

THE STORY OF PRINCE PEECHIPERL AND THE DEVIL-DOCTOR.

PANCOQUIN was King of Bongo, which, as all the world knows, is situated in Equatorial Africa, within twelve days' journey of the Gaboon river. Pancoquin was vastly rich. His palace of mud-plastered reeds stood in the centre of the town, and so high was it that a tall man standing on the shoulders of another tall man could scarcely see over the roof; while such was its capacity that, besides accommodating the oven, and the cooking-pots, and the king's bamboo bedstead, there was sufficient space within its walls to seat thirty persons comfortably. Nor was it simply on account of its size that the house of the king was distinguished from the pigmy and shabby residences of his subjects; for whereas the doorways of the latter were closed merely with a hanging mat of dried grass, the king's doorway was covered with a curtain of leopard's skin, while suspended just above were fourteen skulls in a double row, and springing from their midst a sheaf of spears. When, however, this is spoken of as the king's house, it must not be imagined that he possessed no other. In point of fact, no one else in Bongo had a house—no, nor a cooking-pot, nor a measure of grain, nor a single yam; one and all and everything, from one end to the other of Bongo, belonged to King Pancoquin: there were the skulls and the spears on his roof-top to prove it. But he was a generous king, and seldom or ever turned his subjects out of their houses, or took away the whole of their yams or grain.

Besides the palace, however, there was one other building specially devoted to the king's use. This, indeed, was a prodigious building, and the marvel not only of the Bongons, but also of the Chekianas and the Oshebans, who were the cleverest people in the world, and knew the secret of how to make iron into all sorts of useful shapes—into spear-heads, and ankle-rings, and brain-hatchets for the warriors, and into bowls in which the women pounded corn with a stone. Clever even as were these people, they were never known to fail, when they came to Bongo with their wares, to stand in

awe when the king pointed out, from a distance, this prodigious building, and to lift up their hands, and ejaculate, wonderingly, "Iritába!" which in their language signifies a mountain.

In truth, it was a mountain. Large as was the king's palace, this other place, which stood in the rear of it, and was strongly inclosed by a paling of spiky sticks, was, at the very least, three times as big, three times as high, three times as broad, and three times as long. It was not so handsome a building as the palace, as its roof was very uneven, and covered with shapeless lumps and humps, occasioned by hasty patching in the rainy season, when the wet was found to have gained an entrance. Besides this, it lacked the leopard-skin curtain, and instead of it there was a black cloth, with all sorts of signs and shapes painted on it of a yellow colour. A little child might have burst its way through this flimsy door, but, in the eyes of the people of Bongo, it was as impregnable as a door of double iron; nay, even more so; for the tremendous wealth the black cloth concealed might have tempted even honest folk than the Bongons to try their skill at breaking a door of iron; but a door crowded with fetish marks, contact with only one of which would strike them with some awful disease, or dead at once, perhaps, was quite a different matter. So very strong was this fetish door that it seemed superfluous that those two Bongo warriors, with their clubs swinging in their hands, should always be parading to and fro before it. As to the potency of the fetishes, no one could doubt that, for over the doorway were as many skulls as a hundred men could furnish—a hundred wicked men, doubtless, who from time to time had been discovered by the fetishes lurking suspiciously near to the king's treasure-house.

For so it was. Not that its contents were King Pancoquin's sole accumulations: no one king could hope to save such vast treasure in the space of a lifetime. His great-uncle, who had ruled over Bongo seventy years before, had first built the treasure-



SEQUINISTA EXHAUSTED, SINKS TO THE GROUND IN HER PURSUIT OF PRINCE PEECHIPERL.

house; and, as he did not scruple to kidnap even his own subjects, and pack them off to the slavers lying in the Gaboon, he managed, in the course of a long and prosperous life, to stock the treasure-house at least half-full. Then he died, and the nephew who reigned in his stead, although much more given to lying on his royal back and smoking tobacco than to trading, still managed to make some important additions to the treasury, including a case of looking-glasses, for which he had bartered seventy slaves, men and women. When he died, and King Pancoquin took his place, trade in Bongo was revived, and the treasure-house grew full to the threshold. It was calculated that King Pancoquin was worth as many beads as would have filled five barrels, and such a stock of elephant tusks, ostrich plumes, and leopard skins as would have bought nearly another barrelful—to say nothing of the case of looking-glasses and a lot of brass pots, twenty rolls of chintz, three hundred bows, with sheafs of arrows to match, a thousand spears and brain-hatchets, and enough of grain to sustain Bongo for full a year.

Yet, and despite his enormous wealth, King Pancoquin was dying, and lay extended on his bamboo bedstead, with the slaty paleness of death settling on his ebony face, with the dew of the morning of new life to which he was passing bathing his brow, and with his aged fingers plucking at the hairs of his leopard skin counterpane.

Truly, he was dying of sheer old age, for he was verging on sixty; and that, in a country like Bongo, where so much rum is consumed, was old indeed. But neither the king, nor his thirty-nine wives, nor his medicine-man, nor his gree-gree-man, believed that the death approaching was natural. Like many other remote people, the Bongons were very thick-skulled, and could not understand that death could be natural. "Nature is a live thing, not a dead thing," said they; "it is Nature's business to preserve and renew; Death is the Devil; the Devil has many servants—some in the flesh, some in the spirit. In one shape or the other, the Devil, through his agents, was now persecuting King Pancoquin."

At first it was thought that it was disembodied imps that plagued his majesty, for he complained of sore bones, and a something

tickling him inside, and making him cough. With praiseworthy promptitude, when his relations heard him describe his symptoms, they sent at once for what we should call the court physician, but whom the Bongons know as "Ouganga," or devil-doctor. Neither was his dress such as is customarily worn by our physicians. King Pancoquin's physician was a middle-aged man, very tall and very lean, with a sharp, bold eye, and a general appearance of being a cool, cunning man. He wore a white mask, with a large crimson dab on each cheek; his eyebrows and the upper part of his nose were painted the same colour; while two rings of vivid green, a lesser ring within a larger, appeared on his nose's tip. His forehead was banded with yellow, and across it, from ear to ear, was suspended a row of little bells; and above these, again, was a headdress, composed chiefly of long alligator's teeth, and feathers, and blades of flowering grass, and the stiff hairs of the elephant. Perched atop of his head, cowl-fashion, was a monkey skin, to which the tail was still attached, and hung down behind, terminated by a bell, and oscillating like a pendulum. Round his waist he wore a cloth of native grass, festooned with the teeth of various animals; and in his hands he carried a drum, made of a sort of rough wooden bowl, with a dressed monkey skin stretched over the top, and a heavy drumstick.

The physician was informed of the king's complaint, and at once expressed his opinion that his majesty was afflicted with inward imps, and that unless they were driven out he would not answer for the consequences.

"Which imp is it that plagues you most?" asked the doctor.

"This one," replied the king feebly, laying his hand on his chest; "he won't let me sleep; he claw, claw with his finger, and whisk about his hairy head just at my breathing-place, and make me hack and spit, oh! most dreadful. Ahack! ahick! uick! Take him away, please, or I shall die."

With a look of confidence the doctor proceeds to business. First of all he drives out all the king's wives, who, up to this time, had been unanimously raising their thirty-nine voices in most melancholy cadence; for, as he averred, such sounds delighted the

devil, and encouraged him to persevere in his torment. Then, when the palace was cleared, he squatted on the bamboo bedstead, close by the king's head, and, placing his drum on the king's chest, commenced to hammer on it with the drumstick as hard as he could, at the same time chanting a monotonous and full-chested tune. But, somehow, even such powerful medicine was unequal to the task of banishing the imp that was tickling his majesty's lungs; and the harder the doctor hammered the more King Pancoquin coughed and wheezed. At last, from sheer exhaustion, and with perspiration bursting from every pore, the doctor laid down his drumstick, and, calling in the king's wives and courtiers, explained to them that, after all, he found himself mistaken—that it was an imp in the flesh and not in the spirit that was tormenting the king—in short, that some one dwelling in Bongo had been setting in action against the king the frightful machinery of witchcraft!

At this intelligence the wives and the courtiers looked aghast, especially as King Pancoquin—whose fading senses were suddenly roused at the words of the devil-doctor—glared about him vengefully. No one questioned the truth of the doctor's judgment; least of all the king, who was justly indignant that he should be reduced to this miserable strait through the malice of some contemptible dog among his people, whose life he could snuff out by a snap of his fingers. Beckoning his chief wife, by her assistance he raised himself to a sitting posture.

"Is it so?" yelled he in his thin, shrill old voice. "Am I so despised by my people that so vile a thing shall happen without inquiry? I charge you, my kinsmen—I charge you, Ouganga—I charge you specially, my nephew, Quicayman, to see to this! Find the wretch who has done this! find him! burn him! and blow away his vile dust!"

With loud acclamations the men addressed declared the miscreant should be found and punished as the king desired.

"Even though it prove to be Quicayman himself shall he suffer," spoke the devil-doctor. "Ay, or even the king's favourite son and approved successor, Peechiperl."

"Good, good!" ejaculated the savage old

king, and then he lay down, and was for the space of a minute quite quiet; but presently he began to make strange movements and stranger noises, so that his wives and courtiers knew that Death must be hovering near to the bamboo bedstead, and, for fear of seeing him, or even, perhaps, feeling the clap of his wings, they ran out crying and shrieking, leaving nobody but the devil-doctor, who, when he had covered King Pancoquin's face decently with the leopard's skin, called them to come back, for that the king was dead.

Now, it will be proper here to observe that, according to the Bongon custom, the king is empowered to appoint his successor, to whom is bequeathed not only the throne but also the whole of the treasure stored in the treasure-house; therefore to be King of Bongo was to be very rich as well as very powerful. Despite, however, the royal privilege of choosing an heir, during the past three dynasties the dying king had appointed his eldest nephew to reign in his stead. But King Pancoquin, who was a man of peculiar whims, had declared that the ancient form should now be broken, and that the eldest son of his favourite wife should inherit his crown, and not his eldest nephew. Now the eldest son of his favourite wife was Peechiperl, and his eldest nephew—a grim, ambitious warrior—was Quicayman. Ever since the king's health had begun to fail him the devil-doctor and Quicayman had been very intimate, so that the Bongons began to wonder what it meant; but as it was generally known that the warrior had recently purchased a new brain-hatchet of the Oshebans, it was concluded that his frequent visits to the doctor were for the necessary purpose of having that weapon charmed. As will be presently seen, however, the companionship involved much more serious ends.

Again, it may be proper here to state that Quicayman had a daughter, the most beautiful creature in Bongo, and partaking of nothing of her father's character but in the matter of dignity of mien and unswerving courage. Sequinista and Peechiperl had known and loved each other from infancy almost, and it was generally understood throughout the kingdom that, one of these days, the handsome couple would become

one. Old King Pancoquin had been aware of the attachment; indeed, knowing how sore his nephew Quicayman was on the subject of the sovereignty, he was wont to comfort him with the hint that a man whose daughter was queen should himself be little less equal in power to the king himself. But it was to be nothing less than a king that Quicayman aspired; and though he appeared to bow dutifully to the king's decision, his thoughts never for a moment wandered from the object he was resolved to attain.

Finding that Pancoquin was really dead, they set about his funeral obsequies. They dug a deep hole in the centre of the palace floor, and squatted him in it with his chief weapons, and his pans and cooking-pots, above, below, and around him. They filled his mouth with meal, and gave him a double-handful of smoked elephant meat, that he might not be hungry; and in order that his ghost might not be able to find its way into the world again, they cunningly blindfolded the defunct king with a strip of tough hide. Then they covered in the grave, and razed the palace to the ground; and then brought faggots of wood that the devil-doctor had charmed, and strewed them above the king's grave and fired the heap, and when it was nearly burned out they poured among the glowing embers measures of corn, and stirred it till it was well parched, and then ashes and parched corn were collected, and it was called the dust of the dead king, and every Bongan in Bongo was compelled to swallow a pinch of it, while at the same time he acknowledged the purity of the late king's life, and the wisdom he had displayed in appointing his successor, whom they swore to obey.

This ceremony at an end, came another equally grave and important—who had bewitched King Pancoquin to death? Knowing his innocence, and not for a moment doubting that whatever ordeal the devil-doctor might appoint it would be a just one, and bring confusion on no one but the culprit himself, every man in Bongo was eager for trial, and loud in his cries for vengeance on the wicked witch who had destroyed the king.

Now, being altogether as innocent of the king's death as any one in the realm, Peechiperl was eager as the rest to know at whose

door the crime lay, and, no doubt, according to his savage belief and his savage nature, would have been among the foremost to see full justice done on the culprit. He had not yet taken the throne, thinking that it would be better that all matters concerning his late father should first be settled. Besides, there was no occasion for hurry; only on the afternoon, as it were, of to-day, as the ordeal was to take place to-morrow, the doctor had been to see him and condole with him on his father's untimely end.

"Concerning to-morrow's ordeal?" asked the devil-doctor. "Is it your intention, O my prince, to submit to it?"

"Ay!" replied Peechiperl readily. "I shall take my turn with the rest; not a man in Bongo shall escape it; even yourself, Ouganga, must undergo the ordeal."

"Most willingly, O prince," replied the devil-doctor; "the ordeal is but a simple one—the holding on the outstretched hand of a brimming calabash. The hand of the honest is steady and confident, and the water will not spill; it is only the hand of the guilty that trembles."

"True, Ouganga," replied the young man thoughtfully; "but is not grief as potent as guilt to cause a man's heart—and so his limbs—to waver? Can I, or any of my father's close kinsmen, behold all Bongo assembled, and know that in the crowd his murderer is, for certain, without being moved?"

"My prince," replied the devil-doctor in a low whisper, "it is that that brings me here; it is *not* fair that you, trembling under your recent load of sorrow, should be submitted to the water test—that is, unless you are fortified against accident. Take you, then, this powder," continued the devil-doctor, taking from his necklace a little packet bound in a leaf, "swallow it at once, and by to-morrow, were the calabash of red-hot iron, you should hold it without flinching!"

"Nay," replied Peechiperl, "I am not a woman, to need such bolstering; if my——"

"Pardon me, my prince," interrupted the devil-doctor; "I may, in confidence, tell you that even your doughty kinsman Quicayman has already swallowed the powder."

"Very well, then," observed the prince; "I think, after that, I may venture to take it."

So he swallowed it on the spot.

But, alas! scarce an hour had passed when he found reason to regret his blind confidence in the devil-doctor; for at the end of that time his betrothed Sequinista came to him, pale and breathless, to report that she had just before overheard such fragments of a conversation between her father and the devil-doctor as made her heart quake for the morrow.

"The ordeal need not be, O my prince and lover!" said she, "for the victim is already doomed. It is yourself, dear Peechiperl, who will have to atone for your father's death, so that Quicayman may reign in your stead, with the Ouganga for his head man."

When Peechiperl heard this, and by further questioning her as to the fragments of the conversation she had heard, he was much surprised.

"My light of life," said he, "you must be mistaken, for but an hour since the Ouganga was here, with comfort for my mind and medicine for my body, that to-morrow I might show manfully to my people."

"And did you swallow his medicine?" asked Sequinista with painful eagerness.

"I did."

"Then indeed you are lost," said the maiden, falling on his neck and kissing him tenderly, "for but just now did I hear the devil-doctor say to my father, 'Fear not the result, my future king; to-morrow he will shake like a thistle in the wind.'"

For a minute Peechiperl was mute with rage, but presently finding speech, he took from the wall two of his strongest spears, and, addressing Sequinista, said—

"Show me where I may find these two traitors to my father's memory; let me, at least, before my hand begins to shake, do one last act of just vengeance."

But Sequinista, more that she feared for her lover's than her father's life, dissuaded him from his purpose.

"You might, indeed, quarrel with my father to-day," said she, "and no one think it very strange; but should you now, just on the eve of the great ordeal, seek to hurt the Ouganga, it would be suspected that guilt had made you a coward, and that by such means you sought to evade the law. Let us rather set our minds to thinking how this wicked scheme may be made to miscarry."

After some pondering, Peechiperl started up, and said—

"My fetish has put into my head a scheme which, perhaps, may serve me. Go back to your father's house, Sequinista, quietly, and as though nothing was amiss; but, as you have eyes to see, and ears to hear, use them for my sake, and make note of all that may concern me, and tell it me when I meet you at sunset."

So Sequinista tearfully took her leave, and, as soon as she was gone, Peechiperl, who, though not yet absolutely king, was as well served almost as though he had been, struck the copper gong, and instantly there came to his door one of his late father's chief servants, who, having an eye to retaining his situation, was obsequious to the last degree.

"Carry these my words first to Quicayman, and then to the Ouganga: I wish to see them at once," was Peechiperl's order.

Now, while the messenger was gone, Peechiperl, to make sure that the baneful thing that the Ouganga had given him had not yet begun its work, made several trials of his hand's steadiness, and was rejoiced to find that his muscles, at present at least, retained all their natural vigour; nay, braced by his strong determination, his extended hand was so steady that, when he placed five large round beads, one on each of his fingertips, they stood there as securely as though they rested on the floor. At this sight Peechiperl was indeed delighted, and smiled grimly as he re-strung the beads on to his bracelet, and awaited the coming of Quicayman and the devil-doctor.

Presently he observed them coming down the road, walking slowly, and in close conversation; now and then turning to Peechiperl's messenger, as though to glean from him what could be his master's reason for sending for them. As they approached his door, Peechiperl assumed a confident and jovial air that still more astonished the two plotters.

"Good day, my cousin," said he to Quicayman.

"Good day, my future king," replied Quicayman, with an affectation of humility. "It pleases me to find you so happy, since it is not an hour ago our friend, the Ouganga here, informed me that you were not well."

"But did he not likewise tell you that he had given me medicine to cure my ailment?" asked Peechiperl, laughing. "Did he not tell you, O my cousin, that he had given me of the same precious powder he had already given you?"

"He has so informed me, my future king," replied Quicayman; "but—but only as we walked along hither."

"Nay, my kinsman need not be ashamed that so great was his grief at his uncle's death that he needed medicine to keep his nerves steady," observed Peechiperl with an ugly smile. "Indeed," continued he, "it was on the subject of that precious medicine that I have sent for you, though it would seem to have worked differently with my cousin than with myself; for whereas it has made me, as you may see, vigorous and strong, you are cast down, and, as I should judge, the worse for taking it. Are you quite sure, O great Ouganga, that his medicine was the same as mine? What was the flavour of your medicine, Quicayman?"

"A—a—strange flavour," stammered Quicayman; "a sort of bitter."

At this answer the Ouganga made a slight sound with his lips as of impatience, on which Quicayman continued—

"A sort of bitter-sweet flavour; at least, I could detect a bitterness in its sweetness."

"Was it rough and hard to swallow, or did it smoothly melt on your tongue?"

"It melted on my tongue," replied Quicayman with the boldness of despair.

"Ah! then it was not the same," said Peechiperl, "for my powder was sweet as honey, and did not melt at all. I wish that the good Ouganga had some more—it is so excellent."

Now the Ouganga, who had with him some more of the potent powder, was glad to hear Peechiperl make this last remark. Never before had he known it to fail, and that it had done so on this occasion was probably because that Peechiperl was a very strong and temperate young man. "But," thought the devil-doctor to himself, "if you can be brought to take another dose, I will warrant it is effective."

Said he, "It makes me glad to hear our future king speak so of my medicine, and it further rejoices me to be able to gratify his wish for another dose. Behold, O Prince

Peechiperl, here is at least double the quantity you just now took; may it do you as much good as the last!"

"Is it a scarce medicine?" asked Peechiperl.

"So scarce that, were I this instant to set about it, I could not, till to-morrow's sunset, compound as much as would cover the palm of the hand," replied the devil-doctor.

"Here, then, my cousin," said Peechiperl, turning to Quicayman; "had this precious medicine been plentiful, gladly would I have indulged in another dose of it; but since it is so scarce, and I am so well set up by it, I give it to you. Take it, Quicayman, that to-morrow your arm may be steady as a shaft of iron."

There was no help for it. If Peechiperl was a clever actor, Quicayman was a sharp observer, and from the very first he had foreseen that the prince suspected the honesty of the Ouganga. True, he might have refused to take the medicine on the score that he had already tried it, and found that it did not do him good; but such an excuse might have attached a taint to his reputation for courage, and, in addition to this, since the truth must be told, he was encouraged by a slight nod from the Ouganga; so, thanking the prince for his courtesy, he tilted the leaf containing the powder on to his tongue, and smacked his lips with apparent relish. After a few commonplace civilities had passed between them, the Ouganga and Quicayman took their leave, leaving Peechiperl alone.

Well was it they so soon took their departure, for had they remained in the prince's hut another quarter of an hour they must have discovered that the devil-doctor's magic powder administered to the young man had not failed to produce the effect desired. Gradually he felt an unaccountable prostration stealing over him; his whole body was troubled alternately with sudden heats and chills, and his muscles began to relax and soften like iron in a fierce fire. Plainly he foresaw that, if this continued, he should by the morrow be so reduced as to be unable to hold on his extended hand an empty calabash, let alone one brimming to its topmost edge with water. Nevertheless, he had the savage consolation of knowing that the treacherous Quicayman would presently be

brought to the same strait, and be as unable to endure the witch ordeal. And so he flung himself on his mat, that his body might have as much rest as possible.

Meanwhile, the two arch plotters hurried towards the hut of Quicayman, and, as they walked, they discoursed.

"The cunning imp of Satan!" said Quicayman. "He played his trick neatly. I almost regret that so excellent a cheat should be my mortal enemy. Lucky was it, O Ouganga! that the medicine was of your own make, and that you know its antidote."

"In that you are mistaken, O Quicayman!" quietly replied the devil-doctor. "The earth does not furnish an antidote to the sweet powder that makes men shake."

When Quicayman heard this he was eaten up with rage, and, handling his iron-shod club menacingly, he turned on the Ouganga, exclaiming—

"Dare you tell me so, thou crocodile spawn? Thou son of the great ape, am I, then, so deceived?"

"It is even so," replied the devil-doctor; "and, even were it otherwise, I would withhold it; for am I not an Ouganga, and the son of a race of Ougangas, reading men's hearts, and knowing their most secret thoughts? This young man has offended me as well as yourself, and if you will have a little patience, you shall see how his own weapon shall be turned against him, and how he shall perish miserably, and Quicayman yet rule over Bongo."

But Quicayman was a suspicious man, and the promise the devil-doctor made only half-convinced him.

"Mystery talk never was to my mind," said he, "and least of all is it now. What weapon is it that shall be turned on him and destroy him?"

"Your daughter," calmly replied the devil-doctor.

"Sequinista?"

"Even while we were in the prince's hut," said the Ouganga, "did I see her eagerly watching from a distance, and, as we came out, I saw her fitting off. Moreover, the messenger who summoned us told us that no one had visited the prince throughout the day but Sequinista."

"Curse her and all women!" replied the

savage chief, sending a great patch of bark flying from a tree by a blow of his club.

"She shall die for this!"

"But first she shall kill Peechipperl," said the devil-doctor.

This, too, was mystery talk, but Quicayman, looking at the Ouganga, and seeing the expression of his countenance, was satisfied to continue the walk without asking for an explanation.

Presently they arrived at Quicayman's hut, which was deserted save by one person, for the women were in the forest getting wood, or a little way from the hut pounding corn. The one person within the hut was Sequinista.

"I have business with the good Ouganga," said her father. "Leave us together, my daughter."

So Sequinista went out, and as she did so the Ouganga whispered to Quicayman to evince no sort of surprise at anything he might say or do. For a minute or so he neither said nor did anything, until, looking furtively round the hut, he presently was aware of what he was sure would happen—the covering of a chink in the wall by a pair of human eyes; and then said he, taking from his medicine-bag a little ball of something like red wax—

"Since we are quite alone, O Quicayman! now will I provide you with the means of balking the spite of Prince Peechipperl. This little ball, swallowed whole as it is, will make of you a sound man, whatever may have happened before. Do not swallow it, however, till you lie down to rest; and, that you may not risk losing it meanwhile, let us place it, wrapped up as it is, in this little hole above the doorway."

Only that the devil-doctor had so earnestly enjoined Quicayman to show no surprise, however much he might feel, it is likely he would have protested against so strange a course; but, as it was, he simply thanked the Ouganga, and shortly after they went out together. As they strolled away into the wood, said the devil-doctor—

"Unless I have become a fool, and forgot what sort of nature a woman has, our business is as good as settled."

Alas! the wily Ouganga was only too correct in his calculations.

No sooner were her father and his com-

panion fairly out of sight, than, quickly and softly as a bird, she flitted round to the front of the hut, entered the door, and in an instant possessed herself of the precious little red ball that would make a man well, whatever ailed him before. With the speed of the wind she hurried to the hut where poor Peechiperl reclined, growing worse as the subtle white powder got firmer hold of him.

"My own affianced, my lovely prince," said she joyously, "I bring you good news. I bring you what will make you well, and able to meet and confound your enemies."

And while he sat amazed, she told him the whole story, and when he had heard it it were hard to say which most filled him, admiration for the courage and devotion she had displayed in obtaining the red bead, or triumph at its possession. Without the least suspicion he swallowed it.

"Now," said he, "it will not be safe for you to return to your father's house. Hide you till the morrow in the forest; never fear but that I will find you; and then we will return together, and you shall be declared my wife—the chief wife of the king—in presence of my subjects assembled."

So, full of confidence, she went her way, and hid in a part of the forest which, though secluded, she knew was not unknown to the young prince; while he, feeling suddenly inclined for sleep, closed his door and lay down again.

It might almost be said that he slept and never awoke again; that is, the handsome, even-minded Prince Peechiperl never awoke again; there, however, about an hour before midnight, when the silence of death enveloped the town, and every Bongon's door was as fast as thongs could make it—there arose from the mat in Prince Peechiperl's hut a being with eyes bright as live coals, for all that his limbs twitched and quivered,

and his knees smote each other with a force so full of strong brute life that a tiger might have shrunk from before it. Most horrible dreams had this poor wretch suffered; but so powerful was the sleep that held him to them, that he could not till now break away. Now, however, he was free, and with a great cry of mad exultation—such a cry as reached through the silent town from end to end—he shook himself and sprang out of the hut that was so full of horrors, and ran swifter than man ever ran before. He ran straight on as a mad dog does, leaping impediments that in a sane mood he would never have ventured on—straight on, till he reached the forest, and even there his speed scarcely diminished, for he wound through the straggling trees as though he had been an ape, and born there.

On, with no abatement of fury, till he reaches a spot more secluded than the rest, and then the bright moon revealing his form, a cry came from the thicket uttering his name, and imploring him to stay.

But, although Peechiperl passed within a pace of the affrighted Sequinista, he never heeded her, but bounded on, and she in his rear, crying his name, and running, and falling, and bruising her tender body against the thorn-trees, and up and running again, till, as she paused to listen, he had gained such ground that no sign of him could be heard. Still, urged by despair, she shouted again, and kept on and on all through the night till the morning. Still she did not rest, but hot, bruised, and thirsty, toiled along, till, at last, utterly worn out, and with no more life in her than enabled her to give one last cry for Peechiperl, she sank down. And full a month had passed ere her bones were found by the servants of King Quicayman, whose head man, the Ouganga, had caused Prince Peechiperl to be driven to madness and death.