

I'm going to send a despatch to Johannesburg.'

'The line is clear, then, Fontein?' the driver asked, looking at him in a doubtful and puzzled manner.

'Yes, it's clear,' the operator answered, huskily.

The driver backed out of the station and closed the door. He crossed the platform and stepped to the ground. Quin drew a deep breath of relief.

'No time to lose,' he said. 'Don't ask questions now, Carruthers. I'll explain later. Here, take the pistol, and put a ball through this fellow if he stirs or cries out.'

Carruthers obeyed, and Quin bent over the table. By a lucky chance he knew the telegraphic code and how to use the instrument, and that information was now to be of the greatest service to him. He called Johannesburg, received a signal from that end, and at once ticked off the following message:

'Engine stopped and Englishman arrested. Will send him back in custody. Am just closing office. FONTAIN.'

'Unless I am much mistaken, there will be no stoppage signals further along the line,' Quin muttered, as he turned away. He looked about for a moment and found a pair of sharp nippers. 'Take these and give me the revolver,' he said to Carruthers. 'Now get out of the rear window and go up the line till you can't be seen from the engine. Slink up one of the poles—you're a good climber—and cut the wires. Be as quick as you can.'

Carruthers was out of the window in a trice, and for ten anxious minutes—for he dreaded the return of the driver or stoker—Quin kept guard over the loer, who vented his rage in low-spoken threats and profanity. Then Carruthers climbed into the room as he had left it, breathing hard.

'It's all right,' he panted. 'The wires are down.'

'Good!' exclaimed Quin. 'Now give me a hand with this fellow.'

In two minutes the operator was gagged with a strip of his own shirt, and his arms were bound behind him. Then he was thrust into the closet and the door locked upon him.

'If you do any kicking I'll come back and kill you,' Quin called through the keyhole. 'Remember that.'

The two Englishmen calmly left the station, shouting goodby to Fontein as they closed the door.

'This man is going on with me,' Quin said, as he mounted the engine, followed by Carruthers.

The stoker looked questioningly at the driver, and the latter, after an instant of hesitation, pulled the lever. The engine bounded forward into the night, and the station of New Rotterdam faded in the distance.

Lorenzo Marquez was about eighty miles distant, and 40 miles of the journey lay within Transvaal territory, where the engine was likely to be stopped if the operator should effect an early escape and reopen telegraphic communication. 'This was the only contingency that Quin feared, for he believed that the message he had sent would prevent further action on the part of the Johannesburg police.'

But all went well. The driver and stoker, though they probably suspected that something was wrong, were too prudent to shirk their duty or to try to overpower the two Englishmen. The miles fell steadily and swiftly behind, and at 6 o'clock in the morning the Portuguese boundary line was crossed. Two hours later the engine drew up outside the station at Lorenzo Marquez.

A vessel was waiting in port, and the trainload of animals, which had arrived safely, was put on board within the next two days. Meanwhile no attempt was made to apprehend Quin, and on the following morning, from the steamer's deck, he and Carruthers watched the Portuguese coast fading on the horizon. After a prosperous voyage they reached the Thames, and soon after they read of the gallant but unsuccessful raid into the Transvaal, the failure of which Quin attributed to the foreknowledge of the event learned by the loers through the arrest of John Fordyce. That well-meaning individual, it may be said, was sentenced to several years' imprisonment.

'We were both imposed upon,' Karl Hamrach exclaimed, when he heard the story from Quin. 'Fordyce belong-

ed to my club; I knew nothing of him beyond that. He met me that night at Liverpool-street and asked if he might join your party to Bechuanaland for the sake of the sport, offering to pay his own expenses. I referred him to you—'

'Yes, by means of a written message that was capable of any construction,' interposed Quin. 'As a result you have lost a fine lion, and are considerably more than £100 out of pocket, while my name is on the black list of the Transvaal government.'

## A SERPENTINE REVELATION.

BY CHARLES KELSEY GAINES.

There were two of them; that made all the trouble. There were plenty of others on the boat, of course. I could then plainly enough—twenty at least, grouped about under the awnings or leaning over the rail, oh-oh-ing at all the old sights on the shore. But he, evidently, could see only those two.

They were both beautiful, but no more alike than a big, sweet, old-fashioned rose, and a dainty, velvety, black pansy of the most highly cultured type.

The pansy girl was petite, dark, and brilliant. She was from America, they said, and very wealthy. She dressed superbly—with a perfect sense of fitness, too, only there was something aggressive and merciless in the way she made the most of every natural advantage.

The other girl was tall and blonde, and rather quiet. I wondered that she was so quiet. Her hair was red—intensely red; but its massy coils were of the rich hue of burnished copper, and glistened in the Egyptian sunshine until you could hardly bear to look at it. You did look at it, however.

Just where she came from, or whether she were rich or poor, nobody seemed to know; but she couldn't have been so very poor, or she wouldn't have been a passenger on a luxurious excursion steamer lazily creeping up the Nile.

He knew very well that the dark one wanted him—his scalp at least. Everybody saw that; and it seemed not unlikely that she might even be willing to pledge her hand in exchange for it. Whether the fair one wanted anything that he could give he couldn't tell. Nobody on the boat could tell; and so everybody guessed. Probably she, too, was guessing, and very likely guessed wrong. It is pretty certain, however, that she guessed differently at different times.

And who was he? Really I don't know, a graduate possibly, from some college football team, for he was a fine athletic fellow, as fresh and wholesome as a young tree after a rain. Everybody liked him too well to blame anybody for loving him—or to forgive any one for palping tricks with him. He was tall and ruddy, with boyish blue eyes and a great shock of gold-blond hair. But there is no law of nature to prevent a big fair man from falling in love with a keen little brunette, with hair and eyes like the night sky, and the stars that shine out of it—no, not even though she be a shade the older of the two. The laws of nature are much like the laws of man; they do not prevent; they sometimes punish.

We had tied up at Luxor, an unsavory dump of mud huts and booths, occupying a fraction of the site of ancient Thebes. Two or three hotels lie along the river front, and behind them rises the banded minaret of the mosque. All through the plain are scattered the half-buried remains of the monstrous structures of the Pharaohs, which even invade the village; for on its margin lie the colossal images which still guard the portals of a ruined temple lift their battered faces from a deep excavation and stare blankly down the narrow lanes. But we had already inspected these and had visited Karnak—that astonishing wilderness of huge pylons, towering columns, spire-like obelisks, and tumbled stone, the like of which is not to be seen elsewhere in all the earth. Christmas was to be devoted to the tombs of the kings on the west shore of the Nile; and in the evening there was to be an Arabian fantasia on the steamer in honour of the festival. A tree, also, was promised with distribution of gifts.

We started early in the morning,

crossing the river in barges, the guttural chant of the Moslem boatmen sounding in our ears with most unchristian cadence, as they rowed and poled across the wide shallows. As the barges finally grounded several rods from the bank the Arabs made ready to wade ashore bearing the passengers on their shoulders.

'O Heavens!' exclaimed the lady of the raven tresses, shrinking back in theatrical dismay as a burly native approached her. 'Is that the idea? I can't. Really, I can't. Oh! make him keep away from me. I'll go back. It's too much to ask of a lady to trust herself in the hands of one of those filthy fellahin. It is, indeed. It's an outrage. Isn't there some other way?'

'All right, Miss Fermor,' cried the young athlete. 'I'll take you over, if you'll allow me.' He leaped into the water.

'Oh, thank you,' she said. 'It's rather unconventional, but there seems to be no alternative.'

She put herself in his strong grasp with no great appearance of unwillingness, and he bore her across—the natives staring in mute astonishment, for no Arab is able to understand how any one can bring himself to perform a menial task unless compelled by poverty, and still less how a man can voluntarily make himself a slave of a woman. 'But all Afrank are mad,' was their inward comment.

Meanwhile another lady stood on the stranded barge with flashing eyes.

'Wait a minute, Miss Heath, and I'll take you over, too,' called back the young man as he deposited his burden untruffled on the bank.

'It isn't necessary, Mr Howe,' she responded; and even as he approached she flung herself into the arms of the big boatman who stood silently waiting her pleasure. The Oriental received his fair charge with more than customary reverence. 'She, at least, is not mad,' he thought, as he placed her tenderly on the beach. 'She is in her own country a great lady, wise and good. But the others are hashashin.'

A throng of donkey boys with their beasts were awaiting us, and a long canter through the broad fields of clover and grain ensued. I noticed that young Howe drew away from Miss Fermor, and urged his animal to the side of Miss Heath, who was well to the front, riding at a pretty sharp gait.

'Why not try another little race?' I heard him suggest.

'It's smooth here, and I see you've got a rather strong mount. Mine isn't quite so good, but I'll chance it. You know I won the last.'

They were now close together, and I could distinguish no more. There was no race, however, and presently I observed that the young fellow drooped back, looking crestfallen, and devoted himself to Miss Fermor with renewed assiduity.

At last we reached the tawny cliffs that girdle the Theban valley like the wall of a great amphitheatre, and struggled up the precipitous path that leads to the tombs that honeycomb its front. Long we wandered, candle in hand, through the dark, painted labyrinths where Egypt's ancient monarchs thought to await the final resurrection. They are waiting now, with uncovered faces, shrunken and blackened almost out of human semblance, in glass cases in the Gizeh museum—a grotesque spectacle for the motley throng of tourists from every clime that is forever filing through its corridors. A most humiliating outcome truly! But it does not concern us here.

'Ouah!' granted Mahmud, the dragonman, as we passed the entrance of a tomb obstructed with rubbish, and I turned to peer into its depths.

'Nobody permit there. Tab'an—snakes—cober—tultermiyeh.'

I drew back with sated curiosity. Heath kicked a loose stone with nervous petulance. Miss Heath paled a little.

'Why, there may be snakes in the tombs where we are prowling,' cried Miss Fermor with a dramatic shudder.

'Oh, no,' said Mahmud reassuringly. 'No snakes where we go. Fellahin keep watch.'

Nevertheless, the unexpected often happens.

We soon reached a tomb unusually clean and open, but almost denuded of paintings and of little interest in itself. It is, however, a convenient place to spread a lunch, and we made

use of it for that purpose. Cloths were laid down, we seated ourselves upon the ground in a more or less broken circle, and were enjoying a very satisfactory collation. Young Howe, as it chanced, had placed himself in the inner side, so that his back was toward the passage leading in to the darker recesses, and the two ladies who seemed to divide his heart were enmeshed near him.

Suddenly one of the native attendants leaped back with a cry and a crash of falling dishes. 'Tab'an!' he shouted, 'Ouah! Nasher!'

We sprang to our feet. And there indeed, so near to Howe that he might have touched it with his hand, rose the head of a huge cobra, its hideous crest dilated with rage, its tongue vibrant. For one pulsing instant the young man seemed paralyzed—and an instant wadded within striking distance of an angry cobra may cost the whole remaining span of life. Yet brief was that instant, it was long enough for the black-eyed flirt to fall in a dead faint—no theatricals this time; and it was long enough for something else. Quick as was the stroke of the venomous reptile, it was met by a quicker stroke from a white jewelled hand that flashed across the dark background with a gleam of gold, yet dealt a blow so sharp and fierce that the monster fell with broken vertebrae, writhing and lashing on the cavern floor, and then she of the flashing eyes and sunlit hair also sank unconscious. There is a marked difference, however, between the woman who faints before and the woman who faints afterward.

Clearly the young fellow thought so. He gathered the lovely, lifeless form into his arms and wailed aloud. He seemed to have made a discovery—somehow late.

Meanwhile the snake had received its final quietus, and Mahmud was stooping over it. He now rose and turned toward us.

'I think lady not much hurt,' he said. 'Tame cober. Get away from some rifa'. Snake charmer always pull out teeth. No poison.'

—And so, indeed, it was. Happy! I think I never was so happy in my life as when I saw that beautiful girl open her eyes. And when she looked up into the eyes of young Howe, and felt the hot drops that still gushed from them falling upon her face, I don't think she cared much whether she lived or died. She was perfectly satisfied.

No Arab was privileged to carry Miss Heath across the shallows on our return. Just how Miss Fermor got across I didn't observe.

That evening the fantasia was carried through with great eclat on the steamer. The deck was canopied and brilliantly illuminated. The ghawazi, the best of their kind, fully costumed for European eyes, went through their difficult evolutions with surpassing skill. The jugglers performed apparent miracles. There were two of those present, however, who didn't seem to give them much attention.

The Christmas tree, also, was a grand success, though it was neither fir nor spruce, and I doubt whether a tree of the same variety was ever used for such a purpose before. The gifts were mostly provided by the steamship company—boxes of bonbons and various little trinkets, distributed by lot—but there were a few that were personal. The greater number of these seemed to go to Miss Heath, and I noticed that a new ring—a twining serpent with an opal in his head—was added to the white, jewelled hand.

## ILL-MANNERED.

The Gamin: Come quick. They're killing a man 'round the corner.

The Policeman: Begorra this, it's half a moidil I have to take you in. Don't yez know any better than to break in on a gentleman whin he's atin' his cream? It's toime enough to call me whin the man is dead.—'Life.'

## AT THE SEASIDE.

Boatman: Fine day for a saale, sur.  
Bolomon Isaacs, Esq. (licensed broker and appraiser): Vell, I knows that, stoopid; but I'm down 'ere a-in'yin' myself. I don't carry my hauction rooms about with me.'