# Jungle Breath

## by Ben Lucien Burman

SYNOPSIS

Attempts have been made on the life of Elise Marberry, owner of a coffee plantation near Porto Verde, Brazil. Several mysterious deaths have occurred, and Vilak, Elise's cousin and protector, believes that Gaylor Prentiss, Elise's enemy, is at the bottom of all the trouble. News comes that the dam at Avilos has broken, and Vilak, Elise and Lincoln Nunnally ride to warn Prentiss. They are fired upon from the woods and Vilak then determines that the threat of floods is a fake to get Prentiss out in the open that he might be murdered by his enemies. They barricade themselves in a tower and are besieged. When their ammunition gets low Vilak and Prentiss take dynamite and go to blow up the dyke holding a small lake.

CHAPTER XXX.

Five minutes passed. Ten minutes. A tuco-tuco, that strange South American animal which, like the mole, lives always underground, began its fantastic, resonant hammering beneath them. The green caterpillar, which had crawled up the wall, now crawled down again and vanished into the crack from which it had come.

Fifteen minutes. Shots rang out from the trees near the gate. Elise's powder-smoked lips quivered. Twenty minutes. Still no sign of the two men who had departed.

Elise rested her weary wrist. "Do you think . . . he's . . . hit?" she asked slowly.

"No . . . no . . . Er . . . no." The old man's voice expressed a cheerfulness he did not feel. "He's all right."

"Let me tie up your arm again. The bleeding's recommenced."

She made the bandage tighter. As she did so, the door opened cautiously. Vilak stepped inside. His clothes were covered with mud, his face scratched with brambles.

"Bad shots," he grunted. "Or they would have had me. Moon went under for a minute. Thought I was safe but it came out in a hurry and they saw me. Fuse's lit all right."

The old man wonderingly watched him shut the door. "Where is . . . er . . . Prentiss?"

"Went over to the house to get something. Said he'd be back in a minute."

Once more the log thundered against the gate with an increased violence which showed that the attackers had well profited by their rest. The iron, weakened by the previous assaults, could no longer resist the tremendous blows rained upon it. It cracked explosively.

"Broken through," Vilak snapped. "The water'll have to be fast."

A torch glared along the creek, then another and another.

"Try to smoke us out, probably. Won't get them very far, when we're in this stone tower."

One torch seemed to speed through the gate. Vilak fired. The torch went out. A moment later all the torches were extinguished.

Vilak swiftly glanced at his watch. "Fuse been burning seven minutes," he said placidly. "Two minutes overdue as nearly as I can calculate a makeshift affair. Our friends are now undoubtedly crawling through the gate. If it doesn't go off soon, we'll be in trouble. Wonder what's keeping Prentiss."

He slipped a pellet of betel into his mouth and fixed his gaze upon his watch. A bit of mortar loosened by the firing dropped down upon his muddy black hair and a few of the grains fell into one of Elise's eyes. Quickly, dextrously, he began to remove them.

A flash of light colored the sky behind the house; the roar of a powerful explosion shook the ground. "There it goes," Vilak murmured.

The roar of the explosion was followed by the clatter of crashing rocks, then the steady, dull thunder of rushing water. Frightened shouts arose from the bushes at the creek; the watchers in the towers could see shadows scurrying frantically about, some dodging back to the gate through which they had come, others racing to the house, all fleeing from the unseen, booming peril whose nature they could divine only dimly.

With a muffled report, the fazenda wall toward the lake collapsed as a huge wave of water sweeping down from above surged against it. A mad, moving mountain, spreading wider and wider as it went, it circled house and tower, and hurtled toward the creek, sweeping away trees, walls, low-lying sheds, anything which came within its fierce embrace.

A second wave came down upon the first; it swirled up the ground around the tower and began licking at the foundation stones. The three inside watched it fascinated, tried to distinguished whether the black forms bobbing on its crest were branches or men. But the moon had gone under a cloud again and they could see clearly only a few feet ahead.

The water began trickling over the door-sill. The old man eyed it apprehensively. Vilak caught his glance. "No use worrying, Nanny." Coolly he lit his cigaret. The trickle became more rapid. Vilak held out his cigaret case. The old man shook his head nervously.

"I tell you there's no use worrying," Vilak went on, his eyes again at the window. "Either the water rises, and makes the tower collapse, or it doesn't. These are the only two things that can possibly happen. If it collapses, then it'll be time to think about it. Meanwhile, we've done everything we can, and there's nothing to be gained by getting nervous about it. Wish it wasn't so confounded dark. Could see then whether our friends had gotten away or not. Wonder what's happened to Prentiss?" He extended the cigaret case to Elise. "You're not going to desert me too, are you, cousin?"

She brushed her hair back from her blackened face. "Surely I'll smoke with you." She smiled faintly. "Not one of yours . . . if you don't mind."

The old man decided to join them. Vilak took the candle from the corner, lit the cigarets, then put the candle upon a shelf. The water began to inundate the room.

"Might as well get comfortable," Vilak said, as he pushed a heavy table toward the centre of the room. "If we all sit on this, we may not get so wet."

They climbed up. "More water than I expected," he went on. "Lake either deeper, or we started that one next to it on a little voyage, too. One thing's in our favor: the higher the water rises, the more ground it has to cover. Certainly oughtn't rise much more."

They stretched out on the table, their feet overhanging the edge, the old man watching the water creeping higher and higher up the walls. Elise leaning down and trying to wash some of the powder stains from her eyes and mouth.

The water climbed half way up the table, then neared the top. The tower gave a slight quiver and a gap appeared in the stones near the foot. Nunnally let his cigaret sizzle into the water. "Don't you think . . er . . . Vilak . . . we'd better try to depart from here? The water's still rising. And that wall seems about to . . . er . . . topple."

"Refuse to worry until it gets at least a couple of feet higher. Then we'll get out on a log or something if we have to. Water can't keep rising forever. And that's a pretty good wall and I don't think it's ready to fall. Yet, at least. I'm not going to let an insignificant crack in it rout me out of my comfortable seat." He leaned back lazily. A centipede crawled out from the under side of the table-top onto his coat. He brushed it away.

The rise of the water slackened. Soon it became stationary. It remained thus for perhaps ten minutes, then slowly began to fall. Inch by inch it crept down the walls, exposing now the black seat of a broken chair, now the tops of two iron pots standing on the floor, now with a final swish vanishing and exposing the muddy floor itself.

They climbed down from the table and, going to one of the windows, attempted to peer out to watch the retreat of the rising water. But the disappearing of the moon for the night seemed permanent, their eyes could not pierce the obscurity. They could gauge its fall somewhat, however, by the growing faintness of the murmuring eddies as they dropped lower and lower down the slight rises on which stood the house and tower.

"Wonder how Prentiss fared in all this?" Vilak said. He stretched again. Elise vigorously slapped a foot which had gone to sleep; the old man shifted the bandage, to curiously regard the wound.

In a quarter of an hour they were standing outside, while Vilak was flashing his electric torch on the water in the low gully which lay between the tower and the house. "Be down enough to get across in a few minutes," he said thoughtfully. "Funny about Prentiss. Wait a little while, and if he doesn't come we'll go out to look for him."

Soon after the odd trio slushed through the mud to the house. Vilak's lantern sprayed the gloomy exterior with a white circle of light. "Prentiss!" he shouted. There was no answer. "Prentiss! Where the devil are you?" he called again, making a megaphone of his hands to gain greater volume.

His only reply was a wolf-like howl from an aguara off in the forest. His great blond eyebrows puckered. "Funny. Mighty funny. . . Let's go inside."

They entered the desolate structure. Again they walked through crumbling living rooms, moldering bedrooms, the ruins of a kitchen. They peered into every musty cupboard and pried into every skeleton of an attic. In one hall which formed the gloomy entrance to the forlorn building were a few muddy prints which Vilak had no difficulty in recognizing as the marks of the heavy hunting shoes Prentiss constantly wore. Beyond this there was nothing. Man and dog as well had vanished.

(To be continued.)

She made the bandage tighter. As she did so, the door opened cautiously. Vilak stepped inside.

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## New Party Formed

Hamburg, Germany.—Five thousand German inventors met here recently in Whitsuntide congress, and added another to the legion of existing German parties. The new group is called the "party of technics." The leaders said the organization would strive to smooth the way for German inventive genius to develop new technical schemes which might partly solve the unemployment problem.

Motoring-Mike says: "Not all the wooden-headed drivers are found on golf courses."

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## Mother Dear

### A Grown-up Child's Prayer

By BETTY GOURRE

Let me please, oh Mother dear
Lay my head upon your breast
And in silence surely feel,
Here, at last, I can find rest.

I cannot find the words to tell you,
What burns in my heart so deep;
Just let, me, Mother, like a child
Sit near you—and softly weep.

Do not question; Such a child
Cannot find expression
For the thoughts that rack the mind
And that need suppression.

Everything is still too new,
Do not know its name;
Only lately have I learnt
To know—love and pain!

Let me please, Mother dear,
Lay my head upon your breast,
And in silence surely feel,
That with your love I am blessed!

## Memories

By BETTY GOURRE

I found a rose in an old, old book,
Hidden away in a dusty nook
In a summer house by a rippling brook!

It had shrivelled and died in that tumble-down shed
Had no bright green leaves or petals of red,
But it brought to my mind a romance long dead!

Fragrant and sweet in that old book it lies,
And though its long long ago, and I'm old and wise,
Somehow the tears find their way to my eyes!

I thought of a far away night in June,
Starry skies, and a glittering moon,
And of innocent love that had ended too soon!

Minard's Drives Away the Headache.

Little Joseph had recently taken up the study of physiology, which he found so interesting that he was eager to apply its teachings in the home. Particularly as regarded the daily food Joseph was inclined to condemn or approve uncompromisingly from his physiological standard. One evening his aunt was serving some fresh apple cider, when Joseph's uncle jokingly said, "How about this cider being good for us, Joseph?" The boy, looking very serious, replied, "I don't think it is very good for us, uncle William, as our 'Physiology' says cider contains 10 per cent. alcohol!" "Is that so?" said uncle William. "Well, how can you explain the case of our neighbor, Mr. Jowles, who raised a great many apples, made cider by the barrel, and all his life drank quantities of it, and yet lived to be 94 years old?" Little Joseph felt his pet study was being severely assailed, and it was necessary for him to defend it with a clinching argument, so, with quivering lips, he stammered, "Well, I—I'll—bet he wasn't very healthy when he died!"

Great inventions are often the simplest: The architect took the door off a clothes closet and called it a breakfast nook.

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## Sporting

Old Brown had had a terrible morning. He was unable to walk, and had engaged a man to pull him about in an invalid's chair. Twice they had nearly been crushed under a tramcar, and once the invalid-chair man had almost dropped his charge into a river.

They halted at the top of a very steep hill. At first Brown welcomed the halt. But at last he began to get restless.

"Why are you stopping here?" he asked, nervously.

"It's all right, guv'nor," the attendant replied. "I' only waiting for my mate, with another old gent. We're going to 'ave a race down the 'ill."—Tit-Bits.

Premier Ferguson gives Sir John A. all the credit for Canada's progress to date. Evidently most of the money spent on the two volumes of "Great Men of Canada" was wasted.

## Lemon Pudding

Juice of 1 lemon and the grated rind of ½ lemon, 1 cup sugar, yolks of two eggs (beaten well), 1 teaspoon of melted butter, 2 tablespoons flour, 1 cup sweet milk.

Method: Mix together in following order: Sugar, juice and rind of lemon, egg-yolks, butter, flour, milk, and, lastly, fold in beaten whites of eggs. Pour into buttered pudding-dish, set dish in larger pan of water and bake 40 minutes.


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