

Yellow Men Sleep

By JEREMY LANE

Copyright by the Century Company

CHAPTER XIII.

—16—

The Ape Repays.

When he wakened some time later, his first link of consciousness was that the altar-fire was out, the air changing; and he knew without looking that Helen was no longer on the other side of the wall. The same green twilight suffused the top of the tunnel. He recalled as from months ago how the party of dwarfs had drawn aside to permit him to pass on into this maze below the palace. Con wondered vaguely if the whole world were honeycombed. Then he managed to rise, and his feet at first were like diving weights.

Nothing less than his intensity of emotion lifted him up the notched barrier again. His arms were shaking, his eyes dim. Again the greenish glow in his face. The chamber was empty now, save for one drugged mandarin, lying full length in his blue robe, one gaunt arm touching the floor. The altar was dead, and only an oppressive feeling in the air remained of the koresh. The wooden door at the further side was not quite closed.

She had come down to this pit of royal iniquity because he was making her unhappy. Con knew this. She had come to dream in semideath under fingers from the yellow bowl. Yet he was not so fatuous as to believe that it could be her first communion with the darker gods. In fact, the dais here resembled that in the throne-room—a permanent affair. Con was sick at heart.

Heedless of the sleeping Chinese, he drew himself up and across the wall. The exertion seemed to bring back his strength. The space at the roof of the tunnel was small. He slid through and dropped down on the other side, near the altar. The yellow bowl, too, was gone. The bowl of jade gave an opalescent light, close up, itself a dream, with the ceaseless dry pouring of the gas. Con glanced at the prone figure—a face of smooth putty, no eyes, a white mouth, nerveless. It was the symbol of all that ailed Tau Kuan. Levington grasped the iron ring in the door, and pulled back.

Softly it swung to him, with a gush of better air from the black passage beyond. The darkness was damp and thick. He moved into it, and the door closed after him. He stumbled upon the lowest step of a stairway. The stones were wet and worn. A feeling of oil was about the place. He began to ascend, carefully, taking no reckoning. Nothing mattered but this inner draw, the great master passion. Perhaps if his brain had been clearer he would have questioned himself, perhaps held back from this rashness. But he was burning inside. He lost count of the ascending steps. He had no thought of bravery. Presently another door at the top, another iron ring.

More important than any material surroundings was the fact that he was making her unhappy. At first he had

perfume of the procession that had passed. Con imagined the borne hammocks with the silken sleeping burdens, especially one. He moved into the hall, keeping close to the inner wall. He came to the familiar door. There was no time to knock.

The victrola was still there. With a little cry of dismay the servant of the princess arched his back and ran forward, quite hideous in haste and hate. Levington stopped him and picked up the knife that fell from the yellow hand. There was further brief business of wadding the mouth of old Fu Ah and securing his enraged members. Then the white man, his heart pounding, ran to the raised couch. She was there. He closed his eyes a moment; because of her loveliness, his own relief and the strange hurt. Her face held the calm of that shadow of sable wings. Con knew the satiny black beneath her eyes. In fact, the yellow bowl had been left here within her reach when she wakened. He bent over and stared into her face.

"Helen," he whispered. "Helen, wake up! They are giving you death. I do not mean to make you unhappy. Do not sleep, it is poison, you must not! I want you to live. Oh, princess, there is America."

He did not know what he was saying to her. Her arms and shoulders were limp as he touched her, lifted her a little from the colored cushions. Without opening her eyes, she smiled faintly, and it maddened him to think that she was pleased with some phantom in a subtler world, perhaps entirely unaware of his own presence. The deep shadows about her eyes seemed to stab him. He raised her closer to him. He was pleading. He smoothed her temples. His hands shook, as he breathed the full story of his heart. The universe was only this—that she lay faint in his arms, that her white beauty possessed him, that he could not reach her, a web always between, delicate yet unbreakable. She sighed, as a child who enters a new depth of rest, and it punished him. She had not opened her eyes.

The leaves rustled outside the casement. From a silver vase on a taboret white rose petals drifted down to the rug. Curtains swayed gently in the movement of the air. Afternoon sunlight crossed golden through the oaks. Out of the age-old secrets of the heart Levington knew the mystery of high desire, as if a race of men, stalwart, tender, true, had gone before him, lived and loved and perished, that he might breathe the same air with his princess in this hour, might feel the softly rushing storm within himself, and pledge his all to the beauty of one who did not speak.

Again he leaned over her, and whispered rapidly—only the great hazards mattered now—"Tell me, tell me—" Helen's throat trembled, beneath the smooth skin a ripple of effort, but she did not unseal her lips. Con covered his eyes with his arm.

Out of this moment of intense quiet he heard footsteps, great leaping falls. He turned, crouching. A Nubian, a giant, passed, his dagger steady as bronze, his eyes red. He rushed, and Levington stepped aside. The tray must be led away from Helen. The negro also reckoned on this. Con made sure of the knife he had taken from the servant, Fu Ah, who was still tightly bandaged, lying near the door.

They faced each other. The great black rushed again. Levington grappled, parrled, and they swung around. He could do nothing with his knife. Another wild down thrust from the Nubian, a lunge with iron power in it. Gray foam stood out upon the negro's lips. A mighty hinge of ebony was closing upon Levington, who felt his legs giving way, and the borrowed knife, prided steadily out of his hand. His head was gradually being forced backward. Catlike, he writhed loose his right arm, and fashed a blow to the black neck, but it was like hitting a rug. The African was mousing hotly. For all that life meant, Con clung to the dagger-arm. He was lifted clear of the floor, to enable the black to adjust him at his leisure for the final stroke. All the agony of life's unassisted cup came to Levington as he thought of Helen.

Suddenly the Nubian cried out and seemed to lose control. He dropped the weapon from him. He was screaming and stamping. Upon his shoulders clung two small white-faced monkeys, his teeth holding deep, eyes staring out at nothing. The infuriated black would summon the entire palace with his howl. Con drove the dagger twice below the ribs, and the giant toppled into silence, while the little beast bit and bit, doubtless repaying black cruelty and white friendship at the same time. Besur turned inquiring eyes up to Levington, who had no time to express thanks. Retaining the Nubian's weapon, he fled past the gagged and fight-ridden Fu Ah, and out of the apartment, dodging down the corridor. There were running, shouting behind him. He gained the door to the stairway and stumbled down.

Having entered the passage from a known direction, Con had no difficulty in continuing eastward, toward the location of the air shafts. His thoughts were a riot of things, beginning with

their talk in the open near her mother's grave. Almost before he expected, he saw Andrew March, who was searching for him. Many were with the elder American, including the interpreter.

"How far did you go?"

"Far enough to hear the oak leaves blowing outside her window."

"You cross—not?" queried the Arabian.

"Yes."

He recounted their morning meeting, his return to the mines; the strange, silent malice of the dwarfs who had allowed him to go on into the fumes from the devotions; what he had seen over the rim of the wall; the blackness that had fallen, and then the events beyond the stairs.

"You have profaned the holy of holies," said March. "They have no higher religion. There is no end to your crimes." March was smiling gravely. Oddly, it did not seem to

the night, and then merely to relax into deeper rest again, noted that the spaces in the caves were seething with little ugly men, whose twisted spines bobbed in a light that was sickish and cold. The crowd seemed to grow as the hours passed, as if the innermost crevices of earth were giving up their human ants. More hoelike weapons were brought to add to the rusty knives. There were tubes for blowing darts, containing now a long accumulation of the dust of peace. In fact, the present generation could not recall a day of revolt in their subterranean history. The Arabian sailor rushed about all this night like one possessed, his old hopes ignited.

Primitive military system prevailed. The horde was grouped into units. There were lieutenants. The white men when wakened would rank as colonels, with no less a person than the Arab as their generalissimo.

The miners seemed lost in a dull glow of excitement. Within their lives nothing had occurred to interrupt the next day's labor. The seizing of their four brothers had not seemed unusual, but the effect promised an infinity of new turns. There was no thought of sleep. The old humors of an uprising seemed at last about to be fulfilled. The hour was near, their lot cast. Every tortured heart was eased somewhat of its burden of hate in the prospect of action. They had never before attempted to express their loathing of the city, of their masters.

They had been born to pain, toll, silence. Home, shop, and grave were one to them. There were no families. From some warrior's house in the city, each man-child returned to the pits crippled forever, its spine an arch of horror. There was seldom any way of identifying the broken creature of ten or twelve. All thought of parentage was lost. When by chance, kinship was re-established, such meeting was but a renewal of bitterness.

And always in the city cellars the precious store of roots grew and grew. On the far edges of the state the essence of these roots was bartered or exchanged for silver. Always the yellow bowl in the apartment of the future queen was kept filled with dream potency. The state religion was perpetuated in the lower room, which was so situated as to be symbolic of its connection with the source of all dreams, the mines themselves. Thus Chee Ming wrought upon the whole world the substance of his meditations—the vizir, whose thin eyelids had never been touched and soothed and damned by one taint of koresh.

His web was spreading beyond the sea. He chose the blood of princes and of queens, to blend at his leisure, in his own interpretation of right. The old monzouls had become no more than a warm silken bag of clay under the skinny hands of his vizir. Chee Ming was ready to rule the planet entire.

Now in the caverns, the miners were eating, wherever they stood, sticks flicking in and out of brown jars, the women slinking about in mortal fear. It was long after midnight. March dropped down beside Levington.

"Surprising the riders do not come."

"They'll wait for daylight. They have the four. They feel sure of us."

The two friends sat a little way off from the swarm, and looked idly into the gas-flare. Con grew drowsy with the warmth in his face. After a while he said, "The green hair of —"

"You mean the gas?"

"Yes, the way it comes up and floats, like something drowned in air. That's the flowing green hair—rather fiendish. I can't say what I mean."

"If the fire happened to go out," said March, "we should all go out with it."

"From what depth do you suppose it comes?"

March looked quickly at his comrade, and smiled. "You are sleepy."

"Yes. I'll take a nap here. But do you think the gas has anything to do with the crusted seeds they dig out of the pits here?"

"I don't know. Nor can I tell you how the koresh seeds, millions of them, ever got down so deep in the earth, to begin with. The Arab says that there are shafts as deep as wells, and from these chasms the worker with a torch brings up seeds that must have laid in the clay ever since the planet condensed and cooled; and the same seeds will sprout in a month's time when planted on the surface and watered."

"Something left over, preserved, from the days of the giants and the mastodons," said Con.

"I thought you were going to say seeds from —"

"How do they extract the oil and the incense?"

"The oil is simply pressed out of the full-grown root, and the incense is oil vaporized."

"It got me," said Levington.

"And there is a poison they make from the seed itself; but that is death, no dreams with it," added March.

A curious kind of notoriety came to Levington while he dozed and rested. The story of his battle with the Nubian was spread about the caverns, and many were the glances cast upon him, not so unfriendly. The monkey's choice in that struggle was taken here as a good omen; it strengthened these people's faith in the white man.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XIV.

The Prince Rides Out.

The ardors of the past day and night brought deep sleep to the two white men. Con, who wakened but once in

Something Original and Chic



There are no rules without exceptions, so far as fashions are concerned. At any rate, that is the conclusion one comes to after reviewing the new styles in suits. Although nearly all suit coats are finger tip length, there are a few very long coats and a greater number of short ones. The short coats vary as to shortness and are to be found among the many box coat models, some of them reaching only a little way below the waistline. The box coat is chic—youthful and becoming to slender women. The exception to the rule in length—but in the opposite direction from the box-coat—is found in a few very long coats that are usually somewhat irregular about the bottom, extending to the knees at the longest point.

And always in the city cellars the precious store of roots grew and grew. On the far edges of the state the essence of these roots was bartered or exchanged for silver. Always the yellow bowl in the apartment of the future queen was kept filled with dream potency. The state religion was perpetuated in the lower room, which was so situated as to be symbolic of its connection with the source of all dreams, the mines themselves. Thus Chee Ming wrought upon the whole world the substance of his meditations—the vizir, whose thin eyelids had never been touched and soothed and damned by one taint of koresh.

His web was spreading beyond the sea. He chose the blood of princes and of queens, to blend at his leisure, in his own interpretation of right. The old monzouls had become no more than a warm silken bag of clay under the skinny hands of his vizir. Chee Ming was ready to rule the planet entire.

Now in the caverns, the miners were eating, wherever they stood, sticks flicking in and out of brown jars, the women slinking about in mortal fear. It was long after midnight. March dropped down beside Levington.

"Surprising the riders do not come."

"They'll wait for daylight. They have the four. They feel sure of us."

The two friends sat a little way off from the swarm, and looked idly into the gas-flare. Con grew drowsy with the warmth in his face. After a while he said, "The green hair of —"

"You mean the gas?"

"Yes, the way it comes up and floats, like something drowned in air. That's the flowing green hair—rather fiendish. I can't say what I mean."

"If the fire happened to go out," said March, "we should all go out with it."

"From what depth do you suppose it comes?"

March looked quickly at his comrade, and smiled. "You are sleepy."

"Yes. I'll take a nap here. But do you think the gas has anything to do with the crusted seeds they dig out of the pits here?"

"I don't know. Nor can I tell you how the koresh seeds, millions of them, ever got down so deep in the earth, to begin with. The Arab says that there are shafts as deep as wells, and from these chasms the worker with a torch brings up seeds that must have laid in the clay ever since the planet condensed and cooled; and the same seeds will sprout in a month's time when planted on the surface and watered."

"Something left over, preserved, from the days of the giants and the mastodons," said Con.

"I thought you were going to say seeds from —"

"How do they extract the oil and the incense?"

"The oil is simply pressed out of the full-grown root, and the incense is oil vaporized."

"It got me," said Levington.

"And there is a poison they make from the seed itself; but that is death, no dreams with it," added March.

A curious kind of notoriety came to Levington while he dozed and rested. The story of his battle with the Nubian was spread about the caverns, and many were the glances cast upon him, not so unfriendly. The monkey's choice in that struggle was taken here as a good omen; it strengthened these people's faith in the white man.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Pretty Ribbon Furbelows



The season of pretty furbelows is every season, but as soon as the wind of autumn blows, a lot of new trifles come fluttering in. Late September sees a whole host of lovely furnishings of all sorts emerging from somewhere and coming to light in the shops. The list of pretty things made of ribbon will fill a small book and they disclose ribbon used in a greater number and greater variety of accessories than we have had before. In furnishings there are pillows of many designs, foot rests, telephone screens and covers, candle shades, powder bowls and boxes, boudoir dishes, rouge and powder boxes, toilet water and perfume bottles, work baskets, jewel cases, handkerchief and glove cases, slipper holders, shoe trees, hangers, sachets and whole toilet-table sets made of ribbon or covered with them, and then there is the long list of bags. In dress accessories there are camisoles, vestees, boudoir caps, slippers and jackets, girdles, sashes, garters, neckwear, hair ornaments and innumerable lingerie bows and ornaments. Besides these luxuries for grown-ups and

prettier than all are the many lovely belongings of the baby—little sashes and booties, caps, arm bands, pin cushions, pillows, baskets, carriage robes, cushions and bands, hangers and toys.

A few pretty girdles and sashes among the recent new arrivals have been chosen for illustration here. At the left of the group a long girdle is made by braiding or plaiting narrow ribbons as one plait of strands of hair. The ends of the girdle are finished with ribbon-covered balls of cotton cord. At the top of the group a girdle of satin ribbon appears with a flat bow at one side and a rosette with ends at the other. Just below it are two girdles ending in flower-like rosettes. At the right is a sash of wide ribbon with four short loops and two long ends, and at the bottom an elastic girdle in which satin ribbon is shirred over a flat elastic band.

Julia Bottomly
(© 1926, Western Newspaper Union)