WHITE MAN

By George Agnew Chamberlain

Author of "Home," "Through Stained Glass," "John Bogardus," etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

They were all early to bed, the word having gone out to break camp at dawn for safari. The bishop and his companions were northward bound. Andrea and her man headed for the south and the coast. In the cold mist of the morning they parted with tight handclasps and earnestly murmured "God-bless-you's."

Incidents, following rapidly one after the other, kept Andrea's mind off the coming encounter with her old world until she was actually on its verge. Late one afternoon they came upon the bay and Trevor waited expectantly for her to recognize the scene of her ravishment. He was disappointed, for the thin, insignificant strip of yellow sand tucked under the red cliff diminished by distance to the proportion of a railway embankment, meant nothing to her inexperienced eyes.

At last he pointed it out to her. "Behold," he said, "the beginning and the end of all things."

"Why," exclaimed Andrea. "Is it really the beach—our beach? How it's shrunk!"

"It has," said Trevor solemnly. "The erosion on this bit of coast is a foot for every hundred years. We'd better hurry if we want to make a landing."

He chartered two sailing boats from a Greek fisherman and in an hour the beach had broadened, the cliff had risen to almost imposing heights; while they were still well off the shore they shot into its shadow. The boatman chose a landing at the foot of the Cliff road, a quarter of a mile away from the steep path by which Andrea had made her descent. As the safari began to form on the beach Trevor turned to Andrea. "We're going to your old hotel, you know. It's really the only one. If you prefer, I can send for a motor-car for you and myself; but we'd have to wait half an hour."

Andrea caught her breath as she realized that it was only minutes before she would be in collision with a world. Her eyes ran down the line of their marching column already on the edge of an incongruous setting, but still impressing with that subtle dignity which the free and half-naked black takes with him everywhere and which is born of his absolute indifference to standards not his own.

"Let us go down at the head of our men," she answered.

"You are right," said Trevor, pleased at her shrewd judgment. "We mortals," he added, "don't always recognize the importance of fighting an atmosphere with an atmosphere. To go in as cock of our own walk is a thousand times better than a motor-car and the back door."

Andrea nodded. "I felt it but I could not put it in words like that."

As Trevor, the white head of a quarter-mile-long and glistening black serpent of humanity, swung in between the gateposts of the hotel's imposing portals, the ever-opportune Marguerite stretched his neck, raised his barrel-head and brayed. Above that raucous cry sounded the spontaneous and uncontrollable peal of Andrea's silver laughter.

The groups of men and women—all but one—on the hotel veranda stopped in their various occupations as though paralyzed; drinks paused halfway to thirsty lips, cigarettes burned unconscious fingers, knitting needles poised instantaneously—all but one pair. The manipulator of the exception was a dear but very proper old lady wearing a cap of filmy lace on her plentiful white hair and enough filmy lace on her person to make the porch chair, in which she sat, look like a stall at a Red Cross bazaar. She was knitting a vast khaki-colored sweater and at the sound of Andrea's laughter she gave no sign beyond pursing her withered lips while she methodically finished off the stitch upon which she had been engaged.

That done, she raised a pair of beady black eyes so wonderfully alive that it seemed impossible they belonged to her wrinkled face and flashed one look at Andrea and one at Trevor. "Well, my dear," she said calmly, presumably to the former, "it's a relief to have you back apparently alive and well."

No sooner were the words out of her mouth than she was swept into a [illegible] impetuous embrace. "Oh, Au[illegible]n! Oh, you old dear!"

She defended herself with considerable energy and was heard to mumble that even kissing had degenerated into a rough pastime. Having rescued herself from Andrea's arms, she said, "Now that that is over you will please go to your room and change from that outlandish circus costume; you'll find everything as you left it except for a new lock on the door."

Andrea glanced at Trevor and leaned over to whisper imploringly in her aunt's ear.

"Your husband?" enunciated the old lady clearly. "Well, that's a relief, too; but I prefer to meet him elsewhere and after you have presented documentary evidence. By the way," she added with ominous emphasis as she resumed her knitting, "Harry is still here."

"I should say I am," exclaimed a youth in the trim uniform of the Flying Corps, as he stepped out from the hotel door. "Hello, Sister Andy." Then his eyes fell on Trevor. A slow smile of happy welcome spread over his face. "Well, I'll be d——!" he exclaimed fervently. "D' you know, Trevor, I've been saying from the first. 'Cherchez the flying-machine.' Come in and let me watch you have a drink."

Trevor, quivering under the pressure of the control he had summoned to carry him through the trying moment and filled with an immediate love and admiration for Aunty Gwen, paused to direct his following to a nearby vacant lot.

"Is that marriage tip straight?" asked Harry.

"Straight as the good bishop of Moma and two other missionary Johnnies could make it," replied Trevor.

Harry was thoughtful for a moment, then he said, "Well, Trevor, I don't know how you're fixed for proof but you know that through lean years and fat, I'm for you from the break in talk. As one sportsman to another, I congratulate you on putting one over on that up-country animated leather-sack of vintage wines. By the way, you realize I've got to wire him."

"Of course," said Trevor. "The sooner the better. Don't worry about Andrea's food and raiment," he added flushing. "The truth is, I'm pretty well heeled with the needful."

"You Americans generally are," said Harry admiringly. "Sort of jolly national tradition."

Twenty-four hours later the diamond magnate, perennially flushed as

to face and heavy of paunch made an impressive arrival.

When he had washed and otherwise attempted to freshen his perspiring person he sent out a call for a family conference. It took place in the Trevors' sitting room. Harry was there resentative of the house of Pellor vor and his bride. The sole male representative of the house of Pellor opened the proceedings with the following speech: "Hammar," he said, "on the part of my sister I wish to offer you an unqualified apology. It seems that she was—er—suddenly carried away by an impulse in conjuction with a flying machine, but you will be glad to know that Trevor here has—er—has played the man all through and you are permanently relieved from any further responsibility in the matter. I don't think there's another bally thing to say beyond repeating the apology due you from my entire family."

"Not a thing to say, you young sycophant of a whipper-snapper!" thundered the red-faced magnate. "Do you think I came down here to listen to your maiden speech, accept a dirty apology and get out with my tail between my legs? Well, I didn't, I came down here to show this interloping vagabond of a scavenger where he and his—wife—don't get off."

A gleam crept into Trevor's eyes the same gleam that had shone there when he had shot MacCloster, but it turned into his slow assuring smile as his gaze met that of Andrea and took note of her alarm. He remembered that only ten minutes before he had promised on the honor of a lover to be seen only and not heard.

"Aren't you a bit late for that?" asked Harry, unperturbed. "They seem to be running before the wind already and with a fair lead." He lit a cigarette and snapped the dead match through the open doorway.

"You think so, do you?" said the magnate, his eyes snapping malignantly. "You've probably never heard of the shipping ring, but I'll tell you this—the line that takes these two—two—two whatchumay-callums as passengers is ruined. They'll stay in Africa till they rot."

Andrea stifled a yawn. "Robert," she said in her coolest and best society voice, "if Sir Hammar is going to force us to wait here for one of your own steamers to put in—I think you'd better collect that thousand pounds reward."

It was the end. The magnate gasped, sprang up and fled, pursued by a smoke arrow propelled from Harry's rounded mouth. Aunty Gwen pursed her lips but kept on knitting; she could not, however, altogether hide the laugh that was in her snapping eyes. Andrea dropped on her knees beside her.

"Oh, Aunty Gwen," she begged "won't you please let me introduce Robert? He's the dearest, most thoughtful, strongest and weakest man that a lucky girl ever loved."

That night when all the hotel was in darkness and silence reigned Andrea and Trevor stood together by the coping at the edge of the cliff and looked across the moonlit bay to the far-away line of the sea. Behind them was the dark, massed shadow of the Bougainville trellis; at their feet and before them stretched an open world, bathed in kindly and opalescent light.

Andrea's eyes started at the top of the zigzag path and followed it delibrately down the cliff-side until they reached and swept the gleaming crescent of the beach; then they rose and stared at the placid moon. Nine weeks, no more, had passed since last this scene had held her, yet into them was packed the germ of all her life almost to the exclusion of preceding memories. She felt a welling within

She Felt a Welling Within Her of All the Major Emotions.

her of all the major emotions and frightened, turned from them to hide her face against Trevor's shoulder. Her arms slipped up around his neck and clung to him.

"Oh, White Man," she whispered, "my Wonder Man, plunderer of my heart, if desire to give is any measure, how far you have led me along the shining road!"

(THE END.)

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