

## THE HYPNOTIST

Jack Somers was as normal a man as there ever was. Normal in all respects save one—he had a great desire to become a hypnotist. Nearly all his meager earnings went to buy books, pamphlets, and more books on the subject. But he could not master it. Whenever he had finished his study of the books and was confident of success, he would call over his dog, Chum, and practice on him. Invariably old Chum would look up at him, yawn, and walk away.

Somers had spent his last dollar on another book, "Hypnotism for All." Now at last he would master the art. For three hours he pored over the book. Every now and then he would practise before the mirror. "At last," he thought, "success is mine." He experimented on the dog again—with the same result. The dog blinked at him and walked away. Somers sank into his chair, overcome with despair.

A slight noise startled him and he rose quickly. There was a man in the room. Somers was very much surprised, for usually he kept the doors locked. In his excitement, perhaps, he had forgotten to lock them that night. The man moved towards the centre of the room without a sound. He was unusually tall and dressed in black. His high, broad forehead contrasted sharply with his close-set eyes and receding chin. Over all spread a great mass of jet black hair. But it was the eyes that held Somers' attention. Never before had he seen such flaming, almost horrible eyes.

"I understand that you wish to become a great hypnotist?" said the man in a deep hollow voice.

"Yes, I do," answered Somers wonderingly.

"That you would give anything to become one?"

"I'd give anything and everything to become the world's greatest."

"That is quite a broad statement to make. Are you sure you would part with something very precious?"

Somers considered.

"Yes, I mean what I said," he finally replied.

"Very well then, study your book again and you will be the world's greatest hypnotist," said the man, bending on Somers an almost malevolent look which wilted



him. "In five years I shall return and demand my price. Be prepared."

"Who are you anyway?" demanded Somers. But the stranger had departed as quickly as he had come.

Somers was somewhat alarmed at the bargain he had made. He noticed, while looking in the mirror, that his eyes had become, to a degree, similar to his visitor's. Doubtfully he re-read the book and then turned and fixed his gaze on Chum, and sure enough, hypnotized him. His delight knew no bounds, and he soon forgot his visitor and his agreement. He was the world's greatest hypnotist.

After he had completed three great theatre engagements, Somers was acclaimed as the world's greatest hypnotist. His ambition was realized. He was known throughout the world, and soon became as rich as he could possibly wish to be. By the power of his eye he made his will supreme. But still he was not content. Something vague, undefinable, was hanging over him, especially after his great successes. What it was he did not know. It was a feeling—a feeling that he was insecure. Somers laughed at the thought. He insecure? Why, he was the world's greatest hypnotist. What had he to fear? He, insecure? Nonsense! And he laughed, a mirthless laugh with just a hint of fear in it.

As time went on the feeling became more and more pronounced, and Somers became more and more worried. What was this feeling anyway, and how could he explain it? Somers attempted to trace it to its origin, but could not. Dimly he realized that it had begun since he had become a hypnotist. Five years before he had received the gift of hypnotism from the stranger. That stranger had said to him "You are now the world's greatest hypnotist. In five years I shall return and demand my price. Be prepared." Somers suddenly realized that the five years were almost up. What would the stranger's price be?—His money? No. He had hinted at something very precious. What could it be? Somers roused himself from his reverie. Why should he, the world's greatest hypnotist, pay a price to any man? He would not. When this stranger returned he would hypnotize him and force him to cancel the agreement. That is what he would do—hypnotize the man who had taught him to hypnotize. That would be something to his credit. And he fell to



musings again. Who was this stranger anyway, and why had he heard nothing of him during the past five years? Somers gave it up.

The five years were almost up and Somers was sitting in his den. Before, and facing him, lay Chum. Somers was waiting, waiting patiently for the stranger to come. He yawned and gazed around the room. On one wall was a chart showing the details of the human eyes. His gaze rested on this. "Why, those eyes seem almost alive to-night," he thought. He looked closer and felt himself slowly sinking into oblivion. With a supreme effort he averted his gaze and found himself standing before the chart. When he had first looked at the chart he was sitting down. The truth suddenly burst upon him—he had almost been hypnotized!

There was a presence in the room which Somers could not see, but very distinctly felt. He resumed his seat and his waiting. Lost in thought, he was staring into the fire. He started back with a gasp; for those eyes, the eyes of his visitor five years ago, were staring at him from the fire. He looked again. They were gone.

Bathed in cold perspiration he began pacing the room. Still he felt those awful eyes upon him. He turned and saw nothing except his dog. Something about the dog attracted his attention. He looked again and—My God! Was he seeing things or what? There in place of the dog's head was the head of the man who had promised to return that night. The eyes were bending on Somers that same malevolent look that they had that night five years before.

Completely unnerved, Somers knew that now he could never hypnotize the stranger, that he must pay the price. He knew whose eyes he had seen. In a shaky voice he called, "Show yourself. I can stand this no longer. I'm ready."

The tall, gaunt man stood before him again. Somers could not look at him. He felt those awful, horrible eyes upon him. The man spoke, "You, the world's greatest hypnotist by my power, planned to hypnotize me. Stand up and do it."

Somers stood, but with his head turned away. Those eyes were burning into him like red hot coals—he couldn't face them.

Deeper than before came the words, "In a few minutes



the five years will be up. Then I shall demand my price.  
It is YOU—YOUR SOUL. You said you were ready.  
Now, look at me."

A terrible shriek rent the air as Somers' eyes met  
those of his visitor and he toppled to the floor—a corpse.

The world's greatest hypnotist was no match for the  
master of hypnotists.

G. MacG. '30.

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Whatever day  
Makes man a slave takes half his worth away—*Pope.*

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Be to her virtues very kind;  
Be to her faults a little blind.

—*Prior*

