

The Nameless Mummy

By ARLTON EADIE

An amazing tale of the weird events that accompanied the unwrapping of an Egyptian mummy

IN SPITE of the fact that it was still within the hours of public admission, the lofty galleries of the Helmsstone Museum were, save for an occasional uniformed attendant, absolutely deserted; and Peter Venn, the curator, rejoiced accordingly. Usually he was only too pleased to show visitors round the large and well-stocked museum over which he had charge, waxing especially eloquent over the treasures of the Egyptian section, in which it was particularly rich, but today he had work on hand which would monopolize his attention for many hours. By the bequest of a recently deceased collector, the museum had come into possession of a great number of Egyptian antiquities, and it was to the examination and classification of these that his labors were being directed.

The room in which he worked was situated at the extreme end of the Egyptian Gallery, being separated from it by a partition, the upper part of which was glass. By simply raising his head he could obtain an uninterrupted view of the long vista of decorated mummy-cases, carved sphinxes, and monuments which went to make up the more bulky contents, and it was owing to this fact that it was not thought necessary to have an attendant stationed in that particular room.

The task before Peter Venn was no light one. The objects with which his little room was crowded seemed to have been garnered promiscuously by their late owner and to have lain neglected for

many years. One of the great mummy-cases had not even been opened, and it was only natural that this should first engage Peter Venn's attention. The study of Egyptology is notoriously full of surprises, and every unexamined relic of that long-dead civilization may hold a secret that will startle the world.

It must be admitted that the appearance of the casket was such as to arouse his curiosity. It was of unpainted cedar-wood, its sole ornamentation a figure of the Goddess Nout carved on the lid in an attitude as though she were shielding the body within with her protecting wings. But what puzzled Peter Venn most was the small bronze tablet fixed to the lid. This had been covered with a thick coating of bitumen, apparently with the object of concealing the identity of the mummy which lay within, and it was only after having expended two hours in removing this that he was able to see the inscription it bore. This, greatly to his amazement, proved to be written in Latin.

"Regna, honores, divitiae, caduca et incerta sunt," he was able to read at last, and as he uttered the words he felt a thrill of exultation tingling his veins. "He must have been an important, if not a royal, personage to have such an epitaph inscribed on his coffin," he muttered to himself. "There would be no point in writing of a poor and obscure man that 'Kingdoms, honors, riches, are frail and fickle things.' He was evidently a Roman—maybe one of the higher officers of the



"From the finger tips of the statue of Isis fell the blood-red drops."

legions that Julius Cæsar sent to Egypt. Or perhaps it is even——"

Whilst he had been speculating on the identity of the body which lay within, Peter Venn had taken up his chisel and inserted it beneath the lid. His hand was already on the handle to lever the coffin open, when suddenly he paused, overcome with a strange feeling of helplessness that he could neither define nor explain.

Peter was not an imaginative man, neither was he a novice in his profession. Years of constant association had blunted

that feeling of involuntary awe with which the average person would regard the exposure of a body in its two-thousand-year-old resting-place; to him a mummy was just an interesting antiquity, to be examined, classified and ticketed before being placed in its glass case. But now, to his surprize and annoyance, he found himself suddenly overcome with a feeling very much like physical terror. And yet, strangely enough, the actual reason for his fear did not appear to be the mummy-case itself; it needed something more potent, more vital, more hu-

man to account for the sensation which possessed him. Slowly, unconsciously, as though actuated by a compelling volition alien to himself, Peter straightened up and looked through the glass partition, and a slight gasp came from between his parted lips as his eyes fell upon the figure of the woman who stood outside.

She was rather under medium height, slim and dark-haired, with small, delicately chiselled features and long, slightly almond-shaped eyes. Her dress was ordinary enough; a tailored costume of amber-colored cloth with a small, close-fitting hat to match; but that was the last detail of her appearance that Peter noticed. All his interest was centered on her face, and particularly her eyes, which drew his own and held them with a compelling, hypnotic force.

Peter Venn was forty and a bachelor, and up to then women had played but a small part in his life. But now, as he looked into the eyes of this strange woman he seemed to see reflected in those almond-shaped pools of darkness a vision of his youthful hopes and dreams; once more he was filled with vague, romantic longings which he had thought he had long since outgrown. A slight flush crept into his pale cheeks and his eyes began to shine behind their double glasses. Almost without thinking what he did, Peter Venn opened the door of the partition.

"Good afternoon." Even as he uttered it, the commonplace greeting sounded utterly banal, but it was the only opening he could think of. "If you are interested in Egyptian antiquities I shall be most happy to show you round."

A slight smile hovered round the full, rich lips as she glanced at the long rows of glass cases.

"I am certainly interested, as you say," she answered in a full, musical voice, "but whether the information you are able to

impart will be anything new is another matter."

In spite of the smile which accompanied her words, their implied contempt for his knowledge caused a frown to gather on his forehead.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon." His tone was slightly sarcastic. "I was not aware that I was addressing one well versed in ancient lore. Perhaps it is I who should be the listener and you the expounder of the meaning of the relics around us?"

Her slender shoulders lifted in a tiny shrug.

"Perhaps," she agreed, with such composure that Venn felt as though he were being laughed at. His reputation as an Egyptologist was no small one, and it was intolerable to think this slip of a girl should set her knowledge on an equal with his. There was a somewhat grim smile on his lips as he drew the sun-blind off one of the center cases and pointed to a roll of papyrus which lay spread out beneath.

"This is written in the hieratic characters of the Thirteenth Dynasty," he explained gravely. "I should be very grateful for a little assistance in translating it."

He paused, waiting for the look of confusion to expose the shallowness of her boasted learning. To his unbounded amazement, however, the girl stepped up to the case, and, with a mere casual glance at the queer-looking writing, at once began to translate:

"This is the record of Manenka-Ra, High Priest of Horus, son of Isis, He who presents the souls of the departed to Osiris, after Thoth, having weighed their hearts in the balance and found if they be righteous and true——"

She broke off and looked up with a little smile. "Need I read further? This is so elementary, you know."

FOR a full minute Peter Venn remained staring at her. Who was this entrancing young lady who so glibly ran off the complicated script that had taken him, professor though he was, months to decipher?

"Who are you?" he asked curiously. "And how is it that one so young as you is able to read a language that requires many years of study even to grasp the rudiments?"

Again her shoulders lifted in that enigmatical shrug.

"What does it signify where I gained my knowledge? The only fact that matters is that I do possess knowledge so deep and far-reaching that your mind can not do more than enter on the outermost fringe of its boundless, unexplored territory."

Venn looked puzzled, as well he might.

"I'm afraid I do not understand," he murmured.

Again that little shrug that he was beginning to know so well.

"Naturally." The air of complacency with which she assumed her superiority almost took his breath away. "Some time—soon, perhaps—you shall know who and what I am. In the meantime I should be very glad to see those objects which have recently been bequeathed to your museum."

Venn's forehead creased in perplexity. Here was another mystery. Scarcely anybody outside the staff had been informed of the bequest, yet here was a complete stranger apparently in possession of the full details. But he seemed to recognize the futility of seeking an explanation. After all, it was only another extraordinary circumstance connected with this most extraordinary young lady. He shrugged and pointed toward his room behind the glass partition.

"You are quite at liberty to examine

them," he told her. "They are in there, and——"

He broke off short and started forward with outstretched arms. For no sooner had she reached the threshold of the room which contained the unnamed mummy than she uttered a low, strangled cry and staggered back, limp and nerveless. Half leading, half carrying, he got her to the nearest chair and prepared to go in search of a glass of water. But she stopped him with a sudden gesture.

"It is nothing," she said, though her trembling lips and ashy features belied her words. "A sudden faintness, that is all. I shall be better—soon."

He looked from her to the unopened mummy-case. Deep down in his mind a suspicion was beginning to form that the coming of this strange girl was intimately connected with the mummy that he was on the point of exposing. Moreover, he could have sworn that it was the sight of the case which had called forth the display of emotion he had just witnessed.

"It seems as if this mummy-case is not entirely unknown to you," he said slowly.

She inclined her dark head with a gesture of assent.

"I have seen it . . . once . . . many years ago," she answered hesitatingly. "And . . . that is the reason of my presence here."

"I knew it!" cried Peter Venn triumphantly.

With a quick movement that somehow reminded him of the sinuous glide of a panther, the girl rose to her feet and came toward him. Beautiful though her face was, there was now a look on it that filled him with vague alarm. The red lips were set and determined; the eyes held in their starry depths the blaze of an indomitable will. She glided so close to him that he could feel her warm breath fanning his cheek.

"You will open that mummy-case to-

night, after the museum is closed," she said, speaking in low, hurried tones. "I will be present, and after we have seen—what we shall see—I will tell you such a story as human ears have never listened to before."

Peter Venn drew back, aghast.

"What you ask is impossible!" he cried. "My position—my reputation——"

She raised her dark eyes to his, and once again he was conscious of the same mental numbness that had preceded her first coming. It seemed as though her will was fighting for ascendancy with his own—fighting and slowly but surely winning.

"At ten o'clock tonight."

The words were a command rather than a question. Hidden fires seemed to glow in her eyes as she uttered them. Peter Venn threw out his hands with the gesture of one who leaves the future in the hands of fate.

"Very well—at ten," he said hoarsely. A moment later he was alone.

DURING the ensuing hours Peter Venn did nothing but consider his extraordinary interview with the strange girl, and the more he considered it the uglier the whole business seemed. That he, a responsible and respectable official, having in his charge objects whose value was literally beyond all price, had consented to admit an utter stranger to the museum at the dead of night seemed almost beyond belief. Yet he undoubtedly had consented. Why? He asked himself the question a thousand times as he made his way through the darkened streets to his bachelor home; it dinned itself in his ears as he sat over his solitary supper; the very ticking of the tall grandfather clock seemed to reiterate the maddening query as it recorded the passing of the seconds which brought him nearer

the appointed time. Why? . . . why? . . . why?

Although she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen, he was not, he told himself angrily, in love with her; fascinated, dominated, maybe, but no more in love with her than the fluttering bird is in love with the serpent whose glittering eyes lure it to its destruction. Oh, why had he not asserted himself, told her that the thing she asked was impossible to grant, and firmly but gently dismissed her? Yes, that was what he ought to have done, and that was what he must do. He would keep the appointment, but only to tell her that he had changed his mind and any request to view the new exhibits must be made through the directors of the museum.

And yet——

Peter Venn found his newly formed resolution wavering as he remembered those compelling yet adorable eyes. After all, what was it that she asked of him? Merely that she should be present when he examined the strange mummy. Surely there would be no great harm in humoring her whim, or curiosity, or superstition, or whatever was at the back of her unusual desire. And, to confess the truth, he himself was conscious of no small curiosity to see the outcome of the affair.

Who was this amazingly persuasive young lady who was able to read the hieratic script of two thousand years ago as readily as he could read the evening paper? Was she aware of the contents of that Roman-Egyptian mummy-case? Was she——?

The mellow chimes of the clock announcing half-past nine brought his speculations to an abrupt close. Rising hastily, he hurried on his hat and coat and, telling his housekeeper that he had an engagement that would probably keep him very late indeed, issued forth to keep his tryst.

IT WAS just on the hour when Peter Venn turned into the street in which the private door of the museum was situated, only to find it lying silent and deserted. The fair unknown had not kept the appointment—he had been fooled!

He was surprized at the mingled emotions which this discovery called forth in his mind. He should, he told himself, have felt relieved at the respite, and possibly a little angry at the trick which had been played on him. But actually these feelings were swamped by the pang of acute disappointment that shot through his heart at the sight of the empty street. He paused irresolutely; then, with a shrug and a sigh, he turned to go.

Without warning, as though it had suddenly materialized out of the shadows, a hand touched his arm, and a voice, clear, musical, but intensely low, spoke to him.

"Did you think that I should fail to come, my friend?" A slight smile rose to the girl's lips as she noted the amazement depicted on his face as he swung round. "I have been hiding in the shadows, awaiting your arrival. Our task has risks enough without adding to them by courting the observation of chance passers-by. But time presses. We must do what we came to do before the watchman makes his rounds at midnight."

Peter paused in the act of inserting his pass-key in the door.

"How do you know of that?" he asked, but she gave an impatient shake of her head.

"What matter how I know? Proceed, my Peter, and cease to puzzle over trifles. There will be other, far deeper, mysteries to occupy your thoughts before morning."

So sinister was the tone in which she uttered the words that Peter Venn found his early suspicions returning with redoubled force.

"Indeed?" he began. "In that case——"

"Be silent—and open that door!"

Such was the imperious command of that quick sibilant order that Venn, actuated by an impulse which overruled both caution and fear, inserted the key and opened the door.

IT WAS not the first occasion on which Peter Venn had been in the museum at night. An ardent delver into the lore of the past, he had often remained poring over some fragile roll of papyrus or musty black-leather tome until the early hours of the morning; but never had those shadowy halls and galleries seemed so full of eery mystery as they did that night. The faint echoes, which their stealthy footsteps sent floating along the silent corridors, sounded like ghostly whisperings; the beam of the electric pocket-lamp which the girl had switched on sent uncouth, grotesque shadows dancing on the walls; heavy odors, sickly sweet yet death-like, clung about the hall where the still, linen-swathed mummies lay in their last long sleep. It was with a feeling of positive relief that he at last entered his private room and knew that the time for action had arrived.

Pausing only to remove his hat and overcoat, Peter Venn immediately set to work to prize up the coffin-lid of the unnamed mummy. But the task was long and tedious; for, eager and excited though he undoubtedly was, he did not neglect the precautions which long years of handling frail and precious objects had ingrained in him. Cloth pads had to be placed beneath the fulcrum of the tool which he was using as a lever, in order to prevent the metal splintering the aged wood; numerous wedges had to be inserted into the gradually widening space to prevent the heavy lid slipping back as soon as he withdrew the point of the tool. But at last the lid was clear of the numerous tongues of wood that had held it in

position, and, exerting all his strength, he lifted it off and placed it out of the way in a corner of the room.

Inside the coffin, filling it to within a few inches of the top, was a quantity of withered flowers, amongst which the lotus could still be recognized, and these completely hid the body from view. But as soon as he had swept aside the first layer he caught the gleam of yellow metal among the withered petals. His heart gave a sudden bound at the sight. Only one metal could have retained its luster undimmed through the ages which had elapsed since the casket was sealed, and that was gold. Had he stumbled on a treasure unawares?

A cloud of fine dust rose from the shrivelled leaves and blossoms as he scooped them up with trembling hands and tumbled them on the floor. Coughing, half blinded, consumed with that frantic excitement which the true antiquarian feels when on the brink of a unique discovery, Peter Venn worked on until the body was completely revealed. Hitherto he had worked by the light of the little electric pocket-lamp; but now, regardless of the risk of discovery, he switched on the lights and stood regarding his find with glistening eyes.

"Well, I've certainly never seen a mummy like this before!" he muttered. "But what a find! Ye gods! what an unprecedented find!"

The body was that of a tall, heavily built man clad from head to foot in the richly wrought accouterments of a Roman officer of the highest rank. His helmet, cuirass, greaves and armlets were elaborately decorated with figures taken from the mythology of ancient Rome, and had either been heavily plated with gold or else were composed of the solid metal. Contrary to the usual Egyptian custom, the body was not incased in linen swath-

ings, but whatever method of embalming had been used, it had fulfilled its purpose well. The flesh was firm and not discolored; the features composed and life-like. The countenance was bold and remarkably handsome, though the mouth betrayed a slight weakness which the dark beard failed quite to conceal. Although both the beard and the short, curling hair were shot with gray, it was clear that he had been still in the full vigor of manhood when death had overtaken him—suddenly, it seemed, for his features showed no trace of the ravages of a long illness.

All these things Venn noted in a few seconds. Then he saw something else—a robe of Imperial purple caught on the left shoulder with a jewelled clasp.

"An Emperor—a Roman Cæsar!" he gasped, and looked closer at the marble-like countenance. "Can it be Julius Cæsar? Impossible—he was a shorter man and much older when he died. Who then? What Roman ruler died in Egypt? What, is it possible that this is——"

He bent forward and snatched up an object that lay upon the shining corselet. It was a small square of wood, thickly coated with wax—one of the "tablets" which took the place of notebooks in ancient times. Upon it a few words had been scratched in a trembling hand.

"*Aut Caesar aut nullus*—'Either Cæsar or nothing,'" Peter Venn read with staring eyes, and then the almost illegible signature beneath: "Marcus Antonius."

For a moment he stood like a man turned to stone as he strove to realize the stupendous importance of his discovery.

"Mark Antony?" he muttered. "The friend of Julius Cæsar, the conqueror of Brutus and Cassius—the man who won the whole world and then threw it away for the love of——"

"Queen Cleopatra—myself!" said a low, sad voice at his elbow.

SO ABSORBED had Venn been that he had quite forgotten the presence of the girl. At the sound of her voice he raised his eyes, stared for an instant at the vision that confronted him across the body of the dead Emperor, then recoiled with a cry.

She had thrown off the long evening wrap and now appeared in what seemed to him like a fancy-dress costume of an elaborate and rather daring nature, consisting as it did almost entirely of flashing jewels. Jewelled was the fringed girdle which encircled her slender waist, also the deep golden collar round her neck. Rubies gleamed in the eyes of the royal asp upon her brow; sapphires and emeralds flashed from the ground as she moved her sandalled feet. She seemed less like a woman than a flame of living fire.

"Are you mad?" he cried. "Cleopatra lived two thousand years ago and committed suicide over her lover's body after his defeat by Octavianus at Alexandria."

"Are you so certain of this?" she asked slowly.

"Of course. She died by the bite of an asp——"

The eyes of the golden serpent on her brow flashed red fire as she shook her head, a mocking smile playing about her lips the while.

"The old fable! Started by the Queen from motives of policy, spread by common report, garnered by the ancient historian, Plutarch, and recorded in his *Lives*; woven into undying poetry by Shakespeare in his famous play; repeated blindly by the smaller fry of the modern literary world—truly the story has many godfathers. Yet it is a fable nevertheless. Cleopatra did not die at Alexandria. She stands before you now!"

Peter Venn attempted to signify his opinion of her assertion by uttering a de-

risive laugh. But somehow the laugh refused to come. Wild though her words were, there was something so tragic in her manner that, fiercely though his reason might fight against it, he found his skepticism wavering. Surely, he argued, it must be something more than a mere coincidence that brought her to him on the very night that the coffin was opened.

"I promised you a mystery, did I not, my professor?" she went on. "Listen, and you shall hear one—aye, and behold a picture of ancient Egypt more vivid and moving than a lifetime of poring over musty records could bring to your mind. Know then, Cleopatra—Plutarch notwithstanding—did not slay herself when Octavianus Cæsar and his centurions came to drag her in chains to grace his triumph in Rome. Long years before, she had penetrated the Great Pyramid and wrested from its most secret place, in its most secret chamber deep down in the living rock, the most wonderful secret in the world. There, from the finger-tips of the statue of Isis, the Great Mother of All, fall the blood-red drops which well up from the very vitals of this planet, the mystic life-giving and life-preserving essence to which all nature owes its existence. And whosoever drinks of that draft shall never taste mortal death. I drank of it long before the great Julius fell beneath the daggers of Brutus and the rest, and behold! I am living yet!"

"Of the priest of Isis who revealed this wondrous secret to me, and of what befell him later, I do not intend to speak. Suffice to say that no sooner did I feel that immortal vitality coursing through my veins like growing fire than I resolved that I alone should hold the secret of its hidden source until I could find a fitting mate, who, after I had given to him this precious gift, should rule the world with me. I emerged from the Pyramid—

alone—and from that hour began my task of bringing the world to my feet.

"You must read the history of that period to judge how far I succeeded in that aim. Kings and rulers became pawns in the game whose stake was supremacy—provinces the squares of the chessboard on which it was played—the whole known world was the board itself. I played and—for a time—won. For with the fuller, richer life bestowed by the mystic draft there had come a deeper, wiser perception of my fellow-creatures; a power to read their hidden thoughts, a knowledge how to use their wisdom and their folly, their virtues and their failings, for my own ends. But of all those whom I used and flung aside there was not one who had the power to light the flame of love within my heart. It seemed as if the power I had stolen from the Gods was a two-edged sword, wounding its wielder with its backward stroke. While investing my body with immortality, it seemed to have killed the power of love in my soul. My triumphs and conquests turned to Dead Sea fruit in my mouth; it seemed as if I were destined to be the richest yet poorest of womankind. I was even beginning to consider taking the alternant which the dead priest had entrusted to me; a pinch of greenish powder, enclosed in a hollow emerald set in a ring, which would counteract the life-giving draft and render me again mortal. My resolution was almost taken, when there came into my life the man whose body lies before you."

She stretched out her hand and laid it on the pallid brow with a gesture of infinite tenderness. Venn, his mind a tumult in which sanity fought to overcome a belief in the impossible, waited in silence for her to continue.

"Long before we met I had heard reports of Marcus Antonius, the Triumvir who with Octavianus and Lepidus ruled

the Roman Empire. A brave, vain, handsome and fickle-minded soldier was the character that common rumor gave him. When I received his summons to appear before him in Cilicia to answer for having assisted Cassius in the recent war against the Triumvirs, I thought the task of changing my judge into my suppliant would be an easy one. I sailed down the River Cydnus to meet him, in a barge with gilded hull and sails of royal purple, rowed by silver oars which beat time to the music of flutes and harps. He stood to receive me on the shore in a golden chariot drawn by milk-white steeds, a wreath of ivy upon his proud head, a snowy mantle over his armor of dazzling gold. There were no words of recrimination or defense uttered now. Instead, a feast was spread and the multitude rejoiced, crying out that Bacchus was come to feast with Venus, for the common good of Asia. The sword was buried in the wine-cup, and softly-voiced lovers' vows took the place of the clash of contending legions. Nor was it pretense on my part. The sacred fire of love had kindled in my heart; I had found the man who was to sit by my side, god-like and immortal in very truth, ruling the world with me."

Peter Venn started and a dull red flush appeared on his sallow cheeks. So small a part had women played in his life that it needed the pangs of jealousy to reveal the fact that he loved this strange, beautiful being who had drifted across his path. He forgot the tale she was telling, with its manifold impossibilities; forgot that her own words proclaimed her either as an immortal being or else a lunatic; forgot that she was young and beautiful, he middle-aged and bent with study. All he knew was that he loved her. Mad or sane, mortal or undying, every fiber in his body impelled him to crush her slender form to his and shower kisses on those

red, red lips until the light of love awoke in her long, slumberous eyes. She was incomparable, divine! Were her story true, small wonder that she had swayed the destinies of nations as a hurricane shakes a clump of reeds!

Controlling himself with an effort, he realized that she was speaking again.

"For a space our lives were one long series of fêtes and banquets, throughout which I narrowly observed the behavior of my chosen consort, weighing his soul's worth in a balance as fine as a jeweller's scales; gaging, considering, and at last doubting. Handsome he was, and of a noble carriage, fearless in battle and generous to a fault; but his heart was fickle as the spring winds. I hesitated, putting off the day when I would take him to the Pyramid and endow him with a power equal to my own. I hesitated while Octavianus' fleet and legions mustered against my beloved, nor did his defeat at Actium spur me to the deed. Only after Antony's troops had deserted and he himself was a hunted fugitive did I form my resolve.

"But I had tarried too long. Antony, hearing a false report of my death, had already fallen on his sword. He died before I could reach him, and Olympus, my physician, a man whose skill exceeded that of the greatest masters of the craft, caused him to be embalmed and buried in a secret place. Poor Olympus! He was a faithful servant, faithful unto death. He was captured by the victorious troops of Octavianus the following day, and died under torture rather than reveal the tomb of Antony.

"But I was allowed but little time for lamentation. News was brought that the enemy was advancing. I did not fear death—indeed I would rather have welcomed it—but I would never adorn the triumphant progress of the man who had

torn my loved one from me. My preparations were quickly made. One of my female slaves, who resembled me somewhat in face and figure, was dressed in my crown and robes, laid upon the royal couch, and slain by the bite of an asp. Her violently contorted features easily passed for mine. The Romans proclaimed my death. I was safe."

A tone of infinite weariness had crept into her voice, but when she resumed her tale it was in livelier accents. She was like a jaded traveller who quickens his pace in a last effort to reach the long-desired goal.

"Aye, I was safe, and yet I longed for death. All the pomp and power which I could still grasp by stretching out my hand seemed as nothing now that Antony was dead—less than nothing, for now my immortality meant nothing but a long, empty pilgrimage through the world. I longed and prayed for the death I had defied. Then I thought of the green powder which would bring oblivion. I eagerly searched my belongings. It was not there. Then I remembered. I had given the ring to Antony at one of our feasts, laughingly telling him it was the most precious thing in the world. In my grief and distraction I had allowed him to be interred with the ring still on his finger.

"Night and day I searched for the tomb—searched far more diligently for the secret of Death than I had for that of Life. But Olympus had done his work too well; the tomb could not be found. And he himself had died with his secret untold.

"From that hour my boasted immortality was but a living death. All my thoughts and energy were now directed, not to the shaping of nations and the dominating of men, but to the search for those few grains of green powder which

would buy my freedom from the life that had become a burden and a punishment. I shudder now as I recall those dreary, dreary years. I searched, I explored, I bribed, I cajoled—aye, I tortured and slew that I might find the hidden tomb. But it seemed as if I should never regain possession of the drug I craved—until today.”

“Today?” echoed Peter Venn, raising his eyebrows.

“Yes.” She lifted the dead hand and slipped an emerald ring from one of the fingers. “Here is my order of release!”

She raised it to her lips—to kiss it, Venn thought. Too late he saw her real intention. The bezel of the ring had flown open as her finger pressed a hidden spring, releasing a tiny pinch of green powder between her eager lips. Venn dashed forward and caught her as she swayed. . . .

Shock — horror — apprehension — the

three emotions beat upon his brain, numbing it as though with physical blows. Everything before his eyes went blurred and indistinct, and when his vision cleared he found he was holding a withered, jewel-clad corpse.

AT TWELVE o'clock, when the old night-watchman made his usual round, he found Peter Venn apparently hard at work at his accustomed task.

“So there were *two* o' them there mummies in that box, sir?” he said, as he came forward and looked curiously into the open case. “A soldier and his missus, maybe, buried together. Touching, ain't it, to see them lying there after all these years?”

Peter Venn nodded silently and, unseen by the other, a tear rolled down his cheek and fell upon the brow of the woman who, by devious paths, had now reached her appointed place.