

M A G A Z I N E O F
HORROR

THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME

Volume 6

CONTENTS FOR FEBRUARY

Number 2

COVER	<i>Virgil Finlay</i>	
THE EDITOR'S PAGE		4
THE NOSELESS HORROR	<i>Robert E. Howard</i>	8
THE TAILED MAN OF CORNWALL ...	<i>David H. Keller, M.D.</i>	22
Sixth in the series of <i>Tales From Cornwall</i> .		
INQUISITIONS		35
THE DUEL OF THE SORCERERS (in two parts, part one)		
.....	<i>Paul Ernst</i>	38
FOR SERVICES RENDERED	<i>Stephen Goldin</i>	71
THE RECKONING (Your Findings on our July issue)		81
THE ROC RAID (novelet)	<i>George B. Tuttle</i>	82
IT IS WRITTEN (Your Comments and Our Replies)		115
COMING NEXT ISSUE		123
READERS' PREFERENCE COUPON (double-barrelled)		129/130

While the greatest diligence has been used to ascertain the owners of rights, and to secure any necessary permission, the editor and publisher wish to offer their apologies in any possible case of accidental infringements.

Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor

MAGAZINE OF HORROR, Vol. 6, No. 2, February 1970 (whole number 31). Published bi-monthly by Health Knowledge, Inc. Executive and editorial offices at 140 Fifth Avenue, N. Y., N. Y. 10011. Single copy 50c. Annual subscription (6 issues) \$2.50 in the U. S., Canada, and Pan American Union. Foreign, \$3.00. Manuscripts accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes will be carefully considered, but the publisher and editors will not be responsible for loss or damage. All payments for accepted contributions are made on publication. Copyright © 1969 by Health Knowledge, Inc. All rights reserved under Universal International and Pan American copyright conventions. Printed in U. S. A.

The Noseless Horror

by Robert E. Howard

(author of *Worms of the Earth*, *Kings of the Night*, etc.)

ROBERT ERVIN HOWARD (1906-1936) has come in to his own in recent years, after many years' obscurity following the death of *WEIRD TALES*, as L. Sprague de Camp, Lin Howard, and others have championed him through editing collections of his tales and completing unfinished stories in the Conan, Solomon Kane, and King Kull cycles—sometimes adapting complete mss, REH left behind him, sometimes working out fragments, etc. The present story does not belong in any series, and is not a sword-and-sorcery tale, although necromancy certainly does play a part in it.

ABYSSES OF UNKNOWN TERROR lie veiled by the mists which separate man's everyday life from the uncharted and unguessed realms of the supernatural. The majority of people live and die in blissful ignorance of these realms—I say blissful, for the rending of the veil between the worlds of reality and of the occult is often a hideous experience. Once have I seen the veil so rent, and the incidents attendant thereto were burned so deeply into my brain that my dreams are haunted to this day.

The terrible affair was ushered in by an invitation to visit the estate of Sir Thomas Cameron, the noted Egyptologist and explorer. I accepted for the man was always an interesting study, though I disliked his brutal

manner and ruthless character. Owing to my association with various papers of a scientific nature, we had been frequently thrown together for several years, and I gathered that Sir Thomas considered me one of his few friends. I was accompanied on this visit by John Gordon, a wealthy sportsman to whom, also, an invitation had been extended.

The sun was setting as we came to the gate of the estate, and the desolate and gloomy landscape depressed me and filled me with nameless forebodings. Some miles away could be faintly seen the village at which we had detoured and between this, and on all sides, the barren moors lay stark and sullen. No other human habitation could be seen, and the only sign of life was some large fen bird flapping its lonely way inland. A cold wind whispered out of the east, laden with the bitter salt tang of the sea; and I shivered.

"Strike the bell," said Gordon, his impatience betraying the fact that the repellent atmosphere was affecting him, also. "We can't stand here all night."

But at that moment the gate swung open. Let it be understood that the manor house was surrounded by a high wall which entirely enclosed the estate. It was at the front gate that we stood. As it opened, we looked down a long driveway flanked by dense trees, but our attention at the present was riveted on the bizarre figure which stood to one side to let us pass. The gate had been opened by a tall man in Oriental dress. He stood like a statue, arms folded, head inclined in a manner respectful, but stately. The darkness of his skin enhanced the scintillant quality of his glittering eyes, and he would have been handsome save for a hideous disfiguration which at once robbed his features of comeliness and lent them a sinister aspect. He was noseless.

While Gordon and I stood silent, struck speechless by this apparition, the Oriental—a Sikh of India, by his turban—bowed and said in almost perfect English: "The master awaits you in his study, sahibs."

We dismissed the lad who had brought us from the village, and, as his cart wheels rattled away in the distance, we started up the shadowed driveway, followed by the Indian with our bags. The sun had set as we waited at the gate, and night fell with surprising suddenness, the sky being heavily veiled by gray misty clouds. The wind sighed drearily through the trees on each side of the driveway and the great house loomed up in front of us, silent and dark except for a light in a single window. In the semi-darkness I heard the easy pad-pad of the Oriental's slippered feet behind us, and the impression was so like a great panther stealing upon his victim that a shudder shook me.

Then we had reached the door and were being ushered into a broad, dimly-lighted hallway, where Sir Thomas came striding forth to greet us.

"Good evening, my friends," his great voice boomed through the echoing house. "I have been expecting you! Have you dined? Yes? Then come into my study; I am preparing a treatise upon my latest discoveries and wish to have your advice on certain points. Ganra Singh!"

This last to the Sikh who stood motionless by. Sir Thomas spoke a few words to him in Hindustani, and, with another bow, the noseless one lifted our bags and left the hall.

"I've given you a couple of rooms in the right wing," said Sir Thomas, leading the way to the stairs. "My study is in this wing—right above this hall—and I often work there all night."

The study proved to be a spacious room, littered with scientific books and papers, and queer trophies from all lands. Sir Thomas seated himself in a vast armchair and motioned us to make ourselves comfortable. He was a tall, heavily-built man in early middle life, with an aggressive chin masked by a thick blond beard, and keen, hard eyes, that smoldered with pent energy.

"I want your help as I've said," he began abruptly. "But we won't go into that tonight; plenty of time tomorrow, and both of you must be rather fatigued."

"You live a long way from anywhere," answered Gordon. "What possessed you to buy and repair this old down-at-the-heels estate, Cameron?"

"I like solitude," Sir Thomas answered. "Here I am not pestered with small-brained people who buzz about one like mosquitoes about a buffalo. I do not encourage visitors here, and I have absolutely no means of communicating with the outside world. When I am in England I am assured of quiet in which to pursue my work here. I have not even any servants; Ganra Singh does all the work necessary."

"That noseless Sikh? Who is he?"

"He is Ganra Singh. That's all I know about him. I met up with him in Egypt and have an idea that he fled India on account of some crime. But that doesn't matter; he's been faithful to me. He says that he served in the Anglo-Indian army and lost his nose from the sweep of an Afghan tulwar in a border raid."

"I don't like his looks," said Gordon bluntly. "You have a great deal of valuable trophies in this house; how can you be sure of trusting a man whom you know so little?"

"Enough of that," Sir Thomas waved the matter aside with an impatient gesture. "Ganra Singh is all right; I never make mistakes in read-

ing character. Let us talk of other things. I have not told you of my latest researches."

He talked and we listened. It was easy to read in his voice the determination and ruthless driving power which made him one of the world's foremost explorers and research men, as he told us of hardships endured and obstacles overcome. He had some sensational discoveries to disclose to the world, he said, and he added that the most important of his findings consisted of a most unusual mummy.

"I found it in a hitherto undiscovered temple far in the hinterlands of Upper Egypt, the exact location of which you shall learn tomorrow when we consult my notes together. I look to see it revolutionize history, for while I have not made a thorough examination of it, I have at least found that it is like no other mummy yet discovered. Differing from the usual process of mummification, there is no mutilation at all. The mummy is a complete body with all parts intact just as the subject was in life. Allowing for the fact that the features are dried and distorted with the incredible passage of time, one might imagine that he is looking upon a very ancient man who recently died, before disintegration has set in. The leathery lids are drawn down firmly over the eye sockets, and I am sure when I raise those lids I shall find the eyeballs intact beneath.

"I tell you, it is epoch making and overthrows all preconceived ideas! If life could by some manner be breathed into that withered mummy, it would be as able to speak, walk, and breathe as any man; for, as I said, its parts are as intact as if the man had died yesterday. You know the usual process—the disembowelling and so on—by which corpses are made mummies. But no such things have been done to this one. What would my colleagues not give to have been the finder! All Egyptologists will die from pure envy! Attempts have already been made to steal it—I tell you, many a research worker would cut my heart out for it!"

"I think you overvalue your find, and undervalue the moral senses of your co-workers," said Gordon bluntly.

Sir Thomas sneered. "A flock of vultures, sir," he exclaimed with a savage laugh. "Wolves! Jackals! Sneaking about seeking to steal the credit from a better man! The laity have no real conception of the rivalry that exists in the class of their betters. It's each man for himself—let everyone look to his own laurels, and to the devil with the weaker. Thus far I've more than held my own.

"Even allowing this to be true," retorted Gordon, "you have scant right to condemn your rivals' tactics in the light of your own actions."

Sir Thomas glared at his outspoken friend so furiously that I half expected him to commit bodily assault upon him; then the explorer's mood changed, and he laughed mockingly and uproariously.

"The affair of Gustave Von Honmann is still on your mind, doubtless. I find myself the object of scathing denunciations wherever I go since that unfortunate incident. It is, I assure you, a matter of complete indifference to me. I have never desired the mob's plaudits, and I ignore its accusations. Von Honmann was a fool and deserved his fate. As you know, we were both searching for the hidden city of Gomar, the finding of which added so much to the scientific world. I contrived to let a false map fall into his hands and sent him away on a wild goose chase into Central Africa."

"You literally sent him to his death," Gordon pointed out. "I admit that Von Honmann was something of a beast, but it was a rotten thing to do, Cameron. You knew that all the chances in the world were against him escaping death at the hands of the wild tribesmen into whose lands you sent him."

"You can't make me angry," answered Cameron imperturbably. "That's what I like about you, Gordon; you're not afraid to speak out your mind. But let's forget Von Honmann; he's gone the way of all fools. The one camp follower who escaped the general massacre and made his way back to civilization's outpost said that Von Honmann, when he saw the game was up, realized the fraud and died swearing to avenge himself on me, living or dead, but that has never worried me. A man is living and dangerous, or dead and harmless; that's all. But it's growing late and doubtless you are sleepy; I'll have Ganra Singh to show you to your rooms. As for myself, I shall doubtless spend the rest of the night arranging the notes of my trip for tomorrow's work."

Ganra Singh appeared at the door like a giant phantom, and we said good night to our host and followed the Oriental. Let me here say that the house was built in shape like a double ended L. There were two stories and between the two wings was a sort of court upon which the lower rooms opened. Gordon and I had been assigned two bedrooms on the first floor in the left wing, which let into this court. There was a door between them, and, as I was preparing to retire, Gordon entered.

"Strange sort of a chap, isn't he?" nodding across the court at the light which shone in the study window. "A good deal of a brute, but a great brain, marvelous brain."

I opened the door which let into the court for a breath of fresh air.

The atmosphere in these rooms was crisp and sharp, but musky as if from unuse.

"He certainly doesn't have many visitors." The only lights visible besides those in our two rooms, was that in the upstairs study across the court.

"No." Silence fell for a space; then Gordon spoke abruptly, "Did you hear how Von Honmann died?"

"No."

"He fell into the hands of a strange and terrible tribe who claim descent from the early Egyptians. They are past masters at the hellish art of torture. The camp follower who escaped said that Von Honmann was killed slowly and fiendishly, in a manner which left him unincubated, but shrunk and withered him until he was unrecognizable. Then he was sealed into a chest and placed in a fetish hut for a horrible relic and trophy."

My shoulders twitched involuntarily. "Frightful!"

Gordon rose, tossed away his cigarette, and turned toward his room.

"Getting late, good night—*what was that?*"

Across the court had come a faint crash as if a chair or table had been upset. As we stood, frozen by a sudden vague premonition of horror, a scream shuddered out across the night.

"Help! Help! Gordon! Slade! Oh God!"

Together we rushed out into the court. The voice was Sir Thomas', and came from his study in the left wing. As we raced across the court, the sounds of a terrible struggle came clearly to us, and again Sir Thomas cried out like a man in his death agony: "He's got me! Oh God, he's got me!"

"Who is it, Cameron?" shouted Gordon desperately.

"Ganra Singh—" suddenly the straining voice broke short, and a wild gibbering came dimly to us as we rushed into the first door of the lower left wing and charged up the stairs. It seemed an Eternity before we stood at the door of the study, beyond which still came a bestial yammering. We flung open the door and halted, aghast.

Sir Thomas Cameron lay writhing in a growing pool of gore, but it was not the dagger sunk deep into his breast which held us in our tracks like men struck dead, but the hideous and evident insanity stamped on his face. His eyes flared redly, fixed on nothing, and they were the eyes of a man who is staring into Purgatory. A ceaseless gibbering burst from his lips, and then into his yammering was woven human words: "— Nose-

less—the noseless one—"Then a rush of blood burst from his lips, and he dropped on his face.

We bent over him and eyes each other in horror.

"Stone dead," muttered Gordon. "But what killed him?"

"Ganra Singh—" I began; then both of us whirled. Ganra Singh stood silently in the doorway, his expressionless features giving no hint of his thoughts. Gordon rose, his hand sliding easily to his hip pocket.

"Ganra Singh, where have you been?"

"I was in the lower corridor, locking the house for the night. I heard my master call me, and I came."

"Sir Thomas is dead. Do you have any idea as to who did the murder?"

"No, sahib. I am new to this English land; I do not know if my master had any enemies."

"Help me lift him on this couch." This was done. "Ganra Singh, you realize that we must hold you responsible for the time being."

"While you hold me, the real killer may escape."

Gordon did not reply to this. "Let me have the keys to the house."

The Sikh obeyed without a word.

Gordon then led him across the outer corridor to a small room in which he locked him, first assuring himself that the window, as all the other windows in the house, was heavily barred. Ganra Singh made no resistance; his face showed nothing of his emotions. As we shut the door we saw him standing impassively in the center of the room, arms folded, eyes following us inscrutably.

We returned to the study with its shattered chairs and tables, its red stain on the floor, and the silent form on the couch.

"There's nothing we can do until morning," said Gordon. "We can't communicate with anyone, and if we started out to walk to the village we should probably lose our way in the darkness and fog. It seems a pretty fair case against the Sikh."

"Sir Thomas practically accused him in his last words."

"As to that, I don't know. Cameron shouted his name when I yelled, but he might have been calling the fellow—I doubt if Sir Thomas heard me. Of course, that remark about the "noseless one" could seem to mean no one else, but it isn't conclusive. Sir Thomas was insane when he died."

I shuddered. "That, Gordon, is the most terrible phase of the matter. What was it that blasted Cameron's reason and made of him a screaming maniac in the last few minutes he had to live?"

Gordon shook his head. "I can't understand it. The mere fact of looking death in the eyes never shook Sir Thomas' nerve before. I tell you, Slade, I believe there's something deeper here than meets the eye. This smacks of the supernatural, in spite of the fact that I was never a superstitious man. But let's look at it in a logical light.

"This study comprises the whole of the upper left wing, being separated from the back rooms by a corridor which runs the whole length of the house. The only door of the study opens into that corridor. We crossed the court, entered a lower room of the left wing, went into the hall into which we were first admitted, and came up the stairs into the upper corridor. The study door was shut, but not locked. And through that door came whatever it was that shattered Sir Thomas Cameron's brain before it murdered him. And the man—or thing—left the same way, for it is evident that nothing is concealed in the study, and the bars on the windows prohibit escape in that manner. Had we been a few moments quicker we might have seen the slayer leaving. The victim was still grappling with the fiend when I shouted, but between that instant and the moment we came into the upper corridor, there was time for the slayer, moving swiftly, to accomplish his design and leave the room. Doubtless he concealed himself in one of the rooms across the hall and either slipped out while we were bending over Sir Thomas and made his escape—or, if it were Ganra Singh, came boldly into the study."

"Ganra Singh came after us, according to his story. He should have seen anyone trying to escape from the rooms."

"The killer might have heard him coming and waited until he was in the study before emerging. Oh, understand, I believe the Sikh is the murderer, but we wish to be fair and look at the matter from every angle. Let's see that dagger."

It was a thin-bladed, wicked-looking Egyptian weapon, which I remembered having seen lying on Sir Thomas' table.

"It seems as if Ganra Singh's clothes would have been in disarray and his hands bloody," I suggested. "He scarcely had time to cleanse himself and arrange his garments."

"At any rate," Gordon answered, "the fingerprints of the killer should be upon this dagger hilt. I have been careful not to obliterate any such traces, and I will lay the weapon on the couch here for the examination of a Bertillon expert. I am not adept in such matters myself. And in the meanwhile I think I'll go over the room, after the accepted manner of detectives, to look for any possible clues."

"And I'll take a turn through the house. Ganra Singh may really be innocent, and the murderer lurking somewhere in the building."

"Better be careful. If there is such a being, remember that it is a desperate man, quite ready and willing to do murder."

I took up a heavy blackthorn and went out into the corridor. I forgot to say that all these corridors were dimly lighted, and the curtains drawn so closely that the whole house appeared to be dark from the outside. As I shut the door behind me, I felt more strongly than ever the oppressive silence of the house. Heavy velvet hangings masked unseen doorways and, as a stray whisper of wind whipped them about, I started, and the line from Poe flitted through my brain:

"And the silken, sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me, filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before."

I strode to the landing of the stair, and, after another glance at the silent corridors and the blank doors, I descended. I had decided that if any man had hidden in the upper story, he would have descended to the lower floor by this time, if indeed, he had not already left the house. I struck a light in the lower reception hall, and went into the next room. The whole of the main building between the wings, I found, was composed of Sir Thomas' private museum, a really gigantic room, filled with idols, mummy cases, stone and clay pillars, papyrus scrolls, and like objects. I wasted little time here, however, for as I entered my eyes fell upon something I knew to be out of place in some manner. It was a mummy case, very different from the other cases, and it was open! I knew instinctively that it had contained the mummy of which Sir Thomas had boasted that evening, but now it was empty. The mummy was gone.

Thinking of his words regarding the jealousy of his rivals, I turned hastily and made for the hall and the stair. As I did so, I thought I heard somewhere in the house a faint crashing. I had no desire, however, to further explore the building alone and armed only with a club. I wished to return and tell Gordon that we were probably opposed to a gang of international thieves. I had started back toward the hall when I perceived a stair case leading directly from the museum room, and it I mounted, coming into the upper corridor near the right wing.

Again the long dim corridor ran away in front of me, with its blank mysterious doors and dark hangings. I must traverse the greater part of

it in order to reach the study at the other end, and a foolish shiver shook me as I visualized hideous creatures lurking behind those closed doors. Then I shook myself. Whatever had driven Sir Thomas Cameron insane, it was human, and I gripped my blackthorn more firmly and strode down the corridor.

Then after a few strides I halted suddenly, the short hairs prickling at the back of my neck, and my flesh crawling unaccountably. I sensed an unseen presence, and my eyes turned as drawn by a magnet to some heavy tapestries which masked a doorway. There was no wind in the rooms, but *the hangings moved slightly!* I started, straining my eyes on the heavy dark fabric until it seemed the intensity of my gaze would burn through it, and I was aware, instinctively, that other eyes glared back. Then my eyes strayed to the wall beside the hidden doorway. Some freak of the vague light threw a dark formless shadow there, and, as I looked, it slowly assumed shape—a hideous distorted goblin image, grotesquely man-like, *and noseless!*

My nerve broke suddenly. That distorted figure might be merely the twisted shadow of a man who stood behind the hangings, but it was burned into my brain that, man, beast, or demon, those dark tapestries hid a shape of terrible and soul-shattering threat. A brooding horror lurked in the shadows and there in that silent darkened corridor with its vague flickering lights and that stark shadow hovering within my gaze, I came as near to insanity as I have ever come—it was not so much what met my eyes and senses, but the phantoms conjured up in my brain, the terrible dim images that rose at the back of my skull and gibbered at me. For I knew that for the moment the commonplace human world was far away, and that I was face to face with some horror from another sphere.

I turned and hurried down the corridor, my futile blackthorn shaking in my grasp, and the cold sweat forming in great beads upon my brow. I reached the study and entered, closing the door behind me. My eyes turned instinctively to the couch with its grim burden. Gordon leaned over some papers on a table, and he turned as I entered, his eyes alight with some suppressed excitement.

"Slade, I've found a map here drawn by Cameron, and, according to it, he found that mummy on the borders of the land where Von Honmann was murdered—"

"The mummy's gone," I said.

"Gone? By Jupiter! Maybe that explains it! A gang of scientific thieves! Likely Ganra Singh is in with them—let's go talk to him."

Gordon strode across the corridor, I following. My nerve was still shaken, and I had no use to discuss my recent experience. I must get back some of my courage before I could bring myself to put the fear I had felt into words. Gordon knocked at the door. Silence reigned. He turned the key in the lock, swung the door open, and swore. The room was empty! A door opening into another room parallel to the corridor showed how he had escaped. The lock had been fairly torn off.

"That was that noise I heard!" Gordon exclaimed. "Fool that I was, I was so engrossed in Sir Thomas' notes, that I paid no attention, thinking it was but the noise of your opening or closing a door! I'm a failure as a detective. If I had been on my guard I might have arrived on the scene before the prisoner made his getaway."

"Lucky for you, you didn't," I answered shakily. "Gordon, let's get out of here! Ganra Singh was lurking behind the hangings as I came up the corridor—I saw the shadow of his noseless face—and I tell you, the man's not human. He's an evil spirit! An inhuman goblin! Do you think a man could unhinge Sir Thomas' reason—a human being? no, no, no! He's a demon in human form—and I'm not so sure that the form's human!"

Gordon's face was shadowed. "Nonsense! A hideous and unexplained crime has been perpetrated here tonight, but I will not believe that it cannot be explained in natural terms—listen!"

Somewhere down the corridor a door had opened and closed. Gordon leaped to the door, sprang through the passageway. Down the corridor. I followed, cursing his recklessness, but fired by his example to a kind of foolhardy bravery. I had no doubt but that the end of that wild chase would be a death grapple with the inhuman Indian, and the shattered door lock was ample proof of his prowess, even without the gory form which lay in the silent study. But when a man like Gordon leads, what can one do but follow?

Down the corridor we sped, through the door where we had seen the thing vanish, through the dark room beyond, and into the next. The sounds of flight in front of us told us that we were pressing close upon our prey. The memory of that chase through darkened rooms is a vague and hazy dream—a wild and chaotic nightmare. I do not remember the rooms and passages which we traversed. I only know that I followed Gordon blindly and halted only when he stopped in front of a tap-

estry-hung doorway beyond which a red glow was apparent. I was amazed, breathless. My sense of direction was completely gone. I had no idea as to what part of the house we were in, or why that crimson glow pulsed beyond the hangings.

"This is Ganra Singh's room," said Gordon. "Sir Thomas mentioned it in his conversation. It is the extreme upper room of the right wing. Further he cannot go, for this is the only door to the room and the windows are barred. Within that room stands at bay the man—or whatever—killed Sir Thomas Cameron!"

"Then in God's name let us rush in upon him before we have time to reconsider and our nerve breaks!" I urged, and, shouldering past Gordon, I hurled the curtains aside . . .

The red glow at least was explained. A great fire leaped and flickered in the huge fireplace, lending a red radiance to the room. And there at bay stood a nightmarish and hellish form—*the missing mummy!*

My dazed eyes took in at once glance the wrinkled leathery skin, the sunken cheeks, the flaring and withered nostrils from which the nose had decayed away; the hideous eyes were open now, and they burned with a ghastly and demoniac life. A single glimpse was all I had, for in an instant the long lean thing came lurching headlong at me, a heavy ornament of some sort clutched in its lank and taloned hand. I struck once with the blackthorn and felt the skull give way, but it never halted—for who can slay the dead?—and the next instant I was down, writhing and dazed, with a shattered shoulder bone, lying where the sweep of that dried arm had dropped me.

I saw Gordon at short range fire four shots pointblank into the frightful form, and then it had grappled with him, and as I struggled futilely to regain my feet and re-enter the battle, my athletic friend, held helpless in those inhuman arms, was bent back across a table until it seemed his spine would give way.

It was Ganra Singh who saved us. The great Sikh came suddenly through the hangings like an Arctic blast and plunged into the fray like a wounded bull elephant. With a strength I have never seen equalled and which even the living-dead man could not resist, he tore the animated mummy from its prey and hurled it across the room. Borne on the crest of that irresistible onslaught, the mummy was flung backward until the great fireplace was at its back. Then with one last volcanic effort, the avenger crashed it headlong into the fire, beat it down, stamped it into the flames until they caught at the writhing limbs, and

the frightful form crumbled and disintegrated among them with an intolerable scent of decayed and burning flesh.

Then Gordon, who had stood watching like a man in a dream, Gordon the iron-nerved lion hunter who had braved a thousand perils, now crumpled forward on his face in a dead faint!

Later we talked the affair over, while Ganra Singh bandaged my hurts with hands as gentle and light of touch as those of a woman.

"I think," I said weakly, "and I will admit that my view is untenable in the light of reason, but then any explanation must be incredible and improbable, that the people who made this mummy centuries and possibly thousands of years ago knew the art of preserving life; that by some means this man was simply put to sleep and slept in a death-like manner all these years, just as Hindu fakirs appear to lie in death for days and weeks at a time. When the proper time came, then the creature awoke and started on its— or his— hideous course."

"What do you think, Ganra Singh?"

"Sahib," said the great Sikh courteously, "who am I to speak of hidden things? Many things are unknown to man. After the sahib had locked me into the room, I bethought me that whoever slew my master might escape while I stood helpless, and, desiring to go elsewhere, I plucked away the lock with as much silence as I could and went forth searching among the darkened rooms. At last I heard sounds in my own bedroom and, going there, found the sahibs fighting with the living-dead man. It was fortunate that before all this occurred I had built a great fire in my room so as to last all night, for I am unused to this cold country. I know that fire is the enemy of all evil things, the Great Cleanser, and so thrust the Evil One into the flame. I am glad to have avenged my master and aided the sahibs."

"Aided!" Gordon grinned. "If you hadn't showed up just when you did, our bally ships would have been sunk. Ganra Singh, I've already apologized for my suspicions; you're a real man."

"No, Slade," his face grew serious, "I think you are wrong. In the first place, the mummy isn't thousands of years old. It's scarcely ten years old! As I find by reading his secret notes, Sir Thomas didn't find it in a lost temple in Upper Egypt, he found it in a fetish hut in Central Africa. He couldn't explain its presence there, and so said he found it in the hinterlands of Egypt. He being an Egyptologist, it sounded better, too. But he really thought it was very ancient, and, as we know, he was right about the unusual process of mummification. The tribesmen who sealed that mummy into its case knew more about such things

than the ancient Egyptians, evidently. But it wouldn't have lasted over twenty years anyway, I'm sure. Then Sir Thomas came along and stole it from the tribesmen—the same tribe, by the way, who murdered Von Honmann.

"No, your theory is wrong, I feel. You have heard of the occult theory which states that a spirit, earthbound through hate or love, can only do material good or evil when animating a material body? The occultists say, reasonably enough, that to bridge the gulf which lies between the two worlds of life and death, the spirit or ghost must inhabit and animate a fleshly form—preferably its own former habitation. This mummy had died as men die, but I believe that the hate it felt in life was sufficient to span the void of death, to cause the dead and withered body to move and act and do murder.

"Now, if this be true, there is no limit to the horror to which mankind may be heir. If this be true, men may be hovering forever on the brinks of unthought oceans of supernatural terror, parted from the next world by a thin veil which may be rent, as we have just seen it rent. I would like to believe otherwise—but Slade—

"As Ganra hurled the struggling mummy into the fire, I watched—the sunken features expanded in the heat for a fleeting instant, just as a toy balloon when inflated, and for one brief second took on a human and familiar likeness. *Slade, that face was the face of Gustave Von Honmann!*"

