

# One Over

By Robert W. Chambers

## I

Professor Farrago had remarked to me that morning:

“The city of New York always reminds me of a slovenly, fat woman with her dress unbuttoned behind.”

I nodded.

“New York’s architecture,” said I, “—or what popularly passes for it—is all in front. The minute you get to the rear a pitiable condition is exposed.”

He said: “Professor Jane Bottomly is all façade; the remainder of her is merely an occipital backyard full of theoretical tin cans and broken bottles. I think we all had better resign.”

It was a fearsome description. I trembled as I lighted an inexpensive cigar.

The sentimental feminist movement in America was clearly at the bottom of the Bottomly affair.

Long ago, in a reactionary burst of hysteria, the North enfranchised the Ethiopian. In a similar sentimental explosion of dementia, some sixty years later, the United States wept violently over the immemorial wrongs perpetrated upon the restless sex, opened the front and back doors of opportunity, and sobbed out, “Go to it, ladies!”

They are still going.

Professor Jane Bottomly was wished on us out of a pleasant April sky. She fell like a meteoric mass of molten metal upon the Bronx Park Zoological Society splashing her excoriating personality over everybody until everybody writhed.

I had not yet seen the lady. I did not care to. Sooner or later I’d be obliged to meet her but I was not impatient.

Now the Field Expeditionary Force of the Bronx Park Zoological Society is, perhaps, the most important arm of the service. Professor Bottomly had just been appointed official head of all field work. Why? Nobody knew. It is true that she had written several combination nature and love romances. In these popular volumes trees, flowers, butterflies, birds, animals, dialect, sobs, and sunbonnets were stirred up together into a saccharine mess eagerly gulped down by *a* provincial reading public, which immediately protruded its tongue for more.

The news of her impending arrival among us was an awful blow to everybody at the Bronx. Professor Farrago fainted in the arms of his pretty stenographer; Professor Cornelius Lezard of the Batnachian Department ran around his desk all day long in narrowing circles and was discovered on his stomach still feebly squirming like an expiring top; Dr. Hans Fooss, our beloved Professor of Pachydermatology, sat for hours weeping into his noodle soup. As for me, I was both furious and frightened, for, within the hearing of several people, Professor Bottomly had remarked in a very clear voice to her new assistant, Dr. Daisy Delmoun, that she intended to get rid of me for the good of the Bronx because of my reputation for indiscreet gallantry among the feminine employees of the Bronx Society.

Professor Lezard overheard that outrageous remark and he hastened to repeat it to me.

I was lunching at the time in my private office in the Administration Building with Dr. Hans Fooss—he and I being too busy dissecting an unusually fine specimen of Dingue to go to the

Rolling Stone Inn for luncheon—when Professor Lezard rushed in with the scandalous libel still sizzling in his ears.

“Everybody heard her say it!” he went on, wringing his hands. “It was a most unfortunate thing for anybody to say about you before all those young ladies. Every stenographer and typewriter there turned pale and then red.”

“What!” I exclaimed, conscious that my own ears were growing large and hot. “Did that outrageous woman have the bad taste to say such a thing before all those sensitive girls!”

“She did. She glared at them when she said it. Several blondes and one brunette began to cry.”

“I hope,” said I, a trifle tremulously, “that no typewriter so far forgot herself as to admit noticing playfulness on my part.”

“They all were tearfully unanimous in declaring you to be a perfect gentleman!”

“I am,” I said. “I am also a married man—irrevocably wedded to science. I desire no other spouse. I am ineligible; and everybody knows it. If at times a purely scientific curiosity leads me into a detached and impersonally psychological investigation of certain—ah—feminine idiosyncrasies—”

“Certainly,” said Lezard. “To investigate the feminine is more than a science; it is a duty!”

“Of a surety!” nodded Dr. Fooss.

I looked proudly upon my two loyal friends and bit into my cheese sandwich. Only men know men. A jury of my peers had exonerated me. What did I care for Professor Bottomly!

“All the same,” added Lezard, “you’d better be careful or Professor Bottomly will put one over on you yet.

“I am always careful,” I said with dignity.

“All men should be. It is the only protection of a defenseless coast line,” nodded Lezard.

“Und neffer, neffer commid nodding to paper,” added Dr. Fooss. “Don’d neffer write it, ‘I lofe you like I was going to blow up alretty!’ Ach, nein! Don’d you write down somedings. Effery man he iss entitled to protection; und so iss it he iss protected.”

Stein in hand he beamed upon us benevolently oven his knifeful of sauerfisch, then he fed himself and rammed it down with a hearty draught of Pilsner. We gazed with reverence upon Kultur as embodied in this great Teuton.

“That woman,” remarked Lezard to me, “certainly means to get rid of you. It seems to me that there are only two possible ways for you to hold down your job at the Bronx. You know it, don’t you?”

I nodded. “Yes,” I said; “either I must pay marked masculine attention to Professor Bottomly or I must manage to put one over on hen.”

“Of course,” said Lezard, “the first method is the easier for *you*—”

“Not for a minute!” I said, hastily; “I simply couldn’t become frolicsome with her. You say she’s got a voice like a drill-sergeant and she goose-steps when she walks; and I don’t mind admitting she has me badly scared already. No; she must be scientifically ruined. It is the only method which makes her elimination certain.”

“But if her popular nature books didn’t ruin her scientifically, how can we hope to lead her astray?” inquired Lezard.

“There is,” I said, thoughtfully, “only one thing that can really ruin a scientist. Ridicule! I have braved it many a time, taking my scientific life in my hands in pursuit of unknown specimens which might have proved only imaginary. Public ridicule would have ended my scientific career in such an event. I know of no better way to end Professor Bottomly’s scientific career and

capability for mischief than to start her out after something which doesn't exist, inform the newspapers, and let her suffer the agonising consequences.

Dr. Fooss began to shout:

“The idea iss schön! colossal! prachtvoll! ausgezeichnet! wunderbar! wundenschön! gemütlich—” A large, tough noodle checked him. While he labored with Teutonic imperturbability to master it Lezard and I exchanged suggestions regarding the proposed annihilation of this fearsome woman who had come ravening among us amid the peaceful and soporific environment of Bronx Park.

It was a dreadful thing for us to have our balmy Lotus-eaters' paradise so startlingly invaded by a large, loquacious, loud-voiced lady who had already stirred us all out of our agreeable, traditional and leisurely inertia. Inertia begets cogitation, and cogitation begets ideas, and ideas beget reflexion, and profound reflexion is the fundamental cornerstone of that immortal temple in which the goddess Science sits asleep between her dozing sisters, Custom and Religion.

This thought seemed to me so unusually beautiful that I wrote it with a pencil upon my cuff

While I was writing it, quietly happy in the deep pleasure that my intellectual allegory afforded me, Dr. Fooss swabbed the last morsel of nourishment from his plate with a wad of rye bread, then bolting the bread and wiping his beard with his fingers and his fingers on his waistcoat, he made several guttural observations too profoundly German to be immediately intelligible, and lighted his porcelain pipe.

“Ach wass!” he remarked in ruminative fashion. “Dot Frauenzimmer she iss to raise hell alretty determined. Von Pachydermatology she knows nodding. Maybe she leaves me alone, maybe it is to be 'raus mit me. I' weis' ni'! It iss aber besser one over on dat lady to put, yess?”

“It certainly is advisable,” replied Lezard.

“Let us try to think of something sufficiently disastrous to terminate her scientific career,” said I. And I bowed my rather striking head and nested the point of my forefinger upon my forehead. Thought crystallises more quickly for me when I assume this attitude.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Lezard fold his arms and sit frowning at infinity.

Dr. Fooss lay back in a big, deeply padded armchair and closed his prominent eyes. His pipe went out presently, and now and then he made long-drawn nasal remarks, in German, too complicated for either Lezard or for me to entirely comprehend.

“We must try to get her as fan away from here as possible,” mused Lezard. “Is Oyster Bay *too* fan and too cruel?”

I pondered darkly upon the suggestion. But it seemed unpleasantly like murder.

“Lezard,” said I, “come, let us reason together. Now *what* is woman's besetting emotion?”

“Curiosity?”

“Very well; assuming that to be true, what—ah—quality particularly characterizes woman when so beset.”

“Ruthless determination.”

“Then,” said I, “we ought to begin my exciting the curiosity of Professor Bottomly; and her ruthless determination to satisfy that curiosity should logically follow.”

“How,” he asked, “are we to arouse her curiosity?”

“By pretending that we have knowledge of something hitherto undiscovered, the discovery of which would redound to our scientific glory.”

“I see. She'd want the glory for herself She'd swipe it.”

“She would,” said I.

“Tee—hee!” he giggled; “Wouldn't it be funny to plant something phony on her—”

I waved my arms rather gracefully in my excitement:

“That is the germ of an idea!” I said. “If we could plant something—something—far away from here—very far away—if we could bury something like the Cardiff Giant—”

“Hundreds and hundreds of miles away!”

“Thousands!” I insisted, enthusiastically.

“Tee-hee! In Tasmania, for example! Maybe a Tasmanian Devil might acquire her!”

“There exists a gnat,” said I, “in Borneo—*Gnatus soporificus*—and when this tiny gnat stings people they never entirely wake up. It’s really rather a pleasurable catastrophe, I understand. Life becomes one endless cat-nap—one delightful siesta, with intervals for light nourishment. . . . She—ah—could sit very comfortably in some pleasant retreat and rock in a rocking-chair and doze quite happily through the years to come. . . . And from your description of her I should say that the Soldiers’ Home might receive her.”

“It won’t do,” he said, gloomily.

“Why? Is it too much like crime?”

“Oh not at all. Only if she went to Borneo she’d be sure to take a mosquito-bar with her.”

In the depressed silence which ensued Dr. Fooss suddenly made several Futurist observations through his nose with monotonous but authoritative regularity. I tried to catch his meaning and his eye. The one remained cryptic, the other shut.

Lezard sat thinking very hard. And as I fidgeted in my chair, fiddling nervously with various objects lying on my desk I chanced to pick up a letter from the pile of still unopened mail at my elbow.

Still pondering on Professor Bottomly’s proposed destruction, I turned the letter over idly and my preoccupied gaze rested on the postmark. After a moment I leaned forward and examined it more attentively. The letter directed to me was postmarked Fort Carcajou, Cook’s Peninsula, Baffin Land; and now I recalled the handwriting, having already seen it three or four times within the last month or so.

“Lezard,” I said, “that lunatic trapper from Baffin Land has written to me again. What do you suppose is the matter with him? Is he just plain crazy or does he think he can be funny with me?”

Lezard gazed at me absently. Then, all at once a gleam of savage interest lighted his somewhat solemn features.

“Read the letter to me,” he said, with an evil smile which instantly animated my own latent imagination. And immediately it occurred to me that perhaps, in the humble letter from the wilds of Baffin Land, which I was now opening with eager and unsteady fingers, might lie concealed the professional undoing of Professor Jane Bottomly, and the only hope of my own ultimate and scientific salvation.

The room became hideously still as I unfolded the pencil-scrawled sheets of cheap, ruled letter paper.

Dr. Fooss opened his eyes, looked at me, made porcine sounds indicative of personal well-being, relighted his pipe, and disposed himself to listen. But just as I was about to begin, Lezard suddenly laid his forefinger across his lips conjuring us to densest silence.

For a moment or two I heard nothing except the buzzing of flies. Then I stole a startled glance at my door. It was opening slowly, almost imperceptibly.

But it did not open very far—just a crack remained. Then, listening with all our might, we heard the cautiously suppressed breathing of somebody in the hallway just outside of my door.

Lezard turned and cast at me a glance of horrified intelligence. In dumb pantomime he outlined in the air, with one hand, the large and feminine amplification of his own person, conveying to us the certainty of his suspicions concerning the unseen eavesdropper.

We nodded. We understood perfectly that *she* was out there prepared to listen to every word we uttered.

A flicker of ferocious joy disturbed Lezard's otherwise innocuous features; he winked horribly at Dr. Fooss and at me, and uttered a faint click with his teeth and tongue like the snap of a closing trap.

"Gentlemen," he said, in the guarded yet excited voice of a man who is confident of not being overheard, "the matter under discussion admits of only one interpretation: a discovery—perhaps the most vitally important discovery of all the centuries—is imminent.

"Secrecy is imperative; the scientific glory is to be shared by us alone, and there is enough of glory to go around.

"Mr. Chairman, I move that epoch-making letter be read aloud!"

"I second dot motion!" said Dr. Fooss, winking so violently at me that his glasses wobbled.

"Gentlemen," said I, "it has been moved and seconded that this epoch-making letter be read aloud. All those in favor will kindly say 'aye.' "

'Aye! Aye!' they exclaimed, fairly wriggling in their furtive joy.

"The contrary-minded will kindly emit the usual negation," I went on.

"It seems to be carried. . . . It *is* carried. The chairman will proceed to the reading of the epoch-making letter."

I quietly lighted a five-cent cigar, unfolded the letter and read aloud:

'Joneses Shack,  
Golden Glacier,  
Cook's Peninsula, Baffin Land,  
March 15, 1915.

"Professor, Dear Sir:

"I already wrote you three times no answer having been rec'd perhaps you think I'm kiddin' you're a dam' liar I ain't.

"Hoping to tempt you to come I will hereby tell you more'n I told you in my other letters, the terminal moraine of this here Golden Glacier finishes into a marsh, nothing to see for miles excep' frozen tussock and mud and all flat as hell for fifty miles which is where I am trappin' it for mink and otter and now ready to go back to Fort Carcajou. i told you what I seen stickin' in under this here marsh, where anything sticks out the wolves have eat it, but most of them there ellenphants is in under the ice and mud too fan for the wolves to git 'em.

"i ain't kiddin' you, there is a whole herd of furry ellenphants in the marsh like as they were stuck there and all lay down and was drownded like. Some has tusks and some hasn't. Two ellenphants stuck out of the ice, I eat onto one, the meat was good and sweet and joosy, the damn wolves eat it up that night, I had cut stakes and rost for three months though and am eating off it yet.

"Thinking as how ellenphants and all like that is your graft, I being a keeper in the Mouse House once in the Bronx and seem' you nosin' around like you was full of scientific thinks, it comes to me to write you and put you next.

“If you say so I’ll wait here and help you with them ellerphants. Livin’ wages is all I ask also eleven thousand dollars for tippin’ you wise. I won’t tell nobody till I hear from you. I’m hones’ you can trus’ me. Write me to Fort Carcajou if you mean bizness. So no more respectfully,

JAMES SKAW.”

When I finished reading I cautiously glanced at the door, and, finding it still on the crack, turned and smiled subtly upon Lezard and Fooss.

In their slowly spreading grins I saw they agreed with me that somebody, signing himself James Skaw, was still trying to hoax the Great Zoological Society of Bronx Park.

“Gentlemen,” I said aloud, injecting innocent enthusiasm into my voice, “this secret expedition to Baffin Land which we three are about to organise is destined to be without doubt the most scientifically prolific field expedition ever organised by man.

“Imagine an entire herd of mammoths preserved in mud and ice through all these thousands of years!

“Gentlemen, no discovery ever made has even remotely approached in importance the discovery made by this simple, illiterate trapper, James Skaw.”

“I thought,” protested Lezard, “that we are to be announced as the discoverers.

“We are,” said I, “the discoverers of James Skaw, which makes us technically the finders of the ice-preserved herd of mammoths—*technically*, you understand. A few thousand dollars,” I added, carelessly, “ought to satiate James Skaw.”

“We could name dot glacier after him,” suggested Dr. Fooss.

“Certainly—the Skaw Glacier. That ought to be enough glory for him. It ought to satisfy him and prevent any indiscreet remarks,” nodded Lezard.

“Gentlemen,” said I, “there is only one detail that really troubles me. Ought we to notify our honoured and respected Chief of Division concerning this discovery?”

“Do you mean, should we tell that accomplished and fascinating lady, Professor Bottomly, about this herd of mammoths?” I asked in a loud, clear voice. And immediately answered my own question: “No.” I said, “no, dear friends. Professor Bottomly already has too much responsibility weighing upon her distinguished mind. No, dear brothers in science, we should steal away unobserved as though setting out upon an ordinary field expedition. And when we return with fresh and immortal laurels such as no man before has ever worn, no doubt that our generous-minded Chief of Division will weave for us further wreaths to crown our brows—the priceless garlands of professional approval!” And I made a horrible face at my co-conspirators.

Before I finished Lezard had taken his own face in his hands for the purpose of stifling raucous and untimely mirth. As for Dr. Fooss, his small, porcine eyes snapped and twinkled madly behind his spectacles, but he seemed rather inclined to approve my flowers of rhetoric.

‘Ja,’ said he, “so iss it besser oursellufs dot gefrozenss herd von elephanten to discover, und, by and by, die elephanten bei den Pronx Bark home yet again once more to bring. We shall therefore much praise thereby bekommen. Ach wass!”

“Gentlemen,” said I, distinctly, “it is decided, then, that we shall say nothing concerning the true object of this expedition to Professor Bottomly.”

Lezard and Fooss nodded assent. Then, in the silence, we all strained our ears to listen. And presently we detected the scarcely heard sound of cautiously retreating footsteps down the corridor.

When it was safe to do so I arose and closed my door.

“I think,” said I, with a sort of infernal cheerfulness in my tones, “that we are about to do something jocose to Jane Bottomly.”

‘A few,’ said Professor Lezard. He rose and silently executed a complicated ballet-step.

“I shall laff,” said Dr. Fooss, earnestly, “und I shall laff, und I shall laff—ach Gott how I shall laff my pally head off!”

I folded my arms and turned romanesquely toward the direction in which Professor Bottomly had retreated.

“Viper!” I said. “The Bronx shall nourish you in its bosom no more! Fade away, Ophidian!”

The sentiment was applauded by all. There chanced to be in my desk a bottle marked: “That’s all!” On the label somebody had written: “Do it now!” We did.

## II

It was given out at the Bronx that our field expedition to Baffin Land was to be undertaken solely for the purpose of bringing back living specimens of the five-spotted Arctic woodcock—*Philohela quinquemaculata*—in order to add to our onomatology and our glossary of onomatopoeia an ontogenesis of this important but hitherto unstudied sub-species.

I trust I make myself clean. Scientific statements should be as clean as the Spuyten Duyvil. *Sola in stagno salus!*

But two things immediately occurred which worried us; Professor Bottomly sent us official notification that she approved our expedition to Baffin Land, designated the steamer we were to take, and enclosed tickets. That scared us. Then to add to our perplexity Professor Bottomly disappeared, leaving Dr. Daisy Delmoun in charge of her department during what she announced might be “a somewhat prolonged absence on business.”

And during the four feverish weeks of our pretended preparations for Baffin Land not one word did we hear from Jane Bottomly, which caused us painful inquietude as the hour approached for our departure.

Was this formidable woman actually intending to let us depart alone for the Golden Glacier? Was she too lazy to rob us of the secretly contemplated glory which we had pretended awaited us?

We had been so absolutely convinced that she would forbid our expedition, pack us off elsewhere, and take charge herself of an exploring party to Baffin Land, that, as the time for our leaving drew near we became first uneasy, and then really alarmed.

It would be a dreadful jest on us if she made us swallow our own concoction; if she revealed to our colleagues our pretended knowledge of the Golden Glacier and James Skaw and the supposedly ice-imbedded herd of mammoths, and then publicly forced us to investigate this hoax.

More horrible still would it be if she informed the newspapers and gave them a hint to make merry over the three wise men of the Bronx who went to Baffin Land in a boat.

“What do you suppose that devious and secretive female is up to?” inquired Lezard who, within the last few days, had grown thin with worry. “Is it possible that she is sufficiently degraded to suspect us of trying to put one over on her? Is that what she is now doing to us?”

“*Terminus est*—it is the limit!” said I. He turned a morbid eye upon me. “She is making a monkey of us. That’s what!”

“*Suspendenda omnia naso,*” I nodded; “*tarde sed tute.*” When I think aloud in Latin it means that I am deeply troubled. “*Suum quemque scelus agitat.* Do you get me, Professor? I’m sorry I

attempted to be sportive with this terrible woman. The curse of my scientific career has been periodical excesses of frivolity. See where this frolicsome impulse has landed me!—*super abyssum ambulans. Trahit sua quemque voluptas; transeat zn exemplum!* She means to let us go to our destruction on this mammoth frappé affair.”

But Dr. Fooss was optimistic:

“I tink she iss alretty henselluf by dot Baffin Land ge-gone,” he said. “I tink she has den bait ge-swallowed. Ve wait; we see; und so iss it ye know.”

“But why hasn’t she stopped our preparations?” I demanded. “If she wants all the glory herself why does she permit us to incur this expense in getting ready?”

“No mans can to know den workings of den mental brocess by a Frauenzimmer,” said Dr. Fooss, wagging his head.

The suspense became nerve-racking; we were obliged to pack our camping kits; and it began to look as though we would have either to sail the next morning on to resign from the Bronx Park Zoological Society, because all the evening papers had the story in big type—the details and objects of the expedition, the discovery of the herd of mammoths in cold storage, the prompt organization of an expedition to secure this unparalleled deposit of prehistoric mammalia—everything was there staring at us in violent print, excepting only the name of the discoverer and the names of those composing the field expedition.

“She means to betray us after we have sailed,” said Lezard, greatly depressed. “We might just as well resign now before this hoax explodes and bespatters us. We can take our chances in vaudeville on as lecturing professors with the movies.”

I thought so, too, in point of fact we all had gathered in my study to write out our resignations, when there came a knock at the door and Dr. Daisy Delmour walked in.

Oddly enough I had not before met Dr. Delmour personally; only formal written communications had hitherto passed between us. My idea of her had doubtless been inspired by the physical and intellectual aberrations of her chief; I naturally supposed her to be either impossible and corporeally redundant, or intellectually and otherwise as weazened as last year’s Li-che nut.

I was criminally mistaken. And why Lezard, who knew her, had never set me right I could not understand. I comprehended later.

For the feminine assistant of Professor Jane Bottomly, who sauntered into my study and announced herself, had the features of Athene, the smile of Aphrodite, and the figure of Psyche. I believe I do not exaggerate these scientific details, although it has been said of me that any pretty girl distorts my vision and my intellectual balance to the detriment of my calmer reason and my differentiating ability.

“Gentlemen,” said Dr. Delmour, while we stood in a respectful semicircle before her, modestly conscious of our worth, our toes turned out, and each man’s features wreathed with that politely unnatural smirk which masculine features assume when confronted by feminine beauty. “Gentlemen, on the eve of your proposed departure for Baffin Land in quest of living specimens of the five-spotted *Philohela quinquemaculata*, I have been instructed by Professor Bottomly to announce to you a great good fortune for hen, for you, for the Bronx, for America, for the entire civilized world.

“It has come to Professor Bottomly’s knowledge, recently I believe, that an entire herd of mammoths lie encased in the mud and ice of the vast flat marshes which lie south of the terminal moraine of the Golden Glacier in that part of Baffin Land known as Dr. Cook’s Peninsula.

“The credit of this epoch-making discovery is Professor Bottomly’s entirely. How it happened, she did not inform me. One month ago today she sailed in great haste for Baffin Land. At this very hour she is doubtless standing all alone upon the frozen surface of that wondrous marsh, contemplating with reverence and awe and similar holy emotions the fruits of her own unsurpassed discovery!”

Dr. Delmour’s lovely features became delicately suffused and transfigured as she spoke; her exquisite voice thrilled with generous emotion; she clasped her snowy hands and gazed, enraptured, at the picture of Dr. Bottomly which her mind was so charmingly evoking.

“Perhaps,” she whispered, “perhaps at this very instant, in the midst of that vast and flat and solemn desolation the only protuberance visible for miles and miles is Professor Bottomly. Perhaps the pallid Arctic sun is setting behind the majestic figure of Professor Bottomly, radiating a blinding glory to the zenith, illuminating the crowning act of her career with its unearthly aura!”

She gazed at us out of dimmed and violet eyes.

“Gentlemen,” she said, “I am ordered to take command of this expedition of yours; I am ordered to sail with you tomorrow morning on the Labrador and Baffin Line steamer *Dr. Cook*.

“The object of your expedition, therefore, is not to be the quest of *Philohela quinquemaculata*,’ your duty now is to corroborate the almost miraculous discovery of Professor Bottomly, and to disinter for her the vast herd of frozen mammoths, pack and pickle them, and get them to the Bronx.

“Tomorrow’s morning papers will have the entire story: the credit and responsibility for the discovery and the expedition belong to Professor Bottomly, and will be given to her by the press and the populace of our great republic.

“It is her wish that no other names be mentioned. Which is right. To the discoverer belongs the glory. Therefore, the marsh is to be named Bottomly’s Marsh, and the Glacier, Bottomly’s Glacier.

“Yours and mine is to be the glory of laboring incognito under the direction of the towering scientific intellect of the age, Professor Bottomly.

“And the most precious legacy you can leave your children—if you get married and have any—is that you once wielded the humble pick and shovel for Jane Bottomly on the bottomless marsh which bears her name!”

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After a moment’s silence we three men ventured to look sideways at each other. We had certainly killed Professor Bottomly, scientifically speaking. The lady was practically dead. The morning papers would consummate the murder. We didn’t know whether we wanted to laugh or not.

She was now virtually done for; that seemed certain. So greedily had this egotistical female swallowed the silly bait we offered, so arrogantly had she planned to eliminate everybody excepting herself from the credit of the discovery, that there seemed now nothing left for us to do except to watch her hurdling deliriously toward destruction. *Should* we burst into hellish laughter?

We looked hard at Dr. Delmour and we decided not to—yet.

Said I: “To assist at the final apotheosis of Professor Bottomly makes us very, very happy. We are happy to remain incognito, mere ciphers blotted out by the fierce white light which is about

to beat upon Professor Bottomly, fore and aft. We are happy that our participation in this astonishing affair shall never be known to science.

“But, happiest of all are we, dear Dr. Delmour, in the knowledge that *you* are to be with us and of us, incognito on this voyage now imminent; that you are to be our revered and beloved leader.

“And I, for one, promise you personally the undivided devotion of a man whose entire and austere career has been dedicated to science—in *all* its branches.”

I stepped forward rather gracefully and raised her little hand to my lips to let her see that even the science of gallantry had not been neglected by me.

Dr. Daisy Delmour blushed.

“Therefore,” said I, “considering the fact that our names are not to figure in this expedition; and, furthermore, in consideration of the fact that *you* are going, we shall be very, very happy to accompany you, Dr. Delmour.” I again saluted her hand, and again Dr. Delmour blushed and looked sideways at Professor Lezard.

### III

It was, to be accurate, exactly twenty-three days later that our voyage by sea and land ended one Monday morning upon the gigantic terminal moraine of the Golden Glacier, Cook’s Peninsula, Baffin Land.

Four pack-mules carried our luggage, four more bore our persons; an arctic dicky-bird sat on a boulder and said, “Pilly-willy-willy! Tweet! Tweet!”

As we rode out to the boulder-strewn edge of the moraine the rising sun greeted us cordially, illuminating below us the flat surface of the marsh which stretched away to the east and south as far as the eye could see.

So flat was it that we immediately made out the silhouettes of two mules tethered below us a quarter of a mile away.

Something about the attitude of these mules arrested our attention, and, gazing upon them through our field-glasses we beheld Professor Bottomly.

That resourceful lady had mounted a pneumatic hammock upon the two mules, their saddles had sockets to fit the legs of the galvanized iron tripod.

No matter in which way the mules turned, sliding swivels on the hollow steel frames regulated the hammock slung between them. It was an infernal invention.

There lay Jane Bottomly asleep, her back hair drying over the hammock’s edge, gilded to a peroxide lustre by the rays of the rising sun.

I gazed upon her with a sort of ferocious pity. Her professional days were numbered. *I* also had her number!

“How majestically she slumbers,” whispered Dr. Delmour to me, “dreaming, doubtless, of her approaching triumph.”

Dr. Fooss and Professor Lezard, driving the pack mules ahead of them, were already riding out across the marsh.

“Daisy,” I said, leaning from my saddle and taking one of her gloved hands into mine, “the time has come for me to disillusion you. There are no mammoths in that mud down there.”

She looked at me in blue-eyed amazement.

“You are mistaken,” she said; “Professor Bottomly is celebrated for the absolute and painstaking accuracy of her deductions and the boldness and the imagination of her scientific

investigations. She is the most cautious scientist in America; she would never announce such a discovery to the newspapers unless she were perfectly certain of its truth.”

I was sorry for this young girl. I pressed her hand because I was sorry for her. After a few moments of deepest thought I felt so sorry for her that I kissed her.

“You mustn’t,” said Dr. Delmour, blushing.

The things we mustn’t do are so many that I can’t always remember all of them.

“Daisy,” I said, “shall we pledge ourselves to each other for eternity—here in the presence of this immemorial glacier which moves a thousand inches a year—I mean an inch every thousand years—here in these awful solitudes where incalculable calculations could not enlighten us concerning the number of cubic tons of mud in that marsh—here in the presence of these innocent mules—”

“Oh, look!” exclaimed Dr. Delmour, lifting her flushed cheek from my shoulder. “There is a man in the hammock with Professor Bottomly!”

I levelled my field-glasses incredulously. Good Heavens! There *was* a man there. He was sitting on the edge of the hammock in a dejected attitude, his booted legs dangling.

And, as I gazed, I saw the arm of Professor Bottomly raised as though groping instinctively for something in her slumber—saw her fingers close upon the blue-flannel shirt of her companion, saw his timid futile attempts to elude her, saw him inexorably hauled back and his head forcibly pillowed upon her ample chest.

“Daisy!” I faltered, “what does yonder scene of presumable domesticity mean?”

“I—I haven’t the faintest idea!” she stammered.

“Is that lady married! On is this revelry?” I asked, sternly.

“She wasn’t married when she sailed from N-New-York,” faltered Dr. Delmour.

We rode forward in pained silence, spurning on until we caught up with Lezard and Fooss and the pack-mules; then we all pressed ahead, a prey, now, to the deepest moral anxiety and agitation.

The splashing of our mule’s feet on the partly melted surface of the mud aroused the man as we rode up and he scrambled madly to get out of the hammock as soon as he saw us.

A detaining feminine hand reached mechanically for his collar, groped aimlessly for a moment, and fell across the hammock’s edge. Evidently its owner was too sleepy for effort.

Meanwhile the man who had floundered free from the hammock, leaped overboard and came hopping stiffly over the slush toward us like a badly-winged snipe.

“Who are you?” I demanded, drawing bridle so suddenly that I found myself astride of my mule’s ears. Sliding back into the saddle, I repeated the challenge haughtily, inwardly cursing my horsemanship.

He stood balancing his lank six feet six of bony altitude for a few moments without replying. His large gentle eyes of baby blue were fixed on me.

“Speak!” I said. “The reputation of a lady is at stake! Who are you? We ask, before we shoot you, for purpose of future identification.”

He gazed at me wildly. “I dunno who I be,” he replied. “My name *was* James Skaw before that there lady went an’ changed it on me. She says she has changed my name to hers. I dunno. All I know is I’m married.”

“*Married!*” echoed Dr. Delmour.

He looked dully at the girl, then fixed his large mild eyes on me.

“A mission priest done it for her a month ago when we was hikin’ towards Fort Cancajou. Hoonhel are you?” he added.

I informed him with dignity; he blinked at me, at the others, at the mules. Then he said with infinite bitterness:

“You’re a fine guy, ain’t you, a-wishin’ this here lady onto a pore pelt-hunter what ain’t never done nothin’ to you!”

“Who did you say I wished on you?” I demanded, bewildered.

“That there lady a-sleepin’ into the nuptool hainmick! You wished her onto me—yaas you did! Whatnhel have I done to you, hey?”

We were dumb. He shoved his hand into his pocket, produced a slug of twist, slowly gnawed off a portion, and buried the remains in his vast jaw.

“All I done to you,” he said, “was to write you them letters sayin’s as how I found a lot of ellerphants into the mud.

“What you done to me was to sent that there lady here. Was that gratitood? Man to man I ask you?”

A loud snore from the hammock startled us all. James Skaw twisted his neck turkey-like, and looked warily at the hammock, then turning toward me:

“Aw,” he said, “she don’t never wake up till I have breakfast ready.”

“James Skaw,” I said, “tell me what has happened. On my word of honour I don’t know.”

He regarded me with lack-lustre eyes.

“I was a-settin’ onto a bowlder,” said he, “a-figunin’ out whether you was a-comin’ or not, when that there lady rides up with her led-mule a trailin’.

“Sez she: ‘Are you James Skaw?’

“ ‘Yes, mann,’ sez I, kinder scared an’ puzzled.

“ ‘Where is them ellerphants?’ sez she, reachin’ down from her saddle an’ takin’ me by the shirt collar, an’ beatin’ me with her umbrella.

“Sez I, ‘I have wrote to a certain gent that I would show him them ellenphants for a price. Bein’ strictly hones’ I can’t show ’em to no one else until I hear from him.’

“With that she continood to argoo the case with her umbrella never lettin’ go of my shirt collar. Sir, she argood until dinner time, an’ then she resoomed the debate until I fell asleep. The last I knowed she was still conversin’.

‘An’ so it went next day, all day long, an’ the next day. I couldn’t stand it no longer so I started for Fort Carcajou. But she bein’ onto a mule, nun me down easy, an’ kep’ beside me conversin’ volooble.

“Sir, do you know what it is to listen to umbrella argooment every day, all day long, from sun-up to night-fall? An’ then some more?

“I was loony, I tell you, when we met the mission priest. ‘Marry me, sez she, ‘or I’ll talk you to death!’” ‘I didn’t realise what she was sayin’ an’ what I answered. But them words I uttered done the job, it seems.

“We camped there an’ slep’ for two days without wakin.’ When I waked up I was convalescent.

“She was good to me. She made soup an’ she wrapped blankets onto me an’ she didn’t talk no more until I was well enough to endoon it.

‘An’ by’m’by she brooke the nooze to me that we was married an’ that she had went as far as to marry me in the sacred cause of science because man an’ wife is one, an’ what I knowed about them ellerphants she now had a right to know.

“Sir, she had put one over on me. So bein’ strickly hones’ I had to show her where them ellerphants lay froze up under the marsh.”

#### IV

Where the ambition of this infatuated woman had led her appalled us all. The personal sacrifice she had made in the name of science awed us.

Still when I remembered that detaining arm sleepily lifted from the nuptial hammock, I was not so certain concerning her continued martyrdom.

I cast an involuntary glance of critical appraisal upon James Skaw. He had the golden hair and beard of the early Christian martyr. His features were classically regular; he stood six feet six; he was lean because fit, sound as a hound's tooth, and really a superb specimen of masculine health.

Curry him and trim him and clothe him in evening dress and his physical appearance would make a sensation at the Court of St. James. Only his English required manicuring.

The longer I looked at him the better I comprehended that detaining hand from the hammock. *Fabas indulcet fames.*

Then, with a shock, it rushed over me that there evidently had been some ground for this man's letters to me concerning a herd of frozen mammoths.

Professor Bottomly had not only married him to obtain the information but here she was still camping on the marsh!

'James Skaw,' I said, tremulously, 'where are those mammoths?'

He looked at me, then made a vague gesture:

'Under the mud—everywhere—all around us.'

'Has *she* seen them?'

'Yes, I showed her about a hundred. There's one under you. Look! you can see him through the slush.'

'Ach Gott!' burst from Dr. Fooss, and he tottered in his saddle. Lezard, frightfully pale, passed a shaking hand over his brow. As for me my hair became dank with misery, for there directly under my feet, the vast hairy bulk of a mammoth lay dimly visible through the muddy ice.

What I had done to myself when I was planning to do Professor Bottomly suddenly burst upon me in all its hideous proportions. Fame, the plaudits of the world, the highest scientific honours—all these in my effort to annihilate her, I had deliberately thrust upon this woman to my own everlasting detriment and disgrace.

A sort of howl escaped from Dr. Fooss, who had dismounted and who had been scratching in the slush with his feet like a hen. For already this slight gallinaceous effort of his had laid bane a hairy section of frozen mammoth.

Lezard, weeping bitterly, squatted beside him clawing at the thin skin of ice with a pick-axe.

It seemed more than I could bear and I flung myself from my mule and seizing a spade, fell violently to work, the tears of rage and mortification coursing down my cheeks.

'Hurrah!' cried Dr. Delmour, excitedly, scrambling down from her mule and lifting a box of dynamite from her saddle-bags.

Transfigured with enthusiasm she seized a crowbar, traced in the slush the huge outlines of the buried beast, then, measuring with practiced eye the irregular zone of cleavage, she marked out a vast oval, dug holes along it with her bar, dropped into each hole a stick of dynamite, got out the batteries and wires, attached the fuses, covered each charge, and retired on a run toward the moraine, unreeling wire as she sped upward among the boulders.

Half frantic with grief and half mad with the excitement of the moment we still had sense enough to shoulder our tools and drive our mules back across the moraine.

Only the mule-hammock in which reposed Professor Bottomly remained on the marsh. For one horrid instant temptation assailed me to press the button before James Skaw could lead the hammock-mules up to the moraine. It was my closest approach to a crime.

With a shudder I viewed the approach of the mules. James Skaw led them by the head; the hammock on its ban and swivels swung gently between them; Professor Bottomly slept, lulled, no doubt, to deeper slumber by the gently swaying hammock.

When the hammock came up, one by one we gazed upon its unconscious occupant.

And, even amid dark and revengeful thoughts, amid a mental chaos of grief and fury and frantic self-reproach, I had to admit to myself that Jane Bottomly was a fine figure of a woman, and good-looking, too, and that her hair was all her own and almost magnificent at that.

With a modiste to advise her, a maid to dress her, I myself might have—but let that pass. Only as I gazed upon the fresh complexion and the softly parted red lips of Professor Bottomly, and as I noted the beautiful white throat and prettily shaped hands, a newer, bitterer, and more overwhelming despair seized me; and I realized now that perhaps I had thrown away more than fame, honours, applause; I had perhaps thrown away love!

At that moment Professor Bottomly awoke. For a moment her lilac-tinted eyes had a dazed expression, then they widened, and she lay very quietly looking from one to another of us, cradled in the golden glory of her hair, perfectly mistress of herself, and her mind as clear as a bell.

“Well,” she said, “so you have arrived at last.” And to Dr. Delmour she smilingly extended a cool, fresh hand.

“Have you met my husband?” she inquired.

We admitted that we had.

‘James!’ she called.

At the sound of her voice James Skaw hopped nimbly to do her bidding. A tender smile came into her face as she gazed upon her husband. She made no explanation concerning him, no apology for him. And, watching her, it slowly filtered into my mind that she liked him.

With one hand in her husband’s and one on Dr. Delmour’s arm she listened to Daisy’s account of what we were about to do to the imbedded mammoth, and nodded approval.

James Skaw turned the mules so that she might watch the explosion. She twisted up her hair, then sat up in her hammock; Daisy Delmour pressed the electric button; there came a deep jarring sound, a vast upheaval, and up out of the mud nose five *or six dozen mammoths* and toppled gently over upon the surface of the ice.

Miserable as we were at such an astonishing spectacle we raised a tragic cheer as Professor Bottomly sprang out of her hammock and, telling Dr. Delmour to get a camera, seized her husband and sped down to where one of the great, hairy frozen beasts lay on the ice in full sunshine.

And then we tasted the last drop of gall which our oven-slopping cup of bitterness held for us; Professor Bottomly climbed up the sides of the frozen mammoth, dragging her husband with her, and stood there waving a little American flag while Dr. Delmour used up every film in the camera to record the scientific triumph of the ages.

Almost idiotic with the shock of my great grief I reeled and tottered away among the boulders. Fooss came to find me; and when he found me he kicked me violently for some time. “Esel dumkopf!” he said.

When he was tired Lezard came and fell upon me, showering me with kicks and anathema.

When he went away I beat my head with my fists for a while. Every little helped.

After a time I smelled cooking, and presently Dr. Delmour came to where I sat huddled up miserably in the sun behind the boulder.

“Luncheon is ready,” she said.

I groaned.

“Don’t you feel well?”

I said that I did not.

She lingered apparently with the idea of cheering me up. “It’s been such fun,” she said. “Professor Lezard and I have already located over a hundred and fifty mammoths within a short distance of here, and apparently there are hundreds, if not thousands, more in the vicinity. The ivory alone is worth over a million dollars. Isn’t it wonderful!”

She laughed excitedly and danced away to join the others. Then, out of the black depth of my misery a feeble gleam illuminated the Stygian obscurity. There was one way left to stay my approaching downfall—only one. Professor Bottomly meant to get rid of me, “for the good of the Bronx,” but there remained a way to ward off impending disaster. And though I had lost the opportunity of my life by disbelieving the simple honesty of James Skaw,—and though the honors and emoluments and applause which ought to have been mine were destined for this determined woman, still, if I kept my head, I should be able to hold my job at the Bronx.

Dr. Delmour was immovable in the good graces of Professor Bottomly; and the only way for me to retain my position was to marry her.

The thought comforted me. After a while I felt well enough to anise and partake of some luncheon.

They were all seated around the campfire when I approached. I was welcomed politely, inquiries concerning my health were offered; but the coldly malevolent glare of Dr. Fooss and the calm contempt in Lezard’s gaze chilled me; and I squatted down by Daisy Delmour and accepted a dish of soup from her in mortified silence.

Professor Bottomly and James Skaw were feasting connubially side by side, and she was selecting titbits for him which he dutifully swallowed, his large mild eyes gazing at vacancy in a gentle, surprised sort of way as he gulped down what she offered him.

Neither of them paid any attention to anybody else.

Fooss gobbled his lunch in a sort of raging silence; Lezard, on the other side of Dr. Delmour, conversed with her continually in undertones.

After a while his persistent murmuring began to make me uneasy, even suspicious, and I glared at him sideways.

Daisy Delmour, catching my eye, blushed, hesitated, then leaning over toward me with delightful confusion she whispered:

“I know that you will be glad to hear that I have just promised to marry your closest friend, Professor Lezard—”

“What!” I shouted with all my might, “have you put one over on me, too?”

Lezard and Fooss seized me, for I had risen and was jumping up and down and splashing them with soup.

“Everybody has put one over on me!” I shrieked. “Everybody! Now I’m going to put one over on myself!”

And I lifted my plate of soup and reversed it on my head.

They told me later that I screamed for half an hour before I swooned.

Afterward, my intellect being impaired, instead of being dismissed from my department, I was promoted to the position which I now hold as President Emeritus of the Consolidated Ant Museums and Zoological Gardens of the City of New York.

I have easy hours, little to do, and twenty ornamental stenographers and typewriters engaged upon my memoirs which I dictate when I feel like it, steeped in the aroma of the most inexpensive cigar I can buy at the Rolling Stone Inn.

There is one typist in particular—but let that pass.

*Vir sapit qui pauca loquitur.*