A Mystery Story for Boys

The Rope of Gold

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By
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THE ROPE OF GOLD

CHAPTER I
THE DANGLING LADDER

Night was settling down over the mountain side. Already the valleys far below were lost in darkness. The massive fortress which the dwellers on the island of Haiti have always called the Citadel hung like a mountain cliff above a boy who, hot from climbing, had thrown himself on a bed of moss at the foot of a gnarled mahogany tree.

“Whew!” he exclaimed softly to himself. “Even three thousand feet above the sea here in Haiti it’s hot. Hot and dry. Fellow’d think—”

He broke short off to stare. A curious thing was happening. Out from a small dark opening some forty feet up the perpendicular wall of the massive abandoned fortification, something quite indistinct in the twilight had moved and was creeping slowly down the moss-grown wall.

“Like a snake,” he told himself, “only, here in Haiti, there are no snakes to speak of and certainly not one as long as that. Only look! It’s down to the window below; a full twenty feet.

“That window—” He caught his breath, then began to count. “One, two, three, four,—

“That’s the window of Curlie’s ‘laburatory’ as he calls it. It—why, it’s a plot! I should warn him. It—”

He half rose, preparatory to a race up the mountain side. Then he settled back to his seat on the ground.

“Couldn’t make it,” he told himself. “Ground’s too rough. Boulders there big as

a house. Too far around, take a full hour to come in from the rear. By that time, if anything really serious is to happen, it will be over.

“Besides, if worst comes to worst,—” He put out his hand to grip a six foot bow. It was a good yew bow. The arrows at his side were tipped with triangles of steel sharp as razor blades. Down here in Haiti he had used these for hunting wild guinea hens and wild pigs.

“But if worst comes to worst,” he told himself, settling back against the trunk of the tree, “it’s an easy shot. I wouldn’t miss. And the person, whoever it may be, would not go on.”

You who have read our other book called “Johnny Longbow” will know that his thoughts were true when they assured him that he would not miss; for Johnny Thompson, by long and careful application to the task, had mastered the difficult art of archery. And this boy, resting here at the edge of a tropical forest in that mysterious island of Haiti, was none other than your old friend Johnny Thompson. How he came here; what strange stroke of fate it was that brought him into company with the slim and supple young inventor, Curlie Carson, does not, for the moment, matter.

For some time after that Johnny’s mind was busied with many thoughts. The thing that dangled there from window to window, was, he thought, a rope. Later he decided it must be a ladder, a rope ladder of henequin. The natives of Haiti are expert spinners and rope makers. From the tough fibers of the henequin leaf they twist the finest cord and stoutest rope.

“But why is he there? And how did he get there?” He was thinking of the mysterious being whose invisible hand had let down the rope ladder. “We’ve been about the place for five days and have seen no one. It’s been quiet here—too quiet. Ghostlike. Fellow can hardly sleep nights in such a monstrous bat roost with its hundred years of mystery and tragedy hanging over his head, and it so silent.

“And here,” he told himself, flexing his arms that they might be fit for any emergency, “here we come upon someone who apparently has evil intentions against Curlie. Of course, it may be only curiosity. And who wouldn’t be curious? Got me guessing. All that stuff—batteries, boxes, canvas bound packages. Three donkey loads. You’d think he was setting up a high-power

wireless station. But he hasn't, as yet. Hasn't even erected an aerial."

Curlie *was* a queer chap, there was no getting round that. Tall, slim, with mysterious gray-green eyes and with no past he had thus far cared to mention, he had come into Johnny's life on the way down to Haiti from the States. From that time until now, save for the hours Curlie spent in the secret room he had rigged up in the old fort, the two boys had been inseparable.

"He may not have a past worth mentioning," Johnny had often told himself. "But he has a splendid present and fine ideals for the future. And that is all that counts."

For some time, as twilight turned to darkness, nothing further happened. Keeping his eye on the dangling ladder, Johnny allowed his mind to wander over the events that had led up to the present dramatic moment.

The whole affair had begun way back in freshman high school days. Johnny's science professor had become, in a way, his pal. His natural interest in all matters pertaining to science had made him a leader in that field.

Then too, like Johnny, the Professor was fond of travel. Together, at odd moments, they had traversed all of the New World and much of the Old. All of this, of course, on maps and charts. But always, in the end, they came back to one spot, the Island of Haiti.

"Johnny," the Professor had said over and over, "that is the most interesting island in the world, has the most absorbing history, and most tempting mountain jungles. Johnny," he had always pounded the table at this juncture, "I'll soon be sixty. Thirty-five years of teaching! That's enough for any man. When I am sixty we'll really go to Haiti!"

So here they were. In the meantime Johnny had done a little wandering on his own account, but as soon as he heard that his beloved Professor had gone to Haiti, he had followed.

He had found the Professor head over heels in work. For more than a hundred years this strange republic, not Spanish, not French, nor English, but pure native, red, black and brown, had struggled along without aid from her sister republic, Johnny's own beloved land. But now the United States had taken a hand and Professor Star had been given a share in the work. A splendid, kind-hearted

humanitarian, he had accepted the challenge and, with no pay save his living expenses, had assumed responsibility for the comfort, happiness and well-being of more than ten thousand natives.

“It’s a big task,” he told Johnny. “An almost impossible task without money. See that mason-work?” he had said one day as they walked through a tangled mass of vines and bushes.

“What is it?” Johnny had asked.

“The old French aqueduct, Johnny!” He had gripped the boy’s arm hard. “This narrow valley was once one of the richest in the world. Irrigated it was, by water from the mountain streams. And, Johnny, if we had money for cement, we’d rebuild that aqueduct and these half-starved and half-naked people would be happy and prosperous.

“And we, Johnny, you and I,” his eyes had shone with high hope. “We would become rich, for more than half of the land is uninhabited waste that can be bought for an incredibly small sum. And with water for irrigation it can be reclaimed and sold—for who knows how much? Get an American planter interested in it. Then see! We’d be rich, my boy! Think of an old professor and a boy getting rich!” He had laughed a cackling sort of laugh.

But Johnny knew that he had meant what he said, every word of it. And he was for it from the start. But where was the money for repairing the aqueduct? That was the rub.

“All we need,” Johnny had smiled back, “is to find the ‘Rope of Gold’.”

“Johnny,” the old Professor had spoken again, his voice grown husky, “sometimes when one sees the need, he is tempted to believe in fables, even in pots of gold at the foot of the rainbow. Do you see that massive pile of stone way up yonder, built by the only real emperor the island ever knew?”

Johnny had looked away at the distant Citadel, the massive fortress which was so near now, down whose side the rope ladder dangled.

“Johnny,” the Professor had grown quite excited, “this emperor of theirs, Christophe, was apprenticed as a boy to a stone mason. They say that as an old man, and a very rich emperor, who owned a third of the plantations, he went

many times to work alone on those walls at night. And they say that he built boxes and boxes of gold into the twenty foot walls, together with mortar and stone. Men often have dug for it, but they never found the place. Possibly," he had ended rather wearily, "there was no gold. But there should be. We need it. Christophe, when at his best, had wonderful dreams regarding the future of his people. Those people need the gold as never before."

"I wonder," Johnny now thought to himself as he looked away at the massive wall where the rope ladder still dangled and where a pale light gleamed from the lower window, "I wonder how much of that ancient tale was true?"

As he looked up and up until his eye reached the very crest of the crumbling fortress, he fancied he saw a figure moving there. It suggested the ghost of the emperor still laying stones in the wall.

"But that," he told himself stoutly, "is pure fancy. So, too, are the tales the natives tell of the ghost emperor who returns from time to time to work once more at night repairing the walls to hide his treasure. I wonder—"

He broke short off. A dark figure had appeared at the upper opening from which the rope ladder dangled.

One breathless moment, as if looking for some movement far or near, listening for a sound, the figure of a native huddled there on the giant window ledge.

It was strange, Johnny thought. Crouching there in the shadow, one hand on the muzzle of a century old brass cannon that had once barked its defiance to the world, this native seemed a spirit come from out the past.

"He's not that," the boy told himself. "But who is he? When did he come?"

They had been at the ancient fortress. He and Curlie Carson had been prowling about its dungeons and secret passages for four days and had not so much as seen a sign of a living human being. The silence they had found oppressive by day and spooky by night.

"And here is a man. I wonder—" His wonderings came to a sudden end. A strange phenomena had broken in upon them. Just as the native, having cast fears aside, had swung out upon the slender rope ladder, one of those curious after-glows of a sunset drenched the Citadel with golden light.

The effect was magical. “As if it came from Arabian Nights,” Johnny told himself, thrilled to the very center of his being. The figure of the native, quite naked save for a loin cloth, was transformed into a bronze statue.

“And the ladder seems our ‘Rope of Gold’,” Johnny breathed.

The after-glow endured through a space of ten seconds. Then all was dark as before. It lasted long enough for the boy to see that a machete, a great, long-bladed knife, hung at the native’s side.

“And Curlie is alone, unsuspecting,” he told himself, and a chill ran up his spine.

At once his mind was in a whirl. Should he shout, warning his pal and perhaps frightening the native away?

This, he thought, might be wise. Yet, nothing serious might be contemplated. Most natives wore machetes at their sides. Besides, there was his own bow and arrow, a very useful weapon. An arrow shattered against the wall would serve to drive the intruder away.

“And if worst comes to worst—”

He gripped his bow, nocked an arrow, then sat there breathless, waiting.

The thing that happened in the next sixty seconds was surprising and dramatic.

With astonishing speed the native glided down the ladder.

“He’s there! He—he’s looking in.”

Gripping his bow hard, Johnny took a long breath. He felt that the time had come for sending the arrow of warning. And yet—he wanted to know more. So he waited. The bronze figure, faintly illumined by the pale light from within, hung there for a few moments, motionless.

Then with the speed of thought, things happened. From within there came a sudden flash of blinding red light. The next instant the wall was a blank of darkness.

The whole thing was over in a space of time not measured by seconds, yet

Johnny had seen it all. The native, his eyes distorted by fright, had leaped backward and down. Turning a complete somersault, he had gone speeding to earth, twenty feet below.

“He’ll be killed!” Johnny exclaimed aloud.

But no. The space at the foot of the wall was clear of brush. The next moment he saw the man plainly. He went skulking along the wall to at last lose himself in the shadows of some ancient palm trees.

“We’ve seen the last of him,” Johnny told himself as he rose to take a long breath. “I must be getting back to camp. Dorn and old Pompee will think something has happened to me.”

As he made his way rapidly over a narrow path, down a slope and up the other side, then through a dark and tangled forest, his thoughts were busy.

“Big piece of nonsense, this search for the ‘Rope of Gold’,” he told himself. “May never have existed. Anyway, we’ll never find it. Fascinating though, and lots of fun, this search; and life can’t be all work.”

They *had* worked, he and Curlie Carson. For two months, under the Professor’s direction, they had taught native children the simplest rudiments of learning, had assisted native planters at their work and had taught them new methods of tilling the soil.

It had been a short summer and now, only a few days more and he, Johnny, hoped to be going back to the States. And Curlie Carson, the strange lad with the wanderlust and a bent for inventions, would go elsewhere too.

They had heard many times of the ‘Rope of Gold’; a very fancy rope it had been, hand-wrought with flowers of white gold and leaves of green gold woven through it, so the story ran.

When the native emperor, the magnificent Christophe, was at the height of his power, this rope of gold had been strung through loops of silver all the way down the sides of the massive steps that led up to his palace. A hundred feet long it was. When rolled up it required two men to carry it. When revolution threatened, so the story ran, the emperor had hidden the rope away in the Citadel and there it remained to this day. But where?

This was the question the two boys had tried to solve. Thus far they had made no headway. The ancient walls, the dungeons, and secret passages had yielded nothing more valuable than dust, bats, rats and general decay.

“It’s something one’s not likely soon to forget,” the boy told himself.

He fell to musing on the life of that native emperor and the fortification he had built.

“He thought the French would come back,” the Professor had said to him one day. “He had great dreams for the progress of his people. You can hardly blame him for wanting to defend them. In the end he forgot his great dreams for his people and began worshipping gold and that immense pile of brick and stone. Had he put his trust in God instead of in power and gold,” the kindly old professor had rumbled on, “had he written his name on the hearts of men, his name would have lived forever. Now there is only that crumbling pile of masonry to remind the world that he lived at all.”

“It’s all very strange,” Johnny thought. “If one could but have lived then. If he __”

He stopped short in his tracks. His eye had caught sight of something unusual, a white thing hanging from the lower branch of a large tree.

“Couldn’t have been here when I came along an hour ago.” His curiosity increased. “I’d have noticed it.”

He took two steps forward, then put out a hand to touch it. The thing gave forth a hollow sound.

“How queer!” he thought. “A native drum, hanging here.”

Without thinking much about what he was doing, he took down the drum, which was a three foot section of a hollowed-out log with a goat skin strung across one end, placed it between his knees and gave it two quick, sharp blows with his hand.

The result was two resounding roars that set the hills echoing.

The next instant, quite without warning, the boy was seized and thrown violently

to the ground.

CHAPTER II
THE NATIVE DRUM

Johnny Thompson was no weakling. He was a football player and a lightweight boxer of no mean ability. He had lived clean and taken good care of the physical side of his being as every boy should. When the unseen person seized him so suddenly from behind he was down but not out by any manner of means. With a deft twist he freed himself from the grasp of his unknown adversary, and, leaping to his feet, struck out with his right and left with the best of results. His clenched fists landed with dull thwacks. There followed the sound of a heavy body staggering backward into the brush.

Having no desire to do bodily injury to anyone, the boy turned and would have dashed swiftly away had not a dark arm reached out to entwine itself about his neck. This startling embrace was followed by a blow on the head, which left him all but senseless and without further power of resistance.

Sinking to the ground he awaited the end. To his great surprise, he discovered that the end of this particular adventure had already come. He was left there alone in the dark.

Night, jungle night, dark, damp and silent lay all about him. Still but half conscious of what went on about him, not daring to move, he lay there quite motionless.

A moment passed, another and yet another.

“There is no—no one about,” he told himself at last.

At that, there sounded off in the distance the boom of a native drum; one stroke, that was all, then again jungle silence hung over all.

“They are a long way off. I must get—get back to camp,” he told himself as in a dream. “Dorn and old Pompee will go out hunting for me.”

He tried to rise. In this he failed. His head whirled. He sank back and must have lost consciousness for when next his benumbed brain registered a thought, the light of a torch was shining in his eyes and a face was before him. A strange and very curious pair of eyes were looking into his own.

The man was incredibly short and broad. He seemed to have scarcely any legs at all. His face was thin, his nose sharp and very crooked. But his eyes! Johnny thought he had never looked into a keener pair of eyes. To Johnny’s great surprise, he found that his bruised head had been quite deftly bandaged. There was a pungent odor of drugs about him.

“They hit you,” the short, broad, little man said in quite a matter-of-fact tone. “Hit you on the head. Good thing I happened along. Gone bad with you. But you’re safe enough now.”

Johnny looked into the man’s eyes again and wondered who he might be.

“It was the drum,” the strange man went on. “You thumped it, didn’t you?”

“Yes I—”

“Never thump a native drum here in Haiti. Gets you in trouble, right away. If the Marines or native police don’t get you, someone else will. Where’d you get the drum, anyway?”

“It was hanging on a tree.”

“Uh huh! They left it there. Notice how it was made?”

“No.”

“Cut right out of a log, pretty hard log. Plenty of work to make a native drum. Besides, the natives love their drums. I can’t say the drums are a good thing. Lot of superstition and wild practices hanging about them. But you can’t change people all at once. New ideas will come, the right sort I mean, even here in Haiti. But it takes time. Haiti’s been practically ignored by our country for a hundred years. Now we’re taking hold.

“Know what would have happened to the drum if the native police had got it?” he asked, suddenly fixing his sharp eyes on the boy. “Burst in its head,” he continued, answering his own question. “Split it up for kindling wood. That’s what they’d have done. The Marines would have done the same. You’re white like the Marines. Probably these natives thought you meant to burst their drum. That’s why they treated you rough. But you’ll be right enough now.”

“Th—thanks. I—” Johnny did not finish. The strange short, broad man had vanished into the night.

“This,” Johnny told himself, rising stiffly, “is the strangest island I have ever known. You strike a drum on the head and get struck on the head in return. A short, broad, white man, with the skill of a surgeon, comes along and fixes you up. Who hit me? Who is this curious doctor-like man? Where’d he come from? What’s he doing down here? Guess I’d better hurry on back to camp.”

His steps were a trifle unsteady at first. His head hurt. As his blood warmed, he got the better of this and in due time walked into an illuminated circle which was the light of his own camp fire, to exclaim as he dropped down beside three shadowy figures:

“Well, here I am and I’ve had an adventure.”

“Adventure!” The voice of the speaker was shrill and high-pitched, the voice of a boy in his early teens. “Tell us about it.” This boy was Dorn Montcalm.

Dorn Montcalm was the son of a merchant who made his home in one of the hill villages of Haiti. His father, who had the good of the Island natives at heart, had taken a great liking to Johnny’s aged Professor. They had exchanged many visits. In this way Dorn had become acquainted with Johnny. When he learned of the proposed search for the “Rope of Gold” he had begged to be allowed to go along. Permission was granted by his father only on condition that Pompee, a native servant and a very giant of a man, be taken along as his bodyguard. Pompee was more than welcome for, besides being a man of great physical prowess, he was a famous cook. He knew the value of every native herb, root and fruit. When occasion demanded, he could gather and prepare a delicious repast in the heart of the jungle.

So they sat there by the camp fire waiting for Johnny’s story, Curlie Carson, Dorn and Pompee. The shadow and the spell of the Citadel was upon them. For

some time Johnny did not speak. Their temporary abode, a dark man-made chasm, part of the Citadel, yawned at their back; on either side rose the massive walls.

“What’s happened to your head?” demanded Curlie, suddenly catching sight of Johnny’s white bandages.

“Come to that presently,” replied Johnny. “Had a visitor to-night, didn’t you?”

“No! Why of course not!” Curlie seemed quite startled.

“He looked in at your window.” Johnny chuckled.

“He couldn’t,” Curlie laughed out loud. “It’s twenty feet from the ground.”

“Then you didn’t see him?”

“Of course not. There was no one.”

“There was,” Johnny’s tone was serious.

Curlie Carson leaped to his feet. “What! How—”

“Hung a rope ladder to the great brass cannon above,” Johnny said quietly. “He climbed down after a while. And after that, quite soon, he saw something that caused him to do a back somersault off the end of his ladder. Wonder he didn’t break his neck.”

“But he didn’t?” said Curlie, pacing nervously back and forth.

“No,” said Johnny. “Apparently these natives are like cats—always land on their feet.”

He was surprised at the evident agitation caused in Curlie’s mind by this disclosure. “What’s he cooking up in that dark little laboratory of his?” Johnny asked himself. He recalled the mysterious packages Curlie’s burros had packed up the mountain.

“Radio is all I can think of,” he told himself. “Lots of sense to that. We had a portable outfit complete in a box and decided not to bring it.”

He was to know the answer to all this in due time. For the present it was to remain the freshest mystery of the grim old Citadel.

Presently Curlie dropped back to his place beside the fire, which by this time had burned itself down to a dark red bed of blackening coals.

“It’s all done by the aid of batteries,” he mumbled as if speaking to himself. “Did that visitor of mine come round and try to break your head?” he asked, once more staring at Johnny’s bandages.

“No, well,—perhaps, who can tell? It was some native or other.”

Settling back in his place Johnny told of the night’s encounter. “That proves,” he ended, “that some places are not as safe as they seem.”

“And that you may expect a doctor to appear upon the scene at any time,” laughed Curlie.

“Anyway,” said Johnny quite soberly, “he was a handy person to meet. Only hope I get an opportunity to repay him.”

Once more silence, the great, ominous, silence of the Citadel hung over all. For a full ten minutes no one spoke. It was old Pompee who at last broke the silence.

“Once,” his deep voice rumbled, “men lay upon the ground as we rest here now, waiting for sleep to come. There were hundreds, perhaps thousands of them, prisoners condemned to toil upon the unfinished walls.

“And on this night,” his voice rolled deep, and solemn, “as they looked up they saw a single man toiling there, as they had toiled during the day. This man was larger than any one of us, larger than any of them. And he was greater than all of them,” Pompee continued. “The greatest, most powerful ruler Haiti has ever known. He was their emperor. And yet he toiled there at common labor the long night through. Why?”

As he paused for an answer he looked away at the distant wall to fancy again that he saw a figure moving there, to imagine that he caught the rhythmic motion of a mason working in brick, mortar and stone.

“Of course,” he went on as no one spoke, “he may have been angry and

impatient at the slow workmen. And yet—”

“He hid something there,” said Dorn.

“And that?” asked Johnny.

“Was the ‘Rope of Gold’,” said Dorn. “It required two men to carry it. But the emperor was a powerful man, the most powerful ever known in Haiti.” The French boy’s tone became eager, insistent. “He could have wrapped it about him, inside his great purple coat.”

“Yes,” said Pompee, giving approval. “And that is what he did. But where is the ‘Rope of Gold’ now?”

To this question none could give answer, though each wished that he could do so.

Once more the silence of shadows and night fell upon them.

For some time Curlie spread his slim legs before the fire. Then, apparently remembering some forgotten mission, he sprang to his feet.

“Going down the mountain,” he said shortly. “Be late getting back, past midnight probably.”

“Look out for the natives,” warned Johnny.

“Natives?” said Curlie. “Natives of Haiti? They wouldn’t hurt you.”

“You never can tell.” Johnny rubbed his bandaged head.

Curlie disappeared. The fire burned lower and lower till only a spark remained. Then, because their musty bedchamber within the grim walls seemed unusually damp and chill on this night, Johnny and Dorn dragged their blankets to a flat open space. There rolling themselves up side by side, with the massive Pompee near by, they prepared for sleep.

Dorn, the dark-eyed French boy, was soon breathing in the steady way of a deep sleeper. But Johnny could not sleep. Life that day had been strange. He had thought little of this journey in the beginning. True, he had hoped, boy fashion,

that something might come of it; that they might find something of real value that would aid the aged Professor in his work. It was to be, at worst, a well deserved vacation, a week's experience worth telling of when he returned to his home in the States.

But the presence of natives where there had been no natives before, especially of a long-haired bronze type such as he had not seen before, was vaguely disturbing.

"It's like coming quite suddenly upon a bumblebee's nest," he told himself, "only a great deal worse. What can they want? Is there really something hidden here that they know of and do not wish disturbed? What will come of it all?"

Finding that sleep would not come, he rose at last to begin the ascent of a flight of stairs leading to the top of the Citadel.

"Go a little way up," he told himself. "Cool my blood. Dorn's safe enough. There's Pompee to protect him."

As he began to climb, the bracing night air, acting as a stimulant, drove him up and up until at last he stood at the very top of the Citadel, one hundred and thirty feet above the ground.

"Here," he told himself with a quick intake of breath, "Christophe the Emperor stood on that memorable night spreading mortar and laying bricks. And it may be," he caught his breath, "that I am standing at this very moment above the treasure he buried so long ago.

"Oh, Christophe!" he exclaimed. "In your younger days, before the love of gold and power drove you mad, you dreamed great dreams for the good of your people. Now, as never before, they need the wealth you hid away in your time of great might."

He would have added, "If it be within your power reveal the hiding place to me now," but somehow a feeling came over him that this would be akin to the wild superstitions that pervaded the land, so he fell into silence.

The top of the Citadel is broad and very long; a perfect promenade for a moonlight night.

Now fancying himself a guard pacing his beat in the silent night, and now endeavoring to live again the days of long ago, Johnny paced the ramparts in silence.

Never had there been such a night, and never a lovelier sight in all the world. At the back of the Citadel distant mountains loomed, blue, indistinct, mysterious.

Before him he caught the glint of the far away sea. At its shore, he knew, palms grew rank and tall, shading beautiful white stucco homes. The water of the sea was blue and clear as the most transparent glass. Green parrots flitted from tree to tree. And in the evening the mocking birds sing.

“It’s the most beautiful island in all the world,” he told himself, as he walked slowly along with bowed head, “and yet its history is the saddest of all.

“Columbus found it. He made an earnest attempt to colonize it. Yet it brought him only sorrow, a dungeon and chains. The French conquered it. It brought them only death. Christophe dreamed dreams. He, too, ended in defeat. And why? Gold! Columbus might have succeeded but the greedy Spaniards demanded gold and more gold. He was obliged to enslave the natives to obtain gold. The French were no better. Slavery has always brought tragedy.

“Gold. Christophe was thought of as a hero and a liberator until he fell in love with glittering gold.

“Gold,” he stopped short in his tracks. He was here at this very moment in a search for gold, the ‘Rope of Gold.’

“Ah, yes,” he told himself after a moment’s thought. “But we want it at least in part for others, not entirely for ourselves.”

He strolled slowly on. As he did so, he saw in his mind’s eye a broad aqueduct running down from the mountain and on out over a desolate, cactus grown plain. It was broken in places, but once it was repaired it would bring water to thousands of thirsty acres. Not alone that, but it would bring pure, cold water to those who now traveled far to carry luke-warm water on donkeys’ backs.

“Hundreds die needlessly every year because of the water,” the Professor had said. “If only we had the money for rebuilding the waste places.”

“He must have it,” the boy told himself. “Somehow—”

Of a sudden, he felt himself sinking. His first thought was that he had walked off the wall.

But no, he was in the very center.

Stones crumbled and glided beneath his feet. He threw his arms out madly. It was no use. Down, down he went.

He knew on the instant that the unusual had happened.

“It’s a secret opening in the wall,” he told himself. “I have found the hiding place of the ‘Rope of Gold’.”

“Or you have found death,” a voice seemed to whisper. “You are more than a hundred feet above the mountain top.”

CHAPTER III
THE HIDDEN PITFALL

Not once in all his young life had Johnny Thompson felt so near his end as when he felt himself shooting downward into the unknown heart of the ancient Citadel.

That there were cavities, cisterns, secret passages, and air-vents running here and there through that massive pile of stone, he knew well enough. Some of them he and Curlie, ever hopeful of finding the hidden treasure, had explored. Some cavities had been prisons, others granaries, and one vastly greater than all others had been a cistern for storing rain water.

“But this one?” His heart stopped beating. What if it were an air shaft, running to the very bottom, a hundred feet below? He dared not think. What if it were indeed a storage place for treasure? What if he landed on piles of clinking gold? He dared not hope.

At this moment life, the priceless gift, seemed more precious than ever before. The affair was over in a fraction of a second, yet in that brief span of time all the bright glory of life in this beautiful world appeared to flash before him.

Thud! He struck with a sudden force that drove his knees into his chin and set his teeth rattling.

Instantly there was the sound of wild commotion all about him. “Bats!” he told himself. “Wait till I get out my flashlight. They’ll scurry away fast enough. Only hope the torch is not broken in the fall. Whew! How glad I am to be alive!”

It was with trembling fingers that he at last drew the small flashlight from his pocket.

“If the bulb’s broken,” he thought as a cold chill set his teeth chattering. “Not much fun spending the night down here with these bats.”

A little cry of joy escaped his lips as the light flashed on and the bats, as if touched by a magician’s wand, vanished from sight.

His joy was short lived. The place he was in was small, not over fifteen feet from corner to corner. And the walls that towered above him, some twenty feet, instead of running straight up, slanted in from bottom to top.

“It’s as if I had been sitting upon the very tip-top of a twenty foot pyramid,” he told himself, “and the tip crumbled in, letting me drop inside.”

“Wish it was made of paste-board,” he told himself, tapping the solid stone wall. “But it’s not, and I’m here.”

He sat down to think. Here indeed was a predicament. Neither Curlie nor Dorn knew where he had gone. He would not be able to get out by himself. When he did not return they would search for him. But in that vast pile of brick and stone what chance was there of being found? In its day it had been the most massive fort in the western hemisphere. Ten thousand troops had been quartered there. There were hundreds of holes and caverns, dungeons and passages to be searched.

“And there is the jungle all about,” he told himself. “They may think I have been kidnapped by natives and may go searching there.”

But Johnny was young. What was still better, he had a firm faith in the ways of Providence.

“I will hear them walking on the wall,” he told himself. “I’ll call to them.”

He did hear someone walking on the wall and did call. The result, however, was far different from what he expected.

In the meantime Curlie Carson was returning over a jungle path in the night. The objects he carried slung over his back would have caused Johnny Thompson to stare in amazement. They were two native drums. One was small but the other was an exact duplicate of the one that had won for Johnny a sore head and had endangered his life.

“It’s all done with the aid of batteries,” Curlie repeated to himself as he passed from a moonlit spot into the shadows. “But the drums will help. They will help a lot.” He let forth a low deep chuckle that said volumes.

“Won’t Johnny and Dorn be surprised!” He chuckled again.

* * * * * * * *

After stirring uneasily in his blankets, Dorn at last awoke. It was late in the night, he knew, because the moon was hanging low. He put out a hand to the spot where Johnny should have been sleeping. It was empty. He was a little startled at this. He was more surprised and disturbed a moment later as a dull tum-tum came to him.

“Native drums,” he whispered to himself. Yet he could not be sure.

Oddly enough, the sound appeared to come from within the fort itself, in the direction of Curlie’s improvised laboratory.

As the boy propped himself up for a look at the fort, he fancied he caught a flash of red light. Yes, there it was again, this time it was yellow. It appeared to come from a great crack in the wall. This crack, he suddenly recalled, ran a zig-zagging course down the right side of Curlie’s laboratory.

“Strange he’d work so late,” he thought.

Then of a sudden, this time louder, more distinct, came the boom of a drum.

He was startled. Recalling Johnny’s story of the spying native, he wondered if some wandering tribe of wild natives had taken possession of Curlie’s secret place. He thought of waking Pompee. Then, of a sudden his heart went cold. What if Pompee too were gone?

A moment of suspense and he was reassured. Pompee’s great bulk, sprawled out before the fire, was unmistakable.

“It’s all so strange,” he told himself, dropping back into his place. “I—I almost wish I hadn’t come.”

Then, like Johnny, he saw in his mind’s eye the needy natives, the children,

bright-eyed boys and girls stricken with sickness from bad water and pining away without hope. Then, because he was very young and eager, his vision returned brighter than before.

“The ‘Rope of Gold’,” he said aloud. “We will find it, perhaps to-morrow.”

A quarter of an hour later Curlie Carson came tiptoeing silently through the shadows. He paused for a moment to look down at the sleepers, gave vent to a low whistle of surprise upon seeing that Johnny was gone, then stood for a moment as if in deep thought.

“Where’s Johnny?” asked Dorn, sitting up.

“Don’t you know?” Curlie’s voice showed surprise.

“No,” the boy replied. “He was here. I fell asleep. I woke up. He was gone. That is all.”

“He’s all right,” said Curlie, dropping to a place beside Dorn and drawing a blanket about him. “Gone for a walk. Be coming back presently. Anyway, we couldn’t find him in the night if we tried.”

Realizing the truth of this, Dorn settled back in his place to at last fall asleep.

* * * * * * * *

In his accidental prison Johnny Thompson found only one task before him, with plenty of time for its execution. This task was that of examining every niche and cranny of the enclosure which might lead to a means of escape.

“What’s the use?” he exclaimed at last. “One might, perhaps, climb a perpendicular wall. Jean Val Jean in Victor Hugo’s book was credited with that power. But when the walls slant toward you on every side, what chance?”

Once more he sat down. And, because he wished to conserve his meager supply of light, he snapped off the electric torch to sit staring into utter darkness.

What does one think of when he is at the bottom of a dungeon in a strange land? Johnny wondered a while about this. That he was not the first one who had spent hours of solitary darkness in this great fortress he knew well enough. He was not

even the first white man. During the reign of Christophe more than one daring soldier of fortune sought adventure in Haiti to find a dungeon instead.

With much time on his hands, Johnny thought of many things. He thought first of the aged Professor and his labor of love for the kindly natives of the valley.

“I wanted to help.” His throat tightened. “The Professor laughed at our search. He said there was no ‘Rope of Gold’. Perhaps he was right. But it was a beautiful dream. Besides, he said it would be a fine experience. Well,” he sighed, “it *is* an experience.”

For a long time he sat there thinking and the thoughts that came to him were far from happy ones. Then, into his consciousness there came a disturbance. He scarcely knew its cause. Was it a sound? Was it some slight movement close at hand? His hair appeared to rise as he sat there straining in a vain effort to sense the thing that crept in upon him.

In an effort to think clearly, he rested his head back against the wall. Then, like a flash it came to him. Someone was walking up above, yet so soft were the foot-falls that it was necessary for him to sense the jar of them by placing his head against the wall.

“Can’t be Curlie,” he told himself. “Nor Dorn.”

Because of the sharp cactus that grew among the rocks the boys wore heavy soled, high-topped boots.

“But it’s someone,” he told himself. “And that someone must help me.”

At once two pictures flashed into his mind: one of a strange native clinging to a slender rope ladder, peering into Curlie’s laboratory; the other of a curious, broad, little white man looking down at him through thick glasses.

“What if it’s the native!” he thought with a shudder. “What if he has companions and this is a trap, a pitfall prepared for me?”

He hesitated. The thing seemed absurd. Yet there had always been strange doings at the Citadel. For ten years after the emperor’s death the Citadel had been closely guarded. No one might enter it save with one hand in that of the escorting guard.

Even of late, attempts to explore the walls had been frustrated. A party with picks and shovels had come here. In the morning their tools had vanished. A single white man had camped here. Some time later his camp was found deserted and partially destroyed. He had never been seen again.

“Huh!” the boy grunted, shaking himself free from these forebodings. “He may have perished by falling into a hole, as I will if I do not make the most of any opportunity to escape.”

At that, throwing caution to the wind, he stood on tiptoe and cupping his hands shouted:

“Hello there! Hello! Hello!”

The ancient walls roared back *Hello*.

Almost instantly the jar of footsteps grew more distinct.

“Got me the first time.” A thrill of real joy shot through his being. This was followed almost instantly by a great wave of fear. Who was walking up there at the small hours of the night? What was to come of it all?

The first question was answered immediately. Hearing a stir at the top he threw on his flashlight to find himself staring into a familiar face, the face of the native who, but a few hours before, had been swinging on the rope ladder before Curlie’s window.

If any doubt remained in his mind, it was dispelled at once, for without uttering a word, the native began letting down the rope ladder.

“For all the world as if it had been prepared for this very occasion.” Johnny’s heart raced. His brow grew hot, then turned icy cold.

“Well,” he concluded, “the die is cast. There’s nothing now but to climb the ladder.” With that he awaited its coming.

CHAPTER IV
HE WHO WALKS ALONE

Dorn, the young French boy, awoke early on the morning after Johnny's disappearance. He had fallen asleep in the middle of the night confident that he would find his good American friend sleeping peacefully by his side in the morning. That he was not there alarmed him.

Like most French boys of the better class, Dorn was endowed with a sense of responsibility beyond his years. He awakened Pompee and Curlie Carson and was for starting a search at once, even without breakfast.

This plan Curlie vetoed. He had been out prowling around late at night and was hungry. Besides, being something of a soldier of fortune, who had been lost many times himself, he did not share the French boy's apprehension.

"He'll show up," he said, digging in his pack for a match to light the fire. "Pompee won't be any good without his morning cup of coffee; for that matter, neither will I."

A half hour later, having eaten a hasty breakfast of cassava bread, coffee and mangoes, Dorn struck away across the court that led to the main stairway of the Citadel.

His heart was heavy for he had taken a great liking to the frank, free and kindly American boy, Johnny Thompson. He knew, too, what a dangerous thing it is to be lost in a jungle.

With his eyes and ears open, he wandered among the ruins. Up a stair here, down one there, peering here, there, everywhere he went. Always hoping to catch sight of Johnny's sturdy figure yet always disappointed, he spent the whole bright

tropical morning hunting.

At times he came upon Curlie Carson or Pompee. They, too, were searching. Curlie was taking the affair seriously at last.

“If we don’t find him trapped somewhere in the Citadel,” he said to Dorn, “we’ll have to take to the jungle trails. He may have been spirited away.”

“Spirited away?” The French boy’s tone showed surprise.

“Yes, by the natives. There’s been a lot of queer doings around this mossy old pile of stone. Remember that native who took the trouble to hang a ladder before my window and look in?”

“Yes.”

“He didn’t do that just for fun. These natives are serious folks, despite all their drumming, dancing and singing. I’ve seen natives of other lands, Central America, Alaska, Siberia. I tell you they’re different.

“But they’re superstitious, too,” he went on. “Look at the way I frightened that fellow,” he laughed. “Never meant to at all. Didn’t even know he was there. But look! A little flash of red light, a little something for him to see and Bim! Down he goes, head over heels. Wonder he didn’t break his neck.

“Know what, Dorn?” he suddenly grew serious. “Know what I could do? I could walk from one end of this island to the other and take you with me, and you’d never see a native; at night I mean, always at night.”

“But there are thousands of homes right by the roadside.”

“Plenty of homes. Homes can’t run away. People can. You might see their bare heels. That would be all.”

It was Pompee who made the discovery of the day. There were many strange secrets hidden away behind Pompee’s wrinkled old brow. As a boy he had wandered many days among these ruins. Fear had been upon him then and a great dread, a dread of the spirits of those who had lived there in the past. Yet a boy’s consuming curiosity had led him on and on until he knew every dungeon, every secret passage as an American boy knows the secrets of the woods at the

back of his pasture.

While Curlie and Dorn searched every dark corner, Pompee had eyes only for the new, the unfamiliar. In time he found it, a fresh break in the top of the Citadel.

There he dropped on hands and knees to shade his aged eyes and peer into the darkness below.

Long he remained there motionless. Then of a sudden, a low exclamation escaped his lips. Having moved a little to one side, he had allowed a glimmer of light to touch a spot on the floor of that dark hole where Johnny had come upon a misadventure.

Another moment of silence, then he spoke a name:

“Johnny.”

He spoke it so softly it could not have been heard ten yards away.

He listened. No answer.

“Johnny,” a little louder this time. Still no answer.

“Johnny Thompson!” His lips were at the jagged opening now. His voice sounded out like the roar of a great beast in the hollow enclosure. A bat beat the air with its wings.

Still no answer.

The old man rose to his feet. On his face was a look of fear, the fear that had gripped him here as a boy. His voice trembled, his words came out through chattering teeth as he called again and again:

“Dorn! Dorn! Dorn!”

And this time there came an answering call.

After a long day of weary search Dorn had seated himself on a stone parapet to watch the sun, a fiery red ball slowly sinking toward the sea. As he sat there it

seemed to him that the sun of hope for a little valley that he and Johnny and the Professor had learned to love, was sinking never to rise with another morn.

“The valley has seen triumph and tragedy,” he told himself. “Time was when one could not have found a richer valley. And yet, even then those who labored there were poor. They were slaves. After that freedom and revolution, a hundred years.”

But now, how his hopes had grown. America, the United States, great, strong, beautiful America had come to the aid of little Haiti. Valleys were blossoming as of old. Health was returning to the people. And all this time they were free. “Free,” he repeated the word reverently.

“We hoped so much for our little valley too,” he told himself. “But there is not money for all. Some must wait. And now,” his throat tightened. “Johnny Thompson is lost, perhaps gone forever. And our golden dream will soon be forgotten.”

It was at this moment that he heard the call of old Pompee. It was a strange call, he thought. These Haitians express so much in a call. But this call spoke neither of joy nor sorrow.

“What can it be?” he asked himself as, springing down from his seat, high above the mountain crest, he went racing down at a reckless pace.

“What is it? Have you found him?” he cried as he came near.

Pompee did not answer. He merely stood and pointed at his feet.

Only when the boy stood at his side did he see that he was pointing at a hole in the Citadel’s stone top.

Dropping on one knee, he stared into the darkness of that man-made cavern but could see nothing. The sun had sunk too low. The spot of light was no longer there.

Only by lighting a match and allowing it to drop was he able to see. Then he gave forth a sharp exclamation. What he saw was a khaki handkerchief. The ownership of that bit of cloth was unmistakable. A little friend of Johnny’s had embroidered a large red J in each of his handkerchiefs.

“It’s Johnny’s!” he said in a low, tense tone. “He has been down there. He—he fell in.”

Pompee nodded.

“Is he down there still?”

Pompee shook his head solemnly.

“Where can he be?”

“How can one say? See!” said the faithful old servant. “The sun is gone. Night comes swiftly. Caught on the top of this place where spirits walk, who can say what may happen to us?”

“Spirits do no harm,” said Dorn. “It is only the living ones. But we will go down.” He led the way.

* * * * * * * *

And what of Johnny? Where was he?

He had accepted the proffered aid. He had climbed the rope ladder. What else was there to do? The native who looked down upon him, who earlier in the night had looked in upon Curlie Carson at his work, might be a villain. What of it? If he had cared to he might have murdered Johnny, then closed up the hole in the fortress roof. That he had not chosen to do so was in his favor.

“Probably an innocent, kindly fellow,” Johnny told himself. “A little curious, that’s all. Most of the natives down here are like that.”

He did not feel too certain that this conclusion was correct. Nevertheless, up the rope ladder he went. And as he climbed, all unbeknown to him, his handkerchief fluttered from his pocket and dropped to the floor, there to remain as mute evidence that its owner had spent some time in that dungeon-like hole. Hours later, as you have seen, it was found by Pompee.

On clambering over the rough entrance to the pitfall he found himself surrounded by three stalwart brown men. These men were armed only with steel pointed spears and machetes, a thing Johnny marveled at. In the part of Haiti

which he had visited, spears were scarce, bows and arrows practically unknown, and rifles very common.

As he thought this through he recalled his own bow and quiver of arrows. He had taken them with him on his lonely ramble; in fact he never left camp without them.

In his fall the bow had been knocked from his hand and the quiver, caught on a jagged bit of rock, had broken the light thong that held it to him.

“Where are they now?” he thought.

Ah, there they were!

With a sigh of relief he stooped to pick up his bow. He was not interrupted in this procedure, but as his right hand gripped the bow, one of the natives seized the quiver of razor-pointed arrows.

A thrill shot through him. His brow grew suddenly cold. “So that’s that,” he thought. “At least they don’t trust me too much.”

Turning about, the native who had seized the quiver started away, over a dim trail that did not lead toward the boy’s camp.

For a moment the boy stood where he was. Then a hand pushed him very gently forward.

“What’s the use?” he thought. “They are three. I am one. It is night. I am unarmed. Whatever they will to do they can do.”

He thought of the young French boy. “Shouldn’t have brought him,” he told himself. “But old Pompee will care for him.”

He thought of the needy valley people, of the old Professor and his dreams, of the ‘Rope of Gold’.

“This is the end of that,” he told himself as he followed on in the darkness.

They led him along the top of the Citadel for a time, then, after descending stone stairways into the heart of the fortress, lost him completely in a maze of rooms

and passageways to at last emerge upon the top of a stairway that, hidden as it was by great over-hanging treetops, had escaped the eager eyes of the three boys.

“They know a great deal about this old fortress,” Johnny told himself. “Shouldn’t wonder if they could lead me to the ‘Rope of Gold’.

“But where do we go from here?” he asked himself, as the leader moved on down the moss-grown stairs.

At the foot of the stairs were some twenty natives. Apparently Johnny and his guards had been expected. He noted with a little tremor that two of the men carried light strong ropes.

Without a word the men formed in line, some in front, some behind him. Then, slowly, the procession moved forward single file over a narrow trail Johnny had not known before.

The boy’s head was in a whirl. They had not said “Come.” They had not said, “You must go with us.” They had said nothing. And yet, there was a subtle something about their actions that said plainer than words, “It is useless to resist. You must come with us.”

“But where am I going?” he asked himself. “Where will I be when I get there? And why am I going at all?” Since he could find no answer to these questions, he gripped his stout bow (now quite useless without his arrows) and trudged silently on into the night.

Several hours later he found himself lying upon his back beneath a giant mahogany tree. He was far up the mountain side. Greenish-gray moss hung like beards from the tree branches. Here it was cool even in daytime.

They had left the trail a half hour before, he and the strange group of natives. He guessed they were hiding until dark. When darkness came they would travel again. Where would they go? What was the end of the trail? To these questions he could form no answer. He had dined well enough on native food. He was not being disturbed now; watched that was all.

“Strange business,” he grumbled to himself.

CHAPTER V
THE GIANT ON THE WALL

All that long, tropical day, with the sun burning hot and dry upon him, Curlie Carson had sought for some trace of Johnny Thompson. At the time Pompee discovered the break in the top of the fortress he was some distance away from the Citadel.

Toward evening he had disappeared into the brush. There, crouching low, like some great, slim cat he prowled along bush grown, vine hung trails looking for a familiar footprint.

Long after darkness had fallen, with the golden spot of an electric torch ever moving before him, he prowled on.

Here a surprised covey of wild parrots flew screaming away, and there some strange creature went scampering down his path. Here he narrowly avoided stepping on a great lizard asleep in the trail, and there a yellow snake with green eyes that gleamed horribly in the night caused him to start and shudder.

At last, at a place some five miles from the Citadel, where two trails crossed at a sharp angle, he came to an abrupt halt to bend down and examine the loose, dry soil. Dropping on hands and knees he followed the other trail for a distance of fifty yards or more. Coming upon the dry bed of a stream, he halted. There, to all appearance, he found what he sought.

The bed of the stream was completely dry, but up the bank a little way was a small damp spot, where in the rainy season a spring flowed. In this damp spot were three well marked footsteps.

“Huh!” he grunted. “Didn’t think he’d desert us.”

For a full moment he stood there pondering. Then at last he turned and walked back toward camp.

“He wouldn’t desert us. Stands to reason he wouldn’t,” he muttered. “He might have discovered a clue. Some native might be leading him on. But leading him on to what?”

Curlie didn’t trust natives. He had a notion that all people save those of his own race were treacherous.

Arrived at camp, he cast down a bombshell by saying in his quietest drawl:

“Johnny’s gone into the mountains with a bunch of natives. We’ll follow in the morning, and we’ll take Mike with us.”

Dorn, the French boy, wanted to ask who Mike was, but being timid, and having always been somewhat ill at ease in the presence of this peculiar boy, he asked nothing.

Curlie ate hastily and in silence. Then with a mumbled excuse, he lost himself once more in the night.

“Strange fellow,” said Dorn.

“Some day mebby *Papa Lou*,” said old Pompee, with a shake of his wise old head. “Plenty understand that one boy.”

A *Papa Lou* is a native witch doctor of Haiti, a priest of the Voodoo cult. Dorn thought it very improbable that Curlie, or, for that matter, any white boy, would turn into a *Papa Lou*. However, realizing the futility of arguing with an old man, he kept silent.

With his back against a tree, with the moon gilding the topmost ridge of the ancient fortress, the French boy sat wondering in a troubled sort of way what had become of his good friend Johnny Thompson. Beyond the discovery of the khaki handkerchief at the bottom of the pitfall, they had found no trace of him.

“He can’t have gone away of his own accord,” he assured himself. “He is too honorable for that. He—”

His reflections were broken short off by the cry of old Pompee:

“See, *Monsieur*. Only look! Look!”

Dorn did look and what he saw made his blood run cold.

* * * * * * * *

What Dorn saw had nothing to do with Johnny Thompson. For all that Johnny was having his share of adventure. We left him, as you will know, hiding away with his captors in a secluded tropical glade. The day was hot. He had traveled far. His day dreams may have blended with real dreams. Be that as it may, he was suddenly startled into complete consciousness by a series of shrill cries and, as he sprang to his feet, found himself in complete possession of the field. Every black had fled.

Hearing a sound in a tree at his left, he turned to see a native frantically struggling up the trunk in an endeavor to reach the lowest branch.

“The whole bunch has gone mad,” he told himself.

Then, of a sudden his eyes fell upon his quiver of arrows lying on the ground. With an instinct of preservation harking back perhaps to those remote days when his ancestors dressed in skins and lived by hunting with the longbow, he reached first for his quiver, then his bow.

As he reached for the bow, he caught sight of a pair of brown heels speeding down the trail.

Instinctively he turned to look in the opposite direction. That instant his blood froze.

Charging straight at him was a creature terrible to look upon. Curling yellow tusks six inches long, jaws that chopped at every bouncing step, a wild boar of the wilderness, savage, mad with rage, red-eyed and terrible, had come tearing out of the jungle.

One instant Johnny stood there paralyzed, the next, with such automatic precision as only comes from endless hours of training, his splendid hands did his bidding.

An arrow flashed into place, the bow string sang taut, the arrow sped to strike with a dull spat. The mad beast turning half about uttered a low grunting roar. The second arrow sped. The wild boar, rearing high and lunging far, fell at the boy's feet, dead.

For a moment Johnny stood there motionless. The whole affair had been thrust upon him so suddenly that he had been able to form no plan of action, nor indeed to comprehend the meaning of it all.

"No rifles," he told himself at last, thinking of the natives.

Of a sudden it came to him that he was master of the situation. More than one pair of eyes had witnessed the deadly execution of his powerful yew bow. Eight arrows remained in his quiver.

"Not one of those natives, nor all of them together would dare oppose me so long as I have my bow and arrows," he told himself.

As proof of this he saw a man in the tree nearest him, a look of abject terror on his face, staring down at him.

Seeing the wild creature lying before him and knowing the high place which wild pork held in the esteem of the natives, he drew his clasp knife to cut the jugular vein and allow the blood to run free.

Then with a laugh, he tossed his quiver of arrows over his shoulder, gripped his bow and turning walked slowly back down the trail that had led him to that place.

* * * * * * * *

When Dorn was brought to full consciousness by Pompee's grip on his arm and his insistent, "Look, *Monsieur*. Only look!" he stared wildly about him for a moment. Then, following the direction of the aged native's uplifted and pointing hand, he strained his eyes in an attempt to discover some unusual sight at the crest of the ancient Citadel.

For some little time he saw nothing. The distant tum-tum-tum of a native drum smote his ears. That was all.

“The natives,” he said in a surprised whisper. “Why are they here?”

“It is not the natives of to-day.” Pompee’s voice seemed to come from the depths of some echoing chamber. “It is a spirit of the past. It is he, the Emperor, Christophe. I have heard. I did not believe. Now I see. I believe. It is he who beats the drum. It is he who walks upon the wall. He has come back to call his scattered people together. For what? Who can say?”

The old man was trembling from head to foot, whether from excitement or fear the boy could not tell.

Just as he finished Dorn’s eyes caught the gleam of two red balls of light. These appeared to be some eight or ten feet above the top of the Citadel.

“And they move!” he said in a tense whisper. “They move!”

“*Oui Monsieur*, they move,” said Pompee. “It is he. It is Christophe, the great man of Haiti. He has come back to walk the walls of his great work, his Citadel, just as he worked there a hundred years ago with trowel and mortar.”

Dorn was silent. This thing was weird in the extreme. He did not wish to believe in spirits. Yet the night, the silent jungle, the deep shadows of the fortress so grim and old, the memory of the bloody deeds that fortress had witnessed worked powerfully upon him.

Then as he sat there, hands gripped tight, tense, silent, expectant, he saw the thing clearly. A figure, a very giant of a man, (or was it a man?) moved forward at the top of the Citadel. The moon had climbed to a point where it appeared as a yellow ball lying on the very crest of the fortress. And now the giant figure, moving forward, stood out in bold relief against the ball of gold.

“It is Christophe,” the aged native murmured. Dorn could hear his teeth chatter. He was swaying back and forth with a rhythmic motion that appeared to accompany the distant beating of the drum.

“And there, there,” again Pompee gripped his arm, as the giant figure passed on, and a shorter one moved into the spotlight that was the full moon.

“There is the bearer of the magic telescope. He was ever with him.”

It was true. A short figure followed the giant as he walked on the wall.

A moment longer they watched the strange, shadowy pair. Then a cloud, drifting in from the sea, hid the face of the moon and all was shrouded in darkness.

At that precise moment the drum beats ceased. Silence and darkness hung about them like a shroud.

“He is gone,” said Pompee. His tone was deep. “He will return. It is a sign.”

“A sign of what?” Dorn asked.

“How should I know? I am but a poor old man. I am not a *Papa Lou*.”

For some time they sat there in silence. Then Dorn said in a quiet tone:

“Pompee, tell me of the Magic Telescope.”

“There is much to tell, my son.” Pompee’s tone too was quiet now. “But I will tell you a little. When the great Christophe came to be our ruler, men were in the habit of sleeping much in the sun. The fields were neglected. Weeds and jungle were everywhere and people were very poor.

“Christophe was a great worker. He was not always a tyrant. In the beginning he loved his people and dreamed great dreams for them. It was only when the love of power and gold had driven out his love of God and the toiling people that he became a tyrant.

“At once, when he became emperor, he decreed that all men should work certain hours every day, except on holidays and Sundays. That this decree might surely be put into execution he bought himself a great, brass telescope. This, a brown boy from the hills always carried after the emperor. Many days the emperor wandered far over the hills and the mountains. Always the boy and the telescope went with him.

“On some tall pile of rocks the emperor would stand for hours, looking, looking everywhere. It has always been said that the telescope had magic within it; that with it the great man could see hundreds of miles. I do not know. Certain it was that many times a man sleeping in the shade during working hours one day found himself in a dungeon or on a chain gang the next. Christophe had seen him

from afar."

"And the telescope?" said Dorn eagerly. "Where is it now?"

"Who knows, *Monsieur*? Who can say? That was all very long ago. Where too is the 'Rope of Gold'?"

"Yes, where?" Dorn echoed.

"But see, *Monsieur*. It is time we sleep."

Dorn rolled up in his blankets. But sleep did not come at once. Half an hour later Curlie Carson came creeping back to camp and found him still wide awake.

"Dorn," Curlie said in a low whisper, "did you see anything to-night?"

"I saw something that was very strange." Dorn replied.

"Dorn," said Curlie, "some wise man has written, 'Believe nothing you hear and only half that you see.' That which you have seen to-night belongs to the half which is not to be believed."

Dorn had only the remotest notion of the meaning of these strange words. Yet they brought him a curious sort of comfort.

CHAPTER VI
A STARTLING DISCOVERY

Night was fast approaching when Curlie Carson, weary from a long day's tramping, threw himself down at the foot of a tamarind tree that shadowed a narrow dried-up stream. He needed rest and time to think. That day he had spent in following the trail of Johnny and the band of natives. Two hours before he had lost the trail. Now he was far, far away from the camp at the Citadel and from his improvised laboratory in the heart of the crumbling old fortress.

Thoughts of his laboratory there all unguarded disturbed him. "He's almost finished," he grumbled to himself. "Be a pity if some natives would get in and wreck him.

"Poor old Mike," he sighed. "All alone in that gloomy old dungeon. But I guess it's safe enough for all that." He chuckled. He was thinking of the fright he had given that native on the rope ladder.

"Same natives that spirited Johnny away." A frown formed on his brow. "Wonder what they've done to him by now? Why couldn't I have followed that trail? Why—"

He broke short off to stare down at the sandy bed of the dried up stream. Did he see the print of a bare foot there! He bent over to look more closely.

"Yes," he told himself, at once alive with fresh hope. "It is a footprint. And there's another, and yet another. They came this way. Hurray! I am on the trail again!"

His joy was short lived. He had not followed the bed of the stream that had been used as a trail a dozen yards before he made a startling discovery. Johnny was no

longer with the group of natives. That this was the same group of natives, he did not doubt. Two of these men had peculiar feet, one was nearly clubfooted, the other had lost a big toe. Their footprints in a damp spot registered these peculiarities quite perfectly.

“Can’t be mistaken,” he told himself. “Question is, what have they done with Johnny?”

To this question he could form no satisfactory answer. One fact stood out plainly: since he had come in search of his friend Johnny Thompson, and since he no longer traveled with this band, there was no longer any reason for following this trail.

“Back track is better,” he told himself. “May find some trace of Johnny. At any rate it will lead me back to the Citadel, to camp and my laboratory.”

He wondered in a vague sort of way what Dorn and old Pompee would think of his prolonged absence. Would they start out in search of him? He hoped not. Yet one never could tell. He had been gone since early morning. It had been agreed that he should take up the search for Johnny while Dorn and Pompee guarded camp and waited for much needed supplies that Dorn’s father had promised to send.

Rising and turning his back on the native trail, he began making his way back down the stream.

He had not gone a quarter of a mile before the trail left the bed of the stream to go branching away up the slope of a wooded hill.

Shadows were falling fast. It would soon be quite dark. As the boy hastened on, a breeze sweeping in from the sea fanned his cheek. It fanned something else; an all but burned out camp fire gleamed out anew.

This sudden flash of red caught the boy’s eye. Turning sharply to the right, he took a dozen steps, then paused in sudden astonishment.

As he stood there before the mildly glowing camp fire he fancied himself Robinson Crusoe. On the sands of the beach had he come upon an abandoned cannibal camp?

“And they do say that these Haitian natives, some of them, descended from cannibals and are not too sure to be free from cannibalism,” he told himself.

A cold chill ran up his spine. All about him were the evidences of a recently completed feast. Bones and scraps of half roasted flesh were everywhere. He thought of his missing friend and shuddered afresh.

A cloud obscured the setting sun. The world went dark. The boy found himself paralyzed with overpowering fear.

“Nonsense,” he managed to stammer. “It—it’s no use being foolish. Got—got to get a grip on myself.”

With that he gave the camp fire such a kick as sent sparks flying and momentarily lighted up the scene.

Enheartened by this he seized a handful of dry palm leaves to hurl them on the glowing coals. In a moment’s time he had a bright fire blazing cheerily.

* * * * * * * *

In the meantime there was consternation at the camp by the Citadel. It was bad enough, Dorn thought, with Johnny Thompson missing. Curlie’s continued absence doubled his anxiety. He was for plunging at once into the jungle in search of his lost companions. To this plan Pompee would not agree. “We are but an old man and a boy,” he argued. “I am strong, but being old I have not the endurance of youth. The jungle would claim me as its own. And you are too young to care for yourself in so vast a wilderness.”

Truth was that Pompee, being black, was very superstitious. The vision he had seen on the Citadel had seemed to him a warning. He would much rather have left the place and gone back to his cabin. But loyalty to his young master forbade this. One thing he could do—he could refuse to lead Dorn into further peril and this he did with all his heart.

To Dorn, held as he was to enforced idleness under the most trying circumstances, the tinkling of a bell that sounded far down the trail was a godsend. He sprang down that trail expecting anything and everything. What he found was a very droll looking donkey, named Midas. Midas was laden with all manner of good things to eat, brought straight from Dorn’s own kitchen.

With Midas came Dorn's flaxen-haired cousin Doris. Doris was from the States. She was of French descent but her people had lived so long in America that they had become truly American. Dorn liked Doris; in fact everyone liked her. She had a round, smiling face and laughing blue eyes. A friend never came within hailing distance of her but they heard her cheery "Whoo hoo!" and saw her arm swung high in greeting.

Doris was now in Haiti for a rather long visit, while her father was away in Europe on business, but she had entered so thoroughly into the life of the island that to her friends and relatives she already seemed a part of it.

Both Doris and her dark-eyed cousin Dot, Dorn's sister, had wished to accompany Dorn and his friends on their exploring trip to the Citadel. This, Dot's father would not permit. The best he would allow was an over-night visit when they brought the supplies. It happened that when the day came for leading the drowsy Midas up the mountain with his loaded hampers Dot was much needed in her father's office. So Doris and a native girl, Nieta, had come in her stead. This had brought bitter disappointment to Dot. She had, however, found some comfort in the thought that on the night of Doris' absence she could carry out a secret experiment which she had for a long time contemplated making.

So here was Doris and the dark Nieta. And here too was Midas with his full hampers. And here as well was the marvelous, mysterious Citadel which must be shown to the girls. Dorn had a full day of it with little enough time to think of his missing friends.

CHAPTER VII
THE VOODOO DRUM

But we must not forget Curlie Carson. Lost from his friends, far away among the hills, confronted by what seemed the scene of a grim tragedy, he found himself at first all but overcome by fear and dread. The brilliant illumination caused by burning palm leaves, however, quickly drove from his mind the suggestion that something sinister and quite horrible had happened round the half burned out camp fire. A little back from the fire, beneath a mango tree, he discovered a broad, sharp-toed hoof.

“Hog,” he mumbled to himself.

The next moment he picked up a broad circle of yellow ivory with edge as keen as a knife blade.

“Hog,” he repeated. A suggestion of awe had crept into his tone. “Tusk of a wild hog. And what a monster! Wonder who had the hardihood to face that fellow and kill him. Whoever it was, he found friends enough to help him pick the bones. Wish—”

He turned to search about among the palm leaves and the bushes. To his great joy, he found, high and dry and quite clean upon a broad leaf where it had apparently been forgotten, a liberal slice taken from the great beast’s ham.

“Thanks, kind Providence. Don’t mind if I do.” He watched the palm leaf fire burn low. Then raking out a good bed of live coals, placed his gift from the gods upon it.

At once the evening air was fragrant with broiling pork steak. A half hour later when Curlie rose to go it was with a feeling that nature was good to all mankind.

“But where am I and where is Johnny Thompson?”

These questions he could not answer. He did believe that with good fortune he could find his own way back to camp. This plan, since there seemed to be no likelihood of his coming upon his missing friend, he proceeded to put into execution.

His small flashlight was still with him. By its light he was able to follow winding trails, avoid brambles and save himself from many a fall over hidden rocks and narrow stream beds.

He had been traveling so for some two hours, when of a sudden, appearing to come from nowhere, a sound smote his ear. A single boom of a native drum. It shattered the silence of the night and set small wild creatures scurrying.

“Now what?” He came to a sudden halt.

A moment of silence and there it was again. This time three strokes: Tum! Tum! Tum!

“Over to the right,” he told himself. “Natives. They may have Johnny. At worst it’s to be one of those forbidden native dances, and that’s something. Something that few enough white folks see these days.”

He waited until the drum sounded again. Tum—Tum—Tum—Tum. Then he struck straight away in the direction from which the sound appeared to come. Nor did he pause until the drummer was so near at hand that the drum seemed to be his own ears pulsating in wild rhythm.

Parting the bushes, he peered into the open space beyond. Before him was a spot quite clear of trees and bushes. The grass had been cropped short by wild goats. And there in the center, squatting low, drum between knees, thumping the drum with naked hands, was not some swarthy native drummer but a slim white girl dressed in a bright blouse and plaid knickers.

“Of all places!” he thought. “Miles from human habitation. A girl and a drum at night.”

Still the girl drummed on. Like one in a trance she sat with eyes raised to the stars and sent out such rolls and thunder with such vibrations as the boy had not

heard before.

But even as he listened in awed surprise there sounded a stealthy movement off to his right, another to his left. A twig snapped. A branch made a swishing sound.

He was becoming frightened. Was this some plot? Was the girl a plant, a lure to lead him on? He could not believe this. There was about her face, not a perfectly molded face, but well cut and strong, something of a look he had seen on the face of angels in an ancient painting.

No, the girl is not a part of a plot, for now in a second of silence, she too has caught a sound. Instantly her drum beats cease. She grips the drum by a strap and drags it noiselessly into the brush. Here she backs far into the shadows, straight toward the spot where Curlie stands. A step forward, a hand outstretched and he might touch her.

“Think she’d hear my heart beating,” he said to himself, but in the shadows he could not see her.

“Well,” he thought again, “the show is over. But I wonder?”

* * * * * * * *

During all this time, where was Johnny Thompson? Curlie had followed his trail over many a weary mile in vain. He had come upon a burned out camp fire and the remains of a feast of wild pig. This pig, as you have guessed, was that killed by Johnny. It was this very beast which had worked his liberation from the mysterious natives. He had not returned to camp, for Doris had journeyed to the Citadel, filled with high hopes of finding him there, only to have her hopes dashed to the ground. He was not there.

After retrieving his quiver of arrows and slaying the wild boar, Johnny had found himself free to go where he chose. Not one of the natives who had witnessed his marvelous archery and the deadly power of his bow dared resist him.

But where did he wish to go? For a moment he found himself engaged in a mental struggle. Strange as it may seem, he felt an almost overwhelming desire to stay and see this unusual affair through. There was something to be said for this course of action. The natives had, more than likely, saved his life by

dragging him from the pit in the ancient fort. Not one of them all had laid violent hands upon him. They had shown him every respect. They had forced him to come with them; that was all.

What was there back of their actions? Had they been sent? If so who had sent them and why? All down the centuries since Columbus set the ensign of Spain upon these newly discovered shores, such procedures as this had come about. A queen of some distant tribe takes a fancy to some gallant young Spaniard. She sends a band of men for him. He is brought, whether he wills it or not, to the court. There, in time he is showered with riches and made a king.

A native chief learns that gold and odd bits of jewelry can be traded for steel knives, hawk's bells and bright silk scarfs. His kingdom is far away. He sends a band to waylay a trader and bring him from afar, only to at last return him unharmed and laden with rich treasure.

"But that," the boy told himself, "was very long ago. There's no use romancing. Dorn and Pompee will be worried about me. Curlie will risk his neck to find me. I must return to camp."

Some persons are natural scouts. To them an overturned pebble, a bent twig, moss on trees, a thousand simple things, are a sign. Johnny was not of this brotherhood.

Just as night began to fall he found himself descending a gently sloping hillside where the ground was red as a native clay pipe when, upon rounding a curve, he came within sight of a small, square house that gleamed white in the light of the setting sun.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Now I shall not spend the night alone."

In this he was mistaken. As he neared the place, no dog came out to bark a warning, no naked native children scurried through the doorway to their mother. The place was silent, deserted, lonely. Yet in the fact that this had once been a home; that children had once played with young goats before the door; that a mother had beaten corn for bread and a father had returned from a day of toil, Johnny found comfort. For this boy Johnny was an exceptional character. Himself a wanderer, he was ever dreaming of home, ever thinking of that time when, with loved ones about him, he would sit before his own hearth fire in a home he called his own.

Having explored the half ruined house and found its roof sound, he brought in dry banana leaves to make a bed on the shelf beneath the rafters.

He found ripe bananas in a little run below the house. Half content with this sparse supply of food, he sat down to listen. Nor did he listen long. From above him, on the sloping hillside which had once been a badly cleared cornfield, there came a sound much like a shrill scream.

Stringing his bow and nocking an arrow, he began scouting away up the hill. Now he peered out from behind a clump of young banana plants. And now a great boulder hid him. Now he crept rapidly over a patch of barren red soil. But ever he moved upward. Now and then to his listening ears came welcome sounds, cries, calls, duckings that told him that the quarry was not far away.

And now, as he lifted his head above a low-growing bush, he caught his breath as he murmured:

“Now! Now’s the time.”

Bending his bow for a quick aim, he let fly. Then such a screaming and whirring of wings! A whole covey of wild guinea fowl went wheeling and screaming away into the sunset. A whole covey? Not quite. A fat young cock lay still upon a flat rock. He had been shot through and through by one of Johnny’s arrows.

“Supper!” the boy exulted as he lifted the bird from the rock and retrieved his arrow.

There were dry branches to be had from the trees in the nearest run. These were rapidly converted into a heap of glowing coals. Lacking a kettle for boiling his fowl, Johnny first plucked off the feathers then rolled it in a two inch coat of red clay. After that he buried it, clay and all, beneath a great mound of glowing coals and sat down to await results.

“Life,” he told himself as he sat there with the abandoned home at his back, “is strange. Here was this chap who made this place a home. To him five dollars a year was a fortune. Wild guineas shot or snared, bananas and mangoes growing in the runs, corn from the hills, goat’s meat and goat’s milk, all to be had for the asking. These were his. And clothes,” he chuckled, “down here a long shirt and a broad smile makes a wonderful suit, better than the best dress suit a tailor ever made.

“But back where I came from,” he mused on, “a dress suit, a business suit, golf suit, top coat, winter coat, rain coat, high shoes, oxfords, golf shoes, tennis shoes, scarfs, shirts, collars, socks by the dozen. Men work days, nights and sometimes Sundays for a living wage. And how much is a living wage? Two thousand, three thousand, five thousand dollars. Poor souls! They grow gray and go to hospitals, sanitariums, and early graves. And here a man lives well enough on five dollars a year.”

Seizing a stout stick he scattered the coals to right and left. An oval mound of hard, baked clay lay before him. This he cracked with a rock and behold! Before him lay a feast fit for a king, a guinea fowl baked in clay among the coals.

As he lay down to sleep on that narrow shelf beneath the rafters, he tried to imagine the natures of those who had slept there before him. Their images did not linger long for he was soon lost in slumber.

CHAPTER VIII
THE YELLOW SNAKE'S TEETH

Dorn looked at the Citadel and all connected with it through the big, round eyes of a young boy. Nothing would do but his fair-haired American cousin, Doris, must climb all those stone steps leading up to the top of the Citadel, there to peer down into the dark hole that had been Johnny's prison and from which he had mysteriously vanished.

Doris exclaimed and shrank back from the darkness of the place. Then seized with a true girl's impulse, she took a fishing line and hook from her knicker pocket and angled until she drew Johnny's handkerchief up from those forbidding depths.

"What's to be learned from that?" Dorn asked.

"Probably nothing," replied Doris. "Anyway I have his handkerchief to remember him by if he is never seen again, haven't I?"

"Remember him? You've never seen him."

"But I can remember him all the same."

This point Dorn did not care to discuss. So they moved onward over the moss grown roof of the ancient fortress until they stood upon the exact spot at which the shadowy giant of the night before had appeared.

"He stood right here," said Dorn in an awed tone. "He moved right along there. And the little fellow, the bearer of the brass telescope, followed after."

Doris had heard the story of the mysterious walking giant twice before, but to be

standing at the very spot where the vision had appeared gave her an added thrill.

The sun was setting. Already half the world was in shadows. As she stood there she found her knees trembling.

“Let’s get away from here.” She moved forward unsteadily.

Behind her sounded the chattering of teeth mingled with mumbled whisperings.

“Nieta,” she said, “what in the world are you doing?”

“She is talking to her teeth,” whispered Dorn.

“Her teeth!” The girl’s tone showed unfeigned amazement.

“Sure. Her snake’s teeth.”

“Snake—”

“You don’t understand,” said her cousin. “Nieta believes in the power of voodoo charms. Her uncle, who is now dead, left her a very ancient charm. She wears it round her neck in a leather sack. It is the teeth of a yellow snake killed at the back of a cave at high tide when the moon was dark. It has great power, so they say. She is afraid now, so she is asking the spirit of the yellow snake for protection.”

“Oh!” Doris shuddered. “I’d rather trust the ghost of that old emperor—if there truly is a ghost.”

“We saw him—Pompee and I.” Dorn’s voice carried conviction.

“But look!” said Doris, pointing to a spot where a patch of green moss had been torn up. “There’s a donkey’s track.”

“Can’t be,” said Dorn. “No donkey has been here. Think of his coming up those steps!”

“But he has,” said Doris. “Look! There’s another footprint. And over there’s another.”

“A fresh mystery,” said Dorn, acknowledging the proof.

“But we must be getting down. Don’t want to be caught up here in the dark.”

“No—o,” said Doris. “We do not.”

But we must not forget Curlie Carson and the strange girl who drummed so mysteriously in the night upon a native drum.

The show which Curlie had thought ended when the strange dark-haired girl stepped from the greensward stage to his corner of hiding was continued and that almost at once. Curlie found time to note only one further fact. Crouching close beside the girl was an unusually large dog.

“Hate to mix with him,” he thought.

The next instant his attention was drawn back to the narrow stretch of green. Figures were darting back and forth across the narrow clearing.

“Those can’t be wild creatures,” Curlie told himself. “There are none in the island like that. They’re natives. And the girl has called them with the drum. What can they be doing at such an hour in such a place?”

He dared not move. He studied the girl. She seemed frightened, about to flee; yet she remained there motionless. As they crouched there a fourth, a fifth, sixth, eighth, tenth, twelfth figure passed across the star-lit clearing.

In time he lost much of his fear. The natives were some distance away. There was the girl and her dog. The girl might need protection. He doubted this, and curiosity came to take the place of fear. So he lingered.

The thing he was about to witness might seem to belong to those long lost days on the Hudson that Washington Irving is so fond of writing about. Be that as it may the strange panorama of that hour will never pass from his memory.

Somewhere in the dark, a drum was struck. At the same instant a dusky figure darted to the center of the spot of ground before him and as if by magic flames leaped up. After that came the steady red glow of a slow fire.

Again the drum, again and yet again. Figures appeared. They began leaping about the fire. Like black ghosts they were now within the circle of light and

now lost within the shadows.

“Why did they come to this spot?” he asked himself. “There are a thousand grass grown clearings in the hills.”

There could be but one answer to this. The girl had drummed. Had she meant them to come? If so, then why had she hidden? Why did she seem so much afraid?

At once his mind was filled with pictures of the past. All the sad and tragic history of the island of Haiti, all the bright days, too, passed before his mind’s eye.

The brief, bright, glorious days of the French Colony, bright for a few, dark for many slaves, came and went.

The drum was beating now. Rolling, throbbing, singing, if a drum may be said to sing, it was telling out the story of the uprising of the natives and the slaves; telling how just such a goat’s head drum had sent out the signals, how another, another and yet a hundred others had taken up the notes until all the island heard. Down through all the bright and bitter years, of rebellion, war, slavery and freedom, the drums had played their part.

“But now?” he thought as the drumming rose louder and the dancers leaped in wilder circles, “now what can they want? It is their land. This is a republic. They are free. True, there are the Marines. But they are the servants of this nation as well as our own. They are here to help the people find their way out.” There came a pause in his thoughts. There had been rumors of intrigue against the present government. In every land there are the dissatisfied ones, especially in a small republic.

“And this girl, this American girl,” he thought, “has called them together for this.” The thing seemed unbelievable, yet had he not seen her drumming the signal call?

His thoughts broke short off. From before him there had sounded a shrill whisper.

“If only we could get their goat.”

He heard the words plainly but could not believe his ears. The words had come from the girl's lips. She had discovered him and had not cried out in fright. What a truly remarkable girl!

"If only we could get their goat," she repeated, for all the world as if she had known him always, and as if he should understand what she meant.

Once more Curlie's heart leaped. Who was this strange girl? What could she mean?

For the answer to this second question, he had not long to wait.

"They've got a goat, a very black goat." The girl's whisper was low but distinct. "They're going to sacrifice it. It's a voodoo custom, you know. There are always the witch doctors to lead them on. And besides, just now there is Pluto. Pluto is a big, bad man, a sort of leader, who wants money and power. He thinks he can drive the Marines away and overturn the government. He will make these people mad with wild dances. Then *Papa Lou* will sacrifice the black goat which they think will bring them success."

"We can't get their goat." Curlie whispered.

"There may be a rebellion," the girl urged. "Lives may be lost. If only we could somehow break up the meeting; the meeting I must have called without meaning to. If only we could!"

"There's the dog," suggested Curlie.

"Yes," said the girl. "He is my protector. He's very good. He won't hurt you. But I wouldn't think of sicking him on. He'd be killed."

For a moment, save for the mad tum-tum of the drum, there was silence. Then Curlie, leaning close, asked in a low tone:

"Will he howl?"

"Who?"

"Your dog. Can you make him howl?"

“Why yes, I think so.”

“Make him howl then.”

“Why?”

“Make him howl. There’s no time for explaining.”

“Be ready to fly,” Curlie added. “Follow me. I know a secret way down the mountain.”

With trembling fingers the girl drew a small harmonica from her pocket. Then she touched the dog who had all this time stood tense at her side.

“Now, Leo, old boy,” she whispered hoarsely as the throb of the drum rose louder and a chanted song rose and fell like the wild waves of the sea. “Now Leo, do your bit.”

She put the tiny musical instrument to her lips and sent forth a piercing discordant screech.

The next instant Leo stood on his haunches and pointing his nose to the stars let out such a mournful wail as only a tropical dog knows.

The effect was electrical. With a loud *bam*, the drum beats ceased. The song broke off short. For ten seconds silence, deep and ominous, hung over the jungle. Then again came that unearthly screech and the dog’s answering wail.

This last was too much. Came the sound of rushing through the brush, the bleating of a black goat being dragged over the rough trail by his masters. All this grew indistinct in the night. Then again silence.

“There won’t be any rebellion now,” said Curlie. “At least not right away. They thought it was the *Loupe Garoe*. That is a bad sign.”

“The *Loupe Garoe*?” said the girl.

“Yes,” said Curlie. “But we’d better be getting down. Some of them might suspect. It wouldn’t be nice to be found here.”

“These natives,” Curlie said as they crept along down a steep trail, “as you know of course, are very superstitious. It’s a pity. One who is afraid of many things is never happy. Voodooism is really a sort of Devil worship.

“They are afraid to offend the *Mama Lou* and the *Papa Lou*, who are witch doctors. But most of all they are afraid of the *Loupe Garoe*, who doesn’t exist at all, except in their imaginations. When your dog howled they thought him the *Loupe Garoe* who, so they believe, is half wolf and half man. He carries off little children and when he is about it is a very bad sign.”

“I have heard all that,” said the girl, “but I didn’t think of it in the way you did. You are a wise one. I thank you.

“If only we could get their goat,” she said after a time. “Goats that are all black are hard to find and according to their superstitious notions, only an all black goat will suffice for a sacrifice before some desperate undertaking.”

In a moment of stress and great danger, perfect strangers become comrades for the hour. Once the danger is passed they more often than not become strangers once more. It was so with Curlie and the girl, or so it seemed to Curlie. He had hoped she would tell him who she was and where she lived. She did not. She told him nothing.

One thing he did not need to be told. They had not been scouting down the trail for a half hour before he realized that she needed no directing from him. She was far better acquainted with the jungle than he. Once when he hesitated at a forking of the way, she forged straight on. At another time she gripped his arm just in time to save him from a dangerous fall. At this time he learned one more fact; slender girl that she was, there was power in her good right arm. Hers was the grip of a man.

“I go this way,” she said quite suddenly when, after an hour of almost unbroken silence, they came to a fork in the trail.

Curlie found himself sorely tempted to say, “So do I.” But this he knew would be an untruth.

Since he valued truth and above all prized this girl’s opinion, he said, “I go up.”

“All right. Good night, and thank you.” He found his hand caught for a second in

a firm clasp. The next instant she was gone; swallowed up by the night.

“That’s a queer girl; but a real one,” he told himself as he toiled up the trail. “Wonder why she beat out those signals on the drum if she didn’t want those natives to meet? Who is she? Where’s her home? Will we meet again?” He hoped so. Yet in this strange old world one never could tell.

The night was well spent. His eyes were heavy with sleep. At this elevation there were no flying pests. The trail was still long. It would be there in the morning.

Selecting a gently sloping bank beneath a tropical oak, he gathered moss from low hanging branches to form a pillow. He then threw himself upon the earth, closed his eyes and fell asleep.

CHAPTER IX
THE JEWELED MONKEY

Johnny Thompson did not in the least mind being lost. Truth was he got much joy from it. The sky was so blue, the morning air, as he left the abandoned native home, so crisp and balmy, he felt like singing a song.

True, he disliked worrying his friends, but the island of Haiti is not the world. He would find his way back in time. He had breakfasted well on cold guinea meat, parched corn and bananas. His bow and quiver of arrows were slung across his back. The trail was before him.

“With wild fruit and game I could live a half year through,” he told himself.

For some time he made his way through rough uplands, where trees and brush obstructed his travel and only wild trails helped him on his way.

At last, however, he came upon an ancient man-made trail that led over a ridge and down upon the other side.

“Now I shall find my way to somewhere,” he told himself. But this trail ran through rough uncultivated land. Mid-afternoon found him apparently some distance still from human habitation.

“Oh well,” he sighed dropping down beside a cool spring, “the afternoon is hot. Guess I’ll rest a while. The evening will be cool.”

Had he persevered for another quarter of a mile he most surely would have met with a surprise; for there browsing close to the trail was a donkey, and on his back were two empty hampers. A few yards up the bank in the deep shade, he might have discovered two unusual patches of color, one orange, the other red.

The orange spot was a white girl's jacket, the red a native girl's dress. Had he explored still further he would have found that the two girls were resting from the heat of the day. And these girls, as you may have guessed, were Doris and Nieta. They had chosen to return home from the ancient fort by a new and little used trail. Midas had not liked the plan. He had shown his displeasure by using a snail-like pace and by offering to eat every tree and bush that grew beside the trail.

At last, quite worn out by her constant flogging of the obstinate donkey Doris had given in to his whims and had allowed him to wander as he willed while she and Nieta rested.

"You can't lose a donkey," she had said to Nieta. "Not completely. He'll always find his way home. And he has nothing on his back but empty hampers."

They had been sitting there for some time dreamily gazing at the wavering patterns of sunlight and shadows woven on the mossy earth or looking up into the treetops when Doris gave a sudden start. Her eye had caught a peculiar gleam of white light.

"What can it be?" she asked herself. "There is nothing about a palm tree to reflect light that way."

She puzzled about this for some time. Then, since her keen eyes did not succeed in detecting the cause, she fell to wondering about Midas who had disappeared down the trail. "If he's gone home by himself it will be a blessing," she told herself.

"There are no lions and tigers to fear here. There are some very terrible snakes and lizards five feet long and wild hogs with tusks like razor blades, but they're not likely to trouble us. We—" She broke short off to stare. Once more in the midst of dense foliage she had caught that white flash of light. So white! So intense! Like the flash that comes from a mirror, only sharper and brighter. She caught her breath. There it was again. Here it was, there. Now, like a glimmering ghost, it was gone.

"Quick as lightning." She glanced through the leafy branches to the sky. Pale blue the sky was, not a cloud. She had suspected lightning. "But no," she told herself, "it's four hours before shower-time." Showers come with a convenient regularity in Haiti.

She studied the scanty leaves and many dry pods that hung directly above her. They had seated themselves beneath a “chattering woman,” or so this odd tree is called. It was loaded with dry pods. These pods rattle and chatter in the wind. At this moment there was no wind.

Slowly her eyes roved over the dangling pods. Then, of a sudden, her gaze became fixed, her lips parted in a scream that died in forming.

Directly above her, peering down at her, was the smallest, strangest little face she had ever seen. The eyes were so wide in question, the brow so wrinkled, the whole expression so broadly intelligent that for the briefest part of a moment she was tempted to believe the creature human. He was, she realized at once, a marmoset, one of those smallest of monkeys who are so popular as pets among South American ladies of quality.

“Oh you monk! You cute little monkey! Where did you come from?” she cried.

The monkey blinked his eyes three times, then, as if to hide himself from her, put both hands over his eyes.

It was this movement that brought a low exclamation to the girl’s lips for, once again, at the very instant his slim arms moved, there came that brilliant flash of light.

“He did it!” she told herself. “A monkey! But how could he?”

The answer came at once and with such sudden surprise as fairly sent her senses reeling. On the monkey’s left forearm, like a lady’s bejeweled bracelet, there gleamed a ring, set with a white stone.

“It’s a diamond,” she told herself, “a very large diamond! No bit of glass could flash like that. But where did he get it?”

In her mind was formed what she believed to be the answer. This was a pet monkey. There could be no question about that, for there are no wild monkeys in Haiti. This monkey had stolen his mistress’ diamond ring and made away with it.

“It should be worth hundreds of dollars,” she told herself. “It’s probably a wedding ring, a priceless possession. Somehow we must catch the monkey and take the ring from him. He may tire of it and hide it or throw it away.”

“How old it seems,” she told herself after a moment’s study. “All corroded. Can’t have been worn for years. But how the diamond sparkles!”

Again the white stone flashed, as the monkey uncovered his eyes to resume his worried study of these strangers who had invaded his domain.

Doris touched the drowsy Nieta on the arm. Then, after placing a finger to lips for silence, pointed up at the tree.

“Sh’sh! Don’t speak,” she whispered. “Look up, up there among the pods on that thick branch.”

Nieta did look up. She started suddenly and found herself staring and fully awake.

“See!” Doris whispered. “See that on his arm? It’s a diamond ring; must be. And we must get it. Think of the reward! Think—if we never found the owner at all! Think—

“Oh—Oh!” she fairly cried. “He’s gone! Hurry! Hurry!” she whispered excitedly. “Look! Look everywhere! We mustn’t lose him! Think Nieta, think of the reward. Think if we find no owner at all!”

The native girl’s eyes were bulging.

At that precise moment, Johnny Thompson came swinging down the trail.

At sight of the two excited girls he stopped short to stare in astonishment.

“Babes in the woods,” he said at last. “Now where is the wicked old queen or the dragon, or—Oh, now I know,” he said changing his tone. “You are Doris, Dorn’s cousin. He’s told me all about you. He—”

“Forget about it and be quiet.” Doris took a step toward him. “There’s a monkey in this tree and he has a diamond ring on his arm.”

“A—a monkey!” The boy stared as if he thought her out of her senses. “A diamond ring on a monkey’s arm!”

“Be quiet, I tell you.” Doris put a finger over his lips. “It’s true. I—we—we saw

him! There! There he goes now!” she exclaimed as a brown streak surging from a branch set the dry pods rattling, then vaulted into the top of a cocoanut palm.

“And there he leaps again,” said Johnny, losing himself in wild excitement. “Come on. We’ll get him.”

They all went tumbling down the hill.

They were quite out of sight of the “chattering woman” and still following the monkey when Doris stopped short. “I—I think I saw him.”

“Where? Where is he?” demanded Nieta. Her eyes were wide with excitement.

“There! There!” The white girl’s words came in a shrill whisper. “He’s up in that small mahogany tree looking down at us.”

“He’s come to rest,” said Johnny. “All we have to do now is to coax him down.”

“Ye-e-s,” said Doris, doubtfully. “That’s all.” They sat down side by side on a big flat stone to stare up at the grinning monkey and to catch now and then a fleeting glance of that gleaming stone.

“It’s a diamond all right,” said Johnny. “And my! what a whopper!”

“Wait,” he said a moment later. “Monkeys like bananas. I saw a clump of wild ones back there. Perhaps I can find some ripe ones.”

While he was gone Doris kept her eyes on the monkey, but once when she glanced down at Nieta she found to her surprise that she was paying no attention to the monkey. Instead, she had taken some curious white objects from a small leather sack carried by a string round her neck and was whispering to them.

“Nieta!” she whispered. “What in the world are you doing?”

“These,” said Nieta quite soberly, “are the teeth of a yellow snake killed in the back of a cave in the dark of the moon. They are a powerful voodoo charm. They were given me by a very wise *Papa Lou*. A *Papa Lou* is a voodoo priest.”

At once Doris recalled what Dorn had told her of the strange voodoo charm.

“The snake, you know,” Nieta went on quite solemnly, “is able when alive to charm a monkey. When the snake is dead his spirit remains near his teeth. I am telling him to charm the monkey and bring him down to us.”

“Nieta,” said Doris, shocked beyond belief, “you must not think such things. They are not true. It is truly wicked to believe them. There is but one living spirit outside ourselves and that is the spirit of the great Father.”

“But do you not pray to that spirit?” The native girl’s brow wrinkled. “Do you not—”

“Look!” Doris gripped her arm. “He leaped away over there. He—he’s gone!”

By the time Johnny caught up with them, the monkey, by a succession of tree races and wild flying leaps, had led the girls down a precipitous slope to a spot where a rocky ledge hanging over a drop of some fifty feet brought their race and the monkey’s to an end.

The monkey climbed out on a branch that appeared to hang over a precipice. He seemed at first to contemplate a flying leap to the top of a tall tree that grew on the lower slope. This would have proven a thrilling spectacle. Doris caught her breath as he hung there by one foot, looking down. The distance was thirty feet or more, a straight drop down. Would he do it? Dared he?

“Oh!” she said gripping at her breast. “If he dares we will never see him again.”

Apparently Mr. Monk did not dare, for in time he drew himself up to a position of safety, then began polishing the glistening stone mounting of the ring with the furry back of his right hand.

From time to time he would pause to give the girls a knowing look and wink as if to say:

“See! Doesn’t it shine? Don’t you wish you had it?”

In good time Johnny caught up with them. They were delighted to see that his arms were filled with small ripe bananas.

“They are really good,” he said, slipping the last bite of one in his mouth. “Ripened in the shade.”

There followed the age old drama of a boy with something in his possession and a monkey who wants it. The monkey had been someone's pet. For this reason he did not have the fear of humans that possesses a wild monkey. Yet these children were strangers. More than that, two were white. His master had beyond doubt been a dusky native. He was in no hurry to come down. He came one branch at a time with many a backward look. More than once he paused to polish his diamond and wink.

"We'll get him," said Johnny half beside himself with suppressed excitement. "You'll see! He'll come."

He was coming. Little by little, branch by branch, he came. Now he was half way down, now three quarters. Now he was five yards away, now four, three, two. He stared wistfully at the banana held high.

Then, of a sudden, with a speed that was astonishing, he leaped.

Not upon another branch did he land, nor upon the ground, but squarely on the top of Johnny's head.

So surprised was Johnny that he jumped and yelled.

Came a snatching at his hand, then monkey and banana were gone—gone not up but down.

Leaping to the top of the ledge the monkey paused for a second to place the banana between his teeth, then without so much as a backward look, lowered himself over the precipice and was gone.

Throwing herself flat on the ground, then crawling slowly forward until the steep surface of the cliff was within her view, Doris watched him throw himself from fissure to fissure and from one narrow ledge to the next.

"He'll be killed," she said breathlessly.

But he was not. Almost before she could realize it, he had reached a spot near the bottom, where by a daring leap, he reached the top of a tree.

"We—we've lost him," she half sobbed. "We'll never see him again."

“Listen,” said Nieta with a sudden start.

They did listen and to their waiting ears came the dull roll of distant thunder. In their wild chase they had completely forgotten that the time for the day’s thunderstorm was at hand.

“Where are we?” Johnny asked.

Where indeed? The trail was far above them. Should they attempt to find it they must surely be half drowned before they reached it. A Haitian thunderstorm in the jungle is a fearful thing to contemplate.

“We’d better skirt the top of this cliff and make our way down to the sea,” said Doris. “There must be some thatched huts down there that will furnish shelter.”

Acting upon this plan, they dashed away.

The race after the monkey was nothing to this mad race with the storm. Now creeping along a rocky ledge, now clinging to a stout vine and dropping down, down, down, now racing over a wild hog’s trail, now leaping a fallen tree to tear through a clump of brambles with the rumble and roar of the storm ever increasing they made their way forward, until, with a sudden breathless whoop, Johnny stopped at the edge of a wild cocoanut jungle to stare at the silent, blue-black sea.

“Not a hut,” Doris moaned as her eyes swept the narrow coral beach.

“What’s that yonder?” Johnny asked.

“A boat! A boat on the beach!” Doris exclaimed. “Hurray! We will tip it over and make a shelter of it.”

“I wonder if we will ever see him again,” she said to herself as, on reaching the beach, she paused for breath. She was thinking of the monkey with the jeweled arm.

The next instant a blinding flash of lightning and a crash of thunder sent her flying toward the boat, that seen from the level now seemed much larger and very far away.

“We’ll never make it,” she panted sobbingly. “We’ll be half drowned.”

CHAPTER X
STOWAWAYS

That the boat they had sighted was a large one, far too large to be tipped on its side they learned soon enough; not, however, until they had become utterly exhausted by their mad race with the storm.

And such a storm as it promised to be. The sky was inky black. The mountains, the nearby hills, even the cocoanut groves were blotted out. The sea, a sheet black as iron lay so still it appeared that one might walk upon it.

“Cou—couldn’t turn it over. If it—it was only a bark canoe! And look!” Doris panted. “It’s a young ship.”

It was indeed. The craft they had taken for a row-boat was a square masted schooner, with mast thrown carelessly over the side.

“We might get under the sail,” suggested Doris.

“Too much wind,” said Johnny. “Blow away. Give me a hand. I’ll look inside of her.”

Doris gave him a lift and up he went.

“Yo—ho!” he cried ten seconds later. “What luck! A cabin, a regular canvas cabin in her prow. And not a soul on board. Give us your hand and up you come.”

“But dare we?” screamed Doris above the roar of the storm.

There was no time for answering this question. The storm was upon them. She

could see it racing in white sheets down the beach.

Up they went, up and over, scramble, tumble, scramble, and they were there, all hidden in the prow with a roof of stout painted canvas over their heads and a brown curtain of the same material hanging before them.

“What could be sweeter?” said Johnny, dropping into a corner.

“How it rains!” Doris shuddered as torrents of water came pelting down.

Once more the native girl was whispering to her snake tooth charm.

Nieta was the only member of the little party who really feared lightning. Now they were sheltered from the rain and far from tall trees, where danger from lightning really lurks, Doris and Johnny settled back each in a dark corner for a good rest.

“Wonder whose boat it is?” said Doris.

“Native boat,” said Johnny. “Tell by the way the canvas is sewed and the boards are nailed.”

“Probably came from Cape Haitian,” said Doris. “Gone up in the hills to hunt wild guineas or cocoanuts. We’ll get them to take us to town with them.”

This was a consoling thought. To trek back up the mountain in the dark and wet after the storm would be difficult indeed.

“Wonder where Mr. Monk is?” said Doris.

“It’s curious about that ring,” said Johnny. “It looked old—old as the hills. The gold was all tarnished and the stone didn’t look a bit like the ones I’ve seen; wasn’t cut the same.”

Doris made no answer to this. She had suddenly recalled some strange stories told to her by a very old black woman of Cape Haitian. The stories had to do with days long gone by. They told of the rule of Christophe, the only powerful emperor Haiti has ever known.

“And Honey,” the toothless old crone had said to her, “I had it right from my

own Mammy and I know it’s true; the ladies of that Emperor’s court wore diamonds and rubies and pearls, such jewels as you only hear of now, but don’t most never see.

“And when the uprisin’ came and the Emperor was expectin’ to be overthrowed, the wicked old Emperor took all the jewels an’ gold an’ buried it somewheres; nobody’s found out where. No Honey, not nobody has ever found it yet.”

“What if—” Doris thought to herself now. “But then of course that could never be.”

“And besides,” she added a moment later, “we’ll never see the monkey again, so how could we follow him?”

Then, because she was far from her home and her new found friend, Johnny Thompson, was near at hand, because the wild beat of the storm gave her a feeling of loneliness and a longing for someone to confide in, she told him of her day dreams, of her hope that she might find the monkey and follow him to the hiding place of the ancient treasure.

“There must be something to that story of the hidden treasure of the black Empress,” said Johnny quite soberly. “Of course there are many wild tales told of that romantic king of the blacks. This much is history. I read it in a book written six years after his death. When the emperor felt his throne crumbling beneath him he went one evening to the Citadel. There he worked until past midnight. At two o’clock in the morning he knocked at the door of one of his dukes, a trusted ally.

“The duchess opened the door and was frightened half out of her wits. The emperor said nothing was wrong. He required the service of the duke; that was all.

“The duke dressed, then accompanied him to the castle. At the back of the castle they entered a door to drag forth a strong box. It was all the two of them could do to lift it.

“Having carried it a little way they hid it, so the story goes. When the work was done the emperor explained to his ally that the box was filled with the queen’s treasures; that, if anything ever happened to him, there was enough there to support his family in comfort for many years.

“A few days more and the emperor was dead.” Johnny’s story was at an end.

“And the treasure?” Doris leaned eagerly forward trying to read his face in the half darkness.

“Who knows about that?” Johnny laughed a low laugh. “If we knew where it was hidden we would go for it. If that had been told in the book, the treasure would have been removed long ago.

“So far as anyone knows, the duke never betrayed the emperor’s secret. Perhaps he too died during the uprising. As for the queen, everyone knows that she sailed for Europe on the first available boat and never returned to Haiti.

“You see,” he explained, as he felt that Doris was about to ask one more question, “the Emperor had sent a great deal of gold to England by a sea captain he trusted. This was at the queen’s disposal. Since it was enough why risk her head by a return to Haiti in search of further wealth?

“So,” he added, with another low laugh, “the treasure is yours; provided you find it. I too have been on a search for some of the emperor’s treasure, the ‘Rope of Gold’.”

“I know,” she said quietly. “How have you succeeded? When I was at your camp you were mysteriously absent.”

Johnny told her of his search, of Curlie Carson’s strange doings, of his kidnapping by the natives, and his all but miraculous escape.

“And so here we are,” he added. “Two treasure hunters lost in the night and the storm.”

“Here—here’s wishing you luck,” said Doris, reaching out in the half darkness to grip his hand.

“But say,” Johnny asked, “what would you do with all those diamonds, rubies and all that if you found them?”

“I’d sell them. Don’t care much for jewels. They’re too hard to keep. People steal them.

“And then,” she half closed her eyes, to lean far back in her corner, “then I’d buy dresses and shoes and things like that. I like bright things. I want a blue dress with orange trimmings and an orange dress with blue trimmings, and a green dress with an old gold sash, and a white dress with a pink sash; all of them silk, real shimmering silk that shines in the moonlight.”

“That,” said Johnny quite suddenly, “will do. Here’s hoping you never find them. I like girls with arms strong as a man’s, who can hike ten miles and who mostly wear khaki knickers.”

“And yet,” he set the gleam of his flashlight measuring her up and down, “if that’s what spells happiness for you, you should have all your dresses and wear them too.”

“I suppose,” he added, “that you also want a fur coat.”

“No,” she said, in sudden anger. “I don’t. I want a midnight blue cape with an Alaskan white fox collar.”

“That,” said Johnny at once sorry for his caustic remarks, “shows your good taste. I’ve been in Alaska. Know real fur when I see it. And like it as well as you. Here,” he said, putting out a hand, “is wishing you best of luck and happiness! Everyone in the world has a right to happiness.”

“I say!” he exclaimed after a brief silence. “How’d you like some lunch?”

“Fine! Please serve it at once,” laughed Doris.

“No fooling. Pockets full of good, ripe bananas.”

He began digging into his pockets. In the end, he brought out three; quite a little feast.

After the first wild burst that came like a flood, the rain settled down to a steady, monotonous patter—patter—patter on the staunch canvas roof.

Night crept in upon the world like the falling of a great curtain. All three, Johnny, Doris and Nieta had traveled far that day. They had been hot. Now they were cool. They had been excited. Now they were calm. They had been weary. Now their bodies were in repose.

Slowly a drowsiness crept over them. The slow patter—patter of rain on their roof, the low rush of wind through the palms whispered of sleep.

And why not? Just three winks. Here they were cosy and safe. The storm would end. Then they would wake to think of other things.

Perhaps they did not think it through in just this manner. Probably they did not think it through at all, but yielded to the call of slumber. However that may be, time found them all breathing softly and steadily in sleep. And still the rain pattered on their canvas roof.

Just how long they slept no one will ever know. It was Johnny who first awoke. He emerged from unreality to reality, from dream life to real life with something of a start.

In his dream he had once more followed the strange monkey with the band of gold and a diamond on his arm. The monkey climbed a great cocoanut palm. With quite as much ability, he followed after. Up—up—up, ten, twenty, thirty, forty feet he climbed until at last he was among the fronds, sitting on a clump of half-ripe cocoanuts.

But where was the monkey? He looked wildly about him and even as he looked a sudden burst of wind seized the great palm and set it swaying like an inverted pendulum, back and forth.

Still in the dream he threw out his hands—but found nothing to which he might cling. He tried to cry out but words stuck in his throat.

It was at this instant that he awoke. Awoke to what? A very dark little chamber at the prow of a sail-boat and silence.

No not quite silence. There was a strange rushing sound all about him, and in the distance an indistinct murmur of voices.

Instantly he recalled his position. But the sounds, the rushing, the subdued voices, these were startling.

“There were no voices,” he told himself. “No people at all except—”

Perhaps it was Doris and Nieta. They might have awakened and gone out on

deck.

But no, as his eyes became accustomed to the dim light he made out their forms close beside him. They were still asleep.

Then, of a sudden, he realized that a part of his dream was true. The boat was pitching about.

“We are on the sea,” he told himself as his heart leaped painfully. “They have launched the boat, whoever they are. We are on our way out to sea.

“Oh well,” he endeavored to reassure himself, “they will be going to Cape Haitian. When we get there, we will give them a grand surprise. We’ll crawl out and thank them for the ride. What sport to be stowaways.

“But were they going to Cape Haitian?” This question troubled him more and more as time went on. The size of the waves they rode, the break of spray over the canvas, the creaking of masts seemed to tell him that they were not hugging the shore but striking boldly out to sea.

“And if we are?” Once more he caught his breath. Where would they be going? What was to be done when they got there? He had never been on a tropical island save Haiti. What the people were like on other islands he had not the faintest notions. He had heard that some were cannibals.

He thought of going on deck, of trying to hire the skipper to carry them back to land. He dared not. Perhaps these very people were cannibals or pirates. Who could tell? All he could do was to sit tight and see what happened. He feared more for his recently found friends than for himself.

As the boat sailed quietly on and nothing happened, his mind became more at ease. He wondered whether he should awaken his companions. After a moment’s thought he decided this would be unwise. To awaken them would be to add to their period of anxiety. Nothing could be done until they came to some land.

“Besides,” he told himself, “wakened suddenly from sleep, they may speak aloud and betray our presence. That might bring disaster. If these are bad men our chances of escape on land will be much greater.”

So he sat there in silent meditation, sensing the lift and fall of the boat, catching

the toss and creak of the masts and wondering whither they were bound.

Oddly enough, he thought again of the monkey and his diamond set band of gold.

“Now surely,” he told himself, “we will never see him again.”

Passing strange it was to be riding thus, alone save for two sleeping companions; and those friends for but an hour; sailing over waters he had never before sailed to some land he had never seen. The rain had ceased. The moon was out. It shone upon a tossing sea.

More than four hundred years before another small craft had sailed these waters in the light of that moon. It was upon the shores of Haiti that Columbus established his first colony. For a time Johnny amused himself by imagining that he was Columbus sitting in his berth, waiting for the sound of a dropping anchor.

“It must have been wonderful,” he told himself. “The first white man to see these shores.”

Of a sudden, as he sat there thinking, there came a sharp command from the stern, then another and yet another.

“Surely that must awaken them.” He looked at his companions as he stiffened in preparation for an emergency.

Doris stirred but did not awaken. Nieta slumbered on.

The boat gave a lurch, appeared to veer in its course, then swept on. Ten minutes later the tossing ceased.

“Entered a bay. Come to land soon. What land?” He thrilled afresh.

“It’s like the adventures of Robinson Crusoe.”

A half hour later the boat ground gently on a sandy shore. The mast came down. There was the sound of men going ashore. The boat was drawn farther up on the beach. After that all was darkness and silence.

“Now is our chance,” he thought. His knees trembled slightly as he rose to part

the canvas curtain and peer out.

He saw no living thing. Stepping boldly out he looked shoreward. A grove of tall palms painted a dark fringe against the night.

“Now is our chance,” he repeated as he stepped back.

“Doris.” He spoke the name in a low tone as he touched the girl’s shoulder. “Wake up!”

“Wha—where are we?” She sat up sleepily.

“I don’t know where. I only know we have arrived,” said Johnny. “Hurry. Waken that native girl. We must get out of this boat.”

CHAPTER XI
THE DRUMS

During the very hour in which Johnny Thompson discovered that he and the two girls, Doris and Nieta, were stowaways in a strange schooner sailing straight out to sea, Curlie Carson sat beside a mahogany table beneath the stars in a beautiful tropical garden.

The air was heavy with the perfume of flowers. The night was cool and damp. Now and then a breeze from the distant sea set the palm fronds rustling and brought forth a hoarse croak from a sleeping buzzard.

Back of him was a home. And such a home as it was! All white and glistening in the moonlight, with its little spires and minarets, with its broad, deep, mysterious windows, standing tall against the dark green of palms it seemed some castle in Spain—a thing of dreams.

But the home, a sort of French Chateau, was real. Haiti has thousands of beautiful homes. Some of them hark back to the days when fine French ladies rode out with their maids in the cool of the evening, and a hundred thousand slaves toiled in the sugar cane and the cotton.

The girl who sat opposite Curlie sipping limeade was real too. To Curlie at first she had been rather startling as well. She was Dot Montcalm, Dorn’s sister. To Curlie she was a great deal more than that. She was the mysterious dark-haired girl who had shared his adventure of the night before. She it had been who had beaten the strange native drum and had called together that band of half wild natives to dance and to plot revolution beneath the stars. She too had raced away with him down the trail after the weird howling of her dog had put the natives to flight. All this she smilingly admitted on meeting Curlie two hours before. He

had not asked her why she had concealed her identity. There was no reason for asking. A girl with good sense, and Dot Montcalm seemed well endowed with that by nature, does not reveal her identity to a stranger during a chance meeting.

“But she has told me nothing else,” Curlie was thinking to himself, as they sat there in the garden before the girl’s home. “Why did she beat out the drum signals that called that wild band together to plot revolution. Surely she and her father would be the last to desire a revolution. In truth she seemed eager to scatter them before plotting was begun. It’s all very strange.”

Curlie had arrived at camp a little before noon of that day. He had, as you well know, found Johnny still missing. After visiting his laboratory and finding all in order, he had heavily bolted the door and then had announced his intention of going to Dorn’s village in search of some clue of Johnny’s whereabouts.

“Some natives may have seen him. He may have arrived at the village over a strange trail,” he had said to Dorn.

“Yes,” said Dorn. “That is true. You may find him there. But as for Pompee and me, we will remain. He may come here tired and hungry. Besides,” his eyes had gone dreamy, “I like this old Citadel. It is scary and most spooky at night, but by day it is so old, so massive, so grand. And then, at any moment I may come upon one end of the ‘Rope of Gold’ sticking out from the masonry. Then how rich we all shall be.” A low laugh followed this last remark.

So Curlie had gone away down the trail toward the village of Terre Plaisance. And here he was sitting across from Dot drinking limeade, talking now and then of matters of no great consequence, and dreaming long dreams in between.

“A revolution,” he thought now. “How wildly thrilling that would be. And yet it would be tragic. These natives can’t fight against our airplanes, our gas, our machine guns. And yet—”

He thought of the long and bitter struggle that had been going on in Nicaragua and of the war between the invincible Napoleon and the Blacks of Haiti and how the Blacks of Haiti had won. After that he was not so sure.

“We must put an end to it,” he said, speaking aloud.

“To what?” said the girl.

“To the revolution.”

“Oh, yes. We must. If we can.”

“You do not want the revolution?”

“Oh no! No!” She shuddered.

“But you beat the drum. You called those natives together.”

“Oh that—why that was—I’ll—I—I’ll tell you about that sometime.”

For a time they sat there in silence. Then, like the first flush of morning, her face lighted with a smile. “She will tell me,” Curlie assured himself.

But she did not, for at that precise moment there came, faint, indistinct, like the low roll of thunder, yet unmistakable a call from the distance and the dark.

“The drums,” a shudder ran through the girl’s slender form. “Far away, the drums. And now perhaps there will be a revolution. How—how useless, how terrible! Someone must prevent it. It can only end with the death of many honest but deluded people; the poor, honest ones.”

“It is true,” said Mona the black servant who had come to serve cocoa. “It should not be.”

“The men all are gone; the native police too,” Dot said turning to Curlie.

“But we—we might do something,” she added after a moment.

“Yes,” said Curlie. “We did something last night. Plenty.”

“Let’s try.”

“Yes, let’s.”

“Will you go with us?” Dot turned to Mona.

“If I might help.”

“You might help a great deal. You know all the secret mountain passes and the

people.”

“I will go,” said the aged native woman. “The Blanc does much for my people. He is honest. He will not do wrong. Rebellion is for bad men.”

The “Blanc” is the Haitian’s name for the white man from America. In the few short years of the American occupation the greater part of the hill people of Haiti have come to trust their American friends. Yet in every land there is some discontent. There are some too who are willing enough to stir up discontent that they may advance their own selfish ends.

Even now, as they prepared to lose themselves in the forest trails at night, Dot felt herself overtaken with fear.

“Father has always said the hills are safe,” she said to Curlie. “Yet there are many wild rumors.

“We’ll take Leo,” she continued.

“I’ve a bow and arrows with me,” said Curlie.

“Bow and arrows?” exclaimed the girl in great surprise.

“It’s really a very strong one,” said the boy. “A regular six foot yew bow. It will drive a steel pointed arrow a full inch into a mahogany tree. Johnny Thompson has been teaching me to use it. I—I’m getting pretty good.”

“Oh,” said Dot.

“Of course,” said Curlie, “we won’t use it to—”

“Of course not,” said Dot, not allowing him to finish. “But bring it. I only wish I could shoot it. Just think of the lost arts there are in the world! When Columbus was Governor of this island every native knew how to shoot with bows and strong ones, too. That was the way they hunted and how they fought their battles.”

“Of course,” said Curlie, “we use them only for sport now. But I’ll take it along.”

CHAPTER XII
CURLIE GETS THEIR GOAT

You have not forgotten the strange plight into which a jeweled monkey, a storm and a strange craft had led Johnny and Doris. They had arrived at night on some strange shore. This must be an island. But what island and how inhabited? Who could say? There were questions enough in their minds but none were asked as Doris and Nieta, in the prow of the strange ship, following Johnny began feeling their way out of the dark little forward cabin into the moonlight.

As they stood upon the gunwale ready to drop silently to the sandy beach, they saw circling to the right and left of them a narrow bay. Back from the beach was a fringe of palms.

The night was still. Only the faintest murmur of wavelets lapping at the sand whispered of the ocean's age-long unrest.

Back from the shore all seemed lost in slumber. Not a light glimmered, not a camp fire glowed. There was no sound. Even the soaring bats appeared to have gone to rest.

"Wha—where are we?" Doris shivered though the night was not cold.

"Who knows?" In a few words Johnny told all he knew of the night's curious adventure.

"All we can do," he said in conclusion, "is to find some sheltered spot where we can hide till morning. Then I'll have to go out scouting to discover if I can find what island this is and what sort of people live upon it."

Even as he spoke he was conscious of the fact that he was reading into the

present some of the romance and adventure of the West Indies' colorful past. But for all that their position, two girls and a boy on a strange shore at night, was perilous enough.

Silently, in single file, they crossed the sandy beach to come at last to the edge of the cocoanut grove. There, by following the shore for a short distance, they found a well trodden path leading into the forest.

"We won't follow that, at least not to-night," said Johnny. "There are dogs, dangerous native dogs. Natives always have them. And the natives—who knows?"

They continued along the beach until they came to a spot where the land rose quite abruptly up from the sea.

There they found a second trail, little more than a wild animal's trail to water. The tracks they found there were the sharply cut marks of goats' hoofs.

"We'll go up here," said Johnny leading the way. "We'll get up high where there are no mosquitoes. There we can rest and think things over."

A half hour later they found themselves seated upon a mossy bank beneath low-growing palms. The night was soon to end. Then would come morning. What of that morning? Who could answer?

As Johnny sat there listening for some sound that might spell danger, trying at times to peer into the darkness, his mind was filled with many strange thoughts. At times he found himself wondering about the secret Curlie Carson had hidden away in his laboratory up there in the Citadel.

"He's something like my old pal, Panther Eye," he told himself. "Always working something out, springing some surprise; always mysterious. Wonder where old Pant is now."

He thought of the 'Rope of Gold'. "Guess we'll never find it," he told himself gloomily. "Never can tell, though. One thing's sure—never will find it by chasing jeweled monkeys and getting caught out all times night and day on boats and islands with a pair of girls."

He couldn't be sure he regretted his latest experience. Doris was a regular sport.

He liked her. Hadn't made the least fuss when she found herself marooned on a strange island. "Be a great joke if she and this native girl really followed up that jeweled monkey and found the black queen's treasure and we never as much as had a look at the 'Rope of Gold'. Things come out that way sometimes."

He thought of the natives who tried to kidnap him. "Something strange about that," he thought. They had not laid a hand on him from first to last. He wondered what would have happened if he had really resisted. As it was he had walked out on them and they were quite powerless to stop him. He wished now that he had seen the thing through.

"That's the way with life," he whispered to the darkness. "We have a feeling that life is short, that we must hurry here, hurry there, get out of this and into that; that we really haven't time to see things through. And the joke of it all is life is very, very long and we've time for almost everything, plenty of time if only we think so."

In the meantime Dorn, with old Pompee at his side at the camp by the Citadel, watched and waited for Johnny's return. At times he wondered if Doris and Nieta had found their way safely home.

"Of course they did," he said aloud once.

"Did what?" Pompee asked.

"Did find their way home. The girls."

"Yes, yes. To be sure."

Had he seen what at that moment was happening at his home he would have been not a little startled. Curlie Carson, Dot and the aged native woman were at the gate prepared to follow the sound of the drums in search of the secret meeting of the would-be rebels, when there sounded on the flagstone walk outside the rattle of a donkey's hoofs.

"It is Doris," Dot exclaimed. "Doris and Nieta. I am glad. We have been worried about them. Of course, we thought they might have stayed at your camp two nights, but that they did not intend to do. The storm must have delayed them. But now here they are. They—

“Who—what?” She stared as the donkey came into view. His baskets were empty. He was riderless and alone.

“What can have happened?” She looked at Curlie as if expecting an answer. But Curlie had no answer for her. When he had reached his camp that day the girls were already gone. This he told her in the kindliest tone he knew.

At once there was commotion in the household. Doris and Nieta were lost; lost alone in the night and the jungle, perhaps kidnapped, robbed, killed. Who could say? Curlie thought of Johnny’s disappearance and of the strange camp on the mountain; thought too of the plotted rebellion.

“We can do nothing to-night,” said Dot. “We must be up and away on the search at dawn.”

“In the meantime?” said Curlie.

As if in answer to his question, to their ears there came once more the distant tum—tum—tum of native drums.

Curlie looked at Dot. Dot looked at her aged servant. Then, without a word they walked out of the gate bound for the hills, the three of them, ready to follow the sound of the drums, ready for any peril or adventure to which this might lead.

It was strange, this marching up a little known trail in the night, following the sound of the drum that grew louder, ever louder as they advanced.

The night was strange too. The moist air laden with the odor of blossoms and tropical spices was a constant delight. The stars shone as no stars had ever shone before. Here some creeping thing set the dry leaves rustling, there a strange bird piped his shrill night tune.

The trail was steep. As they paused beside a massive rock a breath of wind came sweeping up from the sea to fan their cheeks. Then, quite unexpectedly Dot’s heart gave a leap. From up the trail came a sound as of a host rushing through the brush.

“Oh—Ah!” she whispered sibilantly, gripping Curlie’s arm and backing into the brush.

Curlie began to laugh. “Do you not recognize the sound?” he asked. “It’s only a ‘chattering woman’.”

“O, yes, so it is a ‘chattering woman’. How stupid of me to get all excited,” she exclaimed as she stared away in the direction of the curious tree.

Dot told herself that she must get better control of her nerves if she was to be of any service on this strange enterprise.

“Listen! The dance grows wilder,” she said. “If we are to learn anything, be of any service, we must hurry.”

“You see,” she explained as they moved steadily up the trail, “the United States Government is doing all it can for this republic, especially for the common people, who most of all appreciate and deserve it.

“There are a few in the cities, who were used to growing fat on graft under the old rule, who do not like the Americans. Then too there are traders, white men with black hearts, who will do anything they can to stir up trouble. In the old days they grew rich selling arms and supplies to rebels. It is rumored that a boat loaded with rifles and ammunition is hiding away somewhere among the islands and that a rebel chieftain is here in the hills exciting the hill people to rebel. If only the Marines were here and the native police,” she sighed, “they’d put an end to it. But we must do what we can.

“If rebellion is started, cruel leaders will go roving through the hills forcing the people to follow them. In that way many innocent ones will be killed. If it can only be stopped, lives will be saved. And think what it means to live!”

Curlie did think. Every morning was a delight. Every day brought some fresh revelation from the natural world. Each night brought sweet repose. Ah yes, life was good.

The life of the hill people was simple and beautiful—children playing about their small, grass thatched, white plastered homes, men hoeing corn, women picking wild coffee, and always the simple songs of the hills were on their lips.

As they rounded a rugged cliff that overhung the trail, the sound of the drums grew louder and mingled with it was the chant of many voices.

“It is very near,” said the native woman.

“Listen!” said Curlie impressively. “When Columbus visited this island on his first great voyage, he heard those drums. All down the centuries they have sounded until now.”

“Yes,” said Dot. “And always for war. If only we could get their goat,” she said once more. “They will not go into revolt before the black goat is sacrificed.”

“But you can’t get their goat,” Mona whispered in an awed tone. “The *Papa Lou* has thrown a spell about the black goat. He throws spells over men and all living things. If he says ‘come’ the nightingale lights on his shoulder and the wild parrot eats from his hands. Twenty days ago the black goat ran wild in the mountains. Now he will not leave the *Papa Lou*. You do what you will, you cannot get the black goat. It is a spell that is cast over him.”

“Some part of what you have said is true,” said Dot, “but not all, I hope. We can get their goat. At least I hope so. Somehow we must do it.”

At that they began moving forward, now bending low to glide along on tiptoe, and now creeping on hands and knees toward their strange goal.

“There! There they are!” Mona whispered, as she at last parted two broad palm leaves.

“And there! There is the black goat!” Dot breathed. “And see!” Her words came in an excited whisper. “See! There is no spell upon him. He is tied with a slender rope.”

“Someone else has done this,” the aged native woman’s tone was one of calm assurance. “The *Papa Lou* did not tie him. There is no need.”

“If we could but get the goat!” Dot whispered once more. “You see,” her low whispered tones were tense with suppressed excitement, “these voodoo people have always been great believers in sacrifice. They have even been accused of human sacrifice, but this I cannot believe to be true. However that may be, they have always sacrificed animals. The goat, a black goat with not a white hair, has always been their choice, yet, when Christophe prepared to defend his people against the French, he and his followers pledged themselves to fight until death over the carcass of a freshly killed wild boar.

“Black goats are rare. This *Papa Lou*, by some chance, has found one running wild in the mountains. He captured it. They have it now, as you see. After the drumming, dancing and singing will come the ceremony of sacrifice. And after that will begin—”

“The revolution,” Curlie whispered.

“The revolution,” she repeated. “And our little village may be attacked and destroyed at once. For we are white and there are few to protect us.”

In his mind’s eye Curlie saw the beautiful white chateau standing out like a castle of Spain in the moonlight. He pictured himself once more in that beautiful garden with this splendid girl pal across from him and thereupon resolved that, come what might, all this beauty and happiness must not be destroyed.

“Yes,” he said aloud. “We must get their goat to-night.”

But how was this to be done? The goat stood at a spot not five feet from the edge of the circling throng. The flare of the camp fire lighted the scene. To approach near enough to free the goat was to court disaster.

“Listen.” Dot held up a hand.

The drumming had ceased quite suddenly. The chanting died away. Exhausted dancers threw themselves upon the grass. A dark figure, a man unmistakably from the city, a black man with an evil face, rose up from among the people. He began to speak in French creole, the language of the people.

For a time the three there in the shadows listened spell-bound. The man’s words came forth in wild explosive outbursts. The people murmured assent, or sat in stolid silence, listening to the harangue.

“What does he say?” Curlie whispered.

“He,” Mona answered, “he say what is not true. But how are these simple ones to know? He say white men have come to enslave us, even as French men enslaved our grandfathers. Already we work roads we do not travel. Time will come when we work on plantations, in sugar mills, in mines and have no pay. That he says. Better he says that we die fighting.”

“People have worked the roads always,” said Dot. “Now they work on the most needed roads. It’s part of America’s efficiency.”

“I know,” said Mona. “But how can these understand? After the speech—the sacrifice.”

Curlie repeated, “We must get the goat. But how?”

He thought of his bow and arrow. He was a fair shot. The arrow point was sharp as a razor blade. One twang of the bow, one wild bleat, perhaps, and the goat would be no more. Yet he shrank from killing such a beautiful creature. Besides, such a course was fraught with danger. They might be caught. There must be another way.

And then like a flash, to his mind came a suggestion of a possible way out. At once he began groping about on the ground and about the bark of the ancient tree that spread its protecting branches above them. It was a pine.

“Listen!” said Mona. “He is telling them that a boat load of arms and ammunition awaits them in Deception Bay. After the sacrifice—the rebellion.”

“We must get their goat,” whispered Curlie. He was smearing his arrowhead with a sticky substance. “Now!” he breathed. “Now!” He nocked his arrow. Then, with a whispered word he thrust something into Dot’s hand.

“It’s a match,” his whisper was low. “A sulphur match. Strike it and apply it to the head of my arrow.”

A small blue flame appeared. It wavered for a second at the arrow’s head. A larger golden flame replaced it.

The next instant that yellow flame shot forward to lodge in the bark of the pine tree to which the goat was tied. It was a perfect shot. The flames of burning rosin were licking their way toward the rope that held the goat captive.

Mona stared with all her eyes. The tiny golden flame had not been noted by the throng. They were too intent on their leader’s words.

The arrow and the pine rosin flame burned fiercely now. The rope was already singed. In ten seconds it would be burned away. The goat’s keen senses warned

him of fire. He strained at his rope. One second, two, three, five, then with a wild *blaa*—he threw his full force into one terrific tug. It was enough. The rope gave way. He fell. Rolling over and over, he at last scrambled to his feet and with a final *blaa* dashed away into the darkness that was the jungle.

For a space of ten seconds there was silence. Then pandemonium broke loose.

“The goat! The goat! The black goat!” the natives screamed in a chorus.

Then, with one accord, they went dashing away into the night, in a wild but futile attempt to recapture the goat.

“The goat,” said Dot, rising from among the ferns, “is free. And Mona,” she said quietly, “there was no spell woven about him. The moment his bonds were burned away he ran into the forest.”

“There was no spell,” said Mona.

“There will be no revolution now,” said Dot.

“Not at once,” said Mona. Then as if a new thought had come to her, “There is a great white shadow in the sea at Deception Bay. That is where the ship with rifles is hiding. They had better be careful. The great white shadow—he makes men disappear. They never come back.”

“That,” said Dot to Curlie in a tone so low the aged native woman could not hear, “is another of her wild Voodoo notions.”

They made their way unmolested down the mountainside. In time, after a long march, they entered the sleeping village. Once more, as Curlie’s eyes took in the beauty of it all, the few white chateaux, the many modest homes of the natives, he said with increasing conviction, “It must not be destroyed by a revolution. It must not!”

When they had entered the garden of the chateau, Dot put out a cool hand and gave Curlie a strong handclasp and a good night.

“Now,” she said, in a tone that was deeply serious. “We have had two adventures. Something tells me the third will come very soon. Where there are two there are always three. You will not forget?”

“I will not forget,” said Curlie.

“May you sleep well.”

“Sweet dreams.”

She was gone. The room that had been assigned to Curlie was on the ground floor. The door opened on the broad porch. He was free to come and go as he chose. Because the night had been an exciting one and his blood was not yet cooled for sleep, he decided to take a turn about the village streets. In this way he chanced upon a man who was destined to play a large part in the near future, not alone of himself but of his friend Johnny Thompson as well.

The man was standing before a low door over which a feeble kerosene lamp burned. Curlie recognized him at once. True he had never seen him, but he fitted so well the description of the short, broad man who had played the good Samaritan to Johnny when he fell among the wild natives on the road to the Citadel that there could be no mistaking his identity.

Strangely enough the man recognized Curlie Carson.

“You are one of the young men from up at the Citadel,” he said without waiting to be spoken to. “You are looking for the ‘Rope of Gold’. What strange fancy tells you it is there? And where is your companion?”

“I should like to know that last myself,” said Curlie.

“I thought you might,” said the short, broad man, blinking his eyes in a strange way. “Well, I can tell you this much: he left some native friends, left them flat when they were bent on doing him a good turn, a very good turn. Left them flat I tell you. Walked right out on them.”

Curlie was astonished at the man’s talk. How, he wondered, could the man know so much about Johnny?

“You know a great deal,” he said. “Perhaps you can tell me where he is now.”

“No,” said the man. “I can not. If he is lost, it is his own fault. The natives would have guided him safely back to the Citadel and perhaps he would have brought back with him that which he could not have carried, though I dare say he is a

very strong boy.”

The man’s talk got Curlie in more and more of a tangle. He had assumed that Johnny had been kidnapped. But here was a man saying the natives were his friends bent on loading him down with presents he could not carry alone.

All this was too much for Curlie’s weary mind to grasp. In an effort to think it through, he looked down at his feet. When he looked up once more, the short, broad man was gone. He had vanished into the night.

CHAPTER XIII
CRUSOES FOR A NIGHT

As the three companions, Johnny, Doris and Nieta sat upon the mossy bank beneath the palms waiting for the dawn on that mysterious island. Johnny was not the only one to indulge in long, long thoughts. Doris came in for her full share.

“It’s strange,” she told herself, as a little thrill ran through her, “to be camping here on an island we have never seen. Who can say what wild creatures may roam these forests? Time was when whole herds of wild cattle wandered peacefully over our own dry plains or went charging madly up the steep slopes to escape some pursuer.”

As she sat there amid the silence, she fancied all manner of strange and unusual things, yet a stout heart held her nerves steady. Fortunately her mind was fresh. Sleep on the boat had done much for her. She was ready for another day and whatever it might bring. So she sat there listening to the voice of the jungle.

Night brings its changes to a tropical island. At night a thousand creatures, too torpid or too timid to face the light of day, fare forth in search of food. Strange mouselike rodents, and those resembling rabbits, sport in the spots where moonlight falls. The short-nosed wild pig comes forth from his dark retreat to root around among the ferns and shrubs. More fearsome creatures there are too: yellow snakes and great, brown lizards.

All this Doris knew, yet, strangely enough, she experienced no tremor of fear. Not so strange after all perhaps: for was not Johnny Thompson close at hand? It is strange this confidence of a girl in the strength of a boy; her utter confidence in his power to defend her from the beasts of the jungle, from a hidden enemy,

yes, from the very lightning bolts that shoot from the sky.

Perhaps, as she sat there, eyes half closed, part asleep, part awake, the girl dreamed of the time when she should have a man who was all her own, and a home. For, long ago she had learned that the best of life's good things come to those who have a roof, a kitchen, a hearthfire they can call their own.

She thought for the hundredth time of the jeweled monkey and of the treasure supposed to be hidden away in the now ruined castle. She thought of Johnny's 'Rope of Gold' and wondered if it had really existed, existed still to-day or were made of the stuff that dreams are woven from.

She thrilled as she recalled Johnny's story of the copper-colored natives and his battle with the wild boar.

Most of all she wondered about the island which they had reached in such a strange manner. Was it a small island? Was it large? Were there many natives? Were they wild natives? Was it true that some of these natives were cannibals? It had been true long ago in the days of Columbus. Had they changed or had they clung to their primitive customs down the long centuries? She thought of Nieta and her snake-tooth charm.

"If she who has lived among white people all her life still believes in this Voodoo charm," she thought with a shudder, "what is one to expect from the inhabitants of some small island where the white man is seldom seen?"

So she wondered and thought, and wondered again until the first flush of dawn came sifting down among the trees. Then Johnny Thompson rose to shake himself and peer into the dawn. After that they started, the three of them, through that faint but beautiful light that is a tropical morning, toward the beach, fortified with brave hearts, strong bodies and clean minds against that which the day might bring forth.

* * * * * * * *

At that very hour Curlie and Dot were leaving the garden of the chateau. They were going in search of Doris and Nieta. Dot's father was away. There remained at their home only two aged servants. Because of the threatened revolution it was necessary that the servants remain and keep a sharp watch out for trouble.

“Father should be told of the revolution,” said Dot. “He should know, too, that Doris has disappeared. But who will find him? He is to be gone for a week. He will travel from place to place and has no definite route.

“So,” she sighed. “I guess it’s up to us to do what is to be done.”

“Count on me,” said Curlie. “Mike and I will help you.”

“Mike?” The girl threw him a curious glance.

“Why yes,—Mike.” Curlie spoke slowly as if reluctant to say more.

With a girl’s quick perception, she read his thoughts and asked no other questions.

So in the half darkness of early morning, they left the beautiful chateau to lose themselves on the jungle trail that leads up to the ancient fortress where Dorn, after a restless night full of dire forebodings, was doing his bit helping old Pompee kindle a fire.

They walked along in silence, Curlie and the girl. Curlie was thinking. He had always thought of Haiti as a quiet place, sleepy and hot where nothing truly exciting ever happened, yet after being here only part of a very short summer, he found himself facing many mysteries and, as far as he could tell, in for more than one adventure.

“If only people wouldn’t be forever getting themselves lost,” he thought to himself.

His mind at that moment was busy with thoughts of his little laboratory at the ancient Citadel. “If only they’d leave me alone I’d get the thing completed. And it is important that I should complete it; especially if there is to be a revolution. With these superstitious natives——

“Man! Oh Man!” He unconsciously spoke out loud. “How they would run!”

“Who would run?” said Dot.

“The—why the natives, of course. They’re always running, aren’t they?”

Again the girl understood and said no more.

“She’s a peach of a girl. Don’t insist on prying into everything,” he thought. “Someday I’ll tell her my secrets.”

“If this Midas were only a dog,” he said a moment later, speaking of Dot’s donkey, “he could lead us back over the trail to his mistress. But being only a donkey—”

“Midas has donkey’s ears because he is a donkey.” The girl laughed a merry laugh. “Since he is a donkey you can’t expect too much of him. But we’ll find Doris all right.”

“I’m sure of it,” said Curlie.

* * * * * * * *

In the meantime Johnny, Doris and Nieta had reached the beach and were revelling in a tropical sunrise over the sea.

Dawn on a tropical sea! How can one describe it? Great, dark clouds that appear to threaten sudden disaster. The sea a sheet of gray steel. Then, slowly comes the change. The dull, threatening clouds are tinted with the pink of rose petals. The sea loses its dull foreboding and like the sky becomes a thing of beauty. Brighter colors follow, red, orange, yellow, and after that, with a low whisper of wavelets the day is ushered in.

And such a day as it promised to be for the three of them, Johnny, Doris and Nieta.

The first fact that Johnny’s practiced eye noted was that the boat that had carried them to these strange shores was gone.

“What if this should prove to be a small, abandoned island,” he said aloud, “like Robinson Crusoe’s?”

“What if it should?” Doris breathed.

What indeed? They were young, romantic. The sea lay before them. Behind them was the island. The thrilling possibilities of it all set their blood racing.

Animal trails no human foot has trod. Jungles no man has explored. Strange butterflies and flowers of a species no man has known. Ruins perhaps of a long forgotten race or of some ancient pirate's hiding place. All these possibilities and more lay before them.

There was food. Wild bananas, cocoanuts, bread fruit, fish in the streams and the sea, and birds so tame they might almost be caught with the naked hand.

As they stood there day-dreaming, the sea, the air, the very palm tops appeared to listen to their thoughts; so calm and still it was; such a Sabbath hush there was over all.

And then, crashing into their thoughts, wrecking the silence, came a laugh, the loud, prolonged laugh of a black man. There could be no mistaking it. No white man, certainly no Oriental, could laugh like that.

The boy and girl started, then stood for ten seconds looking into one another's eyes. After that, because the laugh was contagious, they too burst forth into merry peals of laughter.

"There are people on the island," said Johnny. "A man seldom laughs when he is alone. Never like that."

"Johnny," said Doris, "do cannibals and pirates laugh?"

"I doubt it," said Johnny. "Surely not that way."

"How strange it is," he said after a moment of silence. "Men may read your character, your mood, your very attitude toward life and your fellow men by your laugh. A boy torments a smaller boy by burning his bare foot with a hot stick. He laughs. How different is that laugh from a heart so full of pure joy that it needs must overflow with laughter."

"There are people over there," he repeated. "There's no use prolonging the suspense. Either they are friendly natives or vicious savages. In either case there is nothing gained by delay. Humanity is very much the same everywhere. We are usurpers in their land. The best we can do is to march right up and say, 'Howdy'. Let's go."

And away they marched.

CHAPTER XIV
THE MARINE KING

Of all the strange sights their heightened imaginations prepared them to behold, none, perhaps, could have so filled the minds of Doris and Johnny with astonishment as that which they saw when, having passed a grove of cocoanuts and a clump of low growing palms, they came to a broad clearing.

Before them was a circle of hard trodden sand. Standing there were more than a hundred natives.

In the center, and to all appearances king of them all, was a man seated upon a throne of hand-hewn mahogany. On the head of this man was a battered crown and in his hand an ebony stick, which one might assume was used as a scepter.

Most astonishing of all was the fact that the man was neither black nor brown, but white. And he was dressed in the olive drab uniform of an American Marine.

For one full moment they stood there, the boy and the two girls, unobserved, staring at this astounding revelation. Their reactions to the scene were strange. Johnny was scarcely able to resist a desire to laugh. Doris stood stock still, lips parted, pupils dilated, staring. Nieta felt an all but overpowering desire to turn and flee.

Then something happened. The strange king, on his stranger throne, turned his crowned head and looked squarely at them.

This apparently was his turn to stare and stare he did in quite an unroyal manner.

Another moment had elapsed by the time he regained his composure sufficiently to find his tongue.

“Why—why hello there!” he said. “Who are you and where did you come from?”

“Who—who are you?” It was Doris who asked this without answering his question.

“Can’t you see?” His face expanded into a broad grin. “I am the Marine King of Manowa. And these,” he added with a low bow, “are my subjects—some of ’em. Three thousand, in all, and pretty loyal, too.”

“This,” Doris told herself, rubbing a hand across her eyes, as if to dispel a vision, “is not reality. It is a chapter from Alice in Wonderland.”

But it was not. The Marine King of Manowa proved to be very real indeed. The repast he spread before his three young guests a half hour later dispelled the last doubt. One doesn’t get real oatmeal with rich cream, poached eggs and hot cakes with honey from the pages of a fairy book.

“Yes, he is real,” Doris whispered to Johnny. “But how strange.”

“I suppose you think it’s awfully queer,” said the Corporal King, polishing his battered crown thoughtfully, “that I should be king over here. Well, it’s a strange sort of a yarn.” He settled back in his rustic seat. “You see, this island is part of Haiti, and our country, the grand old United States of America, is engaged at present in an endeavor to bring order out of chaos.”

“Yes,” said Doris eagerly. “My uncle is a horticultural expert. He’s trying to help them to raise fruits and nuts in a better way.”

“That,” said the king, “is part of the work, a mighty important part, too. If you are to have schools, hospitals and all that, you must have money to support ’em. And rocks, big round silver washers I mean, comes from what you sell. But first of all,” he grinned a good-natured grin, “you’ve gotta sort of knock their thick heads together an’ git ’em to be good. And that’s no job fer a Y. M. C. A. secretary.”

“I’m a Marine, and Marines, so they say, are hard-boiled—tough as old sole leather baked in the sun. They put me here with twelve rough and readys and said, ‘Make ’em be good’. That was my job. I’d of liked somethin’ else but Marines have to take what they get—and be happy.

“Right off I discovered that there was two of these Christophes wantin’ to wear this brass ring on his old bean and neither one succeedin’ more than a day at a time.

“What did I do? What would you have done?” He turned to Johnny.

“Why I,—er,—”

“You’d a done what I done,” replied the king with a hoarse laugh. “You’d a said, ‘Here, gimme the thing. I’ll wear it.’ That’s what I done and it worked; worked mighty well.

“I’ve no great amount of education. Don’t take a college professor to see that. But I believe in it—education I mean. If I can get enough high hatters to teach ’em and enough money I’ll have the best educated little kingdom this side of the Golden Gates. We’ve no school at all yet. We’ll have one though. You’ll see.

“If this crown was set with diamonds,” he said, thumbing the spots where diamonds might once have been, “I’d take them out and sell them for money to buy a school house. For a school house is more important than diamonds or Persian rugs or anything like that.”

“I know where there is one diamond,” said Doris impulsively.

“So do I, several of them,” smiled the king. “Trouble is, folks won’t sell their diamonds to help me build my school.”

“But this one does not belong to anyone: at least a—a monkey has it and a monkey isn’t anyone, is he?” Doris blushed in her excitement.

“No,” said the king with a laugh. “Not that I know of.”

Then of course the story of the jeweled monkey had to be told.

When the story was finished the king sat for a long time in a brown study.

“Of course,” he exclaimed at last, “it sounds wild, but there are a great many stories—most of them wild tales I guess—about the treasure hidden by old Emperor Christophe before his reign was brought to a close.

“We know there was a heap of gold then and a barrel of jewels. What became of them? Who knows? What if this monkey has discovered the hidin’ place of that wealth? You might follow him—”

“And find all the hidden treasure,” Doris broke in excitedly.

“Exactly,” smiled the king. “But you’ll probably never see that monkey again. And yet, it’s strange what things happen. Take your landin’ on this island. You might have landed anywhere else and been lost from your family for days and days. But now, if you are brave enough, you’ll be at home in less than three hours.”

“Three! Three hours!” they cried excitedly.

“Less time perhaps. By airplane. My supply plane will be here within an hour. Then, if you’ve got the nerve, you can go flyin’ straight back to Cape Haitian. Do you dare?”

“Do we dare?” Doris leaped to her feet to do a wild fling across the sand. “Dare? Dare?” she cried again. “Who wouldn’t dare?”

As for the native girl, Nieta, she whispered to her snake-tooth charm, then said to Doris with a very sober face, “I am very much afraid, but I will go.”

Never, as long as she lives, will Doris forget that ride back to Cape Haitian. There was a friendly handclasp and a “May you come back” from the king and they were away.

Up, up, up they climbed. The sea swam beneath them. The little island of Manowa drifted away behind them. The great island of Haiti with its plains, its forests, its cloud-capped mountains reached out friendly hands to greet them.

“How wonderful are all the inventions of our age!” Doris thought. “What a marvelous privilege to live in such an age.”

Still, like some great bird their plane soared aloft.

CHAPTER XV
DREAMS

Before they began this thrilling flight Doris and Nieta had told their pilot the exact location of their home in the village of Terre Plaisance. Cape Haitian, his own headquarters, was some twenty miles from their home. This distance they had expected to cover on donkeyback or on foot, as circumstance permitted. Imagine their surprise when, as they watched the ever changing panorama that passed beneath them, they began recognizing little hill peaks and dark groves that formed the surroundings of their own little village and not Cape Haitian at all.

“Surely,” Doris said to herself, with a little intake of breath, “he would not attempt to land in our garden, or the village street. That would be impossible.”

As for Nieta she was busy whispering to her snake-tooth charm, for she expected nothing else than that they would go crashing into some rocky hillside or plunging into the forest.

The plane circled once. It circled again, this time much lower. A third time they circled, so low that Doris could count the tiny flower beds in the garden. For a half minute she held her breath, then like some wild fowl that circling has failed to find water, the plane shot upward and away.

Curlie Carson and Dot heard the drumming of the plane and wondered at its presence there.

“I have never seen a plane here before,” said Dot.

“Perhaps,” said Curlie, “they have had some word of the revolution that is brewing and are on the lookout for the rebel camp.”

“I doubt it,” said Dot. “I—

“But look!” she broke short off to stand staring. “They’re coming down. They—they’ll crash!” She put both hands over her eyes to shut out the sight. But of this there was no need, for the plane disappeared silently behind the distant treetops.

“Come on!” said Curlie, seizing her by the hand and dragging her down the trail. “They can’t be far away. They may be injured—dying. The plane may be on fire.”

Then madly, recklessly, heedless of bruises and scratches, they went racing, scrambling, rolling, tumbling down the hillside.

“We—we must be half way there,” Curlie said, panting.

Again he paused to puff. “Can’t be far now.”

Imagine their surprise when, as they parted the branches of a low palm tree, they came upon an open, uncultivated field and saw in the midst of that field an airplane resting safely upon its landing wheels.

“Of all things!” said Dot.

“And there are girls,” said Curlie. “Two of them.”

“That,” said Dot, sitting down upon the ground with alarming suddenness, “is Doris and Nieta. Nice trick they played on us.”

“I’ve heard of them but never met them,” said Curlie, offering the girl his hand. “Suppose you take me over and give me an introduction.”

A half hour later, after many a laugh and much introducing and explaining, when the gallant young pilot had flown away the four young people, Doris, Dot, Johnny and Curlie, marched away toward the village of Terre Plaisance, which was now but a comfortable walking distance away.

* * * * * * * *

“Curlie,” said Johnny, late that night, as they sat with their feet on a broad window sill, looking through a great window to a scene of matchless beauty,

tropical flowers, waving fronds and a sky sprinkled with stars, “Curlie, old boy, a fellow could almost settle down to something like this. I’ve never seen anything quite like it, have you?”

“No,” said Curlie, “I haven’t. I’ve been in the northern wilds. Too cold up there. I’ve seen the Amazon country. Too hot. Too humid. Too many bugs. But here—look out there. Sense it all, the night, the perfume of flowers, the stars.”

Perhaps they thought too of the girls who had left them but a short half hour before. Their dresses that night had formed a strange contrast to that worn in the bush. Khaki had been replaced by filmy things of brilliant color. Doris had been dressed in pink and old rose; Dot in dark blue and a glorious orange hue. Together they had played low, haunting native airs on banjo and ukulele, while the palms accompanied them with the ever restless rustle of the mysterious jungle.

“Yes,” said Curlie, “we could almost do it, but not quite. Only one thing keeps us from it.”

“What’s that?”

“The existence of a mystery yet unsolved.”

“Yes—many mysteries.”

“And so,” Curlie yawned, “we’d better turn in, for to-morrow is another day.”

CHAPTER XVI
THE CALL OF THE DRUMS

Again it was night. Once more the moon edged the crest of the ancient Citadel with a line of silver. Curlie and Johnny had returned to camp. They were welcomed by Dorn with shouts of joy. Old Pompee had uttered grunts of satisfaction and had begun at once the beating up of sorghum seed into petit meal, which later would be formed into cakes and baked on hot coals.

The boys arrived too late for any daylight exploration of the Citadel. After an hour of rest followed by a sumptuous meal of hot cakes and roasted wild pig, they went each his own way in search of adventure.

Curlie struck away up the Citadel trail that led to his laboratory. There, finding all in order, he began work on wires, switches and batteries. From time to time a low tum—tum—tum came from one or the other of his two native drums. At other times there sounded a shrill piping not unlike the notes of a boy's willow whistle.

Meanwhile Johnny was pursuing an investigation of his own. Recalling the story of the ancient black emperor's visits to the Citadel and the story of how he went to the crest of the uncompleted fortress to work all night long with mortar and stone, he had thought too of the slaves who, looking up from their hard beds of trodden earth, had seen him working there. From all this he had developed a theory which he hoped might aid him in discovering the spot, or at least the general location on the wall where Christophe had worked at night.

"Here," he told himself as he stood upon a certain raised portion of earth, "those slaves could not have slept. The space is too narrow and irregular. There were many hundreds of workmen. The greater part of them were slaves condemned to

toil on the wall. They must be kept together, guarded against escape at night. Must have been a broad, clear, open space."

After wandering about, flashing his light far and near, walking here, turning to the right, then to the left he came to a definite conclusion.

"This broad square," he told himself, "must have been the sleeping ground of the workers. And from this point only a small section of the wall may be seen, not more than a fourth of it."

Of a sudden, he started. It came to him with something of a shock that this very section of the wall might be seen plainly from their own camp. Dorn and Pompee had told him of the giant with fiery eyes who walked the wall at night, and the little man, the bearer of the telescope, who followed after, but he had quite frankly disbelieved their story. It was, he had said, but the work of their overwrought imagination. Now, as some slight confirmation of its plausibility came to him, he experienced an overpowering desire to go once more to the crest of the Citadel.

"This time," he told himself, "I will avoid pitfalls." For all that he found himself unable to suppress a shudder as his foot touched the first step of the stairway.

* * * * * * * *

During all this time Curlie was experiencing unsurmountable difficulties in his work as an inventive genius. The drums he had procured at some hazard did not fulfill his purpose. One, it was true, worked admirably. The other did not work at all.

"Of course," he grumbled to himself, "one could use whistles, but drums would be more effective and dramatic." The thought that in this land he might use the drums, which had played so great a part in the history of the country, to serve a new and strange end thrilled him to the very center of his being.

"Anyone knows that drums are of different tones, the same as bells and whistles," he told himself. "And I'll find the ones I want though they cost me thirty gourdes apiece." The gourdes he spoke of were not the kind that grow on vines but Haitian silver coins worth twenty cents in American money.

Curious enough, just as he came to this conclusion there sounded on the still

night air a faint, long drawn tum—tum—tum.

“They are calling. The drums are calling,” he muttered. “I must go. If it’s the right one I’ll pay forty gourdes—and be glad enough to make the bargain.”

* * * * * * * *

Curlie followed the sound of the drum. Not always did he find the right trail. At times as he skulked along beneath overhanging bushes the sound grew fainter. Then he must turn, retrace his steps to begin the search anew. In the main, however, his keen senses served him well.

Moment by moment, yard by yard, mile by mile the sound grew louder until at last the throbbing, pulsating air seemed full of it.

Curlie marveled at the boldness of the drummers. “They know that all the men of Terre Plaisance are gone,” he told himself. “It is well for them, else their drums would be split from end to end and they’d not get thirty gourdes for them, either.”

It was just at this juncture that a curious thing happened. As he moved stealthily forward, his keen ear caught a sound not made by a drummer.

“A belated dancer,” he thought. The fact that someone was so near him in the dark disturbed him.

For all this he continued gliding silently forward over the same trail. Eerie business this, following another in the dark. Snap! went a twig up there in the trail. Rustle, rustle sounded the swinging bushes. Now he fancied he heard a whispered conversation.

“Might drop off at the side of the trail and waylay me.” His blood ran cold as he seemed to feel the two-foot blade of a machete come down upon his back.

“Beat ’em to it,” he whispered to himself, drawing forth his flashlight. “One glimmer of light full in the face, then I do the vanishing act.”

A few gliding foot-steps, then from his lips there sounded a loud:

“Hist!”

The next instant the white gleam of his flashlight shot down the trail. It fell upon two startled faces, one white, one coal black.

But Curlie did not do the disappearing act into the brush. Instead he uttered a low exclamation that expressed profound surprise. The persons before him were Dot and her aged black servant Mona.

“Wha—what are you doing here?” Dot gasped, as he came forward.

“After a drum,” he stated briefly. “Buy that drum. Pay forty gourdes if I must. That’s the drum I want. Just the right tone.”

“Do you know what that drum may cost?” Dot’s tone was impressive.

“Fifty—”

“Not fifty, not a hundred, nor a thousand gourdes, but many times that in money and men. That is the war drum of the revolution. It says that they have the black goat once more. Come on. We are glad you are here. But we must hasten. Even now we may be too late.” The French girl’s dark eyes shone like fire as she turned once more to take up the trail to follow the sound of the drums.

CHAPTER XVII
THE WHITE SHADOW

The trail this time was short. To Curlie's heightened imagination it seemed but a moment before he stood shoulder to shoulder with the dark-eyed French girl, staring at a scene such as no white person ever before witnessed.

"We are too late." It seemed to Curlie that the girl said this, not with lips, but with heart beats.

That the words were true he did not doubt, for at that very moment the white blade of a long knife flashed. It entered the heart of the black goat. The creature quivered, then lay still, quite dead, while the red blood flowed free.

The scene they witnessed that night will remain with them long as life shall last. It was the blood covenant of the blacks and was for war.

It was over before their hearts had ceased their wild beating. Then, in dead silence, with not a drum beat, not a whisper, the natives filed away into the forest.

"We must follow," said Dot. "For Haiti, and her kindly, innocent people, we must follow. The sacrifice has been made. But the torch of war must not be lit."

"We must not follow." The tone of Mona, the black woman, was firm. "If we follow we will be surprised and killed. There is another way. They go to Deception Bay where the ship is and where are many rifles and much ammunition. There is another trail. We will take it. It goes to the top of a very steep cliff. There we may look down upon them. After that we will think of a way."

“She is right,” Curlie said to the girl. To the native woman he said, “Lead on. We will follow.”

After that, for a half hour they followed the black woman through such an intricate maze of rocks, cliffs, vines and bushes as neither of them had ever known before. Through it all the old black woman never faltered. In the end, after a final breathless climb of a hundred feet, they found themselves looking down upon a scene of matchless beauty. Riding high the moon painted on a glassy sea a path of gold. Rock-ribbed, a narrow bay lay before them. And close in, almost beneath them, lay a large, full-rigged schooner.

For a time they lay there side by side, the boy, the girl, and the aged black woman. Straining their eyes, listening with all their ears, they strove to learn all that they might of this little revolution that might grow into an affair of grave consequence.

To their waiting ears there came at last a series of low bumping sounds, as of someone moving heavy objects across a floor.

“They are shifting the cargo. Getting ready to unload, perhaps to-night,” Mona’s words came short and quick.

“But look!” said Dot a moment later. “A boat.”

“Rifles in cases,” said Mona.

“On such a moonlight night, would they dare?”

“It is a deserted spot. The goat has been sacrificed. The terrible work must be begun.”

“Then,” said Curlie, “we are too late.”

As the full meaning of all this came to Dot she felt herself stifled with emotion. Rifles and ammunition would be unloaded. Somewhere there would be an attack. Peaceful, happy people would be driven from their homes.

“Perhaps,” she told herself, “it will be our village. Perhaps our home, our most beautiful home where the pink roses bloom in the garden and the nightingale sings in the cool of the evening.”

The thing seemed impossible. The air about her was so still, the bay so placid. Haiti had been so peaceful. And yet the history of Haiti is a story of many revolutions.

“This little beginning may be part of a terrible affair,” she told herself. She recalled the stories she had read of those remote days when Napoleon tried with 20,000 picked soldiers to subdue these people and had failed.

“There are seven hundred Marines on the island,” she told herself. “But what are they against so many? This—this terrible schooner will be everywhere, in all the little bays, lurking about with rifles and ammunition to sell for gain and at the cost of many human lives.”

Suddenly a desperate measure suggested itself to her. She recalled the incident of a few nights before when, by shooting an arrow made into a pitch-pine torch, Curlie had burned a cord and loosed the black goat.

Curlie’s bow and arrows were at this moment close by his side. Near at hand was a dwarf pine. It would furnish the pitch. In the center of that boat lying down there in the bay stacked round the mast was a pile of sleeping mats. Inch thick affairs of palm fiber they were and dry as tinder.

The schooner lay almost directly beneath them, an easy shot.

“One flaming arrow in that pile of sleeping mats and the boat will be in flames.” She said these words aloud without really willing it.

“And the ship carries much powder,” said Mona gripping Dot’s arm until it hurt. “It is the way. He, the young man, must shoot the arrow. He must shoot at once. See! I will gather the rosin.”

She endeavored to spring to her feet but Dot pulled her back.

“I—I—Wait. Wait one moment,” Dot implored. “Those are bad men. Perhaps they do not deserve to live, but—”

“They do not deserve it.” The native woman’s tone was bitter. “That white man who owns that ship sold the rifle that killed my father in a needless revolution before the Americans came. He does not deserve to live.”

“Wait,” said Curlie touching the girl’s arm lightly. “There is no need for haste. They are unloading rifles. Those long boxes could contain nothing else. The ammunition remains on board. Without it they can do nothing. I will be back,” he took a long breath, “very soon.”

The next instant he was lost in the shadows. He did not for a moment doubt the wisdom and justice of the aged black woman’s plan. His only thought was for the safety of the daring girl who was willing to risk so much for a country that was not her own.

“If the plan fails, if they see the descending arrow and trace its course,” he told himself, “if they come storming up the cliff and block our one way of escape, we are lost. I must find a second way down.”

He was gone but ten minutes. To the waiting girl it seemed an hour.

“There is another way; very steep and dangerous,” he said, “but a way of escape I believe. Shall I shoot the arrow?”

“Shoot the arrow.” Her eyes gleamed in the moonlight.

“They may discover us, may surround the rock. I am not afraid for myself, but for you—”

“Shoot the arrow.” He felt the warm pressure of her hand on his arm.

“Shoot the arrow,” she repeated.

“They may guess the source of the arrow. Your home may be destroyed.”

“Shoot the arrow.” Her lips were close to his ear, her tone low and tense.

“Here is the rosin.” The black woman’s hand trembled as she pressed a sticky ball into his own.

Seizing an arrow he rolled it over and over in the sticky mass. Then, with a sudden intake of breath he lighted a match. A moment later he nocked his arrow to send it circling straight and true, down, down, down to at last bury itself in the pile of dry mats.

All unseen by the workers on the schooner, a wisp of white smoke began mounting to the sky. Then, with a suddenness that was startling, the whole mass of mats burst out in red flame. Even then they did not see. For a space of thirty seconds they worked on. When at last the smell of smoke reached their nostrils and they turned to find themselves staring into the flames, they acted according to their own natures.

A native seized a bucket of drinking water to dash it into the flames. It might have been oil for all the good it did. The mats, baked as they had been in the dry Haitian sunlight, were tinder. So too was the deck, the mast and the rails of the schooner.

The schooner carried two dories. The one at her side was more than half filled with heavy boxes of rifles. Two natives, in an attempt to lighten this dory, over-balanced it. It filled and sank. All thought now was of escape. Men poured from the cabin where they had been sleeping. Brown men, red men, black men, men of every hue, they stormed madly about the deck.

Two men, cooler than the rest, began launching the remaining dory.

One man, wilder than the rest and possessing no patience at all, leaped into the sea.

“The White Shadow!” Mona screamed. “That man will perish!”

As if hearing her call, the man turned his face upward as he swam.

“It is the villain, the bad white man.” Mona put her hands to her eyes. “It is he, yet I cannot see him perish.”

Without knowing why she did it, Dot followed her example. For a full moment she remained with covered eyes. Then, suddenly realizing the peril of their position, she uncovered her eyes and scrambled to her feet to exclaim:

“Curlie! Mona! The ship will explode. We are in great danger! Back! Back! We must get far back into the forest!”

Even with this warning Mona paused for a last look. The ship was all in flames. The dory, with its human freight, was moving rapidly away. But the swimming white man, where was he? Gone. Only where he had last been seen, far below

the surface, was a movement as of a white sheet.

“The White Shadow of the sea,” said Mona as she turned to go racing away after her friends.

They had beaten their way back into the brush for a distance of a hundred rods when of a sudden, the very earth beneath them seemed torn in pieces. So great was the explosion that they were thrown to the earth and fine particles of debris were sprinkled over them.

“That,” said Mona, “is the end of the revolution. And perhaps of all revolutions. That heartless seller of arms will visit us no more.”

Ten minutes later they were lying once more upon the rock, looking down. All the overhanging bushes and palms had been blown away. The bay, a silent, beautiful blue, lay beneath them. Only drifting fragments remained to tell the story. A dory swamped near the farther shore told that the crew had escaped.

“But what is that white thing over there?” Dot asked, pointing away to the left.

“That,” said Curlie after one good look, “is the White Shadow of the sea.”

“A shark!” Dot said in great surprise. “He must have been killed by the explosion. But see! Was there ever one as large as he?”

The shark was indeed a monster; fully sixteen feet long, with all his cruel teeth grinning he lay there a terrible thing.

“So you see, Mona,” Dot said quietly, “it is as I have told you. Your White Shadow was but one of God’s living creatures, created beyond doubt to do His will.”

“What was that?” said Curlie suddenly springing to his feet. A twig had snapped in the brush behind them. In an instant Curlie’s flashlight revealed an ugly, distorted black face. Quite as suddenly the face vanished into the night.

“That,” said Mona, “was Pluto, the bad black man, the bad white man’s friend.”

“This affair,” said Curlie, as they made their way down the rugged cliff in the dark, “is not at an end. We have been seen. Who can tell what will follow?”

“Very bad,” said Mona.

That night, at a late hour, Curlie sat once more by the window that looked out upon the garden at the chateau. He was alone. Dot, he hoped, was fast asleep. Johnny was far away. For all that he was dreaming once more of a life of peace in a garden of roses.

“Peace,” he said at last, flinging his arms wide. “What chance is there for peace with such a girl about? ‘Shoot the arrow’ she said, ‘Shoot the arrow!’ and once more ‘Shoot the arrow!’”

All the same in the end he found himself admiring the brown-eyed girl for her rare courage.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE MAGIC TELESCOPE

There was in Curlie Carson something of the primitive man. Like the American Indian or the Eskimo, if he hunted or prowled half the night, he slept half the next day. The tropical sun was high when he awoke. The particular sound that disturbed his slumbers was the barking of a dog—Dorn's dog. The dog barked for joy. His young master had returned. With Dorn was Pompee.

They had returned, Curlie heard them tell Dot, because there was no use keeping camp at the Citadel. Nothing ever happened there. Nothing of importance was discovered and the two young adventurers who had induced them to take up camp there were forever getting themselves lost. Just at the present moment they were both lost.

"Curlie Carson is here," said Dot. "He came upon us in the dark last night. And how glad I am that he did! We—we destroyed the supply ship of the revolutionists. The revolution is over. The bad white man is dead.

"But Dorn," Curlie heard her catch a long hard breath, "Pluto, the bad black man, is still alive. He saw us last night after it was all over and he understood. I know he did. And now what will happen? Who can tell?"

Curlie had heard enough. His good friend Johnny was lost once more. In the light of the previous night's events that seemed serious.

"They may have known of our camp," he told himself. "Going there to waylay me they may have come upon Johnny and taken him instead. That settles it." There was an air of finality in his tone. "The whistles must do. The drums would have been more dramatic, but there is no time to lose."

After a hasty toilet and a more hasty meal, he bade good-bye to Dot and Doris, Dorn and Pompee, then went hurrying away over the trail to the Citadel.

Arriving at the grim old fortress just at nightfall, he went at once to his laboratory. From this place, after a half hour of banging and bumping, he emerged laden with packages. Having caught up with his burros he began loading them. After six trips to the laboratory he at last left it with the door ajar which told plainer than words that whatever of value had been there was now safely packed in hampers on the burros' backs.

Being a good trail hunter he was not long in picking up a fresh scent that, to his great surprise, he found led in the same direction as that taken by the natives who had before spirited Johnny away.

Had he known the full truth, he must have been much more surprised for it was not alone the same trail that Johnny had been taken over but the same group of natives had taken him, and, at the very moment when Curlie found the trail, the same natives were breaking camp on the identical spot at which Johnny, with the aid of a ferocious wild boar, had made good his escape only a few days previous.

It is said that lightning never strikes twice in the same place. Something very like lightning had struck Johnny twice. A second time as he walked on the Citadel wall a group of bronze natives had silently formed about him and had spirited him away.

"This time," he had told himself, as he recalled the strange words of the short, broad man, "I will see the thing through."

And well he might say this for now he was caught quite helpless and unarmed. And no wild boar had as yet come to his aid.

As before, the group of bronze natives taking Johnny with them from the Citadel had traveled all night without the aid of a light. As morning dawned, they had sought out a secluded spot and had breakfasted, without building a fire, on fruits, nuts and cold cooked meats. With one member of the band detailed to watch, they had sprawled out among the ferns and had fallen asleep. Not one of them slept better than Johnny, for having once committed himself to a course of action, he never allowed the strangeness of the course nor the wildness of the land about him to rob him of his rest.

As night fell they resumed their journey. The general direction of their course was not changed. Once more they plodded steadily onward over the narrow trail that now rose at an abrupt angle, now ran on the level and now dipped a trifle downward, as a mountain trail will, but in the main bore steadily upward.

“It’s the strangest thing I ever heard of,” Johnny told himself. “I am not treated as a prisoner. Yet they take me with them, nor do they as much as say, ‘By your leave.’”

Once more the old resolve surged through his being; he would see the thing through, come what might.

What he saw and heard after three hours of steady plodding caused him to start and wonder. Having rounded a dark clump of southern pines, they came quite suddenly upon a low burning camp fire. And seated crosslegged before the fire, smiling like some elfin king, was the short, broad man who had already played so considerable a part in the boy’s life.

“So you came?” he exclaimed in quite a genial tone.

“Yes,” said Johnny rather slowly, “I—I came.”

“I hoped you would. Knew you too were trying to help the natives of Haiti. Thought I might help you. Sit down by the fire.”

As Johnny’s eyes became accustomed to the dim firelight, he noted that a large brass tube lay across the mysterious man’s knee.

“That,” said the stranger as he saw Johnny’s eyes resting upon it, “is the Magic Telescope of the old Emperor Christophe.”

“That! It—it can’t be!”

“There’s not the least doubt about it.”

“But it must be more than a hundred years old.”

“Quite a little more. Look closely and you will see the date’s still there.”

He held up a blazing ember. Johnny, looking close, read there: “Paris, France,

1797.”

“It is.” His tone was filled with awe.

At once, as he settled back in his place his mind was filled with strange stories that had been told of Christophe and this telescope and its magic properties.

“But, of course,” he said to the little man, “the magic part was all myth?”

“Nevertheless,” said the other without answering his question, “it’s a strangely powerful instrument. I’ll demonstrate. Come with me.”

He led the way to a cleared spot above a rocky ledge that was like an observation post.

“If you will follow the direction the telescope points,” said the stranger, “you will be able to locate the Citadel. The rising moon brings it out in rather strong relief.”

“Ah,” Johnny was astonished at its apparent nearness.

“You followed an irregular trail in coming here,” the other offered. “For all that it’s some distance away. Now try this.” He placed the priceless relic of other days in Johnny’s hands.

For a time as he lifted the telescope to his eyes, his trembling hands defeated his purpose, but at last the parapets of the ancient fortress stood out in startling clearness.

“It—why, it’s marvelous!” he said in a low whisper as if afraid the ghosts of other days might overhear. “It is as if—”

“As if one were right there,” put in the short broad man. “Exactly so. And it might interest you to know,” he said as he dropped to a seat on a fallen tree trunk well back from the edge of the precipice, “that the Citadel has been watched from this point, through this very glass, every day for more than a hundred years —since the death of Christophe, in fact. You have heard the story of the telescope?” He asked quite suddenly.

“Yes,” said Johnny. “But after the Emperor’s death, how did it come here?”

“The brown boy, carrier of the telescope during Christophe’s reign, was a native of this very mountain,” said the little man. “He and his tribe were loyal to the Emperor. After his death they remained loyal still. They took an oath to watch the Citadel and to defend it from vandals. That is why the watch has been kept.”

“And that explains—”

“It explains many things. There is a rumor that the bearer of the telescope knew the secret of the Emperor’s treasure and that is why they guard the Citadel so very carefully.”

“If they know that,” said Johnny, suddenly springing to his feet, “then they know the hiding place of the ‘Rope of Gold’.”

“The rumor has never been confirmed,” said the little man, rising and turning away from the ledge. “It is probably one of those myths that spring up from time to time.

“But as to the ‘Rope of Gold’,” he added as an apparent after-thought, “whether the rumor were true or not will not make the least difference. The ‘Rope of Gold’ is not in the Citadel and never was. Come, let’s go.” He struck back over the trail at a stride quite astonishing for one so short of stature.

“He knows where the ‘Rope of Gold’ has been.” The boy’s heart throbbed. “Perhaps he knows where it is to-day.”

For some time they tramped along in silence. They were, Johnny discovered, not going to the camp spot they had left.

“These people,” said the short, broad man after a time, “are not black men. They are Indians, almost pure stock, the kind of men Columbus found when first he landed here. They do not build houses as the blacks do. They live in groves and caves. We will soon come to one of their caves. Whatever you see or hear, have no fear. They have known me for more than twenty years. So long as I am with you, you are safe.”

CHAPTER XIX
AN APE-LIKE BAND

Johnny spent the remainder of that night in the most curious place he had yet seen in Haiti—at the mouth of a cave. How far back the cave extended into the mountain he had no notion. He did know that the night air at this high altitude was crisp and cool, that his thick bed of mats was comfortable and the home-woven blankets ample for warmth. This, however, did not at once induce sleep. The day had been too full of adventure and fresh revelation for that.

When he realized that their every act at the Citadel had been watched through the “magic telescope” it gave him a peculiar feeling.

“And yet,” he told himself, “we have done nothing but look about. We have not removed a stone from its place in the ancient walls.

“Well enough that we didn’t,” he mused. “That little man told me that the ‘Rope of Gold’ has never been at the Citadel. Wonder how he knows.”

The natural answer to this question came to him as something of a shock. “If a man knows for sure that a thing is not in a certain place and never has been there, he needs must know where it has been and where it is now,” he told himself. “And if only he would tell me,” he added. “But that, of course, is not to be expected.”

There were other problems to be studied out. He had been brought to this spot for a purpose. What could that purpose be? Were these bronze men afraid that he and Curlie would chance upon some of the ancient treasure? Did they propose to break up their search by holding him prisoner? If so, where did this strange white man come in? To this question he could form no answer, so still puzzling over it he fell asleep.

* * * * * * * *

As you know, when Curlie Carson, with his heavily laden donkeys, took the trail in search of Johnny Thompson, he left his laboratory stripped of all contents. It was well that he did, for only two hours after he left, a band of blacks, some fifty in number, came scrambling up the trail that leads to the Citadel. They were led by a black man with a face of such fierce ugliness as one seldom sees on land or sea.

Arrived at the Citadel, they scattered as if in search of someone. When two of them came upon Curlie's abandoned laboratory they let out a cry and at once the entire band swarmed around them.

Finding the place deserted, they wrecked it, tearing up tables and shelves, even wrenching the door from its hinges.

When one member, keener eyed than the others, discovered Curlie's trail leading away into the hills, the whole band, like a pack of hounds in full cry, went yelling and roaring away after the boy and his donkeys.

What a strange and terrible horde they were. Leaning far forward as they ran they seemed more like a pack of gigantic baboons than men. But woe unto any human being who might fall into their clutches.

As for Curlie Carson, he plodded doggedly on before his burros, picking out the trail leading the way, steadily and surely, toward Johnny's cave.

* * * * * * * *

On the day that Curlie left the chateau to go in search of Johnny, Doris and Dot started on an expedition all their own. With imagination fired by dreams of the ancient black queen's treasure, still dreaming of seeing again that monkey with the diamond ring on his wrist, they proposed to visit the ruins of the black emperor's palace.

"We'll take Mona," Dot said. "Now that the revolution has been brought to an end there is no danger."

Doris thought of the ugly black foe that Dot and Curlie had seen at the top of the cliff after the explosion, and experienced a moment of uneasiness. But so eager

was she to begin the search that she was able at once to cast fears aside.

“It will be a race,” she said with a little wild skipping, “a race between the boys and ourselves to see who first discovers treasure.”

“Yes,” laughed Dot, “a race that is likely to end with a draw. Everybody loses.” Despite this dire prophecy, they departed in high spirits and ere twilight came found themselves camping within the shadows of the impressive stone steps that had once led to a palace of such magnificence and grandeur as no other black ruler has known.

“To think,” Doris told herself as two hours later she lay beneath the blankets awaiting sleep, “that up those steps in days long gone by one passed gorgeously attired dukes and earls with their women all aglitter with jewels. And now here we are, just two girls and one old black woman, all alone with all the ruined magnificence. Here we are and to-morrow—Oh, you glorious to-morrow!”

To-morrow they would explore the mysterious pile of brick and stone that had once been a king’s palace.

“Treasure,” she whispered. “That magic word treasure. There was treasure aplenty here in those all but forgotten days. Who knows but it lies hidden away here still? Who knows—”

Her thoughts broke short off. There had come a faint scratching sound from the palm fronds above her.

“Blackbird. Some old blackbird,” she told herself. She was not quite satisfied with this. A tropical blackbird, she remembered, was always talking to himself and fluttering in and out among the branches. The thing troubled her. It was night and the jungle was new to her. She thought of snakes. Snakes, she remembered, glided about in trees. She had seen a picture of a huge one hanging over a limb.

“But everyone says there are no dangerous creatures in the Haitian jungle, not even snakes,” she reassured herself. She settled back in her place. The rustling for the time had ceased. “Just some bird,” she told herself once more.

Her right hand went to her left wrist. There something gave forth a jingling sound. Doris was not given to wearing jewelry. Notwithstanding this, before

starting on this trip she had surprised her companions by putting on her three bracelets and even borrowing two others from Dot. Dot hadn't asked why she wanted to wear them, but she had wondered about it. They were on her wrist still.

"Seems sort of foolish," she told herself. "I'm glad I brought them though, for you really never can tell. They say that monkeys travel far. And if we found him it really might work. And if—Why! What was that?" Something had hit her hand.

"It was thrown or dropped," she told herself, now quite genuinely alarmed. "Who could have done that?"

"Perhaps," she thought as her heart gave a leap, "there are natives about these ruins." She thought of the black face the others had seen at the top of the cliff by Deception Bay. With an unsteady hand she drew a flashlight from her pocket. Having snapped it on, she set its circle of light searching for the thing that had struck her hand. A half minute of this, then she gave forth a low chuckle.

"Only some creature shucking a cocoanut up there," she told herself.

The next instant her face was quite serious. "If it were the monkey; if it only could be the jeweled monkey." Her heart raced.

Directing the ray of light upward she was just in time to catch sight of a pair of small eyes peering down at her. The next instant they were gone.

"It *was* a monkey!" she told herself with a quick intake of breath. "It was! It was!"

"But then," she told herself more soberly, "there may be many tame monkeys in the hills who have turned wild. I have heard of three."

For a long time she kept the light playing upon the fronds of the palm, but all to no purpose. She saw nothing more of the creature who had showered her with cocoanut shucks. At last, as her rebellious eyelids grew heavy, she crept up to a place beside her pal and fell asleep. But even in her sleep she dreamed of palatial halls, soft carpets, gleaming chandeliers and of diamonds worn by black ladies dressed for state.

CHAPTER XX
THE CHEST OF SECRETS

All that night, Curlie Carson plodded doggedly on before his three burros. Had he known of his pal's safety, he must surely have camped beside the trail and slept. As it was he did not pause for rest.

As the black horde on Curlie's trail traveled light, with no donkeys to be urged forward, they made hourly gains on the lone plodder. In the beginning Curlie had a start of ten miles. Two hours had not passed before this lead was cut to eight miles. Midnight found them but four miles behind. As dawn broke, had the trail been straight and broad instead of crooked and narrow, they must surely have caught sight of Curlie's lagging donkeys. And then—

But fate was with the lone traveler. They did not see; they could not know how near they were to the one on whom they hoped to wreak vengeance. And as the sun came out hot on the jungle trail, they began, animal-like, to drop beside the trail to rest.

At last with half his force missing, the revengeful leader angrily called a halt and made rude camp for the day. In this he missed his opportunity, for Curlie, after a brief pause to allow his donkeys to browse on the tree leaves and wiry grass, pressed tirelessly on through the long hot day. Only as evening fell did he tether his beasts and lie him down to close his weary eyes in sleep.

* * * * * * * *

Meanwhile Doris and Dot were not without their exciting hours.

"Look! There! There he is!" It was Doris who spoke. She danced up and down in wild excitement.

“Where? Where?” Dot asked in great bewilderment. Night had passed. Morning had dawned with vivid clearness over the ruins of the ancient castle. Breakfast was over and the girls for three hours past had been exploring the ruins. On tiptoes they had ascended the massive moss-grown stairs that in the distant past had led to stately halls. They had come upon great heaps of stone and brick mantled by clinging bush and creeping vine.

“It is as if nature would hide it all.” Doris had said, a touch of sadness in her tone.

“Yes,” said Dot. “And why not? The man who built the castle turned tyrant. He sold his splendid birthright for power and gold. Had he proven a kind and just ruler his castle might have been standing to this day.”

They were wandering still among the ruins when the great moment had arrived. Doris did not answer her companion’s excited questions. She only pointed at the top of a jagged pile of rock and Dot saw for herself.

“The monkey!” exclaimed Dot.

“The jeweled monkey,” Doris answered.

“And see!” she said, gripping at her heart to still its wild beating. “There are now three rings on his arm!”

It was true. From the small creature’s arm there gleamed three jewels, two white stones and a red one.

“Two diamonds and a ruby,” whispered Dot. “If only we can get them.”

“If only we can find the hiding place from which they come,” said Doris.

Dot was thinking hard. Of all the exciting moments in her young life, this was the wildest, yet she knew that few things were accomplished in moments of wild excitement.

“We must be calm,” she said.

She closed her eyes for a moment that her wild spirits might be stilled.

Doris too was thinking and as she thought she put her hand to her bracelets. She wondered, as she did so, whether her finely laid plan would work.

Moving one step nearer to the motionless monkey she squatted down in the identical posture he had assumed, then having removed one bracelet from her wrist she placed it on the rock before her. This done she removed another and yet another until the five bracelets lay on the rocks before her.

She then replaced all the bracelets upon her wrist; waited a moment only to repeat the operation. When she had removed the bracelets six times, she left them lying on the rock to turn her back and walk away motioning her companion to follow her.

“Why! What in the world?” Dot whispered as they hid behind a clump of bushes.

Doris held up a hand for silence. It was indeed a bold game she was playing. She prized her bracelets because they came from very dear friends. And if she lost Dot’s? She dared not think of it.

That the monkey would do one of two things she felt quite certain. “If he should take a fancy to the bracelets,” she drew in a quick breath at the thought.

But no! As they peered through the bushes they saw that the monkey was acting true to form. He was imitating the girl’s action. Having removed the three rings from his arm he placed them on a flat rock. This done he placed them again on his arm.

“But will he go away and leave them?” Doris asked herself.

Three tense moments followed, moments in which the monkey followed out the girl’s pantomime to the last detail.

Then to Doris’ intense delight, he went scampering away.

Twenty seconds later Doris’ hand was closing over the three precious stones.

“It is a shame to do it,” she said. “But these stones will do us much more good than they could possibly do any monkey.”

“Let me see them,” said Dot eagerly stretching out a hand.

She took one of the white stone rings from her open palm. Then having taken a small mirror from her pocket, she drew the corner of the stone across it.

“Hurrah!” she shouted. “It’s real. It cuts glass. It’s a diamond.”

“Be still!” said Doris gripping her arm. “You’ll frighten the monkey away. I’m afraid that we have killed the goose that lays the golden egg.”

“Killed what?” Dot stared at her in surprise.

“Don’t you see,” said Doris, “what we might have done? If our monkey friend has found two rings in the last few days, who can say how many more treasures there are hidden where these rings were found?”

“Who indeed?”

“If only we could have followed him to the source of his treasure.”

“We can! We can!” exclaimed Dot, springing up. “There he goes now!”

The next instant they were following on the trail of the fleet-footed monkey. In no time at all Dot, surer of foot and more accustomed to rough travel in the tropics, was far in the lead of her cousin.

“We—we’ll lose him!” she panted.

“But look,” said Doris, trying her best to keep up. “He is leaving the ruins and taking to the forest.” Her tone showed her disappointment. “He’s not going to his treasure-house. He’s trying to escape us.”

“You never can tell,” said Dot. “Anyway we must follow him.”

So once more in the stifling heat of a Haitian day they took up the wild race that led on to victory or defeat, to treasure or disappointment.

A half hour of exciting struggle through brush, bush and tangled vines and then, just as hope was waning, they came to an open space to discover there a heap of broken masonry. And atop the pile, Oh, joy of joys! was the jeweled monkey.

One moment he blinked at them, the next he disappeared into the ruins.

“Oh, Dot!” said Doris. “What if this should prove to be the place of the queen’s treasure!”

“That,” said Dot, after a moment of rest and thought, “is what we are about to find out.”

Together, hand in hand, feeling like Twin Alices in Wonderland, they marched to the ruins.

“This,” said Dot, “is the ruins of the black emperor’s hunting lodge. I have heard of it, but no one I know has ever seen it. Look,” she said as she mounted the pile. “The monkey went down through that small hole to the cavity beneath that large rock.”

“We must roll the stone away,” said Doris excitedly. “There must be a chest down there, a huge copper chest filled with jewels and gold.”

Instantly all save the treasure was forgotten. The heat, approaching night, the trouble and labor that had been theirs, all was forgotten in their one desire to roll away the stone.

For a time all went well. A dozen smaller stones were sent tumbling down the sloping pile. The monkey, who had left his retreat, chattered encouragement from a nearby treetop. When at last they came to the key stone they found, to their consternation, that their combined strength could not move it. Three times they attempted it. Then panting and perspiring, with sore hands and heavy hearts, they sat down to think.

“If only we had brought old Pompee with us,” said Dot.

“I am so hungry I could eat anything,” said Doris.

“Tell you what,” said Dot, who was a hard loser. “We’ll have one more try at that big stone. There’s a stout lignumvitae pole over there. It’s dreadfully heavy, heaviest wood in the world, but we can handle it. We’ll get one end under the stone, then use it as a pry.”

Wearily the girls climbed down to tug away at the pole. Up it went and into

place. Then presto! Down it came and up came the stone.

“Grand!” said Dot. “Now you sit on the end of the pole and I’ll have a look.”

“Hurrah!” she shouted a moment later. “Here is a hole, a regular grotto, and I see something shining down there. We’ve found the chest of gold. You just sit tight where you are on the pole and I’ll go down. Don’t move though or you might drop the stone on me.”

Down she went. The place she entered was not over three feet across. It had jagged edges and led down to what had once been a solid floor, some eight feet below.

“Fine! I’m down!” Doris heard her say. “And here’s a chest of secrets!”

The chest she spoke of was a rather small affair; little more than a lady’s jewel box.

The earthquake which had wrecked the walls of the ancient lodge had crushed the chest as well. One hinge was gone, the lock was broken, and it lay half on its side with its contents spilled over the rocks.

That the objects the box had contained were of considerable value Dot knew. She set herself to the task of gathering them together. Darting her flashlight about she discovered here a diamond brooch, there a ruby set shoe buckle and here its mate, here a curious ring set with a more curious stone and there a belt buckle set with a spray of small diamonds.

She had righted the box, had replaced the contents and was darting her light about for a last look when, of a sudden, a terrible thing happened.

No one knew just how it came about. To sit on a smooth pole for a considerable length of time is a trying and difficult task. When one is weary it is worse. Perhaps Doris moved a trifle to ease a benumbed muscle. Perhaps she fell half asleep and moved unconsciously. Whatever it might be, the pole suddenly swung to the right, there came a sickening grind and the great rock fell into place, sealing Dot up beneath the rock as effectively as if it had been a tomb.

Could anything be worse? Their treasure hunt had ended in disaster. Doris sat down upon the ruins to cover her aching eyes with her hands and to try to think

calmly.

Night was coming on. Already the shadows were falling. There was an ominous muttering from off in the east.

“It may rain. She may be drowned in that horrible well of a place.” For the first time she found herself hating the jeweled monkey. To make matters worse the graceful creature sat on a low hanging limb and chuckled as in high glee.

“It’s all right,” Doris called to Dot at last in the most cheerful tone she could command. “I will go to our camp for Mona. The two of us can roll the stone away.”

“The camp,” Dot answered, “is miles away. Besides, Mona is old. She has no strength. You two could not roll the stone away.”

“Then,” said Doris, “I must go for someone else. You can’t remain there forever.”

“No, I can’t. You’d better go.”

“All right. I’m going.” Something akin to a sob followed Doris’ words “Good bye.”

“Good bye.”

She was gone. Night settled down swiftly as nights will in the tropics. Dot was left to herself and the ancient treasure that had in its day witnessed so much of glory and honor, so much of baseness and defeat. As she sat there in the little dark hole it seemed to her that the long-lost jewels spoke to her telling her how all that is bright, rich and glorious must fade and pass away.

“If ever I get out of this alive,” she told herself, “my share of jewels shall be used in a way that will make a few people in this old world happier and better.”

Strangely enough, this resolve brought to her a peace she had not known before. It was as if some great spirit, kinder and more noble than she could ever hope to be, had whispered a solemn “Amen.”

CHAPTER XXI
JOHNNY'S MISSION

In his cave near the top of the mountain, Johnny slept soundly. But the first faint streak of dawn found him wide awake and staring up at the stone that formed the roof of the cave. He had been engaged in this rather fruitless occupation for a full ten minutes, when, with a suddenness that might have been startling to an observer, he sat bolt upright to stare with all his eyes at some object far back in the cave.

Well he might stare, for there, but half revealed by the dim light, apparently suspended from the roof of the cave, was what appeared to be a mammoth dull yellow and green snake.

"It can't be," he told himself. "And yet, if not, what can it be? I—"

His thoughts were broken in upon by a cheerful voice:

"Sleep well?" It was the short, broad man.

"Yes, I—"

"Come out with me into the light. Bit dismal in the cave." The little man seized him by the arm to fairly shove him toward the door. As Johnny turned about for one more look at that fantastic thing clinging to the cave's roof, the little man appeared to redouble his efforts. Yet in that last look Johnny obtained a further impression that was startling in the extreme.

"I wanted to have a talk with you before the natives were about," said the little man, as they seated themselves on mossy rocks beneath a low, spreading tree. "They would not understand us for they speak only the lowest Creole. However,

they would disturb us."

"When I sent for you," he began after a moment's silence.

"Sent—"

"Did you not guess? Did they not tell you?"

"The natives speak only Creole," said Johnny. "I do not understand that language."

Then in a few words he told of his strange experience with the bronze natives.

"I am sorry to have caused you unnecessary trouble," said the little man. "However, it was necessary for you to come. In the end you will not regret it I am sure. I am in a position, I think, to do you a lasting favor. That, however, must wait. It might help you to understand and lead you the more readily to consent to any proposition I may care to make, should I tell you a little more of myself.

"I was born," he said, half closing his eyes as if to recall the past, "to a life of pain. Infantile paralysis struck me when I was less than a year old. Many doctors were called in consultation, for my father was a banker of some means. All told the same story. I would never walk, never feed myself, probably never talk. But after these, when I was five years old, came one greater than them all. He freed me from my terrible bondage. True, I have never been just as other men are. But that, my boy," he laid a hand impressively on Johnny's arm, "that does not matter. The only thing that really matters in this world is that a man have a mission and that he be equipped to fulfil that mission. Many a man who has been looked down upon, pitied, or scorned, because of physical infirmity has made a great and lasting contribution to the world's true wealth and happiness. I studied medicine. When I had finished my course I said, 'I will find the neediest people in the world and serve them.' I found, I believe, the neediest people right here in Haiti. And here I am serving them, and shall be until I die. Money," he said thoughtfully, "I do not ask from them. I have a small income from my father's estate. It is ample. Loyalty, love, a certain amount of gratitude, these are my reward. And right royally I am paid. You too," he said once more touching Johnny on the arm, "have a desire to serve."

"Yes I—"

“I think it will be possible for me to aid you,” the little doctor broke in eagerly. “But first, before you know more, I have a mission, a hard one for you to perform.”

“Name it,” said Johnny, springing to his feet.

“Sit down,” said the doctor.

Johnny sat down.

“While you slept,” the little doctor’s tone became deeply impressive, “a man lay at the back of the cave, fighting a battle, perhaps his last battle with disease. He is very old; is not longer able to resist, and I, as a doctor, am able to do little for him. This man,” he went on, as his tone grew mellow, “is a native, a member of the tribe. Yet for more than twenty years, I have counted him my dearest friend. His family seem to have absorbed some of the greatness, generosity and nobleness of the black emperor at his best; for it was his father who always bore the Magic Telescope.”

“Oh!” said Johnny.

“Yes, he is the son of the bearer of the telescope. Father and son, they have more than spanned the century. But now his light burns dim.”

The doctor’s next remark was surprising. “You, I think,” he said, “have something to gain by his death. And yet,” he added at once, “I am going to ask you to go on a mission which may add some months, perhaps years to his life. Knowing you, having studied you, I know that you will do your best though failure might bring you a million.”

“A human life,” said Johnny quietly. “What is a million dollars to that?”

“Nothing. You are quite right,” said the doctor.

He rose to stand before the boy and point away toward a distant valley. “At the point of that valley is a humble village. There, for many years, I have had my home. In my home is a small laboratory. In it is the greater part of my medicine. One of those medicines may save this man’s life.

“If it were merely a matter of bringing it, I should send a native. Unfortunately it

must first be distilled. It is, at the present moment, in a small distillery in one corner of the room. You have only to light the alcohol lamp and wait until the distilling process has been accomplished."

"But the place?" said Johnny, eagerly.

"I will send a guide with you. He knows every foot of the way. And remember," he added, "I am not sending you because I am unwilling myself to endure the hardship of the journey. For reasons I cannot at this time explain, I wish to remain beside the man who is fighting for his life."

"I am ready to go," said Johnny.

"Your breakfast is here," said the doctor. "When it is finished your guide will be ready."

Ten minutes later Johnny followed a lean, muscular bronze man down the trail that led away and away over hillside and mountain, down valley, through forest and jungle to the village.

"That native looks like one who cannot grow weary," the boy told himself. He was to learn in time that this was true and was to feel thankful for his own physical training.

In the meantime, he had abundant food for thought. His mind was full of many wonders. He had left camp at the Citadel without taking leave. What of Dorn and Pompee? What of Curlie? He wondered most about the curious things the little doctor had said. How was the doctor to be of service to him and to the cause he had espoused? How, of all things, could he profit by the death of an old man, the son of the bearer of the Magic Telescope?

After a time he thought again of the golden green serpent hanging from the roof of the cave—or was it a serpent?

Mid-afternoon found him at the distant native village. Having dined while the distilling went forward, he bottled the fluid, and turning his face upward, was prepared to follow his tireless guide back to the cave.

CHAPTER XXII
THE QUEEN'S RUBY

Darkness had fallen as Curlie Carson, still following the trail of his good pal Johnny, and still urging his donkeys forward, approached the mouth of the cave occupied by the bronze natives and the little doctor. Johnny, as you will know, had been gone from that place several hours. He was now well on his way back.

The black horde, had Curlie but known it, was but two hours behind him on the trail. He did not know. All he knew was that his good pal was missing and that he had passed this way.

By great good fortune, the first person he met was the short broad man, the white doctor.

"Johnny?" the little doctor smiled in answer to Curlie's question. "Sure we had him. We let him go. But he'll be back; may be here at any time. Sit down and rest."

"Here, Beppo," he spoke to a bronze native, "bring us some of that roasted guinea hen and boiled plantain."

When Curlie had eaten and had fed his donkeys from a bundle of wild grass, the little doctor told him as much as he deemed best of Johnny's latest adventure. He showed him the Magic Telescope and bade him make himself at home.

Hardly had he finished speaking when a bronze native, panting and quite done in by running, dropped at his feet. When this man found his breath he told a startling tale of a black, ape-like horde of men, armed with clubs, machetes and rifles who were marching upon the cave.

“Now what?” said the doctor, turning to Curlie for an answer. “We are a peaceful people. Have you brought this mob to attack us?”

Curlie’s eyes went wide with wonder. The whole affair was news to him. A few well directed questions and he knew the worst. The leader of this band was none other than Pluto, the bad black man whose shipload of arms he had sunk. The others were his followers. That they were bent on vengeance he did not doubt.

“There’s no time for explaining now,” he said springing to his feet and seizing a heavy hamper. “Those men are not my friends but my enemies. I think you may leave them to me. But if your men will carry all these heavy hampers into the cave, it will help.”

“‘There is a destiny’,” he quoted to himself, “‘that shapes our ends’. A moment ago I was thinking what a lot of wasted toil it had been, urging those stubborn donkeys up this trail. But now—”

Ten minutes later he found himself busy erecting in the mouth of the cave a figure that was as fear-inspiring to the timid bronze men as he hoped it might be to the black horde.

This figure it was that had absorbed so much of his thought and occupied his hours in his laboratory at the Citadel.

* * * * * * * *

At ten that night Johnny was still toiling up the trail. As he paused to drink deep of the cool night air, he caught the gleam of lightning and felt some seconds later the shudder of the mountain as the thunder came rolling in.

“Going to storm,” he told himself. “Wonder if we’ll make it?”

Dot too heard the thunder. She too wondered. Her wonder was of a different sort. She was still imprisoned. Doris had gone for aid. She had not returned—might not return until morning.

“And if it storms.” She shuddered anew at the thought. A severe tropical storm is not soon forgotten. Dot had passed through one. It had uprooted century old trees, brought great ships ashore to break them on the rocks and had changed the very aspect of the country.

That she might not lose her grip on her nerves, she began prowling around her prison. Nor did her search go unrewarded. Of a sudden, as she shot her light in a dark hole behind a rock, she gave forth a low cry of surprise and fear. It seemed to her that a single fiery red eye was gleaming up at her.

A second, a calmer look and she knew that she was gazing upon the largest, most beautiful stone she had yet discovered, a huge ruby set in a circle of gold.

“It’s the Queen’s Ruby,” she told herself, holding it up to the light. There is a legend that the black queen always wore at her throat a gleaming solitary ruby.

“If only some one would come,” she said to herself. “If they only would.”

The answer was a second roll of thunder.

* * * * * * * *

In the meantime Johnny was making the best of his way up the mountain. Now he was two miles away, now only one. And now, as he paused once more at the top of a steep climb he caught an odd confusion of noises. His guide too heard and at once became violently excited. He began dancing about and howling in a strange manner.

“What’s happened?” the boy asked, after he had seized him and forced him into silence.

To this question the native made no reply.

“No use asking more,” the boy told himself. “He doesn’t understand a word of English.”

Immediately, upon being released, the fellow renewed his howling and dancing. In this manner he danced himself quite out of sight. That was the last seen of him.

But Johnny no longer needed a guide. The way was plain, straight ahead and up —up—up. He needed someone to explain the loud tum—tum—tum of drums, the wild screeching and screaming that came to him.

“The son of the bearer of the Magic Telescope is dead,” he told himself. “And

this is the funeral chant. Or perhaps a witch doctor has arrived, some *Papa Lou* who is trying out his incantations."

Coming at last upon a clump of tropical pines that shut the traveler off from a view of the cave's mouth, he drew a long breath, stepped boldly forward, then stopped still to stare.

Before the cave, grotesquely lighted up by wavering torches, was the wildest, most terrible assembly of faces he had ever looked upon.

"It—it's like a moving picture scene taken from the Hunchback of Notre Dame," he told himself. "How terrible they are! And how they howl. What can it all mean?"

As he moved a few paces forward and to his right for a better view his astonishment knew no bounds. For there in the mouth of the cave, facing the angry mob of blacks, stood a gigantic solitary figure. Not a human figure was he, but like one. He had arms that now waved madly from side to side and now shot outward and upward as if to rain blows upon an approaching enemy. He had legs that now were motionless and now set him bobbing wildly up and down like an angry child. He had eyes that gleamed now green, now red, now blue, and jaws that from time to time snapped and cracked like the clamps of a steel trap.

"Of such things," said Johnny, "madness is made." He stepped back into the shadows.

Unable to understand the least bit of this wild scene, he found one thought uppermost in his mind; he bore in a sack at his side the precious medicine that might mean life to a dying man. Somehow he must enter the cave. To pass through that angry mob was unthinkable—and impossible.

"There's a secret entrance over here to the right," he told himself. "I will go that way."

Turning, he wearily retraced his steps to approach the cave from a different angle. And still the flashes of light, green, red and blue, continued; so too did the screams and drum beats.

"What's to come of it all?" he asked himself, and found no answer.

Once more came the roar and shudder of thunder, this time louder and more terrifying.

* * * * * * * *

Dot, still trapped among the rocky ruins, heard that thunder. She heard something more. That something set her heart beating wildly. It was the voice of her cousin, calling: “Dot! Dot! Are you still there? Just think! I have found the King.”

“The King. There is no King.” Dot thought her cousin out of her senses.

“The Marine King of Manowa. He was coming to see about the revolution. And I found him.”

“We’ll have you out of there in two shakes,” said the King. “Just sit tight.

“Now where’s that pole? Oh yes, here it is. Guess you’re lucky. Going to be a peach of a storm. Less than an hour. Now young lady, out on the end and down we go. Up goes the stone. No. She slipped. Let’s heave her up again. Now! Down we go. There you are. Crawl out. Double quick time. Trench duty with no frills. Hurray! Here she is laden with treasure and safe as a buck private in the guard house.”

It was with the greatest difficulty that Dot restrained herself from hugging the King as she tumbled off the pile of rocks. She did grip his arm hard and tell him how very, very thankful she was that there was at least one king left in the world.

“And now,” said the King in very blunt language, “we’ve got to beat it and that all-fired fast!”

CHAPTER XXIII
THE BATTLING GIANT

Having completed his detour, Johnny at last entered the cave by the secret door. He found the confusion within the cave almost as great as that without. Bronze natives were darting here and there. Some were shouting, some chanting weird witch songs and some dancing about as if mere action suited the occasion.

The little doctor was nowhere to be seen. Among them all there was one calm figure—Curlie Carson. And he of all things! Johnny stood and stared in blank astonishment. Curlie sat cross-legged on the floor blowing on a tin whistle, or rather several tin whistles, one at a time. On his knees rested a telephone instrument. Each time he blew a whistle he inclined his head toward the receiver of this instrument. His eyes, for the most part, were fixed on the broad back of the grotesque, gigantic mechanical figure who, for the moment at least, blocked the threatening horde of blacks.

“A telephone instrument!” Johnny said to himself, as his astonishment grew by leaps and bounds. “There is not a wire strung within twenty miles.”

He thought of a radio sending set. But no. That was impossible. There had not been time for installing one. “Besides,” he assured himself, “one does not send a radio S. O. S. by means of tin whistles. It’s a mad place,” he told himself. “This cave is full of mad people and Curlie has gone mad with the rest of them.”

Even as he arrived at this conclusion, it struck him that there was some connection between the peep-peeping of those whistles and the actions of the mechanical giant. Curlie blew the shortest whistle several times and the giant began a wild, frenzied dance; a longer whistle and he swung his arms and cracked his iron knuckles together; still another and he began snapping his

clanking jaws.

Slowly it dawned upon Johnny that here was something quite marvelous; well worth watching to its very end; a battle between the brains of a boy and the brawn of a black rabble.

At that moment someone touched his arm. He turned about quite suddenly. It was the little doctor.

“Get it?” he asked.

“Yes, sir,” Johnny answered.

“Good! You made a marvelous trip. We shan’t need it though. I’m sorry. He’s gone. It’s all for the best.”

“Dead?”

“Dead.”

There was a moment of silence during which the giant once more blinked his eyes and cracked his knuckles together. Also from afar, but much nearer than before, came the rumble and growl of thunder.

“You win,” said the little doctor. “I am glad for that.”

“I—I win?” Johnny did not understand.

“You get the ‘Rope of Gold’. Explain later. That is, unless those rascals win. They are after Curlie. They were staging a revolution. Curlie blew up their ship. Good thing. Nothing better ever happened. We’ll stand by him. But what’s there to do? We haven’t weapons—just a few machetes, that’s all. Besides, these bronze people are no fighters; never were.”

He turned and was gone.

Mechanically Johnny moved to a place where he was quite hidden by darkness but where he could witness the action of the mob without and the giant within.

The natives were afraid, that was certain; afraid of this giant.

“Probably think he is the ghost of Christophe. Singing, dancing and drumming to drive him away. Well, if I’m any judge, he won’t drive. But will they grow bolder? That’s the question.”

All the while the giant continued to dance and grimace, swing his arms and crack his knuckles while the angry mob, thirsting for revenge, pressed closer, ever closer to their goal.

At last, as Johnny stood there in the shadows breathless, watching, he saw a short, broad black man with a full neck and an exceedingly evil face dart suddenly forward.

At once Johnny’s brain was in a whirl. These men were superstitious, he knew that. All blacks are. Would this man dare attack this mysterious monster?

“If he dares,” he said aloud, “we are lost.”

Curlie nodded, but at once the sound of his whistles grew louder, more insistent, and the antics of the giant more frantic.

“He will not dare,” Johnny told himself. Yet even as he said it, he knew that he was wrong. What had come over the black man? Had despair lent him courage? Had he by some chance come to realize that the thing before him was made of copper, steel and wood and was no spirit at all? Be that as it may, as he paused before the threatening giant, he suddenly drew a revolver from his belt and emptied its contents into the giant’s broad breast.

The giant’s only answer was a redoubling of his fury. He danced. He cracked his teeth. He grimaced terribly.

For a few seconds the black leader wavered. He took one backward step. At his back sounded the shouts of his men and from far back of that came a wild crash of thunder. The storm was all but upon them.

“The battle is won,” thought Johnny.

But no, with one wild cry the black man leaped at the giant. With a cutting, rending crash his machete drove into the very heart of the giant. At the same instant an iron hand came down upon his head.

The black man sank to the stone floor, to lie there motionless. The giant ceased his swinging and dancing. Only his eyes still burned a steady green. Bending slowly over he came to rest in a position that made it appear that his green eyes were fixed upon the vanquished leader.

With one wild wail the black horde turned to race madly away into the night and the storm.

“The fight,” said Curlie, coming forward, “was a draw.” His voice was husky. “They did one another in. It’s too bad,” he said bending over the still form of the black leader. “I didn’t mean to do that. He threw himself into it. He was a brave, though mistaken man. Had he lived at another time or espoused another cause, he might have died a hero.”

“But you, my friend,” he touched the mechanical giant affectionately, “you will live to fight again. In the world there are ever wrongs to right.

“That,” he said turning to Johnny, “is the advantage of not being human.”

“How does he work?” Johnny asked, looking with great admiration on the stooping giant.

“That,” said Curlie, “is a long story.”

“And I trust will keep,” said a voice behind him. He turned to find himself looking into the eyes of the little doctor.

“Johnny here has been traveling on foot for many hours,” the doctor said. “He will wish to eat and sleep. I too would like to know a little concerning this mechanical marvel. But more important still—I think you will agree when it is told—is something I have to say to you. Your giant,” he turned a twinkling eye on Curlie, “will be safe enough here. The blacks are gone. My men, I assure you, would not touch him for anything in the world. They will carry this unfortunate black man away. Later you may return to remove the victor in that unusual combat.

“In the meantime,” he turned to lead the way, “I suggest a cup of Haitian coffee, over which I have a tale to relate, the story of the ‘Rope of Gold’.”

“The Rope—”

The little man held up a hand for silence. Then he lead the way back into the cave.

CHAPTER XXIV
THE STORY IS TOLD

A half hour later the boys found themselves seated upon cocoanut fiber mats drinking Haitian coffee, black and bitter, and listening to one of the strangest stories ever told.

"'The Rope of Gold'," the little doctor was saying, "was never in the Citadel. When the black Emperor Christophe found himself paralyzed beyond hope of recovery, and all but deserted by his people, he committed suicide. There were certain members of his household who remained loyal to him. Among these was the bearer of the telescope.

"Knowing the hiding place of the 'Rope of Gold' within the palace and fearing the destruction of the palace, he called to his aid a handful of his own hill people and carried it, not to the Citadel, but to—" he paused to look up at the ceiling, "to this place."

Instantly there came to Johnny's mind a picture of the golden green snake that hung from the cave's ceiling. This was not the room but for all that he seemed to see it dangling there. "That," he told himself, "is the 'Rope of Gold'."

As if to verify this conclusion, the doctor went on:

"For more than a century that 'Rope of Gold', with all its matchless workmanship in green, white and yellow gold, has hung within the shadows of this dingy cave.

"To-morrow, Providence permitting, it will again see the light of day."

His young companions leaned forward, eager for the rest of the story.

“When I heard of your search and its purpose,” his voice went on quietly, “to benefit thousands of the simple and kindly peasants of Haiti, I thought once more of my duty regarding the ‘Rope of Gold’. I had known of its whereabouts for many years, knew, too, that its secret was loyally kept.

“But now the only relative of the bearer of the Magic Telescope was passing. A few more months, weeks, perhaps days, and he would be gone. Who, then, would guard the secret?

“I decided that the time had come for putting the wealth represented by the heirloom of the past to work.

“I came to the dying man and put my plan before him. I told him of the work you boys and the old Professor were planning and of your search. ‘Christophe,’ I said to him, ‘in his earlier days had the good of his people at heart. What could be more fitting than that the “Rope of Gold” be sold to some great museum where it will be faithfully preserved, and that the money thus obtained be spent in bettering Haitian people?’

“He was a very old man,” the doctor sighed. “He was long in seeing the light. In fact, when I sent for you,” he nodded toward Johnny, “he had not given his consent. When you went for the medicine he had not. That is why I did not wish to go.

“But to-night, with his dying breath, he gave his consent. His best friends, his henchmen, heard and are satisfied. And to-morrow we bear the ‘Rope of Gold’ once more into the light of day and on down to the valley which Christophe in his youth loved and to a service for the people whom he might have served better had not greed gripped at his heart.”

The story was over. Yet, for some time the two boys sat there, motionless, silent. The whole affair was so strange, so gloriously wonderful that they could not make it seem true.

The doctor rose and went back into the darkness that was the cave. Still they sat there a long time in silence.

“To-morrow,” said Johnny huskily.

“To-morrow,” Curlie echoed.

“And to think,” Curlie spoke once more, “he asked nothing for himself.”

“He does not care for money. He told me all about that. His is a remarkable story. I’ll tell you about him.”

And there while the dancing flames cast grotesque shadows on the walls of the cave, Johnny told the doctor’s story.

* * * * * * * *

In the meantime, far away in the heart of the jungle, Doris, Dot, and the Marine King had found shelter from the storm in a deserted cabin. For some time their attention was focussed upon the small but rich treasure Dot had brought from the ruins. After that their thoughts wandered elsewhere and they talked of many things; perhaps “of shoes-and-ships—and sealing wax,—of cabbages—and kings.” At any rate the time passed quickly. The storm, though fierce in its intensity, was brief in duration. Midnight found them marching along single file over a narrow path that, lighted by the moon, revealed to all the beauty and the glory of a tropical land after a storm.

In due time they came within sight of the chateau. Standing there, white in the moonlight, it seemed a land of dreams.

“That,” said the King admiringly, “is some barracks!”

“It’s my home,” was Dot’s reply.

“Lucky girl!” The King’s compliment was genuine.

“I AM lucky,” said Dot in a voice that was deep with emotion. “I really don’t need a thing. And just for that I am going to give my whole share of the jewels to a certain king I happen to know that he may build a school for some of his black subjects.”

“That,” said the King, bending low, “will be equal to a month’s leave and passage home.”

CHAPTER XXV
THE MARCH OF TRIUMPH

Johnny and Curlie found no time for talk in the morning. They gulped down cups of hot, black coffee, then dressed as best they might for the triumphal procession that was to accompany them down the mountain. The newly chosen native chief had decided that the passing of the ‘Rope of Gold’ from their midst should be made a memorable occasion.

Three hundred natives, resplendent in bright colored skirts and loin cloths, awaited them. Heading the procession were ten native drummers. The doctor had given his word that for this one day no drummer would be molested by native police or Marines.

Behind the drummers were the ten strongest natives of the tribe. Superb figures they were, too! These were to bear on their shoulders the ‘Rope of Gold’.

“It,” said Johnny, striving in vain to control his emotions, “why, it—it’s like some picture taken from the Bible. The High Priests and the Ark of the Covenant, you know. Makes a fellow feel sort of solemn, doesn’t it?”

“Yes,” said Curlie quietly, “it does.”

The two boys took their appointed place behind the bearers of the golden treasure, then the long march to Terre Plaisance began.

At the very end of the procession, stumping stubbornly along under the urge of native drivers, were Curlie’s three donkeys. On their backs in hampers rode the mysterious mechanical giant who the night before had fought so valiant a battle.

So all through that long, hot tropical day they marched until, just as the sun sank

low, they caught the gleam of white chateau and knew that their journey was near its end.

At nine o'clock that night they were assembled in the garden of the beautiful old chateau. They were all there, the entire cast in this little drama of a strange tropical world. Curlie and Johnny, Doris, Dot and Dorn were all there dressed in their best; so, too, was the little doctor and even Johnny's aged Professor, and the Marine King.

The bronze natives had gone back to their cave, laden with such food as the whites could provide. Old Pompee, Mona and Nieta hovered in the background.

At this time all eyes were turned to Curlie, for, after all, had it not been his mechanical genius that had saved the 'Rope of Gold'? And how much did they know concerning that unusual mechanical giant who had saved the day for them? Little enough, I assure you.

"Well," said Curlie, hesitatingly, "there really isn't much that I can tell. I got the idea first from a thing I saw in Chicago. The advertisement said that a mechanical man would wash clothes, sweep the floor, light the lamps and all that.

"The man I found there was a joke. He had legs and arms of sheet steel. His face was painted on steel. He couldn't move a muscle, so to speak. But the things the operator did interested me. Simply by blowing whistles of different pitch into a telephone he could make his mechanical man start and stop a washing machine, a vacuum sweeper, and a lot of other electrical appliances. Then, one day in New York, while I was waiting for the boat to sail for Haiti, I came upon old Mike himself. Some foreign fellow had brought him over from Europe. Hoped to make a lot of money with him in vaudeville. The thing had been a flop. The fellow was broke. I had some money I had made on rubber in South America, so I bought old Mike and brought him along. Glad I did. Thought he would be a lot of fun."

"He was more than that," said Johnny quietly. "He saved our lives, without a doubt."

"I tried substituting drums for whistles," Curlie went on, "but it wouldn't work. Remember when you and Pompee saw the ghost of the black king and his telescope bearer walking on the wall?" he asked turning to Dorn.

Dorn nodded.

“That was Mike and yours truly. I was trying him out.”

“That,” said Doris, “explains the donkey tracks we saw up there.”

“Exactly. And you can’t imagine what a time I had getting the donkeys to carry all that load up those steps,” Curlie laughed. “But I did it. And Mike did his bit, wonderfully well even then. Mike is a marvel!”

“You have seen him perform,” he said turning to Johnny, “but these other people,” he reached for a telephone receiver at his side, “haven’t had the pleasure.”

With that he blew a shrill note into the telephone. At once there sounded from a dark corner the clank-clank of metal striking on stone.

“Look!” said Doris, leaning eagerly forward. “He’s coming, the man of iron.”

It was true. The giant towered before them.

“Pluto really did him very little harm,” said Curlie. “His machete severed two wires, that’s all. There’s a lot to him. Part is telephone switchboard equipment. Radio, of course, enters in and all sorts of wheels. But all and all he’s rather complete.

“See, I blow again into the receiver. This whistle is of a lower pitch. Now he begins to blink his eyes. And now,” again a whistle, “he waves his arms.

“He bows, he cracks his teeth, he strikes out. In fact,” he said finally, “there is nothing he cannot do, providing one works out the mechanical appliances for making him do it.

“It’s too bad,” he said with a note of regret, “that I couldn’t supply him with a set of brains.”

When Mike had furnished his share of the evening’s entertainment and had frightened the black servants out of a year’s growth in the bargain, he was marched back to his place in a dark corner and it was time to talk of other things.

“To-morrow the ‘Rope of Gold’ sails for America,” said Johnny.

“Yes,” said the Professor. “I was able to get in touch with the *Torentia*. She will touch at Cape Haitian. That saves you a tiresome journey to Port au Prince and insures the ‘Rope of Gold’ a safe passage to America.

“And to-morrow,” he added, a note of great gladness creeping into his tone, “we begin the task of building up the waste places. In due time the old French aqueduct will be the new American one and thousands will benefit by the pluck and daring of two American boys.”

“Two boys and one giant,” laughed Johnny.

Late the next afternoon a boy and a girl stood on the deck of the *Torentia*, bound for America. The shoreline of Haiti was fast fading from their sight. America loomed far ahead. Already they were dreaming. Doris was seeing red, yellow, orange, pink and blue dresses without number. Johnny was dreaming of other far lands and strange adventures.

As for Curlie and Dot, who remained behind, they were seated beneath a great, wind-twisted cocoanut tree watching the ship grow small in the distance. Did they too dream? Beyond doubt they did; for Haiti is the land of sunlight and dreams.

So ends the story of the ‘Rope of Gold’. Johnny Thompson’s wanderings were not yet over, as you will see if you find time to read our next book, entitled, “The Arrow of Fire.”

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