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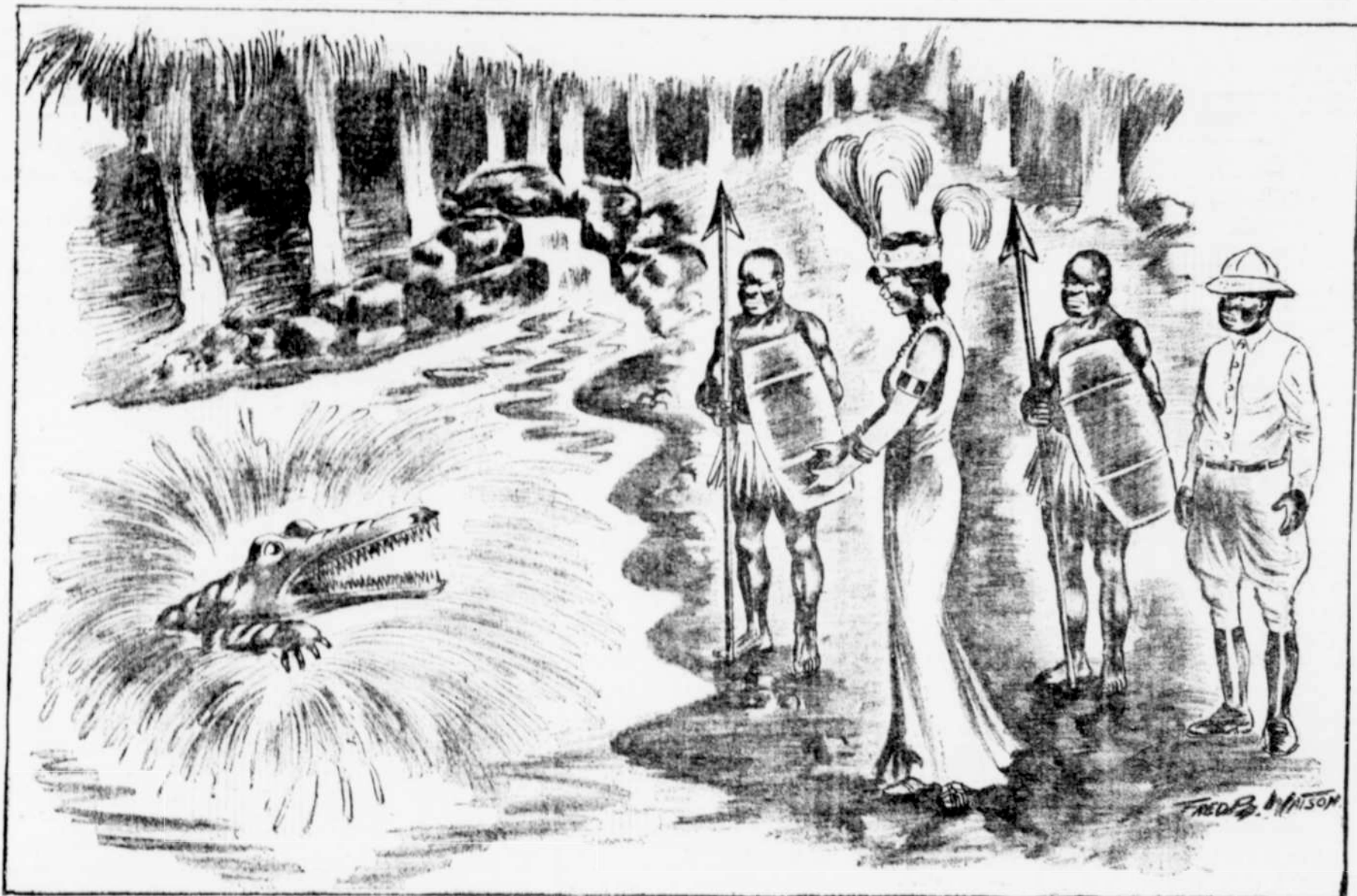
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THE FEATURE SECTION

The Sacred Crocodile

A LOVE STORY OF A FRICA AND AMERICA



Chita walked toward the brook and whistled. Steed's lips parted with surprise when the quiet brook suddenly began to heave and the ugly head of a blunt-nosed crocodile came into view.

Chita, African Princess, Goddess of the Sacred Crocodile, was in Love with Two Men. Their Boat Capsizes in the Stream and the Sacred Crocodile Sees to it that Only One is Left.

By YOSEFE YA MULENA
Author of
"Susu Child of the Bush," Etc.

Lawrence Steed stretched out his arms, braced his bare stockingless legs, and yawned. For the first time he seemed apprehensive of the fact that he was in Africa. "An Afro-American, they call me," he mused, as he stared into a brook that was slowly moving before him.

The remembrance of his nationality seemed to renew again the painful thoughts that were ever in his mind. He recalled anew that he was madly in love with Chita, the only Afro-American girl within a radius of a hundred miles, and he also reminded himself that Dr. Steve Simmons, a new-comer from America, also loved Chita.

Steed knew that Chita was civilized—strangely so. He remembered that she was educated in a college with a "New England atmosphere," then sent to a large colored college in the South, so that she might get a new conception of her race in America. He told himself that she had acquired this to perfection, and that her interpretation of colored American youth equalled her beauty.

He turned his gaze towards the beautiful mansion that stood about

fifty yards away from the spot where he stood. Slowly but painfully he recalled the past that made him love the sight of the beautiful structure. He loved to gaze at it on moonlight nights—African moonlight nights—nights that seemed so velvety soft; that recited transparent poetry.

Chita was to meet him near the brook—Chita the ebony hued, glossy haired beauty. A princess to him—a goddess to the natives who were the subjects of her parents.

Steed's eyes narrowed, and his gaunt frame relaxed as he observed through the moonlight, Chita walking slowly towards him. Only two weeks before she was all his own. Her grandfather had come to Africa just a hundred years before.

Steed remembered that together with his own sire, Chita's father had fled from America's scourge of slavery, arrived on the West coast and there settled down. Here these pioneers soon found partners suitable to marry, and from this union sprang the parents who were aristocrats—greater than chiefs. Chita, a princess, was known by her subjects as "The Goddess of the Sacred Crocodile," and his name was "Still Waters."

Chita neared him now. Her small lips parted with a glorious smile.

"Hello, Still Waters," she said

The Author

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shrilly. "What a glorious night—how beautiful these waters look?"

"They are still and beautiful, because you say so," exclaimed Steed. His voice lacked its usual enthusiasm, and Chita noticed this.

"What's the matter?" she pleaded edging nearer to him, until her small lips almost touched his.

"Oh, nothing," said Steed, kissing her softly.

Together they sat down on the brink of the pool. Steed saw that Chita's lips were suffering from her own nervous and unintentional bites upon them. Again and again her beautiful and even teeth buried themselves into the soft flesh that formed around her small mouth. Unconsciously Chita began to speak:

"Last night you were not here with me, instead Dr. Simmons sat where you are." She did not look up at Steed as she continued. "You know, Steed, I often wonder whether our love is genuine—whether it will ever be tested."

"Why?" asked Steed, his voice depicting sudden dismay.

Chita's face was very close to his now as she explained:

"I have always been frank with

you, Steed—told you every thing almost that worried me. For this reason I will tell you this, that—"

"That you love Dr. Simmons," interrupted Steed.

"No, not exactly that; instead, I would say I am wondering whether I love you better than I do him, or vice versa."

As Chita said this her eyes met Steed's. He saw in them determination and truth.

"Africa is hell," he began meditatively. "In America civilized women are plentiful. Frankly I wish that you were not the only woman that I could marry in the radius of almost a hundred miles, but since that is so, and that I love you, I will have to wait until I am sure that our love is tested."

Chita's reply was a low, forced laugh. Then as she observed the stern silence of her companion she added teasingly:

"I am a princess. Once upon a time nobles used to fight for fair women, why not now? Those nobles lived in a type of primitive society then. We live in that society now. Only ours is more primitive—jungles, snakes, crocodiles. Why not see who is the better man? I will be the judge, and I shall try to be fair."

"Thanks," replied Steed just above a whisper. Springing to his feet he added: "What about your Sacred Crocodile? Aren't you going to call that ugly beast tonight?"

"Help me up, and I will call him," said Chita.

Steed did as he was requested, and as Chita once more stood on her feet she went nearer the brook. As she walked slowly towards it, she whistled

low, and jauntingly. Steed gazed at her as if he had never observed her doing this before. His lips parted with suppressed surprise when he saw that the quiet brook suddenly began to heave, and huge billows crested with foam appeared. Amongst this spectacle the head of an ugly blunt nosed crocodile came in view.

"Come Sacred—come Sacred," called Chita.

She did not have to coax the beast much, for without much effort it dragged itself out of the water, and climbed lazily towards the spot where the girl stood. Steed stood his ground, still staring. "What a strange contrast! The huge ugly shapeless beast—the beautiful, graceful, black princess," he thought. She was now on her knees, calling the animal's name again and again.

"Come and pat Sacred," she begged Steed.

"No thanks, my love for you does not make me appreciated by that ugly cannibal," he replied determinedly.

Chita rose and started to walk back toward the spot where Steed stood. The beast did not follow, but instead crawled half way down to the bank, and hurled itself within.

They watched the heaving waters for awhile, then Chita exclaimed: "Last night Steve Simmons tried to pat Sacred on the head, the result was that Sacred did not like it."

"What did he do?" inquired Steed.

"Attempted to bite him—Simmons withdrew his arm just in time."

"Humph!" exclaimed Steed.

As they walked towards the mansion Steed was satisfied to be silent. Often Chita attempted to lead him into a conversation, but Steed only