

Tarzan of the Apes



by
Edgar
Rice
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PROLOGUE.

Not like any other story you ever read before is "Tarzan of the Apes." While you are reading it you would like to pause to ask yourself "Is it possible?" but you can't, because the story is so fascinating that pausing is impossible. It's a yarn of the you-can't-stop-until-you-finish-it kind.

It may have happened in the wilds of Africa just as the author relates it, or it may not—we do not know whether or not he has basis of fact for his story—but you are not a scientist while you are reading it. You are just an ordinary human being, with a love for a story that is absorbing in its interest and swiftness.

CHAPTER I.

In the Wilds.

I HAD this story from one who had no business to tell it to me or to any other. I may credit the seductive influence of an old vantage upon the narrator for the beginning of it and my own skeptical incredulity during the days that followed for the balance of the strange tale.

I do not say the story is true, for I did not witness the happenings which it portrays.

The yellow, mildewed pages of the diary of a man long dead and the records of the colonial office do not perfectly with the narrative of my convivial host, and so I give you the story as I pieced it out from these several various agencies.

If you do not find it credible, you will at least be as one with me in acknowledging that it is unique, remarkable and interesting.

From the records of the colonial office and from the dead man's diary we learn that a certain young English nobleman, whom we shall call John Clayton, Lord Greystoke, was commissioned to undertake a peculiarly delicate investigation of conditions in a British west coast African colony from whose natives another European power was known to be recruiting soldiers for its army, which latter it used solely for the forcible collection of rubber and ivory from the savage tribes along the Kongo and the Aruwimi.

We learn also that on a bright May morning in 1888 John, Lord Greystoke, and his bride, Lady Alice, sailed from Dover on their way to Africa.

A month later they arrived at Free-town, where they chartered a small sailing vessel, the Fuwanda, which was to bear them to their final destination.

And here John, Lord Greystoke, and Lady Alice, his wife, vanished from the eyes and from the knowledge of men.

Two months after they weighed anchor and cleared from the port of Freetown, a half dozen British war vessels were scouring the south Atlantic for trace of them or their little vessel, and it was almost immediately that the wreckage was found upon the shores of St. Helena which convinced the world that the Fuwanda had gone down with all on board, and thus the search was stopped ere it had scarce begun.

We know now that the crew of the Fuwanda mutinied, slew her officers and spared John Clayton and his wife because of a favor done to the leader of the mutineers by Clayton. Later the crew, fearing discovery, set John Clayton and his wife ashore on the wild west coast of Africa, giving them sufficient arms and tools to enable them to maintain life with work.

Near the shore Clayton built a little cabin for himself and his wife. They endured much hardship, seeing no human creature, but watched often by the giant apes which infest that region. One day Clayton imprudently left his wife alone, and she was attacked and injured by one of the great apes. Clayton slew the beast and bore his wife back to the cabin.

That night a little son was born in the tiny cabin beside the primeval forest, while a great tiger screamed before the door and the deep notes of the lion's roar sounded from beyond the ridge.

Lady Greystoke never recovered from the shock of the great ape's attack, and though she lived for a year after her baby was born, she was never again outside the cabin nor did she ever fully realize that she was not in England.

In other ways she was quite rational, and the joy and happiness she took in the possession of her little son and the

constant attentions of her husband made that year a very happy one for her, the happiest of her life.

Long since had Clayton given up any hope of rescue, except through accident. With unremitted zeal he had worked to beautify the interior of the cabin.

Skins of lion and tiger covered the floor. Cupboards and bookcases lined the walls. Odd vases made by his own hands from the clay of the region held beautiful tropical flowers. Curtains of grass and bamboo covered the windows, and most arduous task of all with his meager assortment of tools, he had fashioned lumber to neatly frame the walls and ceiling and lay a smooth floor within the cabin.

During the year that followed Clayton was several times attacked by the great apes, which now seemed to infest the vicinity of the cabin, but as he never ventured out except with both rifle and revolver he had little fear of the huge beasts.

He had strengthened the window protections and fitted a unique wooden lock to the cabin door, so that when he hunted for game and fruits he had no fear that any animal could break into the little home.

At first much of the game he shot from the cabin windows, but toward the end the animals learned to fear the strange hair whence issued the terrifying thunder of his rifle.

In his leisure Clayton read, often aloud to his wife, from the store of books he had brought for their new home. Among these were many for little children—picture books, primers, readers—for they had known that their little child would be old enough for such before they had hoped to return to England.

At other times Clayton wrote in his diary, which he had always been accustomed to keep in French and which he recorded the details of their strange life. This book he kept locked in a little metal box.

When the tribe saw that Kerchak's rage had ceased they came slowly down from their arboreal retreats and pursued again the various occupations which he had interrupted. The young played and frolicked about among the trees and bushes.

They had passed an hour or so thus when Kerchak called them together and, with a word of command to them to follow him, set off toward the sea.

They traveled for the most part upon the ground, where it was open, following the path of the great elephants whose comings and goings break the only roads through the tangled jungle mazes of bush, vine, creeper and tree. When they walked it was with a rolling, awkward motion, placing the knuckles of their closed hands upon the ground and swinging their ungainly bodies forward.

But when the way was through the lower trees they moved more swiftly, swinging from branch to branch with the agility of their smaller cousins, the monkeys. And all the way Kala carried her little dead baby hugged closely to her breast.

It was shortly after noon when they reached a ridge overlooking the beach, where below them lay the tiny cottage which was Kerchak's goal.

He had seen many of his kind go to their deaths before the loud noise made by the little black stick in the hands of the strange white ape who lived in that wonderland, and Kerchak had made up his brule mind to own that death dealing contrivance and to explore the interior of the mysterious den.

The other males scattered in all directions, but not before the infuriated brute had felt the vertebrae of one snap between his foaming jaws.

Then he spied Kala, who, returning from a search for food with her young babe, was ignorant of the state of the mighty male's temper until the shrill warnings of her fellows caused her to scamper madly for safety.

The younger and lighter members of his tribe scurried to the higher branches of the great trees to escape his wrath, risking their lives upon branches that scarce supported their weight rather than face old Kerchak in one of his fits of uncontrollable anger.

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But Kerchak was close upon her, so close that he had almost grasped her ankle had she not made a furious leap far into space from one tree to another—a perilous chance which apes seldom take, unless so closely pursued by danger that there is no other alternative.

She made the leap successfully, but as she grasped the limb of the further tree the sudden jar loosened the hold of the tiny babe where it clung frantically to her neck, and she saw the little thing hurled, turning and twisting, to the ground thirty feet below.

With a low cry of dismay Kala rushed headlong to its side, thoughtless now of the danger from Kerchak, but when she gathered the wee mangy form to her bosom life had left it.

With low moans she sat cuddling the body to her, nor did Kerchak attempt to molest her. With the death of the babe his fit of demoniacal rage passed suddenly as it had seized him.

Kerchak was a huge king ape, weigh-

ing perhaps 350 pounds. His forehead was extremely low and receding, his eyes bloodshot, small and close set to his coarse, flat nose; his ears large and thin, but smaller than most of his kind.

His awful temper and his mighty strength made him supreme among the little tribe into which he had been born some twenty years before.

Now that he was in his prime, there was no simian in all the mighty forest through which he roved that dared contest his right to rule, nor did the other and larger animals molest him.

Old Tantor, the elephant, alone of all the wild savages feared him not, and him alone did Kerchak fear. When Tantor trumpeted the great ape scurried with his fellows high among the trees of the second terrace.

The tribe of anthropoids, over which Kerchak ruled with an iron hand and bared fangs, numbered some six or eight families, each family consisting of an adult male with his wives and children—some sixty or seventy apes, all told.

Kala was the youngest wife of a male called Tublat, meaning "Broken Nose," and the child she had seen dash to death was her first, for she was but nine or ten years old.

Notwithstanding her youth, she was large and powerful—a splendid, clean limbed animal, with a round, high forehead, which denoted more intelligence than most of her kind possessed. So also she had a greater capacity for mother love and mother sorrow.

But she was still an ape, a huge, fierce, terrible beast of a species closely allied to the gorilla, yet with more intelligence, which, with the strength of their cousins, made her kind the most fearsome of those awe inspiring progenitors of man.

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The cleverly constructed latch which Clayton had made for the door had sprung as Kerchak passed out, nor could the apes find means of ingress through the heavily barred windows.

Kala had not once come to earth with her little adopted babe, but now Kerchak called to her to descend with the rest, and as there was no note of anger in his voice she dropped lightly from branch to branch and joined the others on their homeward march.

Those of the apes who attempted to examine Kala's strange baby were repelled by bared fangs and menacing growls, accompanied by words of warning from Kala.

When they assured her that they meant the child no harm she permitted them to come close, but would not allow them to touch her charge.

It was as though she knew that her baby was frail and delicate and feared lest the rough hands of her fellows might injure the little thing.

(To Be Continued.)

Butter Fat Wanted.

The undersigned manager of the Lincoln Pure Butter Co., at this station, is paying the highest price for butter fat, as determined by the government Babcock test. We are also paying the highest market price at all times for all kinds of produce and poultry. Call and see me before disposing of your produce.

Fred Dawson,
Lincoln Pure Butter Co.,
Plattsmouth, Neb.

Check Your April Cough.

Thawing frost and April rains chill you to the very marrow, you catch cold—Head and lungs are stuffed—You are feverish—Cough continually and feel miserable—You need Dr. King's New Discovery. It soothes inflamed and irritated throat and lungs, stops cough, your head clears up, fever leaves, and you feel fine. Mr. J. T. Davis, of Stickney Corner, Me., "Was cured of dreadful cough after doctor's treatment and all other remedies failed. Relief or money back."

Pleasant—Children like it. Get a bottle today. 50c and \$1.00 at your Druggist.

MYNARD.
(Special Correspondent.)

W. A. Fight shelled corn for W. F. Gillespie last Wednesday.

W. H. Venner and family, who have been away on a visit, returned home last Friday evening.

Uncle Jap Young says he is going to leave us and move back to Plattsmouth some time next week.

The M. P. railroad must be doing something to put the road in better condition, as a number of camp cars are seen on the side-track at this place.

A. W. Vallery is intending to start for Montana next Tuesday.

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Dr. J. S. Brown, the veterinarian,

was called out by Aleck Rhoden and Joe Wheeler, on professional duty, to doctor a sick horse for each of the latter two gentlemen.

W. T. Richardson, our general merchant, received a nice shipment of implements this week and will soon have them on display. Come and take a look at them.

W. B. Porter reports that he

had some tomato plants frozen during the last snow storm, which he had planted in hotbeds. Mr. Porter believes in early vegetation.

Mrs. C. H. Vallery received the

sad news Tuesday morning of the death of her sister, Mrs. Ross Barr, of Greenwood.

Mrs. Vallery departed on the 3:20 p. m. train from Plattsmouth to attend the funeral.

Finally the rifle was torn from its

hook and lay in the grasp of the great

brute. Finding that it harmed him not, Kerchak began to examine it closely.

During all these operations the apes

who had entered sat huddled near the

door watching their chief, while those

outside strained and crowded to catch

a glimpse of what transpired within.

Suddenly Kerchak's finger closed

upon the trigger, there was a deafening

roar in the little room, and the

apes at and beyond the door fell over

one another in their wild anxiety to

escape.

Kerchak was equally frightened—so

frightened, in fact, that he quite for-

got to throw aside the author of that

fearful noise, but bolted for the door

with it tightly clasped in one hand.

As he passed through the opening

the front sight of the rifle caught upon

the edge of the inswing door with suf-

cient force to close it tightly after the

feeling ape.

When Kerchak came to a halt a short

distance from the cabin and discov-

ered that he still held the rifle he drop-

ped it as though it had burned him,

nor did he again essay to recover it.

The noise had been too much for his

brute nerves, but he was now quite

convinced that the terrible stick was

quite harmless by itself if left alone.