound of revelry, and by the light of the great fires that burned there, they perceived that the hungry savages were busy feasting, for some of them sat in circles, whilst others, their naked forms looking at that distance like those of imps in the infernal regions, flitted to and fro against the glowing background of the fires, bearing strange looking joints on prongs of wood.

"I suppose they are eating the lioness," said Alan doubtfully.

"No, no, Major, not lioness; eat dwarf by dozen, just like oysters at seaside. But for Little Bonsa we sit on those forks now and look uncommon small."

"Beasts!" said Alan in disgust, "they make me feel uncommon sick. Let us go to bed. I suppose they won't murder us in our sleep, will they?"

"Not they, Major, too much afraid. Also we their blood brothers now, because we bring them good dinner and save chief from lion's fury. No blame them too much, Major, good fellows really with gentle heart, but grub like that from generation to generation. Every mother's son of them have many men inside, that why they so big and strong. Ogula people cover great multitude—like Charity in Book. No doubt sent by Providence to keep down extra population. Not right to think too hard of poor fellows who, as I say, very kind and gentle at heart and most loving family relation, except to old women whom they eat also, so that they no get bored with too long life."

Weary and disgusted by this abominable sight though he was, Alan burst out laughing at his re-

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