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THE MYSTERY OF THE GREEN RAY

By William Le Queux

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

The outbreak of war sends Ronald Ewart, a young London barrister, to the Highlands to say good-bye to his fiancee, Myra McLeod. On the train he meets Hilderman, who calls himself an American and a stranger in those parts, but later Ewart finds that he has built a hut on a cliff above the falls opposite General McLeod's lodge. While fishing in the river Myra is suddenly blinded by a flash of green light. Gen. McLeod tells Ewart of a strange experience at the same place, known as Chemist's Rock. Hilderman is very curious as to the cause of Myra's blindness. The famous London oculist holds out no hope and Ewart, after taking Myra home, brings Dr. Garnesk from Glasgow. In the meantime Sholto is also blinded, then chloroformed and stolen. Garnesk asserts his belief that Hilderman knew of Sholto's affliction. The next morning the two men find footprints and keel-marks on the beach, and the name-plate from the dog's collar. Ewart telegraphs for his friend, Dennis Burnham. At Chemist's Rock, Garnesk sees the green flash and Ewart is suffocated.

CHAPTER XI.—(Cont'd.)

"Further back!" I cried. "How? I don't see how you can be."

"I'll tell you what my theory was about all this affair, and it struck me as a good one—strange, of course, but then, this is a strange business," said Garnesk.

"It is indeed," I agreed ruefully. "Well, go on."

"I had an idea, Ewart, that we should find some sort of wireless telegraphy at the bottom of this business. I had almost made up my mind that we had stumbled across the path of some inventor who was working with a new form of wireless transmission. I felt that in that way we might account for Miss McLeod's blindness and the blindness of the dog. It also seemed to hold good as to the disappearance of Shoito. The inventor hears of the extraordinary effect of his invention, and is afraid he will get into a mess if it is found out. The yacht to experiment from fitted in beautifully. But now all that's knocked on the head."

"Why?" I asked. "It seems to me, Garnesk, that you are doing all the thinking in this affair, as if you had been used to it all your life. Your only trouble is that you're too modest. I take it that because you didn't see the yacht when you noticed the green flash you are taking it for granted you were wrong to expect it. I must say, old chap, I think you've done thundering well, as the General would put it, and even if you are prepared to admit your theory has been knocked on the head I'm not—at any rate, not until I have a jolly good reason. Yet it doesn't seem to matter much what I say or do if I'm going to faint like a girl at the first sign of danger. If you hadn't come to my rescue I might still be lying there waiting to come round, or something," I finished in disgust.

My companion looked at me thoughtfully.

"Ewart," he said, and solemnly shook his head, "you have brought me to the very thing that made me say my theory was exploded."

"What thing?" I asked. "Surely my fainting can't have made any difference to conclusions you have already come to?"

"But then you see," my friend replied, "you didn't faint. And if I had not seen you were in difficulties you would probably never have recovered."

"Didn't faint?" I exclaimed. "Well, I don't know what the medical term for it is, and I daresay there are several technical phrases for the girlish business I went through. That idea of being dumb was simply imagination, but I assure you it was just what I should call a fainting fit."

"I don't want to alarm you if you're not feeling well," he began apologetically.

"Go on," I urged. "I'm as fit as I ever was."

"Well," the young specialist responded, in a serious tone, "if you want to know the truth, Ewart, you were suffocated."

"Suffocated!" I shouted, jumping to my feet. "What in heaven's name do you mean?"

"I can't tell you exactly what I mean because I don't know, but yours was certainly not an ordinary fainting fit. To put the whole thing in non-medical terms, you were practically drowned on dry land!"

I sat down again—heavily at that. Should we never come to an end of these mysterious attacks which were hurled at us in broad daylight from nowhere at all?

"I'm not sure that you hadn't better rest before we go into this fully, Ewart," Garnesk remarked doubtfully. "You're not by any means as fit as you've ever been, in spite of your emphatic assurance."

"Tell me what you think, why you think it, and what you feel we ought to do. Why, man, Myra might have been here alone, with no one to rescue her and—and——"

"Quite so," said Garnesk sympathetically. "So you must comfort yourself with the knowledge that it may be a great blessing that she was temporarily lost her sight. Now, I say you didn't faint, because, medically, I know you didn't. For the same reason I say you were suffocating as surely as if you had been drowning. Hang it, my dear chap, it's my line of business, you know. I can't account for it, but there is the naked fact for you."

"How does this affect your previous conclusions?" I asked. "Before you tell me what you think brought on this suffocation I should like to hear why you give up your theory."

"Simply because no wireless, or other electric current, could have that effect upon you. If you had had an electric shock in any of its many curious forms I could have said it bore me out; but, you see, it's impossible. And, as I refuse to believe that we are continually bumping into new mysteries which have no connection with each other, it follows that if this suffocation was not caused by the supposed wireless experiments, the other can't have been either."

"I'm not making the slightest imputation on your medical knowledge," I ventured, "but are you absolutely certain that you are not mistaken?"

"My dear fellow," he laughed, "for goodness sake don't be so apologetic. I can quite see that you find it difficult to believe. But I am prepared to swear to it all the same. For one thing, the symptoms were unmistakable; for another, it seems impossible that we should both faint at exactly the same time and place for no reason at all."

"You didn't faint too, surely?" I cried.

"No," he admitted, "but we might very easily have been suffocated together—smothered as surely as the princes in the Tower. When I saw you were in difficulties I shouted to you. Obviously you didn't hear me. I naturally didn't wait to see what would happen to you; I cleared down the cliff, and sprinted to you as fast as I could. When I came to within about twenty yards of you I found a difficulty in breathing. I went on for a couple of paces, and realized that the air was almost as heavy as water. So I rushed back, undid my collar, took a deep breath, and bolted in to you, picked you up, and carried you here. Voila! But I very nearly joined you on the ground, and then we would never have regained consciousness, either of us. I applied the simplest form of artificial respiration to you, dowsed your head, and now you're all right. On the whole, Ewart, we can consider ourselves very well out of this latest adventure."

"What you're really telling me," I pointed out gratefully, "is that you saved my life at the risk of your own. I'm no good at making speeches, or anything of that sort, Garnesk, but I thank you, if you know what that means. And Myra will——"

"Not a word to her, Ewart," my companion interrupted eagerly. "Whatever you do, don't on any account worry that poor girl with this new complication. Anything on earth but that."

"No," I agreed; "you're right there. Myra must be kept in the dark."

"Yes," he replied, with a look of relief. "It might have a serious effect on her chances of recovery if she had this additional worry. And I don't think it would be advisable to tell the old man either. I think we had better keep it to ourselves absolutely. Tell no one, Ewart, except your friend when he comes."

"Very well," I answered, for I was very anxious to spare both Myra and her father from the knowledge of any further trouble. "I'll tell Dennis when he comes, but otherwise it is our secret."

"Good," said Garnesk. "Now put your coat on, old chap, and we'll stroll back to the house."

I got up and buttoned my collar, retied my bow, and slipped into my jacket. It was rather uncomfortably damp, and I felt a bit shaky and queer, and decided that I could do with a complete rest from the mysteries of the green ray. But the subject remained uppermost in my mind, and my tired brain still strove to unravel the tangled threads of the puzzle.

"By the way," I said, as we walked slowly up to the house, "you have not yet explained what there was in my remark about the sunlight that made you think of the yacht."

"Well," he replied, "you see I had an idea that perhaps they might come here when the gorge, through which the river flows, was flooded with light, so that they could see if any strange effects were produced. But that suffocation was not brought about by any electrical experiment, and I am beginning to be afraid that, after all, we may be up against some strange natural phenomena, some terrible combination of the forces of Nature, which has not yet been observed, or at any rate recorded."

"Why afraid?" I asked, for although I had been glad to believe that we were faced with a problem which would prove to have a human solution, the revulsion had come, and I should have welcomed the knowledge that some weird, freakish application of natural power might be held accountable.

"Afraid?" queried Garnesk, with a note of surprise. "I am very often afraid of Nature. She is a devoted slave, but a cruel mistress. I don't think that I should ever be very much scared by a human being, even in his most fiendish aspect, but Nature—I tell you, Ewart, there are things in Nature that make me shudder!"

"Yes," I agreed heavily, "you're right, of course. That's how I have felt for the past twenty-four hours. It was a tremendous relief to me to feel that we were men looking for men. But the last few minutes I have had an idea that it would be comforting to explain it all out of a text-book of physics. Still, you're right. It is better far to be men fighting men than to be puny molecules tossed in the maelstrom of immutable power which created the world, and may one day destroy it."

"I'm glad you agree," he said simply. "You see you could not possibly live for a second in electrically produced atmosphere which was so thick that you couldn't hear yourself speak. Death would be instantaneous. It couldn't have been our unknown professor's wireless experiments after all. Yet it seems impossible that a sudden new power should crop up suddenly at one spot like this. Imagine what would happen if this had occurred in a city, in a crowded street. Hundreds would have been stricken blind, then hundreds would have been suffocated. Vehicles would have run amok, and the result would have been an indescribable chaos of the maimed, mangled and distraught. A flash like this green ray (which blinded Miss McLeod and her dog, deluded the General, and nearly suffocated us) at the mouth of a harbor, say, the entrance to a great port—Liverpool, London, or Glasgow—would be responsible for untold loss of life. If this terrible phenomenon spread, Ewart, it would paralyze the industry of the world in twenty-four hours. If it spread still farther the face of the globe would become the playing-fields of Bedlam in a moment. Think of the result of this everywhere! Some suffocated, some blinded, and millions probably mad and sightless, stumbling over the bodies of the dead to cut each other's throats in the frenzy of sudden imbecility."

"Don't, Garnesk," I begged. "It won't bear thinking about. We have enough troubles here to deal with without that!"

"Yes," my companion admitted, "we need not add to them by any idle conjectures of still more hideous horrors to come. But it is an interesting, if terrible speculation. And it means one thing to us, Ewart, of the very greatest importance. We must solve the riddle somehow."

"You mean," I cried, as I realized the tremendous import of his words—"you mean that the sanity of the universe may rest with us? You mean that if we can solve this riddle we, or others, may be able to devise some means of prevention, or at least protection? You mean that we are in duty bound to keep at this night and day until we find out what it is?"

"That is just what I do mean," he replied seriously. "It is a solemn duty; who knows, it may be a holy trust. Ewart, we agree to get to the bottom of this? We have agreed once, but are we still prepared to go on with this now that we know we may be crushed in the machinery that controls the solar system and lights the very sun?"

(To be continued.)

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There is no need to worry about the chance of being poisoned the next time you take a helping of tapioca pudding, for the natives have been preparing farinha for centuries for their own consumption, and know exactly how to make the poison root perfectly safe. Farinha consists of grains of similar size and appearance to the tapioca of our shops, and both are products of the same root.

Tapioca, however, is the purest product of the poison root. Farinha has a little woody fibre in it which gives it a yellowish color, and its hard, dry grains contain no gluten and very little starch, and crumble like earthy matter when mixed with water. Yet this product of the po[illegible] is the staple food of the p[illegible] in countries where man[illegible]

Some animals can dete[illegible] noises inaudible to human beings.

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Woman's Interests

The Child and His Fear of Death.

"Why should we be afraid?" asked Charles Frohman on the sinking Lusitania, as he helped a trembling actress to her place in the lifeboat. "Death is the greatest adventure of life."

Yes, it is this great adventure of life that puzzles us from the time of our first acquaintance with it until the hour that we meet it. Those of us who are mothers must face this mystery not for ourselves alone, but for the little ones under our care; though not one of us understands the phenomenon.

Children are often obsessed by the fear of death. There is nothing strange about this. The instinct of self-preservation is strong in us all. However weary we may be of life, however much we might intellectually desire the end of the earthly day, if a bandit entered the room with his gun pointing toward us, we should feel one moment of fear, one flinch that is purely physical. And it is well indeed that the instinct for life is so strong. Were it otherwise, who of us would grow to our fullest maturity? For to each of us there come moments of such agonizing disappointments, that nothing but the strong instinct to live could restrain us from severing the thread of life. In children that instinct seems doubly strong. That again is natural. They have not the experience which teaches them real from imagined danger; they have not lived long enough to learn the self-control which helps us to conceal physical fears; they do not look with comfort to the life to come, for they would prefer the continued life of the earth to the changed, unknown condition of spiritual existence.

With all his dread of death, the very little child who has been told of immortality will not question the possibility of the eternal life, because great is his faith in his parents' knowledge. Yet he will be mystified, as are we all, and will fancy, of course, that hands like our hands will come with the resurrection, and that faces like our own will be ours after death. All in all are we not each of us very like these children; for who can conceive of a disembodied spirit? Even St. Paul could not when he spoke of us as clothed with immortality. We are foolish then to try to force the child's mind to grasp that which our own cannot. Why not let the child fancy the new life in terms of this life? As his mind grows, his concepts will mature.

Very little children, to be sure, will accept without question our faith in immortality. Yet earlier than mother's dream, sometimes, arises the question: "How do we know that the soul lives on?" Often we have tried to make this plain to children by a study of the plant life of the world, by comparisons to the seed that falls and is buried, and comes up a living organism. That analogy may satisfy the troubled mind for a time. But it may later see a false analogy. For is not the mystery of the seed more like our mystery of child and parent, than like the miracle of life and death and life again? This explanation may answer for a few years, but the older child, whose faith requires more than mere analogy, will demand a new proof for his hope of immortality. And we may find it for him in the theory once advanced by a bishop who found himself obliged to argue his faith with a scientist. The bishop was wise in his arguments, for he based his proofs not upon the Holy Scriptures, in which the scientist did not believe, but on the principles of psychological reactions. The human mind, it has been found, desires life after death, which we call immortality. But the mind has never yet desired that which did not exist in whole or in part. No man would ask for gold, if gold were unknown. No one would long for courage if courage did not lodge in some men's hearts. Man could not think to desire that which does not exist. It follows, therefore, as the bishop said, that we could not think to desire immortality, were immortality non-existant. In this proof there is comfort and assurance for us all, young and old; for those who believe in the Hebrew revelations, and for those whose faith can be satisfied by science alone.

After the proof for immortality has been established, the child's mind may still be worried by the thought of the time taken for the transition from this world to the other. If modern psychic research still seems too experimental to be urged as conclusive evidence of immediate transition, turn with the child again to science. The great principle upon which physical science rests is this: "Energy is nowhere lost." Then why not tell the child frankly that the old school of philosophers has long argued that the soul lay asleep until the earth should pass away, and the day of universal resurrection should come. But tell him, too, that the newer school of philosophers believe that the soul never sleeps in the grave, that it passes at once from the corporeal body into the spiritual life, and in the transition loses no consciousness. A long sleep in the grave, or complete annihilation, would mean a loss of energy. The soul, therefore, argue the scientists of the newer day, must pass at once to its new environment.

To many, the Bible is the great and final source of faith. But a little proof from the scientific world helps the child through the years when he must naturally doubt the truth of the things he most desires. Let not a child be troubled because he is in doubt. Every normal mind has had its days of questioning. No intelligence and no faith ever grew strong without the troubling comradeship of doubt.

Short Cuts.

To get all the juice from lemons, put them in the warming oven until quite hot, then roll, being careful not to break the skin. Cut a small hole in one end and every drop of juice can be easily gotten out.

A drop of blood on a dainty new georgette blouse was removed by patting it carefully with a bit of cotton saturated with hydrogen peroxide.

Buns—One cup of dough taken from loaf before putting in pans. Set in a cool place until ready to use two or three days or longer, when ready to use add a piece of lard the size of an egg, to the dough, half cup of sugar, one cup of warm water, mix stiff, raise, then form into buns.

It is said that a little salt added to an over-sweetened dish will neutralize the sugar, and that a little sugar added to a too-salt dish will have the same effect.

Orange Syllabub—Whip one-half pint of cream and beat one egg white and fold into cream. Then add one cup of marshmallows cut in small pieces, one cup of broken walnut meats and pulp of two oranges. Sweeten to suit and serve in sherbet cups.

Add a tablespoonful of water and a pinch of salt to the white of an egg before you beat it for frosting. It only takes half the time to beat it and is very nice.

Modern Invisible Writing.

Early in the war the French secret service became so familiar with the more common forms of invisible ink that German spies used in sending information to The Fatherland that the Germans were forced to seek more sensitive and less conspicuous substances. Liquids that were used for secret writing were no longer carried pure, but were often diluted from fifty thousand to five hundred thousand times.

Frequently socks, shoe laces and other articles of clothing were impregnated with minute quantities of a solution, and when a spy needed to write he had simply to soak the tip of his sock or his shoe lace in a glass of water and use the innocent-appearing water as ink.

It was not easy for the French to discover the process by which the message, which was usually written between the lines of an ordinary letter, could be made legible. In the course of a particularly damaging secret correspondence a French investigator happened to notice that several suspected persons seemed to guard certain articles of their baggage with particular care. In July, 1917, he seized a handkerchief and submitted it to a chemist, who, after three months of experimenting, discovered that it contained invisible ink so powerful that one part in one hundred million parts of water made a solution strong enough to write with. But in the course of his research the chemist made another and even more valuable discovery: he learned what the substance was that would make the writing visible, and as a result the government hunted down and exposed many spies.

Another important result of the experiment was that the investigator was able to present the French government with an excellent secret formula for making an invisible writing fluid. A message written with it can be revealed only by applying four additional substances in a specific order, and unless every step of the process is attended to with the utmost care and precision the writing remains invisible.

Farmer—"So you are an experienced milker, are you? Well, now, which side of the cow do you sit on when you milk her?" Applicant (from the city)—"Well, I'm not a bit particular, if the cow isn't."

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4-10-21

Scotland Saved by a Thistle.

One of the military rules of the early Danes was that it was cowardly to attack an enemy during the night, and because of this the Scots did not consider it necessary to keep a watch during their encounters with the invading army of Denmark. Sunset was supposed to mark the close of all hostilities for the day.

On one occasion, however, the Danes deviated from their rule and determined to launch an onslaught against one of the Scottish strongholds. On they crept, barefooted, noiseless, unobserved—until one of them set his foot upon a thistle and cried out with pain. The alarm was given, the Scots fell upon the invaders and defeated them with terrific slaughter.

From that time onwards, the thistle was the Scottish emblem, the motto being, "No one wounds me with impunity!"

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