

THE LAST WHITE MAN

BY ROBERT E. HOWARD

The man shivered in the coolness of the early morning. He shifted his body to relieve the pressure on his elbows.

Cautiously he peered up over the great boulder in front of him, and down the mountain side. Fire twinkled there and the man cursed. An obscene song floated up to him and his curses deepened. The song was in a rich, guttural voice.

The man was a wonder, physically. Over six feet in height, his chest and shoulders were those of a giant. Weighing far over two hundred pounds, he yet gave the impression of sinuous speed. His face was sullen, savage, almost primitive, small black eyes glittering through tangled strands of sandy hair. In one hand he clutched a rifle. A curved scimitar of surprising proportions lay beside him.

He was a splendid example of a wonderful race. A race which reached physical perfection, sank to the depths of degeneracy and then regained the heights just before their fall. He was the last.

He was thinking as he lay there, watching the camps of his enemies.

What heights his race had reached before luxu-

ries, idleness and pleasures had sapped their might; had made of them a race of degenerate weaklings. He cursed beneath his breath.

There had been an age when his race had ruled the world. Their cities dotted the fertile plains. Their ships had furrowed the seas, bringing back the wealth of every land. Their armies had gone forth conquering and subjugating.

None could stand before them in the more peaceful sports. Their athletes defeated all others with ease. They were all giants, physically and mentally.

Then the decadence set in. It had been first noticeable in the sports and athletics. Fewer and fewer of the race had gained fame in the great games. More and more men of other races seized the prizes.

The ruling race forgot the art of war, forgot all except the search for newer pleasures, and in so doing, they descended to the depths of degeneracy.

Always some new strong race sprang up then, the man reflected, thinking of the hazy legends of the ancients, of great empires known as Greece, Rome, Nineveh, Sumeria.

And a new, strong race had risen. A race whose people had been enslaved for ages.

They were a mighty, a prolific race. First

they overran their own continent. Rebellions swept Africa. The negroes pushed the Arab races to the north and the Arabs and Europeans slew each other, until from Cape Town to Tangiers, and from Kimberly to Suez only black men ruled.

The whites should have seen that they could not stand before them. The black race doubles itself in forty years, the brown in sixty, the white in eighty. And the white race was exhausted by dissipation; birth rate almost ceased. Moreover, the race was decimated by fierce wars, wherein white man fought white man.

The whites had taught sanitation to the negroes, and had stopped massacres and tribal wars. The growth of the black race was uninterrupted.

In the almost incessant wars between the white nations, black men were pressed into service, taught the arts of war and then sent to their native lands -- to teach others how the white man fought.

They were a strong, young race. Their day was yet to come. All they lacked was a leader.

And a leader had risen. A mixed-breed Arab, whose ambition was without measure, whose genius was Satanic.

He welded them into one great mass, gave them white man's weapons, furnished by Americans and Europeans who would have as quickly and readily sold their own sisters' souls if the price were high

enough.

He led them to the slaughter. At first the white race held its own.

But not for long. The blacks were physical giants, mighty fighting organisms, whose highest wish was slaughter and plunder.

That century long warfare! The man thrilled with a savage pride as he reviewed the wonderful battle the whites gave, overwhelmed as they were with odds of a hundred to one.

If Asia had stood firm -- but Asia did not stand. Whirlwinds of revolt swept from Kamchatca to Stamboul.

Japan called upon the East to strike for liberty and loot and put herself at their head. Like a pack of tigers the East rose and Japan herself, unable to stem the tide she had loosed, was the first to go down.

The Orientals allied themselves with the negroes to slaughter the hated whites. Only the Sikhs and Ghurkas in India and the Shans in Burma stood firm.

Spain, Portugal, Italy, the Balkans were overwhelmed with one rush. The black hordes, spread out, until the tips of that vast army reached from Gibraltar to Siam.

They swept over Europe like a wave. In America a savage struggle was going on, for her black

inhabitants, who numbered nearly half of her entire population, had risen.

Then over the ocean came the invaders from Africa. In less than ten years, the fight had changed from a war between two great nations, to a hunting down and slaughtering of scattered remnants of the great nation which once had ruled the world. Not with ease was this accomplished. The hunted life brought back the primitive might of the race and those who survived became giants, such as the man who crouched among the boulders and cursed.

Once the white race was scattered, the blacks turned upon their Oriental allies and slaughtered them. The Orientals always warred among themselves and had no unity, whereas the black were held together by the hand of their Arab ruler.

The Sikhs, the Ghurkas and the Shans had fallen with the whites. The Ghurkas withstood the negroes longest, for with the fall of British rule, they had retreated to their Nepal hills and there they held the blacks at bay for a hundred years.

In the hills north of the Khyber, too, a long fierce battle was waged, and the Afghans, fierce and war-like as the blacks, held out longer than any other Asian race.

Followed years of slaughter and fleeing. All over the world, small bands of whites and Orientals fled, fought, stole into the camps of their con-

querors to slay and burn, fled, fought, and were slaughtered, fighting and slaying to the last.

The last man reviewed the history and deep curses slipped from between his bearded lips.

Over a hundred years had passed since the first of the black horde swept up out of the Congo. A hundred years of battle, slaughter, pillage and rapine.

Now, over all the world, which the rising sun would soon light, to send the blacks bounding up the mountain, he was the only white man.

A world of black men. No white men, no brown or yellow men. No mulattoes. The women of the other races had slain themselves ere they could bear the children of the hated ravishers.

One white man in all the world.

And, he reflected, it would not be many years before the jackal and the wolf would wander unchecked. For sixty-five years the Satanic Arab emperor had held the blacks together but when he was murdered, they fell into wars and even now a thousand small chiefs were fighting for ascendancy. The last white man laughed with savage, unholy glee.

The black race was doomed. They were destroyers, not builders. When they slew the white men, progress ceased. The blacks reverted to savagery. They did not even know the art of making

weapons. They had destroyed and could not rebuild. And they were going back to bestial savagery, and to a slaughtering of one another which even their animal-like rate of birth could not control.

It was dawning. The last white man looked about him; gathered his weapons. The rush would soon come.

And soon it came. A fierce shout, a chorus of yells, a glitter of spears, a firing of ancient rifles, and the black devils came leaping up the mountain-slope.

Unable to make weapons themselves, the negroes had in truth gone back to the ways of their remote ancestors.

They were not the ebony giants who had smashed the armies of Europe, America and the Orient. Even as the whites had degenerated so had the blacks.

The white man grinned savagely, shoved the muzzle of his rifle forward, and began firing. He had not many cartridges, but he wasted not one. Again and again his single rifle broke the rush and sent the remaining blacks scurrying for cover.

But the rush came when the white man stood up and hurled his empty weapon at the attackers. For a moment they halted, staring silently, fearfully, at the silent, savage white giant who faced them, great scimitar held aloft.

No five of them were a match for him; but there

were thousands. They came with a rush, leaping over and across the boulders, spears flashing.

And the white man leaped to meet them, great blade swishing among the thrusting spears, hewing through limbs and bodies, smiting off heads.

They gave back before him and for an instant he stood free. There, ringed about by his foes, he stood, the last white man, bleeding from a hundred spear-thrusts, his fallen enemies piled about him in a thigh-deep heap.

A moment he stood, drawn to his full great height, eyes fixed on the far-away skies, scimitar raised high above his head as if in salute to the spirits of the great ones he saw there -- then a hundred spears whirled through the air.

The sun that rose above the mighty mountain shone upon a world of one race.