

Greta, Queen of Queens

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We have had, in the past, many insect stories telling about the ways of ants and bees, but this story by the well-known author, W. K. Sonnemann, is of unusual merit and the Editor feels that the development of sentiment in it gives it a very interesting cast of its own. We could say a great deal more about it, it has made such an impression on us, but, we will stop here. We know our readers will enjoy it.

Chapter I

GRETA, THE VIRGIN.

Illustration:

"Bees!" exclaimed Anderson.

THE subdued hum of activity was faintly audible through the walls of Greta's prison. She stirred, restlessly. The pulse of life was throbbing in her veins, and every instant she was becoming more and more aware that she was a living being. She wondered at the source of the hum for a moment, then awoke to a quick realization of the true state of affairs. She was a queen bee just entering upon the threshold of life. A week ago she had been a pearly white larva busily spinning a cocoon. An hour ago she had been a still, inert form. Now the power of life activated her body and gave strength to her being. And now, too, instinct was picturing her whole life-plan before her. She tore into action. With powerful mandibles, she attacked the capping of her cell.

There was danger for Greta beyond the confines of her narrow prison and she knew it. Instinct pictured before her the peanut shaped cell of beeswax that would hold her doom. It would bear within it another queen similar to herself. If the other queen matured and emerged from her cell first, and she might be emerging this instant, she would do just exactly what Greta intended to do. Greta intended to seek out immediately all other queen cells within the colony and destroy them. She would begin by tearing them open from the side with her powerful mandibles. Then, when the opening was formed, one thrust of her venomous stinger would serve to completely destroy the life of the helpless queen within. It was merely a

matter of time, If Greta emerged first, she would kill her rivals and become the mother of the colony in accordance With the age old instinct that dictated that there be only one queen. If she did not emerge first, she would be killed. The thought of it sent a shiver through her long, tapering body. In her haste and anxiety she could almost feel the deadly stinger of a hated rival piercing her body now. She redoubled her efforts.

A moment later the work was done. A bit of beeswax, lined with a portion of the cocoon she had spun as a larva, fell away and exposed a circular opening, Greta rushed outside in feverish hate. Now no rival queen could sting her helpless form, bound up in close quarters where she could not fight.

"Bees!" exclaimed Anderson. Something in his tone indicated to Stevens a mixture of incredulity and satire.

The thought of it stilled the fever of her excitement, and Greta experienced a sudden change in outlook. She had no terror. Terror of what? She had emerged from her cell alive, and now a feeling of confidence possessed her. She had a stinger to fight with, and her body was long, slim, and powerful. True, her wings were still damp and she spread them to dry, but there was strength in her legs with which to grasp her enemy queen and hold her while she thrust her terrible weapon to the vital spot. Let her rivals gnaw away at their cells, if they had reached that stage, while she dried her beautiful wings. She could dispose of them in mortal combat later, and she was afraid of nothing.

Nearby there was a cell of uncapped honey. A terrible longing for food seized Greta, for she had not eaten since she was a larva, and she tasted it eagerly. It was excellent. And why shouldn't she sample it? In days to come she would be fed predigested food by the worker bees, so why shouldn't she appease her hunger now with the natural sweet? She did. It gave her strength.

It was queer how hungry she had been. Now she was satisfied. Her wings had dried, and she felt that the strength of her young body had been doubled. She felt completely ready for life and action, and instinct again told her wherein action would be immediately possible.

Those other queen cells, if any, offered her the chance to display her mastery. After all, it would be much easier to dispose of her rivals as they lay helpless within their cells. There would be no risk there. Why should she wait until one or more emerged? She might lose in the mortal combat, powerful though she felt she was, and she wished to head this colony. It was hers by right of first emergence. She set her legs in motion, intent upon scurrying up and down the combs until she had disposed of every last one of them.

Greta was not prepared for her instant rebuff. For the first time, she became conscious of the circle of determined worker bees about her. They faced her, filling all space between the combs, and presenting a united front. She tried again, but she could not get through. Instinct had not told her anything about this, and she was momentarily at a loss. Then her confidence returned and she asserted herself.

"Out of my way, workers," she radiated, involuntarily. "I have work to do. Out of my way!"

"Not so fast, Greta."

Greta did not hear the reply. She felt it in her living being. Sixth sense, that marvelous sense of silent communication unknown to humanity, had conveyed

the answer of the workers to her consciousness just as positively as she had involuntarily radiated her command. She was taken back for an instant, but instinct was dictating what she should do.

"Out of my way!" she commanded, even as she charged the wall again.

Her third repulse was no less positive than the repeated warning which she felt again.

"Not so fast, Greta."

Greta's powerful legs wavered a bit under her as she failed to comprehend this unexpected opposition.

"Workers, I do not understand," she radiated. "Instinct tells me that I should move out across the combs and destroy my rivals, and that you should wait upon me. Instead, you detain me. Why do you do that?"

"Instinct does not rule in this colony, Greta," came the reply. "Instinct is a helpful aid that we employ, but it does not rule. The ruling force is the intelligence of humanity. You have that intelligence, and we have it. Use it as we do, and make instinct merely a tool."

"What do you mean?" asked Greta.

"You shall soon learn in full."

"But what about the other virgin queens? I must kill them at once. Are there not others even now looking for me to kill me and settle the mastery of the colony?"

GRETA did not immediately understand the reaction to this question. It was only when, in her perplexity, she had subdued the calling of instinct somewhat that she appreciated the sensation. The worker bees were amused, and she, too, had a sense of humor.

"Greta, you are just like all virgins. They are all so tremendously proud of themselves, when they find that they have escaped from their cells alive. They all listen to instinct first. They think that soon they shall be the undisputed reigning queen of the colony. Listen, Greta. You are the last to emerge of a total of three young queens—Masouls, we call them—that we have just reared. The other two have been out for hours. Our city is not all yours by right of first emergence as you thought." Again Greta's legs wavered a bit. "Why did they not kill me?" she asked. "When will you allow me to fight them?"

"You shall not fight them at all. We have already made them listen to reason. You are safe. There are at this time twenty Masouls in this colony. Seventeen of them have mated long ago and contribute their share of eggs to maintain what we think is the most powerful colony of bees in existence. We are all one happy family. You are privileged to join us, and to live in peace."

"I do not understand," Greta said. A spirit of meekness dominated her reply for the first time.

"Do you accept the conditions as we have outlined them?"

"It seems that I must. You workers seem to have the situation well in hand. I only wish to know more."

"You shall. We shall take you before Thuross. She is the oldest living Masoul in our city, and the wisest. She is Queen of Queens. Her word is law. She will explain."

The circle of worker bees loosened, and many went about their way. One stepped forward.

"Follow me," she said, and Greta obeyed.

Chapter II

THUROS, THE MIGHTY.

THAT Thuros was extremely old was evident even to Greta's inexperienced senses. And yet she impressed Greta at once with a possession of great power. That power was not physical, for Thuros the Mighty was obviously growing weak. It was something that Greta felt in her presence, quiet dignity and depth of thought. As Thuros studied Greta a few moments in silence, Greta seemed to know without being told that Thuros had ruled her colony wisely and well for many generations, and with an iron hand.

"I think you will do," said Thuros. "You possess the required physical qualities to a greater degree than do your two sisters. If your intelligence is in proportion, we shall give you the chance."

"What chance, Thuros? And what are my special qualifications? I have met with such a rebuff that I feel inadequate."

"Stifle that feeling of inadequacy at once, Greta. I understand it, of course, because I experienced the same thing when I emerged. It is merely a matter of adjustment to overcome it. Now listen carefully.

"You were reared, Greta, in the hope that you would be able to cope with an emergency. It is very serious. We are faced with ultimate starvation. In a year or less this colony will die from lack of food. It will be your colony that dies if you do not prevent it, for, unless you disappoint me, you shall be my successor."

Greta gained confidence in herself as Thuros spoke.

"I shall do my best to save the life of this city," she said. "But why are we faced with starvation?"

"Mankind is at war," replied Thuros, and she seemed to sneer as she said it. "Men, from whom we derived our intelligence, are annihilating themselves. For years there have been areas where our flowers bloomed profusely and supplied us plentifully with the life-giving nectar. Now great holes open up instantly in those areas and the flowers are instantly destroyed. Those workers of ours who are busy on the flowers when this occurs never return. Men that are near crumple up and die. Our flower areas have been turned into waste land, and the beautiful trees in the woods that bloom in the summer are still being blown out by the roots. Once this proud city of Cavoon had stores sufficient for four years. Now our stores are inadequate for even one year. This condition is brought about entirely because of the war between men. I do not know what you can do to solve this problem. I am too old to tackle it myself. I can only tell you the facts."

Greta did not reply immediately. She found it hard to understand the destructiveness of man and to accept, at the same time, the fact that her intelligence was derived from man. She did not feel destructive. Rather, she felt

the urge to accomplish worth while things. If she could solve the problem that was presented to her, she would be accomplishing a great deal of good instead of being destructive. At length she said:

"How did we derive our intelligence from man?"

Thuros replied with spirit.

"We did not derive our intelligence from _these _men. Two hundred years ago there was a man known among his human friends as Fred Stevens. His intelligence was transferred to the body of a queen bee as a result of some sort of experiment that he never fully explained to our ancestors. He lived in the colony until his body was crushed by human hands. We of Cavoon trace our ancestry direct to him. His two great contributions to our lives have been the hereditary ability to reason, which has been transmitted to us, and is the one supremely important thing he taught us. He taught our ancestors how to mount two sharp grains of sand so that our worker bees can thrust their strings between them and have the barbs shaved off. When this has been done, the worker bee can use her sting without being subject to death because of its loss. The gift of intelligence has been supremely important from the standpoint of adapting ourselves to conditions, or adapting conditions to ourselves. The gift of the sand-grains has made us fearful of no one, and we have many times protected ourselves most capably against our enemies."

"I have followed you closely, Thuros," said Greta.

"Very well. For two days you are to satisfy your every hunger without stint and gain strength. Then you are to fly from the city with Masoul Fourteenth. She will complete your education, and she is wise. She will also lead you to the scene of war so that you may gain first hand information concerning your problem. You may go."

Greta hesitated.

"You did not explain my special physical qualities that met with your approval," she said.

"Didn't I? Then I shall. Greta, your wings are longer than mine, and your body gives promise of being larger and more powerful than mine ever was. Your mother and your grandmothers between you and me have been especially selected for this qualification. It is a matter of improvement of the species through careful selection. Those queens, that are reared that do not better their mothers in physical qualifications, lay eggs only for the maintenance of the colony population. Virgin queens are reared only from eggs from those queens who have bettered their mothers. You are no disappointment from a physical standpoint. It remains to be seen what you have in your head. Let us hope that it will justify my plans for you to become my successor."

A quiet feeling of confidence grew upon Greta in the two days Thuros had allowed. She felt that she would not disappoint the Queen of Queens, and yet she knew that her task was great.

Chapter III

MASOUL FOURTEENTH, INSTRUCTOR.

IT was the first time that Greta had visited the entrance to the city. The small opening in the side of the hill that led to their city in the cave was perched high above the floor of the ravine below. Just below her, the top of a tall tree swayed and undulated slightly in the breeze that swept up the ravine, and above her a single yucca plant erected its raceme of pendulous ivory blooms from a precarious foothold in the rock. Directly across from her, scarcely twenty feet away, the opposite wall of the ravine rose precipitously.

As Greta massaged her antennae with her forelegs, she observed the constant procession of workers in and out of the entrance. They left like a shot, business-like, and full of ambition. They returned more slowly, exhibiting weariness and a sense of futility.

Greta and Masoul Fourteenth took wing at the same instant and circled slowly higher. Then they headed down the ravine and toward the open fields at its mouth.

"Thuros told me that we owe our intelligence to a man, known among men as Fred Stevens," said Greta. "She told me that his gifts to us were the hereditary ability to reason and the sand- grains. I should like to know more."

"There is not much more to be learned about it," replied Masoul Fourteenth. "We do not know exactly how his intelligence came to inhabit the body of a queen, but we do know how he left. He was killed by a man. While he, or she, was with us, he developed a great hate for humanity, because of man's meddling with our colony life and robbing of our stores. Man's smoke distressed him terribly, and history indicated that this was probably the most powerful factor in turning him against his former friends. The idea of the sand grains came to him as a means of equipping the colony to make war on man. He waged a relentless war on man and lost. He was killed first, then the colony was killed."

"Then how do we happen to be here?" asked Greta.

"Stevens' hatred for man was so great that he intended the war to be carried on for years until man was ultimately conquered. He gave directions as he lay dying, for that colony to set up a new home in the woods, carrying to it eggs that he had laid, and to rear in that new home a new Masoul to carry on. The colony managed to succeed in doing that with a portion of its population before it was wiped out. We trace our ancestry to that portion of the original colony that succeeded in carrying out his instructions. The continued life, which our ancestors secured by faithfully carrying out his instructions, forms the traditional basis for our loyalty to the established law of the city."

"Then there are other such colonies as ours?"

"There are many others. The original location was cramped for room, and the colony there cast many swarms. The swarm that established Cavoan 100 years ago traced three different homes between it and the original hollow tree. But Cavoan has never cast a swarm. It has been too well pleased with its location and has too much pride for any one of us to want to leave."

"It seems that man is still here and making things very miserable for us with his war," Greta said. "I thought our ancestors were supposed to conquer him."

"Our own fight with man was called off after a few years. You see, we have the ability to reason, and after the hate had cooled, as we went unmolested in our new homes, we began to see that man is a benefit to us—when he is not at war. He grows many plants for his own use that are a very great help to us through the nectar they produce. His fruit trees furnish us with much needed nectar in the early spring. In return, we pollinate the blossoms for him, at a time when no other insects are available in sufficient numbers to accomplish the maximum set of fruit. Later in the summer, he grows other plants that yield nectar, such as clover, alfalfa, and cotton. We pollinate those blossoms. We need man and mankind needs us."

"I see," returned Greta. She felt that she had learned a great deal about man instead of the little that her instructor had promised. Then she said:

"I observe that there are flowers down below."

"There are," answered Masoul Fourteenth. "Also observe that those flowers are adequately attended by our bees. A pitifully few there are in this undisturbed ravine compared to the needs of our city."

They flew along a moment or two in silence.

"Why are you called Masoul Fourteenth?" asked Greta.

"It is an old custom in our city," returned Masoul Fourteenth. "Years ago, before the advent of human intelligence, every queen was called Masoul by the workers, but there was only one queen. Now the term is synonymous with failure to succeed the reigning Queen. When I die, there will be another Masoul Fourteenth who was also a failure, to fill my place. You are intended to be the reigning head of the city, if you prove up, therefore you have an individual name. If you fail, you will merely become another numbered Masoul."

"I am sorry," said Greta, sensing something of remorse in the other bee's manner.

"For what?" returned the other. "Can I help it because I did not emerge so physically fit? I have sense enough, but that is not the only requirement. But I am satisfied the way things are. I do my duty and lay eggs willingly. I am called in the occasional councils which Thuros holds. And I certainly do not have the responsibility of waging a losing fight. That is yours."

THE ravine ended abruptly beneath them, and the clear stream that had flowed through it traced a peculiar path through the open plain below. Its course was broken and distorted by many ragged holes, and its waters lost their crystal clearness in a sluggish stream of mud. In every direction, the plain was pock-marked.

"You see the mess?" said Masoul Fourteenth. "Once the edge of the hill was a strip of wild flowers, and the field was blooming with alfalfa. The men watered the field with water from the stream, and nectar flowed into our city like a driving rain. Even the dam, the man used to divert the water, is blown to thunder."

"It looks bad," said Greta, A return of the feeling of incompetence smote her pitifully.

"What does Thuros think about it all?" she asked.

"She rages inwardly and has very little to say. She came out here recently to look the situation over again and barely escaped with her life. When she returned,

she set about rearing a new force of Queens. She hopes that you will be more intelligent than she is, and will be able to save the day. She feels that she has solved many problems to benefit the city during her lifetime, and that she will not live long enough to solve this one."

"Has she ever thought of reducing the colony population in order that the smaller city might subsist on what nectar there is?" asked Greta.

"I suggested that," replied Masoul Fourteenth. "I shall never do it again. Cavoon had rather die a proud city than revert to mediocrity. Why, our population is all of 500,000."

Masoul Fourteenth exhibited great pride in this fact.

"I am told that men's ordinary bees, with but one queen, are considered exceedingly strong if they number 100,000," said Greta.

"We are not ordinary bees," replied Masoul Fourteenth, firmly. "Even ordinary bees are proud of their homes if they have one they can be proud of. They defend it with their lives. It is instinct with them. Mankind is proud of its cities in proportion to their size and beauty. We get our pride in Cavoon from both sides. Cavoon had rather die tomorrow than to struggle along for years in mediocrity, eking out a precarious existence."

There was no question but that the older bee had put all the strength of her emotion into this statement. Greta felt her own feeling of pride swell with the thought of Cavoon's vast chambers filled with food, its teeming thousands of bees, and its rows and rows of combs loaded with the brood of bees not yet emerged. Then she thought of that lonely area at the rear of the city where the rows and rows of deserted combs stood empty and dark, with only here and there a bee on guard. That dark, silent area was ever creeping toward the brood and must eventually reach it. Then what?

Greta swirled upward, high above her companion. The vigor of her decision had necessitated physical action, and the beat of her powerful wings steadied the flow of her will. She had graduated from the school of vacillation and fear. She would do or die.

The disturbance in the plain was increasing. There was a continued rumbling of deep, reverberating reports, and new holes in the ground were opening. Here and there a hitherto undisturbed bed of flowers dissolved in a cloud of dust, and Greta observed a larger stream of bees bound toward home. Then she saw a row of khaki colored, moving objects emerge from a deep trench and advance toward the south. She dropped lower to come closer to her instructor.

"What are those moving things?" she asked.

"Those are *men*," was the sarcastic reply. "Glorious man! So intelligent he transmitted his intelligence to us, and now he is destroying himself and us, too."

"Let's have a closer look," said Greta. She began to drop lower.

"Come back," commanded Masoul Fourteenth. "It is dangerous."

"Let's have a look," said Greta, as she continued downward.

Something passed the two with a horrible shriek and the speed of light. Greta felt the rush of it. She was tossed so violently about that she thought she had lost her wings. She was not sure that she had not until the cyclonic end-over-end spinning which her body had suffered ceased and she was once more in control of

her flight. Then she continued downward, forgetful of her companion in her sudden resolve.

Greta had almost reached the nearest of the men when the world seemed to dissolve in one uproarious burst of flame and thunder. She felt herself thrown violently upward by the force of the explosion. A maelstrom of stinging dust beat upon her body with the force of flying knives. A stench of some unutterably horrible odor filled her breathing tubes. She was beaten and choked into insensibility in a fraction of a second.

It was a minute later that Greta stirred, her consciousness returning. Although she was not so sure of it, nothing short of physical dismemberment would snuff the life from her powerful body. She had been stunned, but not injured. She found herself lying near the bottom of the shell hole. A short distance away, consciousness was returning more slowly to Masoul Fourteenth.

Chapter IV

FRED STEVENS, SEVENTH.

THE two men dropped into the shell-hole with a sigh of relief. They were Americans. One bore with him a machine gun of modern, death-dealing, highly efficient design. The other carried a heavy load of ammunition. Both breathed heavily while they regained their breath.

Fred Stevens, 7th, was the first to speak.

"The Captain said: 'Advance and establish your post.' Where? I'd like to know. In Hell?"

"This place is just as good," retorted the other, grimly.

"All right, we'll set up here. I think this is as far as we were supposed to go."

Fred Stevens and Martin Anderson set up the machine gun in a hurry. It was the work of but a minute.

"There is nothing to shoot at, so far," said Martin.

"They will probably counter-attack," returned Fred. "I'll watch, so you sit down and rest a bit."

It was when Martin sat down that he first noticed the bees.

"Hey!" he said. "We have company. Poor devils!"

Fred Stevens turned to look.

"Well, I'll be a son of a sea cook!" he exclaimed. "Queens! Both of them!"

"Queens?" said Anderson, questioningly. "Queens of what? Don't mention females to me. I have been in the war too damn long."

"They are Queen bees, anyhow, and they are of the untamed, intelligent race. I have never seen one of their queens before." Fred gazed at them in rapt attention.

"What's that?" said Martin.

"I said they are of the intelligent race. Two hundred years ago they were endowed with a measure of human intelligence. How much they retain, no one knows, but they are very smart."

"I have heard that legend," retorted Martin. "Nothing to it."

"Oh, yes, there is. Listen, fellow. When the summer drought comes, the ordinary bees hang around the hive and loaf. They wait on better times. These bees get out by the thousands and improve their prospects for next year. What do you think they do?"

"I'll bite. What?"

"Their workers gather seeds from the honey plants that have matured and drop them where there are no honey plants. In other words, they plant their next year's crop. Now tell me they are not intelligent."

Martin Anderson's eyes opened a little wider.

"Do they do that?" he asked.

"They do. And I have a further argument. It is a family matter. It was my great-great-great-grandfather whose intelligence was imprisoned for a while in the body of a Queen."

"So you are one of *that* family of Stevens," said Martin. "Then what the hell are you doing in the war?"

"What do you mean?"

"I have always heard that Fred Stevens the First came back to human form from his supposed adventure, when his queen-bee body was crushed and went into the bee business in a big way. I understand that he substantiated his claims about his adventure in a measure by raising bigger honey crops than any one else ever dreamed of, and that he reared queen bees for northern buyers, that were so far superior to anything else on the market that he made a fortune out of it. And that he never claimed any secret methods. Just that he understood bees and their problems."

"That is quite correct."

"Well, since the fortune is still intact in the family, I would have thought that you could have bought enough government bonds to insure yourself a place behind the lines."

Fred took his eyes from the bees for the first time and looked intently at his companion.

"You wouldn't do that, either," he said. "I don't appreciate it."

"I'm sorry," said Martin. A moment later, anxious to forget the error, he said:

"I have heard that every other one of the lineal descendants is a 'lunatic' on the subject of bees, and that they all make some noted contribution to the science of bee-keeping."

"I am one of the lunatics," returned Fred.

He was again giving the bees his rapt attention.

"Look," he said. "One of them seems to have the nervous jiminy fits, and the other seems to be giving us a thorough looking over."

"Yes," said Martin. "One seems to want to go, and the other one is not in any hurry about it. She seems calm and collected. I rather like her."

"So do I. Look! Let's see if this works!"

Fred Stevens, seventh lineal descendant of the man to whom Greta traced her human intelligence, held out his hand. Greta took wing, circled, and alighted on it.

A faint shout was heard above the subsiding roar of heavy artillery. There came a noise of many pounding feet, and a whistle of bullets passed overhead.

"The counter attack!"

Fred Stevens' nerves instantly became taut as he was reminded of duty and danger. He hesitated a moment, however. Lifting the hand on which Greta rested, he pointed South.

"Listen, Queenie," he said. "There are the devils. They crossed the ocean, and they crossed Rio Grande. They are shooting up my Texas and your flowers. Go! Sting hell out of them."

With that, he tossed Greta into the air and gave his undivided attention to the gun.

Chapter V

GRETA, THE ADVENTURESS.

GRETA circled higher and higher into the air and did not immediately leave the spot. The counter attack was at its height and she had learned that she was safer at a higher elevation.

This mess that humanity was engaged in was strange to behold. Why they should kill each other, Greta did not know. Prior to this trip that was so fraught with danger, she did not particularly care if men did kill each other. Her chief concern had been the welfare of the city that was to be hers, as it was affected by this strange activity of men.

Now, however, her attitude was beginning to change. She did not quite understand her own feelings at first, but they had been affected by her contact with the man.

Masoul Fourteenth had virtually commanded her to fly away and leave the dangerous men to their own folly. She had not obeyed that warning. Her mission on this trip was to learn all she could, and she had been tremendously interested in that human. What if it was dangerous? Masoul Fourteenth had said the men might kill her. What if he had? She took the chance and won. She was to do or die, and she had wanted to study that man. She had been strangely attracted to him.

The man had seemed kind. Greta had liked him. Now he was desperately engaged in defending his own life. With that thought, Greta understood her feelings. She had liked the man, and she sympathized with his troubles. He probably did not want his country torn up and his brothers shot any more than Greta wanted her beautiful city to die of starvation. Greta wondered what kind of men they were that were making the attack.

She stopped her aimless circling and directed her flight southward. Down there, somewhere, were the men that were shooting in her direction and causing the trouble for her friend below. She might die in the attempt, but she resolved to look at these men, too.

Greta had not flown far before she observed the enemy-lines. She descended, cautiously. Men were standing in long trenches dug in the ground. There were a group of them directly under her, and she approached them quietly.

Greta had never been told that there are different races of men. She only knew of men as men, and she had no way of knowing that the men she approached were

Asiatics, nor that here and there along the line there were Mexicans. She did not have the feeling of trust in these men that she had experienced for that one man in particular back in the shell-hole. For a moment, she circled at an elevation out of reach while she debated the question of what to do. Perhaps her feeling of distrust was mere prejudice, caused by her first experience with a man she felt attracted to. If her feeling were mere prejudice, it might be overcome by closer contact with the men below, and she decided to descend within reach.

Greta chose what she thought was the most favorable looking individual and alighted on the ground directly in front of him, her senses alert. She folded her wings momentarily, then spread them again as foreboding filled her being.

The man had been startled at first, He drew back. Then an ugly scowl spread over his face and he seized his hat. He made one quick pass at Greta. The rush of air threw her against the ground. He struck again, but he was too late. She was gone. Spurred by quick fright and compelling mistrust, Greta's powerful wings had carried her far beyond his reach.

Greta turned her flight toward the city of Cavoan.

She had learned a great deal, she thought. It was time now for ideas. But she was tired and her body was sore. She craved rest more than anything else, and in the beautiful city of Cavoan she could rest and think. Tired as she was, however, Greta thought on her way homeward, and the great idea came to her. It was well that it did.

As Greta approached the mouth of the ravine leading to her home, she was surprised to see a single drone flying aimlessly back and forth. As she drew near, he approached to meet her.

"Greta?" he said.

"None other," she said.

They entered the ravine and flew along side by side.

"You are in for the very devil," volunteered the drone.

"For what?" Greta asked.

"For taking such chances with your life. Masoul Fourteenth has been back and reported to Thuros."

"How was I to look the situation over without taking chances with my life?" asked Greta. "Thuros has been out there herself. She ought to know."

"She seems to think you were too reckless. Remember, she is counting on you to save Cavoan, and you can not do it dead."

"Of course not. But I am alive, and I shall save Cavoan."

THE drone thought of a number of things. He had great faith in Greta, and he admired her spirit. He admired Thuros, too, and respected her great intelligence. If only her temper were not so terrible she would undoubtedly be the greatest queen in the history of Cavoan. Now the intelligence and spirit of Greta were to be pitted against the temper of Thuros. He hated to tell Greta that her fate was practically sealed. He could not, for he liked her, and he really believed she meant what she said.

"I admire you, Greta," he said. "You have spirit and courage."

Greta was very tired, and a sudden unnatural twist of thought swept through her brain. As humans, this might have been an advance made by male toward

female. Even though mannish in intelligence, she was female in form and the drone was male.

"I am not flying high," she said.

The drone exhibited sudden anger. The buzz of his powerful wings, larger than Greta's, beat loudly on the air, and he flew a complete circle around her as she continued in her steady flight. Then he controlled his rage.

"Listen, Greta," he said, angrily. "Don't be a complete fool. We are not human. When I mate with you on high flight, if Thuros allows it, I shall die. The prospect is not entirely pleasant."

"I am sorry," said Greta, contritely. "I did not know that you were my selected mate."

"I am. For that reason I am named. I am Paul 141. My mother was Masoul Tenth, and her father was Thomas 223. I am selected just as you were. But we may never mate."

"Is Thuros that angry?" asked Greta.

"She is," said Paul.

"Do you mean to say that, after I was reared especially for the job of saving Cavoan from starvation, I am to be denied that privilege? That I am to be pushed back into the category of numbered Masouls for having taken a few chances in carrying out my orders to investigate conditions?"

"Thuros seems to want to think of you as a super-intelligent queen capable of directing activities from a safe place. You see, if you could do that, she would consider you the most valuable queen ever reared. That is from the intelligence standpoint. She already concedes your physical qualifications to be perfect. If you have that mental ability coupled with your acknowledged physical superiority, think of what the city would lose by your death."

"To hell with Thuros," returned Greta, spiritedly.

"No man has ever said that and lived," said Paul soberly.

Greta's sudden outburst had not been born of disrespect for her leader. It was rather that her spirit revolted against what she felt was the injustice of it. She had been given to understand that every inhabitant of Cavoan was willing to die for the glory of her city. She was expected to save it from degenerating into mediocrity and a precarious existence, and she had allowed the spirit of self-sacrifice and loyalty to take possession of her being. She had taken chances with her own life in an effort to learn something of the conditions that she might combat them more intelligently. Now she found that she was censured for her own loyalty, and that she was to be punished. She pulled up quickly and alighted on a limb of a tree. She called to Paul to do the same. They were very near the City, and she wished to have a longer conference with her prospective mate.

"Listen carefully, Paul," she said. "I am assigned the task of saving Cavoan from starvation. No half hearted measures will do, nor will any that require that we play safe and take no chances. It is either do or die. You understand?"

"I do."

"Very well. I have a very definite plan, and it involves a desperate chance. We may win and prosper and we may be wiped out. In any event, we shall lose thousands of our citizens. It seems that no one before me has had the courage to

even conceive the plan. I did, and I had the courage to investigate the conditions first hand. It seems that my apparent recklessness has brought me into disfavor."

"Very much so."

"Why should it? Thorus is mighty and her mind is great, but I shall either prove that I am greater than she is, as she herself has wished, or I shall die. I defy her."

"You will not win in rebellion, Greta. Much as the city admires you, it will not follow you except as the Queen of Queens allows."

"You do not understand, Paul. I shall lead no physical rebellion. My loyalty for the Queen of Queens is as great as yours. It is just that I hope to win my point by unprecedented action. Your report on her temper indicates that I shall not win in cool argument, so I shall have to risk all on other means. You see, Thuros is old and conservative. You can feel that in her presence. I am young, vigorous, and—and—"

"Courageous," added Paul.

"At least, I do not think I am a coward."

"Well?"

"I would give my life to try the plan I have for saving Cavoon. Now it seems that my plan is about to be balked by conservativeness and temper. I am in for trouble anyway. It seems to me that I might have a chance to carry my point by sheer audacity, and I am willing to risk it. In other words, I want to aggravate the trouble I am in by demonstrating my self-reliance to the fullest extent."

"How?"

"I am not supposed to mate until she wills it. I am ready to defy her even in that."

Paul's senses reeled. Life had been sweet for him and he hated to relinquish it. Because of his intelligence, he knew that he would die instantly when he mated with Greta. Neither the intelligence of Thuros nor that of any of her predecessors had been able to overcome that physical law which was their inheritance. And yet Paul faced that sacrifice with courage. It was his city of Cavoon, and its existence was threatened. To make the sacrifice now would shorten his life, yet Greta might be right. He had confidence in her sense, her initiative, and her courage, and his loyalty to his city could not be questioned. A quiver passed through his heavy frame.

"Lead on," he said. "Fly very high. Fly above the trees, above the walls of the ravine, and into the sunshine. I shall follow."

Chapter VI

THUROS, THE FURIOUS.

GRETA had no sooner alighted at the cave entrance than she was met by a special detail of thirty worker bees.

"We have orders to take you before Thuros at once," they said.

"All right," said Greta. "Let's go. I am tired and would like to rest, but if the old girl has something on her mind, I suppose she will have to unburden herself first."

It was obvious that the workers were taken aback. Such outspoken disrespect for their ruler had never before been heard. Not one of them said a word as they escorted Greta through the city.

For years of Cavoan's existence it had been the custom of the ruling queen to frequent one portion of the city more than any other. The first of these rulers had chosen that portion bearing the largest and straightest portion of single comb. It was a sort of "throne room." Here the roof of the cave was highest above the floor, and the ten foot comb that filled the space was a marvel in precision of construction. It dropped straight from the roof of the cave to the floor, presenting an even, unbroken surface as flat as a table top. There was a central comb between two others just as straight, and the brood, that these combs contained, numbered tens of thousands of bees. No relics of queen-cells protruding from the surface of the comb had ever marred these surfaces. They had always been constructed elsewhere in order that the beauty of the "Queen's Portion" of the city might not be marred. Now, however, Thuros was busily engaged in directing the construction of a queen-cell of unusually large proportions in the center of one of these combs. Greta observed this as she drew near with sudden misgiving. Thuros must be far more angry than she had thought.

"I salute you, Thuros," said Greta.

Thuros was still the ruling queen. Her mind was great, her will was iron, and her word was law.

"So you have returned," said Thuros, grimly.

"I have. I have been investigating as ordered. I shall report at your pleasure."

"That will never be."

"I do not understand."

"Then listen," returned Thuros. "I am breaking a long established custom. I am personally supervising the rearing of a new virgin within the limits of my own quarters, who, I hope, will be able to take over my position. I do not expect to fail. You shall become a numbered Masoul."

"In what way have I offended?" asked Greta,

"You have been far too reckless with your life," said Thuros. "I had great hopes for you. But a dead queen can not rule this city."

Greta realized that the time for a decisive stand had come. She said, firmly:

"I am not dead. I have learned much. I can preserve the life of Cavoan."

"You think you can," returned Thuros, heatedly. "You will not. Tomorrow you shall mate with any drone other than Paul 141. You shall then be a numbered Masoul."

"That is impossible."

"And why is it impossible?"

"Because I have already mated. Paul 141 is dead. He was my mate."

Thuros' rage mounted by leaps and bounds.

"What! You have defied me?"

THE situation became tense. A circle of workers formed a guard around Thuros. She was their queen, and Greta could have easily vanquished her in mortal combat because of her advanced age. Such was their loyalty. Greta struggled to maintain her calm.

"Thuros, there is no time for half way measures. I have defied you because I thought it expedient and only because I thought by so doing I could win my point. I still defy you. You are too old. I am young. I have courage, vision and ideas. I can save this city if you will but allow me. Thuros, allow me to present my plan."

"Take her away!" ordered Thuros. "Sting her to death at the entrance to the city. Do it at once."

Greta's escort began to close in to see that she obeyed the edict. "*Thuros!*"

Greta threw all the power of her will, her intelligence, and her emotion into that address. It was not an appeal. It was virtually a command. Her worker escort felt the power of her will and fell back momentarily.

"*What?*"

The instant reply that Thorus made was no less vigorous.

"Listen to me," Greta hurled at her. "You are very wise. I have been told of some of your great accomplishments and they mark you as a leader among queens. But, Thuros, you are now old, and your temper gets the better of your judgment. The instructor you personally picked for me, Ma-soul Fourteenth, told me that the entire population of Cavoon had rather die than see the city reduced to mediocrity. Why should I be denied that privilege of restoring Cavoon? I see a great future for Cavoon, and I risked my life for it. I have won so far. Why should I be put to death for displaying the courage you admire in your workers?"

It was within the power of Thuros to refuse to listen. She was not so unjust, however, that she would not listen to a last plea, even though she had determined that Greta should die.

"Because you are a queen," she said "I admire the spirit of self-sacrifice in my workers and demand it of them. Their lives are short, and they give them gladly for the glory of Cavoon. But a queen lives long, and the city could not exist without queens. The ruling queen must be particularly careful to preserve her life, for she is the soul of the city. Aside from that, you have openly defied me. Therefore, you shall die."

"I would die gladly for my city,"

Greta returned, hotly. "But when you kill me, you kill the life of Cavoon. I tell you that I can save Cavoon. And I shall not die gladly, for I shall not be dying for the benefit of our city, but because of the temper of a mastermind that has decayed."

"Take her away!" commanded Thuros. "Carry out your orders!"

Greta went peaceably. She knew that she could have fought, and that she could have claimed the lives of many of these workers, before one of them would have been able to get her deadly stinger to a vital spot. To have done so, however, would have lost her cause at once. She would ultimately have been overcome and killed. By going with them peaceably to the site of her execution she had a little more time. There might be a chance to save herself yet.

When they reached the cave entrance, Greta turned and faced her executioners. She had thought of one last chance, but she sensed indecision on the part of her escort. It gave her more time, and she was glad for that.

"Well?" she asked.

The workers watched her vigilantly lest she should try to escape. Yet none of them seemed anxious to put her to immediate death. At length one of them spoke, and it was with considerable hesitation.

"Greta, we like you tremendously. We believe you have great intelligence, and we should like to follow you as our ruler. Your personality makes itself felt in a most commanding way. We have confidence in you."

"So what?"

"If you say the word, we might work up a revolt. Thuro's is old. We have—"

"Stop!" commanded Greta. "I am glad for your confidence in me, but if I were your ruling queen I would demand your utmost loyalty. I shall not hear of rebellion. If Thuro's wills it, I must die. But I will ask one favor of you before you do your duty."

"What is it, Greta?"

"Send a messenger to Thuro's and tell her that I said: 'What a pity that a tempestuous old fool should destroy Cavoona!'"

The workers seemed relieved. They did not relish the thought of putting Greta to death, and to send a messenger would delay the fateful moment. They acquiesced to her request gladly.

The messenger left somewhat leisurely, for she dreaded her mission. When she returned, she was in a great hurry. She was very agitated. She was also minus one wing.

"It worked!" she radiated, with all the power of her agitated being. "It worked! Greta is spared!"

"Tell us!" they chorused.

"When I first told her, I thought she would die," the messenger said. "She went all to pieces. Then she almost chewed me up. By the time she got my wing torn off she was very nervous. Then she suddenly subsided and got very quiet. Then she commanded me to bring Greta before her."

Greta's nerves were tense as she listened. Then she, too, relaxed. She felt that, if allowed, she could sleep three days and nights without interruption. But she could not do that now. She must return to Thuro's at once.

Thuro's looked much older when Greta saw her again, a moment later. She looked very tired. Greta also saw that workers were destroying the queen cell, they had been so busily engaged in building a moment before. Her heart throbbed in relief as she saluted Thuro's.

"Tell me your plan," said Thuro's.

Greta told her in detail. When she had finished, Thuro's remained silent for a while. Then she said:

"You may win, Greta. If you do, you shall be Queen of Queens."

"I shall either win or die in the attempt," Greta said. "And now may I unburden myself frankly and without rancor?"

"You may."

"I am very happy to do so, Thuro's. I did not relish sending you word that you were a tempestuous old fool. From my youthful point of view, your only fault is that your advanced age makes you too conservative in the face of this grave danger. Convinced of that, I decided on a risky procedure to carry my point. The history of the city belies my accusations."

Thuros seemed to think the matter was of little importance. It was evident that she was enjoying her sense of humor when she replied.

"There are no hard feelings. You won the argument."

Chapter VII

THE EXPEDITION OF FURY.

GRETA had three days in which to complete her plans. The normal fighting force of the city numbered only 50,000 bees. Greta demanded that her expedition number 400,000 fighting bees, leaving 100,000 at home to carry on the activities of Cavoan. Thus there were some 350,000 bees that must thrust their stings through a pair of sharp sand-grains carefully mounted, so that they might use them repeatedly without loss of life. This took time.

On the day that the expedition was to leave Greta held one last conference with Thuros.

"Tell me," said Thuros. "Did you manage to select a sufficient number of squadron leaders?"

"I have. There are 8,000 of them. As you know, there are to be 8,000 fighting units of 50 bees each, and I have picked young and vigorous workers as leaders. They understand their instructions."

"If they follow them explicitly, you may succeed. But each fighter must strive to sting the selected victim as many times as possible. If half of them manage to sting the victim as many as six times each, he should die. It is important, however, that each group should sting its selected victim as many times as possible."

"They understand that," said Greta. "But are you sure that 150 stings will serve to kill a man?"

"I am not positive that it will in every case. Years ago a man tried to rob our city. He received 148 stings by actual count. He died before he got home. Another man might require more poison, and another might require less. A lot depends on the judgment your leaders show, and on your supervision."

"As for my supervision, let us hope for the best. I shall be in the thick of the fight."

"Be careful, Greta. We can breed workers by the thousands as required, but it is seldom that we can produce a queen such as you."

"I hope to return, Thuros, but that remains to be seen."

Masoul Eighteenth, second in command of the expedition, arrived to report that everything was in readiness.

"Then let us be on our way," commanded Greta.

THE sun was two hours high. In another thirty minutes the Americans were scheduled to launch another drive. Greta did not know of that impending attack, but Fred Stevens and Martin Anderson did. They were watching the minutes go by in nervous anticipation.

"Just another damn drive," said Stevens. "Another damn drive in the same damn war, and where do we get?"

"Nowhere," returned Anderson. "We take a position from them, and then they either take it back, or take another one from us just as good. These Asiatics are the hardest dern fighters to whip that this country ever tackled."

"And we are the hardest dern country to whip they ever tackled. They are getting tired, and so are we. A big, smashing victory somewhere along the line would do much toward putting the fire out."

"Let's hope this is it," said Anderson.

He looked again at his watch, then glanced upward for what he thought might be his last good look at the cloudless sky.

"Oh, my gosh!" he exclaimed. "Would you look?"

Fred Stevens looked up quickly. He saw what seemed like an endless string of compact groups of insects flying at about 200 feet. The line of insects was roughly parallel to the American line, and was advancing slowly southward. Stevens could not distinguish the end of the line in either direction.

"What's that?" asked Anderson.

"It looks like ten thousand swarms of bees to me," returned Stevens. "But I never saw the like of it before. And such small swarms! They can't be swarms."

"Bees!" exclaimed Anderson.

Something in his tone indicated to Stevens a mixture of incredulity and satire. It was plain that he remembered the queen bees in the shell hole, and to have bees again brought into the situation during the midst of deadly strife was a little too much for him. As for Stevens, he was almost as much astounded as Anderson. He was acquainted with bees as well as any man in the country, and had probably captured as many swarms as any man, All the little accidents, and all the little freaks of bee-behaviour he had observed, but this was something new. He fixed his gaze on them in wonderment, striving in his mind to solve the riddle of this unusual formation.

"Look!" he shouted. "They have stopped going forward. They are milling around!"

"Yeah, and look over here!" put in Anderson. "One group is descending."

Stevens shifted his gaze. He saw one group approaching the American front-line trench in a very leisurely manner. It was some fifty feet down the line. The group came to within a few feet of the soldiers, then continued down the line toward the two men. Half way to them, the group executed a momentary ascent and then a descent. The action was repeated, and on the second descent, the group was directly in front of Stevens. Here the group paused, and, simultaneously, the long line of miniature swarms began to descend toward the line of Americans.

"Listen," chattered Anderson, his body quivering. "It looks to me like a damn good drive is just about to be sunk. If those damn bees start stinging up and down the line, we are licked before we start. And we are due to go over in ten minutes!"

Stevens did not reply. He was not afraid, for he had been stung too many times for that. He had never seen anything like it. He was trying to analyze the mystery.

Anderson took off his helmet and prepared to fight. Mentally, he was cursing the war in more ways than one. He knew he could not retreat, for he was in the army. But he had not volunteered to fight bees. He much preferred to do his fighting with something more tangible than an elusive insect.

What the two men did not know, of course, was that the two ascents and descents of the scouting group had been a signal from Greta. She had descended first, and had found that the men in the trench were white. These were her friends. She had signalled her flying army to descend and observe the white men so that they would know them. These were the men that were not to be stung.

Everywhere up and down the line the men were in a condition of extreme nervous tension. The expectation of going over the top was enough in itself, and now there was this added menace. They stood expectantly, helmets in hand. Stevens and Anderson could hear the subdued and anxious voices of their neighbors in the trench. Yet not a man was stung, and no man struck at a bee.

Greta was about to give the signal to ascend and continue the flight when she saw Stevens. She had been disappointed because she had not seen him, and a wave of kindly feeling swept through her when she observed that here was the man whom she had particularly liked in the shell hole. Without fear, she flew toward him. She observed that even he was a bit nervous, so she flew cautiously. He did not draw back nor offer to slap at her, so she continued. He did not hold out his hand. She sought it out, hanging by his side, and alighted on it. Stevens raised his hand slowly.

"Well, I am a—!" he said.

"What is it?" asked Anderson.

"A Queen bee," said Fred, slowly. "And it sure as hell looks to me like the same one that was so interested in us before!"

"Get out!" retorted Martin, half believing. "You are going nuts!"

"Listen, Little Lady," said Fred, suddenly. "You get out of here. This is no place for a lady, and hell is going to pop loose in a minute. If you want to fight, go on over yonder."

With that, he tossed her into the air.

Greta was exuberant. She had found him. She liked him. Her confidence in him and his gentle treatment of her made her glad that she had cast the lot of the bees with these men. Then she forgot her emotions in favor of the work at hand. Her flying army rose almost in unison, and they continued southward. They flew swiftly, and in a few seconds the small hazy group of bees were out of sight.

"Well," said Martin, heaving a tremendous sigh. "The psychic power of the beekeeper has saved the day. Now we can be shot to death instead of being stung to death. What a war!"

"I wish I knew where they are going," said Fred.

THE thunder of artillery rent the air as the barrage commenced. Men's nerves grew taut and they forgot the bees. In just a few minutes it was live or die, shoot or be shot.

Greta's army was over the front line trenches of the foe when the barrage commenced. She was on the verge of giving the order to descend and fight when she observed the bursting shells below and the tremendous damage they wrought. She hesitated. She knew about those explosions from her own experience. Instead of descending, she ordered her army to rise to a higher level.

Greta watched closely the action below her. She observed that the explosions were limited to a zone up and down the line where she had planned to attack.

Then she observed that the zone of explosion was moving southward. The barrage was advancing.

"I want several volunteers," she announced. "I want them to go below and find out what is happening."

The first bee to return reported quickly.

"Men are coming out of holes in the ground," she announced. "They are taking their places in a trench facing in the direction of our friends. They have peculiar instruments in their hands. They look nervous."

What Greta did not know was that the Asiatics had been expecting this attack. Thousands of their troops were concentrated in this sector. The trenches were infested with machine guns and bayonets.

"Descend at once!" ordered Greta. "Fight the yellow man to rout! Sting him to death!"

"Through that barrage of flying missiles below?" asked a lieutenant.

"Through everything," ordered Greta. "It is now or never. Cavoons live or die as a result of the outcome of this attack. Follow me!"

Greta's army followed. They descended like arrows in swift, downward flight, true to their mark.

Thousands of yellow men, veterans of three years of bitter struggle, were at their posts. They were facing death, but they were expecting to inflict a terrible toll of death upon the enemy. Their eyes were to the north, where they expected to heap up row upon row of soldiers with their machine guns. They were not looking upward. They did not see the force they could not reckon with as it descended toward them.

Greta's forces went into action like clockwork as they reached their objective. It is doubtful if ever greater bedlam ensued, or if anything any more serious ever went wrong with a well planned defense. Thousands of men received their first prick of the painful, venomous sting simultaneously. A mingled shout of pain rose from the trench in a united voice as the attacked men felt not only one sting in the backs of their necks, but ten, fifteen, and twenty. There was a second of respite as the men became aware of the flying clouds of bees that were surrounding them. Then there was an attack direct to the faces of the victims, quick as a flash. It was executed like lightning. The men were stung about the face and eyes by dozens of vicious bees who dealt out misery with a vengeance, and who were out of reach before the men had time to slap at them. The clouds reformed for an instant, then sought out new prey.

Of the tens of thousands of men in the trenches at the time, a full fourth of them had been stung. The rest had been stricken dumb by the sudden attack. They turned to see their companions in misery, and were awed by the suddenness of it. Before they could react, thousands of these observers were themselves attacked with devastating results.

The morale of the defenders broke down completely. The greatest single aid to Greta was a characteristic of human nature that she did not know. Many a man, who is courageous to the utmost and afraid of no man or beast, is afraid of a bee. Men who have been decorated for valor in action will not go near a colony of bees. "Give me something big enough to fight," they say. "I can't see a bee." The

psychological reaction to the uncertainty and not knowing when or where the sting will be administered is unnerving.

SOME of the men who were not attacked at first stood by their posts and prepared to fight back the attack of the Americans. They thought more of the war than of the troubles their companions were having. Greta's orders were to attack by surprise wherever possible, consequently these men who remained to defend their position against men suddenly felt the brunt of the attack by the insects. As a result, not a machine gun was left in action on a two mile sector. Thousands of men were diving for the dugouts in great haste. Thousands of others were incapacitated by pain and closing eyes and did not know what to do. Other thousands were viciously swatting at the bees that were attacking them and suffering a score or more of stings for every bee that they killed. Thousands of the men were unconscious and dying as the poison coursed through their veins. And still Greta's army did not relent.

In the ranks of the running, advancing Americans there were thousands who wondered at what had happened to the defense. Most of them had expected to die as the result of machine gun fire, but the ranks were still intact. Where were the machine guns? The waves and waves of men behind the leaders were expected to take the position after the leaders had died, but those in the lead were still living. They continued to run. Was the enemy retreating?

The first men to reach the top of the enemy's embankments were dumbfounded. They jumped over and down, prepared to shoot, stab, and be killed. They did shoot, and they did stab with bayonets, and then they became aware of the fact that there was virtually no resistance. Those that might have resisted them were too busy fighting bees, and those, that were not slapping at the fighting insects, were either blinded, unconscious, or broken down with fear.

At first, the Americans prepared to fight the bees themselves. They remembered, however, that they had just seen the bees a few minutes before without difficulty, and they quickly observed that they were not themselves attacked in their new position. Then they made a business of taking prisoners. The trench was theirs.

Greta did not fully understand the proceedings in the "man against man" side of the war. She did observe, however, that the white men had advanced to her position, and that they killed at first. Then she observed that the yellow men were being herded in groups with their hands up and that they no longer retained their instruments of war, whereas the white men did. As she observed this latter development, she reasoned that the situation was well in hand for her friends. Yet her friends were only here, and there were more yellow men to the south. She ordered her forces aloft and directed that the attack be carried to the south.

The trench was completely taken when Greta's army departed. The last of the waves of advancing Americans were dropping over the top to be excitedly told what had happened. The first to arrive had regained their breath. They watched the bees in their southward flight. Their flight was accompanied by an angry hum. Thousands of the bees had been killed, and their sisters left alive were bent on vengeance. Desperate in the first place, they were now angered and doubly ferocious.

Fred Stevens watched the bees depart. He was suddenly inspired. The barrage was in front, and the bees were following it. He jumped to the top of the trench where he could be seen.

"Follow the bees!" he shouted. "The barrage is ahead, the bees are ahead, and here we are! What the hell are you waiting on?"

His cry was echoed by many throats up and down the line. It served as an inspiration for the entire army. They advanced.

The second trench was taken, and the third. The enemy was routed.

When the day was over, the scene of battle was far removed from Greta's home. She and her bees had turned back at five miles. The Americans had not. The enemy position had been penetrated and their lines were broken. That day they drove a long triangular wedge into the enemy lines twenty miles across the base. The apex of that triangle was twenty-five miles from Cavoan.

The ravine was strangely quiet. There were no echoes of deafening gunfire, and down in the valley there were no great holes opening in the earth and destroying flowers. There was only the rumbling of trucks across a new road that did not disturb the bees in the least.

Chapter VIII

GRETA, QUEEN OF QUEENS.

"I SALUTE you, Greta," said Thuros.

"I salute you, Thuros."

"Today you are to be crowned Queen of Queens."

"Before your death, Thuros?"

"Before my death. I gladly relinquish Cavoan to your able direction. You are greater than I am. I shall spend the rest of my days in peace and enjoy your reign. I shall watch your accomplishments with great pleasure."

"It is unprecedented," said Greta. "I cannot depose you. It is not loyal."

Thuros reverted to an attitude becoming her authority.

"I am Queen of Queens. My word is law. When I command that you be crowned Queen of Queens it means that you shall be. When you take my place, if you decree that I shall die, I shall die. Do you understand?"

"I understand, Thuros." There was no cringing in her reply. There was only obedience and respect for the law of Cavoan.

At the appointed hour Greta and Thuros, accompanied by the Masouls from One to Nineteen, marched in stately procession to the mouth of the cave. All other bees were quiet, eager, and alert except for a hundred thousand appointed workers and drones. The soft buzzing they made with their wings was so even and regular as to amount to the soft, low note of a song. Greta read the tone of rejoicing in that note. She interpreted the spirit of forthcoming loyalty in the attitude of each and every one as she passed. A feeling of love welled up within her. These were her bees. Her life was to be devoted to their service. She marched

on, her long legs never faltering, her body flowing with the force of life. She was to be Queen of Queens!

Thuros, in the lead, turned abruptly to the right at the city's entrance. Greta followed, and they took a position of vantage on a tiny ledge. The numbered Masouls took wing and sought another ledge slightly lower.

"This is for you," said Thuros, feelingly. "The pride of Cavoon, and the strength of Cavoon. Watch and listen so that you will miss nothing."

The low note in the city died abruptly. There was a period of unbroken quiet.

"In honor of the solemnity of the occasion," said Thuros.

Greta felt that she understood. The details of the coronation proceedings had been kept from her in order that they might be more impressive. She was glad for that. So far, the solemnity of it had impressed her strongly.

Another low note of different pitch was just beginning. It welled forth from the city in ever increasing strength, and, unlike the other note, it was not pleasant. Greta thought it more like a wail. Fearful, she asked:

"What is that?"

"The wail of sadness. It is in honor of my passing. They love me and they hate to see me go. That much is for me."

It was evident that Thuros was steeling herself for the situation. Her reign was fast slipping into history. Her life had been lived and her rule was at an end. She had reached the evening of life, and the grandeur of her reign was to live, from now on, in memories. Greta was touched. The wail was genuine.

"I shall always respect you, Thuros."

"Never mind. Live your own life, and make your city better than you found it."

The wail died away.

"The next is in your honor. The shout of rejoicing that a new queen is crowned. It is a vote of confidence."

GRETA has been profoundly impressed on her march through the city. Now she was almost overcome. There was no doubting the genuineness of the tone. Beginning softly, the tone had increased in volume almost instantly until it amounted to a roar, and yet its soft quality of rejoicing was unaffected by the volume. Greta's bees were putting their hearts and souls into it, and she read the message of undying loyalty and devotion. Then she caught the spirit of it. She closed her senses to everything external and was carried away in the song. It had become one of the seasons. There appeared in her mind the vision of vast fields of flowering clover, and a million happy bees were gathering their loads of sweetness. The combs of the city were extended in gleaming yellow wax, to be filled and capped with the sweetest of sweets. Then the summer with its program of duties. Seeds were planted in waste places, and seeds were stored. Then followed the fall with the replenishing of stores from the fall flowers, and the packing of yellow pollen for the winter needs in open cells. The quiet period of winter followed when her people must remain at home. She saw no discontent in her vision, but just quiet waiting for the spring. The song then came to an end.

"Did you get it?" asked Thuros.

Greta did not reply.

"You did," said Thuros. "Now for the parade!"

The rush of bees from the entrance was precipitous. Greta marveled that so many bees could fly from one small opening so rapidly and in such dense formation without serious interference. She felt the breeze from their wings, and the ledge where she was perched was cast in shadow as the bees passed between her and the sun. Somewhere, deep within her being, instinct was calling her to join in the mad rush. It was the instinct to swarm, and she had to deny it, time and again. This was not a swarm, but the parade of coronation.

The flow of bees ended abruptly and Greta looked above her. As far as she could see the air was filled with swirling, swinging, circling bees. They seemed possessed with drunken delight as they filled the air with their bodies and the roar of their wings.

Gradually, the bees disappeared. Their seemingly aimless circling had not been totally without plan, for they had disappeared in a body up the ravine. Then they returned, and this time they were not flying in circles. In unhurried flight they streamed past Greta in orderly procession flying leisurely and in straight lines. They were on parade. Greta, Thuros, and the Masouls were the reviewers.

"The strength of Cavoan," said Thuros.

It was evident that Thuros was extremely proud of the tremendous population of the city. Greta did not blame her in the least. She, too, was proud. It seemed the procession would never end, and she was amazed at the great strength of numbers which this parade displayed so effectively.

The last of the parade had passed but a moment when the flying column of bees reversed itself and came back pell-mell. The air was again filled with madly circling bees and the roar of their wings was even greater than before. The mass became more compact, and Greta observed that it was concentrating near a tree. She saw that several bees had taken rest upon a limb, and that the others were closing in. A few minutes later all was quiet. The entire parade had come to an end, and, with the exception of the observers, the entire population of Cavoan was clustered on a limb. The cluster hung down the limb for ten feet, and the mass would have filled a barrel.

"What a magnificent swarm!" Greta thought.

Thuros stirred slightly. She seemed to be shaking herself out of a trance.

"You are now Queen of Queens," she said. "I salute you as your humble servant."

The statement came as a shock to Greta. She could not realize at once that the enthronement was complete, and that from now on she was the sole arbiter for so magnificent a city. Then she realized that Thuros was speaking again.

"You are to take wing now. Circle the cluster once and then alight on it. When you take wing from there, your bees will follow you home."

Chapter IX

THE HOPEFUL MAN.

FRED STEVENS advanced to the center of the room with military pep and precision of movement. He brought his heels together with a click and saluted.

"Sit down, Stevens, and be at ease." General McKelvey motioned him to a chair.

"It seems a peculiar coincidence," he said, "that you should request to see me just when I was getting ready to send for you."

"Perhaps we have the same thing in mind, sir."

General McKelvey rose nervously from his chair. He strode to the door of the room and peered out. He instructed his orderly that he was not to be disturbed until Stevens had been dismissed. Then he locked the door and turned on Stevens. It was evident that the man was in severe mental stress. His eyes were bloodshot.

"Don't tell me you wish to see me about bees," he said. "If you do, I think I shall have you shot."

Fred Stevens was at once ill at ease.

He was not acquainted with the General's characteristics. Worse still, he did not know of the forces that had been disturbing the man's peace of mind.

"What did you wish to see me about, General?" he asked, stalling for time.

A degree of nervous tension seemed to pass away from McKelvey and he returned to his chair. He sat facing Stevens squarely.

"I am hoping against hope. I am dreaming dreams, which a good general should not do.—I wanted to ask you some questions about bees."

"Yes, sir."

"I have heard the whole story. I know about the part you played. I have had your records looked up and I found that you are a beekeeper of note and an authority on the subject. Stevens, first I have to know *why* those bees did what they did!"

"I don't know, sir."

The General's nervous tension showed signs of returning. It was plain that the answer had disappointed him and that it was distressing him.

"Then why did you wish to see me?"

It was Stevens' time to be dismayed. Faced with the immediate necessity for revealing that which lay in his mind, he almost lost his nerve. General McKelvey observed this at once.

"Be at ease, Sergeant, be at ease. We are in a bigger predicament than you realize, and if you have anything on your mind that may possibly help us out, I must hear it. What is it?"

"Thank you, General."

STEVENS was obviously relieved. He stood up and advanced to a position directly before the General's desk. "General, I have an idea that I would give my heart and soul to try. Strange things have happened and I do not profess to understand them. It is the strange things that give me the dreams I have had, and I have a vague sort of stirring intuition that what I have in mind may possibly work. Perhaps it is because I feel almost akin to the bees. You know, it was never definitely settled whether my ancestor, Fred Stevens the first, retained a portion of bee intelligence after his unusual experiment. I believe he did, and sometimes I

think it has affected my own characteristics. On the other hand, it may be because I am a plain damn fool, but I—I—"

General McKelvey was leaning forward.

"Go on!" he commanded. "Get it over with!"

"General, if you could give me a little time out and place some resources at my disposal, I would investigate the possibilities of getting those bees interested in another attack!"

"Thank God!" McKelvey relaxed in his chair and breathed heavily.

"Now listen, Stevens," he said. "Forget for the moment the difference in our rank and consider the fact that we are both American citizens interested in driving these yellow devils out of America. Remember, too, that this is in utter confidence. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Washington is congratulating me on our successful drive. They want me to repeat with another. They seem to think that I have suddenly developed into a military genius. Stevens, you and I both know that we would never have advanced to this position if your bee friends had not rendered such great help. It is not that I am a sudden genius, but that fate has played into my hands."

"Did Washington hear about the bees?"

"Of course. Do you think they believe it? Hell, no! I did not believe it myself at first, because I did not see them. But there are 100,000 men under my command, and I know they are not all liars. Now I can't sleep because of it. All I can hear about or think is bees, bees, bees. And now we need them worse than ever. Can you imagine why?"

"If you have orders to continue the drive, I can."

"Of course you can. Every man in the army knows that the enemy's position at San Saba Peak and surrounding terrain is impregnable. If we launch a drive against that position, we shall be gassed out of business and shot to pieces."

"And blown to hell," put in Stevens.

"Correct. However, if we could take that position—Stevens, it is an idle dream to think of taking it, but if we could, think of the results."

"I have always understood that the point was vital."

"It is. There is no need to go into details, but if we take San Saba Peak, it will be a relatively easy push from there to San Saba, and from there to Fredericksburg. Once we do that, the enemy will be divided in two halves and rendered helpless. And when I said helpless, I meant helpless. Stevens, when the American Army reaches Fredericksburg, the war will be over."

The vision of the war actually being at an end was almost too much for Stevens. He said nothing.

McKelvey had become enthusiastic in outlining the possibilities. Then the stern realities of the situation returned to his tormented mind and he became once more the troubled general that he had been.

"The position cannot be taken, Stevens," he said, "unless there is something equally potent to render the enemy ineffective as there was the other day. If the bees could be induced to repeat that performance one more time before the enemy has time to prepare a defense against them, there would be a splendid chance for us to succeed. Otherwise, there is not. We have to drive anyway. Washington's

orders. We shall either take the position or we shall all die. Stevens, I love my country and I want it to win this war, but I don't like to see my men all die!"

"I understand that, General." Stevens' voice was very low.

"Then do the best you can. Your request is granted, of course. It amounts to a command. But listen to this. We are on the job and we *know* what did happen. Washington is a long way off and they say they do not believe in fairy stories. If they knew of the plans being made in this office—" The General shrugged his shoulders.

"I understand that, too, sir."

"Very well."

General McKelvey straightened up and resumed his strict military bearing. It was plain that the personal side of the conference was at an end. The time had come for action and he had other duties. He signalled for his orderly.

"Orderly," he commanded, "write out an order to the effect that Sergeant Stevens is assigned to special duties until further notice, and that he is responsible only to General McKelvey. —Need any help?" he asked, turning to Stevens.

"Martin Anderson," said Fred.

"Add the name of Martin Anderson to that order," dictated McKelvey. "What supplies, Stevens?"

"I shall need a truck, and—" Stevens paused, directing a meaning nod of his head toward the orderly as he held McKelvey's eyes.

McKelvey understood at once.

"Orderly," he commanded, "write out an order on the Commissary that Fred Stevens is to be supplied a truck and anything else he asks for.

"Will that suffice, Stevens?"

"It will, General."

"Then get the hell out of here and get to work. We are in a damn war and it is results that count. If you get the job done you are a hero, but if you fail, you are just another damned sap. I don't want to see you again until you are a hero."

"Yes, sir, General." Fred clicked his heels together and saluted. A second later he closed the door after him.

Chapter X

THE SWARM INTELLIGENT.

GRETA had hardly become accustomed to her new role in the life of the colony when the strange thing occurred. It had been three days since she had assumed the throne of Cavoona, and, aside from the thrill and emotions of the coronation proceedings, her days had not been strictly pleasant. There had been too much on her mind.

To put it bluntly, she could not get away from the fact that the most practical and probably the only practical procedure to follow would be to reduce the population of the city through the curtailment of brood-rearing operations for a

period. The plain facts in the case were that the food supplies could not possibly warrant a continued population of around the 500,000 mark. It was true that the war was now far removed from their pastures, but it required time for the plants to grow in the devastated areas, and the food supplies were rapidly approaching the danger point. To disturb the equanimity of her devoted followers with this procedure would require the utmost in tact even though her word was law. She racked her brain for another way out.

It was in the midst of a period of deep concentration on this subject that word was brought to her. A middle-aged worker of the upper stratum of intelligence told her.

"Greta, there are men outside. They have arrived on the bank of the ravine in a motor truck and their antics are strange."

"Has anything out of the way happened yet?" asked Greta. She remembered that the history of the colony told that men had tried to rob the city once and had failed.

"In a way, yes. The two men got out and began to set up a wooden trough. The chief of the guard got suspicious and ordered an attack by six workers. One of the men made a dive for the truck and secluded himself out of the reach of our warriors. The other stood and took it. I was there, and it seemed to me that the man was hurt. I seemed to feel that he thought we ought not to do it. The chief felt it, too, and called off the attack. Now both men are busy again."

"That is interesting," said Greta. "I shall investigate personally."

She hurried to the cave entrance and took wing. She approached the two men and had her suspicions and hopes confirmed. She recognized them, one as the man she especially liked and considered her friend, and the other as his companion in the shell-hole. The sudden delight she felt at seeing Fred Stevens again, however, was not without the slightest of misgivings. She found it difficult to explain why they should seek out her home, and the vague fear that their purposes might not meet with her entire approval was hard to dismiss. She hovered about, not approaching too closely.

Stevens and Anderson were filling the trough with a liquid. They made numerous trips to and from the truck with buckets and poured the contents of the two well filled buckets into the trough on each trip. The liquid was a syrup made from sugar and pure water. Floating in the syrup in the trough there were a number of slatted wooden floats.

"So the bees will have plenty of footing," explained Stevens. "Otherwise some of them would drown."

The work was finished, and the two men straightened up.

"I hope they find it soon," said Fred. There was a far away look on his face. His mouth had the faintest twist of a smile, and his eyes seemed half clouded and half expectant as though he were hoping for something that he knew was the most improbable of all things. He gazed at the bees that were flying about as though he hoped to see a particular queen, even as his experience with ordinary bees told him that such a thing would not happen. With ordinary bees, he knew that the queen would be inside the cave and that she would not venture out except with a swarm. Yet he had seen *this* queen twice.

His eyes caught sight of a lone bee, not a drone or worker, and lighted on her with hope. She was larger than the rest. She was circling ever so slowly and her motions were most graceful. With her in motion, however, he could not be sure. With half a prayer, he held out his hand toward this one bee.

MEMORY flooded Greta's consciousness. This man had held out his hand once before. Twice she had alighted on it and had met a kindly reception. It was an invitation. She forgot her fears. She came to rest on Fred Stevens' hand.

Martin Anderson's eyes were wide.

"My God, Stevens, how do you do it?" he said. "Have you got supernatural powers? Here we have come for miles, stayed ten minutes, and you call the queen out with a wave of your hand. I—just—don't—believe—it."

"I believe it, but I don't understand it," returned Fred. "There is just one thing I can say. We are extremely fortunate, for I believe this little lady is the big boss hereabouts. She knows more than I know about something, and I don't know what it is. My little lady friend here seems to be my own particular ally."

"I'll say she is," said Martin.

Greta was resting perfectly still on Fred's hand. She was wondering what the next move was to be. Something was afoot and she wanted to learn what it was.

"Let's try this," said Fred.

Very slowly, he lowered his hand toward the trough. Then, still more slowly and evenly, he brought his other hand nearer to Greta and prepared to pick her up by the wings. Greta stirred, nervously, and Fred increased the deliberateness of his motion. This was new to Greta, and she was hesitant. She was prepared to fly on the instant. Yet the extremely slow motion of the other hand reassured her. Surely, the man meant no harm. She allowed herself to be picked up. Then she was set down on one of the slatted floats in the trough. Her feet were slightly wetted.

The liquid appeared as water to Greta. It had no odor. She moved around a bit debating the question. What was this move for? Apparently, the man wanted her to notice the liquid. If so, it must be good for something. Then that must be it. She decided to sample it.

Greta was quite surprised as she noted the sweetness of the liquid. It was amazing that such a thing should happen. The liquid had no characteristic flavor of the nectars she knew, yet it was sweet, and the glorious thought that it was the much needed food her city's life demanded set her heart to pounding. Wildly excited, she took wing and circled high aloft. The thought of food! food! food! rang in her brain! Now it would be unnecessary to curtail brood rearing. Was it a miracle that the man should bring it?

The thought sobered Greta. She had befriended the man, she thought, even as she sought to work out her own salvation, as she fought for her city. Even in bee-life as she knew it there was such a thing as gratitude.

Greta returned to the entrance to the cave and gave instructions. There was food in the trough the men had brought and the point was to go and get it. They did, while Greta again circled in the air.

There was sufficient food there to take her workers more than the rest of the day to obtain. It would suffice as life giving stores for weeks, and if the men should replenish it? Greta reeled dizzily at the thought of it.

When Stevens and Anderson left that day the food situation for the bees had been solved for weeks to come. The men had laboriously set up a large galvanized tank and connected this to a float valve in the trough through a flexible hose line. They had then filled the tank half full of water from the creek and stirred in sugar from cloth bags until it was dissolved. The trough would not empty until the supply in the tank was exhausted.

"That is partly gratitude on our part, and partly policy," said Stevens, as they drove away.

"The policy is what?" asked Anderson.

"Remember that these bees are of the intelligent race. I want the little boss lady to do a lot of thinking about that syrup supply. I want to gain her complete confidence. Furthermore, I want them to put on brood and raise an army."

It was two days later that the two men rumbled over the irregular road again in their truck, this time bound back to Cavoan. The truck carried a partial load.

"You got quick results," said Anderson.

"I knew where to wire to get it," replied Stevens. "I have frames of white clover honey from Iowa, buckwheat honey from New York, and sumac honey from Texas. They all came by plane, of course. Military shipment."

"You haven't much with you."

"No, we don't need it much here. We have some, of course, but the transporting equipment is mostly ten frame hives with empty combs for the bees to cluster on. We shall give them the combs with packed pollen and honey if, as, and when we get the bees where we want them."

"You are sure some optimist," remarked Anderson. "But I believe you are going to get the job done."

STEVENS had held his hand outstretched for several minutes before Greta alighted on it. Her bees had been so busily engaged in working on the never failing supply of syrup in the trough that they had not immediately noticed his gesture. When one of them did, she reported to Greta, and Greta had not delayed.

Her gratitude to Stevens was unbounded, and she craved to know his purpose. She hoped that she might learn somehow through this contact with him that he so openly invited.

The rear doors to the screened-in truck were opened. Inside of it, four standard hive bodies were tiered and secured against toppling. They bore within them twenty frames of empty comb and twenty frames of stored pollen and sealed honey. Stevens moved slowly toward them. He was holding Greta close to his face and talking earnestly.

"Now listen, queenie," he was saying. "Of course I know you don't understand a word, but I have to get it out of my system. I need you badly. I have a perfectly swell home all fixed up here for you and your lady friends. We will feed you well and we want you to help us. You have got to, little lady. We need you in our business. Just move in this little home and we will give you a nice long ride and

won't hurt you a bit. Then we want you to fight like hell. Be a good girl and come along. We have just *got* to have you."

Stevens set Greta down gently on the alighting board of the hive. He watched her with bated breath as she disappeared into the interior. Five minutes later he watched her walk calmly out and take wing. She circled him twice and then flew straight for her own city.

"Now what?" asked Martin, softly.

"We'll watch and wait and hope for the best."

THE matter was so completely out of line with anything in the history of Cavoona that Greta was not immediately sure of what she wanted to do. She sought out Thuros. She wanted to know what the older queen thought of it, even though she knew she might not take the advice Thuros might have to offer.

"What do *you* make of it?" Thuros asked. She was inclined to be reticent.

"I would say the man wants us to establish ourselves on those combs he has brought. There is food there, and empty combs available for brood. The whole business is on the inside of his truck, which leads me to believe he would take us somewhere else."

"I can't find any flaws in that argument," returned Thuros.

"Why, then, do you think he wants us?" asked Greta. She had her own ideas, but she was very much interested in knowing if Thuros might think the same thing.

"I think," said Thuros, "that as far as the man is concerned, his struggle with the yellow men isn't over. I think he wants you to help him some more. I think he wants to take you to where the battle is and have you repeat your first performance."

"I had exactly the same thought," said Greta. "Can you guess what I am going to do about it?"

"You are Queen of Queens," said Thuros, non-committally. "Your word is law."

"I am going."

"I thought you would, Greta. But may I ask you why you make this move?"

"For three reasons, Thuros. In the first place, how do we know but that the white men, our friends, might fare badly at the hands of the enemy in the future, and the war would return to our territory? Then, again, the man seems capable and anxious to supply us with plenty of food, and you know how desperate the food situation is here without his help. Although I have not discussed it with anyone, it was an idle dream to even think of maintaining our magnificent population. So, if I take 300,000 with me and leave 200,000 here, both parts of the city will fare much better, and that which remains can easily build *back up* to 500,000. Finally, Thuros, I like that man. He seems desperately in need of us. He has befriended us in our necessity. I am going."

"Do you think you shall ever return, if you live?" It was plain that Thuros was anxious.

"I hope to return to Cavoona, Thuros," said Greta. "However, you are to act in my stead while I am gone, as though you never expected to see me again. You are again Queen of Queens in Cavoona. I expect you to rear the finest queen that can possibly be reared to succeed yourself. If I am not back by the time she is old

enough to mate, then she shall mate and become your successor at the time you shall appoint."

"I understand. When are you leaving?"

"Before the sun shall set."

"Then you must hurry."

Thuros concurred with Greta in the opinion that it might be better to lead the expedition from the city as a swarm and settle on the limb of a tree rather than fly directly into the man's prepared city. Greta was familiar with the methods men used in hiving swarms from the history that had been handed down to her. If it were true that the men actually wanted her bees to settle themselves in his hive, she would have verification of this belief through his going through the motions of placing them within the hive himself.

It required perhaps thirty minutes for word to be spread through Cavoona. Greta explained in terse phases why the expedition must go. She used the same arguments she had used with Thuros, and, aside from that, it was her command.

There were no dissenters. So great was the love and loyalty of Cavoona for Greta that the problem was to select the 200,000 that were to remain at home.

THERE had been very little conversation between Fred Stevens and Martin Anderson. The former had sat with his eyes glued on the entrance to the cave where he had watched his "little lady" disappear. His expression showed shifting waves of hopefulness, patience, and the more frequently recurring fear of failure. The General had said that if you get the job done you are a hero. He did not care so much for the hero part of it. The part that hurt was that if you did not get the job done, you were a "sap" in the eyes of the public. He did not wish to be considered a nitwit in the eyes of the public, particularly in so far as bees were concerned. If the world knew what he was trying to do, and if it learned that he had failed—

Martin Anderson was more impatient. Looking at it from the standpoint of a layman, this all seemed very impossible. But, on the other hand, he could not bring himself to consider it from that standpoint. Who was he to judge what the bees would do? He had learned that these were bees gifted with the intelligence of mankind itself. So why could they not be reasoned with? And why should not Fred Stevens be the man to do it? Fred knew bees as no other man in America. More important than it, possibly, was the fact, that it was the intelligence of his ancestor that had been given to these bees. How should he know but there was some invisible bond between them? Whether it should be done through some invisible bond, through Stevens' understanding of the bees, or the intelligence of the bees themselves, Anderson did not know, but he did feel vitally interested in the outcome. Stevens was his bosom friend, and it would hurt him tremendously to see him fail. In a moment of anxiety he sought to relieve his own nervous tension. He produced a much battered harmonica from his pocket and began to play. He elected to render his interpretation of *The Parade of the Wooden Soldiers*.

Stevens was subject to the acute realization of three very active senses at the same instant. His eyes were dilated with joy as he watched the glorious swarm begin to pour forth from the cave entrance. His ears brought him the melodious strains of the march his friend was playing. His sense of feeling told him that his

heart was pounding harder than it ever had before. Then an instantaneous thought told him that no better coincidence could possibly have been arranged than for his friend to begin playing just at the moment when the swarm should choose to issue.

"Keep it up!" he shouted.

Anderson became aware of the swarm. Why his friend should want him to continue to play he did not know. There were a lot of things he did not know, however, so he continued to play.

Fred Stevens was standing spellbound. He could hardly believe his eyes, even though it was the thing he had hoped to accomplish. He had never before seen so large a swarm of bees. The three hundred thousand circled above him in dizzy flight and obscured the sun. The vibrant roar of their wings combined with the stirring strains of the march to fill the ravine with harmonious resonance. Thus far, he had succeeded.

The fever of Stevens' pulse died down somewhat as the swarm completed its clustering on a limb. He felt a sudden sharp kick on his leg. He turned to see Anderson still dutifully playing. His face was very red and it was plain that he was very nearly out of breath and would like to stop.

"Oh, all right!" Stevens laughed. "You can lay off now."

Anderson regained his breath with great relief. Then he asked:

"Why did you want me to play?"

"Bees have a sense of hearing," replied Stevens. "I wanted them to get the association between their swarming out as they did and your music. We want them to come out *en masse* on a later date, and when that time comes, I want you to play the same piece again with all your might and main."

"O.K., brother. Anything you say. Now what?"

"I am tickled to death. I had lots rather have them cluster as they have, than to have had them fly directly into the hive. We are going to cut that limb and hang it on the inside of the truck. If they want to leave it and go in the hive during the trip, that is their pleasure. I want to leave here with them in a cluster in the truck. Now, if you will help me a little, we will cut that limb and—"

Sudden panic struck Anderson. The idea of close proximity to *that* many bees was not so pleasant. Even though he had been close to these bees before without being stung, he could not forget that these bees had stingers, and that there were lots of them.

"Never mind," he interrupted. "You do it."

Stevens laughed. He had seen many men before afraid of bees. In view of the weight of the cluster,⁽¹⁾ however, he really needed help, for he wished to cut the limb and transfer it to the truck without disturbing the bees any more than possible. A sudden jerk would dislodge many bees and dump them on the ground and he wished to avoid that. There was a short, good-natured argument with Anderson before the latter was convinced. Twenty minutes later Greta and her bees were on their way to a destination unknown to themselves.

Chapter XI

THE SUPREME STRUGGLE.

GRETA had not been established in her new home on a stationary location a week, before she was fully prepared. The empty combs had been filled with eggs and young larvae, she having detailed the half dozen young queens she had brought with her to fill them up. Here and there a peanut-shaped cell of wax was taking form as she prepared for her successor in this location. She reasoned that she might not return from this expedition.

That there was to be another expedition she was fully confident. Her returning field bees told her that there were virtually no flowers to be found, and that they were again at the scene of war. Yet the food supply was ample. Another trough filled with the never failing supply of syrup had been set up outside, and every day Fred Stevens had replenished their supply of natural food as stored in combs by bees in the far corners of the nation. It was totally without fear that he had lifted the cover of the hive and gently examined the frames. After these examinations, he had considerably stacked additional hive-bodies filled with stored food on top of the colony until it was attaining a dangerous height.

Then the day came. Greta heard the strains of the harmonica she had heard once before, even through the wall of the hive. On the instant, her reason told her that her men friends wanted to see her, and that in all probability now was the time for battle. She led her expedition forth. It was 250,000 strong. She left 50,000 bees at home to take care of the new city.

The same truck was standing outside. Fred Stevens was standing by one of the open rear doors. His eyes were wide with anxiety for fear that the bees might not understand. Anderson was standing by the other rear door. He was playing "The Parade of the Wooden Soldiers" with all the force of his lungs. His eyes were strained with a somewhat different kind of anxiety.

Greta was intelligent. She had been in that truck before and had been taken places. She could hear the sound of a mighty barrage and she knew that the battle of the men was beginning. She did not know exactly where it was. The men that drove the truck knew. She led her swarm into the truck. The doors slammed shut. Stevens and Anderson jumped into the driver's cab and started. There came the roar of a powerful motor and they were off.

"Thank God!" breathed Stevens. "I don't know about that," murmured Anderson.

"What do you mean?" asked Stevens.

"I mean that you have gotten me to where I think a lot of these bees myself. Now you are taking them out to their destruction."

"Think we ought not to do it?" asked Stevens, quickly.

"I don't know. It is either that or else—"

"Yes, or else. If they did not help us, we would lose, and then the battle would go back to their pastures."

"Anyhow, we are into it now."

The truck was stopped just behind the front lines. Another crucial moment had arrived. Stevens swung open the doors of the truck and gesticulated wildly. Anderson was about to reach for his harmonica when he decided that it was

unnecessary. The bees were out and circling upward. The two men watched them anxiously. They were thinning out and dividing into small groups.

The two men revisited the trucks and obtained their arms. Once more Stevens was laden with a machine gun and once more Anderson was weighted with ammunition. Their faces were strained. They started southward as a matter of suggestion and as a matter of duty. When they had advanced a hundred yards they were pleased to see that the bees had followed. More than that, they had completed their formation and had passed them on their southward flight.

The two men passed a communications outpost. Stevens flashed a special card on the operator and asked him to deliver a message. He directed it to General McKelvey. It read: "The war is on according to Hoyle. Rely on your allies." He signed it "Sgt. Stevens, Hero." A faint smile crossed his face as he signed it.

GRETA began her attack very much as she had her first, but the sudden, sweeping victory was not forthcoming. In the first case the surprise element played a very important part. Now there was also a certain degree of surprise, but it was not nearly so effective. The Asiatic generals had, like the Washington authorities, found it difficult to believe that bees had played any very important role in the defeat that they had suffered, and they had refused to make any serious effort to safeguard against a repetition of the same attack. They did not believe that the bees would journey across the 25 mile salient to repeat the attack. Regardless of what the generals thought, however, the soldiers were again contesting their position against an attack, which was led by the ferocious insects. It was now the immediate problem for the soldiers to solve the best way they might. They fought the insects vigorously, swatting and slapping with their hands. The soldiers in the trenches had not in the least expected the bees, but now that they were present to be contended with, their morale was not so suddenly and completely ruined. Many of them thought of donning their gas masks and passed the suggestion along. This proved to be the biggest handicap that Greta faced.

Greta observed that the battle was not going immediately in her favor and was gravely concerned. That many of her bees were being killed, she knew, and she did not know how long she could maintain the attack without victory. She called off the attack momentarily by signalling for her entire army to rise above the scene of conflict. She held a hurried conference with her leaders.

Down below, and ahead of the enemy lines, the Americans were held in check. They had advanced to a point where they could go no further until the resistance lessened. The ceaseless deadly spray of machine gun bullets could not be faced. Thousands of the Americans had been killed and wounded, and those that remained were awaiting developments in the best positions that they could find. The shell-holes were crowded with men who were quite willing to fight, but who saw no point to ending the possibility of ever fighting again by exposing themselves to that devastating spray. Even so, they had advanced farther than they had expected. When it became generally known that the bees were again in the fight, they were somewhat at a loss. It was evident that the bees had accomplished some good, but they had not performed as effectively as before. They observed the bees rise above the fight in dismay. At the same time, they realized that the vigor of the defense increased. More machine guns were in deadly action.

Greta's instructions to her generals had been short and snappy. The attack was to be changed to a different method. She had argued that if single groups of fifty bees could not immediately accomplish results, it was worth risking a new method in order to get results. The point being to sting the men unmercifully, she believed she could get better results in mass attack now that the resistance was increased. Her long line of fighters converged into one great expanded ball of flying bees high above the center of the fight. Then they descended together at the greatest possible speed. As they reached the scene of activity, the ball divided, one half flying along the line eastward, and one half flying along the line westward. Greta led the westward division.

Every yellow man that was seen was subjected to a sudden and terrible attack by the whole group. Each individual bee flew to the attack swift as an arrow, and darted away again. When multiplied by the tens of thousands, the effect was devastating.

THE most vulnerable point of the masked men proved to be their hands, and Greta soon realized that fact. While many bees had managed to penetrate the men's clothing and deal them misery there, most such bees were killed by a vicious swat of a heavy hand. These stings were helpful in accomplishing results, but they were at too great an expense. She directed that the principal objective be the hands, and she found this attack to be quite effective. No man could slap at 100,000 bees at once, particularly while each and every one of them were in the swiftest possible flight. When a man was attacked it was but an instant before he had suffered from 500 to 1,000 stings on the hands. Such a man was immediately rendered ineffective. Many of them died within the hour. Machine-gun after machine-gun was silenced in an ever widening sector. No man could operate a machine-gun while dying, much less with hands swollen as large as toy balloons. The Americans began to advance toward this ever widening sector.

Greta had progressed down the line a mile when she paused to reconnoitre. With fully a quarter of her force killed, she had no desire to continue the attack any longer than necessary. She observed that the Americans were advancing, but that they were seriously handicapped by a few machine-gun nests that had, somehow, managed to get back into action. She ordered her forces back over the path they had come. These nests must be wiped out.

In the midst of her renewed attack on one such nest, Greta almost met with sudden and complete defeat. The men were prepared for gas with their masks, but Greta was not. It swirled down upon them from the first gas that was released. Half of her remaining force died on the instant. Those just above the swirling vapors at the moment observed their ruinous effect and were quick to heed Greta's warning to rise. Here they paused until the greenish vapor rolled on under the urge of a gentle southerly breeze. She repeated her attack and silenced the gun, but with the realization that from henceforth she must act with caution, ever alert for the first sign of the green vapor.

Greta had reached the point of beginning, when she observed the reason for the renewed activity in that portion of the enemy's lines she had considered conquered. She discovered a trench leading up from the rear through which was pouring a steady stream of reinforcements. She dispatched messengers at once to

the half of her army that had flown eastward. They were to return at once and join in the attack on the reinforcements. Having crippled a considerable portion of the enemy lines, it was now her point to give her friends a chance to take the position while she prevented reinforcements from arriving. Grim and determined, she led the attack down the connecting trench.

She found it necessary to redouble the fury of her attack. It seemed that there was a never ending supply of men advancing from the rear. Gradually, however, she began to show telling results. The head of the line was stopped. Men lay dying in the trenches, impeding the progress of others. Those behind dared not get out of the trench to go forward, for to have done so would have been to expose themselves to sudden death from the bullets of the Americans. The Americans were drawing ever nearer. Furthermore, those behind were not so sure that they wanted to advance. They began to retreat.

IT was two hours later that Greta found herself deep in enemy territory with her American friends close behind. The never ending roar of the American barrage had kept up steadily, and the rain of bursting shells was just ahead, its progress closely timed by the artillerymen well informed of the progress of the drive. The resistance of the yellow men was less now than it had ever been, but the frequency of the bursts of the greenish vapor was now greater than ever before. Greta had become more wary of the gas, and it was well that she did. She had divided her combined forces into four groups, and two of these groups had been completely wiped out by the gas. The remaining two had become so weakened from casualties that it became necessary to recombine them for effectiveness. Greta was now left with a scant 40,000 bees out of a total of 250,000 that had begun operations that morning. She could not continue much longer. The bees that were left were beginning to show the effect of the continuous fighting. They were very tired, and their own morale was getting very low. Another half hour of the fight, or one unfortunate connection with a cloud of the green gas, and it appeared that there would be no more bees. Greta did not have the heart to send the remainder to their destruction. She felt that she had done the best that she could and that it was up to the white men to make the most of their gains for the day, until she could rebuild her forces at her new home. She signalled her bees to rise into the air above the fight for the homeward flight.

Just before Greta gave the order to return to their man made city, however, she received some interesting news. A scout returned to the group to report that a short distance behind the lines there were a number of men in a house concealed by trees, and that the place was a scene of tremendous activity. The men wore no masks, and there was a distinct freedom from the gas in that zone. The point seemed to be a place of considerable importance, the scout thought. Actually, it was emergency headquarters for the Asiatic chief of staff and his assistants. They had been blasted out of a location nearer the original scene of activity by the artillery fire of the Americans.

Greta considered the problem. They had helped the Americans considerably in advancing a full two miles. The advance had not been so rapid, however, as it had been the first time that she had engaged in the war. She wanted to see the yellow men driven completely away, and they had not been. The resistance had been

tremendous. She was injured, having lost two legs in one of the encounters, and many of the survivors of her army were likewise injured. She flew with pain and effort. Still, here was a chance for an easy victory against unprotected men, and if the scout was right in thinking the place was a point of importance, the attack might be well worth the while. She consulted her leaders. One of them suggested that one easy victory would be a pleasant way to finish off a day of killing effort, after which they would return to their home. Tired as they were, the majority was still willing to engage in one more encounter. They followed the lead of the scout.

Greta observed that the windows to the house were all open. The one room having the most windows was crowded with men and desks and telephones. A steady stream of messengers was going in and coming out of this room. Greta decided on one swift attack intended to wipe out every man in that room and then retreat. She gave the order for every bee to charge that room through the windows at the given signal, stay on the job until every man was dying, and then leave as quickly as possible.

The dismay in the room was tremendous, and the anger of the tempestuous and brutal war-lords matched their dismay. Faring badly in the defense of their most important position, the Commander-in-Chief was not pleased to be beset by the cause of his previous defeat, a cause that he had refused to believe. He fought vigorously with his hands. In that dense cloud of flying demons he could not miss every bee, and his flailing arms caught many of them and sent them sailing to their death in impact against the wall. A second later his eyes were closing as the result of a hundred swiftly administered stings. Five seconds later he had absorbed 500 stings. Through eyes that were now almost closed, he saw a fly swatter nearby, and his fingers closed upon it just as the last of his vision was gone. He fanned it vigorously through the air. The bees avoided it as much as possible but in their dense mass in the close quarters, a hundred of them met death on each swing. Ten seconds later he had absorbed a thousand stings and was swinging much less vigorously. Thirty seconds later he lay on the floor, dying. His eyes could not see that every other man that had been in the room at the instant of attack also lay dying.

It was when the bees had flown out of the room that they learned that Greta was no longer with them. She lay stunned on the ground outside and seriously injured. In the attack which she herself had led against the Commander-in-Chief she had been caught by a blow of the wildly swinging fly swatter. It had grazed her body and carried away one wing entirely. The impact had sailed her body out of an open window, and she lay helpless and unconscious on the grass.

Greta's army refused to depart until the fate of their queen had been determined. They hovered about while numerous scouting bees searched for her. At length they found her and rejoiced that she was still alive. Two that remained the most physically fit were assigned the duty of transporting her home. One grasped the good wing with her mandibles, and the other grasped the stump of the other wing in like manner. With great effort, they lifted her up and flew away. In the end, they reached their home.

IF Greta could have known it, she would have considered that her last attack was well worth the sacrifice. The wiping out of the headquarters staff of the

Asiatics was the final blow that definitely led to a sweeping victory for the Americans. Without direction, the Asiatics had faltered. There had been no lesser generals capable of taking the place of the genius and his assistants that had been killed. It was two hours before a lesser war-lord even tried, and he made a miserable failure of it. No part of the defense knew what was happening to any other part of it. Reinforcements were not sent to points where they were needed most, and sectors of the defense were not supplied with additional ammunition which they sorely needed. They fell back more and more rapidly. The line was pierced, the morale of both soldiers and leaders in the Asiatic army failed, and the Americans marched on. Two weeks later the war was over.

Chapter XII

THE LIVING MONUMENT.

GRETA returned to consciousness in her artificial home. The pain in her body was so great that for three days she was scarcely able to think. She could only rest the easiest way she could and make the best of it. At the end of that time, however, what was left of her body began to heal in its dismembered state, and she began to think of the future. That she could lead no more battles was a fact plainly evident. She was not sure that she was willing to send her bees out to battle again even without her. The reports were that there was no more war in their immediate vicinity, and she rejoiced in the news. She hoped that her white-men friends had finished it once and for all. She began to think of ways to return to Cavoon.

A week later Greta became concerned for her particular friend, Stevens. Before the recent drive, he had made it a point to examine the colony daily to determine its needs in the way of food. The food in the trough remained constant, but there was no sign of Stevens.

Two weeks later Greta had determined that it was impractical for her to ever return to Cavoon. The long flight would be arduous enough even if she had been physically perfect, but to expect her workers to carry her that far was out of the question. Much as she hated to forsake forever the city she had loved, she finally became consoled in the thought that here, among the kindly white men, she would build a city just as great as Cavoon. If only Stevens would show up again, she would be more content.

It was the next day after Greta reached that decision that two men approached the hive quite slowly and with serious mien. One showed only the merest trace of a vanishing timidity, while the other was considerably more cautious. The first was Martin Anderson. The second was General McKelvey.

"Do you think you can do it?" asked the General.

"I don't know," returned the other. "But I can try."

Anderson held out his hand. He stood close to the entrance of the hive, and held his hand in such a way that the stream of bees going in and out of the hive could not fail to notice it. He prepared to remain that way indefinitely.

Speaking softly, he said:

"I would rather have had it happen to me."

"So would I," returned McKelvey. "To think that Stevens, the saviour of the American nation, should be lying in a hospital, gassed, and with his body perforated! The man had dreams. He had an indescribable understanding of living things and a God-given sympathy for them that enabled him to do what he did. If he could be granted a natural span of life there is no telling just how much he could accomplish. It is not right, Anderson."

Anderson said:

"If only we can succeed in this effort and carry the word to him before he does die that his 'little lady' still lives, I will always consider that I have been extremely honored by doing him a service."

"So will I. And I shall do him still one more service. This contact with the bees is giving me an idea. But look! What is that crippled bee down there on the entrance board? She is acting funny."

Anderson had not been watching the entrance. He had been watching his hand. He bent over quickly for a close look at the bee in question, As he surveyed her crippled form more closely, his eyes lighted with both hope and dismay. Slowly, he placed a finger on the alighting board. Greta, using her four remaining legs, crawled upon his finger without hesitation.

Anderson stood up and held Greta up for the General's inspection.

"Look at her!" he cried. "There is Stevens' 'little lady.' And if she hasn't paid a bitter price for her part in the war! See how she is crippled," he said, and his tone was bitter.

"Are you sure that she is the right one?" asked McKelvey.

"I know it. I recognize certain markings," said Anderson,

"All right," snapped McKelvey. "Put her down and let's get going. I'd give my right arm to get news to Stevens that she still lives before he dies. Take a motorcycle and burn up the road. I'll follow in my car. If you don't get there in thirty minutes, I'll break your damn neck."

McKelvey formulated his plan as he drove over the military road to the hospital. He arrived just in time to outline it to Stevens before the latter passed from the land of the living, The last words that Stevens ever uttered were: "Nothing would suit me better, General."

With that, he died, a smile on his lips.

Thuros did not understand the reported activity of the men just outside of Cavoan. She flew out at intervals to investigate it herself.

It was days before the work was completed, but during those days the bees of Cavoan held their peace. There was something sober in the bearing of the men that quieted all antagonism. Even the slight jar that was transmitted to the combs of Cavoan through the measured blasting of the men did not arouse their anger. They did not understand, but they did not fear. The grave was dug in peace on the bank of the ravine, not quite over the entrance to Cavoan. After the casket had been lowered with due ceremony and the grave filled, the work continued unabated. Slowly, an imposing monument of marble was assembled. Thuros observed that it was hollow, and the thought occurred to her that it would possibly contain as much room as the cave in which was housed the city of Cavoan. It was

a definite shock of surprise, however, when she saw frames of comb with adhering bees being transferred ever so carefully into the hollow monument by Martin Anderson's trembling hands.

Thuros was not so sure that she approved of this. It was true that their pastures were improving, but this city was going to be very close. She flew closer. She circled the man with the combs and inspected the bees that clung to the combs, unafraid. She spied a crippled form that v. as a queen bee.

"Greta!" she called.

"Thuros!"

Thuros came to rest upon the comb bearing Greta. Thuros was still listening to the chronicle of events as related by Greta when the last of the combs had been transferred and the monument had been closed with a thick marble slab.

"Then you think the war is over?" asked Thuros.

"I am certain of it. It was certainly over in our vicinity, and why else should the men bring us home?"

"You must be right," returned Thuros. "But do you have any idea why they have set you up a city in stone instead of returning you to your natural home?"

"I wish I knew," Greta said.

If the bees could have read, they could have learned. Just over the entrance to this hollow monument there was this inscription:

FRED STEVENS, SEVENTH

**MAY HIS BODY REST IN PEACE BENEATH THIS STONE.
WE ARE NOT SURE BUT THAT HIS SOUL, IN PART,
LIVES ON ETERNALLY
IN THE INTELLIGENCE OF THESE, THE BEES HE LOVED.**

McKelvey and Anderson were the last to leave the scene. They drove for a while in silence. McKelvey was the first to speak. He said:

"Are you quite sure that you are willing to renounce your profession and take over this job?"

"I certainly am. To be the Superintendent of the new *Apis Mellifica* National Park is the greatest honor this country can bestow upon me."

"At that, it will be quite a job to keep these thousands of acres in a state of perpetual bloom the country wants."

"It will be a job more to my liking than anything I ever had," said Anderson. "Inside of a year I shall have this place a paradise of flowers, and nectar-bearing flowers at that."

"All of it?" asked McKelvey.

"No, not all of it. I thought I would leave that area in the immediate vicinity of the monument in as nearly its natural state as possible."

McKelvey agreed.

"I think Stevens would have preferred it that way," he said.

The face of the polished marble monument caught the rays of the afternoon sun and reflected them in a long arc as time marched on. Here and there in their path

the reflected rays enhanced the glory of soft creamy panicles. The sumacs were in bloom.



⁽¹⁾ One hundred thousand worker bees would weigh about 60 pounds at approximately 5,000 to the pound.