

ACCIDENTAL MAGIC

OR

DON'T TELL ALL YOU KNOW



BY
ENESBIT

Illustrated by H. R. Millar.

A STORY FOR
CHILDREN.

enjoyed every moment of his ten years, even the sleeping ones.

I tell you all this so that you may understand why he said what he did when his mother broke the news to him.

He was sitting by the stream that ran along the end of the garden, making bricks of the clay that the stream's banks were made

of. His mother came out, and she had a letter in her hand.

"Halloa, boy of my heart!" she said. "Very busy?"

"Yes," said Quentin, importantly, not looking up, and going on with his work.

"Quentin, dear!" she said, and something in her voice made him look up suddenly.

"Oh, mother, what is it?" he asked.

"Daddy's been wounded," she said; "he's all right now, dear—don't be frightened. Only I've got to go out to him. I shall meet him in Egypt. And you must go to school in Salisbury, a very nice school, dear, till I come back."

After a moment he said, "Salisbury? Then I shall see Stonehenge?"

"Yes," said his mother, pleased that he took the news so calmly; "you will be sure to see Stonehenge some time."

The journey to Salisbury was made in a motor, which was very exciting, of course, and rather took Quentin's mind off the parting with his mother, as she meant it should.

I believe it was quite a nice school. B-



QUENTIN DE WARD was rather a nice little boy, but he had never been with other little boys. His father was in India, and he and his mother lived quite alone in a little house in the New

Forest. Mrs. de Ward read a great many books, and she used to tell Quentin about them afterwards.

Thus he came to know quite a lot of odd, out-of-the-way things, and to have opinions of his own concerning them.

Quentin did no regular lessons, such as most boys have, but he read all sorts of books and made notes from them.

You will, perhaps, have supposed that Quentin was a prig. But he wasn't, and you would have owned this if you had seen him scampering through the green wood on his quiet New Forest pony, or setting snares for the rabbits. And once he fought the grocer's boy and got licked, and didn't cry, and made friends with the grocer's boy afterwards. He was ten years old, and he had

Quentin hated it from the very beginning, for when his mother had gone the head master said: "School will be out in half an hour. Take a book, De Ward," and gave him "Little Eric and His Friends," a mere baby book. It was too silly. He could not read it. He saw on a shelf near him "Smith's Antiquities," a very old friend of his, so he said, "I'd rather have this, please."

"You should say 'sir' when you speak to a master," the head said to him. "Take the book by all means." To himself the head said, "I wish you joy of it, you little prig."

When school was over one of the boys was told to show Quentin his bed and his locker. The matron had already unpacked his box, and his pile of books was waiting for him to carry it over.

"Golly, what a lot of books!" said Smithson minor. "What's this? 'Atlantis'? Is it a jolly story?"

"It isn't a story," said Quentin.

And just then the classical master came by. "What's that about 'Atlantis'?" he said.

"It's a book the new chap's got," said Smithson.

The classical master glanced at the book.

"And how much do you understand of this?" he asked, fluttering the leaves.

"Nearly all, I think," said Quentin.

"You should say 'sir' when you speak to a master," said the classical one; and to himself he added, "Little prig." Then he said to Quentin, "I am afraid you will find yourself rather out of your element among ordinary boys."

"I don't think so," said Quentin, calmly, adding as an afterthought, "sir."

"I'm glad you're so confident," said the classical master, and went.

After supper the boys had half an hour's recreation. Quentin, who was tired, picked up a book which a big boy had just put down. It was the "Midsummer Night's Dream."

"Hi, you kid," said the big boy, "don't pretend you read Shakespeare for fun. That's simple swank, you know."

"I don't know what swank is," said Quentin, "but I like the 'Midsummer,' whoever wrote it."

"Whoever *what*?"

"Well," said Quentin, "there's a good deal to be said for its being Bacon who wrote the plays."

Of course, that settled it. From that moment he was called, not De Ward, which was strange enough, but "Bacon." He rather liked that. But the next day it was

"Pork," and the day after "Pig," and that was unbearable.

The book called "Atlantis" had been looked at by most of the school, and Smithson major—not nearly such an agreeable boy as his brother—hit on a new nickname.

"'Atlantic Pork' is a good name for a swank," he said. "You know the rotten meat they have in Chicago."

This was in the playground, before dinner. Quentin shut the book he was reading and looked up.

"If you call me that I shall hit you," said Quentin, "as hard as I can."

Smithson looked round. No master was in sight. It seemed an excellent opportunity to teach young De Ward his place.

"Atlantic pig-swine!" he said, very deliberately. And Quentin sprang at him. And instantly it was a fight.

As the fist of Smithson major described a half-circle and hurt his ear very much, Quentin suddenly screwed himself up and hit out with his right hand, knuckles up, straight, and with his whole weight behind the blow, as the grocer's boy had shown him. All his grief for his wounded father, his sorrow at the parting from his mother, all his hatred of his school and his contempt for his schoolfellows went into that blow. It landed on the point of the chin of Smithson major, who turned green and fell to the ground like a heap of rags.

"Well done, Piggy! Bravo, young 'un! Well hit, by Jove!"

Friendly hands thumped him on the back. Smithson major was no popular hero.

"Get up, Smithie!" cried the ring. "Want any more?"

Smithson moved and grunted. A sigh of relief swept the ring as a breeze sweeps a cornfield.

"He's all right. A fair knock-out. Piggy's got the use of 'em. Do Smithie good." The voices hushed suddenly. A master was on the scene—the classical master.

"Fighting?" he said. "The new boy? Who began it?"

"I did," said Quentin. "But he began with calling names."

"Sneak!" murmured the entire school; and Quentin, who had seen no reason for not speaking the truth, perceived that one should not tell all one knows, and that once more he stood alone in the world.

"You will go to your room, De Ward," said the classical master. "The headmaster will consider your case to-morrow. You will probably be expelled."

Quentin went to his room and thought over his position. It seemed to be desperate.

"If mother had known what it was like," he said to himself, "she would never have left me here. I've got the two pounds she gave me. I shall go to the White Hart at Salisbury—no, they'd find me then. I'll go to Lyndhurst, and write to her. It's better to run away than to be expelled."

His dinner was brought up on a tray—bread and water. He put the bread in his pocket. Then, when he knew that everyone was at dinner in the long dining-room at the back of the house, he just walked very quietly down the stairs, opened the side door, and

long while the cart shook to the carrier's heavy climb into it, the harness rattled, the cart lurched, and the wheels were loud and bumpy over the cobble-stones of the yard.

The black horse seemed as sleepy as the streets, and went very slowly. Also, it stopped very often, and wherever there were parcels to leave there were slow, long talkings to be exchanged. I think, perhaps, Quentin dozed a good deal under his sacks. At any rate, it was with a shock of surprise that he suddenly heard the carrier's voice saying, as the horse stopped with a jerk:—

"There's a crate for you, Mrs. Braddock, returned empty."



"IT LANDED ON THE POINT OF THE CHIN OF SMITHSON MAJOR."

marched out, down the garden path and out at the tradesmen's gate.

He went quickly down the street, turning the first corner he came to so as to get out of sight of the school. He turned another corner, went through an archway, and found himself in an inn yard—very quiet indeed.

Quentin was just turning to go back through the arch when he saw a big covered cart, whose horse wore a nose-bag and looked as if there was no hurry. The cart bore the name, "Miles, Carrier, Lyndhurst."

Quentin climbed up by the shaft. There were boxes and packages of all sorts in the cart, and at the back an empty crate with sacking over it. He got into the crate, pulled the sacking over himself, and settled down to eat his bread.

Presently the carrier came out, and after a

"I'll go and call Joe," said a voice—Mrs. Braddock's, Quentin supposed—and slow feet stumped away over stones. Mr. Miles leisurely untied the tail canvas of the cart, ready to let the crate be taken out.

Quentin spent a paralytic moment. What could he do?

And then, luckily or unluckily, a reckless motor tore past, and the black horse plunged, and Mr. Miles had to go to its head and "talk pretty" to it for a minute. And in that minute Quentin lifted the sacking and looked out. It was low sunset, and the street was deserted. He stepped out of the crate, dropped to the ground, and slipped behind a stout and friendly water-butt that seemed to offer protective shelter.

Joe came, and the crate was taken down.

The cart rattled away. Joe and the cr

blundered out of hearing, and Quentin looked cautiously round the water-butt.

Hastily turning his school-cap inside out—the only disguise he could think of—he emerged from the water-butt seclusion and into the street, trying to look as if there was no reason why he should not be there. He did not know the village. It was not Lyndhurst. And, of course, asking the way was not to be thought of.

There was a piece of sacking lying on the road; it must have dropped from the carrier's cart. He picked it up and put it over his shoulders.

"A deeper disguise," he said. And walked on.

He walked steadily for a long, long way as it seemed; and the world got darker and darker.

"I shall have to sleep behind a hedge," he said, bravely enough; but there did not seem to be any hedges. And then, quite suddenly, he came upon it.

A scattered building, half-transparent as it seemed, showing black against the last faint pink and primrose of the sunset. He stopped, took a few steps off the road on short, crisp turf that rose in a gentle slope, and at the end of a dozen paces he knew it. Stonehenge! Stonehenge he had always wanted so desperately to see!

He stopped to think. He knew that Stonehenge stands all alone on Salisbury Plain. He was very tired. His mother had told him about a girl in a book who slept all night on the altar-stone at Stonehenge. So it was a thing that people did—to sleep there.

There was just enough light left amid the stones of the wonderful broken circle to guide him to its centre. As he went, his hand brushed a plant; he caught at it, and a little group of flowers came away in his hand.

"St. John's wort," he said; "that's the magic flower." And he remembered that it is only magic when you pluck it on Midsummer Eve.

"And this *is* Midsummer Eve," he told himself, and put it in his buttonhole.

"I don't know where the altar-stone is," he said; "but that looks a cosy little crack between those two big stones."

He crept into it, and lay down on a flat stone that stretched between and under two fallen pillars.

The night was soft and warm; it was Midsummer Eve.

"Mother isn't going till the twenty-sixth," he told himself. "I sha'n't bother about

hotels. I shall send her a telegram in the morning and get a carriage at the nearest stables and go straight back to her."

Then he fell asleep on the smooth, solid, steady stone.

He awoke on the stone in a world that rocked as sea-boats rock on a choppy sea.

He went to sleep between fallen, moveless pillars of a ruin older than any world that history knows.

He awoke in the shade of a purple awning through which strong sunlight filtered and purple curtains that flapped and strained in the wind; and there was a smell—a sweet, familiar smell—of tarred ropes and the sea.

The stone on which he lay dipped and rose to a rhythm which he knew well enough. He had felt it when he and his mother went in a little boat from Key Haven to Alum Bay, in the Isle of Wight. There was no doubt in his mind. He was on a ship. But how—but why? Who could have carried him all that way without waking him? Was it magic—accidental magic? The St. John's wort, perhaps?

There was the pat-pat of bare feet on the deck, a dull sort of shuffling as though people were arranging themselves; and then people outside the awning began to sing. It was a strange song—not at all like any music you or I have ever heard. It had no tune, but it had a sort of wild, rough, glorious, exciting splendour about it.

Quentin lifted a corner of the purple curtain and looked out.

Instantly the song stopped, drowned in the deepest silence Quentin had ever imagined. It was only broken by the flip-flapping of the sheets against the masts of the ship. For it was a ship—Quentin saw that as the bulwark dipped to show him an unending waste of sea, broken by bigger waves than he had ever dreamed of. He saw also a crowd of men, dressed in white and blue and purple and gold. Their right arms were raised towards the sun—half of whose face showed across the sea—but they seemed to be "struck so," for their eyes were not fixed on the sun, but on Quentin. And not in anger, he noticed curiously, but with surprise and—could it be that they were afraid of him?

Quentin was shivering with the surprise and newness of it all. He had read about magic, but he had not wholly believed in it, and yet—now—if this was not magic, what was it?

The silence became awkward. Someone had to say something.

"Good morning," said Quentin, feeling that he ought, perhaps, to be the one.

Instantly everyone in sight fell on its face on the deck.

Only one, a tall man with a black beard and a blue mantle, stood up and looked Quentin in the eyes.

"Who are you?" he said. "Answer. I adjure you by the sacred Tau!" Now this was very odd and Quentin could never understand it, but when this man spoke Quentin understood *him* perfectly; and yet at the same time he knew that the man was speaking a foreign language. So that his thought was not, "Halloa, you speak English!" but, "Halloa, I can understand your language!"

"I am Quentin de Ward," he said.

"A name from other stars! How came you here?" asked the blue-mantled man.

"I don't know," said Quentin.

"He does not know. He did not

sail with us. It is by magic that he is here," said Blue Mantle. "Rise, all, and greet the Chosen of the Gods."

They rose from the deck, and Quentin saw that they were all bearded men, dressed in strange dress of something like jersey and

tunic, but with heavy golden ornaments and bright, earnest eyes.

"Hail, Chosen of the Gods!" cried Blue Mantle, who seemed to be the leader.

"Hail, Chosen of the Gods!" echoed all.



"WHO ARE YOU?" HE SAID. "ANSWER. I ADJURE YOU BY THE SACRED TAU!"

They brought him bread and bananas and oranges.

"Take," said Blue Mantle, "of the fruits of the earth, and specially of this, which gives drink and meat and ointment to man," suddenly offering a large cocoa-nut.

"Nothing," he continued, "is too good for the Chosen of the Gods. All that we have is yours—to the very last day of your life you have only to command, and we obey. You will like to eat in seclusion. And afterwards you will let us behold the whole person of the Chosen of the Gods."

Quentin retired into the purple tent, with the fruits and the cocoa-nut. When he had had enough to eat he peeped out again. Blue Mantle was on the watch and came quickly forward.

"Now," said he, very crossly indeed, "tell me how you got here. This Chosen of the Gods business is all very well for the vulgar. But you and I know that there is no such thing as magic."

"Speak for yourself," said Quentin. "If I'm not here by magic I'm not here at all."

"Yes, you are," said Blue Mantle.

"I know I am," said Quentin; "but if I'm not here by magic, what am I here by?"

"Stowawayishness," said Blue Mantle.

"If you think that, why don't you treat me as a stowaway?"

"Because of public opinion," said Blue Mantle, rubbing his nose in an angry sort of perplexedness.

"Very well," said Quentin, who was feeling so surprised and bewildered that it was a real relief to him to bully somebody. "Now look here. I came here by magic—accidental magic. I belong to quite a different world from yours. But perhaps you are right about my being the Chosen of the Gods. And I sha'n't tell you anything about my world. But I command you, by the sacred Tau" (he had been quick enough to catch and remember the word), "to tell me who you are, and where you come from and where you are going."

"Well, then," said Blue Mantle, "I am a priest of Poseidon, and I come from the great and immortal kingdom of Atlantis."

"From the temple where the gold statue is, with the twelve sea-horses in gold?" Quentin asked, eagerly.

"Ah! I knew you knew all about it," said Blue Mantle; "so I don't need to tell you that I am taking the sacred stone, on which you are sitting (profanely, if you are a mere stowaway and not the Chosen of the Gods), to complete the splendid structure of a temple built on a great plain in the second of the islands which are our colonies in the North-East."

"Tell me all about Atlantis," said Quentin. And the priest, protesting that Quentin knew as much about it as he did, told.

And all the time the ship was ploughing through the waves, sometimes sailing, sometimes rowed by hidden rowers with long oars. And Quentin was served in all things as though he had been a king.

"We are less than three days' journey now from the Eastern Isles," Blue Mantle said one day, "and I warn you that if you are a mere stowaway you had better own it. Because if you persist in calling yourself the Chosen of the Gods you will be expected to act as much—to the very end."

"I don't call myself anything," said Quentin; "though I am not a stowaway, anyhow, and I don't know how I came here—so, of course, it was magic. It's simply silly your being so cross. I can't help being here. Let's be friends."

"Well," said Blue Mantle, much less crossly, "I never believed in magic, though I *am* a priest; but if it is, it is. We may as well be friends, as you call it. It isn't for very long, anyway," he added, mysteriously.

And then, to show his friendliness, he took Quentin all over the ship and explained it to him. And Quentin was fed well all the time and made much of, so that when the ship reached land he was quite sorry. The ship anchored by a stone quay, most solid and serviceable, and everyone was very busy.

And after a very great deal of talk the altar-stone was lifted—Quentin, curtains, awning, and all—and carried along a gangway to the shore, and there it was put on a sort of cart, more like what people in Manchester call a lorry than anything else I can think of. The wheels were made of solid circles of wood bound round with copper. And the cart was drawn by—not horses or donkeys or oxen, or even dogs, but by an enormous creature more like an elephant than anything else, only it had long hair rather like the hair worn by goats.

You, perhaps, would not have known what this vast creature was; but Quentin, who had all sorts of out-of-the-way information packed in his head, knew at once that it was a mammoth.

And by that he knew, too, that he had slipped back many thousands of years, because, of course, it is a very long time indeed since there were any mammoths alive and able to draw lorries. And the car and the priest and the priest's retinue, and the stone and Quentin and the mammoth, journeyed slowly away from the coast, passing through great green forests and among strange grey mountains.

Where were they journeying?

Quentin asked the same question, you may be sure. And Blue Mantle told him.

"To Stonehenge." And Quentin understood him perfectly, though Stonehenge was not the word Blue Mantle used, or anything like it.

"The great temple is now complete," he said; "all but the altar-stone. It will be the most wonderful temple ever built in any of the colonies of Atlantis. And it will be consecrated on the longest day of the year."

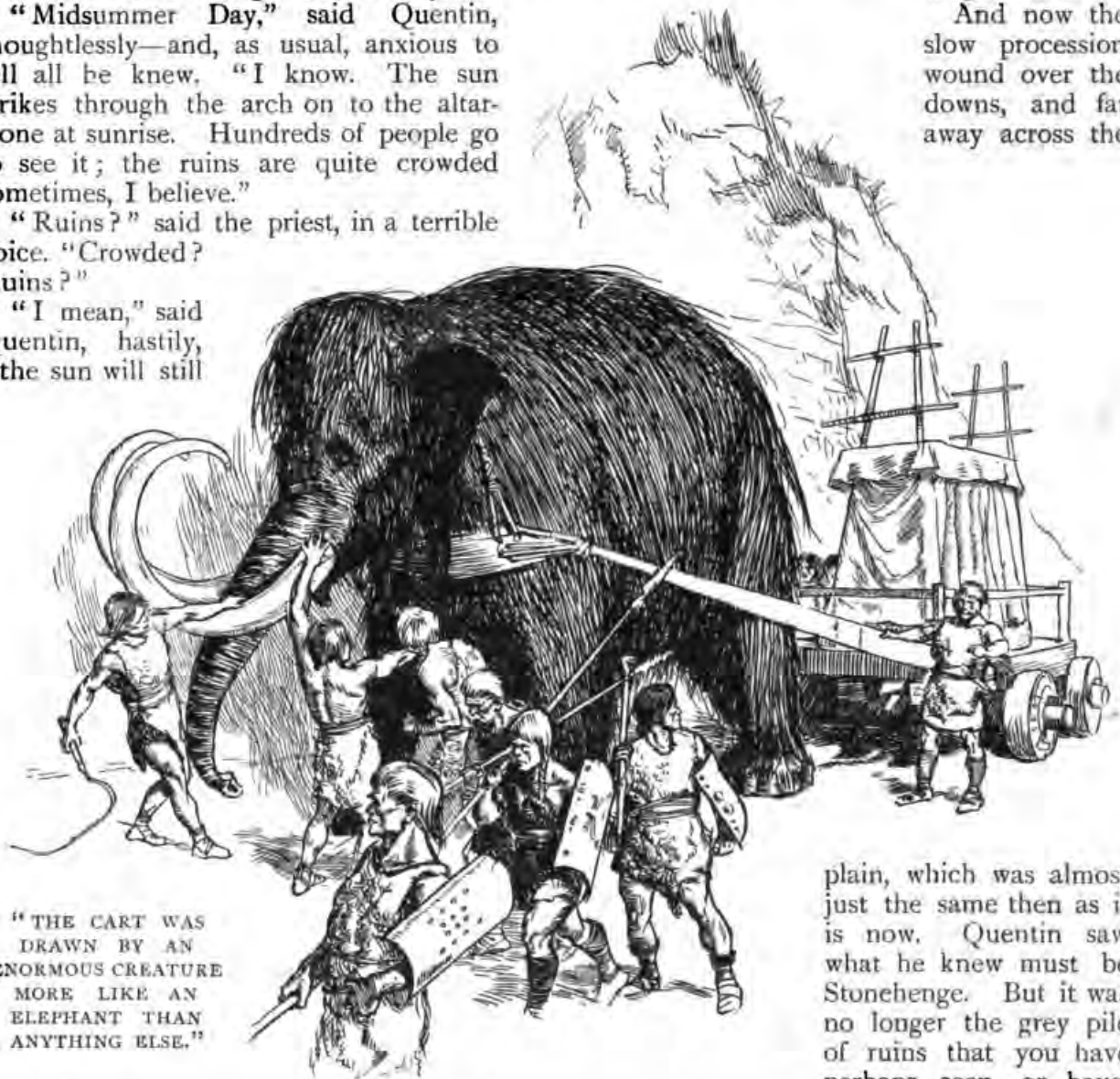
"Midsummer Day," said Quentin, thoughtlessly—and, as usual, anxious to tell all he knew. "I know. The sun strikes through the arch on to the altar-stone at sunrise. Hundreds of people go to see it; the ruins are quite crowded sometimes, I believe."

"Ruins?" said the priest, in a terrible voice. "Crowded? Ruins?"

"I mean," said Quentin, hastily, "the sun will still

simple accidental magic, and he felt, no doubt, that he should get back in the same way. He felt almost sure that the reverse action, so to speak, of the magic would begin when the stone got back to the place where it had lain for so many thousand years before he happened to go to sleep on it, and to start—perhaps by the St. John's wort—the accidental magic. If only, when he got back there, he could think of the compelling, the magic word!

And now the slow procession wound over the downs, and far away across the



"THE CART WAS DRAWN BY AN ENORMOUS CREATURE MORE LIKE AN ELEPHANT THAN ANYTHING ELSE."

shine the same way even when the temple is in ruins, won't it?"

"The temple," said the priest, "is built to defy time. It will never be in ruins."

Now, though Quentin had been intensely interested in everything he had seen in the ship and on the journey, you may be sure he had not lost sight of the need there was to get back out of this time of Atlantis into his own time. He knew that he must have got into these Atlantean times by some very

plain, which was almost just the same then as it is now. Quentin saw what he knew must be Stonehenge. But it was no longer the grey pile of ruins that you have perhaps seen, or have,

at any rate, seen pictures of.

As they drew near to the spot Quentin perceived that the great stones he remembered were overlaid with ornamental work, with vivid bright-coloured paintings. The whole thing was a great circular building, every stone in its place. At a mile or two distant lay a town. And in that town, with every possible luxury, served with every circumstance of servile homage, Quentin ate and slept.

That night, for the first time since he

first gone to sleep on the altar-stone, Quentin slept apart from it. He lay on a wooden couch strewn with soft bear-skins, and a woollen coverlet was laid over him. And he slept soundly.

In the middle of the night, as it seemed, Blue Mantle woke him.

"Come," he said, "Chosen of the Gods—since you *will* be that, and no stowaway—the hour draws nigh."

The mammoth was waiting. Quentin and Blue Mantle rode on its back to the outer porch of the new temple of Stonehenge. Rows of priests and attendants, robed in white and blue and purple, formed a sort of avenue up which Blue Mantle led the Chosen of the Gods, who was Quentin. They took off his jacket and put a white dress on him, rather like a nightshirt without sleeves. And they put a thick wreath of London pride on his head and another, larger and longer, round his neck.

And by this time it was grey dawn.

"Lie down now," said Blue Mantle, "lie down, O Beloved of the Gods, upon the altar-stone, for the last time."

"I shall be able to go, then?" Quentin asked.

"You will not be able to stay," said the priest. "If going is what you desire, the desire of the Chosen of the Gods is fully granted."

Quentin lay down, with his pink wreaths and his white robe, and watched the quickening pinkiness off the East. And slowly the great circle of the temple filled with white-robed folk, all carrying in their hands the faint pinkness of the flowers which we now-days call London pride.

And all eyes were fixed on the arch through which, at sunrise on Midsummer Day, the sun's first beam should fall upon the white, new, clean altar-stone. The stone is still there, after all these thousands of years, and at sunrise on Midsummer Day the sun's first ray still falls on it.

The sky grew lighter and lighter, and at last the sun peered redly over the down, and the first ray of the morning sunlight fell full on the altar-stone and on the face of Quentin.

And as it did so a very tall, white-robed priest, with a deer-skin apron and a curious winged head-dress, stepped forward. He carried a great bronze knife, and he waved it ten times in the shaft of sunlight that shot through the arch and on to the altar-stone.

"Thus," he cried—"thus do I bathe the sacred blade in the pure fountain of all light,

all wisdom, all splendour. In the name of the ten kings, the ten virtues, the ten hopes, the ten fears, I make my weapon clean! May this temple of our love and our desire endure for ever, so long as the glory of our Lord the Sun is shed upon this earth. May the sacrifice I now humbly and proudly offer be acceptable to the gods by whom it has been so miraculously provided. Chosen of the Gods, return to the gods who sent thee!"

A roar of voices rang through the temple. The bronze knife was raised over Quentin. He could not believe that this—this horror—was the end of all these wonderful happenings.

"No, no," he cried; "it's not true. I'm not the Chosen of the Gods! I'm only a little boy that's got here by accidental magic!"

"Silence!" cried the priest. "Chosen of the Immortals, close your eyes! It will not hurt. This life is only a dream; the other life is the real life. Be strong, be brave!"

Quentin was not brave. But he shut his eyes. He could not help it. The glitter of the bronze knife in the sunlight was too strong for him.

Suddenly a sharp touch at his side told him that for this, indeed, it had all been. He felt the point of the knife.

"Mother!" he cried, and opened his eyes again.

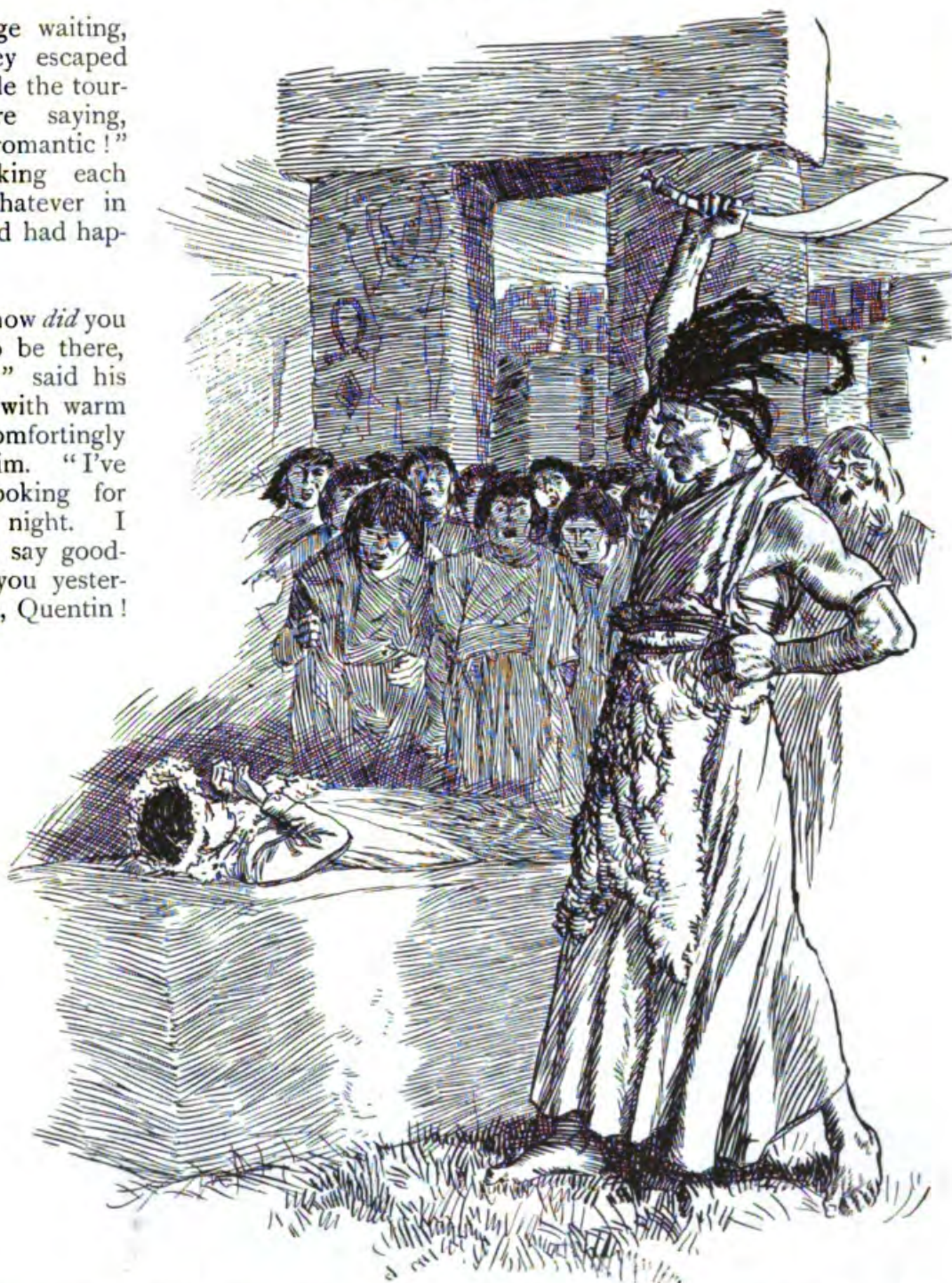
He always felt quite sure afterwards that "Mother" was the master word, the spell of spells. For when he opened his eyes there was no priest, no white-robed worshippers, no splendour of colour and metal, no Chosen of the Gods, no knife—only a little boy with a piece of sacking over him, damp with the night dews, lying on a stone amid the grey ruins of Stonehenge, and, all about him, a crowd of tourists who had come to see the sun's first shaft strike the age-old altar of Stonehenge on Midsummer Day in the morning. And instead of a knife-point at his side there was only the ferrule of the umbrella of an elderly and retired tea-merchant in a mackintosh and an Alpine hat—a ferrule which had prodded the sleeping boy.

And then, in a moment, he knew that he had not uttered the spell in vain, the word of compelling, the word of power—for his mother was there kneeling beside him.

The tourists were very kind and interested, and the tea-merchant insisted on giving Quentin something out of a flask, which was so nasty that Quentin only pretended to drink, out of politeness. His mother had

a carriage waiting, and they escaped to it while the tourists were saying, "How romantic!" and asking each other whatever in the world had happened.

"But how *did* you come to be there, darling?" said his mother, with warm arms comfortingly round him. "I've been looking for you all night. I went to say good-bye to you yesterday—oh, Quentin!



"‘SILENCE!’ CRIED THE PRIEST. ‘CHOSEN OF THE IMMORTALS, CLOSE YOUR EYES!’"

—and I found you'd run away. How *could* you?"

"I'm sorry," said Quentin, "if it worried you. I'm sorry. Very, very. I was going to telegraph to-day." Then he told her all about it. She held him very tightly and let him talk.

Perhaps she thought that a little boy to whom accidental magic happened all in a minute, like that, was not exactly the right little boy for that excellent school in Salisbury. Anyhow, she took him to Egypt with her to meet his father.

Quentin's father is well now, and he has

left the Army, and father and mother and Quentin live in a jolly little old house in Salisbury, and Quentin is a "day boy" at that very same school. He and Smithson minor are the greatest of friends. But he has never told Smithson minor about the accidental magic.

You may think that the accidental magic was all a dream, and that Quentin dreamed it because his mother had told him so much about it. But then, how do you account for his dreaming so much that his mother had never told him?