

LUCILLE LOVE

The Girl of Mystery

By the
"MASTER PEN"

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CHAPTER VII.

A Chief Borrows From a Chief.

ON going into the little street she noticed the chief in earnest conference with his daughter and an old native woman whom Lucille had no recollection of seeing about the village before. Had she but known this was but another servile tool of Hugo Loubeque's what future dangers she might have saved! Coming closer, she knew that it was a stranger. Moreover, from the light upon the crone's wrinkled countenance and the furious gesticulations she made toward her she felt that she was the object of controversy. And the daughter of the old chief seemed adding her pleas to those of the old woman with effect.

Lucille stood a little apart, watching the conference as it disbanded. She had picked up enough of the language to make out an occasional word, but the gestures of the three had been unmistakable. She waited quietly while the trio approached her, feeling that in some way the problem that had been harassing her was to be answered without further worry on her part.

She smiled at the chief's efforts to make her understand what he desired of her, smiled and shook her head as the withered old woman made an equally unsuccessful attempt. But the little girl took the situation in hand.

Without much difficulty Lucille made out from the chief that the old woman came from a chief greater than her father, who lived in a village not far distant; that the wonder of her curative ability had reached his ears, and he earnestly prayed the white woman be loaned his own wife for a nurse, that she might be cured of an illness which seemed certain to be fatal.

Lucille saw from the grim expression on the old chief's face that, even though it might bring him into trouble with his neighbor chief, he was more than loath to part with her. She also saw that the child, with the remembrance of her own illness fresh upon her, had allowed her heart to go out to the wife in such sympathy that she had persuaded her father to permit the loaning.

Her heart gave a great throb of delight at this unexpected answer to her prayer. She had known there would be trouble getting away with the papers just as she had determined that she must leave. There was no possible chance of regaining civilization from here. There might be no chance in another place, but there was hope, and, while it was meager sustenance, anything was better than the strain of knowing impossibility. Anything appeared to her so long as it embraced a change, for change spelled renewed hope. Then, too, Hugo Loubeque would be temporarily at least thrown off the trail.

In an hour she had mounted the chief's own horse, her very soul rejoicing at the familiar feel of an easy canter. Beside her rode the old woman, mumbling continually to herself as though she were keeping track of the devious turns in the wilderness of vegetation through which their way led.

Once Lucille was conscious of a vague feeling of mistrust as she looked back at the squat figure of the old woman ambling along stolidly as some heathen idol, only her rattling eyes emitting flashes of fire from between the layers of wrinkled, brown, drooping lids.

Faster, faster she urged her horse as she saw a clear stretch of trail opening before her, her hand continually reaching up and feeling the precious burden about her neck. Then she looked back for her escort, when the



Lucille at the Door of Her Hut.

ground seemed to grow soft, to slip up from under her mount's hoofs and send her hurtling down—down—down—she knew not where nor why—down into blackness at which her hands clutched vainly, clutching nothing from the dark—down into a blackness that seemed stifling her until it reached up and mercifully compassed her consciousness.

Hugo Loubeque curly dismissed the withered crone who handed him the sack containing the documents Lucille had worn about her neck. In his eyes glowed no light of triumph. First they had lighted with a strange relief, but now they seemed fastened upon a

memory filled with vague regret as he visualized the girl, lying helpless at the bottom of the pit he had caused his native to dig across the trail.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet, once more the man of action. Pity this girl, daughter of the woman he loved, he might, but she was not the sort to lie supine while he made away with the papers for which she had gone through so much already. Suddenly he tore open the bag, dumping the contents out before him and running through them nervously. When he looked up the light of disappointment, almost fear, was upon his face.

The amulet, the sacred amulet which had served her so well, would continue to serve her so well as long as she continued in this land, was still in her possession. He had failed to tell the crone to steal that also. And the old woman had reported that she was merely stunned. The sacred amulet which would make her revered by any savage she chanced to meet was still hers, while he, Hugo Loubeque, would find every hand against him.

He moved swiftly now, preparing for his long journey through the jungle, away from her zealous pursuit and toward possible relief, for so long as he remained here Lucille had every eye for friend and assistant, while he had only those he might gain through fear.

Lucille stirred, opened her eyes in bewilderment, unable to piece together any connection between the black hole in which she found herself and the narrow trail through the jungle along which she had urged her horse. Gradually it all came back to her. Her hands sought her bosom, and, with a little groan of utter misery, she gave way to uncontrollable sobs.

The reaction did her good, worked wonders with her. In that spell of self pity father, home, sweetheart, everything, was forgotten before the horror of her own predicament. Finished with it, she gathered every faculty, mental and physical, and scrambled to her feet. Above her as she lifted her eyes shone one of a streak of light, threaded between aisles of dense leafiness—the sun piercing home into the jungle. She moved forward, her hands before her, groping. Something soft and motionless and so still it caused her to shudder met the toe of her boot. She drew back in swift alarm, knowing it to be the body of the horse she had ridden, a great feeling of gratefulness at her own escape from a similar fate warning her through and through.

Mastering the innate repulsion within her, she stepped upon the corpse, her hands reaching up and finding the smooth edge of the hole that had been dug across the roadway to entrap her. Her fingers found the roots of a tree, roots so stout they bore her weight. For a moment she waited, gathering her falling strength for the supreme effort. Then she sprang up, gathering her knees under her, relaxing slightly before putting forward every ounce of her strength and drawing herself to the warm surface of the road.

About her on every side the jungle breathed, loathsome, fetid, horrible. Like some giant monster it seemed to spread its myriad tentacles in every direction, barring egress, fastening upon the one who chanced to stray within it, sucking at one's very vitals. The chatter of monkeys and the shrieks of birds filled the air.

But no odds how bleak the prospect, how forlorn the hope, one always feels courage renewed when one has just glimpsed a greater danger and averted it. Lucille had known within the quarter hour the horror of blindness, and her heart leaped high with joy at being able to see these things. In this same jungle with her, in quite as bad a predicament, was Hugo Loubeque, and with Hugo Loubeque were the papers she had fought so hard to recover. She spoke aloud, her voice telling a note so foreign to this black abode that even the animal life was silenced in amazement. "He shall not keep the papers long!" were her words.

The thought braced her as would a dose of cold water. To right, to left, before her and behind was naught but jungle. Which way should she turn to come across the international spy? She felt the amulet about her neck with nervous, plucking fingers, as though seeking to read the answer there. Safety lay behind, back along the trail in the village of the chief who had so reluctantly permitted her to answer the trumped up message from his neighbor. But she did not wish safety. She wanted the papers and civilization. In which direction to go she must leave to the power that had guided her steps so far, but she knew she must make quick choice.

As though her question was to be answered for her, she noticed the chatter of the monkeys suddenly changing, observed a wild alarm in their voices, and, looking up, saw a host, an army of them, huddled close together, then slipping swiftly in wild disorder from tree to tree. Lucille felt a thrill of something more than uneasiness coming upon her as she started into the blackness to make out the reason for their alarm. Swiftly she shrank back, before the blazing balls of fire that were fastened upon her from the heavy wall of vines and creepers.

Again that crackling of twigs, this time in greater volume, and where before but one pair of wild eyes had stared at her there were now many eyes. She recollected the fires her savage friends had built of nights that the jungle beasts might not disturb them. But she had no means of lighting a fire. She was alone, with nothing to assist her save her own ingenuity. She retreated slowly, fear hanging upon her feet, holding her back even as low growls indicated that her retreat was observed and would probably be taken for a sign of fear.

At the sound the trees were shaken violently by another rush of the little tree men. It gave her an idea instantly. Even as the eyes grew miraculously into long, graceful bodies Lucille reached up and grasped the thick walls of creepers dangling from a giant trunked tree. Came a rush so silent and sure footed she could hear but the faint pat, pat of the leopard's feet, followed by a heavy click of jaws. Instinctively she drew her feet up under her and, fear lending impetus to her movements, clambered swiftly up the vines until the welcome crotch of the tree supported her.

Higher and higher she climbed until the terrifying sight of the leopards

encircling the tree was shut from her eyes by the heavy foliage beneath which she lay. Her muscles ached, climbed until even the crumpling of twigs beneath failed to reach up to her.

Beneath her swayed the jungle. Above her flickered a myriad of stars. Like peepholes in some great theater curtain they were through which the master player might watch what was going on in his world. They thrilled Lucille with their familiarity. So long she had been here in this jungle she seemed to have forgotten the existence of stars, regarded them as old friends. These same stars that looked down upon her now were looking down upon Manila, upon her father, upon her sweetheart. These same stars were candles of truth that would not, could not, unblushingly look upon such a disaster as threatened her being consummated.

And then her eyes were halted, stayed in their review of the stars by the sight of a long, thin spiral of smoke rising and reaching up toward the stars in wispy fragility. It came from miles to the westward. But Lucille knew that smoke for fire and the fire to be that lighted by human hands.

CHAPTER VIII.
Loubeque Fights Down a Strango Emotion.

LOUBEQUE could not have explained why had he tried, but the thought that Lucille still possessed the mystic amulet given her by the savage chief for saving his daughter's life and which had served in such good stead against his machinations worried him more than a little. True, his plot had succeeded, the pit he had dug across the trail had swallowed her up and the old native crone had brought him the precious papers. But he was worried. He felt himself at times almost wishing to be rid of the quails which had forlornly his serving her with a death sentence.

She had the mystic amulet still and, always plotting in advance those things he wished done, it bothered him not to know exactly how great the power of that amulet was.

Together with the uncertainty of his position, with realization of the intense loneliness, his inability to speak the language of any people he might chance to meet, the international spy fought his way through the jungle in more of a spirit of terror than he ever experienced before. Nights, when he would build fires to fend off wild beasts that gathered in a circle and stared with their blazing eyes from out the blackness, he would find her face emerging from the flames.

"Is it possible that I love her as I loved her mother?" he asked himself. But he fought against the thought. Forcing his marches in mad desire to weary his body so at night his brain would succumb to the utter weariness that gripped him, Hugo Loubeque tried to fight away this change that was struggling to take place within himself.

He noticed a growing sullenness on the part of his servant, a sulky obedience which came only grudgingly after rage had tipped his master's tones with menacing decisiveness. He decided to watch the fellow more carefully, though at the same time laughing at himself for the nervousness which was growing upon him.

It was late in the fourth night that he finally saw to the fire his servant had prepared and stretched out, sinking almost instantly into profound slumber. He had fought against heavy sleep, for the actions of the native had been unusually furtive and restless all day. The wakening was of the most abrupt.

He started bolt upright, looking instinctively toward the place where his servant should have been. But the man was gone, and the fire was scattering wildly about as though some one had intentionally disturbed it. The jungle beasts might lose their fear of this man and pounce upon him. He heard the crackling of twigs under feet too swift to be other than those of man in terror, caught a glimpse of a wavering, flashing flare of torchlight, heard the piercing wail of a man's voice.

Grasping his revolver, Loubeque sprang to his feet, instantly wide awake. For just a second he waited there, then drew a steady aim upon the leaping torch. The gun spoke, followed almost instantly by the shrill voice of a child.

"Don't shoot! It's a lion!"—Loubeque allowed the revolver to drop to his side. Suddenly the wonder of her being at his camp site struck him, and simultaneously his hand sought the sack about his neck. It was gone.

Even as he darted forward, fighting madly against the black tangle of vegetation that barred his way, he was withered by some feeling within from firing the revolver at that torch. He could hear the low growls of a wild animal, caught a stray glimpse of Lucille standing over a dark, shapeless figure of a man beside the bank of a little stream, while, before the wavering torch she had snatched from the camp fire of her enemy, a great lion was silently retreating.

Loubeque caught a glimpse of this; then in his efforts to reach her side he was shut from sight completely. He tried to stumble back to her when the ground seemed to kick up its heels and sink backward. He clutched vainly for support, his hands encountering the arm of a man. Cold water clashed upon him, and, still clutching the arm, he allowed himself to float down the stream for a way. Then, in a turn, he managed to secure footing and drag the body of his dead servant, horribly mutilated by the claws of the lion, to shore. But, search though he would, the little bag that contained the papers was not to be found.

Loubeque sought his way back to the spot where he had made his fire, readily locating the spot where Lucille had driven away the lion from his prey. But Lucille had disappeared, vanished as completely as though the earth had swallowed her up. The international spy stood a long time in silence beside the place where he had seen the wavering torch. And there was that in the eyes that looked down at the revolver in his hand which told that next time he would not hesitate to use it.

For three days Lucille kept very near that campfire light, furtive as any of the animals that prowled about, guarding herself against them by the same

fire that protected her enemy. At times only the watchfulness of Loubeque, his catlike slumber, prevented her carrying out her audacious plot to steal the little bag in which he still carried the papers.

It was the night of the fourth day that she decided to take a desperate chance, the same night that creeping



Loubeque Kept a Careful Watch.

close upon the camp she saw something about the actions of the native that made her keep very still. She caught her breath with a little gasp as she saw the man creep noiselessly toward his master and purloin from about his neck the precious bag which carried the papers she had come so far to rescue.

As he crept away from his victim Lucille slowly rested her feet, her whole soul quivering with delight, for there would be no difficulty with this native compared to the coping of wits and resources with the powerful brain and body of Loubeque.

Lucille's trailing of the native was halted abruptly by a wild cry of alarm, followed by a loud screech of pain, the thud of bodies falling heavily, a horrid, ripping sound. Dimly she glimpsed the shadowy outlines of a magnificent lion, head lifted as though he listened for some one, his paw reaching out and resting upon a shapeless, groaning mass she knew for the thief's servant. Without a thought of consequence, with nothing save the primal urge of saving life, she leaped across the narrow space that separated her from the spy's campfire, kicking the embers right and left, grasping the hardest tamed knot of them all and, darting toward the lion, waved the torch fearlessly.

The animal uttered a low growl, stood his ground for a moment before this menace that darted at him, then tucked his tail between his legs and snaked back into the jungle from which he had appeared so unexpectedly. Lucille bent over the wounded man, uttering a low cry of sympathy as she turned away in terror from the horribly wounded torso. Gradually it dawned upon her that the man was dead, quite dead. She could not realize it instantly; then the voice of Loubeque's revolver spoke, and she uttered her warning cry.

The shot brought everything back to her. She was here, not to sympathize even with one wounded to death, but to save her sweetheart's honor. She found the sack and looked back to where she could see Loubeque advancing.

For just a second she paused. Then, some impulse governing her, she thrust the burning knot of wood between the interstices of the lattice-work of vines and slunk stealthily to the right, knowing the spy would follow the light instead of herself. Even as she watched his movements, glorying in the success of her strategy, her hand pressed against something cold and damp. She looked swiftly down at the stone ruins beside her, along which she had been walking, ruins covered with thick tropical vegetation. She passed her fingers over the stone she had first encountered, rubbing away the mud and creepers that covered it so completely.

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, she saw the ground moving, moving restlessly as it would move had some monster mole been burrowing beneath its surface. It was moving. She started back, wide-eyed at the spectacle of a great stone door suddenly springing wide and hurling the man who had stood upon it to one side completely out of her sight. She advanced timidly, staring about for sign of the spy, but he was not to be seen. She peered down the black hole that had opened, wonderingly, half inclined to believe herself in a trance, for a flight of stone steps reached up to her, reached up from the blackness, a blackness which her eyes could not pierce, try though they would.

A bit terrified, yet with curiosity irresistible, Lucille timidly put a foot upon the first step, then halted. She waited a moment, then followed her right foot with the left. As though some giant hand urged her down, her reluctant feet moved slowly, step by step, down the long flight. And always would she stare in nameless terror lest the door be suddenly closed and her means of exit barred. And even as she looked her premonition of evil was verified.

Slowly, very slowly, the stray light that opened down to her through the passage narrowed, disappeared. To her ears came the sound of feet, swift, sure. About her was such blackness as she had never even imagined before.

Back to the Soil.

The city people have been urging each other to move back to the farm, but very few of them have moved. We welcome our city cousins back to the soil and this earth's surface contains 16,092,160,000 idle acres of tillable land where they can make a living by tilling the earth with a forked stick, but we do not need them so far as increasing production is concerned; we now have all the producers we can use. The city man has very erroneous ideas of agricultural conditions. The commonly accepted theory

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START the Perfection Heater going five minutes before the breakfast hour; by the time the family gets down the whole room is warm and cozy.

The food tastes better — everybody feels better. It's a bully morning send-off for the whole family.

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down into the bowels of the earth; about her human beings whom she could not see.

Curiously clawlike hands, but human hands, sought out her wrists, drawing her down the steps, silently, with undeviating purpose, but never harshly. Realizing the futility of resistance, her utter helplessness, Lucille numbly allowed herself to be conducted down the long flight. A veritable army seemed to swarm before and about her, judging from the footfalls. The hands upon her wrists were cold, unhealthy, hairy, yet the sounds of the voices of her captors were harsh gutturals, incomprehensible, yet human.

"This is the end of all for me!" she said in her terror.

(To be continued.)

MARKETING WORLD'S GREATEST PROBLEM

WE ARE LONG ON PRODUCTION, SHORT ON DISTRIBUTION.

By Peter Radford
Lecturer National Farmers' Union.

The economic distribution of farm products is today the world's greatest problem and the war, while it has brought its hardships, has clearly emphasized the importance of distribution as a factor in American agriculture and promises to give the farmers the co-operation of the government and the business men the solution of their marketing problem.

This result will, in a measure, compensate us for our war losses, for the business interests and government have been in the main assisting almost exclusively on the production side of agriculture. While the department of agriculture has been dumping tons of literature on the farmer telling him how to produce, the farmer has been dumping tons of products in the nation's garbage can for want of a market.

The World Will Never Starve.

At no time since Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden have the inhabitants of this world suffered from lack of production, but some people have gone hungry from the day of creation to this good hour for the lack of proper distribution. Slight variations in production have forced a change in diet and one locality has felt the pinch of want, while another surfeited, but the world as a whole has ever been a land of plenty.

We now have less than one-tenth of the tillable land of the earth's surface under cultivation, and we not only have this surplus area to draw on but it is safe to estimate that in case of dire necessity one-half the earth's population could at the present time knock their living out of the trees of the forest, gather it from wild vines and draw it from streams. No one should become alarmed; the world will never starve.

The consumer has always feared that the producer would not supply him and his fright has found expression on the statute books of our states and nations and the farmer has been urged to produce recklessly and without reference to a market, and regardless of the demands of the consumer.

Back to the Soil.

The city people have been urging each other to move back to the farm, but very few of them have moved. We welcome our city cousins back to the soil and this earth's surface contains 16,092,160,000 idle acres of tillable land where they can make a living by tilling the earth with a forked stick, but we do not need them so far as increasing production is concerned; we now have all the producers we can use. The city man has very erroneous ideas of agricultural conditions. The commonly accepted theory

that we are short on production is all wrong. Our annual increase in production far exceeds that of our increase in population.

The World as a Farm.

Taking the world as one big farm, we find two billion acres of land in cultivation. Of this amount there is approximately 750,000,000 acres on the western and 1,260,000,000 acres on the eastern hemisphere, in cultivation. This estimate, of course, does not include grazing lands, forests, etc., where large quantities of meat are produced.

The world's annual crop approximates fifteen billion bushels of cereals, thirteen billion pounds of fibre and sixty-five million tons of meat.

The average annual world crop for the past five years, compared with the previous five years, is as follows:

| Crops— | Past Half Decade. | | Previous Half Decade. | |
|----------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| | 1908-12 | 1913-17 | 1903-07 | 1908-12 |
| Corn (Bu.) | 3,934,174,000 | 3,403,655,000 | 3,403,655,000 | 3,257,526,000 |
| Wheat (Bu.) | 3,522,769,000 | 3,257,526,000 | 3,257,526,000 | 3,100,000,000 |
| Oats (Bu.) | 4,120,017,000 | 3,508,315,000 | 3,508,315,000 | 3,300,000,000 |
| Cotton (Bales) | 19,863,800 | 17,541,300 | 17,541,300 | 17,541,300 |

The world shows an average increase in cereal production of 15 per cent during the past decade, compared with the previous five years, while the world's population shows an increase of only three per cent.

The gain in production far exceeds that of our increase in population, and it is safe to estimate that the farmer can easily increase production 25 per cent if a remunerative market can be found for the products. In textile fibres the world shows an increase during the past half decade in production of 15 per cent against a population increase of three per cent.

The people of this nation should address themselves to the subject of improved facilities for distribution.

Over-production and crop mortgage force the farmers into ruinous competition with each other. The remedies in organization and co-operation in marketing.

Notice of Sale of Land.

By virtue of power vested in me by a certain deed of trust, executed to me on the 22nd day of November, 1913, by Tom James and wife, Alice, and recorded in the office of the register of deeds for Halifax county, North Carolina, in book 255 at page 140, I will on the 15th day of December, 1914, sell for cash at public auction to the highest bidder in the town of Scotland Neck, North Carolina, at 12 o'clock M., in front of the Planters & Commercial Bank, the following described real estate, to-wit: That lot or parcel of land, in Halifax county, North Carolina, beginning at a path between the lands of J. M. Tillery and Alex Strickland at William Hill's corner, thence in a southerly direction, along his line, 105 yards, to Strickland's line, thence westerly 43 1/2 yards to a stake, thence northerly 105 yards to said path, and along said path to the beginning, being the same land conveyed to the said Tom James by J. M. Tillery and described in book 248 at page 220 of the register of deeds office in Halifax county.

STUART SMITH, Trustee.
This 14th day of November, 1914.

Administrators' Notice.

Having qualified as executors under the last will and testament of D. A. Madry, deceased, late of Halifax County, North Carolina, we hereby notify all persons having claims against said deceased to present them to us within one year from the date of this notice, or said notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery; all persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate settlement.

Nov. 26, 1914.
J. W. Maday & J. E. Bullock,
Executors.

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