

Hemming, The Adventurer

BY
THEODORE
ROBERTS

(Continued.)

"Lord, no!" cried her brother. "I'll see her alone—some other day." One morning, Molly received a visit from her bachelor uncle, much to her surprise. What little she knew of her uncle rather attracted her. More than once she had detected signs of thought, even of intellect, in his conversation. Also, she had heard something of his early career and of the articles he had written. She greeted him brightly. He held her hand, and glanced around the depressing drawing-room.

"My dear, this is no place to talk," he said.

"No, not to really talk," she agreed, "but it is not often used for that." Then she looked at him suspiciously. "Are you going to scold me about something, uncle?" she asked.

He laughed and shook his head. "Oh, no. I am not as courageous as I look," he replied.

She wondered if this round, trim, elderly gentleman really imagined that he looked so.

"I don't know where else we can go," she said. "Mother is in the morning room, and the library is being cleaned."

"If you will come for a walk," he said, with a smiling hesitancy in his manner.

Molly smiled. "I'll come," she answered, "though I am quite sure you have something very disagreeable to say, otherwise why all this trouble?"

"My dear girl," began Mr. Pollin. "I do not wonder at your suspicion. Really, though, it is without grounds. I simply want to become better acquainted with an interesting and charming niece whom I have hitherto neglected."

"Then it is a matter of duty," laughed Molly.

"On your part, my dear," replied her uncle, with a gallant bow.

"Then wait a moment," she said, and let the room.

The moment lengthened into twenty minutes, at the end of which time Miss Travers reappeared, gowned for the street.

"Gad, I don't blame the fool!" muttered Mr. Pollin to himself, as he followed her down the steps. At first their conversation was of trivialities. It soon worked around to books, and Molly found, to her delight and surprise, that her uncle had not altogether forsaken his first love, to wit, literature.

"I have cloaked myself with the reputation of a gossip," he told her, "to hide my greater sins of serious reading and amateur scribbling. A literary man must be successful from the most worldly point of view, to be considered with any leniency by his friends. So I keep dark, and enjoy myself and the respect of the people we know. When I was young, I was not so wise."

"I have heard about it," returned Molly, "and I always liked you for it. But I think you are a coward to give up just as soon as you came in for money."

Mr. Pollin smiled somewhat sadly. "I was never anything more than a dabbler. That is my only excuse for shunning the mass in public," he replied. "But here we are at the door of my humble habitation."

"I have seen the door before. It looks very nice," remarked Molly.

"On the other side of that door," said Mr. Pollin, standing still and surveying the oak, "are two hundred and odd rare volumes, and three times as many more or less common ones—also some easy chairs, and a man-servant capable of producing a modest luncheon."

"And cigarettes?" asked Miss Travers.

The gentleman gave her a look of pained inquiry.

"For you, my dear girl?" he queried.

"I have not smoked a cigarette for years," she replied. "But I learned how—oh, long ago."

"I have some excellent cigarettes," rejoined Mr. Pollin, kindly, as he fitted his latch-key in the door.

Molly found that, for a poor bachelor, her uncle lived very comfortably. She really did not see how one man and his valet could use so many rooms. The library was a charming place, walled with shelves of books, and warmed and brightened by a glowing fire. The floor had no carpet, but was thickly strewn with rugs. The chairs were of modern pattern and wicker ware, built for comfort rather than for looks. The big writing-table had books, and manuscripts scattered over it.

Mr. Pollin rang for his man, who appeared on the instant.

"My niece, Miss Travers, will lunch with me," he said.

"Very good, sir," replied the man, and hesitated at the door.

"Well, Scanlan?" inquired his master.

"General Davidson, sir—and the lady, sir—will that be all?"

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Pollin. "I'd forgotten the general. You don't mind, old Davidson, do you, Molly?"

"I'm sure I do not, know. I have never met him," replied Molly.

"That will be all," said Mr. Pollin to the man, and, as soon as the door closed, he turned to Molly and said: "Now, my dear, we have just an hour before that old bore Davidson gets here, with his everlasting plans of battles, gets here, so we had better make the most of our time." He stirred the fire, and then seated himself close to his niece. He looked at her nervously, and several times opened his mouth as if to speak, but always seemed to think better of it before he had made a sound.

"Why, what on earth is the matter?" cried Miss Travers, staring with wide eyes.

"Mr. Pollin braced himself, and swallowed hard. "My dear," he said, "I want to confess that I promised your mother that I would speak to you about—about—"

"About what, uncle?" She breathed fast, and her face was anxious.

"Dash it all, about some silly rot!" cried the old gentleman, "and, by God, I don't intend to mention it. You are quite old enough to look after your own affairs—of that nature—and you are much wiser than the people who wish to look after them for you."

"I know what it is," said Molly, slowly.

"Then don't give it another thought," said Mr. Pollin. He patted her hand gently, and sighed with relief. "Now we can have a cigarette," he said. But his real task was yet to come. He wanted to know, by her own showing, if she still cared for Hemming. How the devil was it to be done, he wondered. He looked at the clock, and saw that the general was not due inside another forty minutes. He looked at Molly. She leaned back in his deepest chair, looking blissfully at the valleys and hills of the deep!"

And again—

"The sailor's voyage is a thousand miles, 'bout ship, and a thousand more!"

By landfall, pilot, and weed-hung wharf—to the face at the cabin door.

"But mine!—fool heart, what a voyage is this, storm-beaten on every sea. With never the glow of an open door, and a lamp on the sill for me?"

(To be continued.)

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"Surely you will not find anything

in the magazines," she exclaimed.

In answer, he selected one from the heap, and opened it at a marked page.

"What is it," she asked.

"Pedro, the Fisherman," is the name of it," he replied, and straightway began to read.

It was a simple story of a small, brown boy somewhere at the other side of the world, and yet the beauty of the humble joy, and the humble pathos, made of it a masterpiece—for the seeing ones. Pollin read it well, with sympathy in his voice and manner, but with no extravagance of expression. When he came to the end it was a very short story, he got up hurriedly and placed the magazine in his niece's lap.

"I must see how Scanlan is getting along," he said, and left the room.

Molly sat very still, with the magazine face down upon her knee. Her eyes, a-brim with tears, saw nothing of the glowing fire toward which they were turned. There was no need for her to look, to see by whom the story was written. Who but her old lover, could touch her so with the silent magic of printed words? She forgot, for awhile, the unanswered letter, and the weary seasons through which she had vainly waited for his forgiveness. Now she saw only the exile, the wanderer,—and her heart bled for him. He would be wiser than of old, she thought, but still gentle and still fearless. A cynic—no, he could never be that. Such a heart, could never be that. Against one woman, would not turn against the whole of God's world. She had thrown aside the love that now read and translated the sufferings and joys of outland camps and cities. The very tenderness that enabled him to understand the men and women of which he wrote, had once been all for her.

The magazine slid to the floor, and a loose page, evidently cut from some other periodical fluttered to one side. Molly sat up and discovered it. Listlessly she turned it over. Here were verses by Hemming. Her tears blotted the lines as she read:

"When the palms are black, and the stars, are low, and even the trade-winds sleep,

God, give my longing wings, to span the valleys and hills of the deep!"

And again—

"The sailor's voyage is a thousand miles, 'bout ship, and a thousand more!"

By landfall, pilot, and weed-hung wharf—to the face at the cabin door.

"But mine!—fool heart, what a voyage is this, storm-beaten on every sea. With never the glow of an open door, and a lamp on the sill for me?"

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BATWAS AT WORLD'S FAIR.

African Pygmies from the Congo—Why One Anthropological Exhibit is Not What it Was Originally Intended to be.

(By Emily Grant Hutchings.)

St. Louis, Oct. 25.—The usual crowd had gathered around the enclosure that contains the huts of the central African natives. A stranger, who had heard that there were aboriginal pygmies in the live anthropology exhibit, elbowed his way up to the fence and peered over. "Another fake," he muttered. "Common New Orleans wharf niggers," and he was about to turn away in disgust when a man with a camera approached. Instantly there arose a confused and excited chattering like that of a tree-full of angry monkeys.

The camera, that the unwary visitor, in defiance of the numerous warnings posted all around the enclosure, had placed on the top of the fence, became the target for a whole battery of missiles. The next moment the target was changed. This time it was the man's face, and his nose became the bull's eye for the unerring aim of those skilled hunters. Lutano appeared on the scene, brandishing a wooden hatchet.

"Taky photo, oaky photo. Choppy head off!" he yelled. That was the limit of his English for that particular occasion, and he fell back on his native tongue for the remainder of his diatribe. By this time the stranger had corrected his first opinion. This was evidently "the real thing." The sign of a camera does not provoke the ordinary American negro to the desire for blood.

"Who are they and why do they object so to being photographed?" he asked a lady who looked as if she knew.

"It's a sample line of African natives," she replied, "and they are as superstitious as most savages are. They never pose for their pictures unless they are ordered to do so by the Chief of the Department or by Mr. Vernor. Then they are given the assurance that no harm will come to them."

"These are not the Batwa pygmies, are they?" the man asked.

"As I told you, it is a sample line," his companion laughed. "The Reverend Mr. Vernor, the only industrial missionary I ever heard of, brought them over, and he had a complete collection, but he didn't succeed in landing all of them. Before the steamer arrived, he was taken ill with malaria. The savages thought he was under the spell of an evil spirit. Then, when they saw the strange ship, and realized that they were going away across the ocean, more than half of the party ran away and hid in the woods."

"Are there any of the hairy pyg-

mies here?" was the next question. "No, there should have been three, but they are so closely related to the monkeys that they took to the tall trees and Mr. Vernor had no means of compelling them to come down, so he had to sail without them. Of those that are here, only four are pygmies. That one over there by the fence, who looks like the average boy of seven or eight, is the only one. He has a wife and two children, in Africa. The pygmies are the servant class in the Congo, occupying somewhat the same position that the women occupied under the feudal system. They are the direct descendants of the African aborigines, the terrible little men that the Egyptian soldiers dreaded so to meet. They are skillful in hunting elephants and as clever in the use of poisoned arrows today as they were at the time when Herodotus wrote about them."

"I read something about red African negroes," the man said as he watched the antics of the half clad savages. "Are there any here?"

"Yes, but the best specimens were among those that got away. If you will look closely at that big fellow who is stooping over, notice his back where the sun strikes it squarely, you will see that it is red instead of black as it looks in the shadow. Now notice his hair where the sun shines through it. You see that it is decidedly red."

"That's a fact!" the man exclaimed. "I should have said all those fellows were coal black if you had not called my attention to the effect of the light on their hides and hair. Who is that one who seems to be lording it over the others?"

"Oh, that's Lutano, the crown prince of the Congo, eldest son of Ndombe, who is called king by the subjects of a territory half as large as the United States, and is recognized as Paramount Chieftain by the government of Belgium that demands and I believe collects, tribute from a large slice of central Africa. Lutano is seventeen, and he will probably not attain his full growth before he is twenty. He is having the time of his life here at the World's Fair, but he never forgets nor permits his attendants to forget that he is a King's son."

"He seems to be picking up a good deal of English," the man remarked as Lutano shouted to one of his subjects, "Kondolo, come here. It is seventeen, and he will probably not attain his full growth before he is twenty. He is having the time of his life here at the World's Fair, but he never forgets nor permits his attendants to forget that he is a King's son."

"Just like a lot of monkeys, can imitate anything they hear or see," his companion returned. "They had not been in St. Louis a week before they began a trick that they had

learned on ship board. They all knew how to say, 'Gimme nick,' and they wouldn't take pennies either, but they soon learned that dimes were all right. They hadn't been here long until they sent a protest against the food that was being served to them. They wanted elephants flesh and they wanted it properly prepared. They finally compromised on beef, but only on condition that they might roast it themselves."

"They have the solution of the servant-girl problem. I like their independence," the man interposed.

"Yes, and you would probably like their music," the lady laughed.

"They have a full orchestra and Lutano is the leader. He uses an old broomstick for a baton and the orchestration consists of two cracker boxes, two tin lard cans, four beer bottles and a section of stove pipe. I can assure you, the music is glorious."

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Gentleman (quite taken aback). "Why, yes, but 'pon my word, of all—"

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