

The Sleeper—A Dream of Possibilities

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(With Apologies to H. G. Wells.)

THE Archdeacon was weary, tired in body and mind. He had spent three very arduous months canvassing for the new cathedral, and now he would rest. Here at a quiet little summer resort, he would put aside all worries and thoughts of duties and simply rest. But to-day it was so hot—the sun poured its burning rays over the country and man and beast sought relief in every shaded spot.

The Archdeacon had tried to read. He had restlessly moved from seat to seat on the great verandah, but could not find coolness. He looked down at the distant water, perhaps a stroll along the beach might bring relief; at least he could try. He walked slowly down the broad walk and then along the sandy beach. It seemed to get hotter and hotter. A haze rested over the country side and looking about him the Archdeacon saw no living creature moving; the July heat had driven all to seek shelter. Wiping his face and fanning himself with his handkerchief, he turned to retrace his steps to the hotel, when he noticed for the first time, a small grove of trees, a wild spot overgrown with tangled black-berry bushes. He walked over and forced his way through the undergrowth to the shade of the trees—the next moment he stood at the mouth of a small cave. As he felt the sudden coolness, he entered and seating himself on a large rock leaned back with a sigh of relief—this was excellent—why he had found just the place, quiet, cool, nothing to disturb him, he would often come here and read. He closed his eyes, the sudden coolness, the sense of rest and peacefulness, the soft wash of the distant water soothed him greatly. He sat in utter relaxation. How quiet it was! Presently he fell asleep.

When the Archdeacon awakened it was dark in the cave. He sat a few moments wondering where he was. Suddenly he remembered! Well, well! He must have slept all afternoon and now it was night. He struck a match and looked at his watch; it had stopped. Strange, he must have forgotten to wind it. He felt his way to the entrance of the cave, but to his astonishment found it entirely blocked with a tangle of vines and bushes. Puzzled to account for such a rapid growth in a few hours, he tore away roots and labored until he was able to make an opening and then he crawled out into the bright sunshine of a summer's day.

It was not nearly so hot, the weather must have changed greatly the few hours he had slept. He turned to look at the cave and stood with mouth open, he was positive there had only been two or three trees in the afternoon, but, good gracious! Here was a small forest! Most amazing! He walked along the beach but his astonishment increased as he could not find the hotel. Instead, on the hilltop where the hotel had stood, was the strangest lot of buildings he had ever seen. He certainly must still be asleep and dreaming.

As he stood wondering and amazed, puzzled as to whether he was awake or dreaming, he heard a loud hullo and turning saw a young man approaching—but—gracious goodness! what a peculiar dress, short knee breeches, a sleeveless tunic, sandals—and long curls. There must be a moving picture party in the neighbourhood. However, he would ask the way to the hotel. The young man drew near then stopped and smiling said:—

"Pardon my asking you, sir, but where did you manage to get that costume?"

"Eh, what," said the startled Archdeacon, "peculiar dress, young man, what do you mean by asking me such a question?"

"It is one of the best specimens of ancient costumes I have seen and as I am a student in such matters, I am able to speak, but pardon me, I must introduce myself, I am Dr. Oman Klee. It is my interest in such matters made me speak to you, but frankly, except in the Government

Museum at Laketon, I have never seen such a fine costume of the Ancient Period."

The Archdeacon began to get angry. "Ancient period; strange costume; Dr. Klee." He would soon let this young reprobate know, that he was not to be jested with. It must be the gaiters, he had not meant to wear them on his holiday, but so many of the younger clergy were becoming so radical in matters of clerical dress, he had felt it necessary to always wear his archidiaconal dress. He turned angrily to the young stranger, saying:—

"Sir, this jesting is unseemly. I am a priest of the Anglican Church, from Toronto, and am not in the custom of being made a mockery of by impudent young rascals."

"Sir!" The stranger's face had turned red. "I had no intention of seeming impertinent and I am not jesting."

By this time a number of men and women had gathered about the two and the Archdeacon rubbed his eyes then pinched himself. He must be dreaming. Everyone was dressed as the young man, at least the men were, the women, he noticed, wore sandals and loose, flowing robes, something like the Old Greeks had worn. He turned to the crowd. "Will someone be good enough to direct me to the Lakeview Hotel?"

The crowd about him began to whisper to one another and presently some one spoke out. "We never heard of such a place."

"Never heard of such a place! Merciful goodness, this was carrying a joke too far. He would not stop here longer to be made the object of stupid jesting by a party of escaped lunatics or moving picture people. He started to walk away, and the crowd, which was increasing in size every minute, fell in behind and followed him.

The Archdeacon stopped. This was ridiculous! He, a respectable clergyman to be made the object of so much public attention. It must be the gaiters. The people had never acted like this before. Besides he was puzzled. Where on earth was the hotel, and why was there not at least one sane, decently dressed person in sight? There must be hundreds of people gathering and all dressed in the same peculiar manner, and then—the buildings—he had never seen such a strange thing. He must be dreaming; or, had he died and was this the next world? No, it was the heat, and he was dreaming!

The young stranger again approached him and bowing said:—

"Believe me, Sir, I am not meaning to be rude. You seem to be lost. If I can be of any assistance I will gladly help you."

The Archdeacon looked at him. He had a nice face and did not act as if making a jest of him, besides, what could he do? The hotel seemed to have disappeared from the face of the earth. The Archdeacon spoke to him:—

"I thank you. I am, as I said, a priest from Toronto, stopping at the Lakeview Hotel. I went to sleep this afternoon in a small cave on the shore, and now I cannot find my way back to the hotel. It was foolish of me to lose my way, but these July days have been so hot and the heat is always trying to me."

"July days," said the stranger, "but this is only June."

"Only June!" The Archdeacon was too surprised to say more for a moment; then continued: "Young man, do you mean to tell me this is not the fifteenth day of July, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty?"

There was a sudden murmur from the crowd and the stranger answered:—

"I do not understand you. This is the twenty-first of June, Three thousand nine hundred and fifty-three (3953)." He drew a small book from his pocket and opening it showed the Archdeacon the date printed within.

The poor Archdeacon stood speechless, he looked at the stranger, the crowd about him, the

buildings near and then everything grew black as he fell forward and was caught in the arms of the young man.

When the Archdeacon recovered consciousness, he was lying on a low couch in a large, bright room that seemed to be all windows. "Alright now my friend," he heard a voice saying, and sitting up found the stranger and several others standing by his cot. He was in a long room filled with great windows, a few simple pieces of furniture were scattered about and everything seemed to be made of some bright metal. "Where am I?" he asked.

"You fainted and I had you brought to my home," Dr. Klee answered him. "As soon as you are feeling better I will take you to the Bishop as you say you are a priest; he may be able to help you straighten things out."

The Archdeacon stood to his feet. "Please do, I am quite alright now, and would like to see the Bishop at once." He paused then spoke again. "From what you tell me I must have slept two thousand years. Why it's madness! I must be insane."

The doctor smiled. "Insanity has been unknown for centuries, my friend, our medical science has forever banished it." He drew a small, silver tube from his pocket and walking to a window placed it to his mouth and began to talk.

In a few minutes he returned to the Archdeacon's side: "The Bishop is at home and will see you now," he said.

The Archdeacon stared at him. "How did you get in touch with him, may I ask. What is that tube you used?"

"Oh! that's a aerophone, something like the telephone of the ancients, except that we do not need the clumsy poles and wires they used, and can talk from any place or at any time." He touched a bell near him and the next moment a long, boatlike car appeared to drop from the heavens and remain stationary outside one of the windows.

"Come," said the doctor, as he took the Archdeacon by the arm, "I will take you to the Bishop."

As soon as they were seated the airship rose and sailed over the city. Excited and dazed as the Archdeacon was, he could not but notice the scene beneath him. A great city, whose houses all seemed to be surrounded with lawns and gardens. No crowded districts appeared and every house stood by itself. He could see no roads, no cars or vehicles of any kind moved. There appeared to be only broad walks bordered by flower beds. The heavens were filled, however, with airships great and small. Before he could question his guide, the ship dropped, and he found himself stepping out on a broad platform and entering a room similar to the one he had just left. An old man was sitting writing at a small table. As the two men entered he rose and the doctor leading the Archdeacon forward said: "Bishop, this is the stranger of whom I spoke."

The Archdeacon gazed at the Bishop with open mouth. This man a bishop, wearing white knee breeches, a sleeveless tunic, sandals and a short cape. Except for a small silver cross worn on a white ribbon about his neck he was dressed as others of this strange people the Archdeacon had seen. Why this man, instead of a Bishop, appeared rather to be a character from the seventeenth century.

The old man held out his hand and then bade his visitors be seated, but as they took their seats the Archdeacon saw that the Bishop was keenly eyeing his archidiaconal dress.

"My friend the doctor tells me a strange story," he said. "Were it not for the costume you have, we might well have thought you were having a little fun at his expense. Will you please tell me who you are and where you come from?"

The Archdeacon answered: "My Lord, I am a priest from Toronto." He then told the story of what had happened to him.

A young man present in the rooms rubbed his hands together. "Toronto, Bishop. Was not that the name of a small city of the Ancients standing where Laketon now is?"

The Archdeacon sprang to his feet. "What do you mean. Where Toronto was. Is it not still there; is the wild story of this gentleman true?" He pointed to the doctor.

(To be continued.)