

got a neighbor up to witness Butch's going and coming. Hard on the neighbor, but good for the victim of a frame-up. Butch was only gone twelve minutes."

Tiny beads of perspiration started on Wolfe's forehead, and the palms of his hands grew wet. Dawn was coming. He turned his face away from the growing light. With a stupendous effort he swallowed, half choking. With another stupendous effort he spoke.

"Frame-up is right! You believe a bunch of bums in a Cayuga Street flat. Frisk 'em right now! Frisk that Crogan flat, I tell you, and you can find ten thousand in silk. I can uncover enough right now to—"

The chief rose, stepped to a small table near Wolfe's bed, and took in his hand a package of Wolfe's Philippine cigarettes.

"Wolfe, come through," he said quietly. "You used gloves on the safe. Whipped 'em from your pocket, didn't you?"

The chief gazed quizzically at a cigarette he had extracted from the package, then at a white packet he held, which contained a few flakes of tobacco.

"These cigarettes have loose ends, Wolfe—just like your whole job. *The dame found some of this Philippine tobacco stuck on the hinge, and more under the safe.*"

The chief shook Black Wolfe.

"Damn me if he hasn't fainted dead away!" he exclaimed.

The Bird on the Bench

THE AMUSING ADVENTURES OF A RISING YOUNG HITTER WITH
A CLUB ON ONE OF THE FINNEGAN LEAGUES

By James W. Egan

MAYBE I'm better at throwing the apple than the old ink, but right here I'm gonna make a stab at breaking into a league where the words is printed. I got something to say, I have. All my young and hard-hitting life I been reading stories that have some bright and intellectual manager telling the unarmed public what awful saps us athletes is, and I guess it's about time one of the said saps unfolds his clam and pulls a couple o' squawks to the likewise.

I'll admit some of the birds that sock 'em and shag 'em ain't so well-built between the ears as they might be. On the other hand, I've seen babies taking orders from a goof on the bench who knew less than a college guy trying to trick Thomas Edison out o' one of his jobs. Many a bimbo out on the old ball orchard has had the fans cussing him for pulling some terrible skull, when all the time the real guilty party is a cuckoo in the dugout suffering from Charlie horse of the brain.

I spend a couple o' seasons in the sticks learning the joys of being a ball-player

every day in the week, and I think I've met all the bum managers on Terry's firm, as the highbrows yodel it. Then, last spring, the San Francisco Seals release me outright to the Quartz Hill club of the Ore Belt loop.

Sweet cousin! The Ore Belt is one of them Finnegan leagues—off again and on again. It's a good deal like a touring-car you buy second-hand—likely to quit running any time. Naturally they don't get the highest-grade material on the old dish for pilots in this kind o' circuit; but, even so, I haven't a hunch of what I'm gonna bump into at Quartz Hill.

One of the old heads on the Seals does warble a few words the day I get the well-known hatchet.

"Sending you to the Ore Belt, huh? Quartz Hill? Say, I'll bet that's the club Fowler Ball is handling. Watch out for him, son! I know that guy, and he's a hard egg. The fellows on his club usta call him Fowl Ball, and the monniker fits him like liver does bacon. He just loves to burn a guy up."

Well, I think he's trying to kid me along a bit because he's a vet. Being a trifle vexed at the Frisco bunch for not giving me much of a trial, I let his remarks sail in one ear and gently ooze out o' the other.

I blow into Quartz Hill one evening about the time the sidewalks is being rolled up, and inquire at one of the links in a chain of a million hotels named "Tourist" if Manager Fowler Ball of the Quartz Hill Hustlers is on the premises.

The sprightly young clerk, who prob'ly started reading the sport pages the year Grant outpitched Lee at Appomattox, gargles that Mr. Ball is out, but will be back any minute.

A big husky bimbo who is adorning the pretentious and palatial lobby overhears what I chirp to the clerk, and ambles in my direction.

"You gonna play ball with Quartz Hill, buddy? Where you from?"

"I was cabled here by the San Francisco Seals," I says. "Of course Charlie Graham might 'a' done worse. He could have shipped me to Russia."

"You should moan!" growls this baby. "I was booted to this scratch on the face of nature by the Kansas City club. They sent me far enough. It 'll take the rest of my life to get back there."

"What's your position?" I asks.

"Oh, I heave the onion. I'm one of the goofy boys who shoot 'em from the port side. I been wild as an alligator this season, and I guess it's the reason I didn't last long in the Association."

"Well, my sole interest in pitching is whether or not I can hit it," I says. "I'm an out-fielder. I wonder what kind o' loop this is, anyhow!"

"One of them leagues that limp along like a flivver on the rims. They play five games a week, starting Wednesdays, and each club is cut to twelve men. The change catcher plays the gardens with this outfit, I think. I just reported this afternoon myself."

"You've seen the manager, then?"

"Yeh, I've seen and heard him. He's the arsenic. Wait until you get a flash of him."

Just as the left-handed bird from K. C. finishes squawking, a guy with a map that would make granite seem as yielding as jello tramps into the lobby. The giddy young clerk hails him.

"Gentleman to see you, Mr. Ball."

"Gentleman, hell!" gargles the latest arrival. "I'll bet it's a ball-player."

"You guessed it. I'm Bob Shannon, from the Seals." I offers the old mitt. "Howdy, Mr. Ball?"

"So you're Shannon?" Ball hands me one of them glances a butcher bestows on a healthy young hog before he carves it into pork chops. "They tell me you hit. Must be a dinger with the cue to fall back this far in the weeds, all right! I never was shipped a good athlete yet—and I never expect to be."

"Oh, I hit them if they are in there," I says, kind o' stung by his tone. "I oughta get by in the hand-car leagues, at least."

"Don't go turning up your nose at the league before you've played a game or two. You ain't no world-beater, likely," snaps Mr. Ball. "And while you and Gallagher here are new, I want to tell you something. No merry carousing goes in this club. No chicken-chasing or moonshine-guzzling or the like! I got my training rules, and I am the guy who can break the bird who breaks them!"

After a few more jolly and good-natured remarks he legs it up to the hay, leaving me and Lefty Gallagher—which is the handle of this Kansas City chucker—to weep on each other's shoulders.

"Nice fellow!" mutters the southpaw. "The catcher told me at dinner he ain't married. Too bad! A guy with his sweet, sunny disposition oughta have a wife he could go home and club for a while, so's he'd hit the feathers in a good humor."

II

THE Quartz Hill Hustlers were at home for a series with the Silver Summit club, and I break into the line-up the next matinee performance, playin' right field.

It's the seventh frame before I click my first blow. There's two down and we're a run behind when I smear a fat one for three pillows. The peg is made to the plate, but I don't try to stretch the wallop.

Lefty Gallagher happens to be doing the coaching gag on third, and he grins and tells me what a pretty clout she was. Feeling kind o' good, I step off the old bag and get a lead of four or five feet. The pitcher looks over at me, and I uncork a sarcastic smile for him.

All of a sudden—bang!

A ball whizzes by my ear into the third baseman's mitts, and I'm caught off the

cushion for the third out before I wake up to the sad fact that the Silver Summit backstop had been hiding the cherry on me all the time. An old bush trick! Both me and the coach were sound asleep when they pulled it.

Right pronto I'm given a chance to appreciate Fowl Ball's line when he's left a juicy opening. As I walk into the bench, taking the old razzberry on all sides, the manager leaps out o' the pit and grabs my arm.

"You dumb-bell! You half-witted sap!" he yodels. "Here, look up there!" He gives me a jerk. "See that sun up there? It's shining. Probably you don't know it, but the sun shines every fine day, whether you see it or not."

He says a lot more, too, in front of everybody. I know I've pulled a skull, but, believe me, I don't care to be bawled out with the entire world listening in on it. I don't squawk back, yet I'm within an ace of cracking him between the eyes.

Grabbing my glove I hike out into right field, boiling mad, and as I leave I hear a few of the things he hurls at Lefty Gallagher, the coach.

"I know now why they put fenders on trolley-cars!" Ball raves. "You—you—"

He says plenty. After the game the Kansas City fork-hander, who's become my roomie, tells me murder is gonna be done some day, and that Fowl Ball is very apt to be featured in the event. Gallagher is about as mad as a man with a name like that oughta be.

As the week rolls by, I get a pretty fair idea of what a regular fellow Fowler Ball ain't. He's about as mean as they make 'em, and continually crabbing three hundred. It's a wonder the boys worked out there at all. Despite the manager, though, the club was jazzing along in second place.

From what I can pick up, Munro Landers, the prexy of the Hustlers, is a square shooter and a good guy; but he's one of them club heads who don't butt in on the manager every minute. He pays a pilot to run the works and lets him do it—which is usually smart stuff, but not always.

I can't complain at the way I get to going in the Ore Belt. Right off the jump I develop a batting streak, and in the Sunday game I'm lucky enough to smack two drives in a row over the right-field fence, the first time the trick's been turned since Quartz Hill had a ball-park. That makes

me something of a hero with the well-known paid admissions.

The club hits the road for a week, and I sock the onion at a merry clip. When we return, I'm thumpin' over four hundred, and in the opener against Woolville, on Wednesday, I click out four singles.

That same evening Lefty Gallagher and me decide to take in a hop. Lefty hasn't been doing so well in the box as I have in the outfield. My roomie's wild streak persists, and has caused him to drop one tussle he should have won; and of course Manager Ball has made comments—oh, yea!

In the middle of the dance I spear a fox-trot with a sweet little jane, and I fall for her heavy. She tells me that her name is Molly Shade, and that she has a steady job giving wrong numbers to people who use telephones.

"I've seen you play ball several times, Mr. Shannon," she smiles. "I think you hit just dandy!"

"So you're a regular fanette?" I mumble, blushing a bit at the last remark.

"Yes, indeed. I never cared much about the game until I became acquainted with your manager, Mr. Ball, but now I'm crazy over the old pastime, as I suppose you'd call it."

"You know Mr. Ball, too?" I gargle, not so cheerful.

"We are quite good friends," she admits.

This kind o' spills the salt in the ice-cream for me, but I grab off all the dances I can the rest of the evening, and I can't help noticing she rather favors me. I go so far as to cop the home-sweet-home, and I figure this gives me the privilege of asking if I can see her to the family mansion. Therefore I ask.

"If you'd care to, Mr. Shannon," she surprises me.

Mebbe Fowl Ball hasn't everything his way yet, I deduce; so on the trip to the old homestead I mention a date some night later in the week.

"To-morrow I am going to the show with Mr. Ball, and Friday I work for one of the other girls, but Saturday—"

Saturday night it is, then. I walk back to the hotel feeling pretty blithe and gay. Lefty Gallagher, all curious, is waiting there for me.

"Who is the broad?" he wants to know.

When I enlighten him, he grins.

"Hop to it, Bob!" he says. "Take her right away from Ball. How a girl can fall

for him beats me, anyhow; but watch out! That must be the dame some of the boys was telling me about. He's as jealous as sin over her."

I worry! The little girl and I have a wonderful time on Saturday night, and I get away with another date Monday, as the club is home for two weeks. Monday eve is a bell-ringer, too, and I have to confess to myself that Molly has me eating out of her hand. And I get a kind o' hunch she don't mind me playing in her front yard, either.

Fowl Ball is wise. I can see it in his eye; but he don't say anything. I'm going so good there ain't a chance; but if I slump—oh, baby!

We open against Rockridge on Wednesday. Lefty throws a pretty bum brawl, but I bust one out o' the park for him with three on, and save his corned beef. Prexy Munro Landers happens to take in the combat, and he hands me a personal pat on the back.

"Nice hitting, Shannon," he says. "Keep it up, and you're sure to graduate to the big stuff this fall."

Of course that makes me feel good. I take Molly to a dance that night, and am so full of pep that she catches it herself. I have an idea I put an awful crimp in Fowl Ball's chances, as a result.

Next day I pound out two blows, but in the ninth stanza, with the score tied, a Rockridge clouter singles to right with a hard knock, and the ball goes through my legs to the wall. The runner takes third, and counts with the winning tally on a safe slam to left.

In the clubhouse Ball sails into me.

"You'd better wait until Christmas before pulling the Santa Claus stuff," he yodels. "Mebbe you'd field better if you stayed in nights."

"One can't get 'em all," I defend.

"You'll never get 'em as long as you roam around all hours of the night. I'm tired of it. I told you in the beginning that training rules had to be observed. You gotta cut out the monkey business. Next time I call you on the carpet, Shannon, it 'll cost you a slice of jack!"

That burns me up, especially as I figure there's an inside reason for jumping me.

"You've said enough!" I bark. "Nobody is playing better ball on the club than me, and I ain't gonna have you ride me, Mr. Ball. You know I keep in condition,

or I couldn't play good ball; so lay off me while you're in good health!"

Sassy stuff to tell a manager, but I'm mad and don't really care a hoot. I expect to be called hard.

Yet I ain't. Ball calms suddenly, and says no more. I wonder if he's afraid of me. There's something in his lamps I don't like.

III

A MONTH flits by, most of it spent on the road. The manager leaves me pretty much alone, and I continue to hit the old apple at a nice clip. My roomie comes in for a lot o' roasts, however. Poor Lefty has more trouble with his control than a pickled aviator, and Fowl Ball sure razzes him on his bad days.

"If I get out o' this loop without killing that hombre, I'll pay the rent," he frequently gargles. "The next time he tells me I'm so wild I oughta be in a cage, let him look out!"

Quartz Hill comes home for a series with Silver Summit, and Tuesday evening Lefty and me are chewing our toothpicks in the hotel lobby when Rabbit Grass, the second baseman, prances in.

"Are you gonna take in the big show Friday night, boys?" he chirps. "Don't miss it."

"What big show?" I ask.

"Big charity entertainment at the Eagle Opera-House. Our talented manager, Mr. Fowler Ball, is down on the program for a recitation, you know."

"Recitation? Fowl Ball reciting?" gargles Lefty.

"Didn't you know Ball was an amateur elocutionist?" demands Rabbit. "Oh, I forgot! You weren't here last season. He usta get in on entertainments right along. He ain't so bad. A guy that orates so well on the diamond oughta elocute fine."

"Well, I wouldn't walk around the corner to see a program he was on," sneers my roomie. "That's what I think of him!"

"I'll be there, believe me," says Rabbit.

"Not me," I decide. "Friday is the night of the big hop in the armory, and I can't miss it."

But when I try to date up Molly for the armory dance, she tells me Fowl Ball is stepping her out Friday—to hear him recite, I suppose. It peeves me a bit.

Still, I make a date for Thursday, and after a show and a supper I try to chatter

real serious to her. Being in one of them contrary humors a female will bust into now and then, I fail to go so good. The more I argue the less I accomplish, though I stick around until one G.M. I blow back to the hotel in a sweet humor.

Lefty Gallagher has just walked in ahead of me, and there is Fowler Ball in the lobby. His face is some sour, too.

"Where have you been, Gallagher?" he snaps.

"I been out playing rummy," answers my roomie.

"Rummy?" snorts the manager. "A fine rummy you are! How much did you lose?"

"I didn't lose anything," replies Lefty.

"Oh, yes, you did!" says Fowler Ball. "You lose ten smackers next pay-day, and if it happens again you'll decorate the bench for an enforced vacation. And as for you, Shannon—I suppose you've been playing rummy, too? Or was it chess or pachisi with you?"

"Don't get funny!" I squawk, nasty-like. "I just been out where you'd like to be, and can't."

I'll say this hits him where he don't enjoy it. Finally he stutters:

"You ain't gonna stay out until all hours of the night, no matter who you are. You'll be minus a few berries on the fifteenth yourself!"

That makes me mad, and we have a swell little chewing-match before I finally trek to the alfalfa.

"I'll get even with you for this!" I promise. "Don't forget it!"

IV

THE following day I perform kind o' punk, and in the eve I don't know just what to do with myself. Lefty Gallagher is nowhere in sight, and I hate to take in the armory hop without Molly. On a sudden impulse I resolve to hunt up Rabbit Grass and go to the Eagle Opera-House.

But Rabbit is likewise missin', and I drift into the crowded buildin' all by my lonesome. I'm forced to grab off a seat up in the balcony, among a lot o' birds I never saw in my life.

Giving the joint the well-known up and up, I pick out Molly in a box, sitting alongside the peerless pilot of the Hustlers. She sees me, too, and loosens a little smile before the entertainment begins to annoy the audience.

During the first number—a massed chorus of singers who warble as if they were in musical comedy, or something equally terrible—a lot o' commotion is aroused in the balcony by the arrival of a queer-looking old man.

This bird has a flock of snarly gray whiskers and wears a long coat. He carries a paper sack and a crooked stick, and seems to have a lovely temper, judging by the remarks he hands the people whose feet he walks over getting to a seat. I'm kind o' glad he didn't choose my side of the house.

After the balcony and the massed chorus quiet down, I listen to the usual line of amateur joke-peddlers and song-birds, and watch the latest victim of the toe-dancing disease outguess the orchestra from start to finish. Then, all of a sudden, is announced Fowler Ball.

Our beloved manager ambles out on the stage, desperately attempting a near human smile, and cuts loose with the sad, sad story of the guy called *McGrew* and the lady known as *Lou*.

"Razzberry!" hollers some bird in the balcony.

I think it pretty rotten myself, but most of the yokels in the place, never having had to play ball under him, clap loudly. Even Molly seems to think it good.

Seeing the crowd is gluttons for punishment, Ball comes back and busts into Kipling for them, pulling that new and startling sob story featuring one *Gunga Din*, or somebody with a name like a ball-player in the Eastern League. He clamors along down to the last line, which goes like this, as near as I remember:

You're a better man than I, *Gunga Din*!

Just as he's getting this off his chest, I see the old man with gray whiskers rise to his feet.

"I'll say he is, Fowl Ball!" this cooky shouts, and his hand dives into the paper sack he totes with him.

In less time than it takes Babe Ruth to smear a fast ball, the old boy is hurling nice ripe tomatoes in the direction of our surprised manager. His speed and control are wonderful for an aged man, too. At least three of the mushy missiles spatter Fowl Ball before he can duck out o' range, and he leaves the stage looking like a bad accident.

The crowd is roaring and laughing. Having exhausted his ammunition, Gray

Whiskers scrambles out o' the balcony and is on his way before any one can stop him. My curiosity being boiling over this little happening, I flock out after him; but he has moved fast. When I reach the street, he is like the small boy after supper—nowhere to be found.

I decide to go to the hotel. Some of the boys are in the lobby, and when I tell them what has happened to our dear manager, they get a great kick out of it. Lefty Gallagher joins the group while I'm rehearsing the action, and he gets a big grin, too.

Next afternoon Fowl Ball is in a murderous mood, and the little chuckles all along the bench don't help any. I see him give me a few glances that would shrivel up a guy in more delicate health.

I get the shock of my life that evening, though. Managing to waylay Molly Shade on the way to the place where they keep all the wrong numbers, I try to suggest a Sunday night date. She fairly freezes me with her blue eyes.

"I don't think I care to have anything more to do with you after last night, Mr. Shannon," she says. "I didn't think you could be such a rough-neck and coward!"

"What in the world—" I begins.

"I refer to the shameful manner in which you assaulted Mr. Ball," she staggers me. "You know what you did!"

"Me? Why, I—you're crazy, Molly!" I blurt out.

"Thank you, Mr. Shannon. I guess Mr. Ball saw you with his own eyes, and I know you were in the balcony. Why did you disappear right after the thing happened, if you were not a party to the cowardly attack?"

"Now, listen! I—"

"Good evening, Mr. Shannon!" she remarks, and sails past me.

So that was it! Both Ball and Molly blamed me for the tomato-throwing stuff, and I knew things looked kind o' bad for me, even if I was innocent.

Right pronto I decide to do a little detective work. I have a clue or two to work on, and before long I unearth some additional; and then—but I'm getting a bit ahead of myself.

V

FOWL BALL is on me as much as he dares the next few games, and I savvied why. He's continually calling me for not following his signals during the series with

Rockridge; and in the Saturday game things happen.

Early in the brawl I snag a couple o' real base-knocks, and I come up in the ninth stanza with runners on first and second and two away. Rockridge is leading us by the margin of six runs to four. Fowl Ball is coaching at third, and as I step up to the plate I'll be hanged if he don't flash me the bunt signal. The bunt signal, with two down!

Now I know any good athlete has to obey orders, but that sign was as wrong as batting cross-handed. Ball must be nutty!

The Rockridge heaver made a snappy motion and put the olive right down the old alley. It is as fat as a prize heifer. Bunt that one? Not in a thousand years!

I merely take a free, level cut and crack that baby on the seam. The minute I hit her I knew she was going out o' the park. Over the wall in right center she soars, and the game goes in the book for Quartz Hill.

Through the cheering throngs we all dash for the clubhouse. Not a chirp from Fowl Ball until we're divesting for the showers. Then he says to me, very cold:

"You may have won the game with that home-run, Shannon, but I gave you the signal to bunt."

"Bunt, with two down?" I yelp. "Why—"

"That was the play, and orders are orders with me. I know a certain big league manager who fined a man a hundred beans for the same thing. You've messed up signals day after day, and I'll have no more of it. I'm trading you to Woolville tomorrow for Ike Lane. He may not be as flashy as you, but at least he—"

"Trading me to Woolville!" I gasp. "Well—"

"Trading who to Woolville?"

Two men have stepped into the clubhouse. One of 'em is Munro Landers, president of the Hustlers, and the other a big, beefy bird chewing hard on a cigar. Landers shoots the question.

"Shannon here, Mr. Landers," says Ball. "I can get a very useful man, Ike Lane, in return."

"But Shannon is hitting nicely for us, Mr. Ball."

"He won't obey orders, Mr. Landers. He has refused to follow my signals time after time, and to-day's game was the last straw. He also provoked a cowardly personal assault on me, though that has noth-

ing to do with his playing, I admit. Still, Ike Lane will—"

"Is the trade all arranged?"

"No, not yet. I can cinch it with a wire."

"Don't do it, Ball." Landers smiles. "Shannon is leaving Quartz Hill all right, but not in a trade to Woolville. This gentleman here is Scout Shelby of the Cincinnati Reds, and he has offered me five thousand dollars for Shannon. That right, Shelby?"

"That's what I said," the beefy man nods, and gives me a mitt. "Nice hit in the ninth, Shannon. Lucky for us the Seals let you go outright. What's all this talk about signals? What signal didn't you follow to-day, young man?"

"In the ninth I gave him the sign to lay the ball down," Fowl Ball says furiously, "and he swung on it. He is fast, and the play would have surprised them."

"Surprised them? I should say it would. It would surprise me or any other man that ever played ball. I'd never pay five thousand berries for a man who'd be fool enough to obey that signal. Good Lord!"

Shelby chews savagely at his cigar.

"To my mind Shannon did somethin' that merits high praise," says Munro Landers. "I think he is a good young player, and will make good in the big show. You are also going to lose another man, Ball. Gallagher has been recalled by the K. C. club. There may be some other changes I shall make personally. I think I've neglected the leadership of the Hustlers too long."

"In regard to that personal assault you mention," I says to Ball, "and by which

I suppose you refer to the tomatoes thrown at you the other night, I wish to say—"

"Never mind, Bob," butts in Lefty Gallagher. "I'm guilty. I threw 'em. It was a dirty trick, but I wanted to get even with Ball for the way he rode me all year. I rigged up as an old man and pasted him from the balcony. I'm sorry you got the blame for it, Bob. I was gonna square things for you. Of course you couldn't know that it was me, all disguised as I was, and it must have puzzled you pretty much."

"Well, not so much," I chirp. "When I heard you yell 'Fowl Ball!' and saw you throw that juicy fruit with your *left* hand, I had a hunch. Yesterday, when I found some false whiskers and stuff hidden in a dresser drawer in the room, I—"

"A fine, gentlemanly trick!" snarls Ball, all peeved up. "Lucky for you Kansas City wants you, or I would—"

"Yes, I know it was a foul trick," Lefty gargles; "but you had it coming, if any guy ever did. You had your fun all season telling me how wild I was. Say, did you notice my control that night? Did you notice it?"

The last time I see him, Fowl Ball is frothing at the mouth, and you can't blame him in a way. He has lost out all around, it's a cinch, for everybody knows Munro Landers won't keep him much longer at Quartz Hill.

As for Molly Shade and me—did we make up?

Well, I can say this. She ain't taking rings at the telephone office these days. She has just taken one from me, and she opines it's plenty.

MOONLIGHT

To-NIGHT I watch the moon alone;
Last night we watched it hand in hand,
With fleecy clouds about it blown,
A mystical and golden land.

There was a glamour in its gleams
That haloed every vale and hill;
But now, like one bereft of dreams,
I find the moonlight pale and chill.

To-night I watch the moon alone,
And hear the night bird's pleading tune,
Which says: "Return, return, my own—
Bring back the glory to the moon!"

Clinton Scollard

The Mystery of the Shriveled Hand

THE STRANGE STORY OF THE VENGEANCE OF THE WHITE SHEIK OF TANTA

By Sax Rohmer

WE were back in Cairo again, and the conversation drifted into many channels. All sorts of topics were discussed, from racing to the latest feminine fashions, from ballroom dances to the mysteries of the Great Pyramid.

"What became of Adderley?" Jennings suddenly asked.

Several men in the party had been cronies during the time we were stationed in Cairo, and at Jennings's words a sort of hush seemed to fall on those who had known Adderley. I cannot say whether Jennings noticed this, but it was perfectly evident to me that Dr. Matheson, the big-hearted, boyish American, had perceived it, for he glanced swiftly across in my direction in an oddly significant way.

"I don't know," replied Burton, who was an irrigation man. "He was rather an unsavory sort of character in some ways, but I heard that he came to a sticky end."

"You mean Sidney Adderley, the man who was so indecently rich?" some one interjected. "Had a place out at Gezireh, and was always talking about his father's millions?"

"That's the fellow," said Jennings. "There was some scandal, I know, but it was after my time here. Was there really anything in that story, or was it suggested by Adderley's unpleasant reputation?"

"Well," replied Burton, "it's really a sort of fairy tale, unless Marriott"—he glanced across in my direction—"can confirm it. But there was a story current during the latter part of Adderley's stay in Cairo to the effect that he had made the acquaintance of the wife, or some member of the household, of an old gentleman out

Tanta way—a sort of Moslem saint, or *welee*."

"I can settle any doubts upon the point," said I.

I immediately became a focus of general curiosity.

"I met Adderley," I began, "here in this very hotel, one evening in the winter of 1917. He had been drinking rather heavily—a fact which he was quite unable to disguise. He was never by any means a real friend of mine. In fact, I doubt if he had a true friend in the world. However, I could see that he was lonely, and as I chanced to be at a loose end I accepted an invitation to go over to what he termed his 'little place' at Gezireh."

"I even thought the place was something of a myth," declared Jennings.

"It proved to be a veritable palace," I replied. "The man privately—or secretly, to be more exact—kept up a sort of pagan state. He had any number of servants—he became a millionaire after the death of his father, as you will remember. Given more congenial company, I must confess that I might have spent a most enjoyable evening there."

"Adderley insisted upon priming me with champagne. After a while I may as well admit that I lost something of my former reserve, and began to feel that I was having a fairly good time. By the way, my host was now quite drunk. He got into that objectionable and dangerous mood which some of you will recall, and I could see by the light in his eyes that there was mischief brewing, although at the time I did not know its nature."

"I should explain that we were amusing