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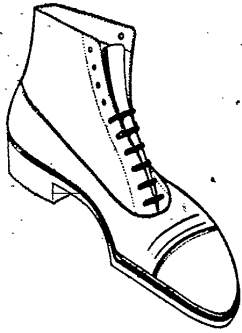
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The Eternal Lover

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

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CHAPTER VI. The Ancient Trail.

IN the bushes was a little pool of dried blood, and where the earth near the roots was free from sod there were several impressions of a bare foot.

"He must have been wounded," explained Brown, "by Curtiss' shot. I doubt if the lion touched him. The beast must have died instantly the spear entered its heart. But where can he have disappeared to?"

Victoria Custer was examining the grass a little distance beyond the bushes. She saw what the others failed to see—a drop of blood now and then leading away in the direction of the mountains to the south.

At the sight of it a great compassion welled in her heart for the lonely, wounded man who had saved her life and then staggered, bleeding, toward the savage wilderness from which he had come. It seemed to her that somewhere out there he was calling to her now and that she must go.

She did not call the attention of the others to her discovery, and presently they all returned to the veranda, where Barney again took up the discussion of their plans for the morrow's departure. The girl interposed no objections. Barney was delighted to see that she was apparently so anxious to return home as he was to have her; he had feared a fat refusal.

Barney had wanted to get a buffalo bull before he left, and when one of the Waziri warriors brought word that morning that there was a splendid herd a few miles north of the ranch Victoria urged him to accompany the other men upon the hunt.

"I'll attend to the balance of the packing," she said. "There's not the slightest reason in the world why you shouldn't go."

And so he went, and Victoria busied

herself in the gathering together of the odds and ends of their personal belongings.

All morning the household was alive with its numerous duties, but after luncheon, while the heat of the day was greatest, the bungalow might have been entirely deserted for any sign of life that there was about it. Lady Greystoke was taking her siesta, as were practically all of the servants.

Victoria Custer had paused in her work to gaze out of her window toward the distant hills far to the south. At her side, nosing his muzzle into her palm, stood one of Lord Greystoke's great wolf hounds, Terkoz. He had taken a great fancy to Victoria Custer from the first and whenever permitted to do so remained close beside her.

The girl's heart filled with a great longing as she looked wistfully out toward the hills that she had so feared before. She feared them still, yet something there called to her.

She tried to fight against the mad desire with every ounce of her reason, but she was fighting against an unreasoning instinct that was far stronger than any argument she could bring to bear against it.

Presently the hound's cold muzzle brought forth an idea in her mind, and with it she cast aside the last semblance of attempted restraint upon her mad desire. Seizing her rifle and ammunition belt, she moved noiselessly into the veranda.

There she found a number of leashes hanging from a peg. One of these she snapped to the hound's collar. Unseen she crossed the garden to the little patch of bushes where the dried blood was. Here she gathered up some of the brown stained earth and held it close to Terkoz's nose; then she put her finger to the ground where the trail of blood led toward the south.

"Here, Terkoz!" she whispered.

The beast gave a low growl as the scent of the new blood filled his nostrils and, with nose close to the ground, started off, tugging upon the leash, in the direction of the mountains upon the opposite side of the plain.

Beside him walked the girl. Across her shoulder was slung a modern big game rifle, and in her left hand swung the stone tipped spear of the savage mate she sought.

What motive prompted her act she did not even pause to consider. The results she gave not the slightest thought. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that she should be seeking this lonely, wounded man. Her place was at his side. He needed her—that was enough for her to know.

She was no longer the pampered, petted child of an effete civilization. That any metamorphosis had taken place within her she did not dream, nor is it certain that any change had occurred, for who may say that it is such a far step from one incarnation to another, however many countless years of man measured time may have intervened?

Darkness had fallen upon the plain and the jungle and the mountain, and still Terkoz forged ahead, nose to the ground, and beside him moved the slender figure of the graceful girl.

Saw the roar of a distant lion came faintly to her ears, answered, quite close, by the moaning of another—a sound that is infinitely more word and terrifying than the deeper throated challenge. The cough of the leopard and the uncanny laughter of hyenas added their evidence that the night prowling carnivora were abroad.

The hair along the wolf hound's spine stiffened in a little ridge of bristling rage. The air misting her rifle, shifting the leash to the hand that carried the heavy spear of the trozodyte, but she was unafraid.

Suddenly, just before her, a little and of antelope sprung from the grass in startled terror, there was a hideous roar and a great body hurtled through the air to alight upon the rump of the hindmost of the herd.

A single scream of pain and terror from the stricken animal, a succession of low growls and the sound of huge jaws crunching through flesh and bone, and then silence.

The girl made a slight detour to avoid the beast and its kill, passing a few yards above them. In the moonlight the lion saw her and the hound.

Standing across his fallen prey, his flaming eyes glaring at the intruders, he rumbled his deep warning to them, but Victoria, dragging the growling Terkoz after her, passed on, and the King of beasts turned to his feast.

It was fifteen minutes before Terkoz could relocate the trail, and then the two took up their lonely way once more.

Into the foothills past the tortured strata of an ancient age it wound. At sight of the naked rock the girl shuddered, yet on and up she went until Terkoz halted, bristling and growling, before the inky entrance to a gloomy cave.

Holding the beast back, Victoria peered within. Her eyes could not penetrate the darkness.

Here evidently the trail ended, but of a sudden it occurred to her that she had only surmised that the bloody spoor they had been following was that of the man she sought.

It was almost equally as probable that Curtiss' shot had struck Old Raf. Her mate and that, after all, she had followed the blood of a wounded lion—

Heading low, she listened, and at last there came to her ears a sound as of a body moving, and then heavy breathing and a sigh.

"Nu," she whispered, "is it you? I have come!" Nor did it seem strange to her that she spoke in a strange tongue, no word of which she had ever heard in all her life before.

For a moment there was silence, and then, weakly from the depths of the cave, a voice replied: "Nat-uh!"

It was barely a whisper. Quickly the girl groped her way into the cavern, feeling before her with her



Victoria Kneeling Beside the Prostrate Form of Nu.

hands until she came to the prostrate form of a man lying upon the cold, hard rock. With difficulty she kept the growling wolfhound from his throat.

Terkoz had found the prey that he had tracked, and he could not understand why he should not now be allowed to make the kill. But he was a well trained beast, and at last at the girl's command he took up a position at the cave's mouth on guard.

Victoria knelt beside the prostrate form of Nu, the son of Nu, but she was no longer Victoria Custer. It was Nat-uh, the daughter of Tha, who knelt there beside the man she loved.

Gently she passed her slim fingers across his forehead. It was burning with a raging fever. She felt the wound along the side of his head and shuddered. Then she raised him in her arms so that his head was pillowed in her lap and kissed his cheek.

Halfway down the mountainside, she recalled, there was a little spring of fresh cold water. Removing her hunting jacket, she rolled it into a pillow for the unconscious man and then, with Terkoz at her side, clambered down the rocky way.

Filling her lap with water, she returned to the cave.

All night she bathed the fevered head and washed the ugly wound, at times squeezing a few refreshing drops between the hot lips.

At last the restless tossing of the wounded man ceased, and the girl saw that he had fallen into a natural sleep and that the fever had abated.

When the first rays of the rising sun relieved the gloom within the cavern Terkoz, rising to stretch himself, looked backward into the interior.

He saw a black haired giant sleeping quietly his hand pillowed upon his chest, and beside him sat the girl, her loosened hair tumbled about her shoulders and over the breast of the sleeping man, upon which her own tired head had dropped in the sleep of utter exhaustion.

Terkoz yawned and lay down again. After a time the girl awoke. For a few minutes she could not assure herself of the reality of her surroundings. She thought that this was but another of her dreams.

Gently she put out her hand and touched the face of the sleeper. It was very red; also she noted that the fever had left.

She sat in silence for a few minutes, attempting to adjust herself to the new and strange conditions which surrounded her. She seemed to be two people—the American girl, Victoria Custer and Nat-uh. But who or from where was Nat-uh she could not fathom other than that she was beloved by Nu and that she returned his love.

She wondered that she did not regret the life of ease she had abandoned and which she knew that she could never again return to. She was still sufficiently of the twentieth century to realize that the step she had taken must cut her off forever from her past life, for she was very happy.

Heading low over the man, she kissed his lips and then, rising, went out, side and taking Terkoz with her, descended to the spring, for she was thirsty.

Neither the girl nor the hound saw the white robed figure that withdrew suddenly behind a huge boulder as the two emerged from the cave's mouth.

Nor did they see him signal to others behind him who had not yet rounded the shoulder of the cliff at the base of which they had been marching.

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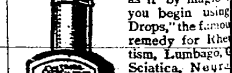
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Our Nation

Points of Interest from News Special Co.

NOTING THE POOR INVENTOR

Washington, D. C., Jan. 30.—An expression that the rich should help the poor men's patents is not only correct; for while the patent system is a good thing, yet a decision rendered by the Board of Examiners of the United States Patent Office, a few days ago, shows that the patent system is a redress for the poor man. Albert S. Jania, a patent maker, living out from New York City, perfected a telephone in 1909, and a year later, when H. Curtis started to perfect a telephone by "discovering" the same thing. There is nothing new in this instance, the inventor knew anything about the invention. In the court case, the Patent Office granted his case, and the "protector" of the patent is that he will receive the benefit from all the products of the Curtis factory which he has made fifty to seventy-five hundred dollars worth of goods.

Wright Brothers fought several years to substantiate their prior claims to patents, and were finally sustained. The case was true of Alexander Graham Bell, in his experience with the telephone. It is felt that when Bell found he had invented his device he went to the Western Union Telegraph Company, and offered to sell the rights of the invention for \$10,000. He and his fellow inventor, James A. Watson, were discouraged. But by great wealth and power upon them because they could not buy their little toy.

Several days ago the correspondent of the News was one of a party of 150 invited guests at the opening of the transatlantic telephone lines, a message we listened to. The receivers with which the lines were supplied, was between Bell, who was in the room, and Mr. Watson, talking from San Francisco. The inventor and other gentlemen, including your humble correspondent, talked on that fine day of that 6800 mile circuit, a great achievement in communication was produced by all as a complete success. Bell and Watson were the poor inventors who were the enforcement of the patent system. Their voices, on that day, were heard them, fairly rich success, joy and pride. Sam stood by them to the notwithstanding that they were very poor young men who were their invention to help the world.

Sanza, The Troublesome

Huerta was President of the Republic, and President Wilson was giving him the "ice treat" the white hope, according to the Washington Undersecretary, was Carranza. So the man was the State Department that one of the southern states in that branch of the government, likened Carranza to E. Lee, and admired the man with equal ardor. Later, the similarity between Carranza and the American "grin" was that they both had a lot of power.

His latest declaration was that he would send \$300,000,000 and \$500,000,000 in Br. Liberty has been his motto. There are some even a patient government of the United States can do and wait for, and it is evidently his in the Washington

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