

PARK III

ONCE his emotions under control, Park unfolded the map. He looked for the place where he supposed himself to be; and at the point found a red dot. It was Svillig's doing; for here and there were translations into Latin, in his handwriting, of the unintelligible words engraved. The country in which the dot appeared was called *Regio principis Ednæ*. Kottatil, on both sides of the Severn estuary, was marked: *urbs nostra*. London was in the Hertfordshire direction and called Ito. The whole of Devon and Cornwall was forest; and, so far as the map showed—for a word crossed it firmly in heavy characters which Svillig had translated *conclusa*—quite uninhabited. The whole, saving these explanations, was one bewilderment of straight lines, ragged forms and unknown signs.

Park stared at it all sadly: but brightened when he saw in the minute script, somewhere about Lincolnshire, the words *Villa gracilis* indicating a small property.

As he folded the map Cuan came in and he asked him the time. The man pointed to a horizontal scale on which an indicator was moving clock-wise to the right. The bar had six great divisions, which equalled together a third of the solar day. When the indicator reached its course, it ran back with a distinctive murmur, not to zero, but to the first of the strokes representing the smallest sub-division (for it took just the time of one 'second' to run). The result was that, when the indicator stood midway on the scale, the time was (in our horology) noon, eight in the evening, or four in the morning. At the moment it wanted about a division to noon.*

*This is one example of the discord between Wafama numeration and that which prevails in the world in the twentieth cen-

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Park worked a long hour extracting from the dictionary a Bapama-English vocabulary; with frequent questioning of Cuan when he was present.

For Cuan was busily doing housework. He had a subordinate whom he kept out of sight, perhaps to spare Park the mortification of seeing a pale man in a menial position. Cuan did not mean too much by it when he said ng' on n'tha.

At noon he told Cuan to call Monsignor Villa.

With the most charming mixture of politeness and familiarity the speaker talked over with Park the events of the day, the contents of the box, the beauty of the season, the miseries of life.

You were at the high mass at the martyrs?

Is the martyrs a big church as churches go?

Well, yes. Did you recognize the assistant priest? I saw you; but I have uncommon eyesight.

Much, if not quite all, is very strange to me.

Tell me, Drak, have you everything you wish?

No. Park heard him laugh.

Of course not. Is there anything we can do for you?

You mean relatively small things?

Yes.

Well, Svillig, I need to be shaved.

Ah, precisely; that is a point. We want you to grow a beard. Please do not be grieved.

I am sorry.

We shall try to make it up to you for that and other inevitable sorrows. How old are you?

59.

Ah.

My beard will be grey if only with age.

Ah.

ture, its intricacies will be shunned in this relation, and precision often sacrificed to a general intelligibility. The Wapami use the week of seven days and lunar months. Spare days are dies non and extra festivals.

Blackfriars

What did you say?

Are your parents living? Park could not answer.

Drak, I am an imbecile. I would come to see you, but the order is strict.

Do get permission and come.

You are to come here at the earliest possible moment. A condition is that you know quite a good deal of Bapami. I will try to send you a tutor. Stare at the blue plate.

The vision was not Svillig, but an old man with infinite wrinkles on his kind face, and a tiny fluff of white hair. Park showed his surprise; and from the expression on the plate he knew that the vision was mutual. The old man made a casual gesture of benediction and disappeared.

The vicar-general, said Svillig, Vale.

NO ONE could wish Park to recall the miseries of weeks which followed. The tutor soon appeared. He was a religious and aged. He had the ways of a Cistercian. His principal business remained prayer, God reward him; and his pupil profited by his example in this particular. His duty of tutoring Park he seemed to regard as a species of agriculture or forestry. Whenever the pupil attempted a distraction he would resume with vigour and authority:

Pay attention to the passive: it is most irregular: and perhaps for that reason little used by the uneducated.

Or:

Mind the dual of this noun: it is very peculiar. Or: Quick, stir your brains, give me the accusatives; look alive: gaping nostrils, odd ears (wrong, get it right), bandy legs (come on), short stilts, an unequal marriage, blind twins, ugly brother and sister, quarrel between friends, blue eyes, a one-legged man.

ON ALL SOULS' day—and he detected some dim allusion to release from purgatory in the selection of this for his first introduction to men at large—he went

to a great cemetery where Svillig, whom he had often seen surreptitiously, introduced him to a multitude of people.

At sundown began a booming bell. All stood uncovered, reciting, inter se, the *De profundis* with incredible slowness. The psalm and the bell stopped simultaneously.

There is a foundation near here, said Svillig, where, by special and ancient indult, mass for the dead is said continuously; do you grasp my meaning?

I think so.

And nobody knows (except, of course, a cob-web of erudition like you) why.

It drives me nearly mad . . . Park was beginning. Svillig hated reminiscences; and always detected them before they were born.

It doesn't matter, said he.

Yes it does, answered Park.

It does not, he rejoined; for all pale men are on the verge of madness; and (as you would say) discourse is wasted on certainties; and he laughed his irresistible laugh.

Come along, said he; there's a jolly supper, goslings and cider.

I say, where do we stay to-night?

That's good too; we're staying with a doctor.

What of?

Medicine, he said, with a look of feigned innocence. I won't say who it is, as I should like you to get a shock.

I don't know one doctor from another.

You soon will.

THERE WAS nothing but a gentleman of scientific eminence in Koti Ra; every sign of perfect breeding and new acquaintance marked his welcome.

I have for some reason, Drak, said he, been appointed president of this commission.

Blackfriars

Svillig seemed sometimes to have a power of moving the pupils of his eyes, and did it now.

Koti addressed his two guests, now both, now one, now the other.

I have thought of different places : perhaps you will advise me. It had better I think be on the surface ; not so convenient perhaps, but desirable.

Svillig was assenting.

The Dominican convent has a good chapter room ; it's frightfully inconvenient, but the speaking room adjoins it. We shall have to rig up a lot of furniture ; for there's only one seat and that's all round the wall ; and A Ra himself is not allowed to sit in the prior's stall. They have a private descent ; but it's always out of order. They might be glad to have it put in repair. Svillig gave a huge laugh, and it infected the other two.

I thought, he went prosing on, that, if we started the examination at once, it might suggest to our distinguished subject an impression of informality in what we do, and rather screen from his notice the strictly scientific aims of the commission and the oppressive stringency of the commands under which we are acting.

Do you mean . . . Svillig began.

Yes, I have asked two of my colleagues. We could do a bit of examination. You could make notes for the protocol. You are a physician, aren't you ? Afterwards we could all have a pleasant evening.

Drak by temperament could hardly put out his tongue or bare his arm for vaccination. But he started to strip, and, as no one forbade him, he continued. He was introduced naked to the two other doctors.

They measured, examined and pulled him about for an hour, making only their own observations to one another. Then one of them handed him one of his

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garments, and he dressed slowly, out of suppressed irritation, while they whispered together.

Capital patient, said Koti Ra. Park perceived his good intention of apology and dropped his bad temper.

We were wondering at your athletic and beautifully proportioned body. You have taken good care of yourself. You have only lost four teeth.

The old man took one of his hands, looking at it like a connoisseur, verifying its thinness and firmness and the position of the thumb.

Finger nails on the small side, he remarked. How old are you?

Park determined to be courageous, and answered : 59 (in Latin ; as Bapami knows no such numeral). Horrible silence.

Gentlemen, said Koti Ra authoritatively ; 59 what?

Solar years. Renewed silence. Koti Ra compressed his lips and asked :

And how many days?

Park calculated and answered :

245. That is, he added, in decimal numeration.

He thought it possible that it was in order to relax tension that Koti Ra asked with polite curiosity :

Decimal numeration? You used that?

Yes.

I wonder what could have been the origin of that. (Svilig was turning over the leaves of a book.) Come ; let's have supper ; and talk merrily like five old friends.

(To be Continued).

JOHN GRAY.