

so? Was he afraid that the shot might attract the girl and cause her to return?

At last Numa, still roaring angrily, strode majestically into the jungle. The hunter crawled from his boma, and half an hour later was entering a little camp snugly hidden in the forest. A handful of black followers greeted his return with sullen indifference. He was a great bearded man, a huge, yellow bearded giant, when he entered his tent. Half an hour later he emerged smooth shaven.

His blacks looked at him in astonishment.

"Would you know me?" he asked.

"The hyena that bore you would not know you, Bwana," replied one.

The man aimed a heavy fist at the black's face; but long experience in dodging similar blows saved the presumptuous one.

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MERIEM returned slowly toward the tree in which she had left her skirt, shoes and stockings. She was singing blithely; but her song came to a sudden stop when she came within sight of the tree, for there, disporting themselves with glee, and pulling and hauling upon her belongings, were a number of baboons.

When they saw her they showed no signs of terror. Instead, they bared their fangs and growled at her. What was there to fear in a single she-Tarmangani? Nothing, absolutely nothing.

In the open plain beyond the forest the hunters were returning from the day's sport. They were widely separated, hoping to raise a wandering lion on the homeward journey across the plain. The Hon. Morison Baynes rode closest to the forest. As his eyes wandered back and forth across the undulating, shrub-sprinkled ground they fell upon the form of a creature close beside the thick jungle where it terminated abruptly at the plain's edge.

He reined his mount in the direction of his discovery. It was yet too far away for his untrained eyes to recognize it; but as he came closer he saw that it was a horse, and was about to resume the original direction of his way when he

thought that he discerned a saddle upon the beast's back.

He rode a little closer. Yes, the animal was saddled. The Hon. Morison approached yet nearer, and as he did so his eyes expressed a pleasurable emotion of anticipation, for they had now recognized the pony as the especial favorite of Meriem.

He galloped to the animal's side. Meriem must be within the wood!

The man shuddered a little at the thought of an unprotected girl alone in the jungle that was still, to him, a fearful place of terrors and stealthily stalking death. He dismounted and left his horse beside Meriem's. On foot he entered the jungle. He knew that she was probably safe enough, and he wished to surprise her by coming suddenly upon her.

He had gone but a short distance into the wood when he heard a great jabbering in a near-by tree. Coming closer, he saw a band of baboons snarling over something. Looking intently, he saw that one of them held a woman's riding skirt, and that others had boots and stockings.

His heart almost ceased to beat as he quite naturally placed the most direful explanation upon the scene. The baboons had killed Meriem and stripped this clothing from her body! Morison shuddered.

He was about to call aloud in the hope that after all the girl still lived, when he saw her in a tree close beside that occupied by the baboons, and now he saw that they were snarling and jabbering at her. To his amazement he saw the girl swing, apelike, into the tree below the huge beasts. He saw her pause upon a branch but a few feet from the nearest baboon.

"You are a Tarmangani," she replied. "The Mangani are covered with hair; you would call them apes."

He was raising his rifle to put a bullet through the hideous creature that seemed about to leap upon her, when he heard the girl speak. He almost dropped his rifle from surprise as a strange jabbering, identical with that of the apes, broke from Meriem's lips.

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THE baboons stopped their snarling and listened. It was quite evident they were as much surprised as the Hon. Morison Baynes. Slowly, and one by one they approached the girl. She gave not the slightest evidence of fear of them. They quite surrounded her now, so that Baynes could not have fired without endangering the girl's life; but he no longer desired to fire. He was consumed with curiosity.

For several minutes the girl carried on what could be nothing less than a conversation with the baboons, and then, with seeming alacrity, every article of her apparel in their possession was handed over to her. The baboons still crowded eagerly about her as she donned them. They chattered to her and she chattered back.

The Hon. Morison Baynes sat down at the foot of a tree and mopped his perspiring brow. Then he rose and made his cautious way back to his mount.

When Meriem emerged from the forest a few minutes later she

found him there, and he eyed her with wide eyes in which were both wonder and a sort of terror.

"I saw your horse here," he explained, "and thought that I would wait and ride home with you—you do not mind?"

"Of course not," she replied. "It will be lovely."

As they made their way stirrup to stirrup across the plain the Hon. Morison caught himself many times watching the girl's regular profile and wondering if his eyes had deceived him, or if, in truth, he really had seen this lovely creature consorting with grotesque baboons and conversing with them as fluently as she conversed with him.

The thing was uncanny—impossible; yet he had seen it with his own eyes!

And as he watched her another thought persisted in obtruding itself into his mind. She was most beautiful and very desirable; but what did he know of her? Was she not altogether impossible? Was the scene that he had just witnessed not sufficient proof of her impossibility? A woman who climbed trees and conversed with the baboons of the jungle!

Again the Hon. Morison mopped his

