

TARZAN OF THE APES

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CHAPTER I

THE AFFAIR ON THE LINER

MAGNIFIQUE!" ejaculated the Countess de Coude, beneath her

questioned the Count, turning

his young wife. "What is it that

is so magnificent? And the Count bent his

various directions in quest of the

nothing at all, my dear," replied

Countess, a slight blush momentarily

her already pink cheek. "I was

recalling, with admiration, those

of New York," and the fair

settled herself more comfortably

her steamer chair, and resumed the

nothing at all," she had

her to let fall upon her lap.

her husband again buried himself in

book, but not without a mild

that three days out from New York

Countess should suddenly have

an admission for the first time

had but recently characterized

as a

presently the count put down his book,

is very tiresome, Olga," he said. "I

that I shall hunt up some other

and that he is equally bored, and see if we

not find enough for a game of cards."

"You are not very gallant, my husband,"

replied the young woman, smiling

and equally bored. "Go and play at your

old cards, then, if you will."

When he had gone she let her eyes

wander slyly to the figure of a tall young

man stretched lastly in a chair not far

from

"Magnifique!" she breathed once more.

The Countess Olga de Coude was 20.

her husband 40. She was a very faithful

and her wife, who had had nothing

whatever to do with the selection of

her husband, it is not at all unlikely that

she was not wildly and passionately in

love with the one that fate had tied

together, but she had selected for her

husband, simply because she was

surprised into a tiny exclamation of

approval at sight of a splendid young

stranger who had entered the

smoking room, and whose thoughts were in

any way

loyal to her spouse. She merely

admired, as she might have admired a

particularly fine specimen of any species.

Furthermore, the young man was un-

questionably good to look at.

As her furtive glance rested upon his

profile she rose to leave the deck. The

Countess de Coude beckoned to a passing

steward.

"Who is that gentleman?" she asked.

"He is booked, madam, as Monsieur

Tarzan of Africa," replied the steward.

"Rather a large estate," thought the

girl, but now her interest was still

further aroused.

As Tarzan walked slowly toward the

smoking room he came unexpectedly

just with

two men whispering excitedly just

with

an even a passing thought for the

strangely guilty glances that one of

them

shot in his direction. They reminded

Tarzan of melodramatic villains he had

seen at the theatres in Paris. Both were

very dark, and this, in connection with

the shrugs and stertorous breathing

and their palpable intrigues, lent

still greater force to the similarity.

Tarzan entered the smoking room and

sought a chair a little apart from the

all attention now, nor did he permit an

other detail of the incident to escape him.

The play went on for some ten minutes

after this, until the Count won a con-

siderable wager from him who had last

played the game, and then Tarzan saw

the fellow look at him with a

head to his confederate. Instantly the

player arose and pointed a finger at the

Count.

"I know that monsieur was a profes-

sional card sharp. I had not been so

ready to be drawn into the game," he

said.

Instantly the Count and the two other

players were upon their feet.

"The Countess went white.

"What do you mean, sir?" he cried.

"Do you know to whom you speak?"

"I know that I speak, for the last time,

one who cheats at cards," replied the

fellow.

The Count leaned across the table and

struck the man full in the mouth with

his open palm, and then the others closed

in between them.

"There is some mistake, sir," cried one

of the other players. "Why, this is Count

de Coude, of France."

"If I am mistaken," said the accuser,

"I shall gladly apologize; but before I

do so first let Monsieur le Count explain

the extra cards which I saw him drop

into his side pocket."

And then the man whom Tarzan had

seen drop them there turned to sneak

from the room, but to his annoyance he

found the exit barred by a tall, gray-eyed

stranger.

"Pardon," said the man, brusquely,

attempting to pass to one side.

"Wait," said Tarzan.

"But why, monsieur?" exclaimed the

other, petulantly. "Permit me to pass,

monsieur."

"Wait," said Tarzan. "I think that

there is a matter in here that you may

doubtless be able to explain."

The fellow had lost his temper by this

time, and with a low oath seized Tarzan

to push him to one side. The ape-man

about and, as he twisted the big fellow

angrily, Tarzan, grasping him by the collar

of his coat, escorted him back to the table,

struggling, cursing and striking a futile

remonstrance. It was Nikolaus Rokoff's

first experience with the muscles that had

brought their savage owner victorious

through encounters with Numa the lion

and Togo the bear. Olga, who will not

forget the man who had accused De Coude,

and the two others who had been playing,

stood looking expectantly at the

count. Several other passengers had

drawn toward the scene of the alterca-

tion and all awaited the denouement.

"The fellow is crazy," said the Count.

"Gentlemen, I implore that one of you

search me."

"The accusation is ridiculous." This

from one of the players.

"You have but to slip your hand in the

Count's coat pocket and you will see that

the accusation is quite serious." Insisted

the accuser. And then, as the others

still hesitated to do so, "Come, I shall

do it myself if no other will," and he

stepped toward the count.

"No, monsieur," said De Coude. "I

will submit to a search only at the hands

of a gentleman."

"It is unnecessary to search the Count.

The cards are in his pocket. I myself

in a nearby cabin the Countess de

Coude was speaking to her husband.

"Why so grave, my dear Raoul?" she

asked. "You have been as glum as could

be all evening. What worries you?"

"Olga, Nikolaus is on board. Did you

know it?"

"Nikolaus? It cannot be. Nikolaus is

impossible, Raoul. It cannot be. Nikolaus

is under arrest in Germany."

"So I thought myself until I saw him

today—and that other arch accou-

nter, Paulvitch, Olga, I cannot endure

his persecution much longer. No, not

even for you. Sooner or later I shall turn

him over to the authorities. In fact, I

am half minded to explain all to the

captain before we land. On a French liner

it were an easy matter, Olga, perma-

nently to settle this Nemelus on our

heads."

"Oh, no, Raoul!" cried the Countess,

he will surely kill you!" But instead of

flying Tarzan advanced to meet the

fellow. "Do not make a fool of yourself,

monsieur," he said.

Rokoff, who was in perfect frenzy of

rage at the humiliation the stranger had

put upon him, had at last succeeded in

drawing the revolver. He had stopped,

and now he deliberately raised it to

Tarzan's breast and pulled the trigger.

The hammer fell with a futile click on

an empty chamber—the ape-man's hand

shot out like the head of an angry

python; there was a quick wrench, and

the revolver sailed far out across the

ship's rail, and dropped into the Atlantic.

For a moment the two men stood there

staring one another. Rokoff had regained

his self-possession. He was the first to

speak.

to note the fingers of the woman

passengers he came upon thereafter, that

he might discover the identity of her whom

Rokoff was persecuting, and learn if the

fellow had offered her further annoyance.

Tarzan had sought his deck chair, where

he sat speculating on the numerous

instances of human cruelty, selfishness

and spite that had fallen to his lot to wit-

ness since that day in the jungle four

years since that his eyes had first fallen

upon a human being other than himself—

the sleek, black Kulonga, whose swift

agility had that day found the vitals of

Kalia, the great ab-ape, and robbed the

youth, Tarzan, of the only mother he had

ever known.

He recalled the murder of King by the

fat-faced Snipes; the abandonment of

Professor Porter and his party by the

been surreptitiously regarding him had

not even time to drop before the gray

eyes of the ape-man shot an inquiring

glance at Tarzan, and then, as they

fell, Tarzan saw a faint way of crim-

son creep swiftly over the now half-

darkened face.

He smiled to himself at the result of

his very undisciplined and ungallant

action, for he had not lowered his own

eyes when they met those of the young

woman. She was very young, and equal-

ly good to look upon. Further, there

was something rather familiar about her

that set Tarzan to wondering where he

had seen her before. He resumed his

former position, and presently he was

aware that she had arisen and was leav-

ing the deck. As she passed, Tarzan

turned to watch her, in the hope that

he might discover a clue to satisfy his

curiosity as to her identity.

Nor was he disappointed entirely, for

he

husband behind the locked door of your

cabin."

"Bah!" cried the woman. "My husband

will know!"

"Most assuredly your husband will

know, but the purser will not; nor will

any of the newspaper men who shall in

some mysterious way hear of our landing.

But they will think it a fine story, and

so will all your friends when they read

of it at breakfast on—let me see, this is

Tuesday—yes, when they read of it at

breakfast next Friday morning. Nor will

it detract from the interest they will

feel when they learn that the man whom

madame entertained is a Russian ser-

vant—no, no, that is quite exact."

"Alexis Paulvitch," came the woman's

voice, cold and fearless. "You are a cow-

ard, and when I whisper a certain name

in your ear you will think better of your

demands upon me and your threats

against me, and then you will leave my

cabin quickly, nor do I think that I

shall again visit you, at least, annoy me,"

and there came a moment's silence in which

Tarzan could imagine the woman leaning

toward the acourel and whispering the

thing she had hinted at into his ear. Only

a moment of silence, and then a started

oath from the man—the scuffling of feet—

a woman's scream—and silence.

But scarcely had the cry ceased before

the ape-man had leaped from his hiding

place. Rokoff started to run, but Tarzan

grasped him by the collar and dragged

him back. Neither spoke, for both felt

instinctively that murder was being done

in the room, and Tarzan was confident

that Rokoff had had no intention of

his confederate should go that far—he