

# I, THE KING

By WAYLAND WELLS WILLIAMS.

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(Continued From Saturday.)

Slowly Kit raised himself on his hands, to his feet, half expecting to be shot dead. Was it all over, so quickly? He went down the ladder and out of the building, followed by the two soldiers. "See to that man," he said, pointing to the wounded Tenguian.

Masson lay on his left side; blood flowed from his mouth, and darkened the dark ground. "Masson," said Kit, bending over him. "It's I, Newell. Do you want to say anything?"

The man quivered and groaned; blood choked him.

"Masson, I'm sorry I had to, but I'm not sorry I did it. There was no other way. . . . But he knew he was not talking to Masson.

The quiverings and gaspings slowly abated; Kit never knew just when he died. When he got up the stars were fading and dawn was cold over the ocean.

IV. The war, as President Wilson put it, was to an end. The Tenguian loss was two killed and perhaps a few slightly wounded; all but Masson and his companion regained their canoes and their island in safety.

There were no Niaravan casualties. That afternoon Kit took two armed canoes over to Tenguia and dictated terms. He demanded every rifle and cartridge on the island, on pain of instant execution of the entire population.

All the rifles and thirty-eight cartridges were handed over, and he was satisfied. He then told Ongong that no further measures would be taken, but that henceforth he would rule over Tenguia as king.

Kakawia and the Council were convinced it was best that way, and on the whole Kit agreed. Ongong if independent might cause further trouble; Ongong as subchief and viceroy (or as a private citizen, if he demurred) would be sensible.

He could send over the exacted tribute, and take his orders from Nuel. It was the only way to save anything for himself.

Kit briefly outlined his plan, which was to rule Tenguia exactly as he did Niarava, coming over at stated intervals to hold a council. He would be ready at all times to go if needed, and to uphold the government by force of arms. He would endeavor to force peace and prosperity, to forget the past and finally he would commend the island, with Niarava, to the care of that mythical foreign power.

The elders nodded gravely. They knew when their game was up, and they were rather pleased at having a white ruler, especially one who had

shown so much dash and resource in warfare. An act of accession was drawn up and duly signed. Kit left the island the only Dual Monarch in the world, except Karl Hapsburg.

Masson was buried in a little bare sun-dazzled cemetery by the ocean. Kit had a smooth board prepared as a headstone, and on it with some difficulty he carved this inscription:

George Masson  
First-Class Seaman, U. S. N.  
King of Tenguia  
Died June 26, 1918.

He wondered if Masson was able to appreciate the calm dignity of the words, the changing splendors of sea and sky about him—or any other good thing that God had made.

CHAPTER IX. Having plenty of time and paper at hand, Kit kept a diary during the ensuing months, a detailed and soulful document. Under a date in September occurs this passage:

"... I thought at first that with the war over and Masson out of the way I was going to have another care on this island. But my nails are just as short, from being bitten, as they were during the war. Why should one worry as hard in prosperity as in adversity? I suppose it's the result of having what Jack used to call a neat mind."

The reflection, however, exaggerated, had a basis of truth. There were diversions, of course, races and trips of exploration and shark-catching and torchlight fishing. Also drilling; he enlarged his Guard to thirty-two and devised a uniform for them. Also baseball; the natives made balls, braided out of pandanus leaves; roughly cubical, but serviceable balls, and they used to play games between villages. There was also the most unorthodox diversion of love, of which more anon. Yet he never could apply his full attention to these as another man might have done. His mind was not only inclined to worry but avid to learn a large part of his brother was the result of mere intelligence.

It was all immensely interesting. Here he was alone among people whom a few months ago he would have lightly dismissed as "savages," of whose general kind he had known nothing when he landed. He soon found that savages—the term is of course an improper one for the Niaravans—were as much people as New Yorkers, and that savagery is as much an institution as Tammany Hall. They had their mores, laws, arts, politics and economic problems as naturally and inevitably as they had a climate and a soil. The whys and wherefores of these gradually transpired to Kit; for instance, he presently understood that the basic reason for the Tenguian's warlike nature was the old business of Satan finding mischief still for idle hands to do. On a coral atoll one has to work for one's living; on a volcanic island one does not, or much less so; hence a host of differences.

And he was tremendously stimulated as it dawned on him that here was a South Sea community nearly in its original state. It had decreased in numbers since its opening to the world, but far less than most. The Germans had been in active possession for hardly more than a decade, and in the three years since they had left their impression had been largely obliterated. Education, religion, disease—all these had disappeared or diminished, and insensibly the islanders had been lapsing back into their old habits of mind, body and belief. It was surprising how well they got along.

There were about seven hundred people on the two islands, or possibly a little more. Niarava proper held nearly two hundred and fifty, Niarava something under one hundred, and Tenguia's figure was substantially more than these two combined. This population was divided into two castes, the nobles, comprising the chiefs and their kin, roughly about one-sixth of the whole, and the others.

In the old days the lower class had been divided into landed and landless, but now there was enough land for every one, though some paid a nominal rent in kind. Although at many times, as in the ruins or in various forms of communal fishing, class distinctions were forgotten, they were firmly embedded in the native mind as the fundamental social order. The nobles might have as many as three wives, whereas the others were allowed only one; certain forms of speech were used toward them, and only them; certain matters were tabu in their presence.

Land constituted practically the only form of wealth. The Germans had introduced currency, but it had fallen into disuse except during the rare visits of trading ships. All the productive land belonged to definite owners, and though the boundaries were unfenced and apparently unmarked there was a great deal of feeling if they were overstepped. More than half the cases which came up before the Council involved trespass in some form or other. The land, of course, was chiefly valuable for the production of coconut and pandanus trees, the two plants which enabled the natives to sustain life. All their vegetable food, all their building and clothing materials, were derived from these two trees.

Government was by the village chiefs assembled in council, one of them being king. The office was nominally hereditary, but the council had power to elect and depose, under appropriate circumstances. The king was, to all intents and purposes, as powerful as he could make himself. It was a question of how much he could persuade the council to do, and this was soon made entirely clear to King Nuel.

The laws were complicated and entirely static. They were also codified, but only in the minds of the Old Men, there being no native writing; hence it followed that a council consisting of men with long memories was not so undesirable as might at first appear. The laws, as Kit began to learn them, seemed incredible, Gilbertesque (W. S., not Islands) in their buoyant inconsistency. The marriage laws in particular were most involved. A woman never lost her caste; if she married into the monarchical class she remained head of the household and had the right to marry more than one husband. From this it followed that misalliances were not wholly unpopular among noble ladies. But the husband or husbands, though of a lower class, had every right to punish infidelity on her part, while she had no redress against infidelity on theirs. The penalty for adultery was murder of the paramour—if you could get him; no one else was going to bother. Murder of a husband, or of a wife not proved unfaithful, or of a person in a higher class, was punished by death. Murder of a commoner by a noble was punished by a method exquisitely adjusted to prevent the crime: the murderer was obliged to support the bereaved family till they all died or married. Murder of a parent, on the other hand, was a mere matter of a fine, and murder of a minor child by a parent was not punishable at all. Abortion was a mere matter of taste.

After passing through the inevitable stages of amusement and scan-

## THE NEBBES



## WHAT'S IN A NAME?



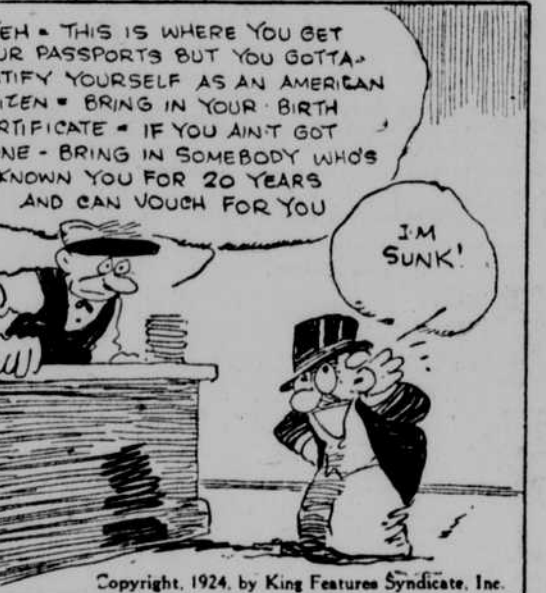
## Directed For The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess



## Barney Google and Spark Plug

## BARNEY HAS POSITIVE PROOF.

## Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Billy DeBeck



## BRINGING UP FATHER

## Registered U. S. Patent Office SEE JIGGS AND MAGGIE IN FULL PAGE OF COLORS IN THE SUNDAY BEE

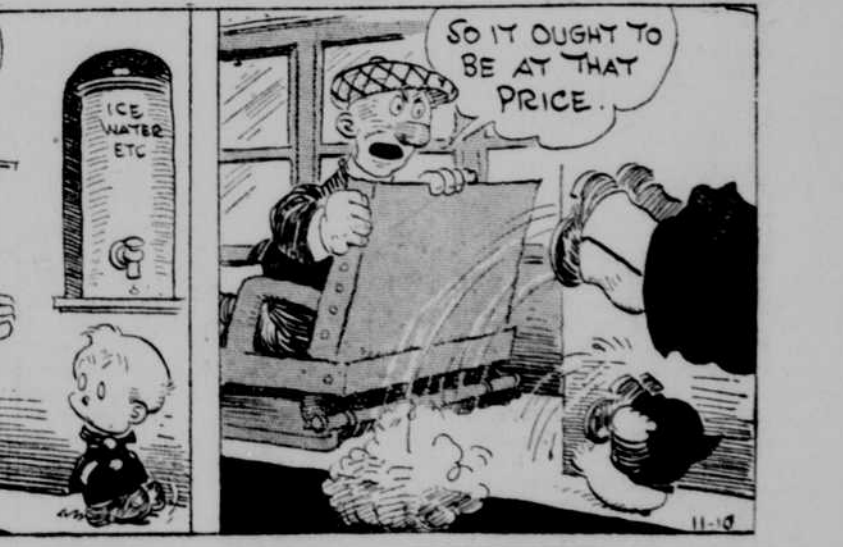
## Drawn for The Omaha Bee by McManus



## JERRY ON THE JOB

## EVERY WEEK I MAKE A TRIP FROM NEW YORK TO SAN FRANCISCO - BY MR. PINGTISH?? WHAT'S THAT RIDE SET A CUSTOMER BACK?

## Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hoban



## When a Feller Needs a Friend.

## By Briggs ABIE THE AGENT

## Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield



## PLUS FOURS



## New York - Day by Day -

By O. O. McINTYRE.

New York, Nov. 9.—A page from the diary of a modern Samual Pepys, Betimes, up and renewed my strength with the coldest bath ever I had. Came Roy L. McCordell to breakfast and in a real rollicking, frolicking humor.

This day I pondered on my blessings and cast my accounts and find myself out of debt, but with little put by. So to my tasks like the hardy yeoman I am.

In the afternoon through the lawn to meet a publisher about the doing of a tome, but the idea appealed to me not a whit and we fell into sharp words but parted fair friends.

To dinner on the floor below with Rudolph Valentino and his wife and he had a kind of meat I never tasted before, but held, from asking what it was. Left early with a servant inquired if Valentino wished to be called at 5:30 in the morning. Good Lord! thought I, he deserves a big salary. So to bed.

Sime Silverman, who publishes Variety, tells of an old dicker who walked many miles to town to do a bit of shopping. He stopped in at the village grocery to refresh himself with food and purchased what he supposed to be crackers and butter. A new clerk by mistake substituted some sour axle grease for butter. The old darkey sat on a back step eating. Finally the clerk inquired: "Well, uncle, how are you enjoying your bit?"

"Fine, sah," replied the dicker. "These crackers is powerful good but the butter is a little ransom."

Hotels with shady pasts in the roaring 40s have the custom of changing their names when the police raid is made. While these hotels are disreputable they are at least honest in their attitude toward unsuspecting patrons. If by chance, a man or woman goes there believing them to be respectable places the clerks will turn them away with a statement all rooms are engaged.

There is a hotel frequented by girls of the burlesque chorus a short distance from Times Square. "Please see that all cigaret stubs are extinguished. In the past a printed sign in each room reads: year three beds have been set afire by going to sleep holding lighted cigarettes. Other guests were thereby endangered."

He is one of those chunky, sleek-haired and immaculate proprietors who run chop houses in the Broadway district. They always appear freshly shaved, debonnaire and worldly. This one was formerly a newsboy, a preliminary boy at boxing bouts and later a bartender. The other night I sat with him at midnight while a swirl of trade eddied in. A waiter brought him a note. It read: "Watch that girl in a pink dress and black hat four tables from you." My back was to her. Suddenly the proprietor rushed to her table and knocked a glass from her hand. It was pungent with the odor of carbolic acid. "How did the waiter know?" I asked afterward. "She has tried that three times before in here," he replied.

Five subdued and contrite members of the theatrical club appeared in the breakfast room the other morning with their hair dyed red. They not laughing any more and there was suspicious puffs under tired eyes. In a hilarious moment they called before one had said: "Boys, let's dye our hair red."

The night before one of the boys was so insistent he did the job. It will take several weeks before the dye loses its color and many had to explain to their wives.

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