

## LIEUTENANT FINN'S PROMOTION

By Aleister Crowley.

### I.

#### Voyage pénible.

**T**HOUGH he had not bought blood-stained laurels on the stricken field, Colonel Koupets was deservedly the pride of the Gallician army.

He had begun as a lion-hunter in Somaliland, and had a wound a foot long in his thigh which had at least the advantage of acting as a barometer. But on his return grave old Galpotz had hinted that such talent as he had shown for dealing with strange countries and peoples might be turned to better use than sport.

Accordingly Koupets had spent his next leave among the lakes that feed the Red Elin River, and a third expedition brought him to Lake Dahct and Northern Melania, and so to the mouth of the Ognoc.\*

His services to the Galician government, though secret, were recognizable, and Koupets had a free hand, and aid and glory from the national geographical societies. His adventures had been written up by industrious journalists, who spared no yellow. He was beginning to be an eponymous hero on the boulevards of his native Tetulia, when he suddenly became the man of mystery—greater, and yet forgotten.

For Koupets disappeared.

He had been last heard of at Lake Dahct. Thence he had plunged into the jungles of Central Kainogeny, and the silence swallowed him up.

People began to wonder where he was. Newspapers invented reports, one at least with such claim to authenticity as to be based on the gossip of a sailor's bar. One paper saw an opportunity, and published the "Terrible Tale of Koupets's Last Stand," with faked diaries, faked last messages, and faked photographs complete. Nobody cared much; the editor cut short his feuilleton and began a gorier, while the gloom of the tropical jungle settled over the fate of Koupets. Five years after his disappearance only one girl in all Gallicia, weeping at the grave of her dead mother, still hoped for his return; hardly a hundred ever gave a thought to him.

But the gathered blackness was not night, but storm; it was to break with a flash and a roar to appal the planet.

### II.

Colonel Koupets and his eight Gallician brother officers and fourteen soldiers had no intention whatever of going to Adoshaf.

Adoshaf has few charms for anybody, and even if we allow a great deal for eccentricity of taste in a man of Koupets's type, we cannot suppose that he would deliberately go two thousand miles out of his way to get there.

But the traveler in Central Kainogeny has to reckon with three main matters: savages, jungles and rivers. He consequently provides himself amply with guns, axes and some form of boat. Even so he may get misled. Koupets had been about three years on his trail, heading over southeast, when he struck an uncharted river where he least expected it. A lieutenant and four men set out in a boat to cross it, and were swept far down stream. Night fell, and they did not return. In the morning Koupets turned northward to try to pick them up. Towards even-

ing a native saw the wreck of the boat on a jutting rock in mid-stream.

Koupets continued his northern detour, on a report of a big village with canoes three days' march down stream. Rumor told truth, but had omitted to mention that the villagers were warlike and bloodthirsty cannibals.

The peaceable overtures of the traveler, who had exhausted his supply of scarlet umbrellas six months earlier, were scornfully rejected.

Koupets mowed down about three hundred of the deputation of protest with a Maxim, and stormed the village at dawn. Unfortunately, the party which he had detached to capture the canoes found itself cut off by a creek full of soft mud. The natives consequently were able to retreat when they saw their huts on fire, and Koupets was no better off for canoes than before.

Prisoners told him of a village of wizards to the north which no man could reach, since (a) the jungle was haunted, (b) there was an impassable river, (c) the road was very bad, (d) the inhabitants, far from being the simple and peaceable folk that informants' martyred tribe was composed of, were incarnate devils. From this Koupets deduced that he would reach it without difficulty in a few days, and meet with a very similar reception.

However, he was wrong. The natives, knowingly or not, failed to find the jungle paths. Koupets was forced more and more to the north, and even to the west. He then struck a friendly village, where every white man went down like a log with fever.

Two months later he made a fresh attempt to reach the river. Succeeding in the end, he found wood suitable for rafts, built them, and cast off. One was overturned, and the doctor, and all his medicines, and all the scientific instruments of the expedition, were lost, as well as a great deal of ammunition. Landing on the opposite bank, the explorer struck a village too big to attack except as a forlorn hope, and little inclined to amity.

The chief, however, proposed an alliance, as he was about to avenge a raid on his northern territory. A year's campaign followed; the enemy, beaten, pleaded that they had been urged to the raid by a fanatical race of strange complexion, who had invaded them from the north. Koupets, who knew that he was a thousand miles or so off his trail, but, since the loss of his instruments, had no real idea where he was on the map, was almost ready to abandon his main object, and get out anywhere he could. The river, always with them, flowed northward as persistently as the Elin itself might have done. He accepted the new alliance, and marched against the "fanatics of strange complexion"—which he found due to paint and an aged madwoman.

After the pacification of this tribe, he again fell dangerously ill. More of his men died; his resources of every kind were nearly exhausted; it seemed to him a duty to make for the sea as best he could.

He therefore chose the best canoes of his allies and plenty of provisions, which the grateful chief bestowed on him in abundance. A touching farewell was only marred by a gratuitous and perfectly treacherous attack on the part of the aforesaid grateful chief, who had suddenly awakened to the fact that the strangers were going off with valuable property, and that as soon as the farewell was said, the laws of hospitality no longer applied.

\*Erlas on the French map.