

# Sorcery Island

By Edward Lucas White

When I regained consciousness I was on my feet, standing erect, near enough to my burning aeroplane to feel the warmth radiated by the crackling flames with which every part of it was ablaze; far enough from it to be, despite the strong breeze, much more aware of the fierce heat of the late forenoon sunrays beating down on me from almost overhead out of the cloudless sky. My shadow, much shorter than I, was sharply outlined before me on the intensely white sand of the beach; which dazzling expanse, but a few paces to my right, ended abruptly in an almost straight line, at a little bank of about eight inches of exposed blackish loam, beyond which was dense tropical vegetation gleaming in the brilliant sunshine. Not much farther away on my left were great patches, almost heaps, fathoms long, yards wide and one or even two or three feet high, of unwholesome looking grayish white slimy foam, like persistent dirty soap-bubbles, strung along the margin of the sparkling dry sand, between it and the swishes of hissing froth that lashed lazily up from the sluggish breakers in which ended the long, broad-backed, sleepy swells of the endlessly recurrent ocean surges. As there was no cloud in the dark blue firmament, so there was no sail, no funnel-smoke in sight on the deep blue sea. Overhead, against the intense blue sky, whirled uncountable flocks of garishly pink flamingoes, some higher, some lower, crossing and recrossing each other, grotesque, flashing, and amazing in their myriads.

To my scrutinizing gaze, as to my first glance, it was manifest that there was no indication of wreckage, breakage or injury to any part of my aeroplane visible through the flames now fast consuming it. No bone of me was broken, no ligament strained. I had not a bruise on me, not a scratch. I did not feel shaken or jarred, my garments were untorn and not even rumpled or mussed. I conjectured at once, what is my settled opinion after long reflection, that I, in my stupor or trance or daze or whatever it was, had made some sort of a landing, had unstrapped myself, had clambered out of the fuselage, had staggered away from it, and had fainted; and that, while I was unconscious, some one had set fire to my aeroplane.

As I stood there on the beach I was flogging my memory to make it bridge over my interval of unconsciousness and I recollected vividly what had preceded my lapse and every detail of my sensations. I had been flying my aeroplane between the wide blue sky, unvaried by any cloud, and the wide blue sea, unbroken by any sign of sail, steamer or island. Then I descried a difference of appearance at one point of the horizon forward and on my right and steered towards it. Soon I made sure of a low island ahead of me.

Up to that instant I had never, in all my life, had anything resembling a delusion or even any thoughts that could be called queer. But, just as I made certain that I was approaching an island, there popped into my head, for no assignable reason, the recollection of the flock of white geese on my grandmother's farm and of how I, when seven years old or so, or maybe only six or perhaps even younger, used to make a pet of an unusually large and most uncommonly docile and friendly white gander, used to fondle him, and, in particular, used to straddle him and fairly ride about on him, he flapping his wings and squawking.

While I was wondering what in the world had made me think of that gander, all of a sudden, as I neared the island and would soon be over it, I had an indubitable delusion. Instead of seeing before me and about me the familiar parts of my aeroplane, I seemed to see nothing but sky and sea and myself astraddle of an enormous white gander, longer than a canoe, and bigger than a

dray-horse; I seemed to see his immense, dazzlingly white wings, ten yards or more in spread, rhythmically beating the air on either side of me; I seemed to see, straight out in front of me, his long white neck, the flattened, rounded top of his big head, and the tip of his great yellow bill against the sky; what was more, instead of seeing my knees clad in khaki, my calves swathed in puttees and my feet in brown boots, I seemed to see my knees in blue corduroy knickerbockers, my legs in blue ribbed woolen stockings, against the white feathers of that gigantic dream-gander's back, and my feet sticking out on either side of him encased in low, square-toed shoes of black leather, of the cut one sees in pictures of Continental soldiers or of Benjamin Franklin as a lad, their big silver buckles plain to me against the blueness of the ocean far below me.

After being swallowed up in this astounding hallucination, which I vividly recalled, I remembered nothing until I came to myself, standing on the beach by what was left of my blazing aeroplane.

While struggling to recollect what I could remember and trying to surmise what had happened during my unconsciousness, I had been surveying my surroundings. On one hand I saw only the limitless and unvaried ocean from which came the cool sea-breeze that fanned my left cheek and stirred my hair under the visor of my cap; on the other opened a wide, flat-floored valley, bounded by low hills, the highest, at the head of the valley, not over ninety feet above sea-level, crowned by a huge palatial building of pinkish stone, its two lofty stories topped by an ornate carved balustrade above which no roof showed, so that I inferred that the roof was flat. The hills shutting in my view on either side, lower and lower towards the sea, were rounded and covered with a dense growth of scrubby trees, not quite tall enough to be called forest. Close to the beach and hills, on each side of the valley, was what looked like a sort of model garden village. That on my right, as I faced inland, was of closely-set one-story cottages, bowered in flowering vines, under a grove of handsome, exotic-looking trees. The other, which I saw beyond the slackening flames above the embers of my aeroplane, was of roomy, broad-verandahed, two-story villas, generously spaced, beneath magnificent young shade-trees, mostly loaded with brilliant flowers.

As I was looking at the valley, the villages, the palace on the hill-top and from one to the other, with now and then a glance overhead at the hosts of wheeling flamingoes, I thought I had a second hallucination. I seemed to see, along a path through the riotous greenery, a human figure approaching me, but, when it drew near and I seemed to see it more clearly, I felt that it must be a figment of my imagination.

It was that of a tall, perfectly formed and gracefully moving young man. But, under the scorching rays of that caustic sunshine he was bare-headed and his shock of abundant, wavy and brilliantly yellow golden hair was bobbed off short below his ears like the hair of Italian page-boys in early Florentine and Venetian paintings. His eyes were very bright and a very light blue, his cheeks rosy, his bare neck pinkish. He was clad only in a tight-fitting stockinet garment of green silk, something like the patent underwear shown in advertising pictures. It looked very new, very silky and very green, and as unsuitable as possible for the climate, for its long, clinging sleeves reached to his wrists and the tight legs of it sheathed him to his ankles. His feet were encased in high laced shoes of a very bright, and apparently very soft, yellow leather, with (I was sure he was an hallucination) *every one of the five toes of each formed separately*.

Just as I was about to rub my eyes to banish this disconcerting apparition, I recognized him and saw him recognize me.

It was Pembroke!

His face, as he recognized me, did not express pleasure; what mine expressed, besides amazement, I could not conjecture. All in a flash my mind ran over what I knew of him and had

heard. We had first met as freshmen and had seen little of each other during our life as classmates. Pembroke, at college, had been noted as the handsomest student of his day; as the youngest student of his class; as surrounding himself with the most luxurious furnishings, the most beautiful and costly pictures, bronzes, porcelains and art objects ever known in the quarters of any student at our college; as very self-indulgent, yet so brilliantly gifted that he stood fifth or sixth in a large class with an unusual proportion of bright students; as daft about languages, music and birds, and, frequently descanting on the wickedness and folly of allowing wild bird-life to be all-but exterminated; as so capricious and erratic that most of his acquaintances thought him odd and his enemies said he was cracked.

I had not seen him since our class dispersed after its graduation and the attendant ceremonies and festivities. I had heard that, besides having a very rich father, he had inherited, on his twenty-first birthday, an income of over four hundred thousand dollars a year and a huge accumulation of ready cash; that he had at once interested himself in the creation of refuges for migratory, rare and picturesque birds; that his fantastic whimsicalities and eccentricities had intensified so as to cause a series of quarrels and a complete estrangement between himself and his father; that he had bought an island somewhere and had absorbed himself in the fostering of wild bird-life and in the companionship of very questionable associates.

He held out his hand and we shook hands.

“You don’t seem injured or hurt at all, Denbigh,” he said. “How did you manage to get out of that blazing thing alive, let alone without any sign of scratch or scorch?”

“I must have gotten out of it before it caught fire,” I replied. “I must have gone daffy or lost my wits as I drew over your island. I have no idea how I landed or why. The whole thing is a blank to me.”

“You are lucky,” he said, matter-of-factly, “to have landed at all. If your mind wandered, it is a miracle you did not smash on the coral rocks on the other side of the island or on one of the outlying keys, or fall into the ocean and drown.

“However, all’s well that ends well. Nothing can be salvaged from the wreckage of your conveyance, that is clear. What you need is a bracer, food, rest, a bath, sleep, fresh clothes and whatever else will soothe you. Come along. I’ll do all I can for you.”

I followed him past the remnants of my aeroplane, along the beach, to the group of villas. Close to them and to the beach was a sort of park or open garden, with fountains playing and carved marble seats set here and there along concrete walks between beds of flowers, shrubberies, and trim lawns, all canopied by astonishingly vigorous and well-grown ornamental trees.

As we approached the nearest villa I saw a family group on its veranda, obviously parents and children; also I heard some one whistling “Annie Laurie” so exquisitely as to evidence superlative artistry. As we passed the entrance to the villa I was amazed to recognize Radnor, another classmate. But, as he ran down the steps to greet me, I reflected that there was nothing really astonishing in a man as opulent as Pembroke having as dependable a physician as he could engage resident on his island nor anything unnatural in his choosing an acquaintance.

“Denbigh,” said Pembroke, “has dropped on us out of the wide blue sky. His aeroplane has been demolished, so he’ll sojourn with us a while.”

“You don’t seem to need me,” Radnor commented, conning me. “I see no blood and no indications of any broken bones. Can I patch you up, anywhere?”

“Not a bruise on me, as far as I know,” I replied.

“Then,” he laughed, “my prescription is two hours abed. Get undressed and horizontal and stay so till you really feel like getting up. And not more than one nip of Pembroke’s guest-brandy, either. Get flat with no unnecessary delay and sleep if you can.”

As we went on I noted that neither Radnor close by nor Mrs. Radnor on the veranda seemed aware of anything remarkable in Pembroke’s attire; they must be habituated by him to it or to similar or even more fantastic raiment.

We appeared to walk the length or width of the village, to the villa farthest from the beach. As we entered I had a glimpse on one hand of a parlor with an ample round center-table, inviting armchairs and walls lined with bookcases, through whose doors I espied some handsome bindings; on the other hand of a cozy dining-room with a polished table and beyond it a sideboard loaded with silverware and decorated porcelain.

By the newel-post of the broad, easy stair stood a paragon of a Chinese butler.

“Wu,” said Pembroke, “Mr. Denbigh is to occupy this house. Show him to his bedroom and call Fong. Mr. Denbigh needs him at once. And tell Fong that Mr. Denbigh has lost all his baggage and needs a change of clothes promptly.”

Without any sudden movement or appearance of haste, without a word, he turned and was out of the villa and away before I could speak.

I found myself domiciled in an abode delightfully situated, each outlook a charming picture, and inside admirably designed and lavishly provided with every imaginable comfort and luxury. The servants were all Chinese. One took care of the lawn, flowers and shrubberies, another swept the rooms; there was an unsurpassable Chinese cook, whom I never saw, and something I heard made me infer that he had a helper. I had at my beck a Chinese valet, a Chinese errand-boy and the deferential butler, who managed the house and anticipated my every want.

Except for frequent baths I think I slept most of the ensuing forty-eight hours. What I swallowed I took in bed. My second breakfast on the island I ate in the dainty, exquisitely appointed dining-room. After that I had energy enough to loll in one of the rattan lounging-chairs on the veranda, comfortably clad in neat, cool, well-cut, well-fitting garments chosen from the amazing abundance which Fong had ready for me, how so exactly suitable for me I could not conjecture. I had not been long on the veranda when Radnor strolled by, whistling “The Carnival of Venice.” He came up and joined me. Early in our chat he said:

“Probably you will be unable to refrain from asking questions; but I fancy that I shall feel at liberty to answer very few of your queries. Nearly everything I know about this island and about happenings on it I have learned not as a mere man or as a mere dweller here, but as Pembroke’s resident physician; it is all confidential. Most of what you learn here you’ll have to absorb by observation and inference. And I don’t mind telling you that the less you learn the better will Pembroke be pleased, and I likewise.”

He did tell me that the villas were tenanted chiefly by the members of Pembroke’s private orchestra and band, mostly Hungarians, Bohemians, Poles and Italians, with such other satellites as a sculptor, an architect, an engineer, a machinist, a head carpenter, a tailor and an accountant. The other village was populated entirely by Asiatics, Chinese, Japanese, Hindoos, and others; who performed all the labor of the island.

The next morning, about the same time, as I was similarly lounging on my veranda, Pembroke appeared, in the same bizarre attire, or lack of attire, in which I had previously seen him. He sat with me a half hour or so, asked courteously after my health and comfort and remarked:

“I am glad you feel contented: you’ll probably abide here some time.”

I said nothing. He glanced away from me, up under the edge of the veranda roof through the overarching boughs. My eyes followed his. I caught glints of pink from far-off flamingoes.

“Glorious birds!” Pembroke exclaimed, rapturously. “They nest on several of the low outlying keys, which, with the coral-reefs scattered between them, make it impossible for any craft bigger than a cat-boat to approach this side of the island. They have multiplied amazingly since I began shepherding them. I love them! I glory in them!”

At the word he left me, as abruptly and swiftly as after our first encounter.

Thereafter, for some weeks of what I can describe only as luxuriously comfortable and very pleasant captivity, I diverted myself by reading the very well-chosen and varied books of the villa’s fairly large library, by getting acquainted with the inhabitants of the other villas, and by roaming about the lower part of the valley. The very evening of our chat Radnor had invited me to dinner, for which Fong fitted me out irreproachably, and at which I found Mrs. Radnor charming and the other guests, Conway the architect, and his wife and sister, very agreeable companions. After that I was a guest at dinner at one or another of the villas each evening, so that I lunched and breakfasted alone at my abode, but never dined there.

Once only I inspected the other village and found its neatness and the apparent contentment of its inhabitants, especially the women and children, very charming. But I seemed to divine that they felt the presence of a European or American as an intrusion:

I avoided the village thereafter.

Some of the men of that village tended the trees, shrubberies, vines and gardens of the valley, and kept it a paradise, luxuriant with every sort of fruit and vegetable which could be grown in that soil and climate.

I saw nothing more of Pembroke and found that I could not approach his palace on the hill-top, for there was an extremely adequate steel fence of tall L-irons, sharp at the top, across the valley and down to the beach beyond either village, which barrier was patrolled by heavily-built, muscular guards, seemingly Scotch and not visibly armed, who respectfully intimated that no one passed any of its gates, or along either beach, without Mr. Pembroke’s express permit. Very seldom did I so much as catch a glimpse of Pembroke on the terraces of his palace, but I did see on them knots, even be vies, of women whose outlines, even at that distance, suggested that they were young and personable, certainly that they were gayly clad in bright-colored silks. Near or with them I saw no man, excepting Asiatic servitors, and Pembroke himself, who powerfully suggested an oriental despot among his sultanas.

By the inadvertent utterance of some one, I forget whom, I learned that the guards had a cantonment or barrack on the other side of the island.

I enjoyed rambling about the valley, as far as I was permitted, for both the variety and the beauty of its products were amazing.

Still more amazing to me was the number of ever-flowing ornamental fountains. The Bahamas are proverbially hampered by scanty water supply. But here I found, apparently, a superabundance of clear, pure, drinkable water. There was a fountain near the village, where a seated bronze figure, seemingly of some Asiatic god or saint unknown to me, held in each hand a great serpent grasped by its throat, and from the open mouth of each snake poured a spout of water into the basin before the statue. There were other fountains, each with a figure or group of figures of bronze, in the formal garden by the village of villas. And beyond it, set against the scooped-out flank of one of the range of enclosing hills, was a huge concrete edifice of basins and outstanding groups of statuary and statues and groups in niches, more or less reminiscent of the Fountain of Trevi. I was dumbfounded at the flow of water from this extravagantly ornate

and overloaded structure. There were many jets squirting so as to cross each other in the air, even to interlace, as it were. But midway of the whole construction, behind the middle basin, was a sort of grotto with, centrally, an open entrance like a low doorway or manhole, on either side of which were two larger apertures like low latticed windows, filled in with elaborately patterned bronze gratings, through the lower part of which flowed two streams of water as copious as brooks, which cascaded into the main basin.

Beyond this rococco fountain was a plot of ground enclosed by a hedge, serving as garden for a tiny cottage of one low story. In it lived an old Welsh woman, spoken of by the inhabitants of the village as "Mother Bevan." She always wore the hideous Welsh national costume and hobbled about leaning on a stout malacca walking-stick with an ivory cross-head tipped with gold bosses. She cared for and delighted in a numerous flock of snow-white geese which somehow seemed thriving in this, one would suppose, for them far too tropical climate. Among them was a large and very handsome gander, which reminded me of my childhood's pet. The flock spent much of its time swimming and splashing in the basins of the enormous grotto-fountain.

When I asked Radnor about the abundance of water and its apparent waste, he said:

"No mystery there nor any secrets. Pembroke could spend anything he pleased on wildcat artesian drilling and had the perverse luck to strike a generous flow just as his drillers were about to tell him that no humanly constructed implements could drill any deeper. It's no spouting well, though, and a less opulent proprietor than Pembroke could not afford to pump it as he does. The power-station is on the other side of the island, near the harbor. It uses oil fuel of some kind. There is never any stint of water for any use and the surplus is made to do ornamental duty, as you see."

I was interested in the old Welsh woman and in her tiny cottage, so oddly discordant with the Italianate concrete fountain near it and the spacious villas not far off. Except the Asiatics of the village and the barrier-guards I had found affable every dweller on the island; most of them sociable. I accosted the grotesque old crone, as she leaned over her gate and discovered in her the unexpected peculiarity that all her answers were in rhyming lines, rather cleverly versified, which she uttered, indeed, slowly, in a measured voice, but without the slightest symptom of hesitation. Her demeanor was distinctly forbidding and her words by no means conciliatory. I recall only one of her doggerels, which ended our first interview:

"Man fallen out of the sky.

"God never intended us to fly.

"It's impious to ascend so high.

"'Twas wicked of you ever to try.

"No lover of reprobates am I."

Except for this queer old creature I encountered no unfriendly word or look from any of my neighbors. I enjoyed the dinners to which I was invited and liked my fellow-guests at them; indeed I disliked no one with whom I talked; but, on the other hand, I was attracted to no one, and, while I felt entirely welcome wherever I was invited and altogether at my ease, and pleased to be invited again later, at no household did I feel free to drop in at odd times for casual chat. I found many congenial fellow-diners, but no one increasingly congenial, no one who impressed me as likely to be glad to have me call uninvited.

Therefore, as I always loved the open air, as I somehow felt lonely on my own veranda and nowhere intimate enough to lounge on any other, I took to spending many hours of the mornings, before the heat of the midday grew intense, out in the shade of the little park, to which I was

attracted by many of its charming features, especially by the pink masses of flowering bougainvillea here and there through it. I always carried a book, sometimes I read, oftener I merely gazed about at the enchanting vistas, overhead at the uncountable flamingoes, or between the trees out to seaward at the dazzling white heaps of billowy cumulus clouds, like titanic snow-clad mountains, bulging and growing on the towering thunder-heads forming against the vivid blue sky out over the ocean.

I think it was on my second morning in the park that I caught a glimpse of Mother Bevan crossing a path at some distance. Later I caught other glimpses of her crossing other paths. Each morning I caught similar glimpses of her. On the fifth or sixth morning I suddenly became conscious of an inward impression that she was, again and again, making the circuit of the park, circling about me as it were, like a witch weaving a spell about an intended victim.

Next morning I affected an absorption in my book and kept an alert, and I was certain, an imperceptible watch in all directions. I made sure that Mother Bevan was indeed perambulating the outer portions of the park, stumping along, leaning heavily on her cross-headed cane, and I made sure also that after she had completed one circuit about me she kept on her way and completed another and another.

I was curious, puzzled, incensed; derisive of myself for so much as entertaining the idea of any one, in 1921, attempting witchcraft; concerned for fear that my wits were addled; and, while unable to rid myself of the notion, yet completely skeptical of any effect on me and unconscious of any.

But, the very next day, seated on the same marble bench, by the same fountain, among the same pink masses of bougainvillea in flower, I was aware not only of Mother Bevan circumambulating the outskirts of the park, but also of her numerous flock of noisy, self-important, white geese waddling about, not far from me, and indubitably walking round and round me in ever lessening circles, the big gander always nearest me. At first I felt incredulous, then silly, then resentful. And, as the gander, now and then honking, circled about me for the fifth or sixth time, I became conscious of an inner impulse, of an all but overmastering inner impulse, to seek out Pembroke and to tell him that I was willing to do anything he wanted me to do; to pledge myself to do anything he wanted me to do.

I took alarm. I felt, shamefacedly, but vividly, that I was being made the subject of some sort of attempted necromancy. All of a sudden I found myself aflame with resentment, with hatred of that gander. I leapt to my feet, I hurled my book at him, I ran after him, I threw at him my bamboo walking stick, barely missing him. I retrieved the walking-stick and pursued the retreating bird, and threw the cane at him a second time, almost hitting him.

The geese half waddled, half flew towards the beetling atrocities of the ornate rococo hill-side fountain; I followed, still infuriated. There was, along the walk before the fountain, an edging of lumps of coral rock defining the border of the flower-beds. I picked up an armful of the smaller pieces of angular coral rock, chased the geese into the big main basin of the fountain and pelted that gander with jagged chunks of coral. He fled through the central manhole into the grotto and hissed at me through one of the gratings, behind which he was safe from my missiles.

Suddenly overwhelmed by a revulsion of shame and a tendency to laugh at myself, I beat a retreat to my veranda. There I sat, pondering my situation and my experiences.

I recalled that, at every dinner to which I had been invited, there had been, practically, but two subjects of conversation: the boredom of life on tropical islands in general and on Pembroke island in particular; and the worth, the fine qualities, the charm, the perfection of Pembroke himself.

I watched a chance to find Radnor at leisure, to waylay him, to entice him to my veranda. When the atmosphere of our talk seemed auspicious, I said:

“See here, Radnor! I know you said you meant to elude any queries I might put to you, but there is one question you’ll have to answer, somehow. Why are all these people here?”

“That is easy,” Radnor laughed. “I have no objection to answering that question. They are here because Pembroke wants them here.”

“I didn’t phrase my question well,” I said, “but you know what I mean. No one I have met really likes being here. Why do they stay?”

“That’s easy, too,” Radnor smiled. “Almost anyone will stay almost anywhere if lodged comfortably and paid enough. Pembroke provides his hirelings with an overplus of luxuries and is more than liberal in payment.”

“That does not explain what intrigues me,” I pursued. “I haven’t yet hit on the right words to express my idea. But you really understand me, I think, though you pretend you don’t. All the inhabitants of these villas are not merely uneasy, they are consciously homesick, acutely homesick, homesick to a degree which no luxurious surroundings, no prospective savings could alleviate. They are pining for home. What keeps them here?”

“Put it down,” said Radnor, weightily, “to the unescapable charm of the island. That keeps them here.”

“Did you say witchery or enchantment?” I queried, meaningly.

Radnor was emphatic.

“I said charm!” he uttered. “Let it go at that.”

“I am not in the least inclined,” I retorted, “to let it go at that. I take it that this is no joke, certainly not anything to be dismissed by a clever play on words. I insist on knowing what makes all these people stay here. They all declare, at every opportunity, that they are dying of ennui, that the climate is uncongenial, that they long for temperate skies, for northern vegetation, for frosty nights. What keeps them here?”

“I tell you,” said Radnor, “that, like me, most human beings will do anything, anything lawful and reasonable, if paid high enough.”

“The rest aren’t like you,” I asserted. “You and Mrs. Radnor impress me as free agents, doing, for a consideration, what you have been asked to do, and what you both, after weighing the pros and cons, have agreed to do. All the others, Europeans, Americans and Asiatics, except Mother Bevan, appear like beings hypnotized and moving in a trance, mere living automatons, without any will of their own, actuated solely by Pembroke’s will; as much so as if they were mechanical dolls. They impress me as being mesmerized or bewitched. I seriously vow that I believe they have been subjected to some supernatural or magical influence. They are as totally dominated by Pembroke as if they were the ends of his fingers.”

Radnor looked startled.

“It will do no good,” I cried, “to contradict me or to deny it.”

“I believe you,” Radnor said, as if thinking out loud. He went on:

“You are right. Except Mother Bevan and me and Lucille every human being on this island is completely under Pembroke’s influence, gained largely through the help of Mother Bevan.”

“Why not you and your wife?” I queried.

“Lucille, because of me,” he replied. “Pembroke found out, by trying Melville here and Kennard, that, after being put under his influence, while retaining surgical skill, a physician loses all ability to diagnose and prescribe. He had to ship Kennard and Melville back home, and pension them till their faculties recovered their tone.”

I looked him straight in the eyes. He forestalled my impending outburst by saying:

“As far as I can discern, Pembroke’s influence over his retainers does them no harm, physical or mental. Kennard and Melville have as large incomes and as many patients and are as successful and prosperous, as popular and prominent among their fellow-physicians as if they had never sojourned here. Except in their enthusiasm for and admiration of Pembroke every human being on this island appears to me as healthy as if not under any influence of any kind.”

“Even so,” I blurted out, “you ought not to abet any such deviltries.”

“I don’t admit,” said Radnor, hotly, “that any deviltries exist on this island or that there is any approach to devilry in what you have partly divined. Also I abet nothing, as I ought, but, as I also ought, I conceive that I am under obligations not to thwart Pembroke in any way. I am the island’s resident physician and his personal physician; I am here to treat injuries, cure maladies, relieve pain, and do all I can to keep healthy every dweller on this island. I live up to my conception of my duty. Don’t attempt to preach at me.

“I am impatient,” I said, “at my enforced stay here, and revolted at the idea of succumbing to Pembroke’s influence.”

Radnor laughed.

“You are,” he said, “the only human being who has reached the island, since Pembroke bought it, uninvited. You’ll get away by and by. And you are most unlikely to be affected by anything he or Mother Bevan may have in their power to do. Neither Kennard nor Melville ever suspected anything, or grew suspicious. You alone have half seen through the situation here. You are Mother Bevan’s most refractory subject, so far. Have no fear.”

He went off, whistling Strauss’ Blue Danube Waltz.

I had frequent and recurrent fears, but I dissembled them. I think, among all the terrors which haunted me during the remainder of my sojourn on the island, that I came nearest to panic and horror within an hour after Radnor had left me. Hardly was he gone when Pembroke, arrayed precisely as before and reminding me of a stage-frog in a goblin pantomime, sauntered up and seated himself by me.

I sweated with tremors of dismay, I was ready to despair, when I found myself, however I tried, unable to utter a word to him concerning the gander, Mother Bevan, or my suspicions; unable even to allude to the subject in any way, although he asked me bluntly:

“Have you anything to complain of?”

“Only that I am here,” I replied.

“I had nothing to do with your coming here,” he retorted. ‘You came uninvited, of your own accord, or by accident. I trust I have been a courteous host, but I have not tried to pretend that you are welcome. I am endeavoring to arrange that your departure shall not entail upon me any inconvenience or any danger of disadvantageous consequences. Believe me, I am doing all I can to expedite your return to your normal haunts. Meantime you’ll have to be patient.’”

I was most impatient and very nearly frantic at finding myself, no matter how I struggled inwardly, totally unable so much as to refer or allude to what lay heaviest on my mind.

We exchanged vaguely generalized sentences for awhile and he left as abruptly as before, left me quivering with consternation, dreading that my inability to broach the subject on which I was eager to beard him was a premonition of my total enthrallment to Pembroke’s influence.

As the days passed I became habituated to stoning that uncanny gander, chasing him into the basin of the fountain and having him hiss at me from behind one of the gratings; I became indifferent to the glimpses I caught of Mother Bevan hovering in the middle distance. I had a good appetite for my meals: in fact, the food set before me at my abode would have awakened

the most finicky dyspeptic to zest and relish, even to voracity; while the dinners to which I was invited were delectable.

But from night to night I slept less and less, until I was near insomnia. And, from day to day, I found it more and more difficult to absorb myself in reading, to keep my mind on what I read; even to read at all.

Again I waylaid Radnor. I described to him my progressively worsening discomfort and distress.

"I am now," I said, "or soon shall be, not merely in need of your help, but beyond any help from you or anybody. If you don't do something for me I'll go crazy, I'll do something desperate, I'll commit suicide."

"I have been pondering," he said, "how to help you, and I have almost bit upon a method. Your condition does not yet justify my giving you anything to make you sleep. As yet I do not want to give you any sort of drug, not even the simplest sedative. Honestly try to get to sleep to-night. Before tomorrow I think I'll hit upon an entirely suitable prescription salutary for you and yet avoiding any appearance any hint, of my antagonizing Pembroke."

I did try to sleep that night, but I was still wide awake long after midnight. So tossing and turning on my comfortable bed, I heard outside in the moonless darkness some one whistling a tune. As the sound came nearer I made sure it was Radnor. Also I recognized the tune.

It was that of "The Ballad of Nell Flaherty's Drake."

The tune brought to my mind the words of the song's refrain:

"The dear little fellow,  
"His legs were so yellow,  
"He could fly like a swallow and swim like a hake!  
"Bad luck to the tober,  
"The haythen cashlober,  
"The monsther thot murdered Nell Flaherty's drake!"

All of a sudden I conceived that this was Radnor's method of intimating to me by indirection what he did not dare to utter to me in plain words. thought I knew what he meant as well as if it had been put into the plainest words. I rolled over, was asleep in three breaths, and slept till Fong ventured to waken me.

After breakfast I went upstairs again and rummaged about in the closet where Fong had deposited what I had worn when I came under his care. I found there everything I remembered to have had about me. My automatic was well oiled and in good working order and its clip of cartridges was full. My belt, with the extra clips of cartridges, was as it had been when I last put it on. I put it on, over my feather-weight hot-weather habiliments; I strapped on my automatic; I strolled out, intent on somehow coming within speaking distance of Pembroke.

Chance, or some unconscious whim, guided my footsteps to the beach and, in spite of the rapidly intensifying heat of the sun rays, along it to the remaining fragments of my wreck, barely visible under a great accumulation of beach foam, left by the breakers, hurled shorewards during the thunder storm which had raged while I slept.

Not far beyond those vestiges of what had been an aeroplane, approaching me along the beach, I encountered Pembroke.

I found I had now no difficulty in speaking out my mind.

"Pembroke," I said, "I'm outdone with confinement on this island of yours. I'm irritated past endurance. If you don't promptly speed me on my way elsewhere the tension inside me is going

to get too much for me. Something inside me is going to snap and I'll do something desperate, something you'll regret."

He looked me straight in the eyes, handsome in his fantastic toggery; calm and cool, to all appearance.

"Are you, by any chance," he drawled, "threatening to shoot me?"

"I haven't made any threats," I retorted, hotly, "and I have no intentions of shooting you or anybody. I realize that this island of yours is part of the British Empire and that in no part of it are homicides or murderous assaults condoned or left unpunished. But, since you use the word 'threat,' I am ready to make a threat. If you don't soon set me free of my present captivity, if you don't soon put me in the way of getting home, I'll not shoot you or any human being, but I will shoot that devilish gander; and, I promise you, if I shoot at him I'll hit him and if I hit him I'll kill him. I fancy those are plain words and I conjecture that you understand me fully, with all the implications of what I say."

Pembroke's expression of face appeared to me to indicate not only amazement and surprise, but the emotions of a man at a loss and momentarily helpless in the face of wholly unexpected circumstances.

"You come with me!" he snapped.

I followed him along the beach to the village, and, as we went, wondered to see him apparently comfortable in his tight-fitting suit and bare headed beneath the fierce radiance of the merciless sun rays, while I rejoiced in my flimsy garments and at being sheltered under the very adequate Panama I had chosen from the beadgear Fong had offered me.

We passed the end of the steel picket fence, the two beach guards saluting Pembroke, and, I thought, suppressing a tendency to grin at me. Just around the point was a wide aviation field with a long row of hangars opposite the beach. I marveled, for I had caught no glimpse of any avion in the air over or about the island.

A half dozen Asiatics, apparently Annamites, rose as we approached and stood respectfully, eyes on Pembroke. He uttered some sort of order in a tongue unknown to me and two of them set wide open the doors of one of the hangars. In it, to my amazement, I saw a Visconti biplane, one of the fastest and most powerful single-seaters ever built.

"What do you think of that?" Pembroke queried.

"I am astonished," I answered. "I was certain that no specimen of this type of machine had ever been on this side of the Atlantic."

"This is the first and only Visconti to be set up on this side of the ocean," he replied. "The point is; could you fly it?"

"I think I could," I said, "and I am sure I could try."

"Try then," Pembroke snapped. "I make you a present of it. The sooner you're off and away the better I'll be pleased."

He spoke at some length, apparently in the same unknown tongue, and strode off towards his palace.

I spent that day and most of the next going over that Visconti biplane, with the deft, quick assistance of the docile Annamites. If there was anything about it defective, untrustworthy or out of order I could not find it. On the third morning (I had dined at Radnor's both evenings), equipped admirably by Fong, who instantly provided me with whatever I asked for, I rose in that Visconti biplane, and, contrary to my fears, reached Miami in safety. But I was so overstrained by anxiety that it required six weeks in a sanitarium to make me myself again. During those, apparently, endless hours in the air I had been expecting every moment that something cunningly

arranged beforehand and undiscoverable to my scrutiny in my inspections and reinspections, was going to go wrong with my conveyance and instantaneously annihilate me. The strain all but finished me. However, all's well that ends well.