

**YERMAH THE
DORADO**

The Story of a Lost Race

BY

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THIS VOLUME
IS DEDICATED TO THE
WHITE KNIGHTS
OF ALL LANDS AND OF ALL THE AGES
IN LOVING MEMORY OF
MY FATHER
JAMES LAFAYETTE SMITH

—Frona Eunice Wait Colburn

FOREWORD

This book "Yermah the Dorado," was first published at The Sign of the Lark, San Francisco, in 1897. The issue was limited to five hundred copies, mostly subscribed for by personal friends of mine. The notes, manuscript and plates were all lost in the fire of 1906.

The date of publication is of the utmost importance because the Llama City, Tlamco, the scene of this romance, was located in Golden Gate Park, where it was destroyed by earthquake, in the long ago.

Since the actual occurrence of 1906, the original story has been slightly revised, but not a line of the description of the earthquake has been changed, nor an incident added. Whoever lived through those days, as I did, will not need to be told why. The use of aeroplanes and wireless telegraphy, with the recent visit of a huge comet are additional reasons impelling me to reprint what is very like a pre-vision of things to be.

To me Golden Gate Park is a hallowed spot. As a place of refuge I saw an ephemeral city reared in a night of stress and misery. The beauty of a rebuilt modern metropolis will but serve to recall the vanished glory of the dream city ruled by the man who was the real El Dorado.

FRONA EUNICE WAIT COLBURN.

TO GOLDEN GATE PARK

Where once the Wisdom-City's temples rose
Within her "Gates of Gold," our latter day
This noble pleasure ground but loves, and knows,
Nor guesses where the fanes of Tlamco lay;
Yet who shall say what spell that vanished race
Bequeathed forever to this mystic place?
For through this realm enchanted, wanderers stroll—
Or from the Seven Seas, or dwellers near—
And cares forget, while from each weary soul
Life's heavy burden slips—till peace reigns here
Where blue sky arches over flower and palm,
And west winds whispering, breathe a healing balm.
Here creep the old and sad, so long denied
The welcoming smile these sunny spaces hold;
Fond lovers weave their golden dreams beside
Gay, laughing children counting poppy gold;
To all the Park brings rest, and sweet relief
From work or pain, or haunting wraiths of grief.
—*Ella M. Sexton.*

YERMAH, THE DORADO
THE STORY OF A LOST RACE

CHAPTER ONE

Yermah, the Dorado, was refreshed and invigorated by his early morning ride. It had been a voluntary gallop, and it would have been hard to say which found the keenest enjoyment in it; he, his horse Cibolo, or Oghi the ocelot, which ran beside them in long, slow leaps, covering much ground yet always alighting noiselessly and as softly as a cat.

It was a beautiful morning, one that would correspond to the first of June now—but this was in the long ago, when days and months were reckoned differently.

The tall grass and wild oats left ample proof of close proximity along the roadside by the fragments secreted in the clothing of Yermah and in the trappings of Cibolo. Oghi, too, could have been convicted on the evidence his formidable toes presented. Added to this was the indescribable scent of dew, of the first hours of day and the springtime of nature.

It was the first time since his arrival from Atlantis that Yermah had ventured alone outside the city limits. When once the temples, and marketplaces of Tlamco were left behind him, he had given Cibolo the rein and abandoned himself to the exhilaration of going like the wind.

Tlamco, the Llama city, the name of which was unknown to the men who sought the mythical Kingdom of Quivera—that will-o'-the-wisp land—supposed to be the center of the Amazon inhabited island of California of the very remote past. Tlamco vanished so

completely that there were no traces perceptible to the men who founded Yerba Buena on the same peninsula ages after. Its existence would be laughed at by present day inhabitants of San Francisco were it not true that the hills in and around Golden Gate Park are living witnesses of great mathematical skill.

The first denizens built some of these hills and shaped others to give the diameters and distances of all the planets. Who of to-day will believe that Las Papas, or Twin Peaks, show the eccentricities of the earth's orbit to one fifty-millionths of its full size?

At present early morning milk-trains, and trucks loaded with vegetables from the outlying gardens intercept and mingle with the heavy wagons laden with meat from South City. In short, the modern city's food supply comes from the same direction in which Yermah rode. Conditions and people have changed since then, and so have many of the features of the locality itself.

South of what is known as the Potrero was a bay. Now it is a swamp, and the north and south points there are the remains of forts, although they appear to be nothing more than hillocks blown into shape by merest chance. To the west is a hill on which dwelt Hanabusa, the captain of the three-decked war-galleys, or balsas. Nearby was the signal tower which could be seen from every eminence in the city. It guarded the western side of the sanded causeway leading from the marketplace in the center of Tlamco to the water's edge. Hanabusa's house afforded protection to the north side.

Yermah skirted the range of hills on the land side, where the granaries of his people were located and which accounted for the presence of the war-galleys and the defenses in that neighborhood.

He rode down what is known as the old San Bruno Road, where he was kept busy returning the salutes of the workmen whose duty it was to produce, conserve and prepare food for their fellows.

Meeting Hanabusa near his house, Yermah dismounted to consult with him. While the men talked, Oghi lay in wait for a flock of birds, which had been frightened into rising from the ground. Oghi was more like the South American jaguar than any of the ocelots of Central America. In olden times these animals were plentiful on the Rio Grande, and were used by the sportsmen of the day for hunting, much as dogs are now employed.

This morning once fairly in the country, the quick eye of Oghi detected a fine buck deer surreptitiously grazing in a field of oats by the roadside. Instantly the ocelot crouched low and hugging the ground crept stealthily forward. The black-tail, soon conscious of danger, elevated its head adorned with a splendid set of antlers still in the velvet. Its nostrils were distended, and it sniffed the air suspiciously. Like a bolt from a gun the deer made a tremendous leap, and was off at top speed. Oghi continued to trail in a crouching position, which made him look like a long, black streak against the horizon. He gained on the deer from the first, and when near enough made a furious spring.

The leap fell short, but Oghi lighted on the rump of the buck and nearly bore it to its haunches. The wounded animal shook off its assailant and plunged ahead desperately, but it was plain to be seen that it was badly hurt where Oghi's claws had torn out great pieces of flesh and hide.

The ocelot now changed tactics. All his cruel leonine nature was aroused by the exertion and the taste of warm blood. Instead of

hugging the heels of his victim, he endeavored to run alongside near the shoulder where he could fix his sharp teeth in the throbbing throat. For a few moments they ran side by side, straight and even as a pair of coach horses.

Then, with a mighty cat-like spring, Oghi's long, slender body stretched out and up into the air. When he descended, his claws had closed on the jugular vein of the deer. For an instant there was no break in speed. The deer made two more leaps, then staggered, whirled once around, and victor and vanquished went heels over head together in the long grass.

Yermah kept close behind, putting Cibolo to his best paces in an endeavor to save the life of the deer. He called repeatedly to Oghi to let go his hold. Finally the creature reluctantly obeyed with a sullen growl. Not only were the main arteries and veins in the deer's throat severed, but the heavy blows had broken the shoulder-blade.

Yermah hastily fastened the chain he carried to the bull's-hide band on Oghi's foreleg, which was held in place by two smaller chains fastened to the animal's collar. As the captor licked the blood off his chops, the death-struggles of his prey grew fainter, and finally ceased altogether.

Oghi was quite a character in his way, and enjoyed an unique reputation among the inhabitants of Tlamco. He came as a gift to Yermah from the Atlantian colonists of the Rio Grande. He seemed so disconsolate and lonely when first brought to his new home, that Yermah sent to his former region to secure the ocelot a mate. In the meantime, the young man told all his friends about it and promised his favorites the first litters which should follow this

happy venture. Oghi's reputation for intelligence, docility and courage made every one feel fortunate in the prospect of owning some of the stock.

Pika, the mate, was an ocelot beauty and carried herself with all the haughty disdain a full knowledge of that fact might have inspired. When turned loose in the yard with Oghi, she flew at him instantly and whipped him unmercifully. In no circumstance would she allow him near her. Oghi submitted like a sheep. He even crawled flat on his belly and howled for mercy. In these encounters he kept close to the wall on the opposite side, and whenever possible scaled it with remarkable agility.

This unexpected outcome gave rise to great hilarity, although the consensus of opinion was that Oghi had behaved like a gentleman. There were men in those days capable of facing a hostile regiment, single-handed, but who capitulated unconditionally at sight of an irate female—so this idea is not entirely modern.

It may have been that an easy victory over Oghi caused Pika to over-estimate her fighting abilities, for she did not hesitate to attack a grizzly bear and in so doing came to an untimely end. It was a rough-and-tumble fight, but a duel to the death from the beginning.

Had Pika been more wary, she would have kept well to the rear; but she foolishly got in the way of Bruin's right paw and the result was a skull split from nose to ear.

When Yermah's irreverent friends came to condole with him, he invited them to witness his endowment of Oghi with a badge of mourning. This was the bull's-hide band, worn on the left foreleg by means of which Oghi was always manageable. Suspended from

the hook which fastened the leading chain was a leaden heart with the inscription—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF PIKA

which was indeed a sign manual of submission and servitude. If at any time during the rest of his life, Oghi showed signs of rebellion, Yermah had but to pull the chain and the left foreleg was doubled up close to the body, while the collar around the neck became uncomfortably tight.

Iaqua, Yermah's official residence, was surrounded by an immense octagonal enclosure, and was approached by two beautiful gates. The one due north closed a roadway composed of tiny sea-shells, extending to the bay and overlooking the Golden Gate. The other was a terminus of a foot-path of flagging which led to the Observatory. Here the adobe was laid in irregular forms and covered with stucco.

Iaqua's eight towers were circular in form and had battlements and winding stairways. Each was furnished with deep-set octagon loopholes for observation, and comfortably accommodated twenty men. The entrance was a door opening into the courtyard and connecting with a passageway under the terrace. It was this opening fitted with loopholes which really made the building a fortification.

The whole structure was flat-roofed, having battlements of hard wood plated with lead. The lower floor of each tower was used as a guardroom, being furnished with huge tables and benches which followed the outline of the room. There were stools of terra-cotta, porcelain and hard woods elaborately carved where the body-guard

suite of the Dorado lived. In each tower, one above the other, were two sleeping apartments of equal size with mess-rooms attached.

As Yermah galloped up through the wide southern gate, the courtyard filled with members of his staff. As he swung lightly from the saddle, it was noticed that Cibolo showed signs of the morning work. Yermah led his charger to the stable door, and, as he was being rubbed down, gave him some salt and patted him affectionately.

Oghi took offense at this show of partiality, and leaping over the back of the horse, stood uncomfortably near Yermah, the hair along his spinal column on end and his tail straight and threatening. Yermah spoke sharply to the ocelot.

Disturbed by the commotion, a flock of parrots having the freedom of Cibolo's crib began to screech and to chatter, as if they not only comprehended but sympathized with Oghi's jealousy. In less than a minute they were vigorously fighting among themselves, and Yermah, unable to make himself heard above the noise and din, fled incontinently.

Cibolo came from Poseidon's stud, whence his ancestry was traced back many generations. He had all the qualities which conduced to endurance and speed. Cibolo's bright eyes gave evidence of energy and splendid nerve, and he carried himself like a king. His straight neck and perfect joints were connecting links of a muscular system of great power. In the center of a wide, flat forehead was a star, and the glossy coat of hair distinctly outlined a delicate tracery of veins. The nostrils were wide and open, while the mobile ears, set well apart were small and straight. Never in his life had the horse

been struck a blow. He was docile, obedient, affectionate and intelligent.

With fine-cut horn brushes, the groom set to work removing every particle of dust and sweat from his skin, smoothing every hair into its proper place, until it shone like fine satin. The mane and tail were combed like human hair and plaited into tight strands, which would be loosened only when he was harnessed to the chariot, later in the day. As became the station of his master, the head ornaments, saddles, coronas and trappings worn when hitched to the chariot were masses of jewels, feathers, silver bells and embroidery.

Yermah went directly to his private apartments in the eastern quadrangle of Iaqua. The approaches to this part of the house were screened by trellises covered with flowering creepers. After a plunge and a shower of both salt and fresh water, followed by a liberal use of lavender spray, of which the Dorado was extremely fond, he emerged from the hands of his dresser with a glow of health and happiness on his face. He lingered but a moment in the hallway, then crossed over to the extreme eastern triangle, which was a private sanctuary where he often went to consult the oracle Orion on personal matters.

The statue was of carved alabaster exquisitely proportioned. It represented the figure of a man, with diamond eyes, whose head supported a jeweled miter terminating in a point. The belt which confined the loose robe at the waist line had three solitaires of purest water which were supposed to grow dim if the petitioner were not in good health or was in danger. If these stones became opaque or colorless, the phenomenon gave rise to most dismal forebodings.

Orion was placed in a square niche exactly facing the rising sun, holding a fan and a sickle in the hand. A window of jeweled glass let in the first rays of the morning, lighting up the gold and silver ornamentation back of the figure. The right side was of gold, the left of silver—one typifying the sun, the other the moon. Back of the head, suspended from the ceiling, was a splendid panache of green feathers dusted with jewels, and above this was a crystal ball, whose knobby surface reflected rainbow colors in circles and zones. At the feet was a bas-relief representing a golden humming bird flying over water which was a symbol of Atlantis.

The prayer-rug in front of the statue was of ivory, woven in strips. It was as flexible as cloth and beautifully fine. The double-key pattern, characteristic of pre-historic America, formed the border; but this was much broken and most effective with its shadings of black, skillfully intermingled with filigree carvings. Pastils of incense burned on the altar—peace and quiet reigned supreme.

The Dorado was a child of promise; that is to say, he had been set apart as the future ruler of the island of Atlantis and her outlying colonies. By the Brotherhood of the White Star he had been consecrated, before he was born, to a life of service. Yermah was a veritable sun-god, and as the subdued light fell over his long, wavy blond hair and beard, while kneeling before the oracle, he was a specimen of manhood fair to look upon.

Tall, broad-shouldered and athletic, with not a pound of flesh too much, his countenance was as open and frank as that of a child. His large, round, clear-seeing blue eyes were placed exactly on a normal line—eyes whose truthfulness could not be questioned; and the slightly arched heavy brows indicated physical strength and mental power. Yermah had a large hand evenly balanced and well

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