

I, THE KING

By WAYLAND WELLS WILLIAMS.
(Copyright, 1924.)

(Continued from yesterday.)

"And you think you'd make a better one than I—Well, possibly you would. But the decision about that rests with the natives, and if they'd thought you'd make a better one they'd have asked you."

"Huh, they'd have asked me, praps, if I'd gone out for it."

"Do you mean to imply that I went out for it? You're talking nonsense."

Masson closed his mouth and turned away. "What do I get out of this?"

It was not an easy question to answer, especially as he so plainly deserved nothing. "Well, Masson, you've a right to ask that, but it's hard to say. It's hard to say what I'd get out of it, beyond what I had before. About all a man needs, or can use, in this place is a house and food. Oh, and women."

Masson gave one of his rare ugly smiles. "More'n you need, huh?"

"Oh," said Kit easily, though he felt his cheeks grow hot, "I don't pretend to be better than you in that respect. Of course, if I stay here any length of time, I'll . . . there'll be women."

Masson with a ludicrously satirical inflection uttered the single word "Queens."

"Yes, queens, to be sure. Well, now about you. How would you like to be commander-in-chief of the army? I'd thought of organizing a squad or two of young fellows. Might be useful against the Tenguans. You could teach 'em to drill, and all that."

"Now," said Masson promptly. "Too much like work."

"Oh, I shall probably do it myself, in any case. Well, can you think of anything?"

Masson stared at the floor for a moment. "About these guns the niggers talked about. You ain't got any notion, have you?"

"Why, yes, there's that place behind here. That cellar door effect."

"Ain't there no way we could get at 'em?"

"Certainly. The file in the dory."

"Huh? What's that?" Masson for the first time moved. "Where is it?"

"Oh, I've taken it out. I did that the first day. That's the chief reason they made me king, I dare say."

"Well, ain't you going to trot it out?" Masson's tone was shrill and aggrieved.

"Of course not. Let loose a bunch of armed savages? Not much."

"Well, see here. This is a hell of a thing. You mean you've hidden it?"

"Yes, just that."

The sailor relaxed into silence, chewing his nails. He was stupid, thought Kit. Never to have thought of the cellar door, or the file in the Pandora's box for the sheer love of trouble. And if he had done his duty as a seaman, and locked the tool box before leaving the dory, he might be king of the island at this moment.

Masson opened his mouth. "I want that file."

"Do you?" said Kit, smiling.

Masson swung round quickly. "You asked me what I wanted, didn't you? Well, I want that."

"You can't have it."

Masson hesitated a moment and then began to use a loud and blustering tone. "Look-a-here now, New-ell. You handed me a lot o' bull the other day about us bein' free and equal and all that. Well, I got a right to know where that file is. I got as much right as you to it, see? And by God . . ."

"Yes," said Kit, "by God?"

"Yes, I'm goin' to, by God. Yes, and I will, too."

There was a short, dry pause. "Masson," said Kit, "you haven't got much brains. Don't you see that if we opened that place it would do us harm and not good? I would simply arm the natives against us, put 'em out of our control. As long as we've got the threat of opening it, we've got them where we want them. But once it was opened, and that file is, the thing happened, what show would we two have—"

"It wouldn't be we two," snorted Masson.

Kit got up and swung himself across the room. "Masson, you're the kind that likes trouble. You'll get it, good and plenty, if you keep on like this. You fool! Don't you know it would be the easiest thing in the world for me to open that place some night, take out a gun and shoot you? Or I could get a native to do it. No one would ever know, in any case. By God, I'll do it, too, if you go on trying to let you stand in the way of peace on this island. You may as well get this straight, Masson. I intend to be king over you as well as the rest of the island. I've got a hard job as it is, and I'm damned if I let you make it any harder."

He was talking hard, and from the heart. Masson sat staring at the floor, impressed in spite of himself. Kit swung round on him again.

"And don't you think you can make it any better for yourself by killing me, either. You can, of course, at time. You could do it now, with your bare hands, I don't doubt. But you'd get found out. You're too much of a fool to do it safely. There'd be a court-martial a minute you got back. . . . And it wouldn't get you the file either, would it? And just how well do you think you'd get on alone with the natives? They're a pretty straight bunch, and they haven't got much use for a man whose whole idea is drink, women and trouble. You'd go a little too far some night, and it would be all up with you. I can tell you, unless I was here."

That was about all he had to say. He took a turn around the room, allowed a longer pause and came to a stop directly in front of Masson. He tried to make his tone friendly but not too ingratiating. "Now then, that's that. But you mustn't think I'm against you, as long as you behave yourself. After all, we've been through something together. . . . I want to see you contented here, of course. I won't stand any nonsense, but I'll do anything I can for you. Anything that's not calculated to make trouble. If anything occurs to you, speak up. I'll try and think, too. . . . Will you shake hands?"

Masson stood up and leered with some approach to dignity. "I'll shake hands with you when you come across. I ain't goin' to shake hands with no guy that says one thing and does another." He went out, hitching his trousers.

It made the Naltuvians and even the Nairavans very angry, and Kit quite enough so to satisfy both.

He was hasty, perhaps; he decided without even holding a council. Masson and all the other dangers that lurked at home were forgotten. He had promised, and he would fulfill. He dug up his file, scraped and swore his way through one of the iron hasps and one of the padlock bars and entered the arsenal. It was as he had expected: an eight-by-eight cellar piled with old Mauser rifles, pistols and copious ammunition. The former were in a woeful condition of rust, but there were also cleaning materials. After a few hours' work

he had enough serviceable arms to equip a punitive expedition. The arsenal door he safeguarded as well as he could by piling against it coral blocks too large for one man to lift alone.

Eighteen of them sailed in a large outrigger canoe for Tengu. Six of the natives carried rifles and the two

white men lugers. Landing on Tengu was a somewhat difficult matter. There was no harbor, and one had to plunge through the surf on the lee side of the island, whichever that was, and walk to one's destination. If the wind changed while one was there, one had either to wait for it to change again or transport the

canoe overland to where the surf was negotiable.

Landing on the western shore they had a walk of half a mile to the main village. Kit enjoyed the walk: the richness and variety of the vegetation was astonishing after the sparseness of Nairava, where only the cocoa palm and the pandanus and

some useless shrubs grew easily. On Tengu numbers trees and plants grew in the greatest profusion; there were springs and brooks of fresh water and a general atmosphere of tropic luxuriance. To make up for that, the air of the jungle hummed with flies and mosquitoes.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

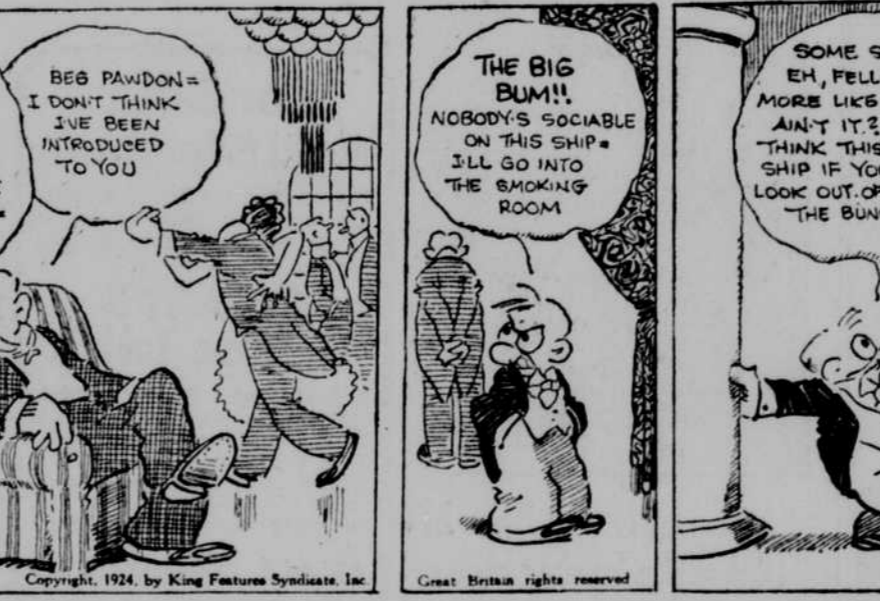
THE NEBBES



HOW'D YOU LIKE TO BE THE ICEMAN?



Barney Google and Spark Plug You'd Think Barney'd Never Been on a Boat Before.



BRINGING UP FATHER



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A FRIEND OF DUMB ANIMALS.



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New York --Day by Day--

By O. O. McINTYRE

New York, Nov. 5.—There is a row of second-hand clothing shops near Pennsylvania station as brisk with noise of trade as the Coney Island bazaars. This is the theater of the "yokel yanker" those odd salesmen who lure you into the master salesmen.

The "yokel yanker" is ragged and unkempt. His face is blurry from booze. He spots his prospective patron among the passing pedestrians and then tries to wheedle him into this shop. If a sale is made he gets three per cent of the total.

Sometimes they will follow for a block, cajoling and haranguing. The shops are open until after midnight. Grotesque dummies with clothes hanging loosely on them are out front. Inside is a dim light for the wares cannot stand exposure.

The "yankers" have a speech all their own. They begin "Nixie clothes, gentlemen." And their hands as one might do over some beautiful work of art. "We can make you a sporty gentlemen the ladies will like. Cheap, very, very, cheap," they purr.

They have their code. One will never try to win a prospect away from another unless at failure he is given a wave of the hand which signifies: "You try him." Nearly all the trade of these shops comes from the "yokel yankers." Without them the stores could not survive.

Once inside, very few get away without buying something or other. It may not be a suit of clothes, but if not, it will be a pair of socks, shoes or suspenders. Second-hand men are superstitious about not making sales. If the customer doesn't buy he is liable to be insulted.

Trade among these shops is not confined altogether to those of lean purse. Many Broadway actors patronize them and take their purchases to a famous tailor who makes them over into the reigning style of the day. He has made a fortune recasting old clothes for stage folk.

It has always seemed to me the most solemn of all trades is that of a grave digger. The other day I talked to one. His father before him was a grave digger and yet he appeared untouched by his lugubrious task. His talk was flavored with humor. He had a loud infectious laugh.

Another profession that rather stirs up curiosity is that of an eyebrow plucker in a beauty parlor. What fling of destiny huris a person into this occupational niche? There are several little beauty shops in town specializing in this sort of vanity. The pluckers are usually beautiful young girls. They are paid from \$50 to \$80 a week and their tips are almost half of that.

There are signs that the old horse-drawn houches or victorias, of 50 years ago, is facing a revival of popularity. More than 50 apic and span new ones now patrol the avenue. Young couples and old lol back and jog dreamily to the beauties of Central park. The fare is about half the price of a taxi over the same route.

There are at least a half-dozen old homes—brown stone fronts—that are caught in the cluster of skyscrapers in midtown. They are austere and freighted with the icy aloofness of New York's aristocracy. One sees white capped elderly ladies at the curtained windows peeping out now and then at the mad jungle. The homes are as forbidding as prisons and the only show of life is when faithful family servitors step out at night for a stroll and pipe smoke. These are families who refuse to give away to rising real estate values. They hold on knowing that each day will more than likely make their property more valuable. There is one on Madison avenue near Forty-third Street. Another on Fifth avenue below Fortieth.

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