Many passages I searched and found

knew I was on the right trail. They

have made an opening on the river

shore, and into it the water is pouring.

They think thee dead, drowned like a rat. Aha!" Old Listah fell to chuck-

ing.
"And Lela, what of her? And Ikla-

"In truth, I know nothing. My vow ended today, but I have spoken to no

and be at them."
"Nay," said Listah, "my master must remain hidden while Listah goes forth to discover what has been done. But

first we will go to a more convenient

place, where you may rest until I re-

Listah took up the torch and led the

CHAPTER XI.

OUT OF DARKNESS.

He discovered that he overlooked the

many devious passages, the priest coun-

seled Eric to take some food and lie

Listah left him, and he laid himself

down on the rude couch. He could not

sleep, of course, for his mind was too

of light from above, feebly illuminating

upward along the ray of light and saw

that it came through a trapdoor in the

Placing several large stones together.

he was enabled to peer through the open-

ing, and discovered that he overlooked

the great estufa, the sacred council

chamber and secret room of the Kabilo.

It was deserted and dark, but his eye.

accustomed now to intense gloom, could

discern every feature of the great room

into which he had never before pene-

It was arranged like an amphitheater,

with a capacity of perhaps two hundred

people. In the center stood the hideous

image of Chalcu, the god to whom the

fearful human sacrifices were devoted.

even in his bosom. How many lives had

been given to this ancient idol; how

many fair throats had poured forth their

virgin blood upon its altars in the long

The image had been, he could see,

upon it polished until it glowed in the

darkness with a semblance of life. Two

immense emeralds were its eyes. They

were turned toward him and seemed

full of dark fire, as though the god saw

him spying there. The effect of dignity

was lessened by the row of ancient but

very precious sea shells that formed the

teeth of this terror of Atzlan. They made

its smile more terrible to its votaries

god's dignity to grotesqueness. This

element of the grotesque grew upon

him as he gazed at it standing there, solemnly, like a Mardi Gras relic, a

monument to the folly and the debase-

As he looked the light grew dim and

the ladder, then another, and he saw

Chalpa and his assistant, Tepelpec, a

Chalpa examined it carefully and re-

Is everything prepared?"

"Everything, although the victim is far from feeling disposed to go willingly. She will not drink the sacred aitsi.

alvantage of the girl." As Tepelpec

his superior and reservation (i) (i) Chalps started and interest at this as-

before him by the side of the idol.

newly painted, and the gold and silver

ages of his dread reign?

roof of an apartment above.

When they reached Listah's chosen

man yet until I saw thee!"

way to his hiding place.

CHAPTER X.

A form came splashing through the water.

There was not a ray of light; the very darkness seemed to press upon him bodily, and the silence was only broken by that ceaseless murmur of the swollen river. He fancied every moment that he heard Chalpa or one of his companions returning. He could scarcely believe that they really meant to leave him there. But the minutes passed; he could now hear his heart beating in a tumult of mingled dread and vexation. Angry resentment against Kulcan, Iklapel and Jan-ila burned in his bosom, alternating with regret and despair when he thought of Lela, probably also a vic-

tim to Chalpa's wiles. Suddenly a distant sound fell upon his ears. He raised his head to listen. It came muffled to him, as of blows upon stone; then a sound of falling masonry, clear and distinct, though far Was help coming to him even now? He lay flat upon his back, bound hand and foot, and already felt stiff and feeble. He hoped they would hurry; this irksome position and continued strain was not the best treatment for a convalescent. How long they were in coming! He tried to wait patiently, to think of other things, in order to distract his mind, for he felt that they might be longer in the search for him than his captors had been in bringing him there. Perhaps they might wander off into other passages, too, before they

He tried to be patient and to wait with a serene mind. A long time elapsed; he thought that he had been there for perhaps two hours and hegan to feel again the horrible creeping dread. The idea now occurred to him that the noises he had heard had been caused by Chalpa blocking up the mouth of the tunnel. This came with agitated. the force of conviction to his mind and It was now midday, as Listah had told took his breath away. His mind reeled with the thought of dying in this man-

Then came another accession of courage, and he tried to remember how long human endurance would resist death by starvation. Men have lived, he knew, for days, then died in wild insanity, unconscious of suffering. Must he lie there and feel death creeping closer in that black vault-a death full of nameless terrors, unseen horrors, unable even to struggle against it-or beat his hands against the prison walls-without one ray of light? He tried to turn over, intending to make an effort to hobble on his knees back toward the eatrance, but he was too stiff and feeble to more than raise his head and shoulders by pressing his elbows upon the floor. After a half minute's struggle he sank

back with a grean. Benumbed and lethargic he began to hear strange music; the songs of birds, the lowing of cattle and the barking of dogs, and then fitful gleams of light danced and flickered before his eyes. as it was, the image awoke from its ter-Yet he knew they were unreal—that the | rible import a thrill of momentary awe silence of the grave encompassed him, and that his unruly brain engendered them. Then suddenly, in the midst of these, he heard a real sound, so clear and distinct that it smote upon his ear like a bell's tolling. It was the sound of water, rippling and darting close to his side. With silvery cadence it splashed and gurgled, and he felt its presence in

the sudden coolness and dampness that it brought. With every sense alert he listened. It was close beside him. What could it mean? It flowed thus for awhile, and then its splashing seemed to cease, and there remained a gentle rippling. Then, to his horror, he felt its icy touch upon his feet, and in a moment it was round and about him, lapping his body

It rose rapidly. He could feel it coming up and swelling against his sides. He had raised his head when he first began to listen, and when he let it fall now the water was above his chin. He raised his head again, and then began another struggle to lift himself upon his feet. He gained his knees, his head reeling with the effort; the water was already up to his waist. He swayed from side to side, scarcely able to support himself. Cold shivers racked him; he trembled as with an ague, and he felt that in an-

other minute he would lose conscious-Then, while life seemed just departing,

he—almost disbelieving—saw a light approaching, and a form came splashing through the water, and he was seized by a strong hand. How his life and strength came surging back! He heard the words:

"A moment more and old Listah would have been too late!" and then Listah cut the thongs which bound his arms, and reaching down into the water, and the water, and he was seized by sich a beauty as Lela. The god looks hungry, too methinks "a lela the prospect," rejoined Tepelpec. "The water no Katun feast was ever graced by such a beauty as Lela. The god looks hungry, too methinks "a lela the prospect," rejoined Tepelpec. "The water no Katun feast was ever graced by such a beauty as Lela. The god looks hungry, too methinks "a lela the prospect," rejoined Tepelpec. "The water no Katun feast was ever graced by such a beauty as Lela. The god looks hungry, too methinks "a lela the prospect," rejoined Tepelpec. "The water no Katun feast was ever graced by such a beauty as Lela. The god looks hungry, too methinks "a lela the prospect," rejoined Tepelpec. "The water no Katun feast was ever graced by such a beauty as Lela. The god looks hungry, too methinks "a lela the prospect," rejoined Tepelpec. "The water no Katun feast was ever graced by such a beauty as Lela. The god looks hungry, too methinks "a lela the prospect," rejoined Tepelpec. "The water provided the how to get to the vault under the temple by the secret door which you know, he says, and we are to go there and be ready to rescue Lela tomorrow noon. He thinks "but wise to wait until the in "The god looks hungry, too methinks "A lela the prospect," rejoined Tepelpec. "The god looks hungry, too methinks "A lela the prospect," rejoined Tepelpec. "The god looks hungry, too methinks "was ever Chalcu the secret door which you know, he says, and we are to go there and be ready to rescue Lela tomorrow noon. He thinks the prospect to the vault under the temple by the secret door which you know, he says, and we are to go there and served the prospect to the vault under the te reaching down into the water severed those about his feet. Hasten Quetzal, or we shall die like rats in a trap! Fol-

low thy servant quickly,",
It was no easy matter; but a few stumbling steps brought the blood into circulation, and leaning upon the old man he staggered on. Up they went, the water decreasing in depth at every

step until at last Listah stopped, saying:

"We are safe here, for we are above the river's surface. Now rest awhile, and then we will eat. Then my master will strike and punish the accursed of Atzlan, the cheating Chalper, will he Eric said nothing. He looked at Listah.

wondering by what strange providence he had found him and sayed his life. After a moment he drew his revolver and examined it. The waterproof cartridges, he knew, were able to withstand a severe souking. He wiped the weapon upon the bosom of his Atzlan tunic, the only dry portion of his garments, then he an-

swered: and beard head report Chalpa, and speedily. But tell me how you.

found me."
"Last night f, thy servant—abroad from my hiding place under the city word! The line that uttered it would

utter no more lies. And remember, keep watch over your own tongue lest it slip and lead you to destruction."

"I speak to no one," answered Tepelpec, "but to you. From you, I think, I need conceal nothing. We, I hope, understand one another. I know that you have long desired to be revenged upon the girl, and that you would hesitate at nothing, my master, to accomplish your ends—even unfairness"——

"You dog!" cried Chalpa, "do you dare to think that I would cheat in this solemn and fearful duty?" "Pray talk not of duty, dear father;

here, alone, we need conceal nothing. I am not your slave! I fear you not, and I dare tell you that I think you a most admirable master of trickery, one who made no outcry, but followed stealthily.

They disappeared in the old tomb, and when they emerged I saw that they had left my master within. When they departed I entered, and, lo, they had filled in a passageway of which I knew not the existence. I flew to my hidden place, and since then I have searched for access to this turnal under the river.

access to this tunnel under the river. a rat.

"Miserable son of a polecat, thy drivelings bespeak thee an idiot! I have a mind to kill you now at Chalcu's teet!" thee not, but when I found the water I Tepelpec's eyes and tongue were pro-truding when Chalpa cast him loose, and he staggered for a few moments.
"Kill me, Chalpa," he cried, "aye, and

in one hour the people will know how you swindled them! They will see the crafty Chalpa in a new light, as one who seeks his private ends in their public matters, who takes their maidens to the feet of the god because they will not "Then we must be up and at work, for they may be in danger also. Lead the way, Listah, and let us get out quickly way, Listah, and let us get out quickly relish learning how they have been derived the simple worshipers. Ah, they will relish learning how they have been derived the simple worshipers. love him, who juggles with the sacred dice and with such solemn mien tricks

Chalpa stood thunderstruck; such effrontery he knew, of course, was backed by knowledge of his evil ways.

"There is a person," Tepelpec went on, who knows it all and has the proofs. If I disappear he is instructed to publish the truth immediately. So, my father, when you kill me you merely pull the whole edifice of fraud down upon your wise head. You will not be so foolish. No, you will cherish Tepelpec as your aid and assistant, who can help you well. You need a faithful, trustworthy accomplice in the game you are playing, for you cannot carry things are playing, for you cannot carry things well-wisher of the old reliable Georgia with such a high hand against the people as you did against Quetzal—they are too many. Iklapel and Kulcan have many friends—they will not all believe so readily our story that we saw Quetzal go up the cliff and disappear. They will uspect you perhaps, and you need help

Eric could see that Chalpa was confounded. Full of vexation, he hung between his wrath and his fear for awhile. Then, assuming an air of unconcern, he

"So, friend, you play the spy upon me! Well, so be it: know then that I will stick at nothing to win the place and power I covet. You can help me, and you shall be repaid. Let us now hasten, for tomorrow is the day that will make or mar our fortunes."

"Everything is ready and awaiting only your orders. Kulcan, Iklapel and Jan-ila are confined, as you commanded, when they reached Listah's chosen retreat, after threading the maze of the old man is obdurate; he swears we have killed Quetzal, but Kulcan may yet yield to save his precious life."

upon his bed while he reconnoitered. So The cruel, hungry smile crossed Chalpa's face. "He will not save it even then, the coward! I am sorry I did not place him beside the false Quetzal; they would lis beneath the water together and cease to

vex us!" "The maiden is at the house of her grandmother, old Intzu, whom I hav commanded to prepare her for her fate. She is haughty and will not speak to me. one little spot. He went ' it and saw a small opening in the wall a few feet above his head. He stood looking directly I visited her but now, but I saw her not Still she is well guarded by men armed with Quetzal's axes. We can thank him

for that blessing."
"I will talk with her," said Chalpa, his eyes lighting with a steely glitter in the gloom. "She will listen to me!

Hark! What was that?" start, caused by Listah, who, returning along the passage, stumbled over a stone. He stopped at once, seeing Eric's upraised finger, and stood motionless. Chalpa and Tepelpec, like two alarmed rats, peered in every direction in silence for awhile. Then Tepelpec said:

"It was nothing—a loose stone per-haps." They noiselessly ascended the

ladder and disappeared.

All the while Eric's hand had been on his weapon, but he was loath to kill them in cold blood, although he had fully determined to slaughter Chalpa as he would a rattlesnake or a rabid dog simply to rid the earth of a vicious and dangerous animal. It had become simply a question of self defense, and although he had been long in arriving at such a decision he was resolved to carry it out. In this he was justified, inasmuch as Chalpa had twice attempted his life, and would certainly kill him if he had another opportunity. He could not invoke the law in Atzlan with any sense of security, and he would be his own law and rid the city of a base scoundrel.

When the two had gone he stepped down and related their conversation to Listah. When he had concluded the perhabs, but to Eric they reduced the latter said:

"Tepelpec is right—there is much objection to the sacrifice. People are saying it is time to abolish it. They say that Quetzal was averse to it, and they believe he will return in time to prevent it. But there is a strong party in favor of it too. They seem about divided. faded suddenly. A figure came down | Some fear Chalpa and side with him."

"Did you see Iklapel?" "Yes," replied Listah. "He is guarded weazened, pockmarked villain, standing by my nephew Aza, and he permitted me to speak to the high priest. He was filled with sorrow, for he thought you dead. He did not believe that you had marked:

"He is dry now, We can take him dead. He did not believe that you had left us, as Chalpa has said, but he feared out and set him on his pedestal at once. that you were murdered. When I told How handsome he looks in his new him you were here he almost wept for joy. He brightened up and appeared

and is allowed to see her; you can send her a message and comfort her."

"Let us do so at once," cried Eric. "She must be told, for that her heart is and I fear that she will make us trouble breaking I know too well. Go to her and tell her all. Give her this knife and "Perhaps," replied Chalps with a grin tell her to use it upon Chalps if he befull of triumph and hate. "But go she comes too dangerous, but also tell her to shall; quietly if she will, or in our tender be cautious and keep our secret well." hands if she is unruly. And the people Go quickly; I will swait here patiently.

"Too quiet: I fear there is a strong him along the passage, but slowly. The underentiest of feeling against this old man, accustomed to the dark ways. sacrifice which only needs stirring to could move rapidly, and he soon vanbecome an open protest. They seem to ished. In less than thirty minutes he think that you have taken some unfair reappeared smiling. "She is happy," he said. "Chalpa has

said this he cast a quick, sly glance at been there, but she taunted and defied him, and he 'eared to touch her because the people would know of it and be sistantes to tries and the land of the same and the heart and the heart at the hear say He hesitated the horizon of think him not cargerous, I suppose and Nothing, father, hothing, only—I he will be here soon with food and your have heard a word of two now and then long thunder tube, if he can bring it that seemed ominous. that seemed ominous. without detection. Everybody is busy Buy your Straw Hats—cheap this By Chalcu, I would like to hear such preparing for tomorrow, and perhaps he season—from J. M. Cobb.

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will not be observed.

They walked down the crypt until

they came to a spot where there was an

opening into an unused apartment; the

stones had fallen in and choked the tunnel, but there was room for a man to squeeze through. Once in the room

above it was easy to pass into another.

Eric as the youth began to descend the

ladder from the room above. He car-

ried with much difficulty a huge bundle

of firewood—light branches, such as were used as fuel for the temple. When

he reached the foot of the ladder he fell

"I did not believe you dead, my master. I knew you would return. I have brought the rifle and the cartridge belt;

now we can rescue Iklapel and Kulcan. There are many who are with you. Chal-

pa is feared more than he is loved, and when they see you many will desert him.

"Hasten slowly, my lad. We will wait

for the proper inoment; then with due effect and the pomp of our surroundings

we will crush friend Chalpa so that he

bundle of fagots, in which he had con-cealed the rifle, "I have brought food

"That's more to the point, for 1 am nearly starved," answered his master.

"But first we will go to the chamber

under the temple. There we can be near

Iklapel and be ready at any moment

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

"A God-send to Me in This Time

of My Dire Necessity."

Show us the way, Listah!"

"See," said Jan-ila, breaking into his

Let us hurry!"

and candles."

will not rise again."

on his knees and embraced Eric's legs with many protestations of joy.

"Here comes Jan-ila at last," said

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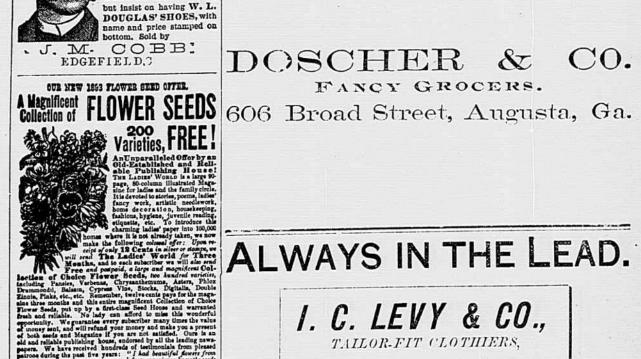
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