MASTER KEV

CHAPTER XXI.

"Only an idol." dus, Harry Wilkerson stared pers. tle daughter-had drawn a plan by eyes. candlelight, to the quarrel, to his own "No plans!" muttered Wilkerson with desperate flight and escape.

And now he was about to see for the "Only an idol?" laughed Jean in wild first time the fatal paper-to know the derision secret of the wealth of the "Master Key." He forgot his surroundings.

'It was Jean Darnell who recalled' bim to the present. She leaned over



Thomas Gallon and His Little Daughter.

his shoulder as he knelt, and the perfume of her breathed into his nostrils. He looked up, laughed and then ordered the box taken aft.

"I was dreaming," he said slowly, Then be looked at her directly, and she saw the flame in his eyes. "Why dream when things are com-

ing true?" she parried. "I wonder whether they will all come true," he said moodily and followed

the chest aft. The curious sailors set the box down and waited. It was evident from their attitudes that they expected to see

nothing less than great treasure. Otherwise, why this costly expedition? But Wilkerson did not start immediately to open the chest. Its very appearance seemed to bewilder him, and

his hands shook. It was Jean Darnell who stirred him to activity. "Now you've got it." she said impatiently, "hurry and open it! The other

launch is chasing us!" Wilkerson stared around and picked

up a marlinspike. He began to pry at the lock. Mrs. Darnell angrily jerked at his shoulder. "Harry, you fool, here is the key!"

He took the article she handed him and nodded. "Sure enough," he assent ed, "we have the key! Funnyal had forgot that."

With some difficulty he managed to clear the lock and insert the key. It turned with difficulty. A moment later he had pried the lid

back from its setting of rust and slime and they were all staring at the sodden contents. There was no sound except the trun-

dling of the swiftly revolving propeller and the heavy breathing of the

Suddenly Wilkerson swung round angrily and ordered everybody forward. Then be began his slow search.

Old jackets almost disintegrated by the action of water, pulpy papers and



Wilkerson Stared at It Stupidly.

various odds and ends came to his hand. The pulp he carefully laid aside as being possibly what he was looking for.

"I'm afraid the plans are gone," Jean "We must find them?" he snarled and

went on with his task. Halfway down he came upon a grotesque figure dripping with woody poze. It stiffly stared up at him as he

idols don't talk.

HEN the chest was hove on An hour afterward Harry Wilkerson deck, dripping with ocean rose to his feet and kicked the scafterslime, corroded and mysteri ed contents of the chest into the scup- .. "We must trace the sailor. Ten to looking for. Do you remember that

down the years to that night when a stop upright against the bulwarks, Thomas Gallon-scheming for his lit- when it presented glazed, mysterious swered.

Then her handsome face flamed with

wrath. She turned her back contemptuously on Wilkerson and stared across the water at the launch, which was pursuing them. In the bitterness of her heart was no

mingling of pity for her tool; only self contempt that she had depended on him, belped him. When she could control herself she rugs, who was presumably an East In-

went forward to get out of sight of dian. the mocking heap of rubbish that had cost so much.

his shirt.

escaped from Wilkerson's filching fin- ed it," she remarked. When the launch put into San Pedro woman mixed herself up in this," John

Mrs. Darnell did not wait for Wilker-"I'm going to Los Angeles," she said.

"You'll find me at the hotel-if you think it worth your while." He looked up from his business of settling with the divers and made a

gesture to detain her. He seemed to call out some inarticulate plea. She merely smiled again and left. She paid no attention to one of the sailors who brushed by her, clutching a concealed object beneath his jacket. This individual, once clear of the wa-

ter front, quickly made his way to a pawnbroker's shop, and the idoi changed hands for a small sum after much haggling. Before Wilkerson had settled with

the diver John Dorr's launch also made its landing, and the two enemies would have met except that Wilkerson had to go to bank to cash a draft. As he slipped away he saw the other hoat and laughed bitterly. Dorr was welcome to what there was in the old

"There is just one thing to do," John told the broken hearted Ruth, "and



"I'm going to Los Angeles," she said. that is to find out what Wilkerson did with what he got from your father's

The captain of the other boat received them with a good humored grin and in answer to their inquiries pointed to the open box and the articles scattered on the deck.

"So far as I could make out," he went on, "there wasn't anything in the old chest worth the trouble of going after. At any rate Mr. Wilkerson and the fady seemed disappointed and put

"Didn't they take anything?" demanded Ruth, peering curiously at the moidy sea chest. "Not a thing, so far as I could discover," was the reply. "In fact, I

heard the two of them kind of quarreling, and the lady went off by ber-The three of them stared down at the mementos of the long past trage-

dy, and then the captain suddenly ejaculated, "Yes, there is one thing miss-"What is that?" demanded John.

"An old idot. But I'm sure neither of them took it."

"But what became of it?" John continued, trying to conceat his anxiety. "Maybe one of the men picked it up for a curio," the skipper said apologetically. "Everybody seemed to think the old thing was worthless, and you know a sailer will grab at just that

A few moments later Dorr had learned that one of the saliers had indeed taken the image and gone uptown with | was in a towering rage, though she He was ready to do murder deliber-

it, apparently to sell it.

"But where can we find it?" she

one bo'll try to sell it to a secondhand | idol that was in the chest?" at it stupidly. His mind went back The .idol rolled away and came to man. Our best plan is to look into the

> no information of value. The third pawnbroker looked at Borr curiously been in to dispose of an idol.

"That thing seems to be wanted pretty much," be remarked. "But I bought it in good faith and sold it to a Hindu a little while after for a rug. Maybe-

you would like to buy a rug?" They made it plain that rugs did not interest them and departed with the poor satisfaction of knowing that the object of their search was in the hands of an unknown wandering peddler of "We can't do any more just now,"

John told Ruth.

Presently a sailor made excuse to "No," was the response, "But I am come aft and peered at the pile of going to keep an eye out for a Hindu junk. The idol caught his eye, and he rug seller. I don't imagine there are stealthily caught it up and bid it in very many of them here, so it ought to be an easy matter to pick him up." "Good in a pawnshop," he chuckled. As they walked back to the hotel Thus once more the plans of the Ruth grew more cheerful. "At any mother lode of the "Master Key" mine rate. Wilkerson and Mrs. Darnell miss-

"I never understood just why that



"All she is after is money."

said thoughtfully. "You must have got some notion. Ruth. You were with her some time."

"Yes, I have an idea," she responded. "I'm not sure of all the details, but it seems Mrs. Darnell knew both father and Harry Wilkerson in the old days and-and"-"And what?"

ly, "father didn't like Jean and very essence of his being, bated father after that."

her," John said presently. "I think he is," Ruth asserted. "But she doesn't care anything about him, I'm sure. All she is after is money."

Later in the evening as they discussed the events of the day John brought up the subject of Wilkerson's anxiety for the papers again and recalled the fact that old Tour Gallon had always insisted on Wilkerson's knowledge of something.

"I wonder just what it was," he went on, "If he knows just where that rich lode is he's concealed his knowledge pretty well, and the eagerness he is showing to get hold of the plans is proof that he isn't sure." "He is spending lots of money," she

sighed. "How much longer can we keep this up. John? Surely we are broke again?"

"Not so long as good old Everett sticks by us," was the response. "But-maybe father was mistaken,

and we can't pay it all back!" "Nonsense!" be said reassuringly. can make the mine pay just as it stands. But I promised your father I'd see that you got all your rights, and be certainly meant for you to have the wealth bidden somewhere in the 'Mas-

ter Key' mine." "And we've lost the deeds and the key, and we haven't found the plans." she sighed.

"I'll find that Hindu and his preclous idol if I have to go to India," he said promptly. "One thing-we won't have Harry Wilkerson spoiling our schemes. He'll give up now."

But Wilkerson had not given up. On his return from the bank he had learned from the launch captain of Dorr's interest in the idol, and he had promptly followed this clew, with the result that he knew as much about its whereabouts as John and Ruth did, so far as its getting into the hands of an East Indian peddler was concerned. Whether Dorr had recovered the image from him he did not know.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Quest of the Hindu. told him distinctly that she that moment, but himself. was outwardly calm.

"An idol?" laughed Mrs. Darnell, 3e and Ruth were out of earshot as early to ner blazing eyes nor to her re- thirst-the blood lust.

"That idol as what we are after, strained, "Well, once more your schemes have failed." "Not failed," he said boldly. "I ad-

mit we nearly passed up what we were Jean stopped her nervous pacing of

eyes on Wilkerson. The first places they visited gave up "Harry," she said buskily, "I am wary of this."

"Wait a moment," he pleaded. when he asked whether a man had "When I went back to the launch I found that Dorr had been quizzing the men about that image." "And I suppose he had got it."

"No, he didn't. One of the sailors



"I don't know where it is," he responded sullenly. "A Hindu rug peddler bought it."

"And Dorr bought it from him?" "Not yet." he said, risking the statement. "Now all I have to do is to find Mr. Peddler and get it back."

Mrs. Darnell flung berself into a chair and laughed hysterically. "You mean to tell me Tom Gallon hid his plans in a heathen idol and

that we overlooked them and that a rug peddler has them now?" She leaned forward, clinching her soft hands on her knees.

"Do you know all you have made me go through, Harry? Kidnaping. theft, murder-yes, murder-and at the end of it all, when we neither of us dare breathe for fear of the police finally getting us, you tell me that a tramp has got what we want! I'm

Wilkerson had expected and feared this. He saw his wild efforts going for nothing. Without her assistance feel," be told them. But they were and her money he was helpless. And profounder even than his hatred

of Dorr and his desire for the hidden wealth was his agony at the thought of his failure to win this woman whom for it and set the image in the shrine. he loved. Love is a noun which conveys to the

without an adjective. There is, indeed, an essence of love, a complete and all absorbing passion, before which even the gods bow and against which the world is powerless. Too often we must describe it as lawless. Yet it also exists when it evokes the

reverence of the most cynical. Wil-"Well," she went on, blushing divine. kerson's love for Jean Darnell was the wouldn't have anything to do with her It had made a brave of a coward.

nor allow me to either. She always It had welded a dozen strands of viclousness, weakness, wickedness and "Wilkerson is certainly in love with treacherousness into a strong character-strong only in its relation to the The past few weeks, with their wildness, risk, crime and continual plot-

ting, had made the Harry Wilkerson who was a weakling and sport of circumstances into a personality who must be dealt with. Jean Darnell realized something of

this when he next spoke. "All this has been disappointing." he said quietly, his eyes burning steadily on hers. "But the more disappointments I have to overcome the more worth while it will make you." "Quite an old time knight," she said

scornfully, but with an effort. "I am going to get that idol," he went on. "I know just two things-



"I'm going to get that idol." here are millions in gold hidden in

'Master Key mine, and the plans | Centuries passed, and the god still tre concented in that image". "When will you have them?" eried, trying to fight against the man's | And one day a drunken sailor wanrower live

"Tomorrow," he returned

"Even if Dorr and Buth"-He modded gravely She read the

stely, without a quaim. There had John thanked the captain, and when Wilkerson paid no attention appar- been born in him another physical flou," was the answer.

He left immediately without uncovering his plans. He knew that the final victory would not be won until be could fill Jean Darnell's soft and avaricious palms with glittering gold, sky, with a rope twisted tightly about heaps of gold, gold that ran over, that his neck, spilled in luxuriant streams over her pawnshops, I think, Ruth," he an the floor and fixed her great, tawny clutching fingers; gold that rang under her feet, that mounted like an enveloping flood about her till her flesh was bathed in it.

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That night he paced the floor of his room, dreaming of gold and of blood. So the next morning when John Dorr fared forth on his quest for the rug peddler Harry Wilkerson was not far behind him, watching his every move. studying him, trying to read what was in his mind. And all with the great question before him:

Had John Dorr the idel? While these two were seeking for the strange image of an unknown god ple. there was a third who had found in it There was no response from the imthe goal of his life's toil.

When God conceals himself from us in time of stress and agony, when he has closed his brazen heavens and our prayers die in the empty air it is human to build for ourselves a tangible God, one whom we can see and feel, into whose face we can look and before whose feet we can-lay our offerings and our petitions. In a far city in India men had died

of famine. The earth had turned to iron under their plows and the heavens to brass above them.

They bad implored a bundred gods for help and made offerings at a thousand shrines. There had been no response. The smoke of the burning ghats by the side of the shrunken river told the sorry tale of prayer unan-

And in their last misery men turned, as men will, to one who dreamed. Reality was death. Dreams held out the promise of life. And this dreamer, as do all who fol-

low a vision, made his dream into a People listened to his tale of a deity who was merciful to listen and powerful to save. They fed on the dreamer's words and called him a prophet."

Yet still the earth refused food, and the river shrank within its bed. Then they went to the prophet and called on him to save them and to call his god to their aid. Like many prophets, he found himself forced to materialize his dream in

and believe, for he had taught them that unless they believed there was no salvation. "How can we believe in a god whom we cannot see?" they cried. "I believe, though I do not see nor.

order that the common folk might see

not satisfied and menaced him with So he took metats and fire and made an image of his god and made a shrine

where all might see and worship. And the people prayed to this new ordinary mortal no definite meaning god and laid offerings at his feet and



A Hindu Selling Rugs.

looked into his eyes and called upon him to save them, as his prophet had

said he was able. Thus, with the folk believing on the god of his vision, the prophet prayed also to the spirit of the delty, and the rains came from the hills, and the river rose, and the earth grew green. When they had been saved and their

stomachs were full the people went away and left the prophet alone with his god and his deserted shrine. Yet always in time of trouble and stress they remembered the god who had saved them and returned to his worship, so that in season other prophets of him arose and erected a temple and taught the people to bring offer-

ings at all times. Thus the image became the image of the tutelary deity of the city and its river, with other images to do him homage and obey his commands.

maintained his place. His priesthood

prospered; his temple was never empty. dered into the temple to stare at the beathen wonders, and when he slipped away the niche of the god was vacant. "He has gone on a journey," said the kind of thing. Better ask some of the HAT night Wilkerson sought message in his eyes and shuddered terrified priests and concealed the theft. out Jean Darnell. She re- Wilkerson langhed. He had won. He But the high priest sent several of his ceived him in a manner that had conquered not only the woman in chosen acolytes throughout the world to seek for and recover the image. "How shall we find him?" they asked,

#By a path of death and destruc-So they set out and found the sailor

who had stolen it dead in a lane with a knife between his shoulders. And his murderer they discovered in a Chinese seaport gaping horridly at the

So the image passed from hand to hand, always bringing with it death, until some sailor hid it in his chest, and when he had been washed over side in a storm and his effects were distributed a captain bought the idoi for a curio.

It was in his chest that Thomas Gallon had found it when seeking a safe place to hide his precious papers in time of mutiny and fire.

Now, at last, it had fallen into the hands of one of the seekers, and be took it to his little tenement room and prayed to it and swore that he would return it to its proper place in the tem-

age, but when the Indian fell asleep on his rug that night in the alien Amer-



Dorr's Greams of Love.

ican city be dreamed that his god appeared to him and spoke of death and destruction yet to follow, commanding him to start instantly for the east. The next day, while Dorr was seek-

ing for a Hindu selling rugs and Wilkerson was shadowing him the new possessor of the idol was hastening to San Francisco to take steamer for india and the city by the river.

The image was conceased with all reverence in his bundle of rugs, and be moved cautiously, because of the dream.

Strange destiny that centered old Tom Gallon's plans for his daughter's happiness, Dorr's dreams of love, Jean Darnell's lust for wealth and Harry Wilkerson's passion for a woman without a heart in the possession of a grotesque image made by a dreamer in faroff India centuries before when city died and a river waned within its

Continued on Tuesday, April 20th.

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