

TARZAN AND THE JEWELS OF OPAR

BY EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS



THIS is the fifth of the wonderful Tarzan stories dealing with the adventures of the steel-thewed ape-man in the fastnesses of his African jungle. The first was "Tarzan of the Apes," which began in the Evening Public Ledger May 15, 1912; the second was "The Return of Tarzan," which began July 17, 1915; the third, "The Beast of Tarzan," which began October 23, 1915, and the fourth, "The Son of Tarzan," which began May 13, 1916.

In one of his early adventures Tarzan visited the mysterious city of Opar. It dated back to Atlantean times and was inhabited by a strange race of blood-thirsty, callous priests headed by La, the beautiful high priestess of the Flaming God. In the present story you will learn why Tarzan returned to the mysterious city and what he found there.

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CHAPTER I The Renegade

LIEUTENANT ALBERT WERPER had only the prestige of the name he had dishonored to thank for his narrow escape from being cashiered. At first he had been humbly thankful, too, that they had sent him to this God-forsaken Congo post instead of court-martialing him, as he had so justly deserved; but now six months of the monotony, the frightful isolation, and the loneliness had wrought a change.

The young man brooded continuously over his fate. His days were filled with morbid self-pity, which eventually engendered in his weak and vacillating mind a hatred for those who had sent him here—for the very men he had at first inwardly thanked for saving him from the ignominy of degradation.

He regretted the gay life of Brussels as he never had regretted the sins which had snatched him from that gayest of capitals, and as the days passed he came to center his resentment upon the representative in Congoland of the authority which had exiled him—his captain and immediate superior.

This officer was a cold, taciturn man, inspiring little love in those directly beneath him, yet respected and feared by the black soldiers of his little command.

Werper was accustomed to sit for hours glaring at his superior as the two sat upon the veranda of their common quarters, smoking their evening cigarettes in a silence which neither seemed desirous of breaking.

The senseless hatred of the lieutenant grew at last into a form of mania. The captain's natural taciturnity he distorted into a studied attempt to insult him because of his past shortcomings. He imagined that his superior held him in contempt, and so he chafed and fumed inwardly until one evening his madness became suddenly homicidal. He fingered the butt of his revolver at his hip, his eyes narrowed, and his brows contracted. At last he spoke.

"You have insulted me for the last time!" he cried, springing to his feet. "I am an officer and a gentleman, and I shall put up with it no longer without an accounting from you, you pig."

The captain, an expression of surprise upon his features, turned toward his junior. He had seen men before with the jungle madness upon them—the madness of solitude and unrestrained brooding, and perhaps a touch of fever.

He rose and extended his hand to lay it upon the other's shoulder. Quiet words of counsel were upon his lips; but they were never spoken. Werper constructed his superior's action into an attempt to close with him. His revolver was on a level with the captain's heart, and the latter had taken but a step when Werper pulled the trigger.

Without a moan the man sank to the rough planking of the veranda, and as he fell the mists that had clouded Werper's brain lifted, so that he saw himself and the deed that he had done in the light that those who must judge him would see them.

He heard excited exclamations from the quarters of the soldiers and he heard men running in his direction. They would seize him, and if they didn't kill him they would take him down the Congo to a point where a properly ordered military tribunal would do so just as effectively, though in a more regular manner.

Werper had no desire to die. Never before had he so yearned for life as in this moment that he had so effectively forfeited his right to live. The men were nearing him. What was he to do? He glanced about as though searching for the tangible form of a legitimate excuse for his crime; but he could find only the body of the man he had so causelessly shot down.

In despair, he turned and fled from the oncoming soldiery. Across the compound he ran, his revolver still clutched tightly in his hand. At the gate a sentry halted him.

Werper did not pause to parley or to exert the influence of his commission—he merely raised his weapon and shot down the innocent black. A moment later the fugitive had torn open the gates and vanished into the blackness of the jungle, but not before he had transferred the rifle and ammunition belt of the dead sentry to his own person.

That night Werper fled further into the heart of the wilderness. Now and again the voice of the jungle brought him to a listening halt; but he did not know him.

Werper nodded. "I have heard of Tarzan," he said. "Now and again the voice of the jungle brought him to a listening halt; but he did not know him."

Both were tall and bearded, and the exposure to the sun and wind had given almost an Arab hue to the European.

"You have heard of the man men call Tarzan?" he asked.

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