

The RETURN of TARZAN



By
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PROLOGUE.

Readers of "Tarzan of the Apes"—there were millions of them—have been awaiting with eagerness "The Return of Tarzan." They need no introduction to the ape-man, who was an English lord by ancestry and an inhabitant of the treetops by fate until the same fate brought him out and made him a civilized man after twenty years of life among the great apes of Africa. His adventures, as wonderful and interesting as any set forth in words, have been the center of interest in a story that is unique in its originality.

Now we have "The Return of Tarzan," as thrilling as its forerunner. In it are told the further adventures of the splendid ape-man, who at last wins his way to the side of his true love after facing countless perils by land and sea.

Whoever read "Tarzan of the Apes" needs no invitation to peruse this story. Others are warned that after they read this sequel to "Tarzan of the Apes" they won't be satisfied until they have read that story also.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Fifty Frightful Men.

HUNDREDS of times before had Tarzan been to this secluded spot, which was so densely surrounded by thorn bushes and tangled vines and creepers of huge girth that not even Sabor, the tiger, could worm his sinuous way within, nor Tantor, with his giant strength, force the barriers which protected the council chamber of the great apes from all but the harmless denizens of the savage jungle.

Fifty trips Tarzan made before he had deposited all the ingots within the precincts of the amphitheater. Then from the hollow of an ancient, lightning-blasted tree he produced the very spade with which he had uncovered the chest of Professor Archimedes Q. Porter, which he had once, apellie, buried in this selfsame spot. With this he dug a long trench, into which he laid the fortune that his blacks had carried from the forgotten treasure vaults of the city of Opar.

That night he slept within the amphitheater, and early the next morning set out to revisit his cabin before returning to his Waziri. Finding things as he had left them, he went forth into the jungle to hunt, intending to bring his prey to the cabin where he might feast in comfort, spending the night upon a comfortable couch.

For five miles toward the south he roamed, toward the banks of a fair sized river that flowed into the sea about six miles from his cabin. He had gone inland about half a mile, when there came suddenly to his trained nostrils the one scent that sets the whole savage jungle a-quake—Tarzan smelled man.

The wind was blowing off the ocean, so Tarzan knew that the authors of the scent were west of him. Mixed with the man scent was the scent of Numa. Man and lion! "I had better hasten," thought the ape-man, for he had recognized the scent of whites. "Numa may be a-hunting."

When he came through the trees to the edge of the jungle he saw a woman kneeling in prayer, and before her stood a wild, primitive-looking white man, his face buried in his arms. Behind the man a mangy lion was advancing slowly toward this easy prey. The man's face was averted; the woman bowed in prayer. He could not see the features of either.

Already Numa was about to spring. There was not a second to spare. Tarzan could not even unslung his bow and fit an arrow in time to send one of his deadly poisoned shafts into the yellow hide. He was too far away to reach the beast in time with his knife. There was but a single hope—a lone alternative. And with the quickness of thought the ape-man acted.

A brassy arm flew back—the briefest fraction of an instant—a huge spear poised above the giant's shoulder—and then the mighty arm shot out, and swift death tore through the intervening leaves, to bury itself in the heart of the leaping lion. Without a sound he rolled over at the very feet of his intended victims—dead.

For a moment neither the man nor the woman moved. Then the latter opened her eyes to look with wonder upon the dead beast behind her companion. As that beautiful head went up, Tarzan of the Apes gave a gasp of

so that when he went into the forest to hunt that morning he had a feeling of much greater security than at any time since they had been cast upon the savage shore. The result was that he penetrated farther from the shelter than ever before.

To escape as far as possible from the mad ravings of the fever-stricken Russian, Jane Porter had descended from



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the shelter to the foot of the tree—she dared not venture farther. Here, beside the crude ladder Clayton had constructed for her, she sat looking out to sea in the always surviving hope that a vessel might be sighted.

Her back was toward the jungle, and so she did not see the grasses part or the savage face that peered from between. Little, bloodshot, close-set eyes scanned her intently, roving from time to time about the open beach for indications of the presence of others.

Presently another head appeared and then another and another. The man in the shelter commenced to rave again, and the heads disappeared as silently and as suddenly as they had come. But soon they were thrust forth once more as the girl gave no sign of perturbation at the continued wailing of the man above.

One by one grotesque forms emerged from the jungle to creep stealthily upon the unsuspecting woman. A faint rustling of the grasses attracted her attention. She turned and at the sight that confronted her staggered to her feet, with a little shriek of fear. Then they closed upon her with a rush. Lifting her bodily in his long, gorilla-like arms, one of the creatures turned and bore her into the jungle. A filthy paw covered her mouth to stifle her screams. Added to the weeks of torture she had already undergone the shock was more than she could withstand. Shattered nerves collapsed, and she lost consciousness.

When she regained her senses she found herself in the thick of the primeval forest. It was night. A huge fire burned brightly in the little clearing in which she lay. About it squatted fifty frightful men. Their heads and faces were covered with matted hair. Their long arms rested upon the bent knees of their short, crooked legs. They were gnawing like beasts upon unclean food. A pot boiled upon the edge of the fire, and out of it one of the creatures would occasionally drag a hunk of meat with a sharpened stick.

When they discovered that their captive had regained consciousness a piece of this repulsive stew was tossed to her from the foul hand of a nearby feaster. It rolled close to her side, but she only closed her eyes as a quail of nausea surged through her.

For many days they traveled through the dense forest. The girl, footsore and exhausted, was half-dragged, half-pushed through the long, hot, tedious days. Occasionally, when she would stumble and fall, she was cuffed and kicked by the nearest of the frightful men. Long before they reached their journey's end her shoes had been discarded—the soles entirely gone. Her clothes were torn to mere shreds and tatters, and through the pitiful rags her once white and tender skin showed raw and bleeding from contact with the thousand pitiless thorns and brambles through which she had been dragged.

The last two days of the journey found her in such utter exhaustion that no amount of kicking and abuse could force her to her poor, bleeding feet. Outraged nature had reached the limit of endurance, and the girl was physically powerless to raise herself even to her knees.

As the beasts surrounded her, chattering threateningly while they gazed at her with their cudgels and beat and kicked her with their fists and feet, she lay with closed eyes praying for the merciful death that she knew alone could give her respite from suffering. But it did not come, and presently the fifty frightful men realized that their victim was no longer able to walk, and so they picked her up and carried her to the balance of the journey.

Late one afternoon she saw the ruinous walls of a mighty city looming before them, but so weak and sick was she that it inspired not the faintest shadow of interest. Wherever they were bearing her there could be but one end to her captivity among these fierce half-brutes.

At last they passed through two great

walls and came to the ruined city within. Into a crumbling pile they bore her, and here she was surrounded by hundreds more of the same creatures that had brought her, but among them were females who looked less horrible.

At sight of them the first faint hope that she had entertained came to mitigate her misery. But it was short-lived, for the women offered her no sympathy, though, on the other hand, neither did they abuse her.

After she had been inspected to the entire satisfaction of the inmates of the building, she was borne to a dark chamber in the vaults beneath and here upon the bare floor she was left with a metal bowl of water and another of food.

For a week she saw only some of the women, whose duty it was to bring her food and water. Slowly her strength was returning—soon she would be in fit condition to offer as a sacrifice to the flaming god. Fortunate indeed it was that she could not know the fate for which she was destined.

As Tarzan of the Apes moved slowly through the jungle after casting the spear that saved Clayton and Jane Porter from the savage fangs of Numa, his mind was filled with all the sorrow that belongs to a freshly opened heart wound.

He was glad that he had stayed his hand to prevent the consummation of the thing that in the first mad wave of jealous wrath he had contemplated. Only the fraction of a second had stood between Clayton and death at the hands of the ape-man. In the short moment that had elapsed after he had recognized the girl and her companion and the relaxing of the taut muscles that held the poisoned shaft directed at the Englishman's heart, Tarzan had been swayed by the swift and savage impulses of brute life.

He had seen the woman he craved—his woman—his mate—in the arms of another. There had been but one course open to him, according to the fierce jungle code that guided him in this other existence, but just before it had become too late the softer sentiment of his inherent chivalry had risen above the flaming fogs of his passion and saved him. A thousand times he gave thanks that they had triumphed before his fingers had released that polished arrow.

As he contemplated his return to the Waziri the idea became repugnant. He did not wish to see a human being again. At least he would range alone through the jungle for a time, until the sharp edge of his sorrow had become blunted. Like his fellow beasts he preferred to suffer in silence and alone.

That night he slept again in the amphitheater of the apes, and for several days he hunted from there, returning at night. On the afternoon of the third day he returned early. He had lain stretched upon the soft grass of the circular clearing for but a few moments when he heard far to the south a familiar sound. It was the passing of a band of great apes through the jungle. He could not mistake it. For several minutes he lay listening. They were coming in the direction of the amphitheater.

Tarzan arose lazily and stretched himself. His keen ears followed every movement of the advancing tribe. They were upwind, and presently he caught their scent, though he had not needed this added evidence to assure him that he was right.

As they entered the cleared space Tarzan of the Apes melted into the branches. Upon the other side of the clearing there he waited to inspect the newcomers. Nor had he long to wait.

Presently a fierce, hairy face appeared among the lower branches opposite him. The cruel, little eyes took in the clearing at a glance; then there was a chattered report returned to those behind. Tarzan could hear the words. The scent was telling the other members of the tribe that the coast was clear and that they might enter the amphitheater in safety.

First the leader dropped lightly upon the soft carpet of the grassy floor, and then, one by one, nearly a hundred anthropoids followed him. There were the huge adults and several young. A few nursing babes clung close to the slung necks of their savage mothers.

Tarzan recognized many members of the tribe. It was the same into which he had come as a tiny babe. Many of the adults had been little apes during his boyhood. He had frolicked and played about this very jungle with them during their brief childhood. He wondered if they would remember him—the memory of the ape is not overlong, and two years is an eternity to them.

From the talk which he overheard he learned that they had come to choose a new king—their late chief had fallen a hundred feet beneath a broken limb to an untimely end.

Tarzan walked to the end of an overhanging limb in plain view of them. The quick eyes of a female caught sight of him first. With a barking guttural she called the attention of the others. Several huge bulls stood erect to get a better view of the intruder. They advanced slowly toward him with deep-throated, ominous growls.

"Karnath, I am Tarzan of the Apes," said the ape-man in the vernacular of the tribe. "You remember me. Together we teased Numa when we were still little apes, throwing sticks and nuts at him from the safety of high branches."

The brute he had addressed stopped with a look of half-comprehending, dull wonderment upon his savage face.

"And Magor," continued Tarzan, addressing another, "do you not recall your former king—he who slew the mighty Kerchak? Look at me! Am I not the same Tarzan—mighty hunter, invincible fighter—that you all knew for many seasons?"

The apes all crowded forward now, but more in curiosity than threatening. They muttered among themselves for a few moments.

"What do you want among us now?" asked Karnath.

"Only peace," answered the ape-man. Again the apes conferred. At length Karnath spoke again.

"Come in peace, then, Tarzan of the Apes," he said.

And so Tarzan of the Apes dropped lightly to the turf into the midst of the fierce and hideous horde—he had completed the cycle of evolution and had returned to be once again a brute among brutes.

(To Be Continued.)

A FAIR WARNING

One That Should Be Heeded by Plattsmouth Residents.

Frequently the first sign of kidney trouble is a slight ache or pain in the loins. Neglect of this warning makes the way easy for more serious troubles—dropsy, gravel, Bright's disease. 'Tis well to pay attention to the first sign. Weak kidneys generally grow weaker and delay is often dangerous. Residents of this locality place reliance in Doan's Kidney Pills. This tested remedy has been used in kidney trouble over 50 years—is recommended all over the civilized world. Read the following:

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George A. Kaffenberger was among the business visitors in the metropolis today, going to that city on No. 23.

Mrs. A. H. Rinker and daughter, Mrs. Della Wicker, were passengers this afternoon for Omaha, where they spent the day. The party was accompanied by Mr. Rinker, who will see that they return safely.

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 - 25 pieces of Altonia Silk, in all the newest colors, for petticoats, at per yard 35 cents
 - 25 pieces of Imperial Chambray, 30 inches wide, on sale as long as it lasts, at per yard 12 1/2 cents
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