

The Orange Beetle

Or the Story of the Search For a Supposedly Rare Orchid of South America

By CLARISSA MACKIE

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Jack Hedges was not a zoologist, yet he had traveled thousands of miles in search of the orange beetle. The finding of it meant a fortune for him as well as the winning of the girl he loved. Not that Dorothy's answer would be influenced by the turn of fortune's wheel, only it happened that Dorothy was the daughter of a rich man, and Jack was a poor young landscape gardener who had not yet received his first big commission.

It was Chalmers who had sent him on this strange quest for the orange beetle. "Jack, old man," Chalmers had said, "I've got a commission for you that will knock the spots out of the landscape business. My uncle, Cassius Chalmers, the banker, you know, is hazy about orchids—has the finest collection in the country, so he says. Now, there's another old chap, a crony of his, who also has the finest collection. Understand? As I understand it, the collections are about neck and neck as to value. They both lack one very rare specimen, which they have been unable to obtain, although they both have trained orchid hunters down along the Amazon now. My uncle has declared he will give \$10,000 and pay all expenses to the man who brings him back the orchid he's after. Now, there's a chance for you. You're heard of amateurs' luck, haven't you?"

"You're joking," said Jack calmly.

"Never. Come with me and I'll introduce you to Uncle Cassius, the fattest old gentleman in New York where orchids are concerned," said Chalmers, rising, and because he had nothing in particular to do that afternoon Jack went with him and soon was deeply interested in the long talk with Mr. Chalmers, the banker, which followed.

"My man is not only looking for the orange beetle, but he's looking for a dozen other sorts at the same time."



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"I'll think it over," said Jack cautiously.

He did think it over with the result that he closed his office for a year and made preparation to depart upon this special mission for Cassius Chalmers. As for Dorothy, he did not exact her promise to wait for him, but he did say he would come back to ask her for an answer when the year was up. He could not tell her the secret of his mission, but he hinted at the little fortune that might be his if he was successful and that would enable him to approach her father.

He knew that the orange beetle was not the name of the orchid he was to seek. That, too, was orange tinted and of most peculiar form. The orange beetle would prove his clue to the presence of the coveted orchid. Chalmers had said the beetle was three inches in length and of horrible appearance, though quite harmless. Wherever the precious orchid grew, in its close vicinity might be found the orange beetle.

Months after his departure from New York Jack Hedges was still bent on his quest in the inner reaches of the Amazon.

His guides were Carajonas Indians from one of the hill tribes, and he conversed with them in a broken mixture of Spanish and elaborate gesticulations. Never a day passed but that he came upon strange specimens of parasitic plants swaying aloft on some towering tree trunk far above his reach, and his strong glasses enabled him to study them at close range, and so far as his book taught knowledge went, there was nothing new that he might take to Cassius Chalmers.

At last one day they made a noonday landing in a quiet lagoon where long creepers reached down to brush their faces as the canoe grounded against the muddy shore.

While the guides prepared a simple meal of coffee and cassava cakes Jack took his glasses and splashed through the spongy morass into an open space where tall trees towered above the

forest as if seeking a purer air than that afforded below.

Suddenly he leaped backward, and he nearly fell. Quickly recovering himself, he leaned over and scanned the uncanny form of the orange beetle. At last he was within reach of the fortune for which he had risked so much.

About three inches long, with closely folded glossy wings, all of a deep orange tint, the insect jerked a small jetty black head and with a slow, awkward gait crawled stickily over the damp ground, avoiding the wet spots and choosing a dry leaf or bit of fallen twig for its path.

Jack followed patiently until his way was stopped by the massive trunk of a huge sycamore up which the beetle was making its laborious way. Jack threw back his head and looked upward among the twisted limbs at the top of the tree and then brought his gaze slowly downward until his eyes rested on the glowing mass of some parasitic blossom. This was the orange orchid.

Two days afterward he was speeding down the river again, the orange orchids confined in a wicker cage stuffed with rotting vegetation; the orange beetle, quietly chloroformed, sleeping its last sleep in an air tight tin box. Six weeks later he was leaving South America behind, and there was no regret in his heart as he set his face toward the north.

On the steamer he made several acquaintances, among them a renowned orchid hunter. In the course of conversation he mentioned the object of his search, and after an incredulous stare the orchid hunter, Jackson by name, spoke bluntly:

"Who sent you on such a fool's errand?"

"Fool's errand!" stuttered Jack. "Surely I was successful in my quest. I found what I went for. What do you mean, sir?"

"Pardon my abruptness, Mr. Hedges. I was surprised," said the other courteously. "The orchid you have described to me is a very common variety and is hardly worth a place in any collection."

"How about the orange beetle?" demanded Jack, chagrined. "I could not have mistaken the variety of orchid, for the beetle was in one of the flower cups when I picked it from the tree. By Jove! If I've made a mess of this expedition after all!" He paused tragically.

Jackson expressed a desire to see the orchid, and the wicker cage was brought and the exotic displayed, to the expert's suppressed amusement. "Deuced queer the old boy's sending you off after that," he muttered after reading the copious notes with which Cassius Chalmers had filled Jack's notebook. "Any reason for his wanting to get you out of the way?"

Jack shook his head hopelessly. "Search me!" he exploded. "A year out of my life—all for nothing, and not a word from—" He bit off Dorothy's name and walked away to conceal his anger and mortification.

At last when they were in the port of New York Jack felt his confidence returning. While he was now convinced that Cassius Chalmers had sent him on a wild-goose chase (as well as a beetle hunt), he was determined to press that eccentric millionaire for some explanation of the whole matter. Therefore his first errand on landing was to go straight to the office of Cassius Chalmers.

There bitter disappointment awaited him. Cassius Chalmers had been dead for two months, and his estate had not only been settled, but his heir, the nephew whom Jack knew, had sailed for a voyage around the world. The lawyers knew nothing whatever about the matter, save that the collection of orchids had been sold at auction and, it was believed, had been scattered among various collectors.

When he presented himself before Dorothy Payton Jack threw out his hands with a hopeless gesture. "Failed!" he said bitterly. And then into her sympathetic ear he poured the story of the past year. "I've got to begin at the bottom and start over again," he said in conclusion, "and hang it all, Dorothy, I can't ask you what I wanted to!"

"I shall ask you, then," said Dorothy bravely, and when she had convinced him of her willingness to share his struggles she confessed that old Cassius Chalmers had evidently sent Jack away to get rid of a dangerous rival, for both uncle and nephew had courted Dorothy without the slightest encouragement until death had removed one and her stern repulse had sent the other to the uttermost ends of the earth.

"Show dad the orange beetle. He's quite a 'bugologist,'" urged Dorothy after awhile. And when Jack had approached Mr. Payton and retold his story that genial financier examined the orange beetle with great interest.

"I know a man who has a standing offer out of \$15,000 for that specimen," he said calmly. "Will you sell?" "Sell!" yelled Jack. "I'd sell it for 30 cents. I've wasted a year of my life over that thing!"

"Never!" returned Mr. Payton emphatically. "You didn't find out how much pluck and perseverance you had till you set out to search for that orchid. Whenever you feel down in the mouth and distrust your own courage just come up here and look in my collection and survey that orange beetle."

"May Dorothy come with me?" asked Jack daringly.

Mr. Payton smiled indulgently at his daughter and clapped a hand on Jack's shoulder. "She said some time ago she was going to marry you, so I suppose you'll have to bring her along."

"Oh, dad!" cried Dorothy, rosy with joy. But her father had escaped from the room.

For the Children

A Baby Giraffe Which Was Born in America.



How many people have ever seen a baby giraffe? Very few at the best. In all there have been only four baby giraffes born in the western hemisphere; three of these were born at the Cincinnati zoological garden. The first two lived but a short time, but the third one, which was born Sept. 1, 1910, in the Cincinnati garden, is still alive and is one of the prettiest little animals that you might wish to see.

Giraffes can utter no sound—they are mutes—but the two old giraffes looked on the young one with eyes as full of expression and appreciation as if they had human intelligence, and one scarcely seemed to notice that they made no sound whatever.

The picture shows the little giraffe when it was two days old. It was then five feet one inch in height and weighed about ninety pounds. It began to grow right away, so that at the age of about four months it measured six feet six inches. That certainly is a marvelous growth, and a boy or girl who would grow over a foot in four or five months would be considered a most unusual phenomenon. When we stop to think, however, that the old giraffe is almost fourteen feet high and can reach a foot or two farther by straightening out its head and neck, it is easy to see that the baby giraffe has to do some growing to catch up with its father and mother.—St. Nicholas.

Told by a Bird.

To say "A little bird told me" is a common way of getting out of telling the real information is obtained. Little birds have, however, told important stories sometimes by means of notes fastened about their legs or necks. The birds most often employed for this purpose are pigeons, but a well known tidings was once carried by a seagull.

Over twenty years ago a large ocean steamer, Atlantis, which ran between Liverpool and Calcutta, was lost. No message was ever received from her but one, and this was found some five months after she had started on her last voyage, tied about the neck of a seagull in the Indian sea. The note read: "Atlantis struck on the Harad rock. We are all lost. Father Coathe." No trace of the wreck or its crew ever came to light, nor was it known who "Father Coathe" was.

An Intelligent Pussycat.

A young lady bookkeeper in Boston has been in the habit for some time of giving the office cat a piece of meat for her lunch every day, precaution being taken to lay down a piece of paper to prevent the meat from soiling the floor. The other day at lunch hour, when the young lady happened to have no meat in her basket, pussycat begged for some in her most intelligent fashion. Finding no meat coming, the cat ran to the wastebasket, dragged out a newspaper and laid it on the floor at the young lady's feet. This appeal was so touching that the young lady went out and bought meat for the intelligent animal.

A Storehouse.

In the old birds' nests that are placed near the ground in shrubs and small trees close to hazelnut bushes and bittersweet vines in the country you will often find a handful of hazelnuts or bittersweet berries. They were put there by the white footed mice and the meadow mice that visit these storehouses regularly. A white footed mouse will often cover a bird's nest with fine dried grass and inner bark and make a nest for itself.

Harry and the Searchlight.

Harry, a six-year-old boy, was greatly excited over his first trip on a steamboat, and his father allowed him to stay on deck with him for awhile in the evening. His attention was at once directed to the light of the searchlight moving to and fro. Excitedly he grasped his father's hand and said: "Daddy, look! There must be a happy comet near here. See how he wags his tail!"

Strange Sights.

Tell me, did you ever see Monkeys climb a banian tree? Banian trees, perhaps you know, On the nursery floor can grow. Troops of monkeys half the day In the great wide branches play. Frolic and make friends with you— If your aunty tells them to!

I've had measles, so, you see, Aunty comes and plays with me. Aunty makes a lion roar Right behind the nursery door. Makes an elephant poke his head Through the window near my bed. Makes the nursery somehow look Like a lovely picture book. —Francis Banine in Youth's Companion.

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An Army Court Martial

There Was Not Much in It at First, but a Good Deal in the End

By F. A. MITCHEL

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Colonel Auchincloss of the United States army was a stickler for army etiquette, discipline and other such matters as pertain to military life. He was in the artillery, and a colonel of artillery in the regular army is a very big man. Then, too, Colonel Auchincloss commanded a big fort on the Atlantic coast, and that made him a bigger man still. Outside the fort was a collection of hotels used by persons from all over the United States as recreation resorts, all of whom looked up to the colonel commanding the fort as a sovereign.

One day when dress parade was taking place inside the fort, witnessed by flocks of persons from the hotels outside—principally young ladies—the colonel left his office to go to his domestic quarters. As he was passing the line the band "beat off," marching before the men, turning and marching back again, what for no one knows ex-



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A HUNGRY FLY LIT ON THE ORGAN.

cept that it has been a part of the ceremony of dress parade for an indefinitely long period.

Lieutenant Bob Phillips was adjutant of the post. Now, the adjutant is an important man at all military ceremonies, especially dress parade. As Colonel Auchincloss passed Lieutenant Phillips was standing, like all the rest, stiff as a ramrod, while the band was marching back and forth. Lieutenant Phillips was suffering at the time from a sore spot on the tip of his nose. It so happened that a hungry fly lit on the organ and, finding such sustenance in the sore spot as especially suited its taste, began to pull lustily.

There are nerves in noses, especially on the upper side. The agony endured by the adjutant was excruciating. Nevertheless, owing to the important part he took in the military ceremony he was the last man on the ground who should infringe upon military discipline by raising his hand to shoo away the fly. Such a breach of uniformity would be especially noticeable in every one and if made by the adjutant would constitute a frightful example to the rest of the corps on parade.

Furthermore, it was expected that every man would be at "eyes front." Phillips held his eyes in that position rigidly. Consequently he did not see the approach of his commander on his right. Just before the colonel came within his range of vision Phillips' agony had passed the limit of human endurance, and his hand went up to brush off the fly.

Colonel Auchincloss stopped, cast a terrible glance at the transgressor and passed on. Phillips saw him and knew that he was doomed. He was then preparing for examination for his promotion to be captain and felt sure that such a flagrant breach of discipline as raising a hand to brush a fly from a sore spot on his nose would be a great detriment to his attaining the rank to which he aspired.

The next day Phillips was obliged to read on parade an order relieving himself of the duties of adjutant of the post and appointing another in his place. After the ceremony he went to his quarters wishing that he might be permitted to challenge the colonel and run him through to the hilt. Persons suffer by their mistakes, their misfortunes, and injustice. It is only in the last of these cases that rebellion can possibly be advisable, and even then to grin and bear it is usually the best policy. Lieutenant Phillips was in a sense obliged to do this, but a spirit of animosity toward the colonel was engendered in him which promised to burst into a flame and bring on an army scandal.

Now, it happened that Colonel Auchincloss, who, notwithstanding his age, was a bachelor, and Lieutenant Phillips unknown to each other had intentions with regard to a young lady who was stopping at one of the hotels outside the military reservation. What a fly had started a woman developed Miss Marjory Dressler was much flattered at the attentions of the mighty commander and much pleased with

those of his subordinate. As soon as it became evident to both officers that they were rivals the fire burned hotter in the breast of the younger, and the elder drew a tighter rein in his official intercourse with his inferior.

Then came Lieutenant Phillips' examination for promotion, and, owing partly to his being absorbed and partly from the breach of discipline for which his colonel had reduced him from the position of adjutant, he was denied a captain's commission.

The young man, conceiving that this deprivation was the result of the colonel's animosity toward him, preferred charges against him for tyrannical treatment.

The commander of the department in which all this happened was an uncle of Miss Marjory Dressler. His official position prevented his expressing any opinion in the matter, but his wife, not being similarly handicapped, took a secret part in the proceedings. Miss Dressler was her sister's child, and the young lady, inasmuch as she was in doubt whether she would marry the colonel or the lieutenant, would one day influence her aunt toward the defendant, the next toward the plaintiff. The former being a prominent artillery officer, that arm of the service took great interest in the trial, some siding with and some against their comrade of the big guns.

Of course the officers' families took great interest in the trial, and, as there is intercourse between the different corps, the trouble spread to the infantry, cavalry and the staff corps. Thus by the time the court was ready to try the case the whole army was involved.

The members assembled in full uniform. The first proceeding was the reading of the charge, which was tyrannical, and the specifications, which were very numerous. The first specification began thus:

"In this, that on or about the —th day of — 19—, the said plaintiff being on dress parade, a fly lighted on his nose, the organ being very sore and painfully tender."

At this point the president of the court interposed.

"Whoever drew that specification should be cashiered. Lieutenant Phillips is not being tried because a fly lighted on his nose. Colonel Auchincloss is being tried on a charge of tyranny."

It was explained to the president, who was so much of a soldier that he could not be anything of a lawyer, that this incident of a fly lighting on the adjutant's nose was the beginning of the trouble, whereupon he was satisfied, and the reading proceeded.

There was one matter that could not be introduced into the trial. That was the rivalry between plaintiff and defendant for the hand of Miss Dressler. But everybody knew that this had added fuel to the flame till the fly that had lighted on the adjutant's nose had been put entirely in the back ground. When the trial began and all through the army the question was asked, "What's this rumpus between Colonel Auchincloss and Phillips?" the reply was invariably, "Why, you see, a fly lit on Phillips' nose when he was on dress parade," etc. But after awhile when the question was asked the reply would be, "No one knows, but if you want to get at the bottom of the matter you'll have to look for a woman in the case."

It was found necessary to bring witnesses (at government expense) from the uttermost points of the world, and when a witness was summoned it was necessary to wait for his or her arrival. So the case dragged and was very expensive till at last it was found necessary to ask congress for a special appropriation to carry it on. The matter was then taken up by the secretary of war, who sent for the judge advocate of the court and asked him to give the facts. The judge advocate began:

"Why, you see, Mr. Secretary, when Lieutenant Phillips was on dress parade a fly lit on a sore spot on the end of his nose."

"I haven't time for that!" snapped the secretary. "Give me the gist of it."

"There's no gist to it."

"Isn't there some way of getting rid of it?"

"That depends."

"On what?"

"A woman."

The secretary was informed that the rancor was kept up by a niece of the commander of the department who couldn't make up her mind whether she wished to marry the colonel or the lieutenant.

"Go tell her to come to me—that I have something nice for her."

Miss Dressler answered the summons in person and expectantly.

"What is your ambition?" asked the secretary.

"To be the wife of a military attaché at a foreign court."

"Name the man you wish for a husband and he shall be appointed."

"Lieutenant Bob Phillips."

"That will do. Good morning."

The next day Lieutenant Phillips withdrew his charges against Colonel Auchincloss, and an order was published promoting him and relieving the military attaché on duty at Paris and appointing Captain Phillips in his stead.

There are those who give Mrs. Phillips' part in this celebrated army case a deeper import than appears on the surface. These persons maintain that she had some sort of an ax to grind, and if not from the first at least from the moment it appeared that the trial was a burden to the government she put the ax on the grindstone. Be this as it may, it is always dangerous for a woman to discover that she holds the balance of power.

When accused of this the lady smiles and says, "Let those laugh who laugh last."

SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL.

Sum of \$62.50 Was Raised for a School Library—Baskets Bell High.

The basket social at Alberta school, out the Highland pike, was a great success Saturday night. There was a large attendance and much enthusiasm. In addition to the sale of the baskets, and the picnic supper to follow, there was an excellent literary and musical program given; proceeds netting \$62.50.

The social was under the auspices of Miss Gregory, the teacher at the school, and the purpose was to raise money for a school library—perhaps a general public library.

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