I, THE KING

By WAYLAND WELLS WILLIAMS.

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(Continued From Saturday.)

The pink in front of him vanished, leaving cloud streaks of cold blue-gray. The sea gave a gleam of wicked steel and retreated into the gloom. A crab scuttled; a tern bleated; out of the suddenly withdrawn spaces of the heavens, soft and opaque and colorless, sprang the stars.

CHAPTER VII.

I.

Next morning, as he wandered about the palm groves with his dictionary in one hand and his eyes raised to the palm fronds in the general style of little Johnny Head-in-Air, he came on one of the muddy pools he had noticed before. By the side of it squatted Masson, entirely naked, and a native girl (Sadie, no doubt) was washing his clothes in the filthy water. Kit reddened and started to walk away; then turned again.

"Masson, look here! That's no place to wash clothes."

"Ain't it?" said Masson.

"No, and I'll tell you why. Have you noticed how many of the natives have got skin diseases? It's awful. And they wash their clothes in that pool all the time, and themselves, too. I've seen them do it. You'll get that disease yourself if you wash your clothes there."

"Hell of a lot I care," growled Masson.

"You'll care when you begin to itch. Do you see that scum on the water there? That's the dry skin they scrape off themselves. . . . God, I don't see how you can do it!"

He started to move away, but the sudden scorn in his voice roused Masson. "It's better'n not washing 'em at all, I guess. I notice you ain't washed your things yet. Naw, and there was a lot o' talk about how you was goin' to, yesterday afternoon." He winked at Sadie, who giggled; it was the most odious kind of showing off.

"Shut up!" said Kit, in spite of himself.

"Ho!" pursued Masson. "That's equality, ain't it? I can't go any place on this island without you come along and tell me to shut up, eh?"

"I didn't, till you asked for it. Masson, can't you ever behave decently?"

"Decent, huh! If you think it's decent to come follerin' round after me and my girl, and me naked, huh! Yeah, Mister Newell, there ain't a gob in the Navy don't know enough to keep off of a guy when he's got his girl out. Decency! Christ!"

This time Kit simply walked away. He went to the ocean side of the island and washed his uniform as well as he could. It was nasty and sticky afterward, but even that was better than ringworm and yaws. It was also better than being less clean than Masson.

Masson was going to be a problem and a pest, clearly. There was nothing to be said for him; he was a bad lot. And in the dory he had been really quite fine. Why did people have to be like that?

II.

On the following morning Etera, bubbling with high spirits, informed him that there was to be an entertainment in his and Masson's honor in the evening—a sort of song and dance affair, as far as Kit could make out. Etera added that his father disapproved, which, however, would probably not prevent him from attending. All the morning the village reeked of food; every cookhouse had a group of women and children squatting about it. Later the whole population, seemingly, gathered in the maniaba for some sort of a rehearsal. Kit could hear them carrying on from a distance: a queer sort of rhythmical chanting and thumping. Well, it was nice to be popular.

At five or so Kak called at the Residenz and escorted them in state to an almost flat section of the lagoon beach. All Nairava was there, and all Naituvi, decked with wreaths and necklaces of flowers. Limbs and bodies were lustrous with cocoanut oil; every one wore an excited and festive air. A great circle was formed, on the edge of which Kit and Masson were installed on chairs brought from the Residenz. The natives squatted on the sand, Nairava on their right, Naituvi on their left. This was to be a competitive affair, it seemed. Liquor was circulated in old cocoanut shells ,a sweet and evidently heady draught. This was the famous manging, the fermented juice of the cocoanut flower; to taste it was to forget trouble.

The party t,he ruolo ,as it was called, began. Without apparent reason, without even obeying any observable signal, an old woman in the front rank set up a sort of wail, beating her two hands on her breast in rhythm. Others took up the burden, clapping their hands on their persons, on the ground, together. Suddenly a man sprang into the center of the circle, gesturing and posing, singing something that was almost what the chorus sang, but not quite, in a close, elusive harmony. Another joined him; they sang alternately, together, broadening the rhythm, quickening it. Presently a woman entered the ring and sang, at first alone and slowly, then with growing passion, the men joining in. The three, followed precisely by the chorus, pressed to a climax; the music and the hand beats grew faster and faster, maddeningly fast; the whole crowd was at last yelling, though always musically, at full voice, making a volcano of sound in the jeweled sunset. Then, in the wink of an eyelid, the whole thing stopped, fell dead.

"God!" breathed Kit in the silence. There was no other word of appreciation for the beauty, the measured madness of it. He applauded lustily. The islanders seemed pleased.

Another dance followed, this time by Naituvi. Two more succeeded, and then came an interval for refreshment. The circle broke up and a stream of people came up to Kit offering food: fresh fish baked in leaves; cocoanut kernel cooked in various ways; chunks of turtle meat; shellfish; the leg of a brawny fowl, obviously male; an egg rather the worse for wear, raw and unbroken; succulent pieces of roast pork; the pathetic form of a little wood dove, sweet and crisp, and more and ever more manging. Of this last Kit partook but sparingly; it was chiefly a matter of raising the cup to his lips and pretending to drink. He was far too interested to have any desire to get drunk. With Masson quite otherwise; he drank deep and often, and had soon pushed his chair away and sprawled on the sand. Kit presently did the same, though for a different reason.

The sun set in dove-gray and fire, and torches of dry oiled palm fronds were lit and held outside the crowd by boys. A bonfire was kindled on the lee side of the circle. Presently the people returned to their seats, their eyes and teeth and flowers gleaming richly in the ruddy light. Above them, beyond infection from firelight, the stars shot their virginal white rays. Down the lagoon, southwestward, the Cross and the twin flames of the Centaur burst out and quickly fell. Landward, over the black palms, the moon rose and rinsed the lagoon in silver. And the ruolo began again.

It was obvious to Kit that this was no mere war and love dance of savages; it was an art, highly developed and obeying certain definite canons. The most extraordinary thing about it was that it attained so much richness and variety by the sole use of the voice and hands; no instruments were used. It seemed to stand about midway between opera and ballet in character. Rhythm was the dominant factor, harmony being present but subordinate. The communal sense of time and tune was astounding. Never did a hand miss a beat by the fraction of a second; never did a voice depart from the exact pitch; never did either hand or voice mar the bewildering suddenness of the finish.

There was one tale enacted of two heroes, represented by Kakaiwia and another man. They were twins, and they excelled all other men in sport and war, equally. One saw them spearing fish, fighting sharks, slaughtering enemies. Presently the inevitable happened; they quarreled over a woman. The tribe gathered to see them fight for her in a duel which the aged parents strove in vain to avert. The two embraced, kissed, then parted and fought. The populace, partial to neither, watched them, fascinated, chanting a measure marvelously suggestive both of admiration and grief. When at last they both fell, killed by the blow that only the other could give, the chorus went mad with despair, and the bride hurled herself on their interlocked bodies in suicidal frenzy. When Kak returned to his place his face was streaming with tears.

After a number of alternating act the two sides of the atoll abandoned their competitive efforts and joined together. Suddenly Kit's heart bounded; he realized that he was seeing enacted the story of his own landfall on that island.

"Two men alone in a little boat. Two men alone in a little boat!" chanted the chorus, as two swarthy natives squatting in the middle portrayed their idea of the sensations of shipwreck, hunger and thirst. Days pass no land, no sail. They resign themselves to death; they commend their souls to the great spirit of the deep. And then—land! And so on: their landing, their welcome, food and drink and entertainment given them by the friendly people. "We love Nuel and Mattoni!" shouted the enthusiastic hosts. "Long may they live with us, in peace and brotherhood!"

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

New York
--Day by Day--

By O. O. McINTYRE.

New York, Nov. 2.—A page from the diary of a modern Samuel Pepys: Early up and thither to breakfast at a charity bazaar where came some great lords and lovely ladies and a pale jongleur read some verse which was very sad.

Thence to a projection room with Julian Johnson and saw a film run off and talked awhile with Bebe Daniels, a wistful cinema lady. Afterward to walk through the town with my wife, poor wretch, and heard a man cry he had been bitten by a tarantula.

In the afternoon with Tex Austin to the garden to see his rodeo and came also Maybelle Manning, Paul Reinhardt, Mrs. Burton and some others and then to Texas Guinan's party, all very merry.

To a club in the evening to join some hearty tosspots in a game of pool, but irked as so much bantering and so joined Gene Buck in a grave discussion of the theater. Late home and to bed.

Thorley's Famous "House of Flowers" is to become a Child's restaurant. The house was once owned by Russell Sage. When it was sold the late Charles Thorley paid $441,000 for it and making it over into a florist shop amassed a huge fortune. When he died he left the business to his employes. This makes the third Child's resaurant to invade the avenue. There are also two 5 and 10 cent stores on the street.

Mother Bertilotti's cafe in the village now bears a probibition padlock. It was the haunt of the short-haired ladies and long-haired gentleman of Bohemia. There were many velveteen jackets and flowing ties. On the little tables many ephemeral verses were polished and many short stories begun. At the dinner hour the place was filled with amiable and careless egotists who suffered the ups and downs of existence with philosophic equanimity. Mother Bertilotti was a buxon, apple cheeked woman with graying hair. She calmed the dissenting hot gospelers as a mother quiets so many children. She saw that many of her patrons were merely going through a stage of incubation for larger efforts. For indeed many who later achieved in the arts sprouted their pin feathers in the atmosphere of the cafe.

New Yorkers have an idea that most people who do not eventually come here to live are the same people who never make a step in love without questioning the love lorn editor; whose literature consists of mail-order pamphlets; who hang dead snakes on the fence to conjure the rain god and who saucer their coffee and eat pie with their knives. But they overlook entirely the fact that when these people from Hog Hollow do come here they are the people who occupy big executive jobs, live in the $20,000 a year apartments and have a well packed garage.

One of the roystering blades of the Lambs was importuned by telephone to join in an uptown apartment revel at 1 o'clock in the morning.

"I'm sorry old man," he said, "but I'm here in my room with a case of neuritis."

"Bring it along," said the voice. "This crowd will drink anything."

An upper Broadway cafe has a lighted sign over the door which reads:

Soft Shelled Crabs
AND LOBSTERS.
DANCING.

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THE NEBBS — LITTLE BOY BLUE.

Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess

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Barney Google and Spark Plug — Barney Might as Well Be on a Desert Island.

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Billy DeBeck

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BRINGING UP FATHER

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SEE JIGGS AND MAGGIE IN FULL PAGE OF COLORS IN THE SUNDAY BEE

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JERRY ON THE JOB — HOW LONG IS A PIECE OF ROPE?

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The Days of Real Sport

By Briggs

ABIE THE AGENT

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield

A Little Advance Work.