A VANISHED IDOL

Situated about seventy miles from a well-known seaport in the Straits Settlements are some very pretty islands. Approached by sea the scenery is beautiful, for the foliage is green and luxuriant, ferns and creepers mingling in wild confusion, and the feathery palms and bamboos crowning the undergrowth add their grace and charm to the landscape. In the calm waters of the inland sea near one of these islands a steam-launch was lying at anchor, from which a party had already disembarked and rowed away in a small boat to the shore. A government official was on one of his visits of inspection and had brought with him a few specially selected companions to share the pleasure of the trip. The said official had gone off to the capital to transact his business with the Chinese Captain, who was the acknowledged head of the coolies on the island, and meanwhile two of his guests were strolling along the shore of a large lake which they had come upon quite close to the sea, picturesquely situated, and surrounded by steep-sided limestone hills. It looked inviting for a bath, but having inquired whether any crocodiles were likely to be hidden beneath its placid surface and received a doubtful answer from one or two natives who had followed at their heels, they decided that discretion was the better part of valor and turned their faces for further exploration towards the hills. One of them was middle-aged, with a rather tired and worn expression, the mark of a long residence in a tropical climate; the other was about five and twenty, of medium height, with a fair mustache and bright blue eyes, broad, strong, and active looking. His dress and military bearing bespoke him to be a soldier.

"This will be your last expedition for some time in this part of the world, won't it, Vizard? You are going on leave, shortly, I hear."

"Yes; I am off in a few days, by the next P. and O. mail, and I shan't come back again."

"How's that?"

"Why, didn't I tell you? I'm going to be married, and only came out for a time because her people insisted on a year's engagement. The fact is, Miss Marshall is an only daughter, so they wouldn't hear of her coming out East, and I expect her governor won't rest satisfied until I've chucked the army and settled down as a country gentleman somewhere in their part of the world."

"Lucky fellow! I wish I had the chance. But it's getting uncommonly hot now the sun is up. If you want more walking I think I'll sit down here and rest for awhile till you come back."

"Well, I'll go on a bit further. They tell me there's a joss-house just beyond this, and I should like to have a look at it. I might pick up something quaint to take to Miss Marshall. She's dead nuts on curios;" and with a nod and a laugh he went on his way along the jungle path which they had been traversing. As he ascended the path narrowed and eventually came to an end before the shrine he was seeking. It was unmistakably a Chinese joss, cut out of the rock, and a very rough specimen of its kind. There was an outer ledge on which were placed flowers and offerings, and bits of colored paper which had been partially burnt were scattered on the ground before the primitive altar, on which stood an image of Buddha hewn out of the stone. At the side was a further small shrine, a square hole cut in the rock, and inside this hole there stood an idle in the shape of a triune god, carved in ivory, with jeweled eyes, and evidently accounted precious as some bars had been fastened across the opening, apparently with the idea of keeping it secure. As Malcolm Vizard examined the quaint specimen of workmanship the thought passed through his mind that if he could get possession of it for his lady love it would be an acceptable gift to carry with him the following week. "A Chinaman will do anything for dollars," he said to himself, and he looked around to see where the custodian of the place was to be found. After shouting once or twice to attract attention and getting no answer he made up his mind that there was no one about. Loath to relinquish the carving he coveted he took hold of one of the wooden bars and, shaking it gently, drew it out in his hand, when he quietly slipped the idol into his pocket, saying to himself, "I will make a bargain with them when I get down to the village," and, turning, he started to rejoin his friend, to whom, however, he did not mention what he had done at the joss-house. When they reached the village they found that the official had completed the work sooner than he had expected and was awaiting them with some impatience on the shore so as to get back to the launch before the turn of the tide should make it too late to row over the shallow water which covered the mud to within a short distance of where their vessel was moored. In the bustle and hurry of departure Vizard forgot all about the tiny idol which he carried with him, lying snugly in his pocket, when a launch steamed out of the bay; and it still lay esconced there when his boy packed his boxes for England, and, in fact, it was only discovered by him when he took it out of the coat half way on his voyage home.

"Mysterious attempt at robbery. Mountworth Park, the residence of Sir Neal Cordillon was burglariously entered the night before last, but it is supposed the thieves were disturbed at their work, as nothing of value, so far, has been missed. The dogs had been drugged, as they were discovered next morning lying about in different parts of the house and garden in a comatose condition. The furniture in the drawing room was displaced, and the door of Lady Cordillon's boudoir, which had been left locked on the outside, was found open. The intruders had not gone away hungry, as they had supped on some jam which they found in the larder and carried into the kitchen, where they had evidently washed down their impromptu repast with cold coffee, a jug of which had been left standing on the table. A cartridge magazine belonging to Captain Vizard, a guest in the house, and some other cases which were in Sir Neal's writing-room, were carried out to a shed in the garden, and there ransacked and the contents scattered on the ground, but nothing appears to have been taken. The police are investigating the affair."

Such was the paragraph which Hilda Marshall read out aloud to those seated with her in the morning-room of their country-house, her mother and her bride-maid-elect, Freda Birchett. And as she put the paper down she said:

"Really, it is a most remarkable thing! Malcolm has only been at home two months, and during these few weeks, besides the time he spent here, he has paid two visits, and on each occasion there has been an attempt at robbery in the house. Don't you think it most extraordinary, mother?"

"Well, my dear, it is certainly a strange coincidence, and rather an unpleasant one for him. I hope the same thing won't occur when he comes back to us the day after to-morrow, or that, if it does, we shall be as lucky as the Cordillons and manage to surprise the thieves in time."

Freda looked up from the piece of fancy work she was doing and said: "You remember, Hilda at the Grey Thompson's it was exactly the same. Everything ransacked; nothing taken. Very mysterious, is it not?"

"So much so that I begin to feel rather nervous about his coming. It is enough to make one superstitious, and I almost wish we could put him off for a little," said Mrs. Marshall, as she took the paper from her daughter's hand.

"O, we can't put him off. There is so much to settle, I promised him this time I would fix the day," and, with a happy laugh, Hilda rose and left the room, and running up-stairs to her own particular sanctum, sat down to scribble a few lines to her lover, to ask by what train he would arrive on the expected day, so that she might go and meet him. Hilda's sanctum was a small room adjoining her bedroom, and with a door opening between. It was prettily decorated with pictures, ornaments and knick-knacks, together with the many curiosities she had collected by degrees, and in a conspicuous place, on a small table near the window was Malcolm's latest gift, the ivory idol from the Joss-house in the far East. Under the window projected the glass roof of a small conservatory, into which the door of the smoking-room opened downstairs.

Hilda was an ideal specimen of a thoroughly bright and pretty English girl—dark hair and brown eyes, with a fresh rosy complexion, and small but well-shaped features. Two days later, as she turned out from the avenue leading from their house into the high road towards the station, she looked indeed a winsome lassie, going to meet her lover. As she walked briskly along her mind intent on thoughts of love, she did not notice until close beside him the figure of a man seated under the hedge by the roadside. Her long residence in the country had not quite sufficed to eradicate her distaste for any stranger who might be taken for a tramp, and she shrank aside from him and passed more quickly on her way. The mometary glance she had given him in passing showed he was dressed like a common sailor, but there was something peculiar about the eyes and face, the latter being of an unusually yellow color. On her return absorbed in conversation with her lover, she forgot all about this man, who had in the meantime disappeared from the place where he had been sitting.

At dinner that evening there was a considerable discussion anent the "burglary" paragraph of a few days before. Malcolm said it was very remarkable that in each case no valuables had been lost, and that he began to think he was rather a Jonah in the matter of housebreaking.

"We were very nearly writing to entreat you not to come on the principle that "prevention is better than cure," said Freda.

"O, third time's lucky. Perhaps, if they do make another attempt, I shall be the fortunate person to catch them at it. Anyhow, I assure you I had nothing to do with the previous affairs, or I promise you I would have solved the mystery."

That night the two girls retired to Hilda's room, ostensibly for a confidential chat, but in reality because the talk down-stairs had somewhat unsettled their nerves, so that as they passed along the corridor they looked for shadows at every corner, and crept together into the same bed. Before the maid-servant tapped at the door with the matutinal hot water, Hilda awoke, and, shaking Freda, exclaimed: "O, do wake up! I had such a horrid dream. I dreamt I was going down-stairs in the middle of the night, and met a man coming up them towards me."

"The result of our last night's conversation, my dear," said Freda, with a yawn. "Fancy ruthlessly arousing me from my slumbers to tell me that."

As she spoke the servant came in. 'If you please, Miss, Richards says as there's been someone in the house fast night; the winder in his pantry 'as been forced, and the things in master's room and in the drawing-room is all of a higgledy-piggledy. But we can't find out as they've took anything and the plate's all safe enough."

"Good gracious, Freda!" said Hilda, as she sat up in bed, her face gradually assuming the hue of the sheets that covered her; "then they have come. What can be the meaning of it?"

"Richards says as 'ow master 'as sent for the police, miss. But by the same token, he will 'ave it as 'ow someone's a-playing a practical joke on Captain Vizard, he ses."

"I expect Richards is right, Freda. But who on earth can it be? And I don't quite see where the joke comes in."

Nor did she after breakfast when her father asked to see her privately in his study, after the constable had been and gone, and, with Mrs. Marshall seated beside him, began to broach the subject in a very serious tone of voice. He told her briefly that it was the opinion of the detectives who had been employed in the other two affairs of the same sort that the extraordinary proceedings had originated by some inmate of each respective house, and that the decision they had one and all arrived at was that the perpetrator of these inexplicable doings was no other than Captain Vizard himself.

"My dear child, your mother and I have sent for you to tell you this, and to entreat you under the circumstances to postpone the day you have fixed for your marriage. We are convinced that something—the effect of a tropical climate, or possibly a stroke in the sun—has temporarily deranged his brain; perhaps he is a sleep-walker of an alarming kind, but in any case, we do not feel that we could trust our precious and only daughter to his care until we are assured that he is in a fit state to undertake your guardianship. And so we ask you to put it off for six months, at any rate. Will you do this?"

Hilda's face had flushed, and the tears had risen to her eyes while he was speaking. "Of course I must do so, if you insist, father. But it is very hard on Malcolm, who has waited patiently for me a year already. As for his brain being affected— of course that is absurd. No one knows better than I do that his intellect is as clear as my own, and far clearer. But sooner than have any trouble about the matter, I will do as you wish—only I don't know how I can tell him."

"I will do so, or your mother, if you prefer it."

"O, no! I would rather tell him myself," and she went out to find her lover and break the news as gently as possible.

Of course he was indignant and angry also at first, but eventually became calm, whilst he vowed to find out who was at the bottom of this burglary business before he was much older.

A week later he was no wiser than any one else, but there had been no further nightly visitation. Freda Birchett had gone home, as her services as bridesmaid were not to be in immediate requisition, promising, however, to return as soon as she was wanted.

Hilda had been feeling worried all day. Malcolm Vizard was bent on urging her to induce her parents to withdraw their prohibition, and if they would not do so, to marry him at once without their consent. She was torn by conflicting emotions, her duty to her father and mother, to whom she was as devotedly attached, and her love for Malcolm to whom she felt they were not quite just. She had taken off her dress and slipped on a peignor, and in order to distract her mind from anxious thought had gone to get a novel she was reading from her boudoir. She found an easy chair drawn up temptingly near to a small fire in the grate, and sank into it with the book unopened in her hand, and, womanlike, began fondly to mentally retrace what had happened since her lover came home from abroad. As she did so she remembered how gladly she had gone forth to greet him that day, only a fortnight ago, when she set out to meet him at the railway station. Suddenly, like a flash came the recollection of the tramp who sat at the roadside. At this moment she raised her eyes from the fireplace towards the window, and there, gazing at her through the panes of it, she beheld the yellow face and the peculiar eyes of the sailor. Just beneath him was the little table on which the Chinese idol stood, and while her terror kept her silent, with one blow he smashed the window, and thrusting his arm through it caught up the image and was gone. With his disappearance her courage gave her back her voice, and she screamed a succession of piercing shrieks, which quickly aroused the household and brought them to her room. In a few brief words she explained what had happened, and the broken glass and empty place on the table were corroborative evidence that the story she told was not a dream.

"But how in the world could he have got there?" exclaimed Mrs. Marshall; "and, my darling, how terribly frightened you must have been."

"I think the mysteries of these burglaries is explained at last," said Malcolm. "From Hilda's description the man was a Chinaman, and I have no doubt that what he has sought for ever since I came home he has now found, and we shall have no more housebreaking. The creature was clearly an emissary sent to retrieve the stolen god. They must have traced it to me, and probably he has been following me about ever since I landed in England, hoping to discover it. The Chinese can climb like cats, and I expect he got on to the roof of the conservatory, determining to investigate the bedrooms of the establishment, as he had already inspected the lower premises, and when Hilda brought the light into the boudoir she showed him what he had been looking for all this time. You may take my word for it, that is the explanation of the whole thing."

And after some consideration Mr. and Mrs. Marshall came to the conclusion he was right, and Freda Birchett was summoned to fulfill her friendly duty of bridesmaid at an early date.

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The last rays of a tropical sun were casting deep shadows along the jungle path in the far-off Easter island where our herio's purloinment of the curio had nearly brought about the loss of the lady for whom he had done the deed. A yellow-robed priest of Buddha came out from a limestone cave near, by, and proceeded with flowers and paper emblems to dress the shrine where, from the hole in the rock, once more smiled benignly down on him and his fellows in the village below, the Chinese idol of the triune god.

STATEROOM ON THE SUNNY SIDE.

Rooms on the south side of the ship as she crosses are the best. That is the side that the sun shines on, and it always seems to be less wave-beaten than to the north; one's chances of having the port open, if the weather is tolerable at all, are, therefore, better. On the big ships there are staterooms on four decks; the promenade deck, from which one can slip into the open air at once; the saloon deck, where the public rooms and the officers' cabins are, and also most of the bad smells; the main deck, given up almost entirely to staterooms, and the lower deck, where people do not stay unless they must.

AWFUL PICTURE OF WAR

GRAPHIC STORY OF THE RETREAT FROM LARISSA.

The Greek's Wild Rush For Safety—A Terrible Journey Among Wild Horses. Frenzied Men and Sobbing Women and Children—A Correspondent's Thrilling Experiences—And This Is War.

The correspondent of the Associated Press at Larissa, who was with the retreating party after the battle of Mati, has arrived at Athens. He says:—When I overtook the Greek infantry the latter were in straggling order, footsore and grimy from four days in the trenches and long exposure to shells enough to unnerve veterans. They went along in silence, a contrast with the ordinary chattering in the Greek ranks. The night was pitch dark and the red glare at Kutari and Deliler in the distance added to the weirdness of the scene. Later I passed batteries of artillery, mule trains, carts, waggons, crying villagers, women and children. It was pitiable. All were hopelessly mixed up. There was no attempt at order. All arms were intermingled and the confusion was completed by the shots and rushes of the Euzones and irregulars in every style of outfit. Their previous sullenness gave place to the clamor of disappointed and dispirited men. They forgot their weariness in wild imprecations against their Generals and other officers. The retreat became a rout. Our carriage was slowly picking its way through desperate men, crying women and children, and horses and donkeys, all overladen, which were creeping along at a snail's pace or prancing with nervous fright.

THE TURKS ARE UPON US.

Suddenly, above the din of the confused masses on the road and in the adjoining fields, came a roar, developing into a fierce, sustained yell, rolling from the distant rear with lightening speed. Soon, in the midst of this yell, could be distinguished cries of "The Turks are upon us!" In a few moments a dozen horsemen and as many riderless steeds appeared on the left at full gallop, the men shouting with frenzy, "Run, run, the Turks are here!" Into the night air rose this agonized roar, fairly paralyzing the imagination. It will remain in my memory for ever. The stampede was immediate. The animals were lashed into a gallop, and men, women and children and soldiers joined pell mell in a mad rush. Many who fell to the ground were tramped to death, and vehicles were overturned, mixing up bedding, furniture, ammunition, horses, donkeys, oxen and buffalos. (According to one story the horsemen who so suddenly appeared and caused this fearful stampede were really Circassian cavalry which debouched from Boughazi, but this report is not generally believed. Beside our carriage, two infantrymen appeared with faces blanched from terror. They jumped upon the steps and we tried to keep them out. One of them thereupon levelled his rifle in our direction. But suddenly their combined weight on the steps of one side of the carriage overturned it, smashed it to pieces, and The London Times correspondent and myself were thrown out. I was pinned by the leg under broken timbers as the pandemonium around increased. In a perfect insanity of terror soldiers, irregulars, and armed peasants began firing their rifles in every direction. From the front and rear, from right and left, the bullets whizzed but the reports of the firearms were scarcely heard above the roar of the people and the terror of the maddened animals. Even in the Shipka Pass, or in the hottest part of the fearful fighting at Plevna, I never witnessed such wild firing. The whole plain was lit by the flashes of the terror-stricken soldiery and peasants. Eventually The Times correspondent and myself succeeded in getting inside a ditch by the roadside and thus proceeded slowly. In this manner we succeeded in pushing forward for a time, when we were thrown down by a rush from behind and were trampled upon by scores of people. As I succeeded in rising to my feet an irregular who was rushing past deliberately turned, raised his rifle to within three inches of my head and fired. I ducked just in time and fell to the ground, thus saving my life. I had lost my companion in the meanwhile and walked on in the ditch referred to or else ploughed my way through the thick of the stampede.

A FRENZIED MOB.

The pandemonium had spread several miles. When I returned to the road, stumbling over dead and dying animals, men and women, the scene was terrible. The way was strewn with ammunition boxes, broken carts and furniture, the bedding of soldiers, blankets and tin pannikans. The latter rattled under the horses' feet, blankets became entangled in them and the animals, frantic with alarm, galloped about among the flying crowd, many of them riderless and deserted. Guns and ammunition, waggons and carts added to the obstruction. Their traces had been cut in order to enable the drivers to mount the horses attached to them and seek safety in flight. There were many struggles between the fugitives for the possession of horses, and in this manner the affrighted crowd struggled on for several miles, presenting a most vivid picture of disaster and fear. Some of the Greek officers, it is true, did their duty. They ordered the buglers and trumpeters to sound "cease firing" and rode about calling upon the fleeing soldiers to halt. But others of the Greek officers lost their heads and pushed onward as terrorized as the soldiery. One brave officer tried to bring his men to their senses by presenting a revolver at them and shouting, "Stop! stop!" but he might as well have called upon a whirlwind to stop. Gen. Mavromichaelis, who had evidently reached Larissa some time before, rode back some distance in order to arrest the stampede. Two miles from the Larissa road is situated an embankment, where the General succeeded in inducing half a company of footsore infantry to fall in. But thousands continued the pell mell rush for Larissa. There was a block at the bridge across the Salambria River, at the entrance of Larissa. Another terrific scene was there presented, guns, men and horses struggling in a fearful mass.

IN THE STREETS OF LARISSA.

In the streets of Larissa was indescribable confusion. Troops of all arms were mixed together, and they threw themselves down in utter exhaustion, heedless of the calls of trumpets and bugles summoning them to fall in. The inhabitants rushing about the streets intensified the confusion. Mere mention of the Turks was sufficient to create a frenzied rush. Some estimates of the number of deaths which occurred during the stampede and indiscriminate firing say that from 500 to 600 persons were killed. But your correspondent thinks these figures are exaggerated, though people declare thay have seen many waggons bringing dead to Larissa. All five newspaper correspondents who were in the stampede had miraculous escapes from death. The first hours of daylight were spent by the Greek officers in assembling their scattered troops and sending them to Pharsalos. The troops continued the march without any refreshment, and it is alleged that many of them had not tasted food since Friday morning. When it became known that Larissa was to be abandoned there was another panic. The women, and even the children, went about drawing their hands across their throats showing what they expected of the Turks, and in an incredibly short time the roads leading to Pharsalos and Volo were crowded with people, vehicles and animals, the latter bearing all kinds of household effects. A special train of trucks took to Volo about 3,000 people of every degree, the passengers hanging to the roofs and platforms like a swarm of bees. But the majority trudged along on foot, and many of the refugees threw anxious looks back at Larissa and the Vale of Pempo, fearing every moment a rush from the Circassian cavalry. By 1.30 p.m. Larissa was emptied.

PANIC AT VOLO.

Instead of following the troops to Pharsalos, the correspondent, in order to get off his despatches, pushed on to Volo, where there was a panic almost equalling the one witnessed at Larissa. Fugitives were arriving at Volo every few minutes, and they spread the rumors that the Turks would enter the place in a few hours. In the absence of steamers there was a general rush for caiques, on board which the well-to-do classes went to Euboea or other islands. Your correspondent hired a caique and went on board of it with a newspaper companion, Mr. Holdall. In a minute there was a great commotion, crowds of people shouting to us to come out of the boat. Then a number of men made a rush on board of her, threw Mr. Holdall out and pushed your correspondent ashore. It seems that the lower classes, panic-stricken, determined that if they could not escape from Volo no one else should do so, and they cried, "We must all die together." To such an extent did this feeling of panic spread that a Government steamer, which was embarking wounded soldiers for the Piraeus, was obliged to leave Volo harbor owing to the fact that the frantic population threatened to make a rush on board the steamship, which would probably have resulted in great loss of life. As it was, the wounded soldiers were taken on board the steamer in small boats, and the vessel sailed for the Piraeus in a hurry, leaving two English nurses and six wounded Greek soldiers on the quay. The nurses and wounded men were taken to the British Consulate. The excitement continued all day Sunday, but I secured a caique on the following day and proceeded to the Island of Euboea, whence by caiquing and driving, your correspondent reached Athens to-day, having been five days without removing shoes or clothing.

THE DURR LIGHT.

Made From Petroleum, and Will Burn in the Strongest Wind.

The remarkable light which has been brought forward in Germany and known as the Durr light is declared to be equally capable of use for interior illumination. It is originated by automatic evaporation and overheating of the vapors from ordinary lamp petroleum. The vapors, being converted into gas, when burned yield a light of from 3,500 to 14,000 candle power. The apparatus consists of a tank containing the supply of petroleum, which is removed sufficiently from the burner to avoid all danger of fire from the flame. The oil is conducted by drops into a burner of special construction, after the latter has been heated for about five minutes by means of oil which is burned in small heating pans furnished with the appratus. Behind the burner from which the flame issues there is a second burner, which, after the heating of the pans has been removed, continually produces the vapors and heats them to a high temperature, at the same time completely surrounding the first burner with a strong flame. This arrangement is said to make the extinction of the light an impossibility, even in the strongest wind. Fresh air is drawn in between the burner and the external cylinder by the force of the flame rushing out, and and by using this air in the burner a smokeless flame results on account of the air being heated. The oil used is ordinary 100 proof coal oil, the consumption of which is about 1 3-4 pints per 1,000 candle power.

THE ORGAN NOT POPULAR.

The demand for organ music in the United States, outside of churches, seems to be quite limited. Boston's great organ, once regarded as a wonder, has been stored in a shed for 13 years, and will soon be sold at auction. It was built in Germany at a cost of $60,000. One trouble about a great organ is that it is not easy to keep it supplied with a great organist.