

# FIRE TONGUE

BY SAX ROHMER

ILLUSTRATED BY G. A. SATERFIELD

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**BEGIN HERE TODAY**

Sir Charles Abington engages Paul Harley, criminal investigator, to solve for him the mystery of constant surveillance of Sir Charles by persons unknown to him. While Harley is dining at the Abington home, Sir Charles falls from his chair in a dazed state. His last words are "Nicol Brinn" and "Fire-Tongue."

Paul asks Nicol Brinn to tell him the meaning of "Fire-Tongue," but Brinn refuses to enlighten him.

Harley and Paul, daughter of Sir Charles, are made prisoners in the home of Ormus Khan. Brinn rescues them and goes to tell the story of Fire-Tongue to the police. He tells of his love for Naida, a member of the Fire-Tongue cult.

## NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

"Respecting the tests to which candidates were put, she spoke with more freedom. Those who, having reached the second grade, aspired to the first, were subjected to three very severe ones, to make trial of their courage, purity and humility. Failure in any of these trials resulted in instant death, and the final test, the trial by fire, which took place in a subterranean chamber of the great temple,



"SHE EXACTED AN OATH THAT I WOULD NEVER DIVULGE WHAT I HAD SEEN OR HEARD."

resulted in a candidate whose courage failed him being precipitated into that lake of flame which I have already described—a dreadful form of death, which by accident I had witnessed.

"I have the reputation of being a cold, hard man. So had Antony before he met Cleopatra. But seven years ago, under the Indian moon, I learned tolerance for the human weakness which forgets the world for the smiles of a woman.

"It had to end. Sooner or later, discovery was inevitable. One night I told Naida that I must go. Over the scene that followed I will pass in silence. It needed all the strength of a fairly straight, hard life to help me keep to my dearest for the world for the smiles of a woman.

"She understood at last, and consented to release me. But there were obstacles—big ones. The snow on the lower mountain slopes had begun to melt, and the water-gate in the valley

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Easily and cheaply made at home, but it beats them all for quick results.

Thousands of housewives have found that they can save two-thirds of the money usually spent for cough preparations by using this well-known old recipe for making cough syrup. It is simple and cheap, but it has no equal for prompt results. It takes right hold of a cough and gives immediate relief, usually stopping an ordinary cough in 24 hours or less.

Get 2½ ounces of Pinex from any druggist, pour it into a pint bottle, and add plain granulated sugar syrup to make a full pint. If you prefer, use clarified molasses, honey, or corn syrup, instead of sugar syrup. Either way, it tastes good, keeps perfectly, and lasts a family a long time.

It's truly astonishing how quickly it acts, penetrating through every air passage of the throat and lungs—loosens and raises the phlegm, soothes and heals the membranes, and gradually but surely the annoying throat tickle and dreaded cough disappear entirely. Nothing better for bronchitis, spasmodic cough or hoarseness.

Pinex is a special and highly concentrated compound of genuine Norway pine extract known the world over for its healing effect on membranes. Avoid disappointment by asking your druggist for "2½ ounces of Pinex" with full directions and don't accept anything else. Guaranteed to give absolute satisfaction or money promptly refunded. © Pinex Co., Ft. Wayne, Ind.—Advertisement.

by which I had entered was now impassable. As a result, I must use another gate, which opened into a mountain path, but which was always guarded. At first, on hearing this, I gave myself up for lost, but Naida had a plan.

"Removing a bangle which she always wore, she showed me the secret mark of Fire-Tongue branded upon the creamy skin.

"I will put this mark upon your arm," she said. "In no other way can you escape. I will teach you some of the passwords by which the brethren know one another, and if you are ever questioned you will say that you were admitted to the order by the Master of the Bombay Lodge, news of whose death has just reached up."

"But," said I, "how can I hope to pass for an Oriental?"

"There are some who are not Orientals among us!"

"She exacted an oath from me that I would never divulge anything which I had seen or heard in the City of Sire. She urged that I must leave India as quickly as possible. I had already learned that this remote society was closely in touch with the affairs of the outside world. And because I knew I was leaving my heart behind there in the Indian hills, I recognized that this dreadful parting must be final.

"Therefore I scarcely heeded her when she showed me the mark which I ever bear in danger because of what had happened, a message in the Times of India would reach her. I never intended to insert such a message, gentlemen. I knew that it would need all my strength to close this door which I had opened."

## CHAPTER XXXIV

Nicol Brinn's Story (Concluded)

"The incidents of the next seven years do not concern you, gentlemen. I had one aim in life—to forget. From the time that I left India until the moment when fate literally threw me in the way of the late Sir Charles Abington, I had heard nothing of the cult of Fire-Tongue.

"Then, lunching with the late Sir Charles after my accident in the Haymarket, he put to me a question which literally made me hold my breath.

"Do you know anything of the significance of the term Fire-Tongue?" he asked.

"I am not accustomed to any display of feeling in public, and I replied in what I think was an ordinary tone.

"In what connection, Sir Charles?"

"Well," said he, watching me oddly, "I know you have traveled in India, and I wondered if you had ever come in contact with the legend which prevails there, that a second Zoroaster has arisen, to preach the doctrine of eternal fire."

"I have heard it," I replied guardedly.

"I thought it possible," continued Sir Charles, "and I am tempted to tell you of a curious experience which once befell me during the time that I was a guest of my late friend, Colonel Blanford, in Delhi. My reputation as an osteologist was not at that time as fully established as it later became, but I already had some reputation in this branch of surgery; and one evening a very distinguished Hindu gentleman sought an interview with me, saying that a distinguished native noble, who was a guest of his, had met with a serious accident, and offering me a fee equivalent to nearly £500 to perform an operation which he believed to be necessary.

"I assured him that my services were at his disposal, and blankly declined to accept so large a fee. He thereupon explained that the circumstances were peculiar. His friend belonged to a religious cult of extremely high order. He would lose caste if it became known that he had been attended by a Christian surgeon; therefore my visit must be a secret one.

"Accordingly I was driven in a car which was waiting to some house upon the outskirts of the city and conducted to a room where the patient had been carried. I saw him to be a singularly handsome young man, apparently about 23 years of age. But there was something effeminate about him which repelled me. I cannot say in what way; nor did I approve of the presence of many bowls of hyacinths in the room.

"However, I performed the operation, which, although slight, demanded some skill, and with the nature of which I will not trouble you. Intense anxiety was manifested by the young man's attendants, and one of these, a strikingly beautiful woman, insisted on remaining while the operation was performed.

"She seemed more especially to concern herself with preserving intact a lock of the young man's jet-black hair, which was brushed in rather an odd manner across his forehead. Naturally enough, this circumstance excited my curiosity and, distracting the women's attention for a moment—I asked her to bring me something from a table at the opposite side of the room—I lightly raised this wayward lock and immediately replaced it again.

"Do you know what it concealed, Mr. Brinn?"

"I assured him that I did not.

"A mark, apparently natural, resembling a torch surmounted by a tongue of fire!"

"Strange though it must appear, at this time I failed to account for Sir Charles confiding this thing to me. Later, I realized that he must have seen the mark on my arm, although he never referred to it.

"I moved at once. I inserted in the Times the prearranged message, hardly daring to hope that it would come to the eye of Naida, but it did. She visited me. And I learned that not only Sir Charles Abington, but another, knew of the mark which I bore!

"I was summoned to appear before the Prophet of Fire!

## OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN



DOINGS OF THE DUFFS—



THE OLD HOME TOWN—By STANLEY



HUBERT HODGE, THE PROGRESSIVE AND HUSTLING MERCHANT, HAS WASHED HIS WINDOW AND JUST RECEIVED A LARGE SHIPMENT OF NEW GOODS PRICED TO MEET ANY COMPETITION

Charles to seek an interview with him. I may say here and now that Ormus Khan is Fire-Tongue! Oh! it's a tough statement—but I can prove it. Sir Charles practically forced his way into this man's presence and immediately recognized his mysterious patient of years ago!

"He accused him of having set

spies upon his daughter's movements—an accusation which was true—and forbade him to see her again. From that hour the fate of Sir Charles was sealed. What he knew, the world must never know. He had recorded, in a private paper, all that he had learned. This paper was stolen from his bureau—and its contents

led to my being summoned to the house of Fire-Tongue! It also spurred the organization to renewed efforts, for it revealed that Sir Charles contemplated confiding the story to others.

"You will have observed, gentlemen, that I am somewhat damaged. However, it was worth it! That the organization of the Fire-Worshippers is destroyed I am not prepared to assert. But I made a discovery to day which untied my hands. Hearing, I shall never know how, that Naida had had a secret interview with me, Fire-Tongue visited upon her the death penalty.

"I found her lying on a silken divan in the deserted house, her hands clasped over a little white flower, like an odontoglossum, which lay on her breast. It was the flower of sleep—and she was dead.

"My seven years' silence was ended. One thing I could do for the world: remove Fire-Tongue—and do it with my own hands!

"Gentlemen, at the angle where the high road from Upper Claybury joins the Dover Road is the Merritt Cottage Hospital. Mr. Harley is awaiting us there. He is less damaged than I am. A native chauffeur, whose name I don't know, is lying insensible in one of the beds—and in another is a dead man, unrecognizable except for a birthmark resembling a torch on his forehead, his head crushed and his neck broken.

"That dead man is Fire-Tongue. I should like, Mr. Commissioner, to sign the statement."

THE END

## OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS



Wilbur Picks the Right Morning



—By ALLMAN

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



## HOOSIER BRIEFS

Montgomery county's oldest practicing physician is dead. Dr. Thomas Jefferson Griffith, 87, of Crawfordsville was a veteran of the Civil War, serving with the 128th Infantry. He died of pneumonia.

The total receipts of the Marion postoffice for the last year amounted to \$162,306, an increase of about \$17,000 over 1922. Postmaster Jones will receive an increase of \$100 a year in salary.

Ministers in downtown churches at Marion are to exchange pulpits during this week. Extensive evangelistic services are being conducted.

The annual Wea Township, Tippecanoe County, fox drive will be held Jan. 12. Dinner will be served at noon, which will be followed by a trap shoot for both amateur and professionals.

Anderson theaters have decided to show no more pictures in which Mabel Normand, movie actress appears.

Bud Steed of Portland spent only \$10 for clothing for his wife and children in ten years, his wife charges in asking for a divorce. Then he became angry and scolded his wife for extravagance, the complaint states.

A pet Airedale dog belonging to M. M. Walker, Alexandria farmer, saved Walker's home from being burned.

When the dog was unable to rouse his master he went to the home of a neighbor and pawed at the window until the neighbor was awakened and saved the house ablaze.

Seymour motion picture theaters have barred all Mabel Normand and Edna Purviance films.

Churches of Seymour plan union meeting Jan. 16 to celebrate the anniversary of the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

The shingle roof is doomed in Michigan City. An ordinance passed by the city council provides that all new

roofs shall be of non-inflammable material.

Carl I. Hedrick has been installed as new president of the Tipton Kiwanis Club.

The Muncie Circuit Court jury panel just drawn for the January term includes seven men and five women, the largest number of women jurors in the county's history.

Alleged "Runners" Caught

Two men giving names as George Granahan and Charles Wheeler, Clinton, Ind., are held under liquor charges today. They were caught by Sheriff George Snider and two deputies Tuesday night after a chase on the National road west of Bridgeport. Thirty gallons of white mule and a revolver were seized.

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