

# RED EVE

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD

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## SYNOPSIS.

RIDER HAGGARD'S romance, "Red Eve," is laid in the period of the battle of Crecy and of the scourge of the black death, both of these events playing important parts in the story.

"Red Eve" opens with a prologue, which is placed in Cathay and is a fanciful and yet gruesome picture depicting the embarking of Murgh, god of death, on his passage from China, which he has devastated with the plague, to the western lands, over which he is about to lay his scourging hand and its blight.

From this prologue the scene passes to Blythburgh, in Suffolk, a village near to the seaport of Dunwich, in which places dwell the families of the Claverings and their cousins, the De Cressis. The Claverings, of whom the head is Sir John Claverling, are large feudal land owners, and the De Cressis are wealthy wool merchants at Dunwich.

Sir John Claverling has two children—a son, John, and a daughter, Eve, the Red Eve of the story, so called because of her fancy for wearing crimson, which sets off her dark beauty.

Eve, a lady of great character, is in love with Hugh de Cressi, the younger son of the merchant, a young man of many parts but small fortune, with whom she has grown up from childhood.

Sir John Claverling, however, will have none of the match, partly because of a feud that has arisen between his house and that of the De Cressis and still more because he wishes his lovely daughter to marry a great lord, half Norman and half English, who is named Sir Edmund Acur in England, Count de Noyon in France and the Seigneur Catrina in Italy. In all three of which countries he has possessions.

This Acur, a handsome but false hearted noble, is at the time of the opening of the story staying with the Claverings under pretext of visiting his English estates, but really as a spy of King Philip of France and to make arrangements for the invasion of England.

The opening of the story describes the secret meeting of Red Eve with her sweetheart, Hugh de Cressi, in Blythburgh fen, upon a winter day. Hugh is accompanied by one of the main characters of the tale, his henchman, Gray Dick, or Richard Archer, so called for his marvelous skill with the bow, a fatherless and misanthropic man, who is supposed to be of the De Cressi blood and who certainly loves Hugh like a brother.

Their meeting is interrupted by Sir John Claverling, Eve's father; John, her brother, and Sir Edmund Acur, with a posse of knights and serving men, who finally fire the reeds in order to drive out the sweethearts, whom they can not find.

Hugh and Eve's brother John have a desperate fight, rolling over each other, but too close to stab. The flurry in the reeds was at an end. John lay on his back; De Cressi knelt on him and lifted his short sword.

"Do you yield?" men heard him say.

"Nay," answered Claverling. Then suddenly Hugh rose and suffered his adversary to do likewise.

"I'll not stick you like a hog," he said, and some cried, "Well done!" for the act seemed noble. Only Acur muttered "Fool!"

Next instant they were at it again, but this time it was Hugh who attacked and John who gave back right to the river's edge, for skill and courage seemed to fall him at once.

"Turn your head, lady," said Dick, "for now one must die." But Eve could not.

The swords flashed for the last time in the red light. Then that of De Cressi vanished. Claverling threw his arms wide and fell backward. A splash as of a great stone thrown into water, and all was done.

The sweethearts, escaping, swim the Blyth in flood in an effort to find sanctuary in the preceptory at Dunwich.

After an exciting and perilous passing of the river Eve and Hugh are joined by Gray Dick, who when asked the outcome of the fight tells them he shot three and slew three men, but the fourth time he missed. "Whom?" asks Eve. "The Frenchman who means to marry you," is Gray Dick's answer.

Arriving at the preceptory of the Knights Templar at Dunwich, Eve and Hugh find themselves given sanctuary by an old priest, Sir Andrew Arnold, who is in charge of the preceptory, the Knights Templar having been dissolved.

Sir Andrew is of high degree and has a famous record as a warrior. Also he is Red Eve's confessor and Hugh's godfather.

He learns the tale of slaughter and love and in turn tells a fantastic story of his experience in his youth with Murgh, the god of death.

Early in life Sir Andrew had traveled to Cathay. He it was who met Murgh in a marvelous temple. Murgh in a remarkable interview bestowed on Sir Andrew some of his weird wisdom.

After this recital and the demand of Red Eve and Hugh that they be forgiven and married, Hugh's father reaches the preceptory, learns of the fight in the marshes and praises his son for his courage. He regrets that a feud is now established between the Claverings and the De Cressis, but proceeds nevertheless to protect his son's life, while showing pride in the fact that the old Norman blood in his veins is shown in his courage.

While father and son talk Sir Andrew takes action by announcing that as part of Hugh's penance he is to ride to London on an errand that shall save his neck. The father grants permission for Hugh to undertake the perilous ride, but asks, "To whom does he go?"

He is told that Hugh is to visit none other than King Edward III, to whom he is to carry proofs of the treachery of Acur. Eve is to be left in charge of Sir Andrew. Accompanied by Gray Dick and his men, Hugh reaches Windsor and is graciously received by the king.

Queen Philippa hears from Hugh the story of his love for Red Eve and becomes interested. She learns of the battle on Blythburgh heath, and the king then grants a full pardon to Hugh and puts in his hand a royal warrant calling for either the capture or death of Acur.

## CHAPTER V. (Continued.)

### GRAY DICK SHOWS HIS ARCHERY

NEXT morning about 9 o'clock the king sent a messenger to Hugh, bidding him and his servant, Richard, wait upon him. They went with this messenger, who led them to a little chamber, where his grace sat, attended only by the clerk, Brother Peter and a dark browed minister, whose name he never learned.

"Hugh de Cressi and Richard Archer," said Edward, motioning to the minister to hand Hugh a parchment to which hung a great seal, "here is the pardon which I promised you. No need to stay to read it, since it is as wide as Windsor keep, and woe betide who lifts hand against either of you for aught you may have done or left undone in the past contrary to the laws of our realm. Yet remember well that this grace runs not to the future. Now that matter is done with and we come to one that is greater. Because of the faith put in you by our loyal and beloved subject, Sir Andrew Arnold, your godfere, and because we like the fashion of you, Hugh de Cressi, and hold you brave and honest, it has pleased us to give you a commission under which we direct the mayor of Dunwich and all true and lawful men of that town and hundred to aid you in the taking of, if need be, in the slaying of our subject, Sir Edmund Acur, Count of



Men, especially those of Dunwich, screamed and shouted, hurling up their caps.

Noyon and Seigneur of Catrina, whom we command you to bring before us alive or dead, that his cause may be judged of by our courts and the truth of the matter alleged against him by the Rev. Father Sir Andrew Arnold therein determined. Nevertheless, we command you not to wound or kill the said knight unless he resists the authority of us by you conveyed and you can not otherwise hold him safe from escaping from out this our realm. This commission you will presently go forth to execute, keeping its tenor and your aim secret until the moment comes to strike, and as you perform your duty, of which you will return and make report to us, so shall we judge and reward you. Do you understand?"

"Sire," answered Hugh, bowing, "I understand, and I will obey to the last drop of my blood."

"Good. When the parchments are engrossed my officer here will read them to you and explain aught that may need it. Meanwhile we have an hour or two during which your horses can eat, for there are no fresh beasts here to give you, and it is best, to avoid doubts, that you should return as you came, only showing your powers if any should attempt to molest you. So let us have done with these heavy matters and disport us for a while. This servant of yours has made a common boast that he will outshoot any of our picked archers, and now we are ready to go forth and put him to the proof of the butts. Let him know, however, that notwithstanding our words of yesterday we shall not hold him to blame if he fails, since many a man of higher degree promises more at night than he can perform in the morning."

"Sire, I'll do my best. I can no more," said Gray Dick, "only I pray that none may be suffered to hang about or pester me at the butts, since I am a lonely man who loves no company when I use my art."

"That shall be so," said the king. "And now to the sport."

"The sport" grumbled Gray Dick, when he and Hugh were alone together. "Why, it is other sport we should be seeking, with Acur and his knives for targets. Go to the king, master, and show him that while we linger here the Frenchman may slip away or work more and worse treasons."

"I can not, Dick; the parchments are not written out, and his grace is bent upon this pleasure match. Moreover, man, all these archers here—yes, and their betters also—would say that you had fled because you were an empty boaster who dared not face the trial."

"They'd say that, would they?" snarled Gray Dick. "Yes, they'd say that, which would be bitter hearing for you and me. Well, they shall not say it. Yet, I tell you, master," he added in a burst of words, "although I know not why, I'd rather bear their scorn and be away on the road to Dunwich."

"It may not be, Dick," replied Hugh, shaking his head doubtfully. "See, here they come to fetch us."

In a glade of the forest of Windsor situate near to the castle and measuring some 25 score yards of open level ground stood Gray Dick, a strange, uncouth figure, at whom the archers of the guard laughed, nudging each other. In his bony hand, however, he held that at which they did not laugh—namely, the great black bow, six feet six inches long, which he said had come to him "from the sea" and was fashioned, not of yew, but of heavy, close grained wood, grown perhaps in southern or even in far eastern lands. Still one of them, who tried to draw this bow to his ear and could not, said aloud that the Suffolk man "would do naught with that clumsy pole," whereat Gray Dick, who heard him, grinned, showing his white teeth like an angry dog.

Near by, on horseback and on foot, were the king, the young Prince Edward and many knights and ladies, while on the other side stood scores of soldiers and other folk from the castle, who came to see this ugly fellow well beaten at his own game.

"Dick," whispered Hugh, "shoot now as you never shot before. Teach them a lesson for the honor of Suffolk."

"Let me be, master," he grumbled. "I told you I would do my best." Then he sat himself down on the grass and began to examine his arrows one by one, to all appearances taking no heed of anything else.

Then came the first test. At a distance of five score yards was set a little "clout," or target, of white wood not more than two feet square, which had a red mark or eye three inches across painted in its center and stood not very high above the sward.

"Now, Richard," said the king, "three of the best archers that we have about us have been chosen to shoot against you and each other by their fellows. Say, will you draw first or last?"

"Last, sire," he answered, "that I may know their mettle."

Then a man stepped forward, a strong and gallant looking fellow, and loosed his three arrows. The first missed the clout, the second pierced the white wood and the third hit the red eye. The clout having been changed and the old one brought to the king with the arrows in it, the second man took his turn. This time all three of the arrows hit the mark, one of them being in the red. Again it was changed and forth came the great archer of the guard, a tall and clear eyed man who was known as Jack Green and whom, it was said, none had ever beaten. He drew the arrow went home in the red on its left edge. He drew again and the arrow went home in the red on its right edge. He drew a third time and the arrow went home straight in the very center of the red, where was a little black spot.

Now a great laugh went up since clearly the Suffolk man was beaten ere even he began.

"Your Dick may do as well; he can do no better," said the king when the target was brought to him.

"A boon, your grace. Grant that this clout may be set up again with the arrows fast. Any man may know them from mine since they are gray, whereas those I make are black, for I am a fletcher in my spare hours and love my own handiwork."

"So be it," said the king, wondering, and the clout was replaced upon its stand. Now Gray Dick stretched himself, looked at the clout, then at the bow and set the black winged arrow on the string; then drew, as it seemed but lightly and carelessly, as though he thought the distance small. Away flew the shaft and sank into the red a good inch within the leftmost arrow of Jack Green.

"Ah," said the onlookers, "a lucky shot, indeed."

Again he drew and again the arrow sank into the red a good inch within the rightmost shot of Jack Green.

"Oh," said the onlookers, "this man is an archer, but Jack's last he can not best, let the devil help him how he will."

"In the devil's name then be silent," wheezed Gray Dick, with a flash of his half opened eye.

"Aye, be silent, be silent," said the king; "we do not see such shooting every day."

Now Dick set his feet apart and, arrow on string, thrice he lifted the bow and thrice let it sink again, perhaps because he felt some breath of wind stir the still air. A fourth time he lifted and drew, not as he had before, but straight to the ear, then loosed at once.

Away rushed the yard long shaft, and folk noted that it scarcely seemed to rise as arrows do, or at least not half so high. It rushed, it smote and there was silence, for none could see exactly what had hap-

pened. Then he who stood near the target to mark ran forward and screamed out:

"By God's name, he has shattered Jack Green's center arrow and shot straight through the clout!"

Then from all sides rose the old-archer cry of "He, He! He, He!" while the young prince threw his cap on high and the king said:

"Would that there were more such men as this in England! Jack Green, it seems that you are beaten."

"Nay," said Gray Dick, seating himself again upon the grass, "there is nought to choose between us in this round. What next, your grace?"

Only Hugh, who watched him, saw the big veins swell beneath the pale skin of his forehead, as they ever did when he was moved.

"The war game," said the king, "that is, if you will, for here rough knocks may be going. Set it out, one of you."

Then a captain of the archers explained this sport. In short, it was that man should stand against man clad in leather jerkins and wearing a helm to protect the head, and shoot at each other with blunt arrows rubbed with chalk, he who first took what would have been a mortal wound to be held worsted.

"I like not blunted arrows," said Gray Dick, "or, for the matter of that, any other arrows save my own. Against how many must I play? The three?"

The captain nodded.

"Then by your leave I will take them all at once."

Now some said that this was not fair, but in the end Dick won his point, and those archers whom he had beaten, and with them Jack Green, were placed against him, standing five yards apart, and blunted arrows served out to all. Dick set one of them on the string and laid the two others in front of him. Then a knight rode half way between them, but a little to one side, and shouted, "Loose!"

As the word struck his ear Dick shot with wonderful swiftness and almost before the arrow had left the bow flung himself down, grasping another as he fell. Next instant three shafts whistled over where he had stood, but his found its mark on the body of him at whom he had aimed, causing the man to stagger backward and throw down his bow, as he was bound to do if hit.

Next instant Dick was up again and his second arrow flew, striking full and fair before ever he at whom it was aimed had drawn.

Now there remained Jack Green alone, and as Dick set the third arrow, but before he could draw, Jack Green shot.

"Beat," said Dick, and stood quite still.

At him rushed the swift shaft and passed over his shoulder within a hairbreadth of his ear. Then came Dick's turn. On Jack Green's helm was an archer's plume.

"Mark the feathers, lords," he said, and lo! the feathers leapt from that helm.

Now there was silence. No one spoke, but Dick drew out three more arrows.

"Tell me, captain," he said, "is your ground marked out in scores, and what is the furthest that any of you has sent a fighting shot?"

"Aye," answered the officer, "and twenty score and one yard is the furthest, nor has that been done for many a day."

Dick steadied himself and seemed to fill his lungs with air. Then, stretching his long arms to the full, he drew the great bow till the horns looked as though they came quite close together and loosed. High and far flew that shaft; men's eyes could scarcely follow it and all must wait long before a man came running to say where it had fallen.

"Twenty score and two yards," he cried.

"Not much to win by," grunted Dick, "though enough. I have done twenty and one score once, but then it was down hill."

Then while the silence still reigned he set the second arrow on the string and waited as though he knew not what to do. Presently about 50 paces from him a wood dove flew from out a tree and, as such birds do at the first breath of spring, for the day was mild and sunny, hovered a moment in the air ere it dipped toward a great fir where doubtless it had built for years. Never, poor fowl, was it destined to build again, for as it turned its beak downward Dick's shaft pierced it through and through and bore it onward to the earth.

Still in the midst of a great silence Dick took up his quiver and emptied it on the ground, then gave it to the captain of the archers, saying:

"And you will, step 60, nay, 70 paces and set this mouth upward in the grass where a man may see it well."

The captain did so, propping the quiver straight with stones and a bit of wood. Then having studied all things with his eye, Dick shot upward but softly, and making a gentle curve, the arrow turned in the air as it drew near the quiver and fell into its mouth, striking it flat.

"Ill done," grumbled Dick, "had I shot well it should have been pinned to earth. Well, you shadow balked me and it might have been worse." Then he unstrung his bow and slipped it into its case.

Now at length the silence was broken and in good earnest. Men, especially those of Dunwich, screamed and shouted, hurling up their caps. Jack Green, for all jealousy was forgotten at this wondrous skill, ran to Dick, clasped him in his arms, and, dragging the badge from off his breast, tried to pin it to his rough doublet. The young prince came and clapped him on the shoulder, saying:

"Be my man! Be my man!"

(To Be Continued.)

## A STRANGE COURT TRIAL

THE following strange incident is related by Captain George A. Briggs and occurred during his stay on the west coast of Africa about 10 years ago.

A chimpanzee named John who was owned by a high official one day broke from his chain and, strolling unconcernedly down the main thoroughfare, scattered the crowds before him. A native woman who was vending dainties dropped her tray and, even forgetting her small child, fled with the crowd.

The chimpanzee soon spied the tray of dainties and devoured them in a most convincing manner. The child, seeing all the sweets disappear, attacked the chimpanzee by the tail, but a bite from the brute sent the child yelling at the top of his lung power.

This so infuriated the natives that they made a combined attack on John, and his lease of life would have been cut short had not his owner appeared. He faced the crowd and assured them that every man would be tendered his due. For a similar offense he

inquired whether a man would not have to stand his trial in court.

"Yah! Yah!" was the shout.

"Then," said John's owner, "let the woman appear in court tomorrow with the child and all the witnesses and I promise you John will be there like a man to stand trial and take whatever punishment may be doled out to him."

The next morning the court was crowded when John appeared, chained and carried by several policemen. He was placed in the dock and the charge of larceny and assault was read to him.

His master turned to him and, asking him if he had any defense to offer, was answered by the usual grunts of delight that John indulged in whenever his master greeted him.

The master then informed the judge that John had pleaded guilty and had no defense to offer. The judge, after due deliberation, sentenced the brute to three months and he was led away to prison, where he served his sentence.