

The Ghoul

By Evangeline Wilbour Blashfield

We were rather a gay party on the deck of the Professor's dahabeah that moonlight evening at Luxor, but the Captain's story sobered the levity that provoked it, and we broke up in a mood half-pensive, half constrained, that affected us all, each after his kind. This last naturally, since we were an extremely multifarious lot, thrown together for the moment by the chances of travel.

One of us was known by her immediate party as the Investigator, and the dinner and the brief conversation on deck afterward was sufficient to enable the rest of us to understand why. This quite charming young person was obviously the victim of a thirst for information which she slaked by accumulating disconnected data of all kinds. Her preference, however, seemed to be for the marvelous, and she further discriminated in favor of the uncanny.

Our host, the Professor, was a savant, pleasantly tinctured with worldliness, who spent his winters on the Nile; he entertained as easily as he read cursive Greek, and the dinner had been good. Among the rest were Herr Doktor Wissenkraft, a world-renowned reader of Demotic; Captain Egerton, and Doctor Herbert, surgeon of the Camel Corps; Achmed Effendi, an Arab, brought up in Lord Dudley's household in England and a good type of the Anglicized Oriental; Colonel Forester Pasha, K. C. B. (and more letters), Overlord of Upper Egypt, with *droit de justice basse et haute* over all the inhabitants thereof, and a number of other persons whom—including several ladies—it is needless to particularize.

The talk at dinner had been largely of the English occupation, and the Investigator was stronger on less complicated subjects. Accordingly, after suffering some prolongation of it during coffee, she turned with a little air of decision to her neighbor, Achmed, and inquired cosily—she began with generalities,

“Are you interested in the supernatural?”

“I might be if I knew anything about it,” he answered in the purest of British accents.

“Oh, don't you?” she lamented; “I'm so disappointed. I thought that I should find spirits — marids and ghins and ghouls—here. Don't tell me that they have disappeared like the lotos and the chibouque!” The Investigator's violet eyes expressed sorrowful surprise.

“We have ghost-stories like yours, but none that have much local color, I fear,” Achmed replied, politely, but not encouragingly.

The Investigator was not easily baffled.

“I am sure you must know quantities of weird legends,” she said. “Why, our sailors on the dahabeah have told us a lot of adventures with ghins. They were a good deal alike, though, or else the dragoman who translated them edited them as well. They were always going home or returning to the boat late at night, and the ghins appeared in the form of a camel or a buffalo; sometimes in that of a cat with fiery eyes like the one in the story of the Three Calendars, don't you remember?”

“I can't say that I do; awfully sorry though; it doesn't make any difference, does it?” rejoined Achmed, trying to be courteous and wary at once. Discussing Egyptian beliefs and ideas with portionless American girls had long since palled on him.

“Of course it does. You ought to know ‘The Arabian Nights’ by heart,” said the Investigator, reproachfully.

Achmed was not living up to her preconceived notion of what an Egyptian should be, and she was correspondingly severe with him.

Here Captain Egerton, whose mind moved leisurely, sauntered into the conversation.

“You were talking of ghouls,” he said slowly, “and askin’ if we’d ever seen one. I have. It was after Tosky in ’89. You remember?” he added, addressing Cecil Carew.

The aide-de-camp looked uneasy.

“It’s a long story—and hardly a dinner-table one,” he murmured to his next neighbor.

“A story, a real, true story about a ghoul! How delightful! We are all of us pining to hear it, are we not?” exclaimed the Investigator, fixing her shining eyes on the Captain’s impassive face, quite unconscious that her suggestion was received with but chastened delight by the Company.

“The Doctor knows it as well as I do,” said the Captain, shifting the responsibility.

The Doctor, obviously taciturn and hitherto silent, looked around the circle scrutinizingly, then, his glance resting on the Investigator, demurred.

“The moonlight is too fine to spoil with anything gruesome,” he said. “The scene round us is the setting for an idyl.”

Even to people densely hedged in by purely personal interests the rare beauty of the night, and the spell of the strange landscape, had appeared for a fugitive moment. The young moon, her horns turned eastward, a slender Isis-bark of silver, floated in a cloudless sky; in the still, dry air the great constellations flamed with unwonted fire to Northern eyes. Alien stars, Canopus, out-burning in his turn all Cleopatra’s lamps, swung low over their own shimmering images in the gently-flowing river. On the left bank, whence the air reached us sweetly burdened with envoys from the jasmines and mimosas of Luxor’s gardens, the three pyramidal peaks of the Arabian chain rose dimly-bright against a somberly lucent sky. The faintly-outlined western shore seemed transformed under the glamor of moonlight, to assume its true aspect, that of a mysterious and sacred realm, peopled by gods and the spirits of the blessed dead. And beneath the splendid calm of the ordered planets, and the tranquil caress of the quiet air, was always the pleasant sense of life and motion, in that smooth flood of moon-freighted water gliding silently below us.

The Investigator, in whom the pursuit of emotion via the garnering of facts had not dulled the capacity to feel emotion at first-hand, looked from river to sky, and from sky to mountains, with a quick, shuddering intake of the breath! Curiosity for the nonce was stilled, and she was content to enjoy merely; but Captain Egerton, whose imagination was not his strong point, and whose scruples had apparently been transitory, persisted. If the Doctor was reluctant he would tell us the story himself.

“We—it was just after Tosky,” he began.

“What was Tosky?” queried the Investigator, as if with pencil poised for recording a new fact.

“It was—ur—ur—Well, you see,” explained the Captain, “in the summer of ’89, Waad en Negumi, one of the Mahdi’s ablest generals, invaded Egypt.”

“Was he not the general who defeated Hicks?” interjected the Professor, who, though a loyal British subject, was not a jingo.

“The same,” returned Captain Egerton meekly. “He was an uncommonly clever man, and an awfully plucky beggar. Really, you know, to lead an army of five thousand soldiers, as many women, babies, and camp-followers—”

“And the wretched prisoners whom he drove before him out of their ruined villages,” added Achmed.

“With no commissariat, and only a few transport camels,” went on Carew, intrepidly, “a hundred miles across a waterless desert to fight a battle, was rather a mad project; but Negumi’s plan was to avoid Wady Halfa, where our troops were stationed, and to strike across the desert to a village called Buriban and give battle there. That was where he made a mistake. He expected to find an open country, and unarmed fellaheen. Instead he found half the garrison of Wady Halfa under Colonel Wodehouse marching between him and the river just ahead of his troops, destroying the date crops in the villages so the dervishes could not victual in them.”

“Practically starving them to death before fighting them, and incidentally starving the luckless, loyal villagers also,” exclaimed the Professor.

“Oh, did you really treat these poor peasants so?” questioned the Investigator anxiously.

“Why I Why! Those were my orders. God bless my soul! I’m the Queen’s soldier—”

“Baid by the Wiceroy, howefer,” mumbled the Herr Doktor.

“And my first duty is obedience to my commanding officer,” explained Captain Egerton, goaded to fluency by a sense of injustice.

“We did feel awful brutes, though,” admitted the Honorable Cecil. “Why, the first place where we ordered ’em to pull the green dates and burn ’em, the Sheik-el-Beled, who was an old man, came to Egerton’s tent and offered him two hundred pounds to spare the crop. ‘My people will die of hunger,’ he groaned, looking like one of those Old Testament prophets, Jehu or—”

“Jeremiah,” murmured the Professor, surprised by this sudden incursion into his own realm.

“What did you do?” queried the Investigator.

“Told him orders must be obeyed, and promised a steamer-load of rations for the lot when the battle was over. But he didn’t believe me. They never do believe us,” added the Captain, thoughtfully.

“Well, then,” he continued, “he refused, saying Allah forbade him to starve his people, and I had to use the koorbag. The old man couldn’t have stood it, but he had a son of five-and-thirty, and we laid on till the old man gave the order to cut down the dates. In the next village they had heard of our proceedin’s, so we had no trouble, but in the next the sheik was childless and we had to burn the water-wheels before the beggars would give in. Now while half our flyin’ column was cuttin’ off Negumi’s supplies, the other half, marchin’ between him and the Nile, was keepin’ away from water; so his army soon began meltin’ away, the women and children first, of course. Then they killed the transport animals for food, and naturally moved more slowly, and every day we potted half a dozen dervishes who ran onto our guns to get to the Nile and drink. They stood lots of killin’. I’ve seen ’em with their skins full of holes, crawl to the river and die in it, lappin’ up the bloody water. Well, we wandered on up the river until the Sirdar—”

“That’s Anglo-Arabic for General Grenfell,” explained the Professor.

“Marched down from the north, joined us at Tosky, and forced Negumi to give battle.”

“Who was nearly deat from hungar alreaty,” added the Herr Doktor.

“I know,” rejoined the Captain, “but the dervishes were game; they were skeletons, but they fought like devils.”

“It never seemed like a battle to me, though,” objected Cecil Carew; “more like a big row; like the grand chain in the Lancers when half the men don’t know the figure and turn the wrong way. I don’t remember much about it except that I kept thinking when it was over I should get something to drink.”

“Without being shot first,” suggested the Professor grimly.

"I was dead-beat before the battle began," added the Captain. "My black men were so hot to fight that I had to keep ridin' up and down the lines crackin' 'em over the head to keep 'em quiet until we got our order to charge. Well, anyhow," the Captain pulled up suddenly, "all this has nothing to do with the story you want. When it was over we were saddled with a lot of prisoners. The dervishes we shot—not *officially*, don'tcherknow. What could we do with 'em? We had no rations for 'em, and it was kinder than lettin' 'em starve—and some of 'em escaped—"

"The old one you hid in your tent, for instance, whom you've taken care of ever since," said Carew.

"That's because I can't get rid of him," returned the man of war, with a fine blush at being discovered by the company in the very act of committing mercy. "We divided the women prisoners among our black troops. Among the young women was one tall girl with big eyes, who was by way of bein' good-lookin', though she was dark—"

"*'Sed Formosa,*" quoted the Professor; but nobody understood him save the Herr Doktor, who also knew his "Wulgate."

"The other women were makin' an awful row, wailin' and puttin' sand in their hair, when we took 'em into camp, but this one was quite quiet—dazed, or dull, it seemed to me."

"Why, man, she was a Barbarian queen among those cattle," protested Carew, in whom the makings of an æsthete occasionally appeared. "Who knows? She may have been a gentlewoman in her own country, wherever it was. She had delicate hands that had never worked. Neither had she, poor wretch, and naturally enough her masters—"

"Her what! " gasped the Investigator.

"Her—ur—ur—husbands, then if you like that better."

"I don't know that I do. Please explain."

Carew colored like a debutante, and twisted his baby mustache.

"You see it's like this, Miss Ising. The black trooper is a marrying man. He won't fight without his *hareemat*. In camp we bar more than one wife at a time, but we can't prevent him from changing that one rather often. There used to be a kind of informal matrimonial exchange on Fridays, which shocked the missionaries, and they stirred up the moralists at home; so we got a *mo'alem* from Cairo, whom we called a native chaplain for our niggahs, and he said a prayer over them whenever they *chassez-croissez-ed* and changed partners. It wasn't an ideal arrangement, and wouldn't satisfy the Dissenting Liberals in Birmingham, but it was the best we could do."

After this apology had been received in bewildered silence by the Investigator, and with covert grins by the men,—more amused than edified by this worthy effort to drape raw savagery with the mantle of British propriety—the narrative finally fell into the Captain's hands.

It appeared that Yasmin, which was the tall woman's sweet name, made trouble at once in half-a-dozen families. The heads of several husbands and fathers already abundantly provided with domestic ties were immediately turned by her mere appearance, and after vainly trying to adjust rival claims, the aspirants were persuaded to draw lots for her, and a trooper of the Camel Corps won.

In less than a week she was on the market again, her value much decreased by the declaration of her late possessor that she had a devil in her; that she frightened him with her eyes—and then, when she had quite bewitched him, stole out of his tent at night and remained away until morning, doubtless on some gruesome business. A braver or less credulous gentleman succeeded him, and still more promptly divorced her, and then another, and another. All had fallen under

the same benumbing spell; all had been rendered nerveless, motionless, by the weird force that drew a man's soul out of its sheath, and fettered it at will. All told the same story of being turned to stone under her steady look; of lying helpless when she glided from the tent, and of seeing her return at dawn, weary, haggard, with torn hands, and dust-covered head.

The Doctor, who, though he was a deft and experienced surgeon, was suspected of being a member of the Society for Psychical Research, was deeply interested in her. She made him believe in the old tales of possession, he said, and explained a lot of curious phenomena. But he couldn't explain her satisfactorily to the other wives in the camp, who were jealous of her to a woman, and wild with fear of her as well. There were horrible whispers about her crawling through their quarters. She was not only a sorceress, she was a vampire—a ghoul. She had been seen in the moonlight by a terrified sentry slinking like a jackal out of camp, and running toward the battlefield where the unburied dead still lay. She had returned with bloody hands the next morning.

Rumor became so busy with her, and in such hideous fashion, that the English officers were obliged to give her a tent to herself and a white man to guard it. As for the native officers, they were convinced that she was a ghoul, and clutched their *hegabs* when they passed her tent. They even asked for a court-martial to try this strange case, which the troopers would have settled more simply by throwing her into the Nile, attached to something weighty. Similar suggestions soon became ominously numerous, and the apparently childish affair rapidly assumed a sinister aspect.

It was against all precedent to interfere with the *hareemat*. The native women were outside or beneath military discipline, or indeed discipline of any sort save of the domestic variety. The code of Islam, scrupulously respected by the English Protectorate, treated the human female as an irresponsible being. The men of her family answered for her good behavior, and the law left in their hands the punishment of her misdeeds and even of her fl crimes. The well-bred man affected ignorance of a woman's existence. Still, English gentlemen could not allow this wretched being to be torn to pieces by a pack of she-wolves who would not long be content merely to snarl and growl at her, for only a firm belief in her maleficent powers protected her from some horrible form of death. Captain Egerton and Mahmoud Bey, the most skeptical of Egyptian officers, who, in spite of his Anglo-French education, and a strong desire for "modernness" in ideas as well as in speech, still believes in the evil eye and in possession, had had an anxious consultation one night on this apparently puerile yet fundamentally serious question. The "poison wind" had been blowing all day, laden with sand and hot as a blast from a kiln. It had unstrung their nerves and set them jangling like loose harp-strings; it had filled them with a feverish restlessness and sent curious electrical thrills shooting through their veins. The force of the wind had slackened at sunset, but there were still fitful wafts of it, and one of them entered the officers' presence unceremoniously with Private Parkins when he interrupted their conference.

Private Parkins was Yasmin's guard, a comely, flaxen-haired English boy. On this special night something more potent than the heat had wiped the wholesome, brick-dusty color off his cheeks, which wore a wan gray look, and excitement was tugging hard at the reins of discipline when he saluted and answered Captain Egerton's interrogative, "Well?"

"She's just gone toward Tosky—with a shovel which she stole from Private Cooper," panted Parkins. "Directly she left camp I came to you, as was your orders—"

"How did she pass the sentry?" questioned the Captain curtly.

Parkins grinned in spite of his evident apprehension.

“She looked at ’im ’ard, and ’e almost dropped ’is gun and ran ’owlin’.”

“When did she start?”

“Five minutes ago,” replied Parkins, whose damp uniform and thumping heart testified to the time he had made in bringing his information.

“Take that little lantern with you—no, unlighted—and hand me that flask yonder,” said the Captain, examining his revolver.

“You are surely not going to follow her?” exclaimed Mahmoud Bey in alarm.

“I surely am,” returned Captain Egerton shortly.

Mahmoud laid a shapely detaining hand on the other’s arm.

“Don’t! Let it alone. This is something you can’t understand. You people know lots of things, but you don’t know it all, you know. There are strange powers which you haven’t seen at work. It’s really unintelligent to disbelieve in them, because you haven’t studied them and can’t explain them. Isn’t it, Doctor?”

“Quite right, Mahmoud Bey. I am of your opinion; there are many curious phenomena which we have not had time to investigate yet. But, of course, it is our duty to do so, when they come our way; this,, for instance, is a heaven-sent occasion and I am going, too—if I may join the excursion.”

Mahmoud shrugged his shoulders, and touched the silver *hegeb* under his tunic.

“You’re crazy, both of you. Is it worth the risk of being struck rigid and speechless among those wolves and jackals, or worse, finding yourselves, or what will be left of you, on four paws, gnawing carrion under a hyena’s hide?”

“Oh, I say!” exclaimed the Captain. “Come on.”

And the Englishmen hurried off, followed by the still expostulating Mahmoud.

“We’ll never come up with her at this rate,” growled the Captain.

“I think you will, Captain, ’er feet is that bad—all cut and swollen—as you can easy overtake ’er,” he was respectfully assured by the perspiring Parkins.

As they bustled through the camp, Mahmoud made one last appeal “to their reason,” as he expressed it, and then sadly left them to run upon their doom.

The awesome predictions of this tarbooshed Cassandra rudely shook the courage of the youthful Parkins, who nevertheless plodded doggedly on in Captain Egerton’s footsteps, his round boyish face stiffened with the resolve to “see it through” at any cost. Naturally brave, he had been infected with the insidious miasma of panic which had lain a malarial mist over the camp for many days. Fear is contagious, and even the Captain’s nerves began to respond to those of his subordinate.

“I say, Doctor, perhaps you’d better go back,” he suggested, as they began to wade through the deep, hot sand of the desert, silken and tawny as the coats of the wild creatures who made it their home.

“Go back? What for? To nurse Mahmoud? He doesn’t need me or valerian yet. Don’t you remember that I have promised *The Scalpel* two articles, one on the elephantiasis, and the other on lycanthropy? I haven’t had any luck with the first— I have only seen two cases since I came here; and now’s my chance for the other thing, perhaps, or I may possibly be able to work their business into something else. There’s a great demand for the sensational scientific article, you know. Besides, why the devil should I go back?”

“Because they need you there more than they do me. Suppose something should happen, something *real*, of course? This girl may go out to meet some of the chaps who escaped—why shouldn’t there by some of them hangin’ about? If we are only three, and it might—”

Be safer if there were only two? You're a good fellow, Egerton, but you're no logician. Go back if you like, but I won't. By Jove! There she is!"

Through a haze of sand tossed high by the restless wind, a tall figure wavered into sight, her ample draperies blown backward like huge dusky pinions.

"There's your vampire; she does look like a big bat—one of those bloodsuckers from South America. She's trailing the wing, too—Why, she's down."

"'Er feet are that cut she can 'ardly walk," Parkins explained again.

"She's only a third-class witch, then, or she may have 'put down' her broomstick since the war. Perhaps she stole the shovel for a mount and her cantrips don't work on it. She's up now."

"And she'll hear us unless we keep quiet," suggested Egerton.

"Not she," contradicted the Doctor, "with this blast in her face carrying every sound down wind." The figure limped on with bent head, collapsing every now and then in a mass of fallen draperies on the sand, and rising again to continue its march. Now and then it turned and glanced backward, but the three sportsmen had stalked creatures far more quick-eyed and alert than this halting, half-blinded quarry, and before the clinging folds of the heavy veil had been swept aside, and she was peering anxiously through the gloom, they were flat on the sand or behind some sheltering hummock. So they waded on, dripping, thirsting, gasping; the scorching breath of the desert burning the moisture from their skins, and plastering them with fine dust, until they looked like the dun specters of the storm, brothers of the ghins the Arabs see riding wan clouds of sand.

After an hour of heavy walking, the wind which, though it seared the throat and crisped the lips, was pure and sweet as only the virgin air of the desert can be, reached them fouled with an indescribable fetor, the scent of the sepulcher.

The men looked at each other in silence and quickened their steps, for the fluttering wraith before them seemed to inhale life fresh from this breath of the Pit, and pressed onward with renewed strength. A kind of vague horror of it oppressed its pursuers. Private Parkins remembered how Yasmin had merely tasted the rations he had brought her, picking at the rice just like Ameeneh, the ghoul-bride in "The Arabian Nights," a memory of his not-remote boyhood; the Captain recalled the compelling, magnetic gaze of those deep-set eyes, which alone seemed alive in her impassive face; and the Doctor, being a wide reader, and possessing some imagination was oppressed by various hideous suggestions. The study of nervous disorders has explained and justified certain ancient beliefs, and a dozen gruesome images flitted through the Doctor's brain as he tramped steadily on.

By this time the outskirts of the battlefield had been reached, and delicate treading was required to avoid the stragglers who lay starkly, turning grinning, eyeless faces to the dim moon, blood-red, behind dun haze. Before long the Englishmen became conscious of the living among the dead; of black shadows that slunk away before them, and once Egerton stopped and examined the foot-prints that crossed and recrossed their path.

"Wolf or perhaps hyena," he said, half to himself; and then, as if in response to his conjecture, an unearthly sound floated toward them on the wing of the tainted wind—a sound which made their hearts plunge like panic-stricken horses—a laugh, strident, inhuman, without mirth or significance, the cry of the ghoul. In the meantime the object of pursuit had made her way to the heart of the field of slaughter. A field it seemed, indeed, over which the great reaper had passed, mowing his plenteous harvest wantonly, for though here the dead lay in rows like ordered sheaves, there they had fallen in great whorls and broken circles, and again were piled in formless heaps as though the gleaners had garnered them in a capricious and wasteful fashion. It was a sight which should be spared all save the makers of war, and yet the kindly desert had

cloaked its ghastliness. It had brought to its sons three most ancient and cunning *paraschites*, the wind, the sun, the sand, to purify and embalm the dishonored dead, and they had done their task well; but the winged wardens of the air, the earth-guardians, the feathered and furred sanitary commissioners of the wilderness, had been at work too, with such result that those who unflinching had forced the living, quailed before the dead.

Yasmin walked on, straight as a horned bird, to an irregular stack of corpses; here she paused, bound back her veil, turned up her fluttering sleeves, and to the sick horror of those who, crouching low on the sand, watched her, began to throw the piled-up dead aside until she had uncovered the body of a tall dervish. At this moment the moon dropped her veil and glared red and sullen down on the battlefield. In the weird, unreal light, the three spectators saw the dead man lifted, after many efforts, out of the grisly heap, and dragged to a clear space of sand.

Though she had trailed him awkwardly and rather roughly over the ground, Yasmin now gathered her charge into her arms, and sinking softly down, laid the withered head gently on her shoulder. Then, with a beautiful wide gesture of protection and tenderness, which seemed to enfold the beloved burden like a great wing, she swept her long veil round her dead, and rocked softly to and fro for many moments. Not a cry or a groan escaped her until she bent her head and began to kiss the Thing that lay on her breast, with shuddering sighs and tearless sobs and foolish, fond words: "O my Strong One! O my Master! My Camel! My Beloved!" And soon, the rising tide of emotion overwhelming speech, she fell to unspoken endearments; low moans and wordless murmurs, the inarticulate language of passion.

There is something so impressive in the direct manifestation of an overmastering feeling that the three men, flat on the sand as they were, instinctively uncovered their heads. Private Parkins, sadly be-juggled by camp-gossip, turned bewildered blue eyes on his superior officers. The Doctor felt it necessary to explain the obvious.

"She's been coming here night after night to look for him, and when she found him she hid him from the crows and the jackals under those others. She's come now to bury him—and we are going to help her."

"Hush!" warned Captain Egerton, "she's quiet again." For Yasmin had laid the dead man's head on her knees, and with raised arms and uplifted face sat motionless, evoking blurred memories of a Mater Dolorosa darkly seen behind flaming altar-tapers, or of those mourning Egyptian goddesses who glance into vision under the glare of the tourist's torches in the dusky depths of some temple shrine, and to whom the Aryan Madonna with her sorrows is but a newcomer. One moment Yasmin sat, as if in dumb appeal to an unresponsive heaven, before she sent her voice quivering down the wind in that lamentation for the dead which once heard remains in the memory. It is as if the intolerable anguish of parting had acquired utterance in the long-drawn, high-pitched, poignant tremolo, which assaults the nerves even when it does not strike at the heart; as if the desolation of all bereavements had been pressed down and distilled into one bitterest essence; as if grief for one irremediable human ill had found tongue. It is the oldest as well as the saddest of threnodies. It was ancient when the First Born were smitten; venerable when Isis and Nephthys shrilled it over the murdered Osiris; and for all we know, it echoed through the water-ways of the lacustrine towns, and reverberated in the dark caverns that were nightly barricaded against the cave-tiger.

The long, plaintive cry swelled, wavered, sank, ending abruptly in a deep note, and the mourner, rising, unfastened her veil, laid it carefully over the dead, and began to dig his grave.

"It's our cue now," whispered the Doctor.

They were close upon Yasmin before she perceived them. Quick as light she straightened her bent back, and stood on the defensive like some fierce mother-beast of the desert, her tall figure dilating, and her jewel-like eyes, which had encroached sadly on her narrowed face, seeming to emit light.

The Doctor, whose acquaintance with the vernacular was less limited than that of his companions, assumed the office of spokesman.

“O Lady,” he began, touching breast, brow, and mouth in Oriental salutation, “we come to bury your Lord. A strong man, and a great Captain deserves a better grave than a woman’s hands can make.”

The wildness of her look softened instantly; veiling her face with the wefts of her loosened hair, she resigned the shovel to the Doctor with a regal gesture. The three men worked, and relieved each other at intervals, until a grave deep enough to baffle the paw of jackal or hyena was dug; then they moved away and left Yasmin alone for a little space with what was once her lover; and when they returned she helped them, dry-eyed and firm-lipped, to push the sand into the pit. After it was piled up, she threw herself upon it and lay there quietly, save for the long shudders which shook her from head to foot, until the Doctor bade her return to camp with him, when she rose and followed the Englishmen like an obedient child, carefully covering her face with the shrouds of her heavy hair, and keeping a certain distance, prescribed by Moslem etiquette, from her companions.

The dauntless spirit that had cowed her would-be masters, that had steeled her against the horrors of her quest, and those phantom-terrors with which the African imagination peoples darkness and solitude, had departed. Half an hour before, she had been a highly-individualized being, a valiant fellow creature with a desire and a will, enfranchised from the bondage of her sex by her high purpose; now she had become again an Oriental and a woman, a thing mysterious and remote. The veil which suffering had swept aside had fallen, more impenetrable than before. The Chasm between the East and the West had opened once more. The Doctor’s questions she answered half-shyly, half-sullenly, in monosyllables; she either could not or would not explain the mystery of her hypnotic power; the sorceress had been cast out of her. At the door of her tent she kissed the hands of her escort with the dignity of an empress bestowing an accolade, and it was with noble humility that she bade her English friends farewell.

The Captain stopped, and for a time no one broke the silence that followed.

“What became of Yasmin?” finally questioned the Investigator, turning her face, gravely sweet, toward the story-teller. “Did she die?”

“No.—Yes.—She was drowned in the Nile two days afterwards. There was a strong current, and the river was high; perhaps some of the other women pushed her in. We never knew. You can’t tell anything about native *hareemat*, and we don’t interfere with ’em.”