

# Tiberius Smith

HE ENTERTAINS CHIEF FEENEY SCRAWS

By HUGH PENDEXTER

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"Tib and I had mapped out a little scamper over Europe, I was going to Broadway supper I could take him to some spot on the continent he was not familiar with. If allowed to make the experiment, I reckon I would have lost, as I'd picked out a cozy corner in Bulgaria, which I subsequently learned he had once summered in. But when we reached Bombay we were met by orders from the main-spring, asking that we undertake a little African tour, something with leopards in it. This was old work for Tib and me, and although all our plans for dodging the guide-book in Europe were smashed, he displayed no disappointment as he prepared for the sail across the Sea of Arabia to the hunched-up shoulder of Africa, where we shifted to a south-bound boat.

"Once arrived, Tib promptly obtained permission to net anything on four legs in the Congo State, we paying a handsome premium on all victims shipped. He also took out licenses in Uganda Protectorate and for the East Africa Protectorate. You'd suppose those stamping-grounds would suffice to fill all the menageries under canvas, yet Tib began to lose all interest in them when we drew near the Uganda border and he heard of Lake Bango country, which is encompassed by the big Magli marsh. That region is under no protectorate, and although the inhabitants were said to be repulsive with disagreeable sentiments towards strangers, the old fact was crazy to visit it. The fact it was forbidden ground to the blond race only conjured up in his mind all sorts of eccentric quadrupedal possibilities; and when our head man shivered in the brazen sunlight and said Feeney Scraws existed solely to kidnap foolish transients, and added that fugitives from that realm had related fearsome nursery tales about man-eating white leopards, I knew the dice were juggled for our going to the Bango.

"An anxious inquiry on my part drew forth the information that Mr. Scraws was probably the most accomplished assassin in all Africa. He was so cruel he ought to have been a dentist. He was a native chief, the head man chattered, a professor of unpleasant practices.

"Thus with a very slim entourage we drew near Mr. Scraws' boma, as the native village is called, and began hunting the fever-laden marsh for white leopards.

"Now that I am out of that business, I'll explain that much of our success in trapping the untamed people of the tanglewood was due to a powerful ammonia pistol, much like those used to-day by cyclists in hesitating ugly dogs. Tib had improved the article as ordinarily made until it would shoot 15 charges of the strongest kind of dope, and our employer often utilized it in quieting caged animals in place of the crude iron. One slug of that stuff, as prepared by Tib, would send the average striped cat or lion off to slumberland for several minutes, and the patient on awaking was usually very docile.

"Well, we made the east shore of Lake Bango, undisturbed, and as the hunting was as thin as an alms-house stew we picked up some native boats and crossed to the west side.

"He studied the approaching shore steadily for a few minutes and then observed: 'Too late, my child. I think our host awaits us; the trees are alive. To retreat now would mean a swarm of them upon us, for they have a few bark ferries on the beach, I note. Brace up and try to inflame a little self-respect into our simple followers, as I fear they have forgotten their ancestral pride and will do us scant credit.'

"There he is, Billy—the man with the face like an inflamed nightmare. Jovial, whole-souled-looking chap, eh? and he nodded his head carelessly toward him we both knew to be Chief Feeney Scraws.

"Don't make a move, Billy, warned Tib in a low voice, as with his free hand he reached in his pocket and produced his last cigarette and lit it.

"The moral effect of this little act swept the chief off his feet for the moment, sir. He lowered his weapon with a grunt of chagrin, or wonder, and released my patron. It was lucky thus, as I was unarmed, all our guns, except our ammonia pistols, being in the boat. And I reckon if I had shot Feeney, Tib and I soon would have overtaken him in the spirit land; for the mob was unusually demonstrative.

"Keep near me and walk slow; cautioned Tib. And show of fear means the emergency ward. Then he mopped his brow and motioned for the chief to lead us to some shade. It was coolly done, and some lone corpulent of our host's talented blood began to admire the old fellow's nerve, as was evinced by the swift gleam of his green eyes. It was fleeting, but we both caught it, and Tib murmured over his resolute shoulder: 'We've got him puzzled a bit. Wouldn't he make an elegant wild boy? I'd almost prefer him in a cage to a white leopard.'

"I'll chasten his proud spirit," grinned Tib. Any millinery display of white feathers will mean an immediate clinic. Tread on his heels a bit.

"This command seemed to me to lend itself to funeral environments, but I obeyed, and would have been brained faster if Tib had not stepped in between and in the traders' ring called a halt. Although the chief stayed his hatched arm he jumped enthusiastically up and down several times in an ecstasy of pique

and knocked one of his body-guard senseless with the flat of his ax. The fellow would have received the edge, only the blade caught in an overhanging creeper. Tib smiled in approbation, and to further show his approval gave the prostrate warrior a hearty kick.

"But Mr. Scraws did not possess a reputation for being thoughtfully and exquisitely cruel for nothing, and after a short session of storm signals his merry face was distorted into a smile and he clapped us both on the shoulder amiably and indulged in spasmodic cluckings.

"You've done the trick," I remarked admiringly. But the face Tib turned on me was puckered with apprehension.

"I fear you are in error, my child," he protested. When Brother Feeney laughs way down in his stomach there's something stirring for the spectators. We had him dubious at first; now he has decided just what it's going to do and it tickles him. And, I guess, what agitates his risibles wouldn't take any prize in a Vermont parlor entertainment."

"And hang me, sir, if Feeney's men weren't all of a shake! The squaws, too, who ran up to meet us, no sooner saw their master enjoying his little joke than they began tearing their hair and scuttling for cover. Feeney, choking with mirth, called a warrior to approach. This man rolled his eyes in despair and gave a tree a farewell rap with his head before obeying. His legs wobbled as he

dragged himself forward and knelt. His boss tapped him coyly on the pate with the ax-handle. It seemed to me the chief ruffled the address longer than was necessary and was loath to desist. But with a sigh he finally lowered his comforter and the sweat rolled from the crouching figure's limbs.

"Why look at the black imp's eyes!" murmured Tib.

"And Feeney's eyes were blood red.

"Not what you'd call amiability," I suggested, with a shudder.

"Certainly not the innocent jollity of childhood," groaned Tib.

"At this point the chief gave the warrior some command, and as if relieved from death the subject sprang to his feet and motioned us to follow him. The chief, still decorated with his hideous smile, nodded for us to obey, and as we were led to a hut in the middle of the glade he kept us company and bowed us within with much mock humility.

"Too intensely polite," snorted Tib, once we were alone and the opening filled up by the backs of two giant guards. Then he added, thoughtfully, 'But my ancestors weren't Green Mountain boys—just for notoriety's sake, and he'd have a run for his money if I had a gun.'

"They are busy about something," I remarked, as the sound of falling timbers and the guttural cries of the men beat against the hide sides of our prison.

"I guess it is something elaborate," admitted Tib, trying to peer through the opening; whereat the guards pushed him back.

"And as if I didn't have enough to fret over, Tib began to go light-headed from a taste of the swamp fever, and talk rapidly in a hectic-flush kind of a voice. 'We don't know what it is, but you can anticipate it is very complete and finished as to detail,' he mumbled, as the sound of the laborers grew scant in the coming gray of the morning. Then, 'Good-by, My Sweet,' he began to babble in his clear, seventy-story tenor as our guards silently rose and left us.

"I say, old chap, don't," I begged. 'It's almost sacrilegious.'

"You silly jade," he quizzed, the red spots on his plump cheeks now glowing as if stamped with a stencil. 'Great Scott!' next—he muttered, while I sat with despairing head on my hands. 'I guess—'

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child, I've a touch of the fever. Ham! and now I've got 'em. Walk in, ladies and gentlemen, walk in. One hour in the big animal tent before the first act in the triple sawdust arena. This is Gooseberry, the man-eating lion. See him—"

"Oh, quit," I cried. "Can't you see you're going daffy with swamp suggestions?" For my little seance with the oven heat and shivers of the disease had left me peevish.

"Just as you say, my child," he replied, humbly. 'Maybe old Tib is cross-eyed mentally, but hang me if he doesn't look like a lion. A figment of the—'

"And great Scott, sir! I turned, and if there wasn't the bulky, befringed head of a big male lion in the narrow aperture of the tent!

"Tib!" I shrieked. 'It's real!'

"And at that my patron pealed forth one resonant roar that caused the massive beast to snarl and spring back. 'Where's the keeper?' he cried, again going a bit flighty. 'The idea of letting him out to scare women and—I forgot. It's real! Then he put to rout his imagination for a moment and swayed to the opening and scowled as he fixed his attention on the present. 'We stand about as much of a chance as an old-fashioned safe in the hands of a gang of yeg-men,' he mumbled.

"The timid peep I stole over his shoulder, reinforced by the rising sun, revealed for the first time what those captains of industry had been doing. During the night they had inclosed us and our villa in a palisade of young trees and slabs of bark; while at the other end of the corral the tawny form of our recent visitor walked nervously back and forth with slow, gliding step.

"We're the newer, better breakfast food," explained Tib, as he tried to wipe the nightmare from his eyes. Then he gazed on me cunningly and demanded: 'Don't play it too strong on the old man, Billy. I feel doped; but is that—or is it not—'

"It is," I gasped. 'For my sake come out of it. It's real.'

"Enough to scare a scarlatina germ into being sterilized?" he lisped.

truth. Did that really happen, or was it a delusion?"

"All real," I howled, clutching his arm.

"I always like to know," he explained, gravely. Then he cried: 'In the name of the continental congress—Don't shoot too quick!'

"For the big, eight-foot male, accompanied by a four-foot tall, was creeping towards us on his belly, while his pal stood and watched the proceedings with morbid curiosity, and as calmly as if it were a mail-order business.

"We separated about ten feet and crouched ready to spring aside, and as the ammonia repeaters were held in the palm of the hand, Feeney, shedding tears of unrestrained joy, had no intimation we possessed that masked batteries.

"Be sane," I again implored, but Tib, kneeling with both hands steady on his gun, cast me a whimsical smile and fluttered his head as if amused. And the red spots on his cheeks didn't look good a bit.

"The king of the wild-wood, probably empty of stomach and hungry enough to eat a whole tribe of white men, now began knitting his claws and agitating his tail for a record-breaking jump. He put his head close to the ground when giving his class cry, and this caused it to rumble and reverberate intensely.

"Take him!" cried Tib, and with a numb heart I squirted a charge of the soothing-syrup and noted it ruffle his breast.

"And although it did not hit him fair, it pestered him and weakened him, and he struck between us and whirled undecidedly in a circle. Then Tib staggered forward and idiotically made a grab for his highness with his left hand while with his right he tried to send home a settler.

"Oh, wili gah!" bellowed the populace, never having seen a lion so misused before.

"And their eight-footer, seemingly oblivious of Tib, began humping himself in a narrow circle, with me at the center. If Tib let go and fell I knew the beast would make the circuit and be upon him before he could

get out of the way. For his every jump possessed all of the hilarious energy of a fast-freight train.

"Oh, wagh!" yelled the spectators, as the dizzy pair sped by the second quarter, with the favorite about to break.

"Hang on and sprint faster," I encouraged, dancing wildly in my hysteria.

"Dye—think—I'm—trying—to—throw—this—race?"

"Oh, oh, for the touch of a Maxim gun and the sound—"

"We've only our pocketknives," I reminded, going so limber I had to clutch his hysterical shoulder for support.

"Shut up!" he roared. 'We have the ammonia guns. Quick! See if they are loaded!' Then, more slowly, 'If that bee would keep out of my head I'd teach 'em that the spirit of Spartacus still loafs about in old New England.'

"Please be sane," I begged, my head going cool again. 'A lion is all I can stand. My gun's loaded.'

"My heart gave a mighty thump as I yanked it forth and found its bulb filled to the limit with Tib's ex-special brand of dope.

"As he produced his pistol the fever returned, and he patted the barrel waggishly, and then mumbled, 'I only hope the lion that eats me won't ever fight or have any quarrels with your lion.'

"There's only one," I remonstrated, slapping his shoulder.

"Very well," the old chap assented, apologetically, 'if he comes one at a time he can never get through the door.'

"It was a mighty tough combination, you'll admit, sir—the lion and Tib's erratic delirium. It was more trouble than an unmarried man ought to inherit. 'Only one, remember,' I begged.

"Just as you say, Billy, but I can see two," he insisted, mildly. 'One's coming towards us; 'other ain't. Which shall we shoot at?'

"And bless you, sir, there were two lions. I thought at first I'd caught his hallucinations and half expected to see a pink giraffe crawling up my shirt-sleeve. But it was real. The audience, to enliven the scene, had let loose another tease in the pen.

"One at a time and a huge surprise for each," cheered Tib, swerving on his pins a bit.

"But even this shadowy chance was eliminated, for as he spoke our hut vanished. The rascals had fastened a line to the top and had yanked the meager shelter over the barrier.

"There we were in the open, with a fringe of black faces mocking us over the fence.

"Tib stood with his mouth ajar in astonishment. Then he drew me aside reproachfully, and whispered: 'Don't try to humor me. Tell me the

and background of all their joss dreams, and if it hadn't been for Mr. Scraws they'd have made us a present of all Africa. You see, we'd done so quiet. No noise, no rudeness, just an inclination on our part, and their biggest champions were put to bed.

We were little tin gods in their eyes, and their yelping now took on more of awe than venom. But Feeney didn't appreciate our growing popularity and foamed at the mouth. Then he barked an order.

"We were still scraping a modest hoof in mild deprecation of the encore when the squaws began bobbing their heads violently and I was inquisitive enough to shyly turn and look over my shoulder.

"Attention!" I cried, and Tib wheeled just in time to see our host's orders had resulted in another rude cage being unloaded through an opening in the paling, and two more beasts entered.

"These started toward us on a canter, and to my horror I observed Tib was frittering away the precious seconds in gallantly kissing his moist digits to a bevy of frenzied valentines, presumably the wives of the chief.

"For my sake!" I had just time to invoke, when the lion in the lead turned at an acute angle and got very close before I could pull the trigger. I overshot. But Tib, ignoring his annoyance and after foolishly chanting some lines about 'Lions to right of 'em, lions to left of 'em, pivoted and raked my villain by a neat snap-shot.

And the next thing I knew I was sailing high enough through space to peer over the top of the inclosure. It seems I was just one jump too slow in dodging, and the brute managed to collect the back of my shirt in passing.

"My return to earth jolted the breath from my lungs, and I had to recline and watch Tib face his fate alone. I knew he must have ducked when enflaming my footpad, and by the way the survivor was performing I realized his second shot had not been wasted. The snuff-colored dream vaguely brushed his ample paws against his muzzle and gave one the impression of being intoxicated. Yet to his original design, he gravely sauntered towards Tib and made a clumsy leap. But two quick shots full in the yellow eyes announced his exit, and after I'd gained my feet we both sank down wearily on his muscular flank.

"Well, sir, I reckon Central Africa never saw such a perfectly astounded set of natives as in Feeney Scraws and his little ones. There were four of their king pins quiescent and we lolled lazily back on the biggest. We had laid them to rest as easily as a laughing-loving chauffeur runs down a crippled beggar with a 60-horse power smoke-wagon. Naturally it made the crowd nervous, and the yowls they let out would have frightened a pumping station into hysterics.

"Will the lions show fight when they revive?" I panted.

"Will Feeney ring in actors until we've used up all the dope?" Tib asked, thoughtfully. In return, mechanically giving our cushion another desuetude drop. 'This anger-killer won't last forever,' he added, moodily. Then the swamp-light stole into his eyes again, and I knew some quaint conceit was adding his brain.

"All down, Feeney," he cried, cheerily, dancing towards the paling. 'Set 'em up in the other alley.'

"I pulled him back and tried to quiet him, while the aborigines yelped as if afraid of the round, laughing man who hushed lions to sleep. The black hands no longer were shaken at us in derision, but instead were pointed in hesitation, and by the speculations and rolling eyes I knew the people were petitioning the chief to hold up his thumb.

"I'd like a nice, cool drink from old Champlain," rambled Tib, playing carelessly with his lion's whiskers. 'Old Vermont! Recall those lines—I remember. I remember the house where I was born? I can't, but I could if there had been lions in it.'

"He's about to play another card," I warned, giving the nearest lion another shot.

"We've four lions now," ruminated Tib, proudly. 'Say, Billy, did you ever try to do a sum in lions? Now, in addition, three columns of lions, when you have two to carry—'

"They are opening the barrier again," I groaned, giving my patron up as a hopeless slave to purple pipe dreams.

"Tib reeled to his feet and tore open his shirt and peered under a shaky hand down the line.

"More lions," he said, simply.

"White leopards! Two of 'em!" I corrected.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, and I believed him thoroughly crazy again.

They looked leopards to me, he cried, but I thought I must be fuzzy again. So I said lions. But white leopards!

"And he waltzed me around joyfully. 'We must have 'em. Isn't this luck?'

"Awfully good luck," I despaired; for I knew a leopard was as formidable as a lion or tiger and harder to dodge.

"And the brunettes along the fence evidently were now determined to stick to their gods through one more whirl and, forgetting their recent

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