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FILE AND ARAVAN



LEO RABINOV



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RIFLE *and* CARAVAN





“Above the tangled bushes waved a writhing, moving object.”

[Page 189.]

RIFLE *and* CARAVAN
OR TWO BOYS IN EAST AFRICA

BY

JAMES BARNES

AUTHOR OF "COMMODORE BAINBRIDGE,"
"THE HERO OF ERIE," ETC.



ILLUSTRATED

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TO
EDWARD AND WILLIAM DE WITT
WHOSE WORLD OF ADVENTURE
IS STILL BEFORE THEM
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
BY THEIR FRIEND
THE AUTHOR

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RIFLE AND CARAVAN OR TWO BOYS IN EAST AFRICA

CHAPTER I

THE CHUMS

DALLAS RATHBONE, captain of the thirty-two-foot power boat *End Rush*, stood at the wheel, gazing at the misty shore of Long Island. Despite the fact that it was blazing hot, he was bareheaded. His arms and shoulders were brown as an Indian's; he wore only a pair of baggy flannel trousers, canvas shoes, and a black sleeveless jersey with the initials of his school, "S. L.", embroidered on it in dark red. The launch was humming over the water with the peculiar sense of constantly accelerating speed that all light, high-powered boats possess.

"Never known the engines to work better," said a voice with a slight drawl in it.

Dallas turned. "Just as sweet as sugar," he said. "That overhauling we gave them at New London was what they needed. Hello! There's little Gull Island—they say—do you know, in case of war, this part of the Sound would just be one great mine field?"

The boy lying on the cushions raised his head and

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gazed over the side. Then he looked up into the air, watching some gulls flying shoreward. "There's where the next war'll be fought," he said, "up yonder."

The use of the word, and the speaker's intonation, would have betrayed his origin to experienced ears. He was from Alabama, and he had the low soft voice and slow drawl of the Southerner.

Alfred Kerfoot Prentice was one of those boys whose looks and actions were at variance. At first glance one would have felt sure that if he had any sisters at all they must be pretty. He had delicate features and long-lashed, dreamy eyes. His muscles did not bulge under their brown skin the way Dallas Rathbone's did. They were smooth and round like a girl's, but he was the quickest thinking, quickest acting, hardest tackling half-back that St. Luke's School had ever had, and that was saying a good deal, for during the last three years two St. Lukers had held that position on two of the big 'varsity teams. Alf Prentice was almost a year younger than Dallas, who had just passed his seventeenth birthday. He was an orphan, and from the day of his arrival at the school—in Rathbone's second form year—the two boys had grown to be great friends. During the sixth form, when Dallas had been senior prefect and captain of the eleven, they had roomed together.

School days were over for them now. Before them stretched the road to a wider life. Ahead of young Rathbone the way was well-paved and clear. In three years, when he came of age, he would be what the world would call a rich man, but he was not the kind

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of boy who counted much on that. Idleness and the desire for ease had no part in his make-up. If anything, he was over-restless, prone to be venturesome. Yet, although he loved risks and excitement, he had a cool head with him always, inherited possibly from his soldier father, whom he resembled in appearance. He was half-English, his mother, the only daughter of wealthy parents, having married Captain Percival Rathbone of the Eleventh Lancers, "the best shot and the best polo player in England." It was five years now since his death. He had been killed in the hunting field while on a visit to his relations in Leicestershire. Up to the time he was fourteen Dallas had followed his mother and father everywhere in their far wanderings. He could hardly remember the time when he couldn't ride and shoot and swim, and in everything his father had been his instructor. In fact, he had been brought up on a system, the principle of which had existed in one of his father's sayings: "There's never been a molly-coddle in the Rathbone family, and, by George, my boy won't be one." Dallas' mother had followed out the same idea. Although many times it had taken courage for her not to interfere, she had never put a curb on any of his plans or ambitions, though she breathed easier at the end of each football season. She was generous to him, in fact, many people thought too generous; but the boy had inherited too many traditions to be either purse-proud or vain-glorious, and he had too healthy a mind, and too much common-sense, to make ill-use of either his allowance or his time. There was nothing of the

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spoiled child about him, and he was thoroughly American, despite his English looks, and a little English way of speaking. His ambition had been to go to West Point, and this was the only thing upon which he and his mother had ever differed. She had been afraid that if he entered the army she would not see so much of him, and at her request he had stifled, and now almost had forgotten, his, perhaps, inherited ambition to be a soldier.

If before Dallas Rathbone the way lay clear and smiling, the road ahead of his chum, the young Southerner, was misty and indistinct. Two generations back his people had been wealthy, but the war had laid its grip on them, as it had on many others. He had no one but himself to rely on, he would have to face the world and carve his way. In fact, he had only been able to go to St. Luke's because of an endowment scholarship, and a small sum of money that his father had managed to put aside before his death for his son's education. During the school vacations he had always been with the Rathbones; in fact, Mrs. Rathbone always spoke of her "two boys." And Dallas himself invariably referred to his own expensive possessions as "ours" instead of "mine." Perhaps, insensibly, Prentice had become used to the partnership. There was no constraint in the boys' friendship.

The forty-horse-power launch had eaten up the miles so quickly that Gull Island was a long way astern. Dallas turned and looked over his shoulder. "Which shall it be," he asked, "Nantucket or Martha's Vineyard? We can make either to-morrow."

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"Nantucket," replied Prentice lazily, but as if his choice decided matters. "I wish it was Samoa or the South Sea Islands. Say, wouldn't it be fun to cruise about like this, only finding new places all the time. Those old explorers led the kind of life I'd like to live."

"Me, too," returned Dallas, turning again and leaving the *End Rush* to hold her course alone, which she did like a well-trained race horse. "Those were great old days. Do you remember 'Drake's Drum'? I think that's the best poem ever written." And with a sweep of his brown arm, he began to quote:

"'Oh, Drake, he was a Devon man,
And sailed the Spanish Seas.
Master, art thou sleeping there below?
Slung atween the round shot
In Nombre Dios Bay,
And dreamin' all the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Yonder looms the headland—'"

"And yonder, if I'm not mistaken," interrupted Prentice, raising himself on his elbow, "looms a school of bluefish. See the gulls! Look! See the menhaden flashin'!"

"Slow down the engine," said Dallas, "and get out the squid." He turned back to the wheel and headed the *End Rush* over to where the bluefish were feeding; their prey, the menhaden, jumping clear of the water in their efforts to escape, only to fall victims to the flock of screeching gulls that hovered overhead. In a few minutes they had hauled in a fine bluefish.

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"Do you know," asked Prentice, "how the Indians cook fish?"

"No," said Dallas, "do you?"

"They roll 'em in mud, then they put 'em in the fire and bake 'em. What do you say to trying it with this fellow? I'm getting tired of hotel fare. Let's avoid civilization for a while, and camp out as we go along. We haven't used any of the cooking things yet."

"Right!" returned Dallas. "Let's land at Neushon. We can put into the inlet and go ashore."

In answer to a turn of the wheel, the *End Rush* swung round for the run toward Vineyard Sound.

The bluefish was not baked in mud that night; it was broiled in the usual way over the *End Rush's* little oil stove, Prentice doing the cooking. And after things had been cleared away he remained for some time in the cabin, developing photograph films and plates, for amateur photography was another hobby that both boys shared in common. When he came on deck he made an exclamation.

"Great Scott! But it's getting cold," he said.

There was a touch of fall in the air. It was one of the crisp, cool evenings that often follow a hot September day. "Better put your sweater on if you're going to sit out here," said Dallas; "the summer's over."

"Doesn't it seem strange not to be going back to school?" said Prentice. "I wonder where I'll be this time next year? Holding down a desk or working in a shop somewhere, I suppose. And you——"

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Dallas drew a long sigh, and interrupted. "Oh, I'll be knocking about. I sometimes wish that my father had not written that last letter on the subject of Me. Mother regards it as sacred instructions. Why should I have to stay out of college until I am twenty? That means a long time to kill, and I don't know what to do with it. You know, the funny thing is that I can't stay at home; I've got to travel."

"Seems to me you've done a great deal of that already," said Prentice.

"Oh, pshaw! Only Europe and the usual things. All civilization—always people within elbow distance. Do you remember what we were talking about to-day?"

"The old explorers," replied Prentice, who had struggled into a sweater and had seated himself on the deckhouse.

"It was an easy job for them," Dallas returned. "There were lots of untouched places then—mighty few left now. Yet, I don't see why we shouldn't try it."

"We?" said Prentice. "I've got to get to work. I don't think I'll even be able to go to college."

"Look here, Alf," said Dal, "you know we've fought this all out before, but I've got a new proposition. If I follow out exactly what my father wishes me to do, it amounts to a job for both of us. It seems a funny sort of job, but my mother thinks it's got to be done—I've got to spend a year away from home, traveling, all on my own, before I go to college. There's one proviso that I've always looked on as a kind of stum-

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bling block. I've got to take a tutor with me. Whose name do you think has been suggested?"

"I don't know," replied Prentice. "Hartley? He wouldn't be bad."

Hartley was one of the under-masters at St. Luke's, a companionable and able young fellow, and a great favorite with the students.

"No; Hartley wouldn't be bad," replied Dallas, "only he's a kind of fusser with the ladies, and I don't know about dragging him away from the beaten paths—he's fond of cathedrals and châteaux, stained glass, archæology, and all that sort of thing. No, it isn't Hartley."

"Who, then?"

"You," replied Dallas, shortly. "You, Mr. Alfred Kerfoot Prentice, F. B., H. B.—first-base and half-back."

"And who suggested my name?" Prentice smiled.

"Oh, a very near relative of mine, by marriage—Mrs. Percival Rathbone."

"Your mother!"

"The same. She said she'd feel safer if you were with me than anybody else. She thinks you have a restraining influence. Of course, I know that you've got me into most of the scrapes I've been in, so far, but she doesn't know that. Your behavior has always been so circumspect when you've been with us."

He rose and changed his manner to mock-seriousness. "Don't decide at once, Mr. Prentice; I'll give you a month to think it over. At all events, there's one thing you've got to do." He resumed his usual

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manner, and placed both hands on his chum's shoulders. "You know you promised to go up to New Brunswick with me this fall—you crossed your heart on that. And, by Harry! we'll get a photograph of the fighting moose, too. You remember that fellow who lectured at the school on 'Wild Game in Action,' and how he said he'd often tried and failed. If we could get a photograph of beaver at work the way we did last year in the Adirondacks, I don't see why we couldn't catch Mr. Moose. We'll get a couple of heads, anyhow. There are plenty up there."

"When do we start?" asked Prentice.

"Oh, in about three weeks—as soon as we get back and put the *End Rush* up for the winter. What d'ye say, let's turn in?"

Prentice rose. "All right," he said. "But look here, Dal, you know about that tutor proposition, that's all——"

Dallas glanced over the side. "Water looks pretty cold," he said, "and it's a good swim to shore. If you begin to talk nonsense, I'll——" he broke off. "How's the anchor holding?"

Prentice glanced forward to where the anchor-light swung on the stay that led down from the little mast; then he looked over the side where the water was rushing by. "She's all right—good holding ground here," he replied. "Don't forget it's your turn to make the morning coffee."

The boys stooped down to the little cabin, crawled into their bunks and soon were fast asleep.

CHAPTER II

THE WILDERNESS

THE road to the little settlement of Kiley Brook follows, for the most part, the course of the rushing Tobique River. Along this road a jolting wagon drawn by two strong horses was traveling northward. On the back seat Dal Rathbone and Alf Prentice sat, muffled up in great coats. They had started on the long drive from Fort Fairfield across the Maine border, and had spent the night at a sportsman's hotel at the little village of Plaster Rock.

At Kiley Brook they were to meet their guides and party, and push out into the wilderness toward the headwaters of the Serpentine; and from thence out to the barrens near Lake Bathurst, where they hoped to get some caribou. They had been well supplied with maps and information, and expected to be gone for a month from home. The driver of the wagon had been kept answering questions ever since they started.

A light fall of snow had taken place in the early morning. The road ahead of the plodding horses had been untraveled. Every now and then it was crossed by tracks of hare and rabbit, tiny footprints of partridges, places where squirrels had dashed from one side of the road to the other, and where a fox had trailed his feathery brush.

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Both Dallas and Prentice were good woodsmen. They had once put in part of a Christmas vacation at Racquet Lake. They knew wood signs and had spent many nights in rough camp sleeping on the ground.

The voluble driver was sanguine over the prospects for good sport. Plenty of moose had been shot during the calling season, but that was well over now, and Lindlay Vanderleck, the guide to whose camp the boys were going, had bagged a big bear a week ago.

Suddenly the driver pulled in his horses. "There's an old hummer just crossed the road here," he said. "Look! Not more'n five minutes ago." He indicated with his whip some large sharp-pointed hoof-prints as big as cow tracks. They crossed the road from the river-side and disappeared in the thick black pines that stretched away toward the mountain. The driver looked at the trees at the top of the bank, where the moose had struggled up, dislodging moss and loose pebbles.

"It's a bull," he said. "See where his antlers nicked that young birch. By tar! if we'd come 'round the bend in the road three minutes earlier, we'd got a sight of him—Eh, mister, what ye goin' do?"

This last was addressed to Dallas, who had jumped out of the wagon, and was hauling his rifle in its leather case over the footboard. "I'm going after that fellow," was the reply, as he drew forth the Winchester and slipped some cartridges into the magazine.

"Sho!" said the driver, smiling. "You be, be you? That old bull wasn't wastin' any time—he's bound for the ridges. You'll get lost in there, boy."

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Dallas looked up. He noticed that the slight wind was blowing from the westward, the direction the moose had taken. He turned to Prentice, who had got down also from the wagon.

"Get the camera, Alf," he said, "this may be the best chance we'll get."

Prentice was slipping the leather strap to the camera case over his shoulders. The driver was looking back at them in a broad grin.

"Why, look here, you two young sports," he said, "we got all o' twenty miles ahead to the settlement, and not too much time to do it in. You get right back in here and we'll drive along. You'll get lost, I tell you."

Dallas approached and stood at the front wheels. He remembered having passed some way back a little lumberman's shanty in a clearing. It looked to be still habitable and there were some stable-sheds hard-by. "You turn 'round," he said to the driver, "and go back a mile and wait by that camp we passed. We'll get back there inside of a couple of hours."

The driver shook his head.

"Now, I'll tell you, boys," he began, "that place in there's full of gulleys and hollows. I wouldn't go in there myself. I've been lost in the woods once, and I know what it is. You don't catch me far from the road nowadays; I don't claim to be no guide—I'm just a teamster. Besides, it's comin' on to snow."

"Hurry up, Dallas," said Prentice in a low voice, "this light won't last any too long. Let's get a move on us."

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They left the astonished driver in the road. Non-plussed, he looked at the place where they had disappeared in the woods. "If they'd been a little smaller, I'd jus' slapped 'em both and tossed 'em in the wagin," he said. "If they get lost it ain't my fault." Still muttering, he turned the horses and retraced the way he had come.

When he got to the shanty he took the horses out of the wagon, blanketed them and put them in the shed, and then going inside the hut, he started a fire in the remains of a rusty sheet-iron stove. An hour, two hours, passed. The driver remembered that there was something to eat in a basket under the seat. As he went out to the wagon he gave a look at the sky. The wind had almost died down and flakes of snow began to fall. It looked as if it was going to set in for a night of it.

"Confound those young fools," he muttered to himself, "I wish I'd told 'em it was cow tracks we seen. Be a good joke on me if I get snowed in here and lose my passengers." Suddenly he stopped as he was lifting the basket out of the wagon. Yes, surely, that was a rifle shot—way off, miles away! Sound travels far in the stillness of the wilderness. Without moving, the man turned his head and listened. "By gum!" he said, "there goes another!"

The second shot had sounded just as he had spoken, and before one could have counted five there came a third. Then all was stillness again.

"It's them two young sports," said the driver. "They ain't nobody been in that way this season."

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Then he looked up at the sky again and swore softly. The snow was coming down heavier and heavier. If it kept up this way, it might be hard to get through with the wagon in the morning. He moved everything into the log cabin and looked around for more firewood.

It began to grow darker and darker. A fear began to possess the driver's mind. Supposing the two boys had been lost and those shots had been fired to bring assistance; supposing that they were the only three cartridges they had? Dave Williams had spoken the truth when he said he had lived in the woods all his life; he had lumbered it and teamed it since he was sixteen, and in all that time he had never gone a hundred yards out of sight of a road or portage, or away from the sound of an axe. He had been lost for three days once when he was fifteen, and that was the reason. He was not alone in this case, there were many like him, men born without any sense of direction and prone to lose their heads when once the horror of not knowing which way to turn strikes into their breasts. He could imagine his return to Kiley Brook alone and the searching parties starting out. He was tempted to harness up and push through to the settlement. It was a moonlight night, and, despite the falling snow, it would not be too dark to see the road ahead. Once more he stepped to the door of the hut. The snow was almost up to his knees. What was that he heard? Voices, yes—excited, talking voices. Not from the road, but coming from the edge of the clearing.

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"Here it is, Al! I thought we'd just about strike it."

The driver's heart gave a leap of joy. His two young sports had found their way back.

"Well, boys," he said, as if he had never worried about them at all, "did ye get him?"

They came into the cabin knocking the snow off their boots.

"Did we get him?"

It was Dallas who spoke. There was a little ring in his voice. "Did we? You wait until you see, old man."

"What was it?" asked the driver. "A young bull?"

His two young charges were taking it so casually that he did not wish to betray too great an interest.

"A bull?" asked Prentice drawlingly. "No, he wasn't a young bull."

"Good Lord!" said the driver, "you young fellows didn't go shoot a cow, did you? There's a big fine—"

"No," drawled Prentice slowly, "he wasn't a cow either. He was a great grandfather—an old bull, and there was two of him."

The driver smiled. "What! You didn't git 'em both?" he asked incredulously. "Where be they?"

"In here," said the boy, tapping his camera. "And there's enough fresh meat to supply a regiment up in the woods about three miles from here."

"Boys," said the driver admiringly, "you city fellers sometimes beats all. Jes' sit down and tell me all about it."

If the two boys had come to the woods for just one

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experience and for the one end, discussed by them in the first chapter, they might just as well have turned around and gone out again, for they had accomplished their mission, and had an experience that seldom occurs to any life-time ranger of the woods. When they had left the road they had followed the great sharp-pointed tracks through a thicket of scrub pines interspersed with closely grown hardwood trees, through which the moose, aiming for the big timber and more open spaces of the ridge, had forced his way slowly. Broken twigs and branches showed how he had worried his antlers through the narrow spaces by sheer brute strength. The soft damp snow rendered the trackers' footsteps almost noiseless. There was just enough breeze to carry their scent away from the direction that the moose was traveling. They pitched down through a big windfall into a deep gulley; as they clambered up the other side Dallas, who was leading, raised his hand, then pointed on ahead. There fresh moose tracks had crossed the first trail diagonally and then turned and joined it. Evidently three or four moose were in the band. In October and November, after the calling season is over, the bull moose get together, while the cows and the calves keep to themselves. For almost a month the bulls fight continuously, until one has successfully maintained the leadership of his particular following. When the deep snows come a truce seems to be established, and, although there are no longer the wolves to combat, the huge animals yard together in small segregated herds, in places where the food is plentiful.

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When the snows break up they begin to rove again. All these things the boys knew from reading, but never had they seen one of the huge creatures even in captivity.

Over the succession of ridges, where the woods were growing more and more open, they followed the tracks that were now becoming intermingled. At last they came to a spot where the snow was trampled down and the brown leaves underneath scattered in all directions. There were flecks of blood and bunches of stiff, wiry hair.

"They've been fighting," whispered Dallas.

"Listen—hark!" returned Prentice. "They're at it now."

From over the rise of ground in front of them suddenly broke forth a short, sharp, grunting sound. Then the crash of twigs, snorts and deep breathing, a rattle of fencing horns and the impact of huge bodies that almost shook the ground. The boys had no idea that they were so close. Prentice swung his camera-box in front of him and took out the handsome reflex with its costly lens—a Christmas present to him from Dallas' mother. With fingers that it was hard to keep from trembling, he adjusted the diaphragm to the light and arranged the shutter. Dallas, cocking the Winchester, motioned him to go ahead, and, bending low, they crept up the slope. The sounds of combat and the deep angry grunts grew clearer. They could even hear the shuffling of the sharp-pointed hoofs and the hoarse breathing of the fighting beasts. A big shaggy birch tree stood just ahead of them. The boys

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crept up behind it. The ground pitched sharply here, but just below them, not thirty feet away, they saw a sight that they never would forget. Two great long-legged monsters stood facing one another some four yards apart. One was slightly larger, with gray sides and muzzle; his antlers spread wide at each side of his great hooked-nosed head. The bell of hair, the strange appendage which hangs from a bull moose's throat, shook as he tossed his antlers. Before him his antagonist, almost as large, but jet black on flank and neck, stood poised for the attack, his horns dripped red. There were gashes in the body of the larger moose around chest and shoulder. The black one had the better fighting horns; they were more compact; the points turned inward.

Twenty-five or thirty yards beyond the antagonists stood three or four young bulls watching the meeting of the champions. Just as the camera clicked the two huge beasts lurched forward; their heads came together, sounding for all the world, as Dallas put it afterward, "like a collision between two hardware stores." The little bull went backward on his haunches, but struggled to his feet; and now they pushed and shoved, grunting in their mighty efforts, digging their sharp-pointed hoofs into the ground to give them a hold. Dallas had almost forgotten that he had a rifle in his hands. He had lowered the barrel and stood watching Prentice, who had stepped boldly out from the tree and was snapping the camera as quickly as he could get range and focus. Suddenly the two bulls redoubled their efforts; they twisted and turned, hold-

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ing back from one another. And then the boys saw what had happened—their horns were locked! Very often there are found in the deep woods the bleaching skulls of deadly rivals who had died thus, head to head. But never, so far as was known, had anyone witnessed the titanic struggle. The bulls were aware by this time of the presence of their common enemy; the others of the band had fled. It was almost pitiful to watch their struggle now. They wrestled around and around. The fury of their rivalry had changed to terror. But the fast-locked horns held them together. The smaller bull in his efforts had tripped and fallen, twisting on his back, his hind legs in the air. The big bull, his head to one side, stood over him. The boys were standing within twelve feet of them, and there Prentice took the last picture of that wonderful series that soon astonished the sporting world, and that bore results that he could not then foresee. The sensation of the two young sportsmen as they stood close to the great animals, who looked at them with rolling eyes, was a strange one. They were talking in loud excited voices, standing so close they could almost touch the gray rangers' heaving flanks.

"Oh, I wish I had another roll of films!" exclaimed Prentice. "Do you remember that picture of the gladiators in the arena in Rome, where they're waiting for the sign from Cæsar?"

He had hardly asked the question when the big bull gave a sudden vicious twist of his mighty head and a backward lurch. There was a sharp snap, and one

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of the prongs of the prostrate bull's horns broke off. Dallas had hardly time to aim at the great shoulder. With the crack of the rifle, the bull pitched forward on top of his late antagonist, who was now struggling to regain his feet. Again Dallas fired, at the black this time, hitting him in the neck. His struggles still continued; the animal did not seem to be able to get his feet under him. Just as he did so and was forging up to an erect position, Dallas fired again, and down he went for good and all, the lucky shot having reached the heart. Panting with excitement, the boys stood looking at the great dead creatures.

It was Dallas who spoke first. "Al," he said, "I don't know about you, but I was nearly scared to death."

Prentice was replacing the camera in the leather box, but his fingers trembled so he could hardly do anything at all.

"I thought I was a goner," he said, "but I don't care now. We've got what we came to get. Aren't we the lucky ones? Which way is the road?"

Dallas took a small compass from his pocket and pointed. "If we strike out in that direction, it will about fetch out at that old camp, where we told the driver to wait. I wonder what he'll say now about our being lost!"

"I tell you what, Dal," said Prentice, to whose face the color had now returned, and who managed to force a smile, "let's treat this thing just as if it happened every day."

"It'll never happen again," said Dallas. "Our luck



“Just as he was forging up to an erect position, Dallas fired again.”

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was with us. It was our one big chance. Come on! It's snowing—it'll soon be dark. We can come back and get the heads to-morrow."

According to their agreement, the boys made short work of their story; the driver had listened with an open mouth and dropped jaw.

"Why," said he, when they had concluded, "shootin' moose is jes' like killin' sheep to you boys, ain't it?"

The next day, when they arrived with two fine heads, one nearly sixty inches, the other fifty-four in stretch, Dave Williams introduced his belated passengers to the two guides who were awaiting them at the little sportsmen's rest at Kiley Brook, in the following words: "Say, you fellers, here's two young city sports who's come up here to guide you into the woods. There's their credentials," he pointed to the two big heads that had been neatly skinned and wrapped. "All you got a do is to cook for 'em and promise to stick close so you won't get lost."

The little crowd of guides who were standing by the wagon began to laugh. The wag of the party spoke up. "Well, gentlemen," he said, "what ye goin' a charge for takin' Lindlay and Abe along with you?"

Lindlay and Abe Vanderleck were brothers, who had a chain of camps that stretched from Mud Lake to the headwaters of the Miramashee. They had been recommended to Dallas by an old friend of his father's who was a member of the Tobique Club. As soon as Dallas had got Prentice to one side after they had again related the story of the moose fight, he gave him a nudge with his elbow, calling his attention to

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the younger Vanderleck, who was heaving one of the moose heads onto his shoulders as he lifted it from the wagon. "I guess they'd like to have him at Yale or Princeton," he said. "Isn't he an everlasting whale?"

Very seldom does it fall to the lot of anyone to see such a man as this young guide. Six feet five in his moccasins he stood; but, unlike most over-tall men, he was well proportioned, from the top of his curly head to his heels. Broad of shoulder, long of arm and lean of flank. And he weighed as he stood just a shade over two hundred and thirty pounds. Before very long the boys were to have an opportunity of seeing a test of his great strength; and on another occasion that was to come, and in a way that they then could not possibly have imagined, his quickness of eye and hand were to stand them in great stead in dire emergency.

The two young sportsmen's good fortune had placed them at the outset in a rather peculiar position toward their guides in the hunting trip. According to the laws of New Brunswick, a hunter takes out a license that binds him rigidly, so far as the extent of his game-bag is concerned. He is allowed to shoot but one bull moose, which must be over a certain age, presumably three years, and but two antlered caribou. They had each received and paid for their licenses at Plaster Rock, and now had a head apiece to their credit side; the precious fight films were still undeveloped in the camera.

To tell the truth, the "Vanderleck boys," despite

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their jocose acceptance of the situation, were slightly chagrined at the fact that their employers had accomplished so unusual a feat without their aid. The like of it had never happened in the woods before. They had to stand some good-natured chaffing as they loaded up a heavy wood wagon with the camp outfit that afternoon. The two heads that had been properly skinned under Dave Williams' directions, were to be taken by him back to Fort Fairfield to the taxidermist. And early in the morning, a whole day late in their starting, Dallas and Prentice followed the jolting wagon that was to take them over the lumber road and through the "portash" to the base camp at Brook Lake. Their party consisted of five men beside themselves, and a laugh had arisen as the proprietor of the little sportsmen's rest had shouted after them on starting:

"You two young gentlemen don't want all them lazy fellows eatin' your grub. Why don't you turn 'em loose and go in alone?"

But in making up the party the boys had followed out their friend, Mr. Carter's, directions. He had done all the ordering for them and they were not responsible for the members of their retinue, which consisted of a driver for the wagon, a cook and helper, or "cookee," as they call him, and a guide apiece for the woods.

They stopped three days at the first camp, where everything was comparatively luxurious, as it was only about a four-hour drive over the rough road from the settlement. Moose were plentiful, their luck

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continued, but the camera was the only weapon they employed. They got one or two good photographs of cows and yearlings at quite close ranges, and even one of a lonely old bull lying in the leaves beside a lake.

After three days of this it was decided that they should push on deeper into the woods and try their luck with the caribou. With the party reduced by two, for the wagon could not penetrate to where they were going, and the "cookee" had proved himself entirely superfluous, the party, now reduced to five, started on foot for the camp on the Serpentine; from thence it was intended to go on to Lake Bathurst and the Barrens.

It's the custom in the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia woods for the guides who have built camps at various places, and who by tacit consent leave each other's hunting grounds alone, to stock their various camps with provisions, except, of course, fresh meat, in advance. So it was expected that when they reached the outpost on the Serpentine they would find flour and tea and coffee, and the tinned necessities in abundance. The good luck that had attended the party so far deserted them on the afternoon of their sixth day in the wilderness. They had picked up plenty of fat grouse from the tree-tops with a noiseless little 22 Stevens. But while they were still at Trousers Lake, Prentice got a deer that had suddenly jumped into sight and fell to a lucky shot. Abe Vanderleck, who unlike his brother, the young giant, was undersized but strong and wiry, was carrying the

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dressed carcass across his shoulders. When almost into camp as he came down a steep bank he slipped and turned his ankle, breaking the small bone in the instep. It was impossible for him to proceed, and with some difficulty he was got back to a deserted lumber camp, where he was left while the cook was sent back to the settlement to get a wagon. After a consultation Abe was made as comfortable as he could be with what provisions they could spare, to wait until the wagon should reach him over the "portash," and Lindlay and the two boys struck out once more for the Barrens. It took them a whole day's traveling to reach the camp, and here the bad luck that had begun seemed to have followed them. Upon the roughly-made door with its leather hinges, of the little log cabin, a note written on brown paper was pinned with a sliver of pinewood. It read as follows:

To the Owner of this Camp:

Owing to the fact that we lost rifles and provisions, in the deep waters of the River, we have had nothing to eat for two days and have helped ourselves here. We intend to try to get back to Brandy Brook where our own camp is, and would not take anything if we were not compelled to. Communicate with—[here followed an address at Halifax]—and money will be sent for what we've taken.

Vanderleck made a survey of his stock. At first, he was so angry that he could not speak, but at last he found words.

"Why," he said, "they hain't left us anything.

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They must have rested here for two or three days, making themselves at home. Tea's gone," he shook the tin canister. "All the sugar's used up, and look, they used most of the oil to help start the fire with. Nice lot of sports they are! See! They ain't left us enough flour for more'n a day or so. First time I ever known a thing like this to happen. Only thing for us to do is to turn 'round and go back to the Settlement, or to Crawley Brook Lake, and lay in a new stock. I had enough here for ten days. We might hunt 'round here to-morrow and see if we get any caribou and then go back to last camp. We'll get there about the time the wagon comes for Abe."

"Why don't you leave us here and go back alone and bring out provisions and another man?" said Dallas. "Are you afraid we're going to get lost?"

"I guess I could fix it so you wouldn't get lost," said the guide, "and you ain't greenhorns, either. You know more about the wods than most sports I've had; but if you stay between the top o' the ridge and the two brooks and the river, you'll have plenty o' hunting ground, and be just the same as if you was in a pasture. You've got enough to eat here for two days, and enough venison for a week. If you boys want to risk it I'll leave you here alone. 'Tain't the same as if you was greenhorns."

He took down the lantern from where it hung against the log-side.

"Well, jus' look at this," he said. "No oil. You'll have to go to bed with the sun, and get up with it, too."

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"That won't hurt us for a little while," said Prentice. The idea of being alone, and the sense of adventure tempted him.

The night after Lindlay's departure for the Settlement it turned bitter cold, so cold, indeed, that the boys doubled up on the pine boughs in the low bunk and the warmth of the two blankets and their own bodies hardly kept them from shivering. They awakened with the first rays of the sun and, numbed and half frozen, started a fire. Their spirits thawed and rose as the little cabin grew warmer. Dallas threw open the door. Two Canadian jays, "moose-birds," as they are often called, sat pecking at the haunch of venison within a few feet—strange, fearless little gluttons of the woods, that grow so tame about the lumber camps that they will often feed from the hand. The sun was well up now and the scene was beautiful. Every limb and twig was encased in a sheathing of ice. Dallas called Prentice to his side. "Look!" said he; "did you ever see anything so wonderful?" It was, indeed, like fairyland—like a painted picture. Even the air seemed frozen into stillness. The chatter of the moose-birds was the only thing to be heard. The two boys stood for a minute awed by the spirit of the wilderness, a feeling that only those who have experienced it can understand. The keen air tingled in their nostrils. The odor of the frying venison on the skillet recalled them to the fact that they had appetites. And after they had disposed of a hearty breakfast they picked up their rifles and the camera and started forth. It was a beautiful day for every-

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thing but still hunting—crisp, frozen snow tinkled and squeaked under foot, and the brittle ice-laden twigs crackled and tinkled like bells at every touch as they pushed their way through the woods. At last they came to where the trees grew smaller and smaller, and suddenly they found themselves almost in the open, where yellowish sedge and grass dotted with clumps of alders and a few larch and pine extended far as the eye could see. It was here they first saw signs of game. The crust had been broken, where a number of sharp-pointed hoofs had left their spoor. They could see also where the animals had been feeding on the gray moss that hung from a half dead hemlock. "Caribou!" said Dallas. "See their hoof-prints! How different from moose—how they spread out! How much wider they are!"

Prentice held up a moistened finger to see if he could catch the direction of the wind, but the morning stillness still prevailed. He pointed off to the eastward. "Shall we follow them?" he asked. "They've headed out into the open."

Dallas nodded and shouldering the rifles the boys crunched off on the track. It grew warmer as the sun got higher. The limbs and branches began to drip and the footsteps grew less noisy. The caribou they were following had turned off from the open and had headed back to the woods again. Soon they came to a brook, the boundary line that Lindlay had told them of. But they crossed it and were soon in the deeper woods again. At noon they stopped and brewed a little cup of their precious tea, making the

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fire from some dry wood dug from the hollow of a log and some crisp birch-bark that the sun had driven the moisture out of.

All this time they had been traveling directly away from camp. Soon it was evident that the caribou must have got wind of them, for the tracks showed that they had put on speed, that they had begun to run.

"It's all up now," said Dallas, "and there's no use of trying to catch those fellows. Let's be getting back. The camp lies off there. Shall we take a short cut?"

The boys did not know how tired they were until they had started on their homeward journey. The sky had grown overcast and large flakes had begun to fall. Faster and faster they came sifting down through the branches until it was hard to see more than twenty or thirty steps ahead. The woods grew thicker, too, with much fallen timber, and the new fallen snow as it lay on top of the crust was well over their ankles.

"We should have come to the brook long before this," suggested Prentice.

"It can't be very far ahead," Dallas returned, searching his pockets for the little compass that was attached to his watch. And then suddenly he started. His watch was not there! He remembered now having left it hanging on the peg by the bunk. Prentice had not turned to look at him, but trudged on ahead. There was no shadow or anything to mark the direction of the sun; the glow seemed permeating, and yet

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it was growing slowly less and less. For an instant Dallas stood still, his heart beating so loudly he could hear it. Prentice now turned back to him.

"Are we heading right?" he asked.

"Yes," said Dallas, who hoped every minute now to run across the brook that would give them their bearings again.

"Keep straight ahead!" He spoke cheerfully, but still his heart sank. Fear is easily communicated, especially the fear of being lost. Perhaps the brook was only a few yards ahead. The open land, the beginning of the Barrens, must anyhow be off to the right. Suddenly Prentice gave an exclamation and stopped.

"Dal," he said, "look yonder!"

A great tree had fallen leaving its gnarled roots twisting like snakes out of the mass of torn-up earth.

"What is it?" Dallas asked.

"Why," returned Prentice, shaking the snow off the brim of his hat, "seems to me I've seen that before. Why—yes, don't you remember? We passed by it just after we made tea."

"We'd see our footprints, wouldn't we?" said Dallas. Then he paused. "Great Scott!" he ejaculated.

Surely, there was a track becoming now fast obliterated in the falling snow. Another half an hour and all traces of it would disappear.

"What does the compass say?" asked Prentice.

"Which way is south?"

"The compass in on my watch chain," Dallas returned, "and that's attached to my watch—and my

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watch is hanging at the head of the bunk in camp." He pointed. "Alf, there's but one thing to do—keep on in that direction until we strike the open, then follow the edge of the timber until we come to the brook. We've got just a bit twisted, but that's all——"

"No," spoke up Prentice bravely, "we'll not advertise for ourselves yet. Come on!"

They struck off in a new direction, Dallas leading now. As the dusk grew deeper the snow stopped falling, for a few minutes, only to begin more heavily. They came to a place where the timber, in many cases old, first-growth trees, lay piled in a little hollow. Dallas, who was leading, was feeling his way cautiously across the slippery trunk of a huge, fallen pine tree that must have come down but a few weeks before, as the top branches were still green. Prentice was only a few steps behind him. For some time the boys had said nothing; they would not have acknowledged for the world the growing fear that they were completely lost.

All at once, Dallas lost his footing, and to save himself from falling, jumped from the trunk off to one side, landing almost breast-high among the broken branches.

The jar had shaken the old pine a little, and to the boys' consternation, there came a sudden grunt, followed by a startled, "Woff!" A huge, gaunt creature rose from under the snow-laden limbs within twelve feet of them. A great black bear popped up like a huge Jack-in-the-box, and stood swaying there with front paws uplifted. Which one of the three was most

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surprised, might be hard to state. Dallas was in such a position that he could not aim his rifle, so entangled was he; and Prentice balancing himself with some difficulty as he tried to bring his weapon to his shoulder, slipped also and came down astride the log. Dallas ducked his head; and as he did so, Prentice fired over him, and with the recoil went head over heels backward into the snow. It was a minute or so before either of the young hunters could extricate himself from his position.

"Where is he? Did you get him?" were Dallas' first words.

"I don't know," the younger boy replied, his voice shaking a little. "I just poked it at him and pulled the trigger. I must have lost my nerve, I think. Perhaps he's in there now."

They were standing side by side a few feet from the fallen pine tree. Then Dallas pointed excitedly. "No, there he goes!" he cried, indicating a huge dark object that could just be seen through the tree trunks and the falling snow. With rifles at full cock, the boys ran around the tangle of branches and began to climb the ridge. The tracks of the bear showed plainly, and there were dark splotches to be seen which showed, evidently, that he was hit. But as they reached the top and plunged down the other side, Dallas, who was leading, gave another shout.

"Here's the brook!" he cried. "Now we know where we are! If we keep off to the left, we'll come to the edge of the Barrens. We can't be more than two miles from the cabin."

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"Which way did that bear go?" asked Prentice. "Here's where he crossed the brook."

Masses of broken ice and scattered mud showed where the animal had dashed through the water; and on the opposite side, it was plain where he had turned and looked behind him.

"He's gone off to the right!" said Dallas. "Shall we follow him, or come back to-morrow? It's getting pretty dark."

But the question was decided for them. Not thirty feet away, a massive shape rose out of the snow and came tottering toward them. Bruin had turned at bay! The boys fired at once, and with a crash, the huge animal fell forward, struggled an instant to get up and then lay lifeless. It was so dark that as they aimed, they could not see the sights of their rifles, but the quick shots had been good guess work. Panting and shivering with excitement, the boys stood over the great black body. It was a very old bear, and lean and thin, which probably accounted for the fact that he had been late in seeking winter quarters.

"We certainly have luck," was Dallas' exclamation, as he stooped down and lifted one of the sharp-pointed claws. "This will be another joke on the guides, eh, Alf?"

"It will be a great joke on us if we don't get back to camp, and, jingo, it's turning cold! We can't miss our way if we follow the brook, so let's get a move on us or we soon won't be able to see a hand before our faces."

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"You lead on," replied Dallas, and with a last look at their quarry, the boys headed off to what they knew now was the east. They had hardly gone two hundred yards, when Prentice gave a shout.

"Well, look here!" he cried. "If we aren't home already!"

With the suddenness of opening a door from a darkened room, they had emerged from the woods into the little clearing, and there stood the cabin, within a stone's throw of them.

"I'll be hanged!" laughed Dallas, looking back at the way they had come. "If that old Johnnie didn't bring us home!"

Ten minutes later, as the cabin began to grow warm under the influence of the roaring fire in the little stove, and as the scent of venison steak rose to their nostrils, the boys looked at one another—that is, as well as they could—for the fire afforded the only light.

"Alf," said the elder, as he dropped the last spoonful of tea into the bubbling pot, "what is civilization compared to this?"

"Civilization," returned Prentice, waving his fork over the frying-pan, "is all right for those who are strong enough to stand it, but it's hard on the nerves and brain. The peace and quiet of the wilderness is what appeals to me, the opportunity to commune with one's inner thoughts, the——" he broke off suddenly. "Say, Dal," he asked, "weren't you just scared to death when our friend in the fur overcoat got up out of that pine?"

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"Well," said Dallas thoughtfully, "I think the three of us were pretty badly frightened, and if we had done what we all felt most like doing, we'd have been running yet!"

CHAPTER III

A NEW SCHEME

THE next morning, the two young campers were busy relieving their big friend of the adventure of the evening before of his "fur overcoat." It was the biggest job of its kind that they had ever had to tackle—their previous experience having been confined to woodchucks and rabbits, and on one occasion they had skinned a fox that they had trapped near Racquet Lake. By noon the task was completed, and the great pelt, when stretched out, almost covered the side of the cabin. Lindlay would surely come in from the Settlement that afternoon, and the boys made up their minds to be on hand to receive him and hear what he should say when he saw the result of their hunting.

Their luncheon this day consisted principally of venison and two little biscuits, about the size of macaroons, that they had been able to make up out of the leavings in the flour sack.

"This would be a bad place for a vegetarian," said Dallas. "I'd give a good deal for some real potatoes and a dish of those prunes that we used to hate so at school."

"Do you know what I'd like?" asked Prentice. "If

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you'd just ask me, I'd like a whole pumpkin pie. I was just thinking how I'd eat it—whether I'd begin in the middle and eat out to the edge, or begin at the edge and eat it all around until there wasn't anything left."

He was sitting on the edge of the bunk, and he went through the pantomime of gorging himself with a large and imaginary pie. Dallas, with a laugh, was standing over him busying himself with shaking up the pine branches that composed the mattress.

"Hello!" he said at last. "Here's a find!"

"Something to eat?" asked his companion, starting to his feet.

"No," Dallas replied. "Here's some food for the brain—something to read." He tossed out a crumpled and well-thumbed copy of a magazine left the year before by some past occupant. Prentice caught it, and seated himself again on the lower bunk.

"Now," said he, "while you go out into the cold and get some wood, I'll indulge in the pleasures of the 'man of letters and the library lamp'; I did the last chopping, you may remember."

In all their long association, the boys had done share and share alike of anything that came under the head of "work" in their excursions and pastimes; in their cruises in the launch it was Prentice who did the cooking one day, and Dallas the next. The elder boy pulled on his sweater, then picking up the axe, he opened the door of the cabin and stepped out again in the crisp winter air. Soon the sound of vigorous chopping started the echoes; and in half an hour, he

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returned with an armful of wood cut into the right length for the little stove. Prentice looked up from the pages of the magazine.

"Do you know," he said, "while you've been indulging in manual labor and healthful exercise, my mind has been working, and I've got an idea!"

"You've got a kind of inspired look!" returned Dallas. "The kind of a look that you used to have when you really had studied your lesson, and were prepared to recite. What is it?"

"When you offered me the position of guide, counsellor, and friend," began Prentice, with an imitation of Mr. Hawley's most professorial manner, "I debated with myself whether I really possessed the capacities for undertaking a position of such extreme importance. But I am now beginning to think that you have chosen well and wisely!"

"All of which means——?" interrupted Dallas.

"That I have an idea," Prentice rejoined, adjusting imaginary spectacles, "how to put in that year of probation in which I am to be your tutor. This little volume which I hold in my hand has been the medium of my inspiration!" He dropped into his usual tone, and stepped over to Dallas's side. "Dal," he went on, "there is the finest article in here written by a chap who had just returned from a long hunting trip into British and German East Africa. Just look at these photographs! Aren't they corking? Wouldn't that be a great country to visit? And here he tells you what to do and how to get there, and all about it."

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"Fine!" exclaimed Dallas. "That's just the ticket!"

With his hand on Prentice's shoulder, he began to look over the dog-eared pages. It was while they were thus employed, that the boys heard the sound of voices.

"They've come!" cried Dallas, dropping the magazine, and jumping to the door. "I hope that young giant of ours has brought some prunes!"

When the boys stepped out into the glare of the sun's reflection, they saw two men laden with heavy packs plowing along through the snow. The first was Lindlay Vanderleck, and the second proved afterwards to be Charlie Tooker, a good woodsman whom he had got to take his brother's place. The two men were talking together, and had not raised their eyes until they were within a rod or so of the cabin; then, looking up, the first thing that caught their eyes was the great bear pelt.

"Gee-hossephat!" exclaimed Lindlay. "Will you look at that?"

The other guide, whose reputation as a humorist extended the whole length of the Tobique, unhitched his bundle from his shoulder, dropped it in the snow, and without a word started to walk away.

"Hey, there! Where are you going?" cried Lindlay after him.

"Back to the Settlement—come on!" replied Charlie. "They don't need us—we'll only be in the way."

But, nevertheless, he turned, grinning, and picking up his bundle again, came close to where the big

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guide was examining the bear skin. Lindlay turned to the boys standing at the cabin door.

"Don't it beat all?" he asked. "Here I've been goin' into the woods nigh twenty year, and I don't think I ever seen, nor heard tell on a bear as big as that, and just bagged by two young city fellers off-handed and careless-like, just as if it didn't count 'tall!"

"I suppose they just used a new-fangled city-made bear call, and he just trotted out obligin'-like," said Charlie, introducing himself. "My name's Tooker—probably you never heard of me—I don't amount to nawthin'—but I'm kind o' interested in the woods, and Lindlay told me that you wuz campin' out here, and that if I'd come 'long, you'd probably give me some lessons. Dare say you've got a couple of caribou 'round here. No? That's funny!"

The boys began to laugh; Dallas fell into Mr. Tooker's humor. "The question isn't whether we've got any caribou," he said; "it's whether you've got anything to eat, especially prunes!"

"I've got all the delicacies of the season!" replied the backwoodsman, with a wink. "If you'll let me walk into the parlor, I'll spread 'em all out!"

In half an hour they were seated around a regular spread at a little wooden table inside the cabin, and actually there were prunes! And over a seething cup of tea with condensed milk and real sugar, the boys told the story of how the big bear had brought them back. Tooker's comment, at the end of the tale, was characteristic.

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"And after doin' all that fer you, you just up and shot 'im!"

"Well, what would you have done, Charlie?" asked Lindlay, turning his flour cake on the skillet.

"Me?" Tooker's face was a picture. "Why, I'd a given him a dollar and let 'im go home."

Lindlay grinned at this, and turned to the delighted boys.

"I've got something to tell you young gentlemen," he said, indicating his companion with a fork. "He ain't no guide; I just brought 'im along to amuse us—that's all he gets paid for."

Charlie in reply threw open the door of the cabin and thrust forth his head and began to whistle shrilly outside. Then he turned back with mock sheepishness.

"Just tryin' to call up a caribou for you two young sports," he said, "but I guess you can do it better yourselves."

"You take that axe," said Lindlay, pointing to the corner, "and go out and see if you can't call up half a cord of wood. Take care—it's awful sharp—don't cut yourself!"

It was a funny thing during the fortnight longer that the boys were in the wilderness, they never heard either of the guides exchange a word except in banter. Of course, there were long hours of silence, but in the evening, what with yarns and singing—for both Lindlay and Tooker proved to be capital backwoods entertainers—the time did not drag. By the end of the week, Prentice had brought down a caribou with a fine head of horns; and four days

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later, one fell to Dallas' rifle. They had seen plenty of small herds, or bunches, mostly of cows and yearlings, and had secured some photographs, although they were nothing to speak of when compared to the moose battle, which had been their first great bit of luck.

When they had returned to the base-camp, where the wagon met them, they had a chance to see and estimate Vanderleck's great strength. While crossing on old lumber bridge, one of the back wheels of the heavy wagon, loaded with dunnage, had broken through; the wheel had sunk some ten inches in the space between the logs. The boys and the two guides, who were following the wagon on foot, came upon the driver scratching his head as he surveyed the accident.

"Guess we'll have to unload," said the man. "I was waiting for you fellows to come up."

He had already tossed off some of the bigger bundles. Charlie Tooker turned to Lindlay.

"It's too much trouble to unload," he said, "an' I hate work that ain't necessary. Here, Lindlay," he spoke in an offhand manner, "just get hold of that axle and lift that wheel up where it belongs!"

"Probably you think I can't do it!" was the young giant's reply.

"Do it!" replied Charlie. "Course you can. I'd just twitch it off myself, if I hadn't run a sliver into my finger this mornin'."

A strong man in the time of his youth is never averse to showing off what he can do. To the boys'

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surprise, Vanderleck backed up the wagon, laid hold of the axle, and straightening his shoulders and mighty knees, lifted the wheel—in fact, the whole end, load and all—and placed it safely on the logs. Tooker did not bear a hand; he stood there smiling slowly as the feat was accomplished.

“Now,” he said, turning to the boys, “what’s the use of havin’ a fine education when you can lift a ton and a half!” Then he looked at Lindlay with mock seriousness. “I got half a mind,” he said, “to put that wheel back there again and show you how to do it proper. Still,” he added, “I’ve got a sore finger, an’ we might as well be goin’ ’long.”

“Jingo!” said Dallas, as the two boys walked on together down the portage. “Couldn’t you see your friend Vanderleck walking under the goal posts just carrying eleven men!”

As they started the next morning on the long drive to the railway, the guides gave them a great send-off from the sportsman’s rest.

“You ain’t goin’ to leave Lindlay behind, are you?” cried Tooker. “I told him that I’d lend him to you, and thought we’d got rid of him.”

“We’ll send for him some time,” shouted back Prentice, with a wave of his hand.

“You can have him for the price of his keep. I can’t afford to keep him much longer.”

The boys were laughing as they drove away in the big lumber sled. Suddenly Dallas spoke.

“Tell you what, Alf, that wouldn’t be a bad idea.”

“What?”

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"Why, to take that young Goliath with us on the big trip next year."

"Fine!" exclaimed Prentice. "I wonder if he'd go?"

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN AT THE ZOO

THE two chums had been back in New York a fortnight. City life did not please either of them very much; whenever they met they found themselves gravitating toward Central Park. There was good skating, but the ice, crowded with beginners and women and children, was not like the long reaches of the frozen river up at school, and they longed to be away from the rumble of trolley cars, and the tooting of automobile horns. It had become quite a habit to them to visit the Bronx Zoölogical Garden, where they had many friends, not only with the keepers, but with many of the animals themselves. Baldy, the chimpanzee, always greeted them with an extended hand, while Gunda, the bad elephant, who was fended off from the general public, apparently regarded them with an unsuspicious eye.

It was in the lion house that a strange meeting took place that bore great results on their fortunes, and without which, and the interviews that followed, this story might never have been written. They had entered the doors of the building a few minutes before feeding time, and behind the wire nettings the great cats were padding restlessly to and fro, their eyes alert



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for the appearance of the keepers with the meat wagon. As they brushed their whiskers and their soft sides against the thin steel wires that, at the Bronx Zoo, have taken the place of the usual prison bars, they whined expectantly.

Suddenly from one of the center cages came the first signal of the approaching dinner. Parker, the big lion, began to roar forth his deep-toned challenge to the universe, and from every side it was taken up, in a resounding, echoing chorus that drowned conversation, and almost hurt the eardrums.

The boys were on the outskirts of the little crowd that had gathered in front of the big Barbary lion's cage, and had edged up as close as possible. Standing beside them was a tall, gaunt man whose dark hair contrasted strangely with his silvery white beard. He was leaning on a heavy stick with a rubber ferrule.

There came a lull in the great chorus, and the tall man, bending slightly, placed a hand on Dallas' shoulder.

"Fine tones he's got, eh, young gentlemen?" he said.

"Ought to go in for grand opera," said Prentice jokingly.

But the tall man did not smile; still looking at the lion, he continued, speaking in a rich voice with a slightly foreign accent that the boys could not place at first.

"You should hear that sound on a still, moonlit African night, my young friends! It seems as if

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everything stops to listen. And most everything does, too," he added, "at least, most everything that has horns and hoofs."

"You've been out there, you've heard it, you've seen them?" questioned Dallas quickly.

"Indeed, I have," replied the white-bearded man thoughtfully, his eyes searching the boys' faces as if to be sure of their actual interest. "I have been where, for seven long years, I never saw the face of a man of my own color. Where almost every night I'd hear one of your opera singers there practising his solo." He pointed to the lion.

"What do they roar for?" asked Prentice, eager for information.

"I don't know," replied the stranger quickly, "and I don't think they are quite certain either. Some people say that they roar only when they are hungry, but I've heard and seen a lion roar when he was so full of zebra meat that he was almost choking to death. Some African travelers hold that he only roars at night, but I've heard him tuning up at noon-day, with the sun a hundred and twenty in the shade, but this only once or twice. All wild animals are not alike," he went on, seeing that his audience of two was following him intently; "there is as much individuality among them as there is among tame ones; take dogs, for instance. Some are born fighters, but now and then you will find a Newfoundland who will do anything to avoid trouble with a skye terrier."

"Lions are all brave, aren't they?" asked Prentice the curious.

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"No," replied the tall man with a smile, "so far as my experience goes, they are mostly cowards; although," he added quietly, "I shouldn't be the one to malign them as a class, for one of them nearly did for me."

He shifted his weight and leaned more heavily on his rubber-ferruled stick.

"That's the reason I shall never go back again," he finished; "that and the rheumatism. I'd like to go, I'd like to go," he repeated, shaking his head, "but the time has gone by."

So interested had the boys become in listening to their new acquaintance that they did not notice that the reason for the long-continued silence from the cages was due to the fact that each occupant was busily engaged in tearing at the large pieces of meat that the keepers had thrust into them.

"They're pretty hungry," said Dallas, glancing around him, "which reminds me that I am, too." He looked rather shyly at the tall, white-bearded gentleman. "We are going to have lunch and spend the day out here," he said. "Won't you join us? This is my friend, H. K. Prentice, and my name is Dallas Rathbone."

"And mine," answered the stranger pleasantly, "is Friederich Gottlieb." The way he pronounced the name gave the boys a key to his peculiar accent; it was assuredly German.

Together the three left the lion house, and a few minutes later they were seated at the corner table in the little restaurant on the top of the hill beyond the

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bear pit. When asked to express his wishes in ordering the lunch, the boys had been rather surprised, for, despite his German name, Mr. Gottlieb had asked only for a glass of milk and some rye bread.

"It is all I take," he explained, "except sometimes a little honey or stewed prunes or fruit."

At the words "stewed prunes" Prentice had kicked Dallas very gently under the table. Dallas understood; it reminded him of the time of the prune strike at school, and of the other time when in the north woods the one thing they had seemed to crave was the very thing they once had declared they hated most. But it was not to see their guest drink milk and eat dry bread that they had asked him to luncheon, and it was Prentice who let him be aware of the fact.

"You said that a lion almost did for you, sir," he began insinuatingly.

"It was not a lion, it was a lioness," Mr. Gottlieb answered. "I suppose I have been as near to being eaten up as anybody, except Little Red Riding Hood. You see," he added, "I was an animal catcher, for years employed by a big German firm that supplies menageries and gardens such as this. I have been up on the edges of Thibet after the wild ponies, in northern China after the Mongolian tiger, through the Himalayas after the snow leopards, and was never mauled by a wild animal but once. That was in the high grass country of German East Africa."

"Tell us the story," said Prentice breathlessly.

"It leads to so many more," rejoined their new-

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found friend, "that I'm afraid you would grow tired of me."

The boys shook their heads, their faces alive with eager interest, and, thus encouraged, Mr. Gottlieb went on with his telling. It was the story of how he had found a lioness with two cubs some five or six weeks old, and having wounded her, had tracked her into the thicket where she had crawled, followed by her offspring. He had been out alone that day, and was not accompanied by even a gun-bearer. The cubs were so small that he had felt that, if he was sure the lioness was dead, he would run the risk of a severe scratching and pick up the cubs single-handed. As he had gone carefully into the bush one of the cubs had rushed past him, and in making a grab for him Mr. Gottlieb had dropped his rifle. Instantly there was a roar and the wounded lioness was upon him; although thrown to the ground he managed to get at a small revolver he always carried in his belt, and he added in his quiet voice: "I think I am the only man who ever killed such a beast with a weapon of that kind. When we had finished with each other, for luckily my very last shot reached her brain, I must have fainted," he concluded, "and how long I lay there with the dead lioness on top of me, I could never say, for the next thing I remember I was in a little kraal with black faces all around me. Not my own men, but blacks who spoke a strange language, and I recognized that I was in the hands of the Wangoni, a powerful tribe with which the white men were then at war. But I live to tell.

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"Experiences that are like stories that people invent, only almost more unreal, have come to me, and some day they should all be written up. Once again I was made a prisoner——" he broke off suddenly; "they will tell you sometimes, these travelers, that black savages have no gratitude, but believe me, my young friends, they have it, and a great courtesy, too, although it is often misleading. You must bring notebooks some day, and I will give you many points how to treat with them, so you'll understand them better."

"You made great friends with them, then?" asked Dallas.

"I have made brotherhood," rejoined Mr. Gottlieb, "and some will be my friends forever; there was one man, of whom I may tell you, whose life is mine at any time. He was the bravest I ever knew, though not brave to look at, for instead of being tall and big like all of his tribe, the Bangwali, he was small, and ill-formed. His mother had saved his life by hiding him, for in that country they do not keep children alive unless they are perfect when born, and this little man became a 'Dorobo,' or wandering hunter, an outcast. He attached himself to me, and we saved each other's lives. I studied once to be a surgeon. Ach! He was grateful! It was he who first called me 'Molombiki.' I could trust him. He cared for me as if I was his father, and I took care of him as if he was my son. Once for days I carried him in my arms and on my back."

"What was the matter?" asked Prentice.

"A lion, again. There are many stories I might

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tell of them, these lions. I told you that my first would drag in a long tale—many tales——” Mr. Gottlieb paused suddenly and looked at his watch; he smiled a little at his joke and leaned back in his chair. “I fear to begin with so short a time ahead of us—but,” and leaned forward again, “it will interest you, my young friends, it will interest you. Perhaps you would like to hear it; it may come to something.” He drew a large wallet out of his coat pocket, and picked out a card. “Here is my address,” he said, “come and see me to-morrow morning, and I will tell you some tales. I have an engagement with myself to work this afternoon. I can only write and read by daylight for it is another trouble that I have, with my eyes; one is quite gone—my good right aiming eye—and before long perhaps the other will follow. I am a very old man, long before my time.” He spoke in a matter-of-fact tone, but with a trace of sadness. “I am only sixty years of age,” he said, “but I am old; some people have taken me for seventy-five and more . . . How old might you be?” he asked, turning quickly to Dallas.

“We’re nearly seventeen,” was the rejoinder. Dallas had blushed as if making a confession. “And we’re going to East Africa as soon as we can get there.”

“So!” exclaimed Mr. Gottlieb. “You look as if you had more years on your shoulders, but, my friend, little Paul de Chaillieu, was hardly any older when he saw the first gorilla seen by a white man since the days of Hanno. Yes, and perhaps a thousand

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years before that. Ah! there was an explorer for you—little Paul—and no one would believe him. He had to publish his books as if they were tales made up out of the head. But now I must go; you come and see me to-morrow, hein?"

"We'll come," said the boys in chorus as they rose from the table, and Mr. Gottlieb, putting on his large, soft hat, shook hands with them and left.

"Well, did you ever!" exclaimed Dallas. "Isn't this just the luckiest thing; I tell you, Prent, we couldn't have found a man who could help us as much as he can."

He looked at the card that the old gentleman had left, and then handed it over to Prentice, who read it carefully. The address given was in one of the new streets up in the Bronx, and as it proved, not far away from the Zoölogical Garden. What happened on the morrow is of such importance that it must be told in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE MEETING AT HERR GOTTLIEB'S

THE boys had said nothing, as yet, to Mrs. Rathbone of their project. Dallas had found out by experience that it was best to approach his mother when his plans had all been made, and he was prepared to answer the first objection which might naturally come to his mother's mind. He was quite certain that she would object at first, but he was just as certain that in the end she would give her permission. The two boys had firmly decided in their minds that before many weeks had gone by they would be on their way to the lion country.

In his father's library Dallas had found some old volumes of Speke and Baker, and a much later work of Selous, and others, and pouring over the pages only inflamed their desire for adventure, and their imaginations of the scenes that lay before them.

The next morning, shortly after breakfast, they were on their way to the Bronx to keep their appointment with their new-found friend.

"I wonder what kind of house he lives in?" said Prentice, looking at the card as they got out at the end of the Third Avenue Elevated.

"I hope it isn't in one of those dinky new little

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brick buildings," responded Dallas, "and I hope we don't have to talk with him in a parlor filled with clocks and pianos and china knick-nacks. I'll tell you what let's do; if we can find a messenger, let's send Mr. Gottlieb word to meet us at the lion house again. Perhaps he's got a family and a lot of girls, and——" He paused.

Prentice laughed. "You're more scared of girls than any fellow I ever met."

"I ain't scared of 'em exactly," Dallas responded, a bit nettled, for this had always been a standard joke of the school where he had once jumped off a bridge and swam across the river to avoid meeting a bevy of his schoolmates' sisters. "I ain't scared of 'em, but I don't know how to talk to 'em. Mother says I'll learn soon enough, but I haven't had much practice. It's different with you; you're a regular fusser."

"I like 'em all," rejoined Prentice, "especially those with light hair and dark eyes. I know three."

"Never noticed any like that," Dallas responded. Then he changed the subject quickly. "We didn't come up here to talk about girls; what are we going to do about Mr. Gottlieb?"

"He asked us to call, and we said we would," Prentice put forward. "There's a policeman on the corner; let's ask him where this address is, and how to get there."

The bluecoat looked at the card and handed it back.

"I can tell you where it is, boys," he said, "but to the best of my recollection it's a vacant lot."

"First rate," Dallas responded; "maybe he lives in

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a tent. At all events, we probably won't find any females."

Carefully noting the policeman's direction they started up the road that skirted the Zoölogical Garden. Before long they had crossed the Bronx River, and their surroundings began to take on an uncultivated look. Once more before they reached their destination they had to ask their way; this time from the driver of a grocery wagon, who pointed off to the left where the new-laid street had been dug out like a canyon through the rocky hill.

"Here we are," said Dallas at last. "Just the place for him, eh?"

They had paused before a rickety flight of wooden steps that led up to the embankment above where could be discerned a tumble-down old picket fence. When they reached the top, there, standing by itself, with a few forlorn trees around it, was an old wooden mansard-roofed building, that had not known a coat of paint for years. There were the remains of ragged flower beds and what had once been a graveled walk leading up to the veranda.

"Fine, isn't it!" exclaimed Prentice, stopping to look about him.

As the boys stood there for a minute the front door opened and a most peculiar-looking figure appeared outlined against the dark shadow within. It was an old colored man in a long, blue cloak that came down to his heels. On his head he wore a little red fez like a smoking cap that Dallas often remembered his father wearing. As the boys approached him he

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smiled and bowed, but when Dallas asked politely if Mr. Gottlieb was at home he made no answer. Just then they heard a voice calling from within the house.

"Come in, my young friends. So you're as good as your word. I was expecting you, but my old enemy has laid me low this morning. It is not often that he's attacked me so hard. You will pardon my not rising."

The boys had entered the house by this time, and their eyes becoming accustomed to the dim light, they discerned their friend of the day before seated in an old armchair near the foot of a bare flight of stairs that led to the story above. He extended a hand to them in turn, and they saw from his face that he had been suffering great pain, for his skin was almost as white as his beard, and his jet black hair gave him the appearance of wearing a bristling fur cap. As the two boys greeted him he said some words to the old black servant in a language they could not understand. The tall black man bowed again, and without uttering a word stepped out onto the veranda and opened the shutters. Prentice cast a curious glance at him as he went through the door. Mr. Gottlieb nodded in the same direction.

"There's a man," he said, "who knows nine tongues and has none of his own."

"Sounds like a riddle," said Dallas.

"But it is not," replied their host. "It is another long story. Years ago he was a great talker, but because there were some men who thought he might

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say too much, they stopped his talking forever; they took his tongue away from him with a knife."

The boys exchanged glances, and before Mr. Gottlieb could continue, the tall black man had returned. At a sign from his master he grasped the back of the old armchair and rolled it on its noisy castors toward a wide door that opened from the hall. The boys followed him and paused in amazement. The room that they had entered had once been the parlor of the old house, but now it was uncarpeted and unfurnished except for a long table in the center and shelves on one side that ran almost up to the ceiling. The opposite wall was covered with the skulls and horns of African antelopes and gazelles. In one corner stood a sheaf of broad bladed spears, and a pile of tall leather and wicker shields leaned against the shelves back of another old armchair, even more dilapidated than the one in which Mr. Gottlieb was sitting. Over the brick fireplace, in which a few embers still glowed, was a magnificently mounted but very dusty buffalo head. Prentice and Dallas drew long breaths of sheer delight.

"It's a regular museum!" cried Prentice in delight. "My, aren't we glad we came!"

At a sign and a few more strange words, the old colored man drew forward the second armchair, dusting it with the flat of his hand. In an instant he had disappeared, and the boys seating themselves beside one another, for the chair was almost big enough for them both, gazed about the room in silence.

The impression that his curiosities had produced

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apparently gave Mr. Gottlieb pleasure, for he waited for one of his guests to speak. It was Prentice who did so.

"What will you tell us first?" he asked abruptly. "Please don't keep us waiting too long."

Mr. Gottlieb smiled.

"It will not be the last time that you'll be here, I hope, and there is going to be much to tell. All of these things," he waved his hand as he spoke, "have stories to them. See that big fellow over there?" he pointed to the broad-horned, fierce-looking head of the African buffalo; "there is an old hunter with a record—a lone bull of the swamp land, and his game was man. When at last he fell he had the scars of more than ten bullets in his hide, and he was known to have killed three, yes, maybe four, men, with that wicked old battering ram of his. But it is not of him that I'm going to ask you to listen to-day. I am going to give you a lesson in geography, for that is the best way to begin. . . . In the first place, I'm going to ask, do you know where the great Nile River has its source?"

The boys shook their heads.

"No one knows but myself," replied Mr. Gottlieb, "for no one has seen it, not even me. The cartographers do not take my word for it, but you young gentlemen will some day, perhaps, drink from this big spring I will tell you about, which is the real head-water, and beyond which there is no further that makes the Nile. Then when you come back, perhaps they will believe you." As he spoke a little

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color returned to the old gentleman's face. He hitched himself further forward in the chair. "And perhaps, too, you will find where the gold comes from, that makes its way to the coast in the little feather quills, and you may see the race of tree pigmies that dwell in the great swamp. Oh, you have fine adventures before you, if you will believe me. And now for the lesson! On the second shelf you will see a roll of maps; if you'll bring them down to the table and push me in close, we will go over them."

"But how about the buffalo?" interposed Prentice.

"And how did your servant lose his tongue?" asked Dallas.

"All in good time, my young friends," responded Mr. Gottlieb; "all in good time."

The boys exchanged glances as they carried the armful of maps to the table. Mr. Gottlieb selected three or four, and under his direction they were spread out so he could reach them.

Some men have the faculty of making dull subjects interesting, especially to younger minds, and although Mr. Gottlieb was probably unconscious of possessing this gift, he succeeded in making the two hours or more that followed so full of information that never for a minute did the boys' attention wander. By the end of this time they had learned not only a great deal of geography in the divisions of British and German East Africa, the Belgian Congo, and northern Rhodesia, but they had also picked up not a little history, and Mr. Gottlieb, on his part, had been surprised at their rudimentary knowledge of the early

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explorations of Speke, and Grant, and the German, Dr. Carl Peters, "the man without mercy." They had traced the line of the Shari watershed of the Nile and the Congo, and had the positions of the great African lakes firmly placed in their minds. The distances were astonishing, and the areas of the countries larger than they had had the least idea of. That German East Africa was twice as big as Germany, and that the British possession to the north was quite equal in size, astonished them, and that Lake Tanganyika was the longest body of fresh water in the world, had been a revelation; that Lake Victoria Nyanza almost equalled Lake Superior in size, they had never learned, or had forgotten. They knew it had been one of the discoveries of Speke and Grant in 1858; this they had ascertained in their rather hurried perusal of the books in the library the night before, but it surprised them to know that the southern part, and the larger, of this great island sea, belonged to Germany.

"When I first visited this country," said Mr. Gottlieb, waving his hand across the map-covered table, "there were no railways, but now there are several, and long, long before you two young gentlemen have reached my age, it will be traversed with them, and you will be able to go from Cairo to the Cape in less time than it has taken me to travel through the wilderness one hundred miles. Now you may wonder why I have taken all this time and tried your patience so severely. It is to test your real interest; so many people go to new countries when it becomes easy so

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to do without learning anything about them, and they come away and know nothing more. Now when you young gentlemen go there you will have something to go for; if you like what I shall tell you, you will see and understand, oh, so many things! There are many maps yet for you to see, and some that have never been published! Most interesting, they are, and you will need them. . . . But now we have had enough for to-day. . . . Shall I tell you of my big friend, there, with the armor-plated forehead?" He nodded at the big buffalo head that glowered down upon them.

Prentice and Dallas, whose backs were stiff from bending over the table, once more sought the comfort of the big armchair.

In a voice slightly tired from his long talking, but in a very dramatic way, Mr. Gottlieb began his story of how, near the border-land, north of the Pagani River, he had been hunting among the buffalo herds, hoping to capture two young calves alive, when he ran across the spoor or track of the gigantic bull. Only a year before in this same neighborhood, two ivory hunters had been killed by a male buffalo, who, after being wounded and getting their wind, had followed them up and charged them from the rear. Mr. Gottlieb had at the time with him a Zanzibari gun-bearer, who had been present on that occasion; the latter declared that the bull was not an ordinary one but was a "devil" in disguise well known to the natives, and he insisted that the huge hoof prints, whose depth proclaimed the great weight of the

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animal, belonged to none other than this notorious murderer.

"And so, my young friends," went on Mr. Gottlieb, "I determined to be his executioner, and for half a day we followed his track, when suddenly it became apparent that our presence was known to him, and that he was on the lookout for us. The rest of that day he hunted us; several times we got fleeting glimpses of him, but never close enough or long enough to shoot. My men were frightened, for the gun-bearer's tale had reached them; they huddled together along the paths, for this country is full of trails made by elephants and other animals packed hard for countless years; in many places you could ride a bicycle along them. Well, toward evening, as the dusk was descending, and we were thinking of going to camp, I heard a shout, and I saw the porters and the other blacks throw down their bundles and jump to one side. In the bad light I could just see coming down the path the back of my big fellow there with his head down! It was like being on the railway track with a locomotive coming on. He did not turn to one side or the other, but came straight for me. The men were so close in front of me that I could not fire. I saw one poor black body go up into the air, but the bull did not stop; he was after me—the white man with the gun! I cannot tell you how quickly all this happened. My servant, Hamid, the same who let you in, was with me; my gun was at my shoulder when suddenly I was grasped around the shoulders and flung to one side. I tumbled back into

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the bushes, for Hamid had thought as quick as that." Mr. Gottlieb snapped his fingers. "He feared I would not shoot in a vital part. Perhaps, like the others, too, he thought the bull was charmed. It saved my life, for our friend, there, missed me by not more than two feet as he rushed by. Quick like a cat he turned, stopping himself as if his legs were four plows deep in the earth, and while I was still on the ground he came at me again, his head down. I was a dead man! I thought I would soon be like as if a steam roller had gone over me, but I fired with my double-barrel gun, hoping to stop him in time. One bullet struck him in the little hollow just above the eye; if it had hit like the other, in all the mass of horns, I would not be here talking now, for when he fell his great head was lying on my two feet."

"So Hamid really saved your life," exclaimed Prentice breathlessly.

"Not the first or the last time, as I shall tell you. But that will be enough for us to-day. You come Thursday, and we will go over more maps, perhaps, and then when we have learned some things I have not yet told, you will know why I want you to have all these lessons by heart."

It was evident that Mr. Gottlieb was very tired, for having finished his story, he lay back in his chair and feebly clapped his hands together. At this signal, for such it was, Hamid, the servant, came from the hall, and the boys made haste to take their departure.

As they went down the old walk to the gate, Prentice took Dallas by the arm.

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"I wonder why he is telling us all this about the maps and country," he said; "maybe he is trying to persuade us not to go."

"It isn't that," Dallas replied; "he's got a reason, and we'll find it out before very long. I think he's going to ask us to do something for him when we get out there. Hold on, I have it," he said suddenly, "maybe he's left something there that he wishes us to bring back."

"Fine!" exclaimed Prentice. "We'll do it if we can."

"We'll try," returned Dallas, "but I hope Mother doesn't hear any stories about buffaloes before we start. We'll know everything by next Thursday."

"We're getting some pretty good coaching, aren't we, Dal?"

"We are for fair," his companion replied; "but it all counts in the game, and you know enough for that."

CHAPTER VI

PREPARATIONS AND ARRIVAL

TO recount the doings for the next two weeks would make a fair-sized book. It did not take long for Mrs. Rathbone to find out that something was in the wind. At home the boys were constantly poring over books that Dallas had purchased or taken from the circulating library, and sometimes in the evening Mrs. Rathbone surprised the two of them studying as if they were preparing for an entrance examination. One day as she went by the billiard room she stopped to listen. What outlandish gibberish were they talking? Perplexed, she entered the room.

"What are you boys about?" she asked. "What was that you said, Prentice?"

Before his friend could answer, Dallas spoke up, laughing.

"He was saying, 'Unaogopa simba?' In other words, he was asking me if I was afraid of a lion. That's Swahili; it is the language spoken by the blacks in East Africa."

"And what are you spending all your time on this for?" asked Mrs. Rathbone. She was rather perplexed.

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"We are preparing our lesson for to-morrow," Dallas rejoined. "And now if you'll sit down, Mother dear, we'll tell you all about it."

And this was the way that Mrs. Rathbone was informed of the intended expedition, and the reason for their extended visits to the Bronx.

It took no little time to overcome her fears and objections. However, before that evening was over she had reluctantly given her consent; and before the end of the week she had entered into the spirit of the undertaking. But there was one thing that she insisted on, and that was that there should be a third member of the party. She suggested one of the under-masters of the school, whom she had met, but this nomination was promptly and decisively black-balled.

"I tell you," said Prentice, when the two boys were alone, "I've got the idea. Your mother insists upon our taking what she calls 'a grown man' with us. What's the matter with Lindlay Vanderleck; if he isn't grown I don't know anybody that is. If we require any shooting from the shoulder with a gattling gun, he's the man to do it."

"Fine!" ejaculated Dallas. "Do you remember how he wanted to come down to the city sometime. We'll send for him and shanghai him out to Africa with us."

That very afternoon the big guide up on the Tobique River received a message, telephoned into the settlement from Fort Fairfield. The next morning he was on the train bound to New York. It was

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going to be many long months before he saw the North Woods again, and he was destined to take part in many adventures that had never been in the scope of his imagination.

Probably two young travelers had never been better prepared for a visit to strange countries than our two young friends, and yet, except for the presence of their huge companion, Lindlay, they might have been going for a little jaunt to Europe, as Mrs. Rathbone bade good-bye to them with tears in her eyes, at the steamer's gangway.

They had taken no guns or camp equipage; everything of this character was going to be purchased in London. The presence of the big, stalwart guide, with his calm, assured manner, and his good spirits, for some reason, gave Mrs. Rathbone comfort. It appeared to her that if they got into any trouble, Lindlay was capable of carrying them out of it on his shoulders.

Mr. Gottlieb, owing to his rheumatism, was not able to come to the steamer; but just at the last moment, before they had left the dock, a tall black figure approached them. It was Hamid, the silent servant, looking strangely out of place in an old, worn suit of clothes and the red fez on the top of his woolly head.

With a salaam he put a long envelope into Dallas' hand. On the outside was written in Mr. Gottlieb's handwriting:

Not to be opened until you leave Mombasa.

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They bore, also, several letters of introduction to people in London; among others, one to the representative of the Uganda Railway, at Dewar House, whom, Mr. Gottlieb informed them, was a very important man for them to meet.

When they were down the bay, and that silent feeling that comes to travelers who have parted from home to go on a long journey, had worn away, Prentice turned to Dallas.

"How's your arm?" he asked.

"It itches a little," said Dallas, pulling up his sleeve. "How's yours?"

"Same here," said Prentice, unbuttoning his cuff. "It didn't hurt as much as I expected." As no one was near them, the boys compared notes, as it were. It was a strange hieroglyph that, half in joke, Dallas had allowed Hamid to prick there under the direction of Mr. Gottlieb. Odd to relate, the latter had regarded this ceremony rather seriously, although he declared he had suggested it merely because the design was a talisman that was bound to bring them good luck. When they had returned home, with a needle and some colors the elder boy had copied the design and pricked it into his chum's forearm.

Their stay in London was very short. As Prentice put it, "they generally tumbled into luck," and on the steamer they had met an Englishman, a Captain Wyn-gate, who was returning from a shooting trip in British Columbia. He had made two trips into both German and British East Africa, and, besides being able to advise the two young sportsmen as to their arsenal

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and equipment, he gave them a number of letters to people "up country," as he called it, recommending that they should deal with Lewland, Carlton and Company at Nairobi, who would procure them everything necessary for their safari and save them the trouble of taking out with them anything but the most necessary articles. He also recommended to them a good head man and an experienced white hunter, an Englishman, Harry White, of whom he could not speak too highly.

Captain Wyngate's admiration for the big New Brunswicker was unbounded. It was very remarkable how Lindlay, the backwoodsman, had fitted himself into place. He possessed a remarkable adaptability and was neither intrusive nor shy. As Dallas said to Prentice one day, "He'd be just as much at home with the King or the German Emperor as he would with the game warden of the Tobique." The only thing that had upset Lindlay's equilibrium was the motion of the vessel, and the fact that he would lose his way on the big steamer—the multitude of decks and passageways confused him. With semi-seriousness, Lindlay had asked one of the stewards for an axe so he could "blaze a way down to his cabin." The boys had found him the best of companions; his inexperience made him depend not a little upon them, and his loyalty and admiration were shown to them every day. They had succeeded in teaching him many words and not a few sentences of Swahili, the comprehensive knowledge of which on their part had astonished their English friend.

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It would be dry reading detailing all of their preparations; yet, condensing the advice and information they had received, it might be well to tell a little of their outfitting.

In London they purchased their boots and clothing and two rifles apiece, Dallas and Prentice choosing two .303 sporting Mausers and two double-barreled .450 express rifles; while nothing could separate Lindlay from his .405 Winchester, and he fell completely in love with a .577 express. Just before they left the steamer another gun was added to their battery in a six-millimeter Mannlicher, presented to them by Captain Wyngate. It was a veteran of the Veldt, having made two trips into the great shooting grounds, although with its magnificent telescopic sight it looked as if it had just come from the maker. They had brought with them only one weapon from America—a little combination arm with a skeleton stock, called a "game-getter." It had two barrels, one on top of the other; one of twenty-two caliber and the other a thirty-eight; but the latter, being smooth bored, was capable of using shot cartridges. Two small folding cameras with expensive German lenses they purchased in Oxford street and a larger camera for landscape photography. At Captain Wyngate's suggestion, they laid in a large stock of provisions and tinned stuff, although almost all of the necessities of camp life, they were informed, could be purchased at Nairobi.

The voyage from England through the Bay of Biscay, the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea to the east coast of Africa can be made as com-

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fortably as any extended yachting trip. Donald Currie and Company's fine steamers start from Southampton and stop at every port of importance on the long voyage to Natal and the Cape.

One bright morning the steamer dropped anchor off the low lying coast before the old Portuguese town of Mombasa, with its ancient fortifications. Three times a week the train steamed out westward on its journey of nearly six hundred miles, perhaps the most remarkable railway journey in the world.

The boys had bought their transportation in London and the train was to leave the day following the steamer's arrival. It was with a feeling of unreality that they looked around them on landing. After seeing their luggage taken to the comfortable Grand Hotel, they, with Lindlay, hurried out into the street; every sight was new to them. The white-robed Arabs and the scantily-cloaked Somalis and Swahilis, the trimly-dressed Englishmen in their duck and khaki, the turbaned Hindus, and all the mixed population of the place, lent a picturesque and bizarre effect to the streets. Lindlay's astonishment rendered him speechless.

"It looks more like pictures of India than Africa," said Dallas. "You know there's one thing I'm crazy to do; it's to open Mr. Gottlieb's envelope. Isn't it strange that he never told us the 'big story' he was always hinting at? He acted as if he was afraid to. He was a mysterious old bird! I'm curious."

"So am I," said Prentice. "But I'll tell you what let's do now, let's open our trunks and get out of these

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store clothes, so we'll be more in the picture, as it were."

Back they went to the hotel, that with all its comforts, electric lights and well-trained servants, reminded them too much of civilization, and soon the three newcomers emerged, grinning self-consciously at one another in all the glory of their brand new khaki suits and big pith helmets. As they went by the shops and through the little streets, up and down which ran tiny railway tracks, with tram cars for passengers and freight, propelled by perspiring negroes, they began to feel that the whole thing, at last, was real and to thrill with the sensation. The Canadian giant as he walked beside them attracted no end of attention. The blacks regarded him with rolling eyes, and even pointed with whispered and respectful exclamations.

It was with difficulty that Dallas could prevent Prentice from purchasing all sorts of things at the outfitting establishments but they added here to their battery two magazine pistols and a second-hand twelve-bore shotgun in good condition. They could hardly sleep that night for excitement and the multitude of strange sounds. The last thing that Dallas remembered before his eyes closed was Prentice sitting up and saying in rather muffled tones: "Unaogopa simba Bwana?" To which he replied, in good but sleepy English: "Oh, shut up and go to bed!"

CHAPTER VII

AN EXPERIENCE IN WONDERLAND

COMFORTABLY installed in a compartment to themselves, our three adventurers looked out of the window as the train, hauled by its panting little engine, pulled out of the Uganda Railway Station.

There had been some necessary business to transact that morning that in all their interest of the previous day they had forgotten—the procuring of their game licenses at the government office. This was no small item in expense, but for fifty pounds sterling apiece they were now entitled to bring back heads, horns and trophies of over forty different kinds of game! The names of these various species, under Mr. Gottlieb's tutoring, they had quite learned by heart and there was hardly a gazelle or antelope that they could not have picked out by sight after their study of the old German's wonderful collection and the living animals in the Bronx Zoo.

They had that very morning added a fourth and very interesting member to their party, a certain Jock McAllister, through the medium of mutual attraction and direct purchase of body and soul. From all indications, judging from his manners and familiar airs, he might have been a lifetime acquaintance. Without

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any preliminaries, Jock McAllister had introduced himself to them in the courtyard of the Grand Hotel. He was a large, yellow, and rangy Airedale terrier, with kindly hazel eyes and a very honest expression, the property of one of the hotel porters, to whom he had been given by an English hunter who was about leaving and considered a sick dog a very useless bit of baggage. For five pounds the porter was not loath to part with him and Jock did not seem averse to the transfer of his allegiance. He was an experienced and traveled veteran, having ranged the forests around Mt. Kenia and crossed the equator almost to the confines of Abyssinia. This long introduction is somewhat necessary, as Jock figures rather largely in some subsequent happenings.

By the judicious use of a couple of rupees, he had been allowed to travel in the compartment instead of suffering the ignominy of a box in the luggage van. He was the only one of the party who did not manifest much interest in the sights to be seen from the window, showing the contempt of an old traveler by making himself comfortable and going to sleep on the cushions.

The dingy, brown little train rattled and clanked slowly across the island on which the picturesque old seaport is situated and jingled over the great viaduct to the mainland beyond; then, with much puffing and snorting, it climbed the grade through a forest of palm trees to the hills, from which the boys got their last look, for many months, at the blue waters of the Indian Ocean.

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Suddenly Dallas started and broke the silence that had come over them.

"Friends and fellow citizens," he declared, "the momentous time has arrived. We will now open the sealed orders of Major-General Gottlieb!"

It was quite a bulky package and the preamble was interesting. It stated in the old German's peculiar English that shooting and hunting were all right, and that it was easy to get a surfeit of it, but he trusted that his young friends would not be contented with a long list of trophies, alone; that he hoped they would like to get their names, and perhaps his, for "everlasting on the maps," and that if they followed his directions, they could go with safety into a new country where there were rivers and lakes and strange people that were unknown to white men. It was the last chance, he said, to join the glorious band of Speke, and Grant, Baldwin, and Cornwallis Harris and all the rest of the great pioneers. They could get into the country of the huge, century-old elephants with tusks from ten to eleven feet in length, where the herds were not depleted; they could visit countries where the echoes had never been awakened by the report of a rifle. He almost begged them not to spend all their time on the easy safari hunting of the park country of the British East African plateau, but to gain experience there and save two or three months of their trip for "real work." He urged them after making one trip to press on to Kibos and Port Florence, the terminus of the railway, and there take the steamer on Lake Victoria Nyanza to the little port of

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Mwanza in the German territory, where, if they presented the letter that he inclosed to a friend of his, Herr Gustav Geibler (if by good fortune he were alive), they would be put in touch with an opportunity for adventure and experience vouchsafed to few men. He would tell them, and on the spot they could decide. *"Now if you follow his directions, my young friends, when you return you will feel richly rewarded,"* read a sentence heavily underscored. The rest of the letter was a detail of instructions carefully written out, most of which he had told the boys before: the proper spots to aim at to bring down the great elephant with the high-power rifle and a small nickel-plated bullet; instructions for avoiding fevers and sickness, and how to deal with and handle head men and chiefs and how to treat or barter with wandering, semi-warlike tribes.

The adventurous Prentice was for going on at once and entering the unknown country that from the perusal of the maps they knew lay southeast of the great lake, in the direction of Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Meru; but after consultation they decided to adhere to their original plan of starting out on safari from Nairobi, and, if there was any time left, they would follow up Herr Gottlieb's suggestion. To the mind of the more cautious Dallas it seemed something of a wild-geese chase after an unknown kind of goose.

The train was now going at a better rate of speed and on a more level track; little sheet-iron stations were passed with bunches of natives standing about and generally a turbaned Indian station-master on the

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platform. At a place called Mazeras they stopped for fuel for the engine, and soon after they were pushing ahead through the great red, dusty wilderness. The country seemed the same stretching away as far as they could see, when suddenly Lindlay pointed to the southward. High up in the air above the clouds, almost like a cloud itself, rose the far distant peak of Kilimanjaro. Before darkness fell it had faded away.

The next day they had entered the wonderland; having passed the long valley of the Voi and the Athi in the night, they found themselves going through a country that was a garden of Eden, so far as animal life went, and, although it was dusty and parched-looking in spots, there were long stretches of rich meadow land and tree-covered plain. For hours they were kept constantly at the windows exclaiming. The great land to the south was the southern game reserve, and for a mile to the north the country was preserved also and no shooting allowed there. They soon got tired counting the herds of zebras, wildebeestes, hartebeestes, water bucks and the smaller gazelles and antelopes. All seemed used to the train; some hardly raised their heads from their grazing as it passed.

"Look!" shouted Dallas all at once.

Above the stunted bushes appeared the long necks of a group of giraffes; further on could be seen the figures of ostriches, and as the train rose out of a little valley Lindlay this time shouted, pointing:

"See the big pigs!"

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The "big pigs" were two rhinoceroses, one of which turned his ugly head toward the train for an instant as if debating whether he would take it in the flank or not, and then scampered away to join his fleeing companion.

"It's like a great zoo," was Prentice's description. And that's exactly what it was! All the wild animals seemed to have recognized that they were on safe ground, and apparently regarded the snorting, puffing train as a friendly beast who shared it with them, and who, despite its disturbing noise, was incapable of doing harm.

Soon they began to leave the plains and to approach the foothills. The air grew cooler; houses and farms could now be seen, and before long they rolled into the good-sized city of Nairobi. It seemed entirely out of place with its well-kept streets and stately stone buildings, its fine shops and bungalows and villas, its tennis courts, cricket fields and racetrack. If it were not for the presence of the great numbers of half-clad and half-savage tribesmen who were there to be engaged as porters and servants, it might belong to a civilization that was centuries old.

The boys and Lindlay were met at the station by a representative of the big outfitting firm, who apparently knew all about them, and at the palatial Nairobi Club, where they dined that night, they were told that their expedition was practically organized for them and that they could start in two days, if they chose, for the shooting grounds, and that they would be in the midst of the wild country of the Athi plains at the

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headwaters of the river of that name in a few days' march. They were eager to be off.

At the Norfolk Hotel, where they stopped, apparently nothing was talked of except shooting; there was some reference made to the annual race meet and to a coming cricket match, but most all of the conversation dealt with records of the number of heads, and measurements of horns, stories of narrow escapes, and hunters' tales in general. There were parties, some of which included ladies, that had just returned from safari, and others which were just starting out. Prentice paraphrased the hotel and its frequenters as "a big picnic rendezvous"; he wondered if some of the caravans were accompanied by French chefs and trained orchestras. Lindlay was not a little bewildered at his surroundings.

"It's lucky," said he, as he joined the boys, who stood looking at a photograph of a great encampment with its tents and army of followers, "it's lucky that I didn't bring my axe and my old frying-pan. I suppose they'd laugh at me. But one thing, by tar," he added, "no nigger's goin' to carry my gun. I'm goin' to tote that myself."

"But it's one of the rules," said Prentice seriously, "and if you don't comply with the rules out here, they won't let you pop a cap at anything."

After breakfast the next morning, one of the firm of Lewland, Carlton and Company, a most charming, delightful gentleman, and a sportsman of great repute, called on them at the hotel and brought with him Mr. Harry White, the hunter. He was one of the

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type of young Englishman that are to be found scattered the world over, wherever the red mapped lands extend. Well educated and of good family, he had chosen his occupation for the sheer love of it. Bronzed by the sun and outdoor life, he was the picture of a healthy man and the product of a healthy country, for the uplands of British East Africa possess as fine a climate as any part of the world. Unlike most guides, Mr. White was not a very talkative individual, but the boys were attracted at once by his manner and his frank, open smile. He, like everybody else, regarded Lindlay with admiring astonishment, and inquired his dimensions as if it was quite the usual thing. The three Americans found that there was mighty little for them to do, in organizing their particular caravan. Mr. White had secured an experienced head man, or conductor, a Mohammedan Somali named Agar Nabruki, who answered, however, to the name of "Patrick." Everything had been arranged, and not the smallest detail had been forgotten when the safari marched away from the town in a long trailing column, headed by a tall black in a garment resembling a night-gown, who proudly carried on the top of a long staff, the American flag, side by side with the English ensign carried by another bearer. Even music was not wanting, for four or five of the natives kept blowing a monotonous tune on roughly made flutes of hollowed antelope horns. Every now and then the bearers would break into a sort of chanting chorus. All of the white men of the party were mounted on mules or ponies, Lindlay's

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long legs nearly touching the ground. Prentice turning in the saddle, gazed ahead at the long, undulating line of loaded human beings who were carrying bales and boxes, bags, trunks and rolled up tents, on their heads or shoulders.

"There's only one or two things they seem to have forgotten," he exclaimed in mock consternation. "Where's that rotary ice-cream freezer? Who has the Amoskeag fire engine, and what under the sun did they do with the Walter Wood reaper? They seem to have everything else!"

"All the comforts of home," smiled Dallas in return. And so it was. They had mosquito-net-protected spring cots, portable canvas wash-stands, bathtubs, tables, chairs, napkins, bed linen, and table covers, and the little trained army that accompanied them was divided into all sorts of handicraftsmen. Cooks and helpers, fuel gatherers, and horse tenders, or cyces, tent men, skimmers, gun-bearers, and trackers, and each member of the party had his own personal servant who stood behind him at meals. Besides this large number, there were forty or fifty ordinary bearers, and three or four extra pack horses, and a guard of six Askari, or police soldiers.

"Looks as if we were going to found a settlement," remarked Lindlay with a grin.

Mr. White, the hunter, had promised them that they were going to be "jolly well looked after," and so, indeed, they were.

At some of the farms they passed when they had left the confines of the town, were some half-tame

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bush buck and water buck; pretty creatures that trotted out of the safari's path with no more alarm shown than if they had been goats or sheep. They passed also a large, wire-enclosed pasture, in which were grazing a big bunch of ostriches.

A strange thought was running through Dallas' mind; if this was all the roughing it they had to do, it was a pity that his mother had not come along with them. Many ladies, much older and less active than Mrs. Rathbone, had accompanied such expeditions, he had found out at the hotel. To tell the truth, deep down in his heart, he was a little disappointed at being in the midst of all this comfort and luxury. The idea of exciting adventure and tempting dangers seemed far removed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ADVENTURES OF TEMBO, TOMBO AND CHUI

PRENTICE," said Dallas, as he stretched himself out in a folding camp armchair, while his black boy was unlacing his heavy boots, "if this keeps up for a month I shall grow lazy."

"You certainly are growing fat," returned Prentice. "I should judge you weigh all of 'twelve stone eight,' as our friend Mr. White would put it, which being interpreted into U. S. is a little over a hundred and seventy-five pounds. You're qualifying for a center rush, my son." As he spoke, Prentice extended his own still booted feet in the direction of his own black body-servant, who was kneeling before him. "Njoo, Mzee, mimi tayari," he said, which meant, "Come on, I'm waiting for you."

They had been on the hunting grounds nearly three weeks now, and had moved camp three times, always apparently choosing some old and well-worn site. Every day they had been out over the beautiful bushveldt and had secured enough specimens to fill the side of a good-sized hall; but not a lion had they come across. Once or twice the natives had discovered spoor at some distance, but the beasts were exceedingly wary, and very scarce. Just ahead of them there had

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been a big hunting party that had employed dogs, and the large carnivora had either been killed or were giving that section a wide berth.

Dallas had brought down a cheetah with a long shot of the telescopic-sighted Mannlicher, but not a real leopard had they seen. At a baited place, Prentice had secured a mangey-looking hyena at night, whom he had all the good fun of taking for a lion; but for any great excitement except that of rather easy stalking, they had none. One day they had sighted a large bull rhino, but he, having winded them, had torn off like an express train in the direction of the not very far distant sanctuary of the game preserve.

After they had got into their slippers, and washed their faces and hands, the two boys sat themselves down once more into easy chairs. The swift and short African twilight was descending; the red glare of the camp fire and the savory smell of frying antelope steak, mingled with that of boiling coffee, wafted them.

"Lindlay ought to be back pretty soon," remarked Dallas. "He went out this afternoon to get some meat for the camp; takes a lot of shooting to feed so many hungry mouths, and my, can't they eat! That little Masai gun-bearer of mine swells up after he eats a meal like one of those whistling pigs."

A huge figure appeared out of the growing darkness, followed by three or four indistinct figures bearing something on their shoulders. The boys arose.

"What did you bag, Lindlay?" asked Dallas of the

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big back-woodsman whose tremendous muscles showed plainly under his damp hunting shirt and his short knee-breeches.

"Shot a couple of striped horses for the camp," he said, "and I've got a strange horned critter here to add to the collection."

"It's a fine Bongo buck!" Dallas exclaimed, bending over the beautiful buck that the bearers had laid on the ground. "It's one of the very rarest; they told us that there were hardly any left in this neighborhood. Jove! What a beautiful head!"

"Longest shot I've ever made," said Lindlay, "and running, too. Had my sights up for three hundred yards—just a bit of luck."

But it wasn't luck exactly; the giant's marksmanship was already renowned throughout the camp. His nerves were so steady and his eye so quick that the blacks had nicknamed him "Bwana Mbali-Tembo," or "Master Far-sighted Elephant." Prentice's name sounded somewhat like it, only it described a very different kind of animal. They called him "Bwana Tombo," or "The Quail," for the quickness of his getting over the ground. For a short distance there was not a runner in camp who could come within reach of him. Dallas, from the fact that he had shot the cheetah, or hunting leopard, had been nicknamed "Bwana Chui." As "Tembo," "Tombo," and "Chui," nicknames they had quickly adopted, they were known to one another. Harry White had long been universally known as "Bwana Bwana," which could fairly be interpreted "The Boss."

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To read descriptions of the every-day happenings of the expedition thus far, would be like reading a hunter's diary or note-book. The licenses which they had procured at Mombasa, limited them to certain members of certain kinds of game, and this limit they had reached, in some cases, having each got two specimens of Grant's gazelle, and two beautiful little gazelles, called topi. Their bag consisted already of no less than fourteen different varieties of heads.

It was the intention of Mr. White to take the safari to the head waters of the Tana River, on the wooded slopes of Mt. Kenia, thence a little further northward and westward to the great Laikipia Plateau, where he promised them that they would secure plenty of big game, and find adventures to their heart's content. But the smaller horned animals had proved to be so plentiful that they had progressed leisurely. The rainy season had lasted much longer to the north, and as it was now late in May, Mr. White concluded that it was better to wait until the June dry season had begun, and the swollen streams and rivers had gone down. But the best laid plans are often interfered with, and Mr. White did not see the Laikipia country this year, nor did the three Americans get more than a very distant view of the summit of the great mountain that lifts into the sky to the height of over eighteen thousand feet.

Probably if they had followed out the itinerary of their proposed journey this would be an entirely different kind of a story, which all leads up to a day

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when the four white men of the safari, and even Jock McAllister, had all the "adventure" they wanted.

Generally the party had divided itself into two shooting divisions, one of the boys accompanying White, while Lindlay and the other, with their gun-bearers and black guides, went in a different direction. It was expected that evening that they would break camp and make a long trek northward in the bright moonlight to the banks of the Tana River, for it was exceedingly hot marching under the noonday sun. It was the intention to strike the river some miles to the eastward of the government station at Fort Hall.

"Well, so long Tembo, and good luck Tombo," cried Dallas, as Lindlay and Prentice, with their party, started out to the north after the early breakfast. "Mind you bring something with teeth and claws this time. Mr. White and I are going to get a rhino, and lead him right back to camp."

Jock McAllister, who apparently showed no partiality in his friendship, chose on this particular morning to attach himself to the division that first left camp, and trotted off at Prentice's heels.

It was a beautiful morning, and the air was exhilarating, and as clear as a crystal; while almost in sight of camp a large herd of zebra dashed away in front of them, their striped coats shining in the sunlight, kicking up their heels, playful as colts in a pasture. A big herd of hartebeests scampered through the tall grass and disappeared into the bushes. They had gone but some three or four miles when one of the Wakamba guides, a slender, well-built black man who car-

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ried a long, heavy-bladed spear, called back to them and pointed.

"Simba!" he said.

Only a few paces away lay the body of a half-devoured gazelle. The man appeared quite excited, and soon the party were grouped about him.

"What is he chattering about?" asked Lindlay, who stood there with the big express rifle over his shoulder, for true to his purpose he had always carried his own weapon, his gun-bearer on this occasion being burdened only with a little "game-getter" that hardly weighed two pounds. He afforded a great deal of amusement to the rest of the blacks, but he did not seem chagrined over the matter.

"He says," returned Prentice, "that there were two lions here only a little while ago, and that they left their kill but shortly after daylight; they can't be far away. Now's our chance."

The other black men were examining the ground about them, and one who had gone further than the others, suddenly came running back excited. He reported that he had got a glimpse of a lion and a lioness at the edge of the thicket that lay in front of them not more than two or three hundred yards. This thicket was nearly a quarter of a mile in length and very dense; a maze of thorn bushes and dwarf trees that filled a little hollow through which ran the bed of a dry water course. On the farther side it appeared that the ground was very open, and the grass seemed to be neither so high nor so thick.

After a short consultation it was decided that Lind-

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lay should go to the eastern end of the thicket and Prentice should take the western; that the others of the party, numbering some ten or twelve, should organize themselves into beaters, and making as much noise as possible, should endeavor to drive the lions, who would keep to cover if they could, either up or down the bush-filled donga.

Half crouching in the grass on the edge of the bank Prentice waited, his heart beating loudly. Here was excitement at last! The noise the beaters made sounded as if they were fifty men instead of less than a dozen; he could hear them calling, and shouting, and slapping, and pounding the branches with their knob sticks and spears. Apparently they were working along the edge toward him. All at once there sounded the loud report of the express rifle at some distance off—a single shot. It diverted Prentice's attention for an instant, and he turned his head, expecting to hear a second, for Mr. White had cautioned and impressed on them all the hunter's adage that with dangerous game "one straight shot deserves another." The beaters who, at the sound of the rifle, had stopped their cries for an instant, now began again. Prentice could see the flash of sunlight on a spear rising here and there above the bushes; all at once his gun-bearer pointed, crouching, and instantly Prentice got a glimpse of a tawny shape sliding through the bushes below him not more than twenty yards away. Quickly he fired, and as if he had touched a spring that let loose a bit of mechanism, there bounded into full view a magnificent male lion.

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The first shot had merely seared across the chest in a large flesh wound. Without an instant's wait he charged. It was fortunate that Prentice was standing at the top of the bank, and that there were some bushes just in front of him, for so quick had the movement been made that he had hardly time to throw in another cartridge and take aim. On level ground, and unencumbered, the lion would have been almost upon him before he had pulled the trigger. Up to this time the beast had not uttered a sound. The second hasty sighting was a lucky shot. The nickel-plated bullet caught the great beast between the eyes, and as he reached the bank in full flight of his last leap, he fell over backward, stretched himself, and lay quiet. It was a magnificent, maned lion, full grown, and in fine condition. The little Masai gun-bearer had stood his ground, and the beaters now came up. Strange to say, Prentice was cool as if he had just shot a tommy gazelle. He wondered at it himself, not knowing it was a usual occurrence, but as the men began to gather about the dead lion, and one of them rolled back the massive head, the young hunter felt little chills creeping up and down his spine, and his hands began to shake.

He was about to jump down the bank to inspect his quarry closer when he heard the sound of some one calling, and turned. Through the bushes came Lindlay's bearer flourishing the little "game-getter" about his head. He was so breathless and excited he could hardly talk, but at last it dawned on Prentice what the man was saying.

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Lindlay had shot the lioness, but had not killed her, and she had mauled him. The bearer had run back for help. Prentice did not wait to hear much of the rest. Dashing up the bank, he cleared the first bush as if it were a hurdle, and ran down the edge of the donga, dodging the bushes like a foot-ball player going through a broken field. Suddenly his foot caught in the thick grass, and he plunged down head foremost, his rifle spinning out of his hand and harpooning itself into the thick thorn bushes. Half stunned from the jar of the fall, he rose to his feet; a figure was standing beside him. It was the Wakamba, panting heavily from his long run.

"Where is he?" Prentice shouted in Swahili.

The black pointed. The others were coming now, but lagging back. Without stopping to look for his rifle, Prentice ran on, the gun-bearer at his side. They turned about a bush, and never would the young hunter forget the sight he saw.

In the days of the old amphitheater of pagan Rome, when men fought beasts, might such a thing have been seen. Down at the bottom of a little gully were two struggling figures—Lindlay and the lioness. It was a dreadful sight. The beast was growling and choking in a weak, half-smothered fashion. Lindlay was silent; his clothes were ripped to tatters, and his great body red from neck to knees; one arm was about the animal's neck, and it appeared as if his hand had been thrust down her throat; the other hand was free and continually plunging a short-bladed hunting-knife into the great yellow body; his legs were clasped like



“At the bottom of a little gulley were two struggling figures.”

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a wrestler's with instep locked to heel just forward of the animal's hind legs! Prentice snatched the "game-getter" from the bearer's hand, and fearlessly jumped down into the hollow. But the shot charge that he poured into the animal's head was not needed; Lindlay's last knife thrust had gone between the ribs and reached the heart. He was dreadfully mauled, but did not lose consciousness, and managed after an effort to get to his feet. It was impossible for him to stand very long, however, and Prentice, who had sent on two of the blacks to camp, began to be very much frightened. Lindlay had lost so much blood that he was very weak, and so exhausted that he could hardly talk; it was almost miraculous that no bones were broken, but he was so terribly ripped and mauled across the back and shoulders, and down the legs, that he was a fearful sight.

Prentice, who administered first aid as well as he could, from the bundle of bandages that one of the bearers always took into the field in his haversack, soon found he had another patient on his hands. One of the men who had remained with him suddenly had bent and picked up something out of the trampled grass and bushes; it was little Jock McAllister, or what was left of him, for a blow from the lioness' paw had put him in almost as bad a shape as Lindlay was in; but here again no bones were broken. The little dog had been almost flayed alive, but showed by weak wagging of his tail, that he knew that everything would now be done for him. In an hour, Asgar, the head man, appeared with apparently all

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the camp at his heels. A litter had been formed of one of the canvas cots, and putting Lindlay on it, with Jock beside him, they started for camp.

The Masai had taken some men back with him to get the lion, and as the other bearers were tying together the feet of the lioness in order to bring the body in on their sticks, Prentice took a look at it. The beast's lower jaw had been broken, rendering her terrible teeth all but useless. Had it not been for this, the effect of Lindlay's single shot, she certainly would have killed him. In the hide when they stretched it out afterwards, were found nearly forty stab wounds. But it would be best to make a separate chapter of Tembo's story of the affair, and also tell therein what happened to Dallas and Mr. White.

When darkness fell they had not returned. Prentice was sitting by Lindlay's side endeavoring to persuade him not to talk, for an alarming fever had set in, when he heard just outside the tent the sound of excited voices. One of the gun-bearers pulled aside the flap.

"Bwana," he said, "they are bringing in Bwana Bwana; he has been hurt by a rhino."

Here was a day of calamities.

CHAPTER IX

HOW IT ALL HAPPENED

THE doctor at the government boma, or station, of Fort Hall, had been roused out of his bed shortly after midnight, and told that his services were needed at the camp of a safari that lay some twenty-five miles to the eastward. Two hunters urgently needing his care lay there on tent cots too badly wounded to be immediately moved. With one of the officials and an assistant, he had set out in answer to the call at daybreak.

There was a good deal of responsibility resting on the shoulders of the two boys during the hours that preceded his arrival, for it appeared as if disaster in its worst form was about to descend on their hunting trip. In one tent poor Lindlay, now quite delirious from the fever, lay mumbling incoherently, on his cot, and in the next one Harry White, the man of many escapes, lay with a fractured hip, a deep gash from the sharp horn of a charging rhino in his side, and four ribs had also been broken, and his shoulder badly dislocated. It seemed as if a veritable hoodoo must have accompanied the expedition from Nairobi, and remained in hiding until that luckless May morning.



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The boys had breakfasted almost in silence, and the gloom that was on them seemed to have pervaded the whole camp. There was no singing that morning, and the blacks sat about on their haunches in groups chattering in low voices; it was evident to them that the trip was at an end.

"I wish we had a wireless telegraph outfit," said Prentice. "I think we're in a position to send out a C. Q. D. call. What if the doctor at the boma is away? The runner should have got there before midnight, and if help was started to us at once they ought almost to be here by this time."

"Did Lindlay tell you how it happened?" asked Dallas.

"Well," replied Prentice, "between what that frightened gun-bearer told and what he told me himself, before he went off his head entirely, I've got a pretty good idea of it. We had brought the little 'game-getter' along to see if we couldn't get a shot at one of those dik-diks, what Lindlay called those 'rabbit deer,' without blowing it all to pieces with a heavy rifle. I think he was more anxious to get one of those as a curiosity, than to shoot a rhinoceros. I told you about finding the kill and the spoor; the lion and the lioness must have separated in the thicket, one going up and one going down the donga, but as the beaters were all coming in my direction, the Wakamba who was with Lindlay concluded that they had both gone my way. As they were standing there, Jock, who had been browsing around, put up one of the little gazelles. It ran out into the grass, and Lindlay

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snatched the little rifle from Moko and handed him the express. He took a shot at the little animal and missed him, but not being sure, he went on into the bushes. He was wading in among them, kicking about with his feet, when all at once Jock set up a tremendous barking, and immediately ran out of the gully with his hair standing on end. Suddenly Moko ran toward Lindlay extending the express rifle, and Lindlay took it, giving to him the little pistol. He hardly got the big gun in his hand when, with a growl, the lioness sprang into clear sight, within five yards of him. Jock had routed her out, and turned to face her like a brave little tyke, but before he could dodge or get away she had caught him a blow with one of her paws that threw him up in the air clear over the top of the bushes. It was then she saw Lindlay and the bearer, and for an instant, hesitated as to what to do. 'Tisn't very often that one of those big guns miss fire, but the cartridge in the right barrel failed to go off when Lindlay pulled the trigger. When he fired the second shot she was turning quickly, and the bullet struck her in the jaw. She whirled so suddenly and jumped that it seemed all one motion, Lindlay said, and the next thing he knew, with her forepaw outstretched she struck him full on the shoulders, her head striking his chest. Over he went backwards, and that is all that Moko was able to see, for he took to his heels. Lindlay first tried to get at his hunting-knife—the short-bladed skinner that he always carried in his belt—but had to give it up, for his two hands were needed to keep her claws and head away from

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his throat. Of course, if the beast could have used her hind claws to good advantage, she would probably have ripped him to pieces, but the branches of the big bush into which they had fallen, hindered her. It was then that Lindlay saw that her jaws were useless for biting, and to keep her away from him, he thrust one hand as far as it would go down the beast's throat, and at last, with the other, succeeded in getting hold of his knife, and in his own words, proceeded to 'carve her up,' while she was clawing him dreadfully. If he hadn't been as strong as three men, she'd have killed him anyhow; but she must have been growing weaker all the time; twice they actually rolled over together, and once he succeeded in getting on her back. They must have fought for some three or four minutes; when I came up, he was actually almost on top with a leg-hold 'round her body, and working the knife." Prentice's voice broke, "I pray to God the doctor comes in time to pull him through; it's a pretty sad end to our trip. White seems to be in an awful bad way, too, but did you ever see such sand? How that rhino ever missed you, I don't see."

"Just a matter of inches," answered Dallas. "I think he must have almost jumped over me. White was hurrying forward to pull me to my feet, when the rhino caught him. He went clean over the animal's back. Oh, Lord, I hope help comes pretty soon. We've done everythin we could; it's awful, just awful!"

Suddenly a commotion was seen among a little group of bearers some distance off; one of them, a

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Wanderobo tracker, clad in an old discarded jersey, came running toward the dining tent. Following the glances of the others, the boys, even before the man had time to speak, saw three men on horseback coming through the tall grass at a trot. In another moment Dr. Chetwood from Fort Hall swung himself out of the saddle, lifting off a pair of heavy saddlebags as he did so. The other two men, who were both very young, proved to be Captain Clay-Morris, the government agent, and Mr. Lambie, a young Scotchman, the assistant.

They first visited Mr. White. His greeting was characteristically casual and British. He was perfectly conscious, and looked up as the doctor approached. Despite the pain in his contorted face, he forced a smile.

"Well, old chap," he said, for he knew Chetwood well, "I've got it at last. Better see to the other fellow; he's worse off than I am. I'm going to pull through all right."

He would not let the doctor touch him until he had gone in to see Lindlay. As he examined the latter, the doctor shook his head rather doubtfully at first.

"Must have the constitution of a bull buffalo," he said. "I think we'll manage to bring him 'round." And he set to work to see what could be done.

By that evening both of the wounded men were more comfortable. Lindlay's fever had gone down, and, though suffering great pain, he was able to talk, and if courage was half the battle in such a stress as his was, he had the fight well in hand. Under the

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doctor's opiates both his patients were asleep shortly after sundown. Captain Clay-Morris had returned to the boma that afternoon, but the doctor and young Lambie sat with the boys around the camp fire. It was proposed to move the whole caravan to Fort Hall the next day, where Lindlay and White could be better taken care of. Comfortable litters had been prepared, and in another week or so, Dr. Chetwood hoped they would be able to make the trip to the Nairobi hospital by wagon.

When Prentice had related again the story of Lindlay's fight with the lioness, the doctor recalled only one instance that was anything like it.

"There was an American hunter-naturalist out here some years ago, named Akeley, who killed a full-grown, wounded leopard with his bare hands. He was pretty badly mauled and scratched, and was laid up for some time, but your friend's great strength alone saved him in this fight, I can tell you; I don't suppose a man ever killed a lion with a four-inch knife blade, before."

"How in the world did Harry White get in that rhino's path?" asked Lambie, as he lit his pipe with an ember from the fire. "He's had 'em come his way a dozen times, and never come to any harm. You know White was one of those who always held that a rhino never actually charged, and that the direction that he took was just a matter of chance or luck."

"He was trying to save me," exclaimed Dallas. "I'll tell you how it happened. We had gone out to the westward of the camp some two or three miles

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when we saw two rhinos lying under a big thorn tree. If they'd been standing up, we probably would have seen them before, but no sooner had we sighted them than they got our wind; the female began to run nervously around, and the big bull sat up on his haunches just like a dog. The tick birds that had been on their backs had sighted us and were flying about them, making an awful row."

"How close were you?" asked the doctor.

"About sixty or seventy yards," said Dallas. "Mr. White turned to me, and said: 'Now's your chance for a photograph; get your camera, we can go up closer.' So I took the camera from the boy who was carrying it, and with White walking alongside of me, we approached the big thorn tree. The female had stopped running now and stood still for a moment, and then with a squeal, she tore off; but the big bull sat there, apparently looking straight at us. White insisted that he couldn't see us, and that we could get still closer. As we walked up, I was looking in the finder and had got so close that I could almost see the hairs on the top of his ragged ears; then I noticed that in my excitement I had not exposed the plate, and just as I was doing so, the big bull heaved himself to his feet and started right for us like a racing automobile. I don't know whether I got a picture of him, or not, in fact, I haven't looked, but he was coming straight for me, and I started to run. Both gun-bearers and the two other boys were legging it as fast as they could go. I heard Mr. White call out and shoot, and my foot struck something that I found

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afterwards was my own rifle, that my bearer had dropped; the camera flew out of my hands, and heels over head I went down into the grass! As I fell I saw behind me that the big bull was right on my trail. White fired a second time, and then came running on toward me only a few yards ahead of the animal. Just as he stopped to pull me to my feet, the rhino caught him, and with a lift of his head, tossed him straight up in the air. You can tell how close he was to me, for he stepped on the stock of the rifle that was just beside my knee, and tore off the heel-plate. I first thought Mr. White was dead; it was some time before I could get the blacks to come up. Luckily, the rhino didn't come back again; he just kept on at full speed, and I don't know what became of him."

"White seldom misses," interjected Lambie, "but that was a pretty rough experience."

"Rath-e-r," commented the doctor. "Pretty bad luck all 'round."

The safari was in motion by three o'clock the next afternoon, but owing to the slow rate at which the litter-bearers had to travel, and the pain occasioned White by the movement, careful though they were, camp was made shortly after sundown, and it was ten o'clock the next morning before they reached Fort Hall. They had run across a curious sight that really furnished an end, and a very satisfactory one, to Dallas' story, just before they had halted and pitched their tents. Observing a cloud of vultures and a few great marabout storks rising in the air some distance away from the line of march, the young Scotchman

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and the two boys had ridden off to investigate. There were the bones of what had once been a great rhinoceros, lying almost picked clean by the hyenas and jackalls at night, and the birds in the daytime. It was wonderful to think that this clean picking had been done in the space of so short a time, but even the bones had been dragged apart, and the great ribs stood up out of the grass like an outline of some wreck on the seashore.

"This is the gentleman that caused you all the fuss!" exclaimed Lambie. "And see, Harry White didn't miss; he must have come all this way with a bullet through his heart, or pretty close to it." He pointed to one of the great flat ribs that had been broken off by the impact of the bullet, and delivered himself of the following sage remark,

"Well," said he, "there was an Irish hunter who was a great shot, out here, who wrote in his note-book: 'As to rhinos and elephants, you've got to get them to get them, or they'll get you.'"

Dallas had been rather surprised to note that there was no horn on the great skull, and learned for the first time that this ornamental and extremely useful appendage grows entirely out of the rhinoceros' hide, and is not attached to any bony formation, being composed of a fibrous hard substance, and is really not a horn at all.

Mr. White seemed pleased when told of the fate of his enemy; his remark again was characteristic.

"I wish jolly well," he said, "that he had chosen another direction." He still adhered to the opinion

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that the big pachyderm just "happened" to come that way, and probably did not see them until he was within a few feet of where Dallas had fallen.

Captain Clay-Morris placed his house at their disposal as soon as they arrived, but the boys preferred to live in a tent that they had pitched not far from a roughly-made tennis ground near the agent's office. Lindlay and White occupied two neat, cool rooms in the house. Jock, who had several stitches in his hide, refused to be treated as an invalid.

Acting under Asgar, the head man's suggestion, the safari had been paid off, although the cook and his helper, the gun-bearers, and body-servants were still retained.

During the ten days that followed the boys made several excursions along the Tana River, and shot water buck and impala, and Dallas had the good luck when out with Lambie to bag a hippo and recover the body. They had crossed the stream and gone some distance into the forest land that extended down from the slope of Kenia, but it was a long time since elephants had been seen on this side of the mountain.

At last the patients were able to travel, and, laid comfortably on mattresses and blankets, in the great station wagon drawn by its span of twelve bullocks, they returned to Nairobi. Here Lindlay had a very bad turn at first after reaching the hospital, but soon began to mend. His magnificent condition stood him in good stead, although lion claw and teeth wounds are very slow to heal, and in some cases leave constantly recurring intermittent tenderness and sores; in

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a fortnight he was able to move around a little. Poor White would have to rest many weeks longer, with his leg and side in a plaster cast.

In their letters home, the boys had not been very minute in describing the unfortunate happenings, and it must be confessed that Dallas' epistles to his mother contained more about the scenery and the social life of the town than they did about the sensations of being charged by a rhinoceros.

Two weeks' idling about the city began to grow irksome; Lindlay did not actually need them, and although the expenses of the interrupted expedition had made a big hole in their finances, Tombo and Chui were planning a short expedition southward to the Sotik plains with a young Englishman whose acquaintance they had made, and who knew the hunting-grounds well, when this was called off also. Apparently they had forgotten all about Mr. Gottlieb and his sealed instructions when something took place that recalled their old friend very forcibly to their minds. They had written him, of course, two long and detailed letters of their adventures, the receipt of which had caused the old gentleman no little disappointment. It appeared to him as if his efforts had been more or less wasted, and that his seed had fallen on rather barren ground. He still hoped, however, that his part of the plans would not prove to be an utter failure.

CHAPTER X

THE MESSAGE OF THE VOICE

THE boys, with their English friend, Cecil Langford, had been playing tennis at the Nairobi Club court, and were sitting off to one side on a bench under a canvas sun canopy, watching an exciting mixed double match that was going on, when a ball, striking the top of the net, rolled toward them. Dallas bent to pick it up; as he did so one of the club servants, a little shriveled black man, employed on the grounds, happened to be passing. Dallas' rolled up shirt sleeve displayed his muscular forearm to the elbow, and the peculiar tattoo mark put there by old Hamid was plainly visible. The attendant had reached for the ball at the same moment, and his eye fell on the supposed talisman of good luck.

"Well," exclaimed Langford, as Dallas once more leaned back on the settee, "what does this chap want?"

The little old man was standing before him as if petrified, looking from Dallas to Prentice and back again; the same mark that had attracted his attention showed plainly on the smaller lad's right forearm also.

"You seem to have hypnotized him," continued Langford. "I can't talk their lingo; ask him to move on, he's in my way."

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"What is it you wish?" asked Dallas in Ki-Swahili.

The question seemed to bring the man to himself.

"Nothing, Bwana. I wish pardon," he replied in English, and then as if he could not refrain from showing his curiosity, he shifted his glance from Dallas's face to his arm. "Mi N'Moki-Bwana Molombiki?" he asked politely, in a strange, cracked voice.

"No," said Dallas, somewhat astonished and amused, "I haven't that pleasure."

The shriveled black man touched his forehead with both forefingers, in respectful salute, and hobbled off.

"Now, what did he mean by that?" asked Langford.

"You can search me," answered Dallas, which reply was quite as unintelligible to the Englishman as the old black's behavior.

Prentice was repeating the word "Molombiki" under his breath. Somehow it sounded reminiscent to him. All at once he slapped Dallas on the knee and spoke the word out loud.

"Why, don't you remember, Dal?" he said, "that is one of the names that old Gottlieb mentioned; I have it! It was the name he went by down among the Kitagandas, or what you call 'em; it's a Wagoni or Walbanzi name; don't you remember it? The tribe who held him prisoner—I forget."

"Of course," responded Dallas; "now I do—or something sounds like it. That's mighty funny. Let's get hold of that fellow."

They started to their feet, but the black man had disappeared. A moment later someone called and beckoned them from the Club veranda. It was the English

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agent who was standing there with his pretty wife beside him. The boys slipped on their coats, and, accompanied by Langford, crossed the tennis court. They had entered very little into the social life of Nairobi, but had lunched and had "tiffin" on one or two occasions at the agent's comfortable, vine-shrouded villa, where his wife had poured tea for them. It was through them that they had met Langford; although he was older than they were by two or three years, he seemed in many ways much younger.

"There was a little box that arrived at the office, directed to you, Mr. Rathbone," said Mr. Carlton, as they came up the steps; "it came with instructions to forward it after you, and as I thought I might find you here, I brought it along with me." He took from under his arm a flat, well-built little box, about a foot square, and not more than two inches wide. "Seems to have come from America," he said, "and been re-shipped to us by the London office."

As Dallas took it, he was consumed with curiosity, for, on the corner of the box, were Mr. Gottlieb's initials, and although the address was printed by hand, he recognized the German script. He showed it to Prentice.

"What under the sun can it be?" exclaimed the latter. "Let's get a knife and open it; it's quite heavy, too."

Together with the agent and his wife they entered the clubhouse. The hall steward was sent to get a screw-driver for the lid of the mysterious little box was carefully fastened with tiny brass screws. Mrs.

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Carlton displayed quite as much curiosity as the boys themselves, and while the man was gone on his errand they all stood there chatting and laughingly speculating as to the contents. The door to the club was open, and Dallas directed Mr. Carlton's attention by touching his arm.

"See that little black man, there by the gate, with the rake in his hand?" he said. "Who is he and where does he come from?"

"There's quite a story to that little chap," responded the agent. "He's a Bantu, from German East Africa, belongs to one of the Lake tribes, I take it. He was gun-bearer to a German hunter and traveler who was here at Nairobi for a long time. He saved his master's life on two occasions; once from an elephant, and once from a wounded lion. Like your friend, Tembo, that son of Anak, he was badly mauled, but if he had been a white man and a brother, the German could not have taken better care of him. He was once a great guide and tracker, I am told, but for some years now, he has been employed at the Club, a very faithful little servitor. Ah! here is Felix with the screw-driver; now we can open it."

When the cover was removed there lay under the lid a note on top of the thick wrappings of tissue-paper. Before Dallas had read it, Prentice had turned the box upside down on the table.

"Why, they're talking-machine records," cried Mrs. Carlton. "Come into the music-room, we've splendid instrument there; we'll give them a try."

Dallas followed after them, reading the note.

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Dear young friends: [it began] I had forgotten already yet until you had gone, of one great important thing. You should take with you, when you leave Mwanza, one of those talking instruments. Why did I not think of it in New York! It will work wonders! It was so stupid of me. Maybe you can get one at Nairobi or send at Mombasa for to get one. Enclosed are some records that you must put on for my friend Gustav and he will tell you how best to make use of them. It will work wonders, I tell you. Do not hesitate to follow his instructions. I hope and pray that he is alive and well.

"The mystery deepens," Dallas said; "do you suppose that we could get one of these machines here?"

"There's an agency," responded Mr. Carlton, "but they are no longer a novelty to the blacks. Several safaris have taken them out with them. At first they were regarded as miracles, and in case of trouble, such as we used to have, one would have been of more use than a Vickar's Maxim, but now most of the safari men and many of the tribes have heard them often. The 'voice in the box' no longer deifies its possessor. While they think it marvelous, they consider it quite natural for a white man to carry the 'preserved sounds' around with him. I should like to have been present when they heard it for the first time; people have told me that the effect was quite wonderful."

By this time they had joined the others in the music-room; the machine had been wound up, and the flat rubber disc had begun to revolve under the scratching needle.

Now it is one of the peculiarities of the transmitted human voice through the megaphone attachment that

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it penetrates and carries in a way, that even the real voice, backed by lung power, cannot. Suddenly they heard the strident tones. The boys at once recognized Mr. Gottlieb's voice, but for the life of them they could not understand a word of what he was saying.

"It's some outlandish gibberish!" exclaimed the young Englishman.

"It certainly isn't anything I've heard before," said Mr. Carlton. "It's not Swahili."

"It sounds rather fine," said Prentice, "something like the ravings of John McCullough. Do you remember the record we had at school, Dal?"

The big wooden trumpet was pointed toward the open window. The black man in the white duck suit stopped raking the walk; he slowly turned his head, listening in an attitude of rigid attention, then perceiving that the sound came from the clubhouse, he slowly approached. Mr. Carlton's attention had been first drawn to him, and he pointed him out to the others. The black's face was a study; his mouth was open, showing his pointed, blackened teeth; his blood-shot little eyes were rolling from side to side, and the skinny paws in which he held the rake were trembling. Owing to the mosquito-netting in the window, it was impossible for him to see into the room, although he could be seen plainly. The sonorous voice, with its peculiar gutturals and clipped words went on. By this time the Bantu was quite close to the window. The record came to an end and Prentice lifted the needle from the disc. Everyone was now watching the

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strange white-clad figure outside; the man raised a hand toward the house.

"Molombiki!" he called in a thrilling whisper, and then again, this time with almost an entreaty, "Molombiki!" It was quite uncanny. He took a step or two nearer and spoke a few hurried sentences.

"More gibberish," said Langford, grinning. "It's catching."

Mr. Carlton broke the spell. He stepped to the window. "Who are you looking for? What are you saying?" he asked.

"Him there, Bwana?" inquired the old man. "Tell Chula here. He know me. Masikina Chula. Ask him speak."

Mr. Carlton lifted the mosquito-netting. "There is no one here, Chula," he said; "it is the voice in a box." He began to speak native tongue now. "You understand what the voice was saying?" he asked.

Chula, whose name, being translated, means the "Frog," hesitated.

"No understand, Bwana," he shook his head.

"Wait till we put it on again," said Dallas. He started the record once more. Chula listened, his eyes shifting from side to side.

"Me no understand," he croaked, when the record ended abruptly as if in the middle of a word.

"Zulia-ku. You are lying," said Mr. Carlton, in the native tongue. The little black man shook his head again.

"Khalas," he muttered, "I do not know."

As he looked up now his eyes lingered a moment on

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Dallas' face, but he said nothing more, and, making a salaam, his fingers to his forehead, he went back to the path.

"He did understand," said Mrs. Carlton, "I'm sure he did."

"If I had him out on safari I'd make him talk," said Mr. Carlton angrily; "but we'll look into this business." Then he added hastily, "I beg your pardon, this is none of my affair. Probably there were too many of us here. I'll have him come to my office and we'll try again."

"Let's see what the other records are," interrupted Prentice. He picked up the other discs. "Hello, we put the third one in by mistake! They are numbered."

But the other records were all the same—a language that no one present could understand or interpret.

The boys had heretofore said nothing about Mr. Gottlieb to any one at Nairobi, but now they told the story.

"It is evidently the language of some little known tribe," said Mr. Carlton, "but haven't you a key that explains it?"

"No," said Prentice, shaking his head, "we're like Chula, we know nothing."

"Bring them to my office to-morrow," said Mr. Carlton, "and we'll have him there. I'll have a 'talking-box' ready for you."

As the mystified party broke up, Dallas and his chum, with the box under his arm, went over to the hospital to see Lindlay. He was seated in an India

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chair out on the veranda, and at his feet lay Jock McAllister. The giant was all cheerfulness.

"Thought you were never coming to-day," he said. "I'm feeling 'head and tail up,' just like a buck. If I was any better I couldn't stand it. Jock and I've been comparing notes, and have come to the conclusion that the air of the city doesn't agree with us."

"What does the doctor say?" asked Dallas.

"He says I'll be able to be out in about a week," Lindlay grinned. "They're not making much money on me; I'm crying like a child for five meals a day." He stretched out a muscular arm. The wounds of the lion's claws had healed nicely. "I've got a score to pay off on those big cats," he said, "and I'd like a chance to do it."

Accompanied by Lindlay, the boys went in to see their friend, Harry White; they found him propped up in the pillows of his cot, and he waved them a greeting as they approached.

"Well," he said, "I thought you would have been off long before this; aren't you pretty well fed up with the luxuries of Nairobi?"

"Tired to death of it," said Dallas. "I don't think we'll be here very much longer."

The Englishman made a wry face. "I've never been in bed so long in my life before; I'd like to take you chaps down to the Sotik, but I suppose I'll be here till the fall. If you wait till then, I'll take you out on a shooting trip that'll make your eyes open."

"We're thinking of going on to the Lake before we

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leave, and making a little run into Uganda as soon as Lindlay is able to travel."

"Why don't you go on to the Congo and go out to the west coast by the river," suggested White; "that'd be a trip worth taking; you'd have something to talk about when you got back home, but before you leave British East Africa, I'd go down to the Sotix plain; Vanderleck might get another chance to turn a lion inside out, just to pass the time."

"I'm going to get even with 'em," said Lindlay, "you can bet on that."

Prentice laughed. "He wants to get a good hide to take home," he chuckled; "he rather spoiled that one. He's too careless with a knife."

The Nairobi papers had contained quite an account of Lindlay's hand-to-claw fight, but he had refused to be interviewed on the subject. The talk after a while came around to the happenings of the day, and the strange behavior of Chula, the little black man, at the Club. White was able to give a little information about him, but nothing very definite.

A number of years ago, it appeared that a tall, bearded German had appeared at Kibos, near Port Florence, on Lake Victoria Nyanza, having come up from the south on the little steamer that then plied the Lake, whose place had long since been taken by the fine large boats that now made monthly trips to the different Lake ports. He had brought with him a little black hunter who had just a fighting chance for life, having been almost devoured by a lion somewhere down in the German territory. Only the skilled

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aid of the Nairobi surgeons and the German's tender nursing saved his life.

"What was his name?" asked Dallas, when White had concluded his story. "I mean the name of the German."

"I've forgotten," replied the Englishman. "I never met him myself, for I came out to the country after he had left, but I remember being told that he had with him another black follower who was deaf and dumb."

The boys exchanged glances.

"Was his name Gottlieb?" asked Prentice eagerly.

"I don't remember," White responded. "He was a stranger to 'most everybody here. He was a kind of mysterious person and kept a good deal to himself, seeing little of anyone but Chula and his two servants."

"Oh, there were two of them," said Dallas; "you only mentioned the deaf and dumb man."

"There was another if I recall rightly," said White, "a young black boy of about ten years of age, who spoke a strange language. When Chula had recovered they disappeared; there must be some people in town who could tell you more about them. But I remember one thing being spoken of, and that was that the wire ornaments the young light-colored black had on his arm were not made of brass or copper wire, but were said to be of heavy gold. However," he added, "that is only a story I've heard; I cannot vouch for it, and there is another tale, that for a long time went about, that Chula was always expecting his master's return.

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He has never left the town, nor has he missed the arrival of the train from Mombasa. Probably if you had gone down there this morning you would have found him on the platform."

"Mr. Carlton is going to have him at his office to-morrow, and give him the third degree," said Prentice.

"What is that?" asked White curiously.

"Have him dance on the carpet," Prentice smiling, explained the meaning of the term.

"Oh," said White, "now I get you. What we call 'grilling on the grid-iron.' I doubt if you get much out of him."

CHAPTER XI

CHANGE OF PLANS

I'LL tell you what let's do, Chui," said Prentice, as they sat in the corridor of the hotel, waiting for Mr. Carlton, who was going to stop for them on his way to the office. "The doctor says that Lindlay won't be able to go into rough camp or do much walking for another three weeks. Let's go on to the Lake and make that steamer trip. I think it'd be mean to go on a big hunt without Tembo, and Langford wants to start day after to-morrow. We can go down to Mwanza and introduce ourselves to Gottlieb's friend Mr. Geibler, and if there's anything doing we can wait there for him."

It was Prentice who generally made the suggestions, but the deciding voice almost always lay with Dallas. The two chums had hardly ever had any serious difference of opinion, and if they ever had any argument at all, two to one it was Prentice who gave way in the end.

"I don't want to leave Lindlay here alone," said Dallas slowly. "I think we could take him along with us and go easy; he could rest on the steamer. Do you know, I think a great deal depends upon what we learn from those records? Chula may be able to put us wise to a good deal that we do not now under-

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stand. Why Mr. Gottlieb should have been so mysterious, in some directions when he was so frank in others, I can't make out. We may learn a lot to-day, however, for it's evident that the little 'frog' knew our old friend, and that the deaf and dumb man was Hamid. But who was the light-colored black boy?"

"Kinder exciting, isn't it?" chuckled Prentice. "Has a sort of to-be-continued-in-our-next flavor, eh? Hello! Here's our friend, Mr. Carlton."

"Good-morning, you two young Nimrods," was the latter's greeting. "I don't think we'll hold our examination to-day."

"Why?" asked the two boys in chorus.

"Chula has disappeared. No one has seen him since yesterday evening, and he wasn't at the station, where, for some reason, he's gone every train day. I'm afraid I frightened him off! But I've got an old traveler who has been down in all the Lake country to meet me, and maybe he can translate those records for us. Come along, we'll go down to the office. By the way," he continued, "are you going off with young Langford? This chap that I just spoke of, Norie Pierce, is going with him as his hunter. Capital fellow, you'll like him."

In the private office of Lewland, Carlton and Company, a short, thick-set man of forty-five was waiting. There was hardly anyone who knew the wild country of the plains, jungle, and forest better than Norie Pierce. He had been a professional ivory hunter in the days when big tusks were plentiful, and had turned to guiding and managing safaris most natur-

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ally when the elephants had become scarcer, and the business less remunerative. Still, if anyone wished to find a big tusker, and was willing to spend the necessary time to do it, Pierce was the man to give him the opportunity.

As the boys entered they noticed an American talking-machine on the big table in the center of the room, and it was only a minute or so before it was set going. Mr. Pierce listened with a puzzled expression.

"Most of it's Greek to me," he said, when they had finished the first record. "But I get one or two words that sound like Wahehe lingo, and one or two words that you hear spoken by the tribes to the southeast of the Lakes; one I am certain of, and that is the word for gold—zenebee. There is also something about a chief or head man, and the mention of a word that means ivory; but I can't make head nor tail of it. Where did it come from?"

"Wait till we try the others," suggested Mr. Carlton.

But the two remaining records left them no wiser, except that Mr. Pierce had recognized again the words for gold and ivory, and also another that stood for the deity or titular god of a little tribe that existed not far from the Lake shore, and who were sun worshippers. Many of the tribes, he explained, had no religion and no tradition; but there were others, and these were mostly forest dwellers, who were believers in all sorts of devil worship and witchcraft. Again he asked the history of the discs, and who had made them.

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Remembering that Mr. Gottlieb had bound them to secrecy about a good many things, the boys only told a bare outline of his story, but they gave his name, and at once Mr. Pierce recalled it, as the same as that of the mysterious German about whom there had been many rumors during the last great uprising of the blacks in the German territory. Some people had stated that he was a missionary whose life had been spared in the massacre that had taken place, and who had lived some years as a prisoner until released by an exploring expedition; others that he was merely a trader, while there were not a few who boldly stated that he was a renegade who had thrown in his lot with the blacks. It was believed that he was a little "touched" in his mind.

Mr. Pierce's information was very vague, however, and he could not, of any certainty, state that this same Gottlieb, if that was the name, was the one who had brought the sick and wounded Chula to the surgeons, and who had nursed him so carefully. The word "Molombiki" Mr. Pierce had never heard before, but it sounded like a contortion of another word in the Bantu tongue, "Malimiki," that meant "Master of Spirits."

When the boys were alone again, they firmly decided upon one thing, and that was to unravel the story so far as they could, and seek out the unknown Gustav Geibler, whose name, owing to their old friend's enjoining secrecy, they had never mentioned. That very afternoon they purchased a fine Victor machine for themselves, and added to their three un-

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read messages some good musical pieces, a few comic songs, a set of Sousa's marches, and a half dozen rag-time tunes.

With some feelings of envy they saw their friend Langford and Pierce, with their safari, start southward for the great hunting grounds, and by the end of the week, with Lindlay able to walk quite well by the aid of a stick, they bade farewell to Nairobi, for the time being, and took the train for the Lake, some hundred and fifty miles to the northeast.

Although they had no intention of going on any extended shooting trip, they brought with them a couple of small tents, a supply of tinned food, all their rifles, and plenty of ammunition, and last, but not least, the "talking-box." Jock, whose misadventure with the lioness had left a long white scar from the back of his head almost to the end of his ribs, again shared the compartment with them as they rolled out of the station, waving their hands to Mr. and Mrs. Carlton and a few of their Club friends who had gathered to see them off.

Up the long grade of many miles the panting engine tugged the little brown train. Soon to the northeast, rising above the clouds, they caught a glimpse of snow-clad Mt. Kenia, whose guarding forest they had just entered on their day's excursion north of the Tana River. Further on to the south they saw the sharp outline of the escarpment of Mau, passed by the little settlement of Naivasha near the shores of its peaceful lake, and through a succession of little native towns they passed, and came into the great

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Rift valley filled with immense volcanic traces racked and torn as by tremendous explosions; then into immense forests through which the sunlight filtered, the winding track made its way, and shortly after dawn they were again on the flat plains of what had once been the great elephant hunting grounds. Here they saw for the first time, unclad savages, warriors with their shields and long-bladed spears, and soon the dampness and the heat warned them that they were approaching the shores of the great water. All at once as they turned through a glade in the hills, they caught a glimpse of the inland sea, unknown for so many thousands of years to history, out of whose overflowing waters the great Nile worked its way southward to the land of the ancient Pharaohs.

"Look! Look!" Prentice pointed excitedly, "we're not in East Africa—What is it this place looks like?"

Out in the harbor lay good-sized vessels at anchor, both steamers and sailing craft. Rowboats and canoes were plentiful. The little houses stretched along the waterfront and above a good-sized building rose the British flag.

"Where have we seen this place before?" Prentice repeated.

"It looks like the West Indies to me," Dallas rejoined.

"Jamaica—that's it exactly! And that isn't a lake, it's the ocean, sure as you're born!"

As far as they could see to the wide horizon stretched the blue expanse. Tiny little clouds hung low over the water and from one a gray veil of rain

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was slanting. It was a beautiful picture that the boys never forgot. The train slid into the station, and the same kind of crowd that they had met at Mombasa, only much smaller, filled the platform—Mohammedans in their long flowing garments and white turbans; half-naked lake folk, with only a wisp of loin cloth; Englishmen in wide pith helmets. It was evident that the railroad terminus was a busy place, if not a very populous one.

On the wharves were bales of goods and a trim little steamer that looked like a millionaire's ocean-going yacht lay at the end of the wharf.

Dallas pointed her out. "There's the *Winifred*; we'll be off on her to-morrow morning. Probably we can sleep on board of her to-night, so we won't have to go to an hotel."

"I'll tell you what let's do," Prentice suggested after they had seen their luggage transferred to the steamer dock, "let's hire all of those one-man-power hansoms and go 'round and see the town." He pointed to two dilapidated rickshaws that stood in the street back of the station. A few words of Swahili convinced the human horses that they had no mere tourists to deal with, and from being very loud and exorbitant in their prices they became most respectful. Lindlay's size interested them, and as the two boys got in the first rickshaw they were amused to see that two men "diked up," as Prentice put it, "as circus Zulus," entered the shafts of the second, that owing to Lindlay's weight and the weakness of the springs

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had a bad list to starboard. Off they started up the street.

"Isn't it odd," remarked Dallas, "that wherever you go in English colonies you'll see the same sort of things—neatness and order and signs of prosperity."

"And tennis courts and cricket grounds," continued Prentice, going on with his speech. "If it weren't for those chaps in their bathing and birthday suits, you'd almost swear it was Jamaica."

The boys had once made the tour of the West Indies together, and they were experiencing what every veteran traveler experiences—the constant reminding to the visual sense of other places seen long ago and maybe thousands of miles away. Vague, indeed, is this half dormant recognition and hard to place; it may be the green vines crawling up the sides of some bungalow, the shadow on a hillside, the pungent odor of the pines, or the whiff of mingled scents from some flower garden, that drags the memory back to old beaten tracks. It is a relief to the mind when the resemblance is placed at last.

One thing they remarked that was rather strange; they had seen hardly any white women and no children at all, the reason for which they discovered later. The damp, hot, east coast is most unhealthy, and but few Europeans, outside of the government officials, remain very long there. The western side of the Lake on the shores of Uganda, while possessing in a measure the same climate, is much healthier.

It was very hot on this day; the humid heat that

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makes even white people long to shed their outer garments.

"Whew!" remarked Dallas, "I'd give a good deal for some of that New Brunswick weather and the sight of a cool snow bank. I think I could take a wallop in one."

"Ages and ages ago," began Prentice, mopping his brow, "two stalwart young men plowed their way through the Canadian woods. After heroic struggles they discovered a large black bear, who kindly put them on the right path, and for a reward they shot said bear and removed his well-fitting overcoat. Upon reaching their palatial log cabin they discovered a tattered tome that told them of a marvelous far country where there wasn't any snow——" He broke in his fantastic story with, "It seems a long time ago, doesn't it?"

"At least a dozen years, instead of a little over seven months," rejoined Dallas, craning his neck to look back at the other rickshaw. "Lindlay appears to be melting away. Let's get back to the steamer; it may be cooler there."

As they neared the station Prentice pointed out the train. "How easy it all is," he remarked. "All we've got to do is to change our minds right now and in a few days we could be on a steamer bound for England, then a few more and we would be on another bound for home. Before the middle of the summer we could be cruising up the Sound again in the *End Rush*."

"Getting homesick, Tombo?" inquired Dallas.

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"Not exactly, Chui," Prentice replied, "but there is a young lady with very light hair and dark eyes——"

"Oh, cut it out!" returned Dallas, giving him a dig with his elbow. "Write her a long letter, but don't give me any of that sort of talk. You're many a long mile from Newport, and I'm mighty glad of it. This is Africa—the land we came to see."

"You know I've hardly realized it yet, despite our permits to shoot in the Zoo," Prentice rejoined. "I suppose it's the steamboats and the railroad, and all that; it's hard to imagine what this country must have been only a short time ago."

Indeed, it was hard to imagine that only a score of years before this vast land had been peopled by warlike tribes and had been the center of the great slave traffic, for the breaking up of which, indeed, the wonderful railroad over which they had traveled from the coast had first been built.

As they entered the little stateroom that had been assigned them on the *Winifred*, Dallas called Prentice's attention to a light, canvas-covered box, containing the talking-machine, that stood in the corner.

"When did you do that and what did you do it for?" he asked, pointing.

"Did what?" inquired his roommate. Then as he looked he gave an exclamation. "Well, I'll be tarred and feathered if that isn't the strangest thing! How do you suppose it came there?"

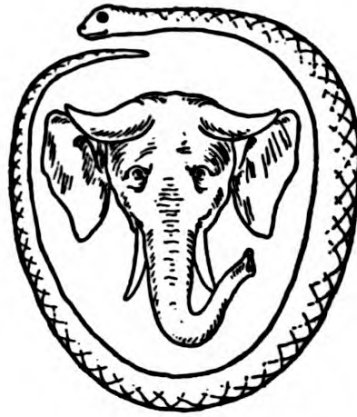
On the top of the box roughly drawn in what appeared to be red ink was the talisman—the same that was tattooed on their forearm!

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"I didn't do it," Prentice exclaimed. "Maybe it's some funny business of Lindlay's. But why should he?"

Lindlay, however, on being called, could throw no light on how the markings got there, and the boys were sorely puzzled.

"Kivuli! Spirits!" Prentice cried. "But it's shown us one thing, however it got there and whoever did it, and that is, what the confounded thing is intended to represent."



"You always beat me out on imagination," Dallas replied. "What do you make out of it?"

"Why, don't you see?" Prentice traced the rough drawing with his finger. "It's an elephant with buffalo horns on his head, plain as day. Now can't you make it out? And the ring around it is a snake."

"It does look like it," Dallas assented. "Did you notice whether it was there when we left Nairobi?"

"I'm almost certain—sure it wasn't," the younger boy replied, "but I won't swear to it; it beats my time altogether. Who could have put it there?"

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But all the guessing and surmising that they indulged in did not help them to come to any conclusion, and the strange occurrence remained a mystery for many days to come.

The champing of the steamer's engines awoke them the next morning, and before the evening, having passed by several islands covered with dense foliage, they arrived at Entebbe, that, with Port Alice a few miles away up a sheltered inlet, are the principal Lake ports of Uganda.

The town seemed more peopled and prosperous than Port Florence or Kibos, and here the boys, after a stop of a day, took steamer again for the voyage southward that would land them at last at their destination.

The first place they stopped at after Entebbe was Bukoba, a dirty, little, unkempt trading-town. The German flag was flying over the low rambling building of the Resident and nearby were working a gang of blacks with chains running from their ankles to a leather belt about their waists. They were guarded by an Askari with a rusty musket surmounted by a huge sword bayonet. The stop here was short; they took on a few passengers, both blacks and whites, and the boys were drawn to make some rather unfavorable comparisons in regard to the latter. They were mostly bearded, trader-looking people, apparently quite different from the trim young English officials.

The afternoon of the following day they passed by the entrance to the waters of Speke Gulf, and soon

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there was pointed out to them the thatched huts and little straggling settlement of Mwanza.

"Here we are at last!" Dallas exclaimed. "Now I suppose we'll get the end of the thread and begin to do some unraveling."

As the steamer was being tied up to the dock Prentice exclaimed excitedly as he grasped his friend's shoulder:

"Look there! See that little black man who is getting over the bows? He just turned and looked up at us."

There was a scramble of half-clad natives crawling over the side of the flimsy dock; leading them all had been a little bare-headed figure. Now, as Prentice pointed, he was hobbling down the planks toward the shore, the crooked black legs showing under a ragged khaki coat.

"Who is it?" Dallas asked.

"It's Chula or I'll eat my hat!" Prentice exclaimed. "Where under the sun did he come from?"

"Are you sure?"

"Sure as shooting. It's Chula, I tell you! Don't you know his walk? Perhaps he'll turn again."

The little man did not look back, however, and soon disappeared among the houses.

"The plot thickens," Dallas remarked. "Now for Mr. Gustav Geibler! We'll see if he can help us out!"

As their luggage and boxes were being taken ashore they looked at the one with the canvas cover; the red ink drawing showed plainly.

"The mark of mystery," laughed Prentice.

CHAPTER XII

THE TRADER

UNDER the grass-thatched, extending roof of a low one-storied house a short, thick-set, bearded man sat on a rough cane-bottomed chair tilted back against the mud wall. Fowls were running everywhere on the veranda and occasionally entering the house through the open door. Out in the garden two scantily clad black women were hanging washing on the bushes to dry.

All at once the man in the chair looked up from beneath his bushy eyebrows and removed the stem of the big gourd pipe he was smoking from his lips; then he stood up and gazed down the lane that threaded the little settlement of half tumbled-down dwellings.

The steamer's whistle had announced that she was coming into the dock, and most of the inhabitants of Mwanza had gone down to watch the landing. But to Gustav Geibler, the trader, it was an old story, and, besides, he was lazy. The climate and the life of indolent ease had worked its way into his bones. The hard packed earth was uncomfortably hot to his bare feet, and he shuffled them into a pair of huge and much worn carpet slippers that were by the side

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of the chair. This done, he stepped out into the sunlight, shading his eyes with his hands.

No one ever ran in Mwanza, be he black or white, unless there was some strong excuse, but along the path, at almost a sprinting pace, was coming a little black figure in a worn khaki coat. The trader knew every native boy, woman or child in the place by sight, and it was an unusual thing for a stranger, such as the newcomer evidently was, to be in such mad haste. As the figure drew nearer Mr. Geibler's face, at least as much of it as was discernible under his ragged, unkempt beard, took on an expression of surprise. He stepped back into the shadow as the runner stopped before him.

"N'Moki!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, master," answered the little figure, panting from the pace at which he had been going. "It is I, your servant. Listen! He has come!"

"He! Who?" Mr. Geibler spoke slowly in the same language that had puzzled Norie Pierce, the expert.

"There are two, sent by Molombiki, which is *the* one, I know not. I have waited long, but he has done as he had promised! They are here and they have brought his voice; it is in the box-that-speaks; he cannot come himself, so he has sent them. I have seen them—spoken with them. From Nairobi to here I have never left them, but they do not know it. I tell you, He-who-commands-the-spirits will fulfill his promise; it is you they are seeking. But we must not frighten them or they will depart, and they are not

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alone. They have brought with them a Lagishu—a giant—so big he cannot stand up in your house; he kills lions with a knife and his bare hands. Remember, this is the year that Nogli's men cross into Manimbiland—this year they drain the swamps. They must be told that the young brother comes. Now he seeks you——”

As he was making this long speech the little man kept looking back every now and then, over his shoulder, as if afraid he would be interrupted before he had time to finish.

Mr. Geibler stepped to the door and beckoned the messenger inside. Within five minutes he came out again and seated himself in his chair, tilting back against the wall, smoking his great gourd pipe as if nothing had disturbed him. Then slowly he blew a big smoke ring and spoke half aloud in German. “Ach! If this could be done!” His eyes under the thick eyebrows took on a keen expression; he half smiled as he drew from his pocket a letter. “They are venturesome—these Americans—and he is young as is expected. Good!”

Up the lane, led by an almost naked black boy and followed at respectful distance by a crowd of still naked children, came three figures, the first two walking together, while behind them, towering like a tall tree, stalked the figure of the Lagishu.

To all intents and appearances Mr. Geibler had to be awakened from a profound slumber, which must, however, have been of short duration, for the pipe that he held in his fingers was still smoking. The

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surprise that he assumed at first soon changed to an expression of perplexity and then to one of delight. Dallas, who was acting as spokesman, introduced Prentice and Lindlay and himself, and at the mention of Mr. Gottlieb's name, Herr Geibler extended both hands toward the boys and, drawing them toward him, began patting their shoulders. ("Thought he was going to rub noses," said Prentice afterward.) He apparently was quite overcome.

"Ach! My dear old friend! So he is alive and, I hope, well. It is years since I have heard from him. It seems all my life since I have seen him, and he told you to look up old Geibler. Ah, my friends, you are welcome to everything I have! Is it shooting you desire? You shall have the best of it! There is more game and fewer hunters in this country than there is to the northward, and there are left with us in the deep forests to the east some elephants with fine tusks; and as for lions, I can tell you of a place where you cannot sleep of nights for them." He turned and looked at Lindlay. "Our big friend here—he looks as if he could kill one with his hands."

"He has pretty nearly," put in Dallas. "We have to remind him to use his rifle all the time."

"So!" exclaimed the German, looking at Lindlay again in a slow survey from head to foot. "Now what can I do for you young Americänischers?"

"Is there any place where we can put up here for a time?" asked Dallas. "Perhaps we could organize a safari here and get some shooting between now and the time that the steamer calls again."

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"You will be my guests," said Mr. Geibler. "There's a little house back of my store that would be very nice for you. It is not a castle, but it is very neat and comfortable. Oh, yes, you can go shooting from here and it would be much cheaper than Nairobi. And something worth it, I can tell you. But did not Friederich Gottlieb send a letter or something to old Geibler?"

"Yes, we have something apparently for your ears alone," Dallas returned, "but it is down at the steamer landing with our belongings."

"I will send some of my boys for them," said the old German. "And now won't you come into the house and partake of some coffee?"

They entered a rather bare large room whose furniture looked for the most part of home-made workmanship, but on the wall was a very handsome lithograph of Kaiser Frederick, the father of the present German Emperor, and on a long shelf were a row of rather dilapidated German books, mostly on scientific subjects.

Through the open door could be seen another large room furnished something after the fashion of a backwoods general store. A door opened into the garden. Mr. Geibler, stepping outside, called to a black man who was working there and gave him orders to call the servants and gather up the strangers' baggage. Prentice volunteered to go back to the landing and direct them.

In a few minutes he returned with the tents and guns and boxes that had been left in charge of one

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of the steamer's officers. Under Mr. Geibler's directions all of their things were soon placed in another grass-thatched house in the rear of the store and on the further side of the garden.

"This is more like it," said Prentice when their host was out of ear shot. "It strikes my fancy better than the hotels that we've been stopping at. You know, I've taken quite a liking to our good old Dutch here."

"I don't know whether I have yet or not," returned Dallas, who seldom or never jumped to opinions or conclusions, especially in meeting new people. He had a little of the English reserve in the presence of strangers.

Mr. Geibler, who had left them alone with one or two black boys to assist them in arranging their belongings, soon returned and announced that coffee was ready in the other house. Prentice was unpacking the talking machine from the heavy traveling box that had been built for it, and, catching Dallas' eye, he silently asked a question. The latter nodded and turned to Mr. Geibler, who was standing in the doorway.

"You know these things?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Geibler, "I have heard them. There was a missionary who brought one down to Bukumbi, not far from here, but he had to get rid of it; it ruined his Bible class. They insisted on worshipping it—even the old converts. It did him out of the business; they had rather hear it talk than listen to him, so one day, when all were in class present, he

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took a big stick and smashed it." Mr. Geibler laughed. "And that made his converts so mad that they left him for a rival missionary who had a box of conjuror's tricks and a magic picture lantern." It was evident that the trader rejoiced in the good man's discomfiture.

With the box and the records under his arm and Lindlay carrying the folding wooden trumpet, they crossed the garden to the main house.

What Mr. Geibler expected to hear the boys did not know, but they agreed between them that they would put on the records without any introduction in order to see how he might act in his surprise. They were not quite prepared, however, for what he did. Hardly had the first words rolled forth when he pushed back in his chair from the table and, stooping forward, took Prentice by the arm.

"Stop!" he said. "Wait a minute. We will have the whole village here."

As Prentice lifted the sound box and stopped the turning disk, Mr. Geibler went to the door that opened into the street and closed it. Then he hastily strode into the store and closed the farther door also. Had he been a little quicker, he would have observed that the store itself was not empty. Like a flitting shadow a little black figure had dodged out of sight behind the protection of the counter.

While he was gone the boys had exchanged some words in a whisper. "He doesn't want anyone else to hear," said Dallas.

"Something strange about this," Prentice observed.

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"At all events, we'll find out pretty soon what it means."

Mr. Geibler had now rejoined them, and it was quite evident that he was nervous.

"Cannot you make it softer?" he asked.

"Certainly," said Prentice, and he stuffed his handkerchief into the mouth of the trumpet.

"Now what does it all mean?" asked Dallas as the record came to an end. "No one at Nairobi could translate it. Not even Norie Pierce."

Mr. Geibler looked at them cautiously. "Oh, he tried, did he," he said, "and failed? Have you asked others?"

"There was a little black at the Nairobi Club who heard it and was much excited," Dallas went on. "But if he understood, he failed to tell us what it meant; it was all very mysterious, for the next day he disappeared and they couldn't find him."

"Now don't keep us waiting any longer," Prentice interposed. "Please translate and explain what it's all about, for we are quite in the dark."

"Well," said Mr. Geibler, "it is a language that but two or three white men understand. Now, word for word I will tell you. In the first place, he says, I consign to you two young friends——"

It was a long speech and the gist of it was apparently commonplace. Mr. Geibler was informed that his old comrade was suffering from rheumatism and bad eyesight, and would not be able to make the trip to Africa again, but he asked that the best of care should be taken of his two emissaries, and that they

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should be given the very best shooting and be guided safely into the great elephant country. He was also to show them some maps and confide in them entirely.

Despite their host's apparent candor, both Prentice and Dallas could not help but feeling that there was something being concealed from them. They were about to put on the other two records when Mr. Geibler interrupted.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that if we make any more speeches someone might be passing on the road, and if it is known that we have a voice-in-the-box here, we will never be left in peace; they will surround the house all day. We will be much bothered. To-morrow we go up on a hill somewhere and we will listen to all of it. Then the day that you leave we will hold a big concert for the whole town and make much magic." He opened the door to the road as he spoke, and drew a long breath of relief as he observed that there was no one apparently who had been listening. He stood there as if thinking a moment and turned again.

"Yes, to-morrow we go up on the hill."

As he spoke Mr. Geibler smiled. He had caught sight of a man in a wide straw hat and white duck suit approaching down the lane; giving a nod to his guests, he stepped out to meet the newcomer and, joining him at the corner, was soon in deep conversation.

"Beats my time," remarked Prentice as the boys were alone that night, "all this confounded secrecy. I've got half a mind to load up the old machine and go out there and turn it loose just to see what would

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happen. Do you know, I think old Geibler was lying; he had never heard one before and was afraid of it. I am fully convinced that Chula saw him before we did, despite the old chap's denying that he ever heard of him. I tell you, that little black fellow is not far away."

"We'll find out what's up before long, Tombo," answered Dallas thoughtfully. "But I am growing to be assured of one thing: Mr. Geibler only intends to do right by us. I think we can trust him, although it pays to be cautious."

Prentice looked up from the camera he was cleaning. "At all events, if what he says about the country 'round here is true, he's promised us a great shooting party." He laughed. "I feel it in my prophetic bones that something is going to happen."

"Do you think Lindlay's in any condition to go on any extended trip?" Dallas returned, lowering his voice. "That's what has been bothering me—you notice how silent he's been all day and he never would complain, but I took his temperature to-night and he seems to have a little fever." He glanced over at the cot where Lindlay lay apparently asleep under the mosquito netting.

Prentice whistled. "I hope he doesn't come down sick in this place, but don't let us borrow any trouble."

"Or even look for it," returned the elder boy. "I've always noticed that when you do, you can find it somewhere."

CHAPTER XIII

THE LURE

IT was four miles to the spot that Mr. Geibler had designated as "the hill." It was not very high ground, but on one side it was quite open and, looking to the north, the roofs of the little town could be seen, and beyond the spreading cloud covered waters of the great lake. The little party of four had made a very early start, leaving Mwanza before the sun was up and, following the narrow path through a dense tangle of underbrush, they had come to the slight elevation, and it was then quite evident why the trader had selected this particular place. The ground had been cleared, and not a very long time ago it had been under cultivation. In the center of an open space of three or four acres, there was the remains of an old, thatched bungalow. About the edges of the clearing tall palm trees rose out of the jungle. The only way into this lonely spot was the path that they had traveled. Although it was early in the morning, it was very hot and emerging from the shade of the green tunnel into the open made them all blink their eyes. Mr. Geibler, leading the way, crossed over to the ruined building and deposited the basket he was carrying under the shelter of an old

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veranda supported by three or four tottering posts. Lindlay put down the talking-machine beside the basket and mopped his brow. Prentice deposited the big trumpet beside it and Dallas leaned the Mauser that he had brought with him against the side of the house. Even Jock, who generally displayed much curiosity in strange places, appeared oppressed by something and sat on his haunches, lolling forth a perspiring tongue.

"Well," said Prentice, fanning himself with his helmet, and addressing Mr. Geibler, "I think you've chosen the hottest spot in the whole of East Africa."

"In a little while it will not be so," said the German. "It will be cooler than any place for miles around, and that is why I chose it; but another reason there is, and not the least important, why I have come here. No native would approach within a mile; it is very much taboo. When the sun gets up higher there will be a breeze come out of the forest toward the lake. Look! You can see the palm trees begin to wave now."

It was a fact. Minute by minute, the oven-like air of the clearing appeared to grow cooler. Faint little breezes from the depths of the deep woods seemed to be stirring. Jock revived and went on a tour of investigation around the ruined building.

"Why is this place shunned by the natives?" Dallas asked.

"It has a most unhappy reputation," returned Geibler, "and one that the German government paid dearly for. A big war started here, and much trouble that

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is not yet forgotten. A famous German scientist lived here on this plantation, a friend of the great Dr. Peters, and here he prepared specimens and among others, unfortunately, he collected the skulls and bones of natives for the big museum in Berlin. A number of chiefs who had been in rebellion and had been condemned to death, were hanged here, and the German scientist conducted his investigations on them, and it got around that he was a white cannibal, so this place is called, 'The Man-eater's House,' and no native will come near it."

Prentice gave a slight shudder.

"Ah, yes, it's growing cooler," said Mr. Geibler. "So now we will have our breakfast, and when we have eaten it we will make ourselves comfortable, and you will listen to a long story, if you have that patience. Then we will hear what more the talking-box has to say."

When they had drunk some cold coffee and eaten some of the native bread and fruit that Mr. Geibler had brought in the basket, the trader lit his pipe and, settling himself down against a post, faced his listeners, who sat back against the wall, and for two hours or more his voice alone broke the silence.

"I am going to tell you," he began, "what your friend Gottlieb wants you to know—some things that he did not tell you before, for the reason that no person would believe him—no, not even you, yourselves. Yet, now since you have come out here and no one has discouraged you, you can find out whether it is all true for yourselves. Africa is a strange country.

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You find tribes who have been living next to one another for so many years that no man could count them, different from each other in customs, manners, speech and looks. It is fortunate that it is so, for, did they all understand or could combine, white men could not live here. There have been books written about them, many books, but there is much that has never been found out—much yet to be learned. It is a country of mystery. Now, what is it that makes white men go to strange countries? Is it always to write books? No, it is to make money. And how is money most easily made? In trading, you say? Yes, perhaps, but it is by finding gold. For that they will risk more than for writing books.” Mr. Geibler lowered his voice. “And there is gold here, somewheres out in that direction,” he waved his hand toward the eastward, “and no white man has found it yet, though some have seen it; and it waits, it waits, to be discovered. For years little quills filled with gold dust have been brought in by expeditions and found their way to traders, but the natives from whom it has been received always said they had got it from other natives who lived further back, further on—always further on.

“Fifteen years ago Friederich Gottlieb appeared in Mwanza, coming back from an expedition after animals, and brought with him three of these little quills. There were but two traders here on the Lake then—myself and another German by the name of Heinrich Mann. We had been most successful. Ivory was plenty and we had made much money, so together

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with Gottlieb we formed a big safari to go in and find where the gold came from. All of our money went into that expedition, for we took with us much to trade with, cloth and beads and guns. We followed up the Simiuyu River and through the country of the great tall grass that is so thick that one cannot see ten yards ahead, and for weeks we pushed on to the west. We had no guides after leaving the settled country of the Shashis and the Usukumas, and the water became scarcer and scarcer. There was little game to be shot, for the grass was so high we could not see it, although there were plenty of places where elephants and rhinos had made paths and roads. We traveled by compass alone. Soon our bearers and men began to desert, and it was evident that we had started in the wrong direction and we would have to come back. But now we heard bad news, before we had gone many days on the journey of returning. All of the Shashi tribes between us and the Lake had risen in revolt; it was impossible for a white man to go to their country. The last of our bearers who had run away had taken with them five cases of trade muskets. There was nothing for it but to go east again, as we were not strong enough now to fight our way to the Lake. Ach, those terrible days! Back over the trail once more.

"There were now left only us three whites and less than twenty blacks who had remained faithful. For two whole days at one time we had been without water and were going mad. I cannot tell you what horrors we went through when we found a dried up stream

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that had once been a river, and it flowed to the east; by digging we could get a little water, the way wild beasts do. So we followed and came to the edge of what had once been a great swamp, but now almost dry. This was the edge of Manimbi land; people had lived here; now all were dead, years ago. In all the memory of the natives, there had been no such dry season as this was; the rains had fallen not one-tenth as heavy as usual. For a week we floundered through the swamp and came at last to the other side, a country that no white man had visited ever—no, not one. How we had lived, it would be hard to tell! We had lost everything; climbing among the roots of the trees and through the mud with heavy burdens was impossible. Eight of the blacks had died; I think we had but twelve when we reached solid ground again. We had eaten snakes and half-decayed fish that we had found in the water holes; but one rifle remained to us and little ammunition; the rest had all been thrown away or lost.

“But when we reached the end of this great half-dried-up swamp it was a beautiful country that we found. It had rained heavier on that side and it was still green, and there was much game and signs of buffalo and elephant paths everywhere. But so weak were we that only Gottlieb could go forth and hunt, and that not far, but the buck were plentiful, and soon we began to build up strength so that we could go on again. The streams on this side had more water in them and the country grew more open and more beautiful. Elephants and rhinoceroses we saw every day

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—such elephants! Not the kind that hide in the great dense forest like now, but great bulls with tusks that would weigh one or nearly two hundred pounds. They seemed not afraid of us, but we did not declare war against them, as we had but one rifle of small caliber; ammunition was now down to but some forty cartridges, and we needed to shoot to feed ourselves alone. We had forgotten all about the gold. Our clothes were worn to pieces; we had little more than what the blacks had on; our one idea was to get somewhere where we could get help, for we were lost, absolutely lost.

“One day we came across a great surprise. For an instant we thought we were all saved. On the top of a hill, in the twilight, we perceived what appeared to be a great stone house with walls about it and an archway, but when we came closer we discovered that they were deserted ruins. Strong built they were and belonging to some past race; there are many such, fallen to pieces, all through this country, and no one knows who built them. But these were almost perfect, and one part of the house had been lived in, for the thatch still showed on wooden rafters, and there were the remains of a fire.

“We stayed here three days, sending the blacks out into the country to see if they could find any trace of natives, for up to this time we had seen no human beings at all. Yet, as I have told, the country was beautiful to live in. The third day our black men returned, bringing with them a half dead wild man. What little life there was left in him was almost

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frightened out of him at sight of us. He had been badly hurt, as we found out afterward, by a buffalo that had crushed and gored him. Our porters had found him on the bank of a stream, too weak to get away. It was evident that he was a Dorobo, or wandering hunter—outcasts they are, mostly, that hang on the skirts of the greater tribes. Now there was one thing that had been saved from all of our baggage; that was a small medicine chest and instruments. Gottlieb was a good doctor, and he proceeded to take care of the little man. Very soon he recovered from his fright and by signs showed that he possessed what most natives are supposed not to have—gratitude. Oh, there was one man in our party who I must tell you about; it was he who had saved the medicine chest and most of the ammunition, Gottlieb's body servant, a Mohammedan Somali, whose name was Hamid. We owed much to him."

At the mention of this name the boys, who had been listening without an interruption, exchanged glances. They remembered the strange figure that had slipped the note into their hands at the pier in New York, that now seemed almost years ago.

"When we came to move from the stone house it was suggested that we leave the little wounded man behind us, but Gottlieb insisted upon bringing him on and so making a litter he was carried with us. While on the march Gottlieb shot an impala; it was very evident that the little native had never seen a gun fired before, and when the big buck fell to Gottlieb's shot he half rose from the litter that had been

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laid upon the ground and prostrated himself before him. In a few days more he was able to walk; by signs we had got him to understand that we wished to reach one of the big rivers flowing to the southward. He seemed to comprehend and showed no disposition to run away. We came across more stone ruins, but as yet no sign of human beings. To the North what had looked like low-lying clouds came to grow into long ranges of hills and mountain tops. Ammunition was still growing scarcer; we had but some twenty cartridges left. But game of all kinds was plentiful and unafraid; every kind of antelope and herds of zebra of all varieties and at night the lions roared all 'round our camp, but none had yet molested us. Elephants, too, were plentiful. We saw hundreds of thalers' worth of tusks on the big bulls every day. Oh, such a country as it was! The elephants had made broad, hard roads, in some places beaten like highways, and in the dust of them one morning we saw the prints of many bare feet, all headed one way, apparently to the mountains toward the north. When we by signs showed our intention of following the path in that direction, the little Dorobo stopped us and pointed to the southeastward, evidently warning us that to the north lay danger."

Mr. Geibler poured himself out some cold coffee from the bottle and lit another pipe.

"You're not tired of my story yet?" he asked.

The boys and Lindlay made no reply; they had followed every word with keenest attention, and their

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silence was the best proof that they wished to hear more.

"We lit a fire that night and were holding a long talk as to what was best to do when the little Dorobo, who never left Gottlieb's side, suddenly touched his arm.

"*'Bangwalis!'* he said. It was the same word he had used when he had stopped us from following the footprints. At the same time one of the two askaris who had survived and who were useful men came crawling to us. *'Out there,'* he said, sweeping his hand about him. *'Warriors.'*

"We listened, but could hear nothing. Gottlieb and myself, with the little savage, crept out from the circle of the firelight. In the gloom we could see moving figures, and above the bushes and in the faint starlight the gleams of tall, long-bladed spears. *'They are waiting for the morning,'* Gottlieb whispered to me.

"*'Bangwalis!'* again repeated the little native under his breath.

"It was not a pleasant night, believe me, my young friends, that we passed. When daylight came and the sun grew higher and objects began to show, it appeared as if we were hemmed in by a solid, well-built fence. It did not take long to see what it was made of; tall shields almost interlocked, over the tops of which appeared to be hundreds of silent black faces, long spears thrusting up here and there, and the strangest part of it, that there was no sound! Every minute we expected to hear the war chant and to see them come rushing on. It was now that the little

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Dorobo came to the fore. He stepped boldly out toward one of the largest shields that was surmounted by a tuft of ostrich feathers and decorated with colobrus monkey tails. And now he began to speak, and as he did the circle grew closer until we occupied a space not more than twenty yards across. The men who had been crouching behind the shields were standing up and we had time to study them; each shield bore a device that was identically the same."

Mr. Geibler had paused and the next words gave the boys a start.

"It is that that is tattooed on your forearm," he said, pointing to Dallas, "an elephant's head with buffalo horns, surrounded by a snake. There were probably a thousand warriors and, although they exchanged glances, contrary to most natives, they remained listening in dead silence to what the little Dorobo was saying. Now there stepped forth from the wall of shields two or three tall figures; magnificent men they were, not quite jet black, but brownish, and their hair long and shiny, not woolly like the Lake negroes. Their features were fine as the Masais; in fact, they did not look unlike them, but were of heavier build. Suddenly the Dorobo stooped and touched the rifle that Gottlieb was holding in the hollow of his arm—our only weapon, except some clubs that we had made, and our knives. The little Dorobo pointed upward; over our heads was flying a great African bustard. Gottlieb caught his intent when the little man pointed. Believe me, gentlemen, there was not one chance in a hundred thousand of that shot going true. No one

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at such a distance had ever in the world brought down, with one bullet, a flying bird, but Gottlieb aimed and fired. All of the assembled warriors were watching him; they started at the report, and as the bustard crumpled in mid-air and came whirling down a strange sound, almost like a groan, came from them. We heard a few exclamations and then all was quiet again. Now the chiefs stepped forward and one took the rifle from Gottlieb's hand, looked at it and gave it back; the others pressed close about us. We made no resistance as they examined our skin and hair, and the remnant of our clothing and our boots. The Dorobo still kept talking, and all at once caught Gottlieb's hand and mine and then Mann's, and dragged us closer to him. At the last moment he reached out and caught Hamid also, linking his hand beneath his other arm. So we stood, and now for the first time one of the chiefs began to speak, and then turning addressed a few words to the other warriors. In a few minutes we were marching northward toward the mountains, surrounded by the crowd of wildly gesticulating, armed men who seemed to speak no language of words that we could understand; their eyes rolled and they uttered strange grunts and moaning sounds; one big man, walking near to me, turned to me. At that moment his mouth was open. With a shudder I saw that his front teeth were filed to points, and a further look, when he turned again, convinced me that he had no tongue. I glanced at another of the warriors and observed that it was the same with him, also—his tongue was gone. Yet the man with the ostrich feathers on

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his shield, who was walking some paces ahead, was talking to the Dorobo, and his teeth were even and white and were not filed to a point, which in most tribes is the mark of cannibals. We had been separated so that we could not talk to one another; Gottlieb, who was marching in front of us, was still carrying his rifle.

"For four hours without stopping we went on; the pace that they set was so swift that it was with only our utmost efforts that we could keep up. I looked 'round to see if I could see any of our own black men, but, with the exception of Hamid, who was following his master, I could see none of them, and none of them did I ever see again, and what became of them I cannot tell.

"While we were going on one of the chiefs came near me, and, despite the danger of our situation, my mind was instantly drawn away from it. About this man's upper arm and around his wrist was wound some inches of shining wire. The handle of the short, heavy sword he carried at his belt—for the chiefs all wore girdles, although the rest were almost naked—was ornamented with the same yellow metal. It needed no testing to tell me what it was—gold! We were among the people who held the secret! At this minute Gottlieb turned back and his eyes caught mine and I saw him pronounce the word, 'gold.' At dusk we came across more stone houses, and then some thatched, wooden kraals, and just at dark we entered a populous town, almost a city, in fact. Mann and I were thrust into a stone-walled hut, and no sooner

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than we were alone in the darkness than he grasped me by the shoulders.

“ ‘Did you see it?’ he said in German. ‘It is gold, man, we have found it, we have found it! We’ll be rich men now!’ ”

“ ‘We’ll probably be dead men,’ said I, ‘but it is gold, nevertheless.’ ”

CHAPTER XIV

WHEREIN MANY THINGS ARE CONSIDERED

MR. GEIBLER had paused when he had reached this point of his narrative, ostensibly to pour himself out a cup of cold coffee from the bottle; but he had cut a short glance at his three listeners to see how the story had affected them. Seeing that their interest was unfeigned, he settled himself back against the post again and took up the tale again.

He told how, for six months or more, he and Mann were kept close prisoners, seeing no one but the guards who brought them their food, that was principally native bread and milk with, now and then, a bit of well-cooked meat and a sort of stew made out of goat's flesh.

During all this time they had not heard a word of Gottlieb, and whether he was alive or dead they did not know. There was no method of communicating with their prison keepers, for they were dumb and conversed among themselves by gestures accompanied by uncouth grunts and mumblings. One day as they were walking in the little compound back of their stone prison pen they observed on the ground a twisted bit of paper. Opening it, they found it was

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a page torn from Gottlieb's diary, and contained a short note from him informing them that he was well, and, although not treated exactly as a prisoner, he had been unable to communicate with them before owing to the strict watch kept over his movements. He was not even living in the same village, but in one on somewhat higher ground about five miles distant. He had met King Nogli and by aid of the surgeon's outfit had performed a very risky operation that, being successful, had won the King's gratitude, but in closing Gottlieb warned his late companions that there was some movement on foot and whether it meant harm or good to the white prisoners he could not tell. How the note had reached them, they were puzzled to find out, but evidently it had been thrown over the wall sometime during the night.

A few days after this they were summoned in the evening, just at moonrise, and by signs were ordered to make ready for departure. Where they were bound for they had not the least idea, nor had they any warning of the difficulties and dangers which before long they had to undergo. The moon was so bright that everything was almost as clear as day. As they went through the village silent crowds stood about watching them. Although escape was absolutely impossible, the two white men had been bound together, side by side, with thongs at wrist and elbow that allowed them, however, some freedom of movement. Their escort was made up of thirty spearsmen and some hundred heavily laden porters—slaves to all appearance, for they were of entirely different size and

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color from the Bangwalis, and appeared to belong to an inferior race. The caravan marched mostly at night until the country became thick with bushes and shrubs, and then the marches were continued in the early morning. From the moon and the stars it was evident that they were traveling south, but when the daylight tramps began they were at first blindfolded; nevertheless, it was easy to see that the trend of the march was still southward; after a while the bandages were removed from their eyes and they perceived they were going westward. Their food was brought to them at morning and at night, and the dreadful uncertainty and monotony of the journey was relieved by only one incident. One of the chiefs, who, of course, had retained his tongue, had proved not averse to conversation, and as the native vocabulary is small and at most not over four or five hundred words, though differing from most of the Lake region tongues, it was evidently of Bantu stock. Before the worst difficulties of the journey began both Mann and Geibler, himself, could hold converse in this strange tongue. They had come to a great swamp land which they threaded by seemingly hidden and intricate paths, until the forest country was reached, and here again their guides seemed to know their way unerringly, for they penetrated the almost impassable jungle in a marvelous manner. Steep hills followed the forest, then a stretch of open country and swamp again.

One thing they had noticed as they progressed; not only was their food becoming less in quantity, but the number of their bearers was becoming less also.

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They penetrated the last swamp with not more than thirty-five men. One day they heard the distant booming of alarm drums, and they knew that they were approaching a native village; they had come out of the swamp to the banks of a small river, across which they could see a number of huts. The people had fled, however, and in succession they passed through a number of such native settlements. The river grew wider, and at last they came to a village before which a number of dug-out canoes lay hauled up on the bank. With two or three of the porters and a head man, they were placed in one of these canoes and a trip down the river began. One morning they were put on shore, their bonds were entirely released, a direction was pointed out, and their escort left them.

Traveling in the way indicated for some miles, floundering along the muddy shore, their hearts rejoiced by hearing the sound of singing, and, pushing forward, they came to one of the advance guards of civilization found often in the wilderness—a missionary settlement. Here they were taken care of, but so exhausted were they that it was a long time before they were able to move again, and then at last striking the great caravan trail that leads up from the coast, they made their way to the government station, and here they told their tale. With frank disbelief it had been received, and with more or less skepticism it had been listened to ever afterward. That they had traveled through a section of country that had been deemed impassable was hard enough to believe, and that they had succeeded in eluding

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tribes who had refused to enter into communication with white men, made it seem more wonderful; but the tale of the tongueless people and the stone dwellings had caused some rather rude suggestions and often open derision. For certain reasons they had said very little about the gold. Twice had they started caravans and tried to penetrate the country, but each time the attempts had been turned back; the tribes they had met refused to trade with them or let them pass.

Mann and Geibler, according to the latter's account, from being fast friends, had had a severe falling out owing to frequent conflicts of authority, and the former was about setting forth on a third expedition of his own when suddenly there appeared on the scene no less a person than Friederich Gottlieb himself. He had reached civilization by a different route apparently. He was accompanied by the faithful Bangwali Dorobo (whom the boys had now thoroughly identified as Chula), and the tall Somali, who by the loss of his tongue was now confined to grunts and gestures. Last, but not least, Gottlieb had brought with him a young Bangwali of some twelve years of age—a beautifully formed young lad, evidently of high birth; he wore upon his right arm above the elbow a golden bracelet and on his right forearm had tattooed the tribal mark.

If their own story had been strange, Gottlieb's was almost unbelievable. He had become during the seven years that had passed, although still kept more or less a prisoner, a head man in the tribe, and so great had

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his influence become and so close had grown his friendship with the king that the latter of his own volition had sent him forth, under a solemn promise to return, and sent with him one of his own sons to become a student of the "white man's magic." He had brought back with him maps of the country that he had roughly drawn and had written out a full account of his story—all about Bangwaliland and the Dwarf Island—quite marvelous! But these papers were no longer in existence, having been burned up in a conflagration in which the trader had lost some of his belongings at Mwanza some three years ago. Only one word had he heard from Gottlieb since his departure from Mwanza, and it was to the effect that Barana, the young prince, had died soon after reaching Germany, and that neither there, nor in England, nor in America, could he enlist interest or money in the enterprise of conquest and exploration that he had proposed in influential circles. Gottlieb had stated that his eyesight and his health were growing worse, and had practically ceded his interest in any future venturing to his old companions, Mann and Geibler. But as they had quarreled and as it was evident that they could not agree, nothing had been done.

"Now," concluded the trader, "you have come upon the scene with a new solution, my young friends. If you were told it was possible for you to reach this country safely and return, would it tempt you? If you came back and told all that you had seen, affairs would be different, and perhaps you would not only be makers of history, but you and all of us would be

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rich men. And now," said he, "let us hear what the records say."

In the stillness of the hot sunshine the machine gurgled forth its monotone of gibberish. The boys noticed one or two words that seemed oft repeated, and Mr. Geibler listened intently, although apparently at times he, too, was puzzled and sat knitting his brows until parts of the record were repeated over again. When it was finished and the trader at last seemed satisfied, Dallas asked for an immediate translation.

It cannot be said that Mr. Geibler was a fluent translator; he appeared rather at a loss for words, at times, but the gist of it all was that the records were apparently a verbal passport and introduction to King Nogli of his two young friends, making a claim, for the sake of old friendship and blood brotherhood, on the royal protection and confidence.

An awkward silence had fallen upon the company when both Mr. Geibler and the machine had had their say. The boys had asked many questions, but they wished to be alone to discuss the matter privately. Its effect upon Lindlay had been, first, to interest him, and then to bring about a soporific effect, for apparently he had no questions to ask on his part, and as the long day drew on he had fallen asleep, a state possibly induced by the example of Jock, who had only stirred at intervals to chase the receding shade of the tumble-down veranda roof.

As the sun began to dip in the afternoon the four headed their way back to the settlement. Mr. Geibler was in rather a sullen mood; he wore a disappointed

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and fractious expression. That he had not produced quite the results that he had wished was evident by the silence that had fallen on the others—a silence that continued through the evening meal that was held in a mosquito-guarded alcove on the rear porch of the big storehouse that opened on the garden. Fortunately, before their repast was finished one of the black women announced to the trader that someone wished to see him in the store, and as soon as they were alone the boys signalled to Lindlay and slid out into the garden, thence into the grass-grown road, and made their way down to the deserted steamer landing.

“Well, what do you think of it?” asked Dallas as they seated themselves on a log near the water’s edge and assured themselves that no one was within hearing.

“Mayne Reid and the Arabian Nights,” returned Prentice. “I’d like to have got hold of those writings of ‘Unser Fritz’ Gottlieb, but, of course, they had to be burned up, and yet, you remember, our friend spoke of the proofs and papers that Geibler would show us. It’s too much of a mystery for me; I pass out. What do you think of it, Lindlay?”

“Well,” returned the latter with a slightly incredulous drawl, “sounds to me like one of Charlie Tooker’s stories of his trip to the big Barrens, where he found a tribe of Indians that lived on raw meat and gravel. I kinder don’t take any stock in it, and if I was you two, I wouldn’t either; seems to me that our Dutch friend wants us to embark on a wild-goose chase in rather an unhealthy country. I don’t care for any

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gold prospecting. I'd just like to shoot a few more big cats and go back home."

"I can see one thing," said Dallas, "that to get up the kind of an expedition necessary to go into the what-you-may-call-it——"

"The Bangwalis," corrected Prentice.

"—would cost more money than we've got to squander. Somehow, I don't quite trust the old boy, and there's a little bit too much mystery in the whole thing."

"Kind of tempting, though," interposed Prentice, "all that great unshot-up district and the herds of elephant and the tongueless people, and the gold——"

"Ah, yes, that's just it," said Dallas, "and the gold. It's been at the bottom of many a strange tale and many foolish expeditions. Remember old DeSoto and the rest of them?"

The end of the consultation was this—that it was unanimously decided to decline this tempting offer of adventure and to depart on the next steamer; in the meantime, if there was any shooting in the neighborhood that would not entail too great expense and preparation, to take it in as sort of a "side-show," as Prentice put it. One thing they agreed upon, however; it was to do nothing to offend their present host and to present him on their departure with the talking-machine, records and all.

As Dallas went to sleep that night someone touched him on the shoulder. He looked up; it was Prentice.

"Look here, Chui," he said, "what do you think about Chula? Do you know what's certain—it was

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he who drew that picture of the talisman on the box, and I believe he'd warned Geibler of our coming. Just supposing——"

"Oh, don't let's suppose any more," Dallas interposed sleepily, "or we won't get any rest; it's pretty late now. We'll talk it over in the morning."

"I've drawn some fine pictures of Bangwali warriors and some great maps of the country," said Prentice. "Want to see 'em?"

"They'll wait till the morning, too," rejoined his chum.

CHAPTER XV

INTO THE TALL GRASS COUNTRY

IF Mr. Geibler was disappointed at his guests' decision, he concealed the fact very well; he simply shrugged his shoulders and accepted it. One thing he persuaded them in, however, was to make a slight change in their plan, and to stay over the two next steamers, promising to organize a safari for them with which they could penetrate into the country of the tall grass and beyond it to the shooting grounds where the chances for big game were even better than on the Sotik Plain.

During the fortnight of preparation more than once the boys had been on the point of changing their minds and departing. They had held many long talks and had reached several conclusions. The reason that Mr. Gottlieb had not urged them to proceed at once to Mwanza, after telling them the whole story, was now quite evident; he had feared to discourage them at the outset and had not altogether trusted them. By telling them at the very beginning his strangely fantastic story he might have met with a rebuff; moreover, he had wished to test them, in a measure, and to allow them to gain some experience before meeting Mr. Geibler, hoping that they would be swept off their

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feet by the alluring chance for adventure and the proofs that the trader could put before them.

Their host seemed now only interested in securing for them the best opportunities to make their shooting a great success. From Bukumbi he had secured them a German hunter and a Neopara, or head man, who had collected about forty experienced porters, mostly from the Usukuma tribes, and three Shashi gun-bearers. Mr. Geibler explained that he would have gone with them himself, but pleaded as an excuse his lack of condition for such long marches as they would have to undergo. Owing to Lindlay's fever, again they were held up another week or so. But at last he declared himself in fine shape and would delay no longer.

When the safari started Geibler accompanied them, riding on a very diminutive donkey until they had entered the confines of the forest, where, wishing them good-luck, he returned to the settlement.

Somehow, both Prentice and Dallas felt not a little sorry to part with him; he had taken his disappointment so well and had appeared so eager to assist them that they felt as if they had behaved in rather a thankless manner. Lindlay was the only one who did not share in this feeling; between the trader and himself there had never been an exchange of friendly feeling, and why the giant had come with the boys, in the first place, Mr. Geibler had not very well understood.

The shooting had begun at the end of their second day, when they had passed through the belt of wooded land and had come into the country where the grass

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grew seven or eight feet high, the stalks almost the size of one's little finger. Dallas' first bag consisted of a fine Sing-sing buck—one of the rarest of all of the East African antelopes, and the commoner species were abundant. There were plenty of signs of larger game, but so thick was the cover that they might have passed in the vicinity of buffalo herds without knowing it. Further on Frankel, their white hunter, promised them more open country, where shooting would be easier. They were going in the direction of the headwaters of one of the tributaries of the Simiuyu River. The tameness of the game showed that they had not been much disturbed by the hunter, but their progress eastward had been very slow. Frankel seemed in no hurry, and sometimes they had not made more than six or eight miles in a day's march. At last they noticed that the grass was growing thinner, and the country more open.

Never would the boys forget the morning that they stood at the top of a little slope and gazed off over a country like a carefully tended English landscape. Looking through their field glasses, they could see herds of zebra and antelope in all directions, and about a mile away there came into the field of their vision two beautiful giraffes nibbling at the foliage of the tree branches. Frankel, standing beside them, made a comprehensive sweep of his arm and spoke in German.

"Here," he said, "is the great hunting ground. Not many miles beyond we will find elephant."

Dallas had just called his attention to the two

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giraffes, and was extending the field glasses to him when Frankel pointed again.

"Buffalo!" he said.

Prentice raised his own glasses to his eyes, and looked in that direction. Above the green of the bushes, shone the sleek, black backs of the great beasts some three or four miles away. Occasionally one would raise his huge armor-fronted head and make a backward sweep at the flies that had settled on his back, or perhaps with one horn be scratching at his thick hide where a tick was bothering. A plan of campaign was now suggested by the German hunter. The wind was blowing from them to the buffalo, but so far off was the herd that the scent could not reach them. It was suggested that Lindlay and Prentice, with their gun-bearers, should keep off to the north while Dallas and Frankel should make a wide detour to the south until they got to leeward of the buffaloes, and then begin to stalk. It was agreed that if the herd should separate that each party would follow up the animals nearest them till they could get a shot, and that by evening they would work their way back to the base of a large hill for camp, this high ground being visible from any point in the open for miles around. The plans being well understood and very simple, they parted company, waving good-luck to one another as they plunged into the bushes that fringed the edge of the plain. As Dallas looked back he could see the tall form of Lindlay towering head and shoulders above the green sea of leaves.

Frankel spoke very little English, but Dallas' Ger-

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man was sufficient for him to carry on conversation, and in a low voice he asked the hunter if he had ever been in this same country before.

"Oh, yes," the German responded. "Five years ago I was here, but for a time there has been almost constant war with the tribes not far away, with the Wahehe, and the Bantus, and the Wangonis. For years it was impossible for white men to hunt in any of the districts, far to the east between Lake Nyasa, or to the westward of Kilwa, and Lindi. There is much country still unexplored; not far to the north the people are still restless, and do not care much for the whites. It is still dangerous. I have been a five days' march in that direction." He nodded his head toward the northeast as he spoke. "After this open country there's a wide stretch of forest where there are fine elephants yet to be seen; then comes the Manimbi Plains, and the great swamp; I have been to the edge of it, and was glad to get back."

"That is the swamp that Geibler and his friends passed through; isn't it?" asked Dallas.

Frankel shrugged his shoulders and half smiled. "So he has told you that story," he responded. "Have you met our friend Mann from Bukumbi?"

"Not yet," said Dallas, "but Mr. Gottlieb who went with them is a great friend of ours."

"Ach!" Frankel stood and looked at his companion curiously, and then with some eagerness he asked. "And is this story the same—about the stone houses and the gold, and the stores of ivory?"

"He never said anything about it to me," Dallas

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answered truthfully. "I never heard of these adventures until I met Mr. Geibler. But don't you think it is possible to get through the swamp?"

"With engineers, and bridges, and boats, perhaps, yes. But the poisonous flies are there—the tsetse—like they have in Uganda. People cannot live on its edges; it is impassable from this direction. In it somewhere dwell the Lotungi, who are part men, part monkeys. To the north there are still hostile tribes, and the mountains."

"But don't you think that——" Dallas had begun a question when the hunter interrupted him, raising his hand with a finger to his lips, and then pointed to the ground.

"They were here only a minute ago—the buffalo," he said. "We must keep silence, and bear more to the southward, where they will not get our wind."

It was evident from signs that the big animals had been there but a short time before, and now turning a little to the right, with Frankel leading the way, they went forward cautiously. The gun-bearers had handed each of the white hunters his rifle, and were keeping close up, carrying the spare guns. Dallas had chosen the double-barrel .450-Express. Mr. Frankel was carrying an old-fashioned Dutch gun that threw a projectile a full ounce in weight. Like the American, he had for a secondary battery a modern sporting Mauser. The park-like country abounded in clumps of bushes of between two and ten acres in extent, dotted here and there by larger trees. Occasionally bare spots showed in the grass, and they were

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traversed everywhere with marks of countless hoofs.

All at once, one of the gun-bearers gave a guttural exclamation, at the same moment Dallas heard a panting sound and something touched his heel. He gave a start and turned; there was Jock, who had been left behind in charge of the camp men. He had slipped his collar, and evidently ran the whole of the distance on the trail, for his tongue was hanging from the corner of his open mouth, and his entreating eyes begged for a word of welcome, and not the scolding that he felt was coming to him. Dallas stooped and patted him, and the dog's whole attitude changed in an instant. Frankel frowned at him and swore beneath his breath, but Jock, as if promising to be good, gave only one joyous whine, and jumped up to Dallas' knee, then with an apparent effort to smother his loud panting, he followed silently in his footsteps.

Skirting the edge of a close thicket of thorn bushes that grew about the foot of a big bamlakifi tree, the party stood stock still. Not fifty yards away, fronting them, and with every head turned in their direction, stood a herd of twenty buffalo. A little to the front was a great bull, his ugly muzzle thrust forward, and his nostrils extended. Dallas had half raised his rifle, but the German hunter stood still as a statue. In a half whisper he spoke, without moving his head.

"Bleiben sie," he said. "Do not move."

The gun-bearers who were a few paces behind looked over their shoulders and took a few steps backward. Jock, by Dallas' side, stood motionless, the coarse hair on his neck standing straight up; his

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panting had stopped entirely. How long they remained that way, Dallas could not have told. It was one of the "touch-and-go" moments that comes into the lives of all hunters of big game. If the big beasts charged together there was little chance of escape; they would have crushed the little party as a squadron of cavalry would a corporal's guard of infantry.

The big bull in advance who was swishing his short, stiff tail, took a half step forward. It was splendid charging ground, smooth as a cricket field. The rest of the animals, which included a few cows with almost full-grown calves, tossed their heads restlessly.

"They're coming!" muttered the German. "I'll take the first, you take the second. We may stop them!"

Just as the loud report of his big Roorback sounded, Dallas picked out the second bull, that was almost as large as the first, and fired at the point of his shoulder, and like a racing whippet released from its thong, Jock, with a loud yelp, started forward. Like a brown streak he had made for the heavy line of sturdy legs and great bodies that were lurching forward with great horned heads lowered, and when almost in among them, barking at the top of his lungs, he turned and swept across the line. Never had the buffalo, careless of lion and leopard, been attacked by a bob-tailed jackall before. It diverted their attention from the curious standing figures whose odor, wafted to them by a drifting air, was so objectionable. Wheeling to the left the whole herd thundered after Jock; all but the two big bulls. The one hit by the ounce ball from Mr. Frankel's right barrel had stumbled

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forward on his knees, only to rise again in time to receive the second shot that tumbled him, plunging and kicking on the grass. The one that Dallas had singled out had merely tripped, as it were, at the impact of the bullet, and gathering his feet, had come thundering on. The German turned back to the gun-bearers. Both had fled carrying the spare weapons with them! He made a half movement as if to reach for Dallas' rifle, then restrained himself. The butt was already at the boy's cheek, and his eyes were glancing along the sights. It seemed to him as if the oncoming beast was nothing but one huge pair of horns; it was like firing into the armored bow of a battleship, and just as useless.

"Steady," said the German, feeling at his cartridge belt. "Don't miss!"

Mr. Gottlieb's lesson came to the young hunter's mind. The heavily plated forehead protected the brain but he got just a glimpse through the notched sight of the point where the neck joins the shoulder, and as he did so, Dallas pressed the trigger. The beast slid forward with his front legs trailed under his huge bulk, and the force of his charge carried him to within five yards of where they stood. Frankel had loaded his clumsy weapon by this time, and fired a second shot. Another maxim of great game hunters came to Dallas' mind: When facing dangerous animals, "shoot, shoot, and keep on shooting!"

But what of Jock. It can only be said for him, that it was fortunate that his breed of terrier possesses the longest legs of any. The movements of the great

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beasts that were after him were incredibly swift, but like a swallow he skimmed the ground in front of them and kept ahead. As they crossed an open space, the dust rose above the bushes like an explosion. Jock swung around a clump of bushes and disappeared from their sight. The buffaloes, whose anger had now turned to fear, kept on in their mad rush southward.

It was fully five minutes before Jock came up to his master, who was sitting on the flanks of the dead buffalo, feeling as he expressed it afterwards, "a little pale around the gills." Dallas fairly smothered him in his arms. Frankel at that moment, was interviewing the two recreant gun-bearers behind the bushes, through the medium of boot and gun butt. There was a doubt arising in Dallas' mind as to whether they had not wished they had waited for the buffalo! As practical gun-bearers, their usefulness was gone for several days. In fact, as was the custom, they were reduced to the ranks of common carriers.

Panting at last from his exertions the big German approached. He looked from one dead buffalo to the other, and slapped the boy on the back. Then seeing Jock he made a reach for him which the latter eluded.

"That is a good dog," said the German. "I think I could kiss him."

One of the chastened bearers was dispatched to bring up the black skimmers from the camp, and hobbled off, then Frankel, seating himself beside Dallas on the buffalo's withers, took out his pipe. Still looking at Jock, he spoke slowly.

"If my friend Mann of Bukumbi had told me this

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story I would not have believed it." He enticed Jock closer to him by snapping his fingers, but the dog looked at him suspiciously. Perhaps he had observed part of Frankel's emphatic interview with the Shashis.

"Nevertheless," said the German, addressing him, "you're a good dog."

Retreating to the shade of a nearby tree, they seated themselves, and Mr. Frankel was soon started on a long hunting tale, brought to his mind by the recent exciting experience. Like every man who has followed the calling of hunter for a living, he had had more than one narrow escape. He was a fatalist, to judge from what he said, for he concluded his story with the following remarks: "It is only a question of time when your turn comes, especially is it so with buffalo and elephant; they are sometimes hunters, also, and man killers. A rhinoceros is an accidental enemy; he has no intent to kill you, and as for lions——"

Hardly had he pronounced the word, when quite close to them there broke forth the jarring sound that, up to this time, Dallas had only heard resounding in the big brick building at the Zoölogical Garden. As Mr. Gottlieb had said, it sounded quite different in the open air of the wilderness. Frankel did not move at first, and then slowly he lifted the rifle by his side, cocked both barrels, and laid it across his lap.

"They seldom roar in the daytime," he said, "unless they are hungry. He's scented the meat! Keep quiet; he may come out in the open."

Dallas slipped back the safety catch of his hammerless and waited, looking in the direction of the sound,

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his nerves tingling with excitement. Then they heard a cry. The Shashi bearer, who had been hiding near them, rubbing the bruises and raised spots of his anatomy, came limping toward them, calling out the universal name of warning: "Simba! Simba!" He bore the two spare rifles, one in each hand, and as he approached the tree he extended them as if imploring the white men to use them.

Frankel had risen to his feet. "There he goes!" he cried. "He's frightened off. So much for the bravery of the king of beasts."

A tawny flash had passed between the bushes some hundred yards away beyond the open space where the dead buffalo were lying.

"I saw two," said Dallas.

"There were three, I think!" returned Frankel, "but this black calf," he spoke in Bantu now, and half addressed the cringing bearer, "frightened them off with his bleating. They won't come back now until after night-fall. We might wait for them."

With another curse and a growl at the disgraced Shashi, who seemed to treasure no resentment at the way he had been treated, Frankel sat down again and lit another pipe. The match was still burning in his finger as he applied it to the bowl, when he and Dallas both gave an exclamation. Two shots, followed by another, and then a fourth, and then two more in quick succession, sounded less than half a mile away.

"Our friends are evidently having some sport," observed Frankel. "Perhaps they saw the lions."

There was a moment's pause, and no sound of fur-

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ther shooting, when Dallas who was standing, threw back his head, and placing the hollow of his hand beside his lips, called forth the old school cry of "Harkaway!" repeated thrice. Almost immediately it was answered from the bushes, and an instant later Dallas with his rifle at the carry was speeding in the direction of the answering call. Before he had crossed the little meadow, a figure had emerged into the open; it was Prentice, and as soon as he saw Dallas he came running toward him. Breathless the two boys met.

"Did you get anything, Chui?" the younger asked. "We heard your shots some time ago, and were working down in this direction. Our buffalo got wind of us and cleared." In reply Dallas took his chum by the elbow and pointed.

"There are two fine specimens," said he, "of the genus Bos."

"Bully for you! Come, let's look 'em over. Was anything doing in the way of excitement?"

"Anything doing! There would have been a good deal doing if it hadn't been for Jock, here." The latter was now jumping up at Prentice, bounding in high leaps off the ground, whining and wiggling his body in an ecstasy of greeting.

"And what did you do, you yellow-eyed rascal?" asked Prentice, endeavoring to lay hold of his stubby tail.

"I'll answer for him," Dallas laughed. "He's trying to say, 'I'm the greatest buffalo dog in the world. I ain't afraid of nothing. I bite 'em on the heels and I bite 'em on the nose, and as long as you stick by



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me you haven't anything to fear from any animal in East Africa. Even that cross old Dutchman says I'm a good dog.' But I'll tell the story later. What were you shooting at?"

"Cats," responded Prentice, "and if one of them doesn't measure over ten feet, I'll eat him, claws and all, and they're three of 'em. Lindlay got two and I got the other. They came trottin' right up to us as if we were saucers of milk. I don't think much of the gun-bearers in this neighborhood, our two gentlemen bunked at the first shot. I don't think they'd better come near Lindlay; he's got a rod in pickle for them."

"Jingo!" exclaimed Dallas suddenly. "I wish we'd brought the camera. Look at that!"

Emerging from the bushes came a remarkable sight. Lindlay staggering along beneath the weight of a full-grown dead male lion that must have weighed well over four hundred pounds. He tossed the huge body down like a bag of meal.

"Ach!" said a voice beside them, "there's not another man in East Africa who could do that."

So interested had they been in talking that they had not perceived that Frankel had joined them. Lindlay who had disappeared again came back, this time assisted by the bearers towing another sleek yellow body out of the bushes. The third, a three-quarter grown male cub, he carried out as he had done the first. This done, he stood looking down at them, so intent with pleasurable excitement that he could hardly talk.

The camp was full of chattering that night; the

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blacks seated about the big fire kept eating, and singing between mouthfuls until nearly midnight.

"Aren't you glad we stayed over, Dal?" asked Prentice, when the boys started to crawl into their blankets. "Old Uncle Geibler has made good his word in one direction, anyhow."

"Ho, for the elephant country next!" Dallas answered. "Frankel says we can reach it in about five days' marching, but we'll have to stay over another steamer. What do you think, Tombo?"

"If you ask me," Prentice responded, "I'd as lief stay here six months. Too bad we didn't organize a bigger expedition and go on and visit the Bangwalis. 'We might return rich men,' " he added, imitating Mr. Geibler.

"I'm afraid we'll have to leave that to someone else," Dallas said dryly. "It'd never do for you to get there, Chui. They might cut out your tongue."

CHAPTER XVI

THE FOREST LAND

FOR another day they kept the same camp at the base of the hill. If they had been in search of good shooting alone, they need never to have left it; in one morning they added three more rare specimens to their already large collection of heads and horns. They might have added a fourth if they had chosen, and the reason that they did not do so, makes a little story of itself. They had taken some good photographs—for every animal seemed almost unafraid. But it was now their great ambition to get pictures of elephants, and they were eager to press on. But the salting and preparation of the lion skins and the buffalo heads had taken some time. As many trophies are often lost because of careless work, Frankel had suggested their remaining where they were a little time longer. So little danger was there of their being lost, that after luncheon, which they had eaten in camp, the two boys started out alone with two new gun-bearers Frankel had picked out, and who, proud of their promotion, went forth high stepping in their company.

The boys took an entirely new direction this time, and disdaining several easy shots at antelope were

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soon some four or five miles from camp. Lindlay and Jock had stayed behind, and as the boys, each carrying a camera, strode forward, they kept up an incessant talking.

"No fear of meeting any old camp-fires in this country," observed Prentice. "Isn't it strange how a line of telegraph poles or barbed wire fence throws back the ages?"

"Make a note of that," laughed Dallas, "it would sound well in a letter or a speech to the Geographical Society. Mind you, we're explorers now."

"You know what I mean," persisted Prentice, who had always had a slight leaning toward the literary. "We were too close to civilization, up near Nairobi. Remember that automobile we saw tearing across the plains, and that impala buck who had become entangled in the wire netting, the one we shot just to put him out of his misery, and the telephone wires to Fort Hall, and all of it. There was too much of the back yard and lower pasture about it. Here it is—one vast wilderness where hitherto the hand of man has never set its foot."

"Fine!" said Dallas. "Especially the last. Better put that down, too, in quotation marks."

One of their gun-bearers, a hideous, broad-chested savage, with tremendous biceps and gnarled torso, supported on rather slender legs, hastened his stride and caught up with them. Following the direction he indicated, the boys saw what they were after. Two immensely tall giraffes, less than a quarter of a mile away, were standing in plain sight, looking straight

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at the strange bipeds, and remaining perfectly motionless.

"You take the rifle, Tombo," whispered Dallas, "and I'll use the camera on them; let's see how close we can approach; the wind's just right."

As the hunters came nearer neither animal moved. At last they were so close to the beasts that they could see the nervous twitching of their long, prehensile upper lips. Fearlessly the giraffes gazed down at them; Dallas with his eyes to the finder had made two exposures, and was constantly bringing the focus nearer; it almost appeared as if they were to come within touching distance. Every instant he expected that Prentice would fire. All at once the animals moved, but not before the shutter had snapped again. Dallas turned to Prentice. The latter, with the butt of his rifle on the ground, was making a series of elaborate bows and graceful sweeps of his pith helmet.

"I'm glad you didn't shoot, Prent, I was half afraid you would."

"Shoot!" exclaimed Prentice. "With those soft, brown, long-lashed eyes looking at me! I would just as lief take aim with murderous intent at a *débutante* on the avenue, or a gawky country boy looking over a fence. It would have been sheer murder."

The two long-necked creatures had moved off a little way and begun to nibble at the tree tops.

"Aren't they beautiful!" said Prentice. "Wouldn't a cold lemonade taste good if you had a throat like that, Chui?"

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Dallas, as he focused for another picture, looked up and laughed. "You're a sentimentalist. It was the brown eyes that got your nerve."

"Run away, girls," rejoined Prentice, waving his hat over his head.

At that instant, as if suddenly realizing that they were in danger, or overcome by an unexpected attack of shyness, the two spotted creatures moved swiftly off, on their stilt-like legs. The boys stood watching them. Prentice as usual found something to say.

"I suppose if they'd been elephants, we wouldn't have been quite so polite, eh? Hello! What's the matter with this fellow?"

One of the bearers was pointing at a good-sized tree that looked as if it had been struck by lightning. A big branch had been torn off from near the top, and another was hanging by a few shreds of bark. The boys had picked up a few words of Bantu, and knew what the boys were saying.

"Talk of angels or devils," exclaimed Dallas. "Did you ever? He's right! That is elephant work, certain!"

Running forward they came to the trampled ground. No doubt about it now—the big round footprints were plain in a dusty open space, and the grass was crushed as if a roller had passed over it.

"Remember what Mr. Gottlieb told us?" said the elder boy. "Twice around an elephant's forefoot will give his approximate height at the shoulder."

"Cricky, this was a big fellow!" Dallas exclaimed, measuring the diameter of a big footprint and making

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a mental calculation. "Bigger than Jumbo, or I miss my guess."

Their knowledge of woodcraft and a glance at the broken tree limbs, told the boys that the spoor was five or six days old. Elated with the news they hastened back in the direction of camp. They had no idea that they had gone so far, and they made a detour in order to find an open spot from which they could get a glimpse of the high ground that would show them their direction.

"Did you hear that?" asked Dallas, grasping Prentice by the elbow.

"I thought I heard," returned the other, "a shot 'way off."

The two blacks had heard also and located the direction of the sound. They were looking to the north; the camp lay to the westward.

"Maybe it's Lindlay after the cats again," suggested Prentice. "There's the hill, off there. Let's leg it home."

In an hour or so they had caught sight of the smoke of the camp fire, where supper was preparing. Surprised, indeed, they were to see Lindlay and Frankel advance to meet them. The German was much interested when he heard the account of the elephant signs. No one in camp had heard any sounds of firing.

"There are no natives here who have guns," Frankel said, "and I'm sure there are no white men in the country." He paused and asked a question of the two gun-bearers. "Maybe the elephants are nearer to us

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than we thought," he added. "It may have been the crack of a broken branch you heard." He seemed to be amused at their story.

But the two blacks averred that it was a gun shot, and when they went to bed that night, the affair was still a mystery.

The next day they broke camp and took up the track of the elephants—the trail led eastward. It was that of a large herd numbering seventy or eighty, bulls and cows with calves. The boys had just happened on the outskirts of their line of march; from every indication they were traveling fast and were heading for the forest. For four more days the march kept up without much gain. The country had become rougher, traversed by dried-up and half dried water courses. Before them one evening there loomed a great black wall, towering against the horizon like a palisade. Into the depths of this the elephants had disappeared. No one had mentioned the rifle shot for sometime now, and it had been taken for granted that it was the work of one of the big beasts who had lagged behind. It was decided to pitch camp on the edge of the forest, and to go in after the tuskers in the morning. Frankel announced that they were now not more than thirty miles from the great swamp land. The little stretch of plain on the other side of the forest, he declared, was not more than ten or twelve miles wide. Here their journey to the east must end.

It was the first time that the young explorers, for as such they might almost be considered, had entered the depths of an African forest. True, they had been

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on the fringes of the deep jungle in the vicinity of the Tana River, but they had not penetrated far enough to gain the peculiar sensations that come from the dense gloom and the damp coolness under the spreading roof of leaves. As they approached the green wall, for the forest began like a line of timberland upstanding from a clearing, they had heard the chatter of monkeys in the tree branches, and many brilliantly colored birds and wonderful butterflies could be seen flitting overhead. As they penetrated further, the silence became more noticeable; everywhere through the tangle of huge tree ferns and undergrowth ran the elephant paths, so it was not as slow going as might have been expected. Frankel had informed them before starting that the elephants were probably merely passing through the woods to the strip of open country beyond. He explained that this great stretch of woodland broadened to the north and the part that lay before them was merely an arm of it that disappeared near to the swamp, only a score of miles to the south.

As usual, they had formed two parties which soon parted after entering the deep shade. In case of darkness coming on, all that would be necessary was to go to the westward until they reached the open, and the camp would be easy to find.

Prentice and Lindlay, with the Neopara, who was a good hunter, and had attached himself to their company, kept off to the right, while Dallas and Frankel, having come to a fork in the paths, bore off to the left. The hunter suggested that maybe the

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two paths joined farther on, for the herd had evidently split, the body containing the larger number going north toward the denser forest.

Carefully Frankel examined the signs that were plentiful everywhere. They came to a place where the sunshine filtered down through the canopy of great leafed branches, and here he stopped.

"They still are traveling fast," he said, "but here you see they halted to feed and rest a little. Look at this great tree where they have scratched themselves—a big tusker did that. We're bound to get some ivory within a day or so, believe me."

A big tree trunk about whose base crawled and twisted vines the thickness of a man's arm, had evidently attracted one of these huge animals as a scratching pole. The bark was torn off and a great tendril snapped some twelve or thirteen feet from the ground. Frankel appeared elated at this sign.

"We may catch up with them to-day," he said.

Another halting place was reached with still more recent signs of occupation, and with an excitement that Dallas had not thought such an experienced hand at big game would have shown, Frankel declared that the elephants were probably not more than three or four miles ahead. He gazed aloft at the leaves to see if any wind was blowing, but the fronds of the tall ferns and each single leaf seemed as still as if painted on a canvas. Not a breath was stirring.

"It is well," said the hunter, "and now let us go forward carefully."

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"Haven't the ivory hunters ever been in here?" asked Dallas in a whisper. "Are we the first?"

"Almost the first," said Frankel. "Years ago this country was settled up with a tribe like the Wehehes, the Manimbi, and they used to send out many tusks, but tribal wars and a sickness cleared them out. It is now uninhabited, I think, and deserted entirely. Maybe but two or three white men have ever been in this woods before, and I am one. Now let us be cautious and keep a sharp look-out, for an elephant can move through the forest like a ghost."

Without any more talking, they proceeded forward some three or four miles, Frankel, in the lead, carrying his huge elephant gun, and Dallas, with his Express ready, close behind him. Suddenly he caught his breath in a quick, excited gasp.

Without a word of warning, Frankel suddenly crouched, fluttering his hand behind him in a sign for the others to follow his example. Then he beckoned Dallas closer, and with his lips to his ear, gave a whispered warning.

"They're right ahead of us. Step out of the path; if they turn they will come straight back on us. You go that side, I'll go this. Be very silent; we're right on top of them."

He pointed to a sign that was so fresh that it must have been made only a minute or so before by a great beast standing almost where they now stood.

Four or five stealthy side-way steps away from the path, and all sense of direction apparently was lost. The gun-bearer who had accompanied Dallas was so

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close that their bodies almost touched; the boy could hear his heart beating loudly in his throat. He pushed back a big fern branch in front of him, and then stood there holding it. There had come a ripping crash and a great swishing sound like the fluttering of a great wounded bird, and then silence again! It was an elephant tearing down a branch of a tree not thirty yards away!

Dallas looked at the black man's face to see how he was taking it. It was the big-chested Usukuma; there was no trace of fear in his bearing, and somehow Dallas felt reassured. The glance that the savage gave his young master was full of confidence. He lifted his hand above his head as if to indicate that the nearby elephant was a big one. A feeling of loneliness that the boy had felt, disappeared at once, and cautiously he stepped forward some twelve or fifteen paces, and stopped at a little tug that he felt at the back of his flannel shirt. The Usukuma was now gazing over his shoulder, his eyes turned upward. He formed a word with his lips, but made no sound.

Never in all his life would Dallas forget his next sensation.

Above the nearby tangled bushes that were so dense he could not see ten feet ahead, waved a writhing, moving object. It was the tip of an elephant's trunk turning this way and that. The little finger-like muscle rigidly stretched above the two distended nostrils. *The great beast was feeling for the strange, unknown odor that he had faintly caught.* Whether he was standing sideways or head-on, it was

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impossible to tell. It seemed that to move forward would almost bring the young hunter into reach, for that wavering, straining trunk tip appeared to be almost overhead.

Holding his breath Dallas waited, his finger on the trigger and the butt of the rifle lifted against the hollow of his shoulder. There was a slight crackling sound, and with a suddenness that was heart-stopping, a great head thrust through the intervening shield of shrubbery. It had the effect of a mounted specimen against a green wall. The great ears, ragged and torn, flanged out on either side some six or seven feet; the trunk fortunately was now lowered between the two great, shining tusks. To the boy it seemed as if the little yellow, blinking eyes were looking straight at him!

Aiming at the point where the muscles of the trunk join the great bony structure of the head, Dallas fired both barrels. Instinctively he had known that if the first shot did not kill, there would be no time for a second.

As if all four legs had been cut from under him, the great beast dropped as the heavy steel-pointed bullets went tearing through his brain!

Instantly pandemonium arose—shrill trumpetings and a crashing like a storm in all directions. Close by him through the forest rushed another huge shape. Hurriedly Dallas had taken the spare rifle from the bearer's hand. Now he heard a shot quite close to him, and then a cry, followed by another.

He shouted but got no answer. Knowing that the

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path that they had left was to his right, he started for it, but it was hard to make any progress. Again he stopped and called, shouting in German :

“Frankel, where are you?”

He thought he heard a smothered groan off to the right; with a dread fear almost stifling him he turned in that direction; the black was saying something that he could not understand. He beckoned him to come, and pushed ahead. Where was the path? Unknown to him it had turned off at a short angle just beyond where he and Frankel had parted, and in the direction that he was going there was nothing but the trackless forest. He stopped again and now the bearer raised his own voice in a loud native call, intended evidently for his black companion who had gone with Frankel. Not a sound.

Dallas felt at his belt for his leather watch chain. It had a compass attached to it; and then with a feeling of dismay he remembered that he had left it hanging against the tent pole back in camp. Once before he had been in a predicament by just such carelessness; that time in the north woods when the bear had brought them back to the cabin clearing. He had sworn that it would never occur again. So dark was it that there were hardly any shadows; which way lay east or west or north or south, he could not tell. Although he had not gone more than a quarter of a mile or more from where the dead elephant lay, he was not positive how to retrace his steps. He turned to the Usukuma and spoke the word for elephant.

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The man pointed in one direction, then another, opened his palm wide and lifted his shoulders. He was of the open country tribe, unused to the deep forest. He placed every dependence on the white man with him now. That something dreadful had happened to Frankel, Dallas was assured; that wild cry had presaged some disaster, and the second was surely from the throat of a native—what had happened?

When lost the only thing to do is to sit down and think, not to rush off aimlessly. Dallas leaned back against a tree trunk. It would be impossible for him to follow his own tracks with any certainty, for the elephants had rushed through the woods in all directions; ferns were crushed and broken, and in the springy ground covered by dead leaves, even their footprints were hardly visible. After a minute's calm reasoning he decided that the path must be further to the left; perhaps in his moments of anxiety he had crossed it without knowing it.

Fright is a contagious thing; the gun-bearer had begun to chatter some incoherent words. Natives fear the supernatural more than the physical; the dead silence and the gloom were evidently getting upon the black's nerves or what, in savages, take their place. For an instant his terror communicated itself to Dallas; a desire to call aloud swept over him, but he mastered it, and forced a smile as he rose. There was no use remaining there, and then an idea came to him. He raised the Mauser and fired three shots at a few seconds' intervals then he stood still and listened.

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Almost a minute passed and then he heard an answering report.

He must have turned completely around, for the direction from which it sounded was directly opposite to that from which he supposed the other party were. To the eastward and the westward he knew there was open country; he had no great fear for himself, but being certain in his mind now as to what had taken place, he wished to summon help. Somewhere near him, Frankel must be lying, either badly wounded or perhaps killed by the elephants' charge. Once more he fired the Mauser and again there came an answering report somewhat nearer. He started in the direction of the sound, working his way through tangled vines and branches that snatched at arms and legs.

He had stepped through the loop of a great green cable that swung down from a tree, and was hastening across a space that seemed to be a little more open, when suddenly he tripped; the rifle that he was carrying slipped from his hands and apparently dissolved into the solid earth. An instant later there was a breaking away beneath him, and with a rush he fell some ten or twelve feet into utter darkness.

He had landed on some hard object with such force that the breath had been knocked out of his body. He lay there coughing and spluttering, and gazing up at the dim light that shone through a small aperture over his head.

CHAPTER XVII

MISSING

LONG, long years before, a lone bull elephant, very old and feeble, had followed through this section of the forest, one of the paths which his brethren had made, and that he himself had trod so many times that he could have swayed along it on the blackest night; he had come down from the great wilderness to the north. Before his coming, the strip of open between the land of the great trees and the swamp had been dotted with many thatch roofed villages; women had worked in the planted ground, and warriors, and hunters had filled the forest. Many miles to the westward lay the great fresh waters, and to the south, so far away that members of this tribe had never seen it, was the caravan route that led to the end of all land. Along this route the scattered white men bartered beads, and wire, and gaily colored cloth in return for shining tusks of ivory. Through many hands these tusks passed until they reached the great market places. Tribal wars and the sickness had slowly lessened their numbers, and then from the east had come an invasion of tall brown men, who had wiped the people of the region out of existence; but their works remained behind them.

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This great lone bull, each of whose tusks would have been a load for two men, suddenly sank out of sight in one of the treacherous holes dug by the hunters who no longer lived; he had trumpeted his last despairing call unheard, and miserably his century of life had rounded out. The vines and leaves had spread their obliterating growth over the old path, and across the pit that had been his unfilled grave they had formed a network covered over with a living bridge of green and fallen leaves.

Now underneath this close-woven, imprisoning thatch, lying on top of the mass of great whitened bones, lay one of the people destined very soon to destroy the last of the great ivory bearers.

Not all of this fanciful story went through Dallas' mind, but flashes of it were revealed to him as, stretching forth his hand, he felt the huge bony structure of the great skull, with the smooth tusks imbedded in the bank beside him.

He knew of the elephant traps and pits that the native hunters dug, and that he had fallen into one, he was, of course, well aware. He had been sure that the gun-bearer had been but a few steps behind him, not knowing that he had stopped to pick up some cartridges that had dropped out of the bag he was carrying. The Usukuma had heard Dallas' cry as he had fallen, and had hurried to overtake him; but alarmed by the mysterious disappearance of the young white Bwana, who had been in plain sight but a moment before, he had dropped the big gun and fled, madly fighting his way through the bushes

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from the vicinity of the spirits who had so mysteriously swept his leader out of existence.

That he would not be able to escape from the predicament never entered Dallas' mind; but as he struggled to his feet, calling at top voice for the bearer, a pain shot through his left shoulder, and do his best, he could move that arm but a few inches from his side. Reaching up with the other, he could just gently tap the leaves and tendrils that trailed down around the edges of the hole through which he had fallen. He felt along the sides; the earth was slippery and hard, like clay. Standing on top of the big skull, he reached upwards again, in a vain effort to lay hold of something strong enough to support his weight; it was fruitless. In his efforts to retain his balance his feet slipped from beneath him and he landed amid the great pile of bones again. Feeling about, his fingers closed on something cold and hard; it was the barrel of his rifle. Touching the bolt and magazine he found that the weapon was uninjured.

As his previous shots had brought response, hope came to him. Lifting the gun with one hand he thrust the muzzle upward and pulled the trigger. There were four shells left; the rest of the ammunition was in the bag carried by the bearer. Surely the latter must come to his rescue now.

After counting one hundred, Dallas fired again, and then at longer intervals, until he had expended all but the last shell in the magazine. It was growing darker and the short afternoon light was still further cur-

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tailed by the forest gloom, as the sun declined. The idea of passing the night in the close prison frightened him. With all his might he fought back the fear, but, strive his utmost, the creeping horror of it grew on him. He knew it would be impossible to find a way through that forest by night, and darkness was swiftly coming on. He would save his last shot for the daylight. There was but one explanation of his savage companion's behavior; he had run away.

It was with no very comfortable feelings that he sat there thinking of the consternation that there would be in camp that night when Frankel and he failed to return. Maybe it was the latter who had fired the shots that answered his; he might be lying in greater need of aid than Dallas was at that very moment; perhaps, however, he was uninjured, and was still searching for him. In the deep forest the report of a rifle would not carry so far as it would in the open country, and help might not be far away. Dallas resolved to hazard another signal shot; his Mauser spoke again. Listening with all his ears, he waited for a reply, but none came.

A wave of despair crept over him; he was certain that Lindlay and Prentice would never leave that locality until they found him, but supposing that the direction they took was a wrong one, or that his shouts on the morrow failed to reach their ears, what would he do? The grim reminders of a possible fate were all around him. A mad desire came over him, and yielding to the impulse, he raised his voice in a wild

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cry. The result was that he felt even more frightened than he had before.

"I mustn't lose my nerve," he said to himself, and then as if there had been another person present, he added: "Hark! What's that?"

He had heard the snapping of a twig and the sound of something moving.

"Hello!" he cried in English. "I'm here. In an old elephant pit. Hello! Who is it? Here I am!"

No answer came. Perhaps it was some wild animal that had scented him and was moving near. Maybe his voice had frightened him away. Yet there was a chance of its being one of the other party, and he called again: "Ho! Frankel, is that you?" After a pause he shouted the names of Lindlay and Prentice as loud as he could. Dead silence! But in a moment something happened that sent the chills up and down his spine. The roof overhead was moving; little particles of dirt and leaves fell down on him. He gazed up at the aperture. Was he going mad? Surely he could not be mistaken—that was a human hand he had seen pushing aside the vines; and, he was sure, yes, positively sure, the fingers of that hand were white! But almost as soon as he had seen it, it had disappeared.

"Here I am, right beneath you," he exploded. "Give me a lift up out of this. Why don't you speak; is that you, Frankel? Who is it? Answer me!" And now his voice became almost a wail. "Don't leave me, here I am! Ho! Help! Help!" Almost exhausted by his shouting and his fruitless efforts to

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climb up the side of the prison pen, he sank back in despair. Had he imagined it?

* * * * *

"What can be keeping them out so late as this?" asked Prentice nervously as he stood beside the camp fire, heaped high with crackling thorn bushes. "They could see this fire for miles."

"Don't get excited," Lindlay replied slowly, "we never do up in the wilderness; when a good woodsman stays out over night, even in bad weather, we know he can take care of himself. I think the head man's explanation, what we could get of it, is correct. That pesky herd of elephants they were following kept straight on through the forest like the ones we were after, but didn't get a sight of. Perhaps they made camp on the other side of the woods; we'll hear from them to-morrow. I ain't a bit worried, and neither are the niggers. So cheer up!"

"But we heard one shot, and possibly two, before we took that turn down into the deep gully that led toward the swamp where our elephants got away from us."

"My head is so buzzing with the quinine that I don't hear as well as I used to," Lindlay replied. "I couldn't swear to hearing any shooting. I think I've got a little touch to-night," he added, "I feel a little queer."

Prentice put a hand on the giant's forehead and wrist; he had strong evidence of fever.

"It was that foolish trick of showing how strong

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you are—toting out those lions. If you had as much brain as you have muscle you'd let the blacks do that kind of work."

"Don't get testy," laughed Lindlay. "I'm going to take a handful more of pills and turn in. The Neopara says we'll get an elephant to-morrow sure, for we've got 'em where they can't get away."

Prentice, however, could not shake off the feeling of worry and depression; he did not sleep well, and every time he woke, he heard Lindlay's incoherent muttering from his corner of the tent. By daylight Prentice crawled over to him and found him in a raging fever and delirious!

"Here's a condition of affairs!" With all his heart and mind he prayed for Dallas' and Frankel's return. No one moved from camp that morning, and by early afternoon it was evident that the Neopara was getting nervous. Prentice, emerging from the tent where Lindlay, refusing all food, lay semi-conscious, found the head man waiting for him.

"Bwana," he said, "all is not well. Moga has returned. He bears bad news."

"What is it?" Prentice asked with a sinking heart—Moga was the hideous savage, who was acting as Dallas' bearer. "Speak out, what is it?"

"He says," answered the Neopara, falteringly, "that the Lombiki have taken them."

Now "Lombiki" is the native name for spirits.

In his own mind, Prentice put the matter distinctly. "It's up to me," he said to himself, and then aloud in Swahili, which the Neopara understood, he ordered:

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"Bring that cowardly black rascal to me and translate what I have to tell him."

The news that the recreant bearer had brought back had caused a turmoil of excitement; it was noticeable in the chatter of the black men, and the glances that they gave at the green wall that lay to the eastward.

That the hideous Moga was no physical coward, and Prentice had maligned him, was proven when he looked square into the muzzle of the cocked and loaded Express that was aimed at his head.

"Tell him," said the boy, addressing the Neopara, "that if I think he's lying, he will go to the Lom-biki without any time for preparation."

The man, however, without flinching, stuck to his tale. Both the white masters had given a cry and vanished, Frankel taking his gun-bearer with him. Moga's native imagination, aided by the horrors of superstition that he had suffered, made him paint a vivid word picture of Dallas' translation to the "Never-never" land. According to the Usukuma, he had been witness to the actual disappearance. The young white master had given a loud cry, which it was carefully explained, was not one of fear, and had leaped into the air, disappearing amid the tree tops, firing his rifle as he went, and keeping it up until too far for the shots to be heard. In accounting for the disappearance of the spare gun, Moga's imagination again helped him. As his imagination saw it, the heavy Express had been snatched from him by invisible hands and disappeared skyward like a tossed spear!

Upon hearing from the Neopara that it was Pren-

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tice's intention to go into the forest and search, the black fell on his knees, begging him not to go. As for himself, he accentuated that he would rather be shot dead at once than ever to set foot into those spirit-haunted shades again.

It took all of Prentice's courage to show that he was unaffected by all this recital; but he managed to force a laugh, and spurning the man with his foot, ordered him to return to his companions, who would soon be called upon to show whether they were men or children.

Lindlay was in no condition to be told of what had happened; in very truth, as Prentice had once before reasoned, the whole affair "was up to him!"

CHAPTER XVIII

A WAY OUT AND A WAY IN

STIFF and sore, Dallas awoke in his close, cramped quarters to a dawning sense of his position. It was long past dawn, and stifling hot in the deep pit that had reeked of earth and decaying vegetation. To his amazement the arm that had been so useless the afternoon before could now be moved without much pain. He had fallen upon a nerve and had partly paralyzed it; it was a relief to find no bones were broken.

A slanting ray of the sun pierced through the tree branches directly on the roof of the pit like a ray from a burning glass. The prisoner's eyes had become accustomed to the gloom about him, and the light that shone through the aperture was dazzling.

Rubbing his aching limbs, he rose to his feet. Now he could see that at the end of the ditch the earth had fallen in, and instead of the sheer wall of clay there was a slope that might give him some foothold. Picking up one of the elephant's ribs for a spade, he dug frantically, and soon was able to mount high enough to reach the over-hanging vines. Turning the big bone into a crowbar, he pried away over his head, and by dint of pulling at the vines made an opening large enough for him to thrust his head out.

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The fresh air outside was invigorating, and he inhaled it in long breaths; dropping back once more he picked up his rifle, and taking it by the muzzle, with a strong thrust tossed it outside onto the ground; then by the exercise of strength and some masterful wriggling, he worked his shoulders through a hole and crawled forth, much like a locust emerging from its long sleep in the bosom of mother earth. The points of the compass were now easy to read from the shadows. He struck off to the westward.

It was hard going. The tangle of vines and the mesh of undergrowth would have taken a Cuban machete to cut through. Surely to the south must lie the elephant paths, and it seemed to be easier to travel in that direction. As he floundered on, he suddenly came to a place that looked familiar. He remembered having noticed how the vines, in following the curves of two leaning trees, had made a perfect representation of the letter A. Here it was—the path must be straight ahead! In a minute he felt like giving a whoop of delight, for he found it. Although he would have frankly confessed to having been lost the day before, Dallas possessed in a great measure, the instinct of the born woodsman, which is a matter of unconscious observation and a good memory. It was much lighter in the forest in the morning than in the afternoon owing to the heavier foliage being to the westward. Not far away, Dallas reasoned, must be the spot where he and Frankel had parted on the day before.

Yes, this was it! Here was the elephant sign, and

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here was the very place where he had stepped off to the left; Frankel could not have been very far to the right at the time Dallas had heard his shot, immediately after he himself had killed the big elephant. The body of the huge beast could not be lying far away. But what was that? Directly in front of him, in the middle of the path, an object caught his eye.

Striding forward, he drew back in horror. Once as a small boy curiosity had tempted him to draw near a railway accident that had taken place near the school, and afterwards he wished he hadn't. It was plain now. The elephants had been revenged for the invasion of their sanctuary! The death of the great tusker had been more than evened up.

Against the foot of a big tree, where he had been flung, was all that was left of the Usukuma bearer, and beyond lay the remains of poor Frankel. Two round, large holes in either side of the body showed where the tusks had entered the ground before the crushing weight of the elephant's head had done its work of destruction.

Sickened for a moment, Dallas ran past the scene of horror. He wanted to get out where there was more light still; and as if to tempt him, he noticed now that the path broadened into a clearing, and beyond, shining yellow and light green in the sunlight, as if looked at through the end of a huge telescope, lay the open meadows.

Knowing from Frankel's description that the point of woods dwindled slowly to the south like the tail of a kite, and that some of the elephant paths were off

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in that direction, it flashed across him that he might find a short cut to the west.

Fairly running the quarter of a mile or so to the edge of the big timber, he flung himself on the ground panting, not from exhaustion, but from the very sickness of his heart. He did not rest there long, however, and was soon on his way south, skirting the forest edge, his eyes intently looking for an opening. As he went on, the chattering of the monkeys in the trees were the only sounds; then he heard a hoarse "coo-ee" call he recognized instantly; it was a native cry, and it was answered. Maybe it might be some of the bearers looking for him? He called back in imitation. This time the sound came from the edge of the woods behind him. He turned.

Standing, waist high in the grass, was a black figure in a feathered head-dress, and rising above the broad shoulders, towered a bright long-bladed spear. When he saw he was observed, the man called again, and with one hand lifted high, came striding forward. The whole of his left side was hidden by a shield that extended from his ankle to the lobe of his ear. The man's bearing did not appear threatening in the least; any thought of resistance that might have entered the boy's mind was dispelled by seeing another figure exactly like the first, appear from the woods beside him. Soon another, and another, stepped into sight. Raising his hand, palm outwards in token of salute and peace Dallas waited as the warriors approached; and then his heart gave a jump. On the shields that they all carried was, beautifully painted

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in red, black, and gray, the horned bull elephant encircled by the snake!

The Bangwali word of greeting with which Mr. Gottlieb's record had begun, came to him.

"Dombala!" he called aloud, in a clear voice.

"Dombala!" returned the advancing chief.

"N'Garo Molombiki," went on the boy. "I come from Molombiki." At the same time he pulled back his shirt sleeve, and displayed the "totem."

"N'Gssasa g'wara," returned the chief, stopping and lowering his shield and spear in a bending posture until both lay flat along the ground. His dark eyes were fixed on the tatooed emblem, the replica of which showed on his own muscular forearm.

From left and right the other figures had now drawn up in almost a completed circle; all made the same genuflection in cadenced time. Drawing himself erect again, the chief, a strikingly handsome man, whose hair was black and wavy like spun silk, went on to speak in a long sentence, not a word of which Dallas understood. Then suddenly to his left another voice spoke up.

"Starehe, Bwana—master, be not afraid."

This time the language was Swahili. The words seemed to come from behind a big shield, over which extended one of the tall Bangwali spears, and the tip of feather head-dress. The point of the shield was dropped, and looking at him with greeting and almost affection in his eyes was Chula!

"You have come, Bwana. We are here." Chula still used the current tongue of the north country.

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"Njoo hapa," returned Dallas. "I would speak with thee. There is my camp the other side of the great woods; I must go there."

"No, the Bwana must come with us; it is the orders. We have been waiting."

"Whose orders, Chula?"

The little black placed his hand across his mouth as if to arrest a word, and then repeated: "The orders that are never changed, or disobeyed, Bwana; you must come."

Suddenly as if thinking that he might not be understood the little man dropped for the moment into native English.

"We saw this morning. From the earth you came. With a big bone you dug. We were there, Bwana—hid—but you did not see us. And near by lies big elephant and two dead men; one white, one black, slain by the brothers of the Bangwalis."

"Chula," returned Dallas, "we must bring out those bodies, and your men must take them to my camp. Come back with me."

"No, Bwana, it is well. That is hyena's work. We have the rifles that were dropped by the white men, and all the cartridges—but we speak too long. For your own safety you must come with us now."

He stopped talking and started retracing the way that Dallas had come. There was nothing to do but to follow and to put the best face on it he could. Dallas turned his head and looked at the magnificently built, but silent, men marching beside him. With a start he recognized that one of them carried his Ex-



“He pulled back his shirt sleeve and displayed the ‘totem’.”

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press rifle; another, that belonging to Frankel; a third man carried what had once been the latter's sporting Mauser, crushed and utterly ruined by the weight of great pounding feet.

He glanced again at the magnificent chieftain who strode along with the little Dorobo beside him; on the man's upper arm there gleamed a bright yellow circlet in the form of a snake, and at Chula's wizened elbow there was another. So Chula was a chief!

Dallas was doing a lot of thinking as he went along with his kindly captors. Where were they taking him? He recalled everything of Mr. Geibler's story, and piecing it together, a strange suspicion came to him, that grew as he thought it over.

He wanted to attract Chula's attention and to ask him just one question, but the little black man kept too far ahead, seeming to do this with an intention to avoid any further conversation. There was one thing that was reassuring: Dallas was certain that in the "frog man" he had a friend in camp. He was bound for the big adventure, and what lay before him he had not the least idea. Had it not been for the tragedy of the day before, and the uncertainty of getting word back to Prentice and Lindlay, he might not have minded so much. He was a prisoner, but evidently they intended him no harm. But the position that his old school chum and the New Brunswicker would find themselves in, caused him great anxiety. As long as they knew he was alive they would never desert him, but supposing that—he thrust the idea from him

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with an effort. He must get word to them somehow!

Once more he called to mind the main features of Geibler's story. How much of it was true? With a sickening of his heart he remembered that it was seven years before Friederich Gottlieb had managed to escape.

CHAPTER XIX

TOUCH AND GO

THE situation that confronted Prentice was one that would have tested the courage and capacity of a grown man of wide experience, and would have disheartened anyone who was not possessed of indomitable spirit and force of will. But Prentice, for a boy of seventeen, had been endowed by nature with many gifts that now served him in good stead. The first was constructive imagination, which is merely the power to plan and see ahead. The second was a dogged, persistent courage, aided by a sanguine temperament. Never in his life had he taken anything but the most hopeful view of matters. In the old football days, with the score against him, the next few minutes of play, in his mind, was going to be the minutes when his team would be in the lead again. The greater the odds, the harder he fought, the sharper he tackled. But it was never recklessness or wasted energy that he employed.

As he sat beside Lindlay's cot with his head in his hands he was thinking hard. The patient was a little bit better and was now in a deep sleep, but even with continued improvement it would be some days before he would be able to march again.

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The first thing to do was to keep down the feeling of alarm and fright that permeated the camp, and that might soon spread until it grew to terror and desertion. The Neopara was still loyal, but the extent of his loyalty remained to be proved. It was above all things necessary for Prentice, at least, to show an unruffled and undaunted front.

The black porters and bearers, as they sat chattering and muttering among themselves, were surprised to see their young master emerge from the tent, and calmly seating himself in one of the camp chairs, begin to adjust the largest camera as if preparing for more picture taking. A little later he was apparently having great fun with a young monkey that the men had caught in the edge of the forest. The rest of the afternoon he put in calmly reading a book.

If any one had looked over his shoulder, he would have perceived that it was the Swahili dictionary and grammar, and Prentice was studying harder than he had ever studied in his life. But no sign of anxiety did he allow to show on his face.

When the day was declining he called the head man, and, telling him he would be back by supper-time, he picked up a rifle and whistling for Jock, started off alone, the dog bounding joyfully at his heels. No sooner was he out of sight of the camp than he made a sprint for the edge of the forest.

When on the trail of the elephant Lindlay and he, after their descent into the deep gully, had passed completely through the narrow part of the thick woods until they had come to the edge of the meadow coun-

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try. It had taken them some time to reach it owing to the cautious way they had advanced, but now, unerringly and still at a dog trot, Prentice ran on. Only once was he undecided which turn to take, and then, as good fortune had it, he chose the proper one. In half a minute he had plunged down a steep bank and, with the vine tendrils snatching at him, kept on with unabated pace until he had reached a big dead stump that the Neopara had pointed out as one of the elephant's rubbing posts. Here he drew from his pocket something that shone yellow in the fading light. It was Dallas' watch and the compass, and attached to the end of the leather thong was a large gold medal that every one in the camp must have observed, as it generally hung free from the breast pocket of his chum's hunting jacket.

Figuring how long it had taken him to reach the spot, and, noticing that he had little time to spare if he wished to get back again before dark, he drew from a notebook a large sheet of paper, and with a couple of thorns tacked it securely against the old dead tree. Jock, who had been running about through the bushes, had disappeared from sight; Prentice whistled and there came a distant barking out in the meadow along the edge of the wood. Although generally independent, Jock served the master whom he had elected for the day with loyalty. But this time he refused to return in answer to the continued whistling, responding every now and then with a sharp, half whimpering signal of his whereabouts. There were no minutes to waste, but Prentice ran in the direction of the sound.

RIFLE AND CARAVAN

The ground was undulating, interspersed with bushes and covered with grass like a grazing pasture; everywhere there were scattered about the dusty, bare spots, as usual covered with the hoof prints of the antelope and gazelle. Jock was standing at the top of an incline, wriggling the whole after-portion of his anatomy in joyful encouragement as he saw Prentice approaching. When assured that the latter was really following, he gave a final bark and disappeared.

Prentice was so exhausted by this last run that he found it difficult to whistle, but, even if his breathless condition would have allowed him to do so, his powers might have failed him.

There in a sandy open space hardly larger than a billiard table he saw a sight that brought him up all standing.

Plain as the stamp of a die, he recognized the hob nails that were in the soles of the old pair of golf boots that Dallas had been wearing the day before. Examining it closely, the young hunter perceived that the footprints must have been made that morning, for no dew had fallen since they had been made. Here was something to go on; but time was pressing if he hoped to get back through the forest before darkness made the trail impassable, and return to camp he must! He whistled again for Jock, and then he saw the meaning of the dog's actions. He had been following Dallas' scent!

It was in the center of this very bare spot that the owner of the golf boots had stood when the warriors at respectful distance had surrounded him. If Pren-

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tice had gone on to the next bare place, he would have seen that the hob-nailed soles had been almost obliterated by the imprint of flat, bare feet.

The journey back to the west tested every ounce of vitality the boy possessed; his heart was almost bursting when at last he saw the gray light that lingers in the sky but a short time after the African sunset. No Shashi runner or Wahehe forest tracker could have made the time that the champion Marathon runner of St. Luke's had made. The big blaze in front of the camp showed him his way, and overhead the stars were just beginning to twinkle when leisurely he walked into the circle of the firelight.

That something had been doing during his absence a glance told him; the porters and all the blacks had gathered in front of the largest tent, where, half supporting himself by holding on to the flap, stood Lindlay and near him the Neopara. Now was the time for dissembling!

As if there was nothing unusual in his tardy appearance, Dallas walked up to Lindlay, handing the Neopara his rifle with a laugh. Often in times of panic the action of one man may quell the onswEEP of contagious fear. Lindlay showed in every feature his great relief, and the effect of Prentice's return on the Neopara was the same. The whole company was watching him as he drew forth a sheet of paper with writing on it, similar to the one he had posted on the dead acacia tree. His words were tense as he spoke to Lindlay, although still he smiled.

"You're better! Has the fever left you?"

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"Yes, I am better, but what has happened? These people are ready to desert."

"I don't know," returned Prentice hastily, "but we must keep together. Dallas is all right, but something must have happened to Frankel. They are on the other side of the woods. Back me up; don't appear alarmed. I'm going to talk to them."

Besides being the champion half-back and the fastest runner that St. Luke's had known, Prentice had won the school prize for oratory and led in the performances of the dramatic association. He turned to the Neopara and pointed to the paper in his hand. As the knowledge of navigation lifted a ship's officer, in the old sailing days, to a high and mysterious level above that of the ignorant foremast hand, so the simplest matter of education—the knowledge of reading and writing—to a savage mind, contains a supernatural gift. Most of the men understood Swahili, but some of them were southern Bantus, whose language differed not a little.

"Translate what I am going to say," Prentice whispered to the head man, at the same time stepping nearer the fire so as to be in full view.

He began his harangue. He told them that the spirits of the forest, if they were there, were most friendly spirits, that the "talking paper" he held in his hand was from the young master with the light colored, curly hair. That all was well with him, and that he wished the camp to follow on the following day.

Looking at the surrounding ring of shining eyes

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and almost brutal faces, Prentice asked them if they were men or women, whether they had courage in their hearts, or were only fit to pound meal or weave baskets? Were they too timid or too aged to do men's work? If so, he wished to see no more of them, and all that were afraid could go back on the morrow. He would give them "posho" for the journey and they could start at daybreak, but never could they call themselves men again.

He stopped in the middle of his talk and drew out Dallas' watch; instead of having been left hanging against the tent pole, it had slipped into the folds of a blanket, where Prentice had found it. The men all recognized the charm; pointing to the compass with convincing mendacity, Prentice spoke on.

"Bwana Chui sent this back to guide us and as a present to Molohafi."

With that he handed the timepiece to the head man, who, proud and delighted and now convinced himself, held it aloft in the firelight as with a sweeping gesture he translated what had been spoken.

The Neopara, Molohafi, seemed to have caught the spirit of the speech. As Prentice rolled forth his periods the head man turned them into booming syllables and guttural exclamations. But the gist of the talk was understood without translation. When he had finished a big black stepped forward and addressed the head man.

"Tell the white master that we will go. Tell him to fear not."

With that the blacks went slowly to their quarters.

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Well did most of them know that, without the white men and their rifles to protect them and to get them meat, the journey to the lake country would be more than hazardous.

Prentice was trembling with excitement as he approached Lindlay, who had seated himself in the camp chair.

"I couldn't understand," said the big man faintly, "but I kept on grinning. What has happened?"

"I don't know," said Prentice.

"Where are they?"

"I can't answer that, but I found Dallas' footprints; maybe he is lost and Frankel is looking for him, or maybe——" He stopped again and thrust aside the discouraging thought. "We'll find them," he went on, "we'll find them."

"What are you going to do?" asked Lindlay, who had surrendered the complete control of affairs to the boy.

"If you're able to travel on the morrow, we'll start early and cross the forest."

"Did Jock come back with you?"

"No, Jock is hot on the trail. Come into the tent and I'll tell you all about it and my plan. I told them that Jock had joined his master, and I'll bet a dollar that from the rate he was going when I last saw him that he's with him now."

CHAPTER XX

LOMBIKI

IT taxed all of Dallas' walking powers to keep pace with the silent and swiftly moving company; although he stood nearly six feet, with the exception of Chula, every one of the Bangwalis was two or three inches taller. The head chief looked almost as big as Lindlay. After three hours' going without a halt or rest, at a sign from the leader each man threw himself flat upon the ground in the shade of a tree and rested, pillowing his head on his forearm and covering his body with his shield. They kept a respectful distance from where he had seated himself, and at first the prisoner thought that they slept, but when he looked closely he perceived that almost every eye was on him; to have slept in his presence would have been the height of disrespect. Dallas now hoped for a talk with Chula, but nowhere around the ring could he discern the little man's familiar features. During the remainder of the march, which was resumed in about half an hour, nothing was to be seen of him. The truth was he had gone on ahead.

Thirst and hunger were beginning to tell on Dallas now; he had had nothing to eat since the previous morning and the exertion in the hot sun showed its

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effect in an increasing heaviness of foot and head. In order to divert himself he carefully studied the shields and accoutrements of the nearest warriors; each carried a short and heavy sword, or panga, in a leather sheath; they were shaped differently from any that the boy remembered to have seen before. They were much like the old Roman "cut and thrust" short sword, the same width throughout and coming to a sharp-angled, keen-edged point. The knives, or daggers, were of an entirely different design—leaf-shaped, ending with a slight curve like a bowie knife. The shields were beautifully made of plaited wicker-work covered with raw hide, on which the talisman had been painted with great skill. As Geibler had described them, most of the men had their teeth filed to sharp points, all except those in feather head-dress, whose gleaming ivories would have done credit to a dentist's window.

While the company had been resting one of them had yawned, and with a shudder Dallas noticed that the man had but the rudiment of a tongue left! He wondered at a people who would submit to such mutilation, but it was no stranger than other disfiguring tribal marks that he had seen already. Customs that cannot be explained hold stronger sway with the African than with any other race of people in the world.

When he thought he could withstand the fatigue no longer, a cry sounded ahead. It was the same call that had greeted Dallas' ear when the warriors had stepped forth from their concealment in the morning. Within a mile a fresh band of warriors met the party;

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there were nearly fifty of them—the detachment with which the boy had been traveling numbered twenty-five. The big chief, who had been leading, greeted one of the approaching warriors with a quick military salute, to which the other, a rather slender but strongly built young fellow of not more than twenty-two, replied in kind. This young man's face was intelligent and his features aquiline, with delicately chiseled lips and nostrils; his long, silky hair fell almost to his shoulders. The feathers of his head-dress stood up from a narrow metal band; it was gold, like the heavy twined serpent around his upper arm. He was not barefooted like the others, but wore well-made leather sandals that had protection for their heel and toes like those seen in pieces of ancient sculpture. After the short conversation the young man came nearer; bending on one knee, gracefully trailing his spear and shield that he held in one hand, he extended the other. Taking Dallas' palm, he placed it to his forehead. The other warriors who accompanied him made the same low obeisance in dead silence.

Rather embarrassed, Dallas raised the young man to his feet, at which he, seemingly pleased, brought Dallas' wrist in contact with his own and stepped back slowly with a smile. He had made the ceremonial sign of blood-brotherhood. A few hundred paces further on Dallas saw, with surprise, a large and well-constructed camp, with huts made from branches of trees, laid out in two straight lines like military tents. The band had been there but a short time, for the leaves and the branches were still green and fresh.

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Before each hut stood two or three carrier's baskets made of wicker-work, cleverly arranged with straps to fit on a man's shoulders. Some were empty and others filled with laced bags made of antelope hide. The tempting odor of cooking meat wafted to Dallas' nostrils. The carcass of a freshly dressed Kongoni buck lay on the ground and, most surprising sight of all, nearby was the body of a full-grown, black-maned lion, dispatched single-handed, as he afterward learned, that very morning by the tall youth with only his spear and sword for weapons.

Making a sign that he was thirsty, there was brought to the prisoner a gourd filled with water, from which, after he had refreshed himself, the young paramount chief of the party, with a smile and a wave as if he were wishing a good-health, drank also in his turn.

"Dombala," said he, his voice showing little of the African guttural, "Dombala Lo Molombiki."

To his delight, Dallas now got a glimpse of Chula emerging from one of the larger huts; he beckoned to him and the little black without hesitation came forward.

"Chula, what are they going to do with me?"

"You are going to the great Chief Molo Nogli, who expects you. These men were sent to bring you there."

"To bring me?"

"Yes, Bwana. They will not return without you—their lives would pay. You will have to come."

"Chula, you'll have to take a message to my camp."

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Dallas in his eagerness had almost grasped him by the shoulders.

"Say nothing of your camp. Let them go back. Is Lagishu, the big man, there? And the little one?"

"Yes."

The Dorobo made a gesture of doubt. "I do not know what Nogli would do," he said. "Did Molombiki send them, too? You are a blood-brother of the Bangwalis—that I know. Are they?"

"The Lagishu is my brother, and the little master who moves so quickly is another. He has the same mark on his arm that I have."

Dallas drew up his wrist band and the man's eyes were fixed on it as he replied:

"Labda!—We must wait, Bwana. And my name here is not Chula; it is N'Moki—'The Tireless.' To-day the chiefs hold council to see what is to be done with the two others."

"What others, N'Moki?" Dallas gasped.

"The white men who followed you from Mwanza. Nogli is expecting only one from Molombiki. It might be death if they should come with you."

"Who are they, N'Moki?"

"The Bwana does not know?" Chula's surprise appeared to be genuine as he asked the question, and it was at this instant that Dallas' mind jumped to its sure conclusion.

"Hodi! They are here," said Chula, suddenly breaking the silence. "Sema, ku. They will tell you."

Looking over N'Moki's head, Dallas saw approaching the short, thick-set figure of Geibler, the trader,

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and with him a taller and younger man with a close-cropped yellow beard. Walking beside them was the handsome young chief.

"Who is that Neopara—the tall, young Bangwali?" asked Dallas in a whisper.

"It is Nolana, son of Nogli, the one he sent to greet you."

"And the other? The big white man?"

"Manna, the friend of Geibla. They were forbidden to return. They will never cross the great swamp land again."

The trader and his companion were now within speaking distance. The former grinned sheepishly.

"Well, well, my young friend!" he cried, "so we have found you at last, and under strange circumstances."

"What are you doing here?" asked Dallas, coldly, folding his arms and not offering to shake the German's extended hand—an attitude that the young chief noticed with apparent pleasure.

"We are prisoners, the same as you are," replied the trader, somewhat discomforted, "but first let me introduce my friend, Heinrich Mann. We were compelled to join forces. Is it not so, friend Heinrich, that we have made up our differences?"

The big German assented. "To quarrel at all was foolish. But now let us sit down and talk, for there is much to tell and to be explained."

Following the example of the other two, Dallas seated himself on the ground facing them. His mind was fully made up on one point—the presence of the

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Bangwalis, his being followed and his final capture were part of a plot in which these two had figured. His first question showed his suspicion.

"Where are my two friends?" he asked. "Tell me."

Geibler shrugged his shoulders. "I do not know," he said. "How should we? Frankel is able to take care of them. It is ourselves that we are concerned about."

"Frankel is dead," answered Dallas.

"Dead!" exclaimed both Germans together, genuine surprise and consternation in their voices.

"Yes! Killed by the elephants. You must have known it."

"But we did not," answered Geibler. "How should we?" His concern at the news was unmistakable. "When did it happen?" he faltered.

"Yesterday afternoon. His body lies back there in the forest. These people had found it before they took me prisoner."

"Let me begin and explain," interrupted the German, "for it is necessary that you understand matters." He glanced sideways at Mann, whose eyes were fixed on the ground, and began talking hurriedly. "Only a short time after you had left who should appear at Mwanza but N'Moki—Chula as you call him. It was most important news that he brought. The first was that the great swamp was nearly dry, and it would be easy to pass through it. The second was that he had met a party of his own tribe and had told them that Molombiki, our friend Gottlieb, the brother of the King, had sent his son, who was on his way to

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them. He had come back to guide you to this place, where an escort of soldiers would be sent to take you across the swamp to Bangwaliland. Hastily as I could I organized a small safari to follow yours and warn you, for I knew that it was in this vicinity that Frankel had intended to hunt elephant. Fearing to go alone and that my strength would give out, for it is a long time since I've been away from the settlement, I appealed to my friend, Heinrich Mann, for assistance. Like a good fellow, he volunteered to go with me. The day before yesterday we must have been in the vicinity of your camp, although we did not know it, and yesterday afternoon we heard shooting and what appeared to be signal shots; we were hurrying in their direction when we found that we were surrounded by warriors of the 'Elephant Brethren' tribe, who made us prisoners. They——"

"And where was Chu—N'Moki all this time?" Dallas asked, concealing his incredulity.

"He was with us," returned Geibler. "We were forced to deceive him by telling him——"

"Mr. Geibler," interrupted Dallas, "I will not begin by asking your pardon, but you are not telling the truth. You knew where we were going; in fact, you appointed the meeting place and told Frankel to bring us here. You were disappointed at our refusal to embark in this enterprise with you and determined to put it through at all hazards. Perhaps now if you tell the truth, we will see what can be done."

The discomfited German seemed at a loss for a reply; it was the big man with the light beard who

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answered for him, but his words at first were not directed to the American, but to his companion.

"Truth was the best; I told you. My young friend, you were right. Only let me assure you of one thing. Frankel knew nothing of it. He never believed in the Bangwalis and was one of those who laughed at our story. We wished to convince him also, and when once convinced he would be a good man to have with us. Only this much he understood; that we were to join you at 'the tail of the kite,' which is this part of the great forest, and that we would hunt elephant together. If he kept you here 'til we appeared he was to have a share in all our trading, and we expected to get much ivory. Do not suspect the dead; he had nothing to do with it."

Mann was not lying, Dallas decided at once. Geibler, who still sat shamefacedly beside him, now spoke up.

"You were our only chance to get into touch with these people again," he said, "without a big expedition which would mean a war, and that the government would not permit. We meant no harm to you. Friedrich Gottlieb intended to lead you into the venture, if you cared to embark in it, and we only meant to lead you still further."

"Until we could not get out of it, you mean," said Dallas, angrily. "But now one question: When did you first meet Nolana and his men?"

"The day before yesterday, late in the afternoon," replied Mann. "It was on the other side of the forest—to the west; we had shot a hartebeest, and they

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came out of the forest and took us. They had been waiting here two days."

"Where is the rest of your safari?" Dallas asked. "Your porters and bearers?"

A frightened look came over the faces of the two seated before him.

"Ask the Bangwali," replied Geibler.

The big German made a motion with the side of his hand across his throat. "Not one of them lives," he said shortly.

"And that's what would happen to all of our camp men, too?" Dallas felt half sickened as he spoke.

"They are but natives," responded Mann bluntly.

"And you knew they would be killed?"

"We hoped to have saved them—to have sent them back."

"But, knowing that there was a chance of it, you risked it?" Dallas' anger was rising.

"Yes, we risked it; they were but natives."

It was with difficulty now that the young American controlled himself. He was not used to this utter disregard of human life. He remembered distinctly the single shot they had heard when Prentice and he were out with their camera, snapping the giraffes. It was a narrow escape that his own camp must have had, for after the story he had listened to he doubted that even he could have saved the lives of his black followers.

While all this conversation had been taking place the handsome young chief and Chula had been standing watching intently just out of earshot. Dallas' at-

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itude had meant much to Nolana. He had observed the anger showing in his young blood-brother's face. Dallas' whole manner had surprised even himself. He seemed to be no longer a boy but an inquisitor—a judge and cross-examiner in one. Mann had been surprised from the very first, for from what Geibler had told him he had expected to meet an inexperienced lad who would bend his will to theirs and whom they could use as an instrument—a safe passport to the forbidden land.

But he was to be still further surprised before he had done. It was necessary for Dallas to find out the exact state of affairs, for his mind had begun to plan a long way ahead, and he must feel assured of his ground.

"Yesterday," said he, "at the time of the elephants' stampede, or shortly afterward, I fell into an old native pit which had been dug for a trap. Not knowing that Frankel had been killed, I kept firing my rifle."

"We were coming to you," put in Mann.

"And you found out where I was?—Whose hand was it I saw pulling aside the vines that covered the place where I had fallen through?"

"Mine," returned Mann.

"And why did you not answer when I called?"

"We could not," replied the German. Again he drew his hand across his throat. "It would have been death. The Bangwalis allow no one to open their lips when in the forest. They must communicate only by signs. If a man speaks after the sun has passed the high noon, he offends the Lombiki; he has committed

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sacrilege and must be killed, even by his brother, if he should be with him."

"Why did you not help me out, then?" Dallas was doubting again now whether he was listening to the truth, but the earnestness of Geibler, who now joined in, convinced him.

"The Bangwalis dragged us away; they had found the dead elephant. To kill one is a crime against their law, for the spirits of their princes and their great men enter into elephants when they die. The smaller chiefs turn into buffalo, and the common people into snakes. For how long, no one can tell, that's been their religion; but let me continue: When we got out into the open where we could talk, I told them who it was in the pit. That it was you. I appealed to their love of the supernatural and told them that the dead elephant had been guarding you when he had died."

"How did they think I got there?" asked Dallas incredulously.

"Molombiki," responded Mann. "Gottlieb, they believed, could hold converse with the unseen. You, they think, have come back to them from another world."

Things were beginning to be easier to be understood. The Bangwali had gone back to the spot at daylight and had been standing about in silence when he had dug himself to freedom with the big bone.

"Where is your camp?" asked Geibler.

"The other side of the forest," Dallas returned. "The Bangwali must not find it."

"They are moving from here to-morrow through the great swamp," Geibler said.

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"I will do my best to hurry them."

As he spoke these words the desperate situation in which he himself was placed dawned forcibly on Dallas' mind. The terrible fate of Geibler's party and the danger that yet hung over the heads of the two white men urged but one line of action upon him. He must save their lives if he could and prevent the Bangwalis from finding his own camp. He was thinking out how best it could be done when Mann interrupted the silence.

"We are in your hands, my young friend," he said. "Anything that you might say or should wish would have the greatest influence. The chiefs are to hold council after sundown! we will know our fate before the night." He turned to Geibler and spoke bitterly. "It was best to have told the truth from the beginning; if you had done so——"

Geibler broke in angrily. "I did the best I could," he cried. "No one would have listened to your propositions; they were foolish."

Dallas stopped the quarrel. "Whatever either of you proposed or intended, it makes no matter. You have made a nice mess of it. But now listen to my plan. I intend to ask the chief's son, who is in command here, to let you go free. Our camp is some twenty-five miles from here, two miles to the west of the forest; you can easily find it. Tell them what has happened, but see that they do not follow. I will have to work out my own salvation. I can see that the Bangwalis intend me no harm. I shall urge that we start across the swamp immediately."

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"You'll see many wonders," put in Mann.

"You must find out where the gold comes from and where they keep their stores of ivory," Geibler suggested eagerly. "If Gottlieb had stayed longer, he would have found out the secret."

It was with difficulty that Dallas could keep his voice from rising with anger. "I don't care for the gold or the ivory," he said contemptuously. "My only idea is to save your lives and those of my two friends. Go back to the Lake, all of you, and wait till you hear from me. If N'Moki could return in safety once, he can do it again. This is the best way out of the trouble. It was an unlucky day for us that we ever met you, or heard of Friederich Gottlieb. You have succeeded in trapping us, only thinking of your gold and your ivory. You intended to make a cat's-paw of me. Where are the records and the talking-machine?"

"They are here. We have brought them to you," said Geibler.

"I thought as much," Dallas returned.

The tall, young chief and Chula, who shall hereafter be referred to by his proper name of N'Moki, now drew near. The little Dorobo acted as spokesman and, addressing Dallas in Swahili, said quietly: "Food is ready. Will the Bwana eat? The Bangwalis never touch meat after sundown and the hour is approaching."

A number of fires had been lit before the huts, and, standing about like soldiers at attention, were the silent warriors, waiting the signal to attack the savory steaks frying in well-fashioned iron skillets. Round cakes

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made of native meal were baking in holes in the ground, heated by glowing embers. But none of the men could touch a morsel of food until the chiefs, who dine apart, had set the example.

Nolana, motioning for Dallas to precede him, pointed the way to a freshly-built bough house. Mann and Geibler were about to follow, when the young chief stopped them, speaking to two tall tribesmen carrying swords and spears; the two plotters were led off in an opposite direction.

Dallas had eaten his well-cooked meal alone. He had hardly seen the face of the warrior servant who had brought him his food, the man concealing his features, when in his presence, by spreading out the palm of his hand. When he had finished the prisoner had looked down the line of leafy huts. Seated around the largest fire were six or eight of the "men with tongues," evidently engaged in weighty conversation. As each man spoke he would rise from his crossed-legged, squatting position to his knees, and occasionally to his feet. There seemed to be some parliamentary order, and Nolana was presiding officer. He clapped his hands as each man rose and as he finished his harangue.

The servant had deposited in the corner of the little bower a soft skin for a sleeping rug, but Dallas had no inclination for slumber. He knew now that the lives of the two white men hung in the balance, and that he might be powerless to save them, and if Geibler and Mann were sacrificed against his wishes, how possibly could he save Lindlay and his own people?

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He did not doubt, if Prentice were captured, his life might be spared, owing to the talisman; but, then, who would ever know of the fate that had befallen him and his chum? He must sacrifice himself with seeming willingness in order to save the rest. There was always the possibility of escape or rescue, and he was young.

The thought of escape involuntarily caused him to cast a glance around him to see if he was guarded.

The hut he occupied stood back a little from the others; no one was watching it. Curiosity tempted him to walk to one side. The moon was rising, the full African moon that makes everything light as day; even the green of the grass and bushes showed plainly, while the dark forest looked like a wall overgrown with ivy. So far as he could see, no sentries were in sight, and, apparently unobserved, he walked to the back of the hut and stood there. A sudden thought tempted him—to make a run for the forest and seek a hiding place—but the suggestion lived only for an instant. Before him lay the unknown; he would have to face it bravely.

As he stood there a small object darted from behind a bush and came straight toward him. An instant later he was crouching with Jock's forelegs on his shoulders; his arms were about the dog's wriggling body. The terrier did not bark or whine; although evidently tired, his whole intent seemed to be to force himself deeper into the embrace of Dallas' arms.

What must have taken place came to the boy in a flash! The dog had followed his trail, and Lindlay

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and Prentice could not be far behind him. Instantly Dallas bethought himself.

"Lie down, Jock," he said. "Be still."

While the dog, obeying, lay at his feet, Dallas drew forth the worn notebook that he always carried. Hastily he scribbled some words with a lead pencil, and, tearing off the elastic band that kept the pages together, he twisted the missive around Jock's collar and made it fast.

"Go back, Jock!" he ordered in a loud whisper, pointing in the direction from which the dog had come. "Go back! Do you hear me?"

Surprised at the tone, Jock hesitated. But he could not mistake the intent of the order. With every sign of the home-sent dog, he slunk away. Dallas' heart gave a bound of rejoicing—the warning had been sent! But on looking around him he hardly could control an exclamation. To the right and left, standing breast high above the bushes that surrounded the open spot were a half score of tall spearsmen, while behind him at the corner of the hut stood Nolana and "The Tireless One." He turned to them. With the same salute that he had been greeted with that afternoon, they each sank down on one knee.

"Oh, son of Molombiki," said N'Moki, "truly thou art great! Even do the beasts talk with thee, and the jackals are thy friends."

In the little man's eyes there gleamed a twinkle of understanding; it was as if he had said, "Don't fear; I know everything." At Nairobi and on the trip from there to Mwanza he must have seen Jock a hun-

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dred times, and that he had recognized him Dallas had not the slightest doubt. In the young Bangwali's eyes, however, there dwelt a look of worshipful awe. Truly this was the son of Molombiki, who could foretell the storms and who had prophesied the day when the sun would be eaten up at high noon!

As Dallas came nearer the young prince would have remained in his kneeling posture, but the white boy raised him, and this time it was he who made the sign of brotherhood.

In his low musical voice Nolana began to speak, N'Moki turning his words into Swahili.

"What shall be done with Geibla and Manna?" he asked. "Do you wish them to come with you? They were forbidden to return and Nogli might be angry. Or shall we kill them here?"

"Let them be sent back," said Dallas, "with food sufficient for their journey through the forest; let them be sent back at dawn." And then he added, "Let us move quickly over the swamp land, for I am anxious that my eyes shall see my other father—the one who calls thee son," he added, turning to Nolana.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WARNING

PRENTICE dreamed that night that he was once more cruising up the sunlit Sound in the *End Rush*. Dallas and he were trolling for blue-fish, but as fast as they would get one up to the side the fish would break away. At last he landed one on deck that twisted the line around his legs and jumped about in such a lively fashion that he could not lay hold on him; and then it seemed he tripped on the companionway, whereupon the big fish landed on top of him and was bent on trying to bite his nose off.

He awoke to find himself on the ground beside the cot, his feet tangled in his blanket and Jock licking at his face. It was broad daylight; the sun must have been up some hours; it was close and hot. No one had called as usual to awaken him and Prentice was a heavy sleeper in the morning.

His first idea was to shout to Lindlay, who lay on the other side of the tent, and tell him of Jock's arrival, but he desisted when he saw that the great broad chest was heaving regularly and that, bathed in a deep perspiration, Lindlay was asleep and sweating off the fever. Jock was endeavoring to talk, if ever a dog did so. When Prentice at last caught hold

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of him and got him quieted the poor beast lay down on his side, his muscular legs quivering from their very weariness and his eyes rolling up as if he was trying to say, "I am bringing a message; don't you see it? It's on my collar; look at it."

"Did you find him, Jock?" Prentice asked as if the dog could really understand. And then his eyes fell on the bit of twisted paper. With trembling fingers he tore it off and unfolded it.

Dear Prent: [it began] Jock found me. I send him back to warn you. Frankel is dead, killed by the elephants. I am captured by the Bangwalis who are this side the swamp. Do not attempt to follow. It would not be safe. They will do me no harm but they will kill all of our black men. Geibler and Mann are here as prisoners. They plotted to lead us here and join us at this point. Chula is here; he was to bring on the Bangwalis to meet our party and theirs. Remain where you are until Geibler and Mann join you. They are not allowed to go with me and will explain all. Go back to Mwanza and wait.

That was all. It bore a wiggle at the end that had always stood for Dallas' signature.

Here was a kettle of fish! Another responsibility was thrust on him—but he began to see things clearly. It had all been a put-up job! First delaying them so long at Mwanza and then sending them to this particular spot, where Chula was to bring the Bangwalis. What was he to do? Dallas had cautioned him to wait and ordered him not to follow. The first seemed the proper thing to do in view of the fact that he

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might soon be joined by two experienced white men whose advice, let alone whose explanation of the state of affairs, was absolutely necessary. As to following, even if it involved every danger, that he determined on. Never would he return alone to face Mrs. Rathbone.

He could answer for Lindlay; if he was able to travel, it would not be homeward while there was the slightest chance of rescuing his young friend from captivity. He must wake him and tell him the whole situation, but whether to let the Neopara into the secret at once Prentice could not decide. He turned his head toward the entrance of the tent and noticed that the flaps had not been drawn back. Quickly he crossed and pushed through into the open air. Not a soul was in sight! There was not the smoke of a fire to greet him. With a sick and gone feeling in the pit of his stomach, Prentice saw further that the tents where the porters slept were gone.

"Deserted!" he exclaimed. "The cowards! The cowards!"

In an instant he had awakened Lindlay, who, to his joy, tossed himself from under the blanket and appeared strong and steady on his feet.

"They have left us," cried Prentice. "We're all alone."

"What? After that beautiful speech of yours!" exclaimed Lindlay. "I don't believe it—come outside and give a shout."

Suiting the action to the word, he rushed into the open air and let a bellow from his lungs that would

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have done credit to one of the great cats, against whom he had sworn eternal warfare.

"There, you see," he cried, "here they come."

Yes, the cry had been answered, and approaching the two anxious watchers saw Molohafi, followed by four other tired and dejected figures. The head man began to talk in a rapid, disconnected manner when afar off.

"These are all that remained faithful, master," he cried. "The rest began to go soon after the moon rose, and thus got a long start. These men slept together; they are of one tribe and always kept apart from the others. With them I started out at daylight to try to bring the others back. But they will not come, Bwana—we, too, must return."

"Why did you not awaken me, Molohafi?" Prentice asked.

"The young master was tired. He would sleep. I shouted and called you, but you would not answer. So I started alone with these faithful ones. Now I beg that we follow and shoot the others, one by one. We will be all who will return. They are cowards who do not deserve to get back to their people. They have taken with them nearly all our posho for their journey. What shall we do?"

"We shall wait here," Prentice returned, "until the arrival of Bwana Geibler and Bwana Mann. They are in the neighborhood and are coming—then we will decide what to do."

"And what of 'Molochui' and 'MoloFrankli.' What of them?"

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"We will wait till the others come. They have seen them and have joined their party. Now prepare us some breakfast."

Motioning Lindlay to follow, Prentice re-entered the tent, where he handed him Dallas' note. He had not dared to tell the Neopara the truth. The big man's comment was characteristic. "He can't lose us like that," he said. "I'm able to travel now, and we must follow him."

"I can never go back without him, Lindlay."

"And no more we will," exclaimed the New Brunswick, slamming one big fist into the hollow of the other. "But I'd like to get a crack at that Dutchman who got us into all this. I never liked his ugly face, anyhow. Wait till I see him again."

* * * * *

Thankful to escape with their lives, Geibler and Mann had been ushered out of camp at daylight. Affairs had turned out differently from what they had expected, and yet part of the plot had worked to perfection. Dallas had been taken.

It had been their intention to lead the elder boy into such a position that he would be captured by Nogli's men. Chula, in the interview Geibler had held with him in Mwanza, had been told to bring back with him—if it were possible to get through the swamp—a small party. They had not expected such an army. Now, however, they knew that when the facts were made known of the young American's capture, large sums of money would be at their disposal and it would

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not be difficult to organize an expedition to rescue him. He was of more importance than any ordinary trader.

They had held a short interview with Dallas before starting that morning, and he had told them the best way to reach the camp; by skirting the woods to the southward some eighteen or twenty miles and then turning direct to the west, they would pass through the forest at its narrowing point.

By noon they had reached the place of Dallas' capture; going a mile or so further on and observing an old elephant trail that made an entrance into the woods, they turned in that direction. Something white on a tall bare stump attracted their attention. It was the note that Prentice had written that purported to be a message from his missing chum!

In order to show something, Prentice had scribbled on the page of the drawing pad the first sentences that had come to his mind, and, owing to his disposition and his tendency to encourage even himself, he had written as follows:

Everything is all right. Follow to the north and you will find our camp. Fire a gun every few minutes and listen for our reply.

Prentice had not noticed that the sheet of paper that he had made use of had been once used before by him back at Mwanza. During an idle hour he had amused himself and Dallas by drawing an imaginary picture of a Bangwali warrior from Mr. Geibler's description.

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He had also outlined a fanciful map of Bangwaliland, with points marked "gold here," "stores of ivory found," "Molombiki's house," "the palace arranged for our reception," etc.

The two traders pored over the missive and the drawings together.

"He was lying to us when he accused *us* of lying," said Geibler. "Frankel is alive. They had met the war party before and knew that we were coming. Their camp is not to the westward at all. They are probably by this time through the forest and have joined their party with the Bangwalis."

"What shall we do?" asked Mann. "Wait here for them?"

"No," returned Geibler, "we would wait here forever. It is a long trip back to the Lake, with nothing but meat to eat. Let us take after them. If he could save their lives so easily, he can do the same for us again."

Putting the paper in his pocket, Geibler led the way back to the north, and reluctantly Mann followed in his footsteps.

CHAPTER XXII

OF THE BLOOD ROYAL

ON the lower slope of the mountain whose sharp escarpment rose against the sky, a race of people whose name had passed out of all tradition had erected their ancient capitol. In ages past, shattered as if by a mighty earthquake, most of the original buildings had been leveled to the ground, but out of the débris the better preserved ruins had been rebuilt. The largest was now the royal residence, where dwelt the Bangwali sovereigns; four huge stone wings extended from the corners of the massive palace like the arms of a Maltese cross. A high stone wall over a half mile in circumference enclosed the inner fortress. With this stone circle as the hub, there radiated in all directions lines of well-built native houses, constructed for the most part of reeds and woven grass; many of the larger ones had stone foundations, showing that more permanent residences had once occupied these same positions. The present dwellers had accurately followed the plan of the original city. The rows of dome-shaped huts that were separated by wide, neatly kept streets did not straggle out into the surrounding meadowland, but were encircled in their turn by another stone wall some twelve

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feet high, with towers pierced for archers guarding each side of the four main gateways.

No mortar had been used in any of the construction; the volcanic stone had been roughly hewn to shape—an art lost to the present inhabitants, who had, in their restoring, but fitted the odd pieces together as children make use of building blocks. Such was Manaera, King Nogli's stronghold, that between its aged walls held some seven or eight thousand souls.

It was a wonderfully beautiful country that lay outside. Rich meadows and sloping pastures, dotted here and there by clumps of shade trees, fed herds of African broad-horned cattle and countless numbers of sheep and goats. Not far away were other smaller towns, all built like the first, amid century-old ruins. Beyond the little valley, where the mountain slopes ended, rose gently undulating hills, that stretched to the westward, and through them flowed the clear waters of "Korosani," the mysterious, that never ran dry, or never during the rainiest season flooded its smooth, green banks. Not a score of miles to the north the stream made an abrupt angle to the eastward between two rocky ridges, whose enfolding sides grew steeper and steeper until the slowly moving current was imprisoned at the bottom of a narrow canyon into which the sun had never shone. Black as a stream of ink, in the dimly percolating light, the river, whose name meant "life blood," issued from the mountain side through a jagged opening—"N'Landa," or "the wound." And here, if one stood and listened, could be heard a thundering, pulsating sound, like the

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rush and whirl of some great machine at work for all eternity; a throbbing organ note of falling waters that never would be stilled. It was "Boromi," the "great heart that beats forever."

Always in the early morning and in the evening, when the wind was still, there drifted around the points of the escarpment, especially encircling one sharp, jagged peak, a misty, filmy cloud; when the storms came lightning flashed and played through it incessantly, and the cloud was called "Lanwaro-Saniambi," or "the crown of white feathers." Beneath it, lying like a dark emerald in an onyx bowl, were the bubbling waters of "Itanzu," "the source," that none but royal eyes had seen since King Nogli's forefathers had come from the other land whose name they had forgotten.

In the open, sun-baked courtyard that fronted the entrance to the palace of the King, or Sultan, as the white men might have called him, if he had lived within their jurisdiction, a number of almost naked figures, whose bronze-brown skins shone in the sunlight, were playing at a proper game for young men and would-be warriors to play, as it required strength and agility, unconscious co-ordination of hand and foot and eye and high qualities of nerve and courage.

Through a hoop made of twisted withes set up on poles some ten feet from the ground, it was the object of the opposing parties to hurl a long and heavy spear. As each man advanced in turn to a cadenced hand-clapping and a low intoned chorus, he called aloud: "Hola!" The reply to the challenging cry was "Holi!"

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and was the signal that all was ready. The instant after the spear was launched, and just as it went through the circle, the young warrior who had accepted the challenge jumped from the ground and caught the hurtling shaft with his right hand. Twirling it above his head, he shouted in his turn and threw it back at the opposite target, where it was caught and once more returned. Should the spear touch the ground, the side of the one who failed to catch it was scored against; should the circle be missed entirely the point was made against the thrower. The spear that they were using on this occasion weighed almost seven pounds and was tipped with a round bar of iron, but when the game was played between two rival villages or sections for almost a third of its length it had a long, keen blade, with edges sharp as a surgeon's knife. This added the spice of danger and lent to the excitement. The fact that many of the players' hands were scarred and one or two had lost a finger, was evidence of this.

"Hola!" shouted a sinewy young warrior, advancing with poised shoulders and back-sweeping arm.

"Holi!" cried a fresh, young voice in answer. As the quivering weapon came flying through the air a lithe, young figure leaped forward—a player whose skin, instead of being of the bronze-brown color was darkened only by exposure to the sun. There was no tropical pigment in his blood. His curling hair flashed like gold in the bright light. Many times when "playing up" between second and third base had he stabbed one-handed at a hard hit ball and raked it

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down. The practice had stood him in good stead in the game of "Hola-Holi." As if the emblem that was tattooed on his forearm really vouchsafed his blood-brotherhood, he had taken to it. His costume, or the lack of it, was the same as the other players, except that he wore what was left of a pair of khaki knee-breeches. Accurately he caught the shaft and, although the weight and speed with which it was traveling almost threw him off his balance, he landed on his feet and let fly the heavy javelin. Here again his practice had helped him. One of the masters of St. Luke's, a young German, had won the javelin throwing contest at the Olympiad and had introduced it and discus-throwing also in the school sports; and the boy who had played since his third form year on every school team had soon excelled.

It was six months since Dallas Rathbone had parted with Prentice and Lindlay at the edge of the haunted forest—six months so full of wonderful experiences that they seemed like crowded years. Although virtually a prisoner, he was not treated in any way as such. One thing had struck him forcibly before he had been the guest of his blood-brothers a single week: they were every inch gentlemen whose code of honor, whatever their customs might be, was as exacting as if they had been tutored in all the written and unwritten laws of civilization.

Truth was a fetish; courtesy marked their daily dealings; dishonesty was abhorred; theft was practically unknown—to take what did not belong to one was punishable by death. They were not a gay peo-

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ple, but they were happy—this remnant of some strange and past great race. Boisterous laughter was never heard; as the men grew older they cultivated a dignity of bearing that almost suggested stiffness, and one thing was noticeable—there were no very aged or decrepit of either sex to be seen. The wherefore of this the guest had learned when he had been but a few weeks in Manaera.

On the hillside above the town stood what appeared to be a thick clump of dense wood; well-trodden paths led to it through the pasture land. At its further edge, where it seemed to press against the palisade-like wall of the escarpment, rose at times a thin, white vapor much like the "crown of white feathers" that encircled the tall peak. If the footprints that made the paths had been visible, it would have been noticed that they were all turned in one direction—all were going; none returning. Cheerfully, when age brought on infirmities, and the limbs, or the eyes, or functions refused to do their duty, the Bangwali, be he speaking chief, tongueless plebeian, or mutilated slave, walked toward "The Grove of Silence" and through it to the open space, where from the ground there arose "the restful vapors"—deadly gases from the boiling springs below the ground. Thus their spirits returned for the time to the animals represented by their totems, and then came back into human form again in after years.

The Bangwali women, instead of being treated as mere chattel, field hands, or beasts of burden, occupied positions that women seldom held in savage tribes. It was they who owned the wealth of the country;

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the herds and flocks belonged to them. Warriors owned but their shields and arms. The ground was tilled by a subject tribe of slaves, who lived in a quarter by themselves. The nobles, who were unmaimed and uncicatrisated, never worked, but exercised continually.

Never would Dallas forget the day of his entry into Manaera. The journey through the swamp had been long and tiresome; the reason that it was made possible at all he found after they had been traveling for two days across the half dry but treacherous ground. The northern portion of the great swamp was some feet higher than that of the south; dividing it like a huge beaver dam, a line of débris extended its full width across. Every five years a large body of slaves worked digging out an ancient ditch that drained the northern section. When the spring rains came on again this open drain clogged and filled up and the waters covered the ground once more. It was the discovery that this drainage was possible that had led the bronze-brown men to the invasion of Manimbi-land and caused the final disappearance of the people who inhabited the western edge of the great forest. The dwarf people who hid in the island in the swamp were allowed to exist unmolested.

On the journey "the son of Molombiki" had been treated with every consideration. He and Nolana had their meals entirely separate from the others, and Dallas could not help observing that N'Moki purposely avoided his society on the march. Whenever he saw him, however, the unwilling guest was greeted with

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a kindly and almost a worshipful glance from the little man's dark eyes.

For Nolana Dallas had conceived a sincere admiration. He was gentle, intelligent, and showed that he was possessed of an affectionate heart. It was not long before the white boy began to pick up many words of his blood-brothers' language. The names of objects were almost all descriptive; the rifles that belonged to himself and poor Frankel were called "Hi-tanga-waru," or "throwers of lightning." His field glasses that excited great wonder were named "great eyes that see far off"; his pith helmet "the shield from the sun," etc.

The morning that they had left their first camp Dallas had noticed that one of the tongueless soldiers was carrying on his back the big box that contained the talking machine and the records. Whether they had appropriated it under Chula's direction or were bringing it with them on account of the talisman that ornamented the top, Dallas was not certain, but its presence, although it had brought this unsought and uncertain adventure on him, was something of a comfort; it might give him powers of control and help him ultimately to get away.

If the Bangwali had allowed so important a person as the great Molombiki to depart in peace and safety, surely they might do the same for the hostage he had sent them. Never allowing himself to doubt in the least that he would some day have an opportunity to gain his freedom, Dallas decided to put the best face on the matter that he could and cheerfully to accept

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the strange situation. There was much to interest him and many things to wonder at.

When at last the swamp was passed they came to a new country finer than any he had seen in Africa. Game was abundant; elephants they saw almost every day, and they appeared to have no fear of the warriors, who always passed them with upraised hands in silent and respectful salutation. As the trees grew smaller the elephants became scarcer, and at last there was no sign of them.

Only twice had Dallas fired a shot; once at an antelope grazing at a long distance, and as the animal fell the warriors, who at first raised a loud murmur of amazement, raced to the spot and returned with the body, depositing it with much ceremony at his feet. He had tried to persuade Nolana to take a shot also, but the latter, to his surprise, had politely, but in a very dignified manner, refused the honor. The second occasion on which Dallas had pulled the trigger was at a rhinoceros that took it into his silly head, after much trotting about and scenting the air, to charge the caravan. A bullet from the heavy Express tumbled him over in a heap of dust. The Bangwalis would not touch the body for some reasons of their own, and at first Dallas was concerned as to whether he had unwittingly destroyed one of their sacred animals. To his relief he found that this was not so, but that a spear or sword that had touched rhinoceros blood was supposed to be rendered useless thereafter as a weapon.

The third day after passing through the swamp the

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caravan came to the first evidence of the country's being inhabited. On a sloping hill some distance away was a herd of grazing cattle tended by some almost naked savages, who, although they bore spears, carried no shields, and were evidently of a lower caste than the marching warriors. They answered the salutations with upraised hands, but kept at a respectful distance. Three or four hours' march brought the company to a village composed entirely of grass huts. They encamped here on the outskirts and the women brought to them bowls of fresh milk and a frothy cheese made out of curds. So far as appearance went there was no trace of kinship between the tall, bronze-skinned men and this subject tribe. Any intercourse held between them was carried on principally by signs.

The day following the country changed, outcroppings of stone appeared, and to the north could be seen the outlines of the mountains. Here was seen the first evidence of ancient occupation, and thereafter until they came in sight of the capital they passed continually aged ruins, some of which, thatched over, were peopled by tribesmen who bore in their features signs of blood relationship to the dominant race. Clearer and clearer grew the sharp outline of the tooth-edged escarpment, and more populous and better ordered the garden-surrounded villages.

Runners announcing their arrival had been sent on ahead, and when but three hours' march from Manaera, whose walls and towers could now be seen plainly, the party, at a sign from Nolana, halted. All eyes were turned to the north. As Dallas stood there

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Nolana had approached him and in a most natural way slipped his arm across the white boy's shoulder.

"They come," he said, "from Nogli, our father. Vila—look!"

A dark moving object like a huge serpent was undulating across the slope of a hill approaching from the direction of the city. Above it darted flashes of light—the reflection of a thousand polished spears! As the "imki," or regiment, came nearer Dallas could hear the sounds of marshal music and the low throbbing of drums. In wonderful formation and keeping accurate step along the hard-beaten road, the fighting men drew near. At a word of command they halted on both sides of the road and stood leaning on their ornamented shields. Here and there rose the tall, feathered head-dress of a chief. And now there came walking toward Nolana's party three magnificent looking warriors, no one of whom was over twenty-five or thirty.

Taking Dallas' hand, Nolana drew him forward to meet them, and as they all saluted by dropping to one knee, Dallas raised them up in turn, placing his wrist to theirs. On every forearm there was tattooed the sign of royal blood.

The other warriors had no such marks upon their bodies. Some bore the snake alone, raised in great welts of flesh; others in the same fashion showed the buffalo horns, but none the elephant's head. Passing through the lines of soldiers who fell in behind them, headed by the band of music, playing a strange march tune on flutes and trumpets made of the horns of

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sable antelope and oxen, they approached the stone walls and entered through the royal archway. There was no sign of confusion or disorder in the crowds gathered at the corners. As if by common consent or custom, sexes were separated. Women dressed in long kirtles that hung below their knees, with a shawl of skins depended from one shoulder, stood to the rear, huddled against the walls and houses; the male citizens, who were naked except for a waist cloth, stood elbow to elbow as if on drill. Silently and with a slight flutter of the upraised hands they greeted the marching men. And so they came to the gateway of the citadel.

Under a canopy of native cloth, for, although they wore scant clothing, the Bangwalis possessed knowledge of weaving, sat on a raised dais the father-king.

Never had Dallas seen such a splendid specimen of manhood before. He was heavier and broader of shoulder than Lindlay Vanderleck, and would have topped him by two inches, standing nearly six feet seven in his sandaled feet. His great feathered head-dress of ostrich plumes made him appear even taller. A kirtle made of colobrus monkey tails hung from a gold-studded leather girdle. On his massive arms were bracelets of the precious metal, and across his broad, deep chest was drawn in lines of red and black the sacred mark that he alone could wear—the elephant head.

Nolana, motioning Dallas to follow, had approached the standing figure. Animated by some impulse, just as Nolana dropped upon his knee, Dallas drew himself

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up at the military "attention," and, as if at drill, saluted with his rifle at "present arms." The King was puzzled, but kept his dignity. Slowly he extended his hands and, stepping up quickly, Dallas passed the kneeling figure of the Prince and in a white man's unostentatious greeting took the huge royal fist in his.

"Dombala, Molo Nogli," he said, breaking the tense silence.

Somehow the unexpected action had impressed the giant King. No one who did not deem himself of the blood royal and an equal would have done such a daring thing.

"Dombala Gwassa Lo Molombiki," he said in a deep-toned voice. "Hail and welcome, son of Molombiki." A smile came over his great handsome face, and, as he beckoned to Nolana to rise and approach, he placed one hand on Dallas' yellow curls, running his big fingers through them.

"Sanikuya," he said softly, and although Dallas did not know it at the time, he had then and there received his Bangwali name of "Golden Crown."

In the front of a crowd of warriors lined up at the gate of the royal enclosure, Dallas now had seen the one of all others for whom his eyes were searching. It was N'Moki, standing as erect as his natural conformation would permit, but reaching hardly more than to the waistline of the men who stood beside him. He caught Dallas' intention and at a few words from him the crowd parted and two men carrying the well-known box, pressed forward. N'Moki preceded it, and as it was placed before the dais, knelt down and

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spoke to Nola^ána, although his words were intended for the King.

"The voice and heart of Molombiki are in here," he said in the native tongue, "brought from the 'far-beyond-land' to which he has gone, by the one whom he has sent to us. Listen, Oh Prince, and King, 'tis Molombiki who will talk with thee."

With a certain authority "The Tireless One" had delivered his short speech. There was nothing cringing or abject in his bearing, despite his kneeling posture. His glance was almost prideful as he gazed up in Dallas' face. Never before had any crooked or malformed person appeared in the royal presence. Because of his very bravery and prowess had he been allowed to live and to consort with perfect men. Although in his veins also ran the blood of the kingly line, he would have been sacrificed at birth had it not been for that crafty, loving mother who had hid and fed and brought him up at the risk of her own life. As the friend and companion of the great master of spirits, and the herald and forerunner of this, his son and emissary, his importance now was great, and N'Moki knew it and spoke with that assurance.

Dallas pointed to the box, and in Swahili said, "Open it with your spear, N'Moki."

Cunningly had the little man prepared for just this moment. The lid had been loosened beforehand, and as if it were on hinges, N'Moki lifted it with the tip of his spear and stepped aside.

Dallas stepped forward, his heart beating excitedly. What if the records had been broken or the delicate

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machinery injured? Supposing that the whole thing would be a failure. But the packing had been carefully done, the works appeared to be intact, and the records wrapped in cloth and tissue paper, were untouched. The trumpet-piece that was made so that it could be folded flat and opened into shape, was there uninjured also. With all the assembly watching, and the King's eyes never leaving his movements, Dallas set up the instrument and inserted the first record.

The effect of the loud, penetrating voice that filled the courtyard was strange and wonderful. Not a hand, or foot, not a feature stirred. And not a muscle of the King's face moved as he listened, but his eyes gazed and gazed at the box, and as the voice went on his wonderment held him spellbound. When it was finished something that sounded like a sigh went through the crowd, yet no one spoke; it was as if to do so would be a sacrilege.

The second record now began, and at the end the King rose majestically.

"Oh, Master of Spirits," said he impressively, "who brought me back to earth and made me live again, it shall be done. Thy wishes will be obeyed. Speak on, speak on!"

It was N'Moki, who, standing by Dallas, translated the King's speech, in a low whisper caught only by the boy's attentive ear. As he was about to start the third disc, N'Moki stopped him just in time.

"Wait, Bwana, wait. This is not for the others to hear."

To Dallas' amazement as he looked up he saw that

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the assemblage was slowly filing from the courtyard, a single gesture from the King had given the orders that they understood. N'Moki himself would have left, but Dallas detained him by a touch on his shoulder. In a few minutes the audience was reduced to four or five young chiefs, and two or three grave-faced men, whose wrinkled faces proved that years had come upon them.

When the third record was completed King Nogli spoke with great solemnity, and once more Chula translated in a whisper.

"He says, Bwana, that they have listened to Molombiki's words 'for the last time'; let it be so—it is better. The voice must not speak again."

Reasoning over it afterwards, Dallas perceived how wise the little man's advice had been, and although in the bottom of the box lay Sousa's Columbia March, a song by Harry Lauder, and Tetrizzini's soaring notes, for any purpose whatsoever, the talking-box was held to perpetual silence in Bangwaliland. It had served its purpose well, as will be shown.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE TRAIL

WE left Lindlay and Prentice full of determination to take up the pursuit of the Bangwali warriors whose trail they reasoned would be an easy one to follow. But Dallas had told them in his note to await the coming of the traders, whose lives had been spared by their savage captors for the second time. For two days, therefore, they lingered at the old camp site, impatiently watching the forest from which they expected Geibler and Mann to emerge. The blacks who had remained faithful to them kept the brush fire going day and night. The smoke and glare could have been seen for miles, but there was no sign of the two Germans, and despairing at last of their coming, or fearing that they had turned back directly to the Lake—the Neopara was told to break camp at early dawn. Portioning out such supplies as were left, the forlorn expedition entered the great green wall, and following the elephant path, came to the old dead stump where Prentice expected to find his decoy note of instructions. That it was gone admitted of two explanations; the warriors had found it, or some great beast using the stump as a scratching post had torn the paper away

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—acting on the second suggestion they were searching the grass and bushes when Lindlay discovered the footprints of two white men in an open, dust-covered spot. There was now but one conclusion: Geibler and Mann had found the paper, and misled by its contents, had imagined that the safari had passed through the woods. Further search revealed the fact that the traders had turned to the north, as more footprints were soon found by the Neopara, heading in that direction. Keeping to the edge of the forest the little party came by evening to the old Bangwali camp; the brush huts had been pulled down but the ashes of the fires were plain to be seen. Here they spent the night. At daybreak they were up hunting for the trail that they knew must lead them to the swamp-land; contrary to their expectations, it was not easy to follow, but the head man at last struck off to the eastward, and the little caravan, now reduced to eight, fell in behind him.

Denser grew the bushes and harder the going. Soon the character of their surroundings changed; the great dead roots stood up like skeleton fingers supporting the trees, and the ground, covered with dried ooze, was bereft of grass. Imperceptibly they had entered the swamp country where there was every evidence of the fact that only a short time before the slimy waters had covered the surface to the depth of two feet or more.

Encouraging them to hasten, however, was the trail of naked footprints, with here and there showing the marks left by Dallas' hob-nailed boots. Nor

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was this all—the two white men were ahead of them, for their tracks, fresher than the others, marked the fact that Geibler and Mann were bound for Bangwaland again.

Five hours' hard marching brought the trackers to their first stop. The bearers who had been grumbling among themselves, threw down their burdens, and almost exhausted, seated themselves on the roots of the trees. Prentice and Lindlay looked at one another, and their faces showed their sudden consternation. They had reached the water. Slowly percolating through the ground and spreading constantly a tiny tide crept on; the trail, plain to be seen at first, in the soggy mud was soon covered ankle deep and was lost to sight. Molohafi, the Neopara, turned to them.

"Masters," he said, "we must go back, while there is yet time—we cannot go forward—it is but to die."

It needed but a sign of fright from the white leaders to start the four bearers stampeding to the westward—Molohafi's courage was on the wane also. Lindlay whispered to Prentice softly.

"If I know anything of the woods," he said, "the land is higher in that direction." He pointed to the north as he spoke, and continued, "we have crossed lower land than this, and if the water is here it is behind us also. No rain has fallen—it is backing up on us from the south."

"To the north, then," said Prentice, taking out the compass and glancing at the trembling needle. "Come

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on——” he turned to Molohafi, “the dry land lies there,” he said, “we will find the trail again.”

Reluctantly the bearers picked up their burdens and followed Lindlay, who, setting a hot pace, now took the lead. His surmise, born of his knowledge of woodcraft, proved correct; although the water had once been there, and not many weeks before, the ground was now dry. Jock, who had chosen the Langishu for his chum for the day, suddenly began sniffing at the ground—in the dim light Lindlay, bending, could see the footprints of two white men.

“Geibler and that other Dutchman are ahead of us!” he cried. “They were here not two hours ago; they were turned back by the water.” He showed the trail to Molohafi; the latter appeared to be cheered a little, but pointing to the eastward, shook his head.

Jock became the leader now; it was too dark to see anything but the gaunt trunks of the stilted trees, but his keen nose kept him on the faint scent, and the ground sloped more and more to firmer ground.

Lindlay gave a shout. “Grass!” he called. “We are working out of the swamp!”

It was time to camp; everyone was exhausted. Throwing down their blankets and burdens, they sat there for fully ten minutes, panting; soon a little fire of dead wood was burning, and a tin of meal was cooking—but the thing they feared most was now very scarce—water. In their felt-covered canteens there was scarce enough for another day’s march.

Prentice shot a reed buck early the next morning, and not only was the meat welcome, but the presence

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of animal life told them that they were on the edge of solid ground, more than likely the "Island" of which Geibler and Frankel had spoken.

When they first awakened, Lindlay and Prentice had held a long consultation, and not to discredit their courage, they had reached the decision dictated by common sense—unless they came up with the two Germans during the day, it would be wise to return to Mwanza if they could and from there organize an expedition of rescue. Molohafi and the four bearers absolutely refused to go further to the eastward.

By ten o'clock they had reached the spot where Geibler and Mann had spent the night—evidenced, as usual, by the remains of a fire and the clean picked bone of a small monkey they had shot for food; they had been less than two hours gone, for the embers were still glowing.

Jock took up the trail immediately, and it was with great relief that Molohafi and the blacks saw that it was to the west, toward Manimbiland. The traders had abandoned the idea of crossing the swamp.

"Masters, let us hurry and we will catch them," urged the Neopara. "They are traveling slow—see, here they rested!"

"Come on," cried Lindlay, and as he spoke he lifted the burden from the back of a weakened, staggering porter and threw it across his own shoulders. "Those Dutchmen are almost done for—probably that monkey was all they had to eat for days—did you notice that pile of cartridges. They must be weak when they

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lighten up that way—ammunition is the last thing a man throws away in the woods.”

With great strides the big New Brunswicker set off on what was now a pursuit of rescue, and at a lumbering trot the porters followed, urged on by Prentice and Molohafi.

Exactly what had taken place when they had been forced to abandon the trail of the Bangwalis now occurred again—they came to the water. It was not a tiny, percolating tide this time, but a rushing stream, gurgling in and out of the slimy roots and increasing so swiftly that they retreated hurriedly, for as they paused the water had risen from their ankles almost to their knees like the bursting of a freshet, and their feet stuck fast in the clinging mud.

“Back to the higher ground,” ordered Prentice, and scrambling and plunging they retraced their former path.

“That’s the gooiest mud I ever saw,” said Prentice, stopping to scrape the clinging substance off his boots. “I wonder if Geibler and Mann got through before the waters reached them.” He looked up at Lindlay as he spoke. The big man turned his head away.

“Oh, they must have,” he replied; “they were here before the water.” The words were spoken half-heartedly; more as if they expressed a faint hope rather than an opinion.

Prentice caught his breath and did not reply right away. “We might have fired a gun and listened if they answered,” he said at last.

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"It would have been no use, they were too far ahead of us," replied Lindlay. "The question is, what are we to do? Keep going north is the best idea. There must be some way out."

The little party had been resting for a minute, and now they started ahead. As if by common consent they spoke no more of Mann or Geibler.

The ground kept rising gently, and the forest shade grew deeper; great tree ferns and trailing vines obstructed their path. They could hear the chattering of monkeys in the branches. Beautiful butterflies flitted over their heads, and to their delight they came to a little stream of clear, running water at which they quenched their thirst. It had always been their custom to boil their drinking water before using it, but on this occasion they did not wait for this precaution and lying down, they drank their fill. As Prentice raised his head he touched Lindlay's shoulder and pointed; the latter looked up with the water dripping from his beard.

"I noticed it," he said; "it looks as if there was a clearing off in that direction."

"No, I don't mean that; up in the tree—that big nest," interrupted Prentice, "and there's another one further on."

They had risen to their feet by this time, and the blacks following their gaze, had sighted the same strange objects.

"Lotungi!" It was Molohafi speaking, and there was a note of fear in his voice as he continued. "The huts of the monkey-men who live in the trees. Their

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arrows are poisoned, Masters, they must not see us."

As if in answer there came a sharp, whirring sound, and a slender little shaft zipped through the leaves and imbedded itself quivering in a tree trunk close to Lindlay's shoulder. At the same time an object moved near the great nest. Lindlay had seen it and raised his rifle; just in time Prentice laid hold of the barrel and pushed it away.

"Don't shoot," he said, and advancing into plainer view he raised both hands in a token of peace. For more than a minute he stood there without moving, and then he saw that the tree branches were filled with monkey-like figures that had emerged from their hiding places. Suddenly there occurred to Prentice's mind the Bangwali word of greeting he had learned from Geibler.

"Dombala! Dombala!" he called in a friendly tone.

The effect was instantaneous; a thin, piping voice replied and a little figure slid from branch to branch until it reached the ground. Another and another followed, until a score or more of entirely naked little pigmies, perfectly formed miniature warriors, came advancing slowly through the underbrush. Each carried a small bow with an arrow at the string; on their backs were more of the slender, sharp-tipped shafts in leather quivers.

Wherever came the inspiration to Prentice he could not tell, but he explained it afterwards to himself in these words: "When I begin to sing, people generally laugh," and so with his hands still raised over his head, the boy launched forth in the old St. Luke's school

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song. It was a ridiculous rendering in an impossible key, for if Prentice was gifted in many ways, he lacked utterly the ability to carry a tune. Smiling he went on to the end, and as the little men looked and listened, their faces showed, first, perplexity, and then open amusement. Their half warlike attitude changed; they lowered their bows and came nearer, chattering among themselves, a sturdy, muscular dwarf a few paces in advance of the others. Never had any member of the tribe seen such a peculiar being as this before, with a white skin and covered with cloth, who made such strange noises and stood smiling and unafraid of their arrows! But the word he had called was one they understood—the greeting of the tall men to whom years before their fathers had sworn fealty—the elephant brethren, whose shields bore the device that now they could see plainly on Prentice's upraised forearm.

As the song ended Lindlay, and the Neopara, and the other blacks came forward; the Lotungi stepped back a little, and their faces showed both fear and suspicion, but the aspect of the invaders of their forest solitude was peaceful.

"Sing them something, Tembo," whispered Prentice, and forthwith Lindlay in a deep, roaring voice, began a north woods song with a laughing chorus that ended each stanza. Smiles that the pigmies bravely endeavored to conceal, greeted the backwoodsman's solo; fright and suspicion vanished, and when Prentice stretched forth his hand the small head man did a totally unexpected thing; with a swift movement,

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he detached the quiver from his shoulders and placed it with his short bow in the white boy's palm. It was a plain sign not only of peace, but of subjection, and as Prentice returned the weapon, the pigmy began to speak.

Not a word of the shrill jargon could be understood by anyone except the little men who, now losing all fear, came up and inspected their visitors from almost touching distance. They paid little or no attention to Molohafi or the bearers, who kept together a short distance away, and confined their curiosity to the hairy giant (Lindlay's beard would now almost rival Geibler's) and the white Bangwali who had so mysteriously entered their domain.

Prentice now made the sign that all the world over stands for hunger; with one hand he rubbed his stomach, and with the other fed an open mouth. The tiny head man beckoned, and surrounded by their shrilly chattering escort, the party moved forward toward what appeared to be a clearing. Here they were greeted with a great surprise; not only was this open spot some thirty or forty acres in extent, but it was planted with evidences of an agricultural skill. On the outskirts were several good-sized huts and an open space where evidently they held their dances or palavers, the trees all about were filled with the nest huts from many of which hung ladders made of vines and strong tendrils.

Honey, and a rough, stringy meal in baskets, and some antelope meat, barely cooked through was laid down before them.

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"We are among friends," said Prentice to Lindlay, as he smiled his thanks to a little monkey man who had just placed a basket at his feet. "What wouldn't I give if we had not lost our camera. What a chance!"

Lindlay did not enter a regret on that score, his mind was bent on more practical and immediate subjects.

"These people must know a way out in some direction," he said, "but how can we ask them?"

"Let's try," returned Prentice, and attracting the attention of a middle-aged man who looked like a miniature bronze Hercules, he pointed to the west. At first the man seemed puzzled, then his small wrinkled face lit up intelligently.

"Nonga," he said, and gave the same reply as Prentice pointed to all points of the compass.

"'Nonga' must mean the swamp." Prentice turned to Lindlay as he spoke, and the latter shrugged his great shoulders.

"Ask Molohafi to try some sign language on them," he suggested; "let's see what he can do."

The Neopara signified his willingness to try, and standing up he began to make gesticulations, acting in pantomime.

"I got that," said Prentice watching him, "he means the full moon. They understand it, too—see this little monkey here? He is raising six fingers—he means six full moons. I've got it! The swamp goes down in six months!"

Before long by means of signs alone they had gained

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much information—the Island was ten sleeps—or ten days' slow marching long, and between two and three in width; reduced to figures that would mean some thirty or forty miles by some ten or twelve; on all sides were they hemmed in by the "nonga" that, from what they could learn, was fifteen or twenty miles across.

"There must be some way out," said Prentice hopefully, "and if there is, we'll find it—at all events if we keep on the right side of the monkey men we won't starve to death." His sense of humor came to the fore for a minute. "What an outfit this would be for a Coney Island show," he suggested.

"I'm afraid we'd have to take 'em to a clothing store first," grinned Lindlay.

"Kind of a Garden of Eden effect," Prentice rejoined, looking about him at the ring of small, naked figures among which were now women and chubby, finely formed children, many in their mothers' arms. "I hope they don't expect us to sleep in the trees."

As night drew on they laid out their blankets on the ground floor of the largest hut, and the natives climbed to their branches. Before they went to sleep Molohafi came to Prentice.

"Bwana," said he, "there are leopards here, we will keep the fire going."

Long before midnight the party on the ground was awakened by the deep roaring of a lion not far away. Lindlay, all alert, picked up his rifle and stepped outside the hut. But nothing bothered them that night,

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and the morning came at last. Once more they were waited on as if they were distinguished guests. Accompanied by some of the little men they started on a tour of exploration during which they had the good fortune to bag two water bucks, and later in the evening Lindlay had added to his score a fine male lion brought down by a snap shot at the flash of a tawny hide in the dense shrubbery.

The effect of this shooting had been marvelous on the monkey men; at first they scattered in all directions, but when they saw the dead lion, it was evident that they regarded their guests as supernatural beings sent for their protection.

The second day they went westward and found the waters of the swamp risen so high that escape, except by boat or canoe, in that direction was impossible.

"We are in for it," observed Prentice that evening as they returned to "Eden," the name they had given to the pigmies' village. Then he repeated half below his breath: "Six full moons—I wonder what they will think at home."

Restlessly he tossed on his springy couch of dried fern leaves until early morning thinking over the situation; he remembered the time when he and Dallas had longed for "real adventures." What was Dallas doing? Surely his experiences could not be stranger than those that had befallen his two faithful chums! The disappearance of the party of Americans would soon be known—what steps would be taken to find them? Of course, Mrs. Rathbone would spare no expense; knowing her so well, Prentice did not doubt

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that she would come to East Africa herself to be as near the spot as possible. It was going to be a fine "mix up" all round! Yet in all this reasoning he did not give way to gloomy thoughts or forebodings—he was too young, too healthy, and too optimistic to be cast down. His thoughts turned to Lindlay sleeping so quietly; what good fortune it was to have with him such a brave and true comrade! Never once had he shown anything but cheerfulness and high courage. The only one who had shown any despondency was Molohafi; for two days he had spoken hardly a word. The other black men seemed contented in that they were getting little work and plenty of food. The monkey men were the kindest hosts to their visitors; there was not the slightest danger in stopping on the Island—but to wait six months until the mysterious waters of the swamp should subside was not to be thought of. It must be one attempt after another, one plan that proved unsuccessful must be followed by a better one—escape they must!

In the morning he made a proposition that Lindlay fell in with at once. They would make a thorough exploration of the Island.

"And then?" asked the big man, "what will we do?"

"We must build a canoe," returned Prentice, "and see if we can't push our way out to the mainland."

"I wish that they grew birchbark over here," sighed the north woodsman, "I'd build one in a week."

"We will make one out of a hollow log," said Prentice. "I remember seeing how that was done down in Florida."

CHAPTER XXIV

MOLOMBIKI'S RECORDS

WHEN Dallas had turned away from N'Moki for a moment, wondering what next to do, his attention was once more attracted by "The Tireless One," who spoke without looking at him.

"Bwana, walk out in the sun; look at the big stone over the gate. Be careful—they are waiting."

No one had noticed the low whispered admonition, and as if he knew exactly what was expected of him, the adopted son of the tribe strode out across the courtyard, his light hair glistening more like a golden crown than ever. As he moved away the older men rose and followed him at a respectful distance; even the King had made a movement as if to accompany them, but remembering his dignity had seated himself, his eyes never straying from the erect young figure that led the others.

As Dallas had drawn closer to the arched gateway, he perceived that, cut lightly in the surface of the stone was an inscription in German characters; with a strange excitement growing within him he recognized the handiwork of Friederich Gottlieb! Who would ever have thought that that chance meeting in

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the Bronx would ever have led to this strange situation? Many times during the early days of his captivity this thought had come to the "son of Molombiki," and as he saw "F. G." scratched at the end of the inscription, the old German's promise of "many adventures" came back to him—the great one was just beginning.

It was necessary to stand in such a position that the sunlight should strike slantingly on the stone to read the characters distinctly. Translated the words ran thus: "In the fourth chamber with the sealed door are the records; enter by pushing the middle stone." A roughly drawn arrow pointed to the right, and then came the signature.

Following the great stone wall, Dallas passed three archways back of which could be seen deep shadowed recesses, curtained off by tanned skins, hung in place of doors; the fourth was filled in with heavy stones, and tied across the front were two crossed spears lashed in their turn over a great Bangwali shield. The barrier had been there for a long time as its weather-beaten appearance proved.

The young hostage felt his heart beating wildly as he wrenched away the spears and shield, and exerting all his strength pushed against the center stone. At first it resisted his efforts, but then as he put his shoulder to it, it began slowly to move, and with a crash fell inside. The removal of another stone made a space large enough for a man to enter. Crouching low, Dallas crept inside. The room was about fifteen feet deep by twelve in width; it was empty

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but for a box and a roughly built table. The air was cool and damp like a cavern.

Enough light came through the orifice for the intruder to see that the lid of the box was half open; lifting it he first came to a leather case of medicines and surgical instruments, then a large notebook, and an almanac—one of those volumes of useful information that provide multitude of recipes and formulas. The notebook was full of microscopic writing in a reddish-purple ink, and the space between the printed lines of the almanac, Gottlieb had also filled in with carefully minute characters.

Dallas took both books over to the light. It was fortunate that he was a good German scholar, but there were many words that he was compelled to guess at by the context. It puzzled him to imagine why such important documents should have been left behind. Soon he was convinced that both books were merely copies—transcriptions of others that Molombiki must have taken with him. The pains taken to have a complete record in Manaera was explained in the dangers of the return journey to civilization. Gottlieb wished to leave behind him evidence of his visit, in case anyone should reach King Nogli's capital during his absence.

Dallas found plenty of time to read for no one disturbed him. As soon as he had disappeared through the hole in the wall, the Bangwalis had withdrawn to the other side of the courtyard, and seating themselves in the shade had patiently waited his reappearance.

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Gottlieb's record was written in short sentences in the simplest style, but supplementing Geibler's story, it gave a world of information, and now Dallas understood how it was that the King had come under the white man's influence. As Gottlieb had saved N'Moki's life by his surgical knowledge and skill, he had also saved King Nogli's. The day of his arrival at Manaera, the latter had met with a peculiar accident that had rendered him partially insensible, and completely paralyzed his left side. While on a visit to the mountains, accompanied by his chief counsellor, he had fallen and sustained a depressed fracture of the skull. Gottlieb was brought into the royal presence—the medicine men had given the King up for dead—the Queens and the consorts were preparing for the funeral. At a glance, Gottlieb had seen that the delicate operation of trepanning was the only thing that would save Nogli's life, and although the risks were great, he had set about it at once with Hamid to assist him.

The magnificent physical condition of the King aided greatly in his recovery, for he rallied from the anesthetic, and showed almost immediately the result of relieving the pressure on the brain. Gottlieb went very minutely into the phases of the case that there would be little use in recording here. The result, however, was that the request he made that he and his two friends should be allowed to depart from the Bangwali land was granted in part: Geibler and Mann were escorted south to the border, but at the last minute, Gottlieb had been detained. He found that,

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although deeply grateful, the giant sovereign considered him too useful a guest to spare at that time. Nogli was convinced that his own life was bound up with that of the marvelous white man who had brought him back from the jaws of death.

As Dallas continued reading he found the writing harder to decipher, and turning forward several leaves of the notebook, to his dismay he discovered that the writing became fainter and fainter, until in many places only a few words were legible; whole pages were quite undecipherable, and the last part of the carefully prepared record was, to all intents and purposes, a blank.

He put down the notebook and took up the almanac. The ink, evidently manufactured by Gottlieb from some chemicals or native preparations, was of better quality, and had withstood the heat and dampness, and the entries were easy to read, and of great importance. In the first place, the German had gained a great ascendancy over the native mind by the old trick of foretelling a partial eclipse of the sun—an easy thing to do, for the almanac mentioned the latitude and longitude where it would be visible. The almanac also volunteered the information that exactly fourteen years afterwards a total eclipse would take place, giving the exact date and time.

Dallas almost dropped the book. It would be exactly ten days from this very day! A total eclipse! He remembered reading in a story how a white prisoner in the hands of savages had saved his life by the prediction of such an occurrence. It would be

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easy for him to establish his own reputation as a mighty man of magic. Although in no danger, he now possessed a means of gaining great importance in the eyes of the whole people.

"Never lose track of the day of the week or the date of the month when traveling," had been impressed on him, and now he saw the value of the maxim.

Besides the important day, in a rather disjointed fashion, what Gottlieb had written had given him many valuable hints, and much information that would aid him. In the first place the Bangwalis mined no gold; they could extract iron from the ore like many other tribes, and were expert at making spears, knives and weapons, but the gold ornaments and their origin were a mystery to Gottlieb that he referred to time and again. Whence came they? As Dallas read on, straining his eyes, he came to this entry:

Eureka! I have found it! Every seven years the ruler of this country makes a visit to the lake at the top of the old volcano, known as "Itanzu," taking with him his favorite son, who is to succeed him and one other, generally his chief counsellor. The journey is made by ascending the river and crawling up the channel of the subterranean water course—a journey of great danger but the only way to the source. On his return he brings with him a gold ornament, generally a bracelet or armlet, sometimes it is a small ingot of gold from which the decorations of their swords are fashioned. There is where the "kuga" or gold comes from. I cannot make out if these people are aware of its intrinsic value or not, but no warrior or noble will part with any ornament made of precious metal. It is a King's gift

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to himself or to one of his ancestors—to part with such would be selling the family honor.

Plainly Gottlieb hoped some day to see the treasury that was kept safe in the mountain fastness. But never did he get the opportunity—it was a subject concerning which no one was allowed to speak openly; the royal pilgrimage was veiled in secrecy. The sheer sides of the volcanic escarpment left but one mode of ingress—that through the opening in the mountain side, N'Landa, and past the waterfall of Baromi. Whether there were guardians at the top of Mount Lanwaro, it could not be ascertained.

Gottlieb's writing in the microscopic German script became harder to read. He began to complain of his failing eyesight and to the faithful Hamid he confided the fear that unless he could get back to civilization for treatment he would soon grow blind. But despite this fear he constantly referred to the gold—always the gold. At last he found an opportunity to learn something definite. An old man who was soon to seek the Grove of Silence had been the confidant of Nogli's father, and had made the journey to Itanzu. What Gottlieb promised him as reward he did not state, but he frankly wrote that he bribed him to show the way. With Hamid, and the aged counsellor as a guide, Gottlieb had started to ascend the hidden water course, but at the first steep climb he had fallen and hurt his knee so badly that he could not proceed, and Hamid and the Bangwali had gone on alone. It was a luckless venture. After waiting two days Gottlieb

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managed to get back to Manaera, explaining his absence in the best way he could. Hamid, when next he saw him was bereft of a tongue. He had been caught as he had issued into the daylight from "the wound." For the sake of his master his life had been spared, but the tall Somali could talk no more. He had not reached the summit, and had crawled through dark passages half drowned by falling water, and in some way had become separated from the old man, whose body was afterwards found floating in the dark waters of the cañon.

King Nogli had never spoken of the treasures, but one day Gottlieb had asked him point blank if he would not take him to Itanzu.

"Why ask me?" had replied the King. "You who know everything—have been there! For me to speak of what Lanwaro holds is to grow old immediately. Within a few days, I like all my ancestors, would have to seek the restful vapors. Oh, Master of Spirits, do not speak of it again!"

So earnestly had the King spoken, and so intense were his feelings, that Gottlieb had never dared to bring up the subject again.

The next to the last entry interlined in the almanac was touching.

I have been here nearly seven years. My eyesight is going. All this time I have been hoping for some word from the world outside. None comes. To-day I told the King that my powers were failing, that unless I got back to my people I would soon have to go to the Grove of Silence myself.

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The last page contained the following:

I am to go back to civilization. Nogli will send me through the swamp to Manimbiland. The swamp is dry. I have promised faithfully to return, or if I can not, to send in my place, my spirit, in a younger body. The king believes that as long as my spirit is with him, he will not grow old! I do not know whether I can get through to the lake. I have but six cartridges for my rifle. N'Moki, the Dorobo, goes with me, and Hamid, my faithful Hamid . . . [Written later.] The King has sent for me; he wishes, in order to show his trust, for me to take with me one of his younger sons, Barana; I cannot refuse. I am leaving this record behind me. But if other eyes than my own failing ones see these pages remember that the gold is there and stores of ivory.

F. G.

Dallas closed the book and sat there thinking. Where were Prentice and Lindlay? What would his mother think on hearing of his capture? She had Gottlieb's address; of course she would seek the old German out. Would his story be of any comfort to her? His position was different from that of his predecessor—he had no miracle to perform to save his life. The talking-machine and the circumstances of his arrival were sufficient credentials. Then he thought of the almanac and turned to the proper page. Yes—the date was correct. He stepped out into the courtyard.

"N'Moki," he called.

The little black man came to him instantly.

"Bwana?"

"N'Moki, in ten days the sun shall disappear at

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noonday, and it will be dark like the early night. I have read it in what Molombiki has told. But if all the people gather in the open air and keep silence the sun will come back again. Bring me the voice in the box. Then take me to King Nogli and tell him what I have told you."

When Dallas had seen the talking-machine placed in Molombiki's room he ordered the stones replaced, and the entrance sealed as it had been before. The two books he had safely tucked under his coat, and the small medicine chest beneath his arm. What use he would make of the latter he did not know.

Turning to N'Moki, he said, in a half whisper:
"Now take me to the King."

CHAPTER XXV

THE JOURNEY TO ITANZU

TIME wore on—the day of the eclipse came and passed. Exactly as Dallas had predicted the sun had disappeared; it had suddenly gone from noon to dark, from dark to midnight, and all Manaera, instead of wailing and weeping and indulging in sacrifice to appease the evil spirits, had gathered quietly in the open air and waited in silence. Had not Sanikuya, the young white prophet, predicted that the giver of life would return? As the shadows wore away, even from the quarters of the tongueless soldiers there had risen a cry of relief and thanksgiving. If Dallas had so chosen he might have occupied the position of a demi-god, for the people were ready to fall down and worship a being who could so avert the end of all existence—the Bangwali, besides believing in transformation, were sun-worshippers; the beginning of the world, in their minds, was the day that the sun first broke the darkness. The end would come when the great light went out—which is a most sound doctrine, for assuredly it will!

Instead of claiming any prerogatives or privileges, Dallas had entered into the clean, healthy life of the young men of Nogli's court. They had races and

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games of strength and skill, with champions whose excellence would have made them famous in athletic history could their performances have been shown before civilized audiences. In high jumping there were a dozen or more warriors would clear over six feet six, and Nolana had jumped the wonderful height of seven feet! At any distance over half a mile Dallas doubted if there ever was a white man who could have pushed a Bangwali warrior to his utmost.

There was one thing that pleased him; the vanquished was the first to give the victor praise. Never did he hear an excuse offered for defeat or a word of bitterness pass between any contestants. Very quickly he had picked up the musical Bangwali tongue—their words were few, the syntax simple, but there was little or no trace of any language he had ever heard.

It was many years since the tribe had had a war, but they were well prepared; the soldiers drilled constantly and their formations were those of the old Roman legion, the swordsmen and heavy spearmen in the front ranks, and the light, or throwing spears behind them. Of archery they knew nothing. They hunted for sport, but lions were their chief game; every prince of the blood was required to kill one at least every twelfth month. Consequently the "great cats" were scarce in the neighborhood of the town and villages, and hunting trips to the borderland were often undertaken. It was a Bangwali tradition that a great war was to come, that out of the south would appear a people who, unless they were prepared to receive

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them, would destroy their flocks and herds and take the sacred treasures from the royal sanctuary on Mount Lanwaro.

As Dallas' clothes wore out he had been forced to come to the native custom of wearing little if any—and possessing luckily a skin that tanned brown without painful burning, he found it little hardship. N'Moki had become his own especial follower, almost his servant. He was in constant attendance, and was of the greatest help as a guide, counsellor, and friend. Often Dallas had spoken of the life that he had left behind him, of how he wished to return to it, and N'Moki had answered thus:

“What more can the Bwana want? Here is plenty. Wait—have patience.”

One day the little black came to him early in the morning. It was hardly daylight, and inside the cell-like room of the stone fortress it was so dark that Dallas could not see his features, but the hand that had touched his shoulder had trembled, and N'Moki was plainly excited.

“Bwana,” said he, “to-day the King visits Itanzu; he is to take you with him. I overheard him make plans. It is the thing that Molombiki wished most to do. But you must not appear eager—you must urge Nolana's going. Do not say, ‘I am willing.’ Say, ‘I will wait; take Nolana, my brother; he is more fit to go than I.’”

“And if I do, N'Moki, will Nolana take my place?”

“No, the King will take you, master; you will see what only those who are to be kings perhaps, them-

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selves, have seen. But never must you speak of it, not if you go out to the white man's country; only to one—to Molombiki himself."

"Should I go, N'Moki, answer me truly," said Dallas, wondering at the little man's great interest.

N'Moki paused. "It is for this you were sent," he replied. "Surely you know, O Son of a great father. It is for this Molombiki would have returned."

"How long a journey is it?" asked Dallas. "When will we return?"

"In two days—and you will eat nothing on the way. It is only for the strong. When a King fears to go he seeks the Grove of Silence or dies in the heart of Baromi on the way."

As N'Moki stopped speaking, he caught his breath and listened; then went on more hurriedly.

"They must not know I have told you. I must not be found here. They are coming soon. Sasa wenda na lala—you must go to sleep—they must find you sleeping, master."

Dallas hardly heard him steal out of the room; there was a soft rustle of the hide curtain at the door and he was gone.

How many minutes elapsed before there was a slight sound out in the stone paved passageway, Dallas had not counted, but it seemed as if he had taken only a few long breaths when he was aware that some one was standing in the entrance.

"Dombala Sanikuya," said a great, round voice that he recognized as the King's, "awake! I have need of thee."

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"Dombala gwassa lo Molo Nogli," returned Dallas, rising and rubbing his eyes as if he had just awakened. He had never dropped to his knee before the King, and he did not do so now; he simply drew himself up at attention, saluted and waited.

His majesty did not waste words. "Come—Vila! The day is here. I go to Lanwaro, to Itanzu. Thou art chosen—of all my sons and brethren. Come!"

Instantly there flashed through the mind of the white boy that perhaps N'Moki had taught him the wrong answer in order to save him from some danger. He was tempted to reply, "I am ready, O Ruler of brave men," when a certain note he had caught in the King's voice decided him. Besides, why should he doubt N'Moki's teaching or his loyalty?

"Ah, santi, Molo Nogli. It is not I who should go—some one more worthy. Take thy son Nolana."

Dallas had spoken the last words sincerely, for surely the gentle and gallant son of the King should have been the one to accompany him—not an unwilling guest whose one wish was to escape.

The big monarch seemed relieved. "You would have me take him in your place?" he asked.

"Yes, Molo Nogli."

"It is not that you are afraid? You who are a thrower of lightning and who can bring the sun to life—like thy father!"

"No—I am not afraid."

In answer the King simply beckoned, and Dallas followed him in silence.

Out in the courtyard were standing three figures;

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one of the more elderly men whose somewhat relaxed and heavy muscles showed that he once must have possessed great activity and strength, and two tremendous blacks of the royal guard—dumb creatures, who, patient as oxen, only obeyed orders, and seemed in no way to resent their condition or disfigurement.

It was broad daylight, and a time that the place should have been teeming with palace slaves and soldiers, but not a soul was in sight. Outside the walls of the citadel sounded the blowing of a horn, and the long blare was repeated, this time from a distance. Then other horns took up the doleful note, like dying echoes. No smoke rose above the city roofs as usually there did in the morning and evening, there was not a sound of a voice or the cackle of a fowl. As the party of five passed through the arched gateway guarded by the towers, there was no waiting sentinel. Down into the streets they went, and it might have been a city of the dead. Not a face appeared at the open doorways—there was not the cry of a child to break the stillness.

But if this was surprising what greeted Dallas' eyes when he saw the open meadow land beyond the walls, puzzled him more. The herds of cattle and goat-like sheep were gone, driven off where, he could not imagine. The only living thing was a falcon that wheeled against the deep blue of the sky. He glanced up at the jagged peak of Lanwaro—Saniambi—"the crown of white feathers" appeared thicker than ever, like a soft canopy it drifted above the escarpment, billowing and falling in the gentle western wind.

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Not a word had been spoken since they had left the palace. The counsellor or priest was marching a little way behind King Nogli, at whose side Dallas kept with great difficulty, for Nogli's long strides took him over the ground at a great rate. Further back came the two guardsmen, one carrying a small net bag. Hurrying up to the leaders the elderly man pointed to the soaring falcon. His intention was understood, for Nogli paused and nodded.

"Rotangao-misi, it is a good omen," he said, and, turning with his great arm outstretched toward the mountain, he asked in a hoarse whisper:

"O Sanikuya, Son of Molombiki, canst thou fly? Canst thou make birds of us and give us wings—so we can mount into the air?"

As Dallas halted, astonished at the question, still in a whisper the King continued, "There is no one to see—we can kill these two." He indicated the guards. "Make thy magic."

Dallas shook his head. "My brethren do fly," he answered, "but it has taken them years to make the wings. I cannot now."

"Then we must tempt Baromi," answered the King, and it seemed as if he said it in half fear, half disappointment.

The placidly flowing Korosani that shone through the undulating meadows at their left now took a sharp turn eastward, and before them rose the spur of the escarpment that, stretching out, embraced between its steep walls, the waters of the mysterious "life blood" of Itanzu.

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Tied to the bank at the entrance to the cañon, was a raft of logs roughly but strongly made, and capable of holding five or six persons. There were no oars or paddles, only two stout spear handles, one of which had an iron head like a cumbersome boat-hook.

The King and the priest stepped on board the clumsy craft and Dallas followed. The two soldiers shoved it out into the stream. The current was sluggish and, wading behind, the black men pushed the raft up stream until they were in the deep shadows. Narrower grew the walls on either side, and the water rose to their shoulders; soon they could wade no longer, and crossing to the left they climbed on board. Skillfully they hauled the raft along with their hands, grasping the extending rocks and catching at the crevices. Now the boat-hook and the spear-shaft were brought into play, and the progress grew still slower. There was but one turn, and here the water ran swiftly, dashing over the logs and roaring along the sides. It was a ticklish moment, the man with the boat-hook lost his hold, and the raft swept against a sharp ledge with a threatening jar. Nogli glanced up and frowned, his hand sought the short knife at his belt. Desperately the man in the bow lunged forward and caught a fissure, exerting all his strength he stemmed the backward movement until his companion, coming to his aid, the craft was safely straightened out again. For a quarter of a mile or more the stream ran black as a flow of ink before them; overhead the narrow ribbon of sky let down a faint guiding light; in many places the cliffs were

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almost joined together. It was still as death. Only the labored breathing of the men working with straining backs and arms to keep the craft going, could be heard, and then there began, so subtly that it was hardly noticeable at first, a deep jarring note like the back draught of an engine. Louder and louder, deeper and deeper it sounded, until it was almost possible to count the slow pulsations. Not only the ear drum felt it; it seemed to pound against the lungs and diaphragm, it almost took away the breath—the thunder throb of Baromi—"the great heart that beats forever!"

The steep walls had widened hundreds of feet above to a circular opening, letting down a ray of light, that as the sun declined, would soon be gone. Out of a ragged wound in the rocks poured a thin steam-like mist, and below it gushed out with no sign of froth or spray, the life blood. To one side was a flat ledge, scarcely three feet wide, and almost even with the water. Here the boatmen held the raft, and the King stepped out, dropping the cloak of native cloth from his shoulders, and standing there in the ray of light like a huge bronze statue. Soon the priest and Dallas stood beside him, and one of the silent ones having moored the logs to an iron bar wedged into a crevice, handed to the elderly man the bag or net of woven cord. It contained a gourd-shaped earthen vessel and three pairs of heavy sandals that were protected and stiffened at the toe with iron, the soles, though very flexible, were studded with short, sharp nails. Nogli without assistance, strapped the largest

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pair to his feet, and Dallas replaced the lighter ones that he was wearing, and followed the King's example. When all three were shod, the stopper was removed from the bottle, and they anointed their bodies with the heavy scented oil it contained. This proceeding, which was made a ceremony by the elder who accompanied his movements by constant genuflections and much mumbling, completed, the King pointed to the opening, and led the way. If he had shouted at the top of his lungs he could not have been heard above the deep note that seemed to set the very air trembling.

As they stood for an instant at the entrance a waft of warm air like the breath of some great monster, greeted them. Dallas had a sensation of unreality as if he were acting in a dream, the situation was uncanny, and a shiver of dread swept over him. What lay before?

Unhesitatingly Nogli stretched forth his arms, and flattening his great bulk against the stone, gained a finger hold somewhere, at the same time he swung out his foot in a long reaching step, felt for a moment to gain his balance, and with a sudden haul and push, disappeared. There was nothing to do but to imitate his movements. Fairly sick and dizzy from the sight of the black water sweeping beneath him, Dallas reached along the wall; it felt smooth and slippery, but stretching out to meet his groping fingers came a muscular hand, his own was guided upwards until he found a deep indentation with an edge that was raised enough for him to grasp, the toe of his iron-clad sandal had secured a resting place, and an instant

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later he had drawn himself around the protruding buttress to a firm stand beside the King. The unknown companion followed in safety. They had passed the portal!

It was not completely dark; as the eye became used to the gloom a path could be discerned slanting upward. Keeping one hand on the wall to guide him, Nogli pressed on ahead. The way grew steeper, the light less and less until it was pitch black, and now they began crawling, but the way was smooth; there were no stones or obstructions to wound knee or elbow; it was like ascending a pipe or tube laid down by giant engineers and long disused. Dallas was sure that they had passed several entrances or galleries that led in from the sides, and it was a comfort to feel occasionally the soles of Nogli's sandals or the hands of his companion as they touched his own. Why they could not have carried a torch or lighted fire brand was now disclosed; in such an upward rush of air, no flame could have lived an instant.

The roaring that had for a time diminished, now grew louder than ever, until the sound was deafening; its origin was plain in the sound of falling waters; a faint light showed a long way ahead. The breath was almost gone from the white boy's lungs as he crawled out and laid himself down beside the panting figure of the royal guide, on whom the journey had begun to tell. The hope that they had reached the summit died in Dallas' heart, for the position in which he found himself was the most perilous of all from first appearances. It was fairly light, but like the

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strange half gloom, half glare of a hot room in a turkish bath—almost within arm's length roared past a solid sheet of water; the spray was like the dash of rain hurled by a great gale, and from below came the bellowing of the mighty impact. It was sheer drop into the caldron of Baromi. Occasionally as the warm air veered a little, the pelting drops ceased, the mist lifted, and the mighty leaping stream could be seen where it poured over the lip of the well three hundred feet overhead. It was not black now, but clear emerald green ribbed with dancing ropes and ribbons of white that shattered into huge glistening pearls, that, in their turn, scattered, faded, and drifted off to mist. Fascinated, dizzy and deaf, Dallas watched.

But the trial of endurance and courage was not yet over. The King turned a determined but tired face to the boy beside him, and smiled. It was not a smile of encouragement, it was one of trust and almost humility. Back of it there showed no semi-savage indifference. No matter his mixed ancestry, shrouded in doubt and obscurity as it must have been, Dallas recognized the white man, gleaming through. Very gently the King put out his right hand in the greeting of civilization which he had learned from Sani-kuya.

"Ah santi—thanks," he said simply, and gratitude sounded in his voice.

Nogli rose at last, and, seemingly refreshed, nodded to the right. Then as he had done when entering N'Landa, he extended himself against the wall and

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side-stepped carefully toward the column of falling water.

Once Dallas had visited Niagara, and with Prentice had entered the Cave of Winds, where the mighty fall, plunging out from the cliff, leaves a damp passage-way behind its moving curtain. Here it was the same, on a lesser but more dangerous scale; instead of a wide space of twenty feet or more, and a railed platform to guard the visitor from accident, it was a scant twenty inches, and but a fissure for his fingers and a ledge but a hand's breadth wide for his feet. A backward slip and a quick but awful death!

Never had Nogli shown the slightest solicitude for either of his companions, and Dallas was soon to learn the reason why. Once back of the fall, and safely on the other side, a steep climb brought the adventurers to a wider ledge in the rear of which extended a chamber in the rock. A rough altar had been carved here, and probably in times past a bridge had crossed the chasm, but all trace but the merest of it had gone.

Now came the supremest test. The mist rising from the well drifted upwards, but clearing occasionally showed another ledge directly opposite, and a few inches lower; it was all of twelve feet across the opening. The elderly man, almost exhausted, staggered to the end of the cavern and threw himself down; his journey was ended, here he was to wait. It was not for him to reach Itanzu—only those of the blood-royal who might be Kings, went farther up.

Nogli turned and smiled again; he took Dallas' two

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hands and brought them to him until they touched the elephant head tattooed on his chest.

"Vila!" he said. "Wish me well across, O son of Molombiki."

With a sense of horror the young athlete saw that the King was going to make a standing jump of it—there was room for a few running steps, and they would help—but before he could interfere, Nogli had poised himself and leaped. He landed safe by a few inches. A mighty man he must have been in his prime, for the Bangwali sovereign was, as nearly as might be guessed, full sixty years of age!

Dallas took all the run he could in the limited space and came sailing through the mist to a secure footing. The King, who had not noticed the start, smiled again as he noticed how far he had been out-jumped.

The dangers were over—the rest was a simple climb of eighty feet up a well worn path to the summit. As he followed in Nogli's footsteps, Dallas could not help wondering at the courage of the man who had journeyed past Baromi to the summit for the first time. Many of the present ruler's forefathers had started and never reached there; some, as years had dimmed their sight and weakened their limbs and muscles, had preferred the quiet, painless passing of the Silent Grove, and others——

"Vila!" cried the King, interrupting his thoughts. "We are here, O Sanikuya!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE WINNING OF THE AMULET

THE scene that was spread before him so affected Dallas that for fully a minute he stood without moving. Nogli, too, remained in rapt silence, drawing long, deep breaths.

Imagine a black, polished bowl half a mile in diameter, above whose rim lifted sharp peaks that stood clear for a minute and then disappeared in the cloud that hung suspended like a soft coverlet ready to descend. Conceive this bowl half filled with a deep green liquid, dotted with great bursting bubbles and constantly in motion as if stirred by some living thing that swam beneath the surface. Rising but a few feet from where the swirling green edges lapped the bowl, stretched what appeared to be a ledge of gleaming ice—but ice that never melted, from which, streaming upwards to join the “crown of feathers,” soared spirals and waving plumes of steam!

So impressed was the new spectator of this wonderland that he failed to take note of his immediate surroundings. A gentle touch on his arm brought him to himself.

“Sanikuya,” said the King, “I am thy debtor; keep me strong to come here once again.”

THE WINNING OF THE AMULET

It was now that the white boy fully understood the meaning of the royal gratitude; the realization of the responsibility confused him.

"Is there no other way to Manaera?" he asked.

"None," returned the King; "as we came so we must return."

Dallas looked up at him and perceived that Nogli's face was drawn and his eyes tired; the long breaths he drew were not from awe or exhilaration but sheer physical exhaustion.

"Let us sit down and rest, O Molo Nogli," he said.

His companion did not reply, instead he gave a quick exclamation and pointed upward.

From a peak seen for that instant against the sky, poured a rolling cloud tinged with yellow, and even in the bright sunlight there was visible a flickering tongue of flame.

"Six times have I been here," spoke the King, "and before me my father and his people, and never yet has the fire been seen."

Dallas, like everyone who has traveled and read much, possessed a fund of general knowledge; he knew that the emerald lake spread before him occupied the crater of an extinct volcano, that the rising steam came from innumerable geysers, and that the ice-like floe that took such fantastic and beautiful forms was travertine deposited by the drip of the hot waters. The deep well and the passageway by which they had ascended to the summit was but a flume of a great chimney that led up from the everlasting fur-

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nace of the earth. Like the sharp ridges seen from the railway on the way to Port Florence, the whole of the Lanwaro escarpment was of volcanic origin.

The yellow smoke and flame was not in the least surprising. Dallas smiled at the King's accent of fear, and Nogli seemed reassured.

"Come," said he, "and what you see, tell no one."

Behind the point on which they stood were rounded, terraced steps that had once been chipped out of the gleaming geyserite, covered, and almost hidden by the deposit of ages. Up these slippery stairs, Nogli led the way to the encircling platform.

It was Dallas' turn to give an exclamation. The marvelous formations defied description. Here was a tall shaft quite as perfectly proportioned as an Egyptian lotus column; there an altar-like table, and on top a bowl filled with a liquid of all colors of the rainbow. There were urns and vases, monuments and tumuli of all shapes and sizes, from most of which wafted the white, lifting vapor. A heavy, sulphurous smell permeated the air and rendered breathing difficult.

But the most astonishing sight of all was the long row of entrances to what were evidently caverns extending into the walls of the smooth circular cliff; some were festooned and half hid in folds of delicate drapery, others presented the effect of Pylon gates, architecturally perfect; and not a few stood out from the cliff like the fronts of Grecian temples.

Toward one of the largest of these tomb-like structures Nogli led the way. As they neared the entrance

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Dallas discerned plainly the work of human hands; beneath the overlaying of sparkling calcinations, distinct and easy to trace were the blocks of volcanic rock of which the entrance had been built; keystone and arch, plinth and architrave were there. He remembered the steps cut in the great wall above Baromi, the remains of the bridge at the leaping place and the altar—the mysterious forerunners of the race had dwelt here or had used this mountain fastness as a place of worship.

Nogli, without hesitation entered; excited and entranced, Dallas followed at his heels. The choking sulphur gas was denser and at first almost unsupportable, stinging eyes and throat. To left and right were hundreds of curved objects neatly piled and coated with the omnipresent white sinter. Here was the reason for the rumors of the stores of ivory!

Dallas had stopped to rub his aching eyes and when he opened them the King had disappeared; there were galleries leading out from either side, and from the left came a sound of hammering. Moving in that direction, he met Nogli staggering forth, coughing and gasping, almost overcome by the strength of the noxious gases. It was only when Dallas had guided him to the fresher air outside that he noticed that, firmly grasped in the King's right hand was an irregular lump of geyserite that he carried with great care.

"I have it, Sanikuya," he whispered when he had cleared his lungs and could talk without choking. "It is for thee."

Exactly as a necromancer would perform a trick,

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and with almost the same exaggerated expression of triumph, Nogli shattered the brittle globe on the hard side of a giant basin and there rolled forth a tarnished golden bracelet that weighed at least three ounces. He picked it up and, tapping it gently to remove the residue of clinging crystals, put it on Dallas' arm.

"For thee and thy descendants—never to be bartered for—never to be given to one not of thy blood." Nogli had spoken the words gravely.

The boy took his hand and held it for an instant; suitable words did not come to him, so he said nothing.

"Come," continued Nogli, seemingly pleased at the effect of his gift, "I wish thee to see what is hidden here so safely—the secret of Itanzu."

They entered the treasure house again, but the fumes seemed to have gained in strength; it was impossible to take more than a few steps inside the portal. Three times they tried and were beaten back.

"When do we return to the river?" asked Dallas when they had descended the terrace to the edge of the lake, where the atmosphere was clearer.

"To-morrow, when the sun can be seen," returned Nogli. "It must shine above Lanwaro."

"And where do we sleep, O Molo Nogli?"

"We do not sleep," came the unexpected answer. "Those who lie down here do not awake; we must keep moving. When the night comes the vapors rise no longer."

It was not a pleasant prospect to keep awake when wearied to the uttermost and then to face the perils of the return trip, weakened and hungry, also. The

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air was warm and enervating, but there was no alternative. Like every desperate situation, it had to be faced bravely. Dusk found them both sitting on the dripping terraced slope, fighting off the desire to slumber that was almost overpowering.

"See, the fire is still burning," observed Nogli, pointing to the smoking mountain top. "It is an omen—tell me its meaning, O son of Molombiki."

"It means," said Dallas, answering perfunctorily, "that a great danger threatens."

"And will it come upon us?"

"I cannot tell, O Molo Nogli."

"But I will trust to thy powers, O Sanikuya."

"Not to me, ruler of happy people, not to me," and as well as he could Dallas for the first time began to tell of the God of the white man.

Down in Manaera the people stood with their faces turned toward Lanwaro; above Saniambi flickered and flared a great flame throughout the night.

CHAPTER XXVII

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THE thoughts that came to the two watchers by the lake were not calculated to prepare them for the test that would come with morning. In the effort to keep awake (for, as Nogli had predicted, the choking cloud descended like a pall after nightfall), they were compelled to rise frequently in order to keep their senses from being completely overcome. They spoke but little; the night seemed never-ending.

Six visits had King Nogli made to Itanzu; the first with his father over forty years before. When another ninety moons had passed would he still be able to make the journey? But one Bangwali sovereign had essayed the eighth trip and returned. Seven years would pass quickly, and then Molo Nogli would be called upon to try again; there would face him the climb and leap, or if his courage failed, a month of preparation and the Grove! This was the custom, and custom is law in Africa.

Under the guarding influence of the son of Molombiki, or the Great Spirit about Whom he had spoken, he had come through safely this time; would this influence be sufficient for the next?

Dallas kept turning over in his mind the desperate

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situation that confronted them. If the King made no better leap returning, when the landing place would be higher, than he had on the trip to the summit when the chances were in his favor, the tribe would have a new ruler before many hours. And how could he, himself, return without a guide? From what he had noticed he was convinced that the third member of their party had trusted on the way entirely to the King's knowledge of the labyrinthine passages.

When the sun rose the cloud canopy lifted. Nogli watched the shadows until at last he raised both hands and, beating his chest and limbs to stimulate circulation, proclaimed that the start must now be made.

In Dallas' memory the return journey long lingered as a nightmare experience. Often he would awake to see the huge form of the King tottering backward over the abyss, then he would recall that mad leap of his own that landed him almost on the royal shoulders and sent them both sprawling to safety at the feet of the waiting priest-counsellor. But after safely negotiating the cataract, the half-slide, half-scramble down the flume had brought them, scraped and bruised, at last to the opening where the hungry boatmen waited, for they also had fasted while on guard.

As they emerged from the river bank the raft was torn to pieces by the soldiers and floated down the current. Although they must have been sighted from the town, no one received them, and through the empty street they made their way to the palace. That evening the place was alive with noise and chatter and above the roofs lifted the smoke of many fires.

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For two days the wearer of the amulet did not see the King, and when at last they met at a feast that was apparently one of thanksgiving and rejoicing there was no reference made to the journey, and so far as he could remember no one had cast a second look at the gold bracelet that now, polished and shining, he wore around his wrist.

All this had happened but a week before the game of spear throwing that has been described in a previous chapter.

The night that followed had been marked by excitement in Manaera; the flame that had been noticed on the occasion of the King's visit showed on Lanwaro for the second time, and the next day volumes of dark smoke had poured upward, rising above the feather crown that in its shadow took on a tinge of yellow. Noises like the distant firing of great guns were heard and steam had risen along the line of the cañon. The shepherds had reported that the waters of the Koro-sani had turned so warm that their herds would hardly enter it to drink and that many dead fish were seen floating on the surface. But the phenomena disappeared after a few hours and the people, who beheld no warning in these strange occurrences, had forgotten them.

It was not so with Dallas. To him the flame, and especially the explosions, were merely a warning and a prophecy of nature, and held nothing supernatural. That the earth was but a ball of molten masses, cooled at the surface to a thin crust covering, could not be understood by the native mind, and he had entered

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into no explanation, hoping that the manifestation was but a temporary exposition of the might of the imprisoned forces.

Nolana, who had not shown the least jealousy over the fact that his blood-brother had taken the privilege that might rightly have been considered his own, came one morning to Dallas with joy shining in his handsome face. It was the time for lion slaying and a great hunt was being organized to skirt the country of the swamp land, and by the King's permission Sani-kuya was to go. N'Moki had also heard the news and was evidently excited. When Dallas had produced his rifle from its hiding place and was counting his cartridges N'Moki had come upon him.

"No, Bwana," he objected, "Nikamata msinga—you must not take the rifles. They are afraid of the lightning throwers. If you carry it with you they will fear you do not mean to return. It must be with the spear and the panga sword alone that you must go. It was only when it was known that Molombiki was going back to his own country that he was allowed to take the msinga with him. You'll be given shield and head-dress and——" for a second only N'Moki's eyes rested on the golden bracelet, "you'll be like the other sons of Nogli."

"We are going near the swamp, N'Moki," answered Dallas. "If you care for Molombiki, who saved your life, and if you care for me, help me to get across it, and to reach the lake."

The little black shook his head.

"No, Bwana, it cannot be. The swamp is full;

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no man can cross, and it is to a different part that we are going."

"N'Moki," said Dallas, half despairingly, "are you trying to keep me here, a prisoner? All day and all night I think of but one thing—to get back to my people, and it is you that I have counted on."

"Wait, Bwana, wait; have patience," was the reply. "And speak not thus to anyone. The time may come when, like Molombiki, you can depart without trouble or danger—smile and be patient."

The admonition was so much like the old adage of "Grin and bear it" that Dallas could not but laugh. But he determined to take N'Moki's advice, and when the hunting party, fifty strong, composed of ten young nobles and the burden-bearers who accompanied Nolan and a younger brother, a stripling who was to kill his first lion, the white son of the King set forth attired like all the rest.

It was a long time before Dallas got used to carrying the shield; it required a week or so's practice before he could so manage it that it did not impede his progress or tire his arm. The food for the journey was transported mostly in the posho baskets. They passed plenty of antelope during the first four or five days, but not a spear was thrown until within sight of the forest that edged the swamp.

If there were many lions in the neighborhood, they kept themselves well hidden, but at last fresh spoor was discovered, and with no little sign of excitement it was taken up immediately. The track led away from the forest in the direction of a group of small

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hills, and, although it was late in the evening, it was decided to surround them and commence the beat.

Dallas and Nolana were to ascend the westernmost hill and the lion was to be driven toward them. There was a bodyguard of some five or six warriors and one or two young nobles, but Dallas and the youthful prince who answered to the name of Nawi were given the posts of honor in advance.

As he stood there, waist high in the bushes, listening to the loud kalele, the cry of the beaters who were pounding on their shields, the white boy more than once wished for his trusty Express. The heavy spear and the sharp sword at his belt seemed most inadequate weapons with which to meet a charging beast, and the shield merely encumbered his movements. The cries were growing nearer and from the clamor that arose the beaters must have sighted the quarry. But this particular lion was not destined to meet his death that day.

It was Nawi, the young prince, who first saw it. He was standing but a few spear lengths from Dallas and had been waiting with the coolness of a veteran, his heavy spear resting on his shoulder, ready to be poised and thrown. The cry that he had given was not one of warning, but one of astonishment and fear; his eyes were staring, not into the bushes, but far out toward the eastern horizon!

Rolling upward and continually growing into the sky, like a black mushroom of gigantic proportions was a huge dark cloud, and through it, even at that distance could be seen vivid flashes of lightning, pink

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and scarlet in intensity of color. It was not a thunder cloud, although a bank of them hung in the western sky. What was happening the native eyes had never seen before!

As a boy of eight or ten Dallas had been traveling in Italy with his father and mother when Vesuvius had gone into sudden eruption. It needed no second glance to tell him what had happened. The prophetic threatenings of the long extinct Lanwaro had been fulfilled.

The cries of the beaters had ceased and there was not a sound; everyone had turned to the eastward, where the immense mushroom was rising and spreading as it reached the rarer strata of the air.

Such a tremendous convulsion of nature could not take place without other signs of the terrific force so suddenly expended. Counting the seconds, knowing that the sound would soon reach his ears, Dallas waited. But it was not the rumble of a great big explosion that suddenly made him gasp and start; it was the sharp crack of a rifle shot not more than a mile or so away from the direction of the swamp. Rifles and firearms of different makes have different sounds; it was surely the report of a Mauser!

If the other members of the party had noticed it, they paid no attention. But the silence of awe and astonishment had by this time been broken. Calling, gesticulating and pointing, the warriors had gathered at the top of the hill. Even those who had been behind him had rushed forward to join the others—the white boy did not follow. The column of smoke had told

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its story; the timely report of the rifle had told one also. To the eastward lay death and destruction; but to the west were men of his own color—and rescue.

Stooping low in the bushes so as to keep from sight, he started running like a hare; only one had turned to notice him; the sharp eyes of N'Moki had seen the sudden movement, and his keen ears had recognized the sound that had meant little to the others. Stooping also, so as not to be seen, he chased after his young master. More used to making his way through the tangle of bushes, he had almost caught him when there came a jar in the air and the earth seemed to tremble with the very force of it. There was a sound as if of a shiver from the forest—great strips of bark fell from the larger trees. The birds, wildly flying, started up from the branches, and the frightened chattering of the monkeys rose everywhere from the wood. A lion not far away began to roar—not the deep-toned challenge of strength or hunger, but with another note, as if in a torment of surprise and fear.

As they lay there, for both had been hurled together to the ground, N'Moki whispered:

“O son of Molombiki, what is it that has happened?”

There was no use of trying to explain, but, rising to his feet, still holding to the shield and spear, Dallas pointed with the latter toward the west.

“They have come for me,” he said.

“I heard it—the rifle shot! But what meant the thunder and the cloud? O Bwana, tell me!”

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"Lanwaro and Manaera are no more," returned Dallas.

N'Moki drew back, half crouching.

"And thou, master?" He changed his tone suddenly. "No, no, thou couldst not. It is Kuvuli, the Evil Spirit, strong in their absence to work his anger. Canst thou not return?"

"No, no, N'Moki, my way lies here. Choose. Will you come with me? Beyond lies freedom, but over toward the mountains there is no longer a thing alive."

A second explosion sounded and this time the earth did tremble and the ground moved like a wave under their feet. The tall trees beside them swayed drunkenly.

Although possessed of a courage that knew no fear of death, the latent superstition of the native mind stirred N'Moki to the very depths.

"O master, save me and I will go with thee!"

Hastening as fast as they could, the two figures slid through the strip of forest, one guided by hope and the other urged on by a terror that was new to him. The first thing that the white boy knew he was ankle-deep in water; before him stretched a wide lagoon, along whose sides grew, standing up from the surface, the curious rooted trees. The shot that they had heard must have come from beyond. Solid ground must be there! Dallas halted and, obeying an inspiration, cried with all the power of his lungs. A second or two only had he to wait, and then he heard a reply that started the blood tingling to his finger-tips. Tears

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came into his eyes; he fell to sobbing so hard he could not make a sound. The cry that had answered was the old St. Luke's call, that had echoed often in the New England hills. Though his own voice was still muffled and broken, he returned it. Out into the narrow water of the bayou appeared a strange object—a canoe. He could see the flash of a paddle and, standing up, a slight figure with the wreck of a pith helmet on his head. What the occupants of the canoe saw was a naked, red-brown warrior with a long shield and feather head-dress standing knee-deep in the muddy water, and the warrior called loud in English, wild, incoherent words of joy.

As the clumsy dug-out neared Dallas waded out to meet it. A great pair of arms was stretched out toward him, and Lindlay, looking like a stone-age man with a beard way down his breast, hauled him over the side. At the same moment the figure in the crushed pith helmet leant down to the water and grasped the elbow of a lean, black arm.

"And Chula, too!" he cried.

Laughing hysterically, Prentice pulled the little black into the bottom of the canoe, and then, falling forward, began to shake Dallas by the only portion of his anatomy that he could reach, which were his roughly sandaled feet.

Only Lindlay's skill at the paddle had kept the craft from being overturned.

"Back!" cried Dallas as soon as he could get his breath and collect his wits. "Back into the swamp; they may pursue us. Back to deeper water!"

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No second warning was needed; under the strong sweeping strokes into which Lindlay put every ounce of strength he had, the canoe slid down the open stretch of water until a tangle of green hid it from the shore.

There had been no fear of any pursuit, if they had but known it. The hunting party, with wild cries of fright, had separated in all directions; only Nolana, young Nawi, and a few of the nobles had kept together. They had called for Sanikuya, but there had been no response. Brave but bewildered, they had started in the direction of the great cloud, and one by one, as the deadly, swift-stealing vapors and the gray dust reached them, they had sunk down to the sleep that their ancestors had sought in the Groves of Silence, their fate forever unknown to their rescued blood-brother to whose participation in the events that followed we must return.

There were so many questions to be asked and answered on both sides and so many explanations to be gone into that it would take a volume to cover them. But the first one that Dallas put to his rescuers was this:

"Where is Jock?"

"Back on the island with our friends, the pigmies," returned Prentice. "He'll be mighty glad to see you again. Oh, Dal, Dal, I can hardly believe we've got you here at last!"

Rather excitedly, he began to tell of how they had followed the trail and met with the monkey people. He went on to recount how, for weeks and weeks,

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they had labored at making the dug-out, and how they had circumnavigated the island and explored the swamp. "We have found a way out to the west," he said, "but we were looking for the mouth of a river that the Lotungi said flowed into the swamp from the eastward and came from the mountains of Bangwaliland. One of the dwarfs had visited Manaera and possessed some information of the country. We hadn't given up hope of finding you. . . . But what are our adventures compared with yours?" he concluded suddenly. "Here I've been doing all the talking, as usual, and——" his eyes fell on the golden bracelet. "Where did you get that?" he asked.

"It was given to me by the King," answered Dallas slowly. "Oh, Prent, if you'd only met him! And Nolana, and all the rest! Gottlieb was right; they are not savages, they are the finest people, in some ways, that ever lived."

The sense of adventure ever latent in Prentice's bosom caused him to interrupt.

"Did you see the stone houses and the gold and the ivory? Couldn't you take us back there with you? I'm game for it."

There came a grunt from Lindlay, who had stopped paddling, and was listening. "Not for me," he said. "I've had enough; I'm going to take you two young sports by the scruff of the neck and bring you home to your mother, if I can. I'm kinder homesick, and," he added parenthetically, "there's something doing up at Kiley Brook about this time of the year. And now," he went on, poking Prentice in the back with

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a paddle, "if you'll hold your clack, perhaps we'll get the story out of this young Injun chief. Where were you when the lightning struck? Never saw any come out of a sky like that before; the thunder almost chucked us out of the canoe. We had just heard the hollerin' and fired the rifle to attract attention when there comes a slam-bang the like of which I never heard before, and then we heard you shout——"

"Whose doing all the talking now?" Prentice put in facetiously. "Go on, Dal, begin at the beginning. But in the first place let me ask you——" he subsided again at another shove in the back from the paddle.

"In the first place," began Dallas, taking up the words that Prentice had used, "it was not thunder; it was a volcanic explosion many miles away, and is the reason, I believe, that no one will see what I have seen again. Remember Mount Pélée and Martinique? That's what I firmly believe has happened. But I can't tell that part of it all at once. Let me begin at the beginning, although it seems as if I will have to talk for a week. Where's your camp?"

"Right here in the canoe," answered Lindlay. "We've got some grub, and it's eight hours' paddling and poling back to the island. We've got plenty of time—go on." He leaned back of him and reached into a basket, drew out a rough cake of native meal; he handed some to Prentice and N'Moki. "We'll talk and eat at the same time," he said.

The little black man was the only one who touched a morsel as Dallas began the recital of his story, taking up the tale from the time of his leaving camp so

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many months ago, months in which they had heard nothing from the outside world—an anxious time, they recognized, for their loved ones and friends at home.

Darkness came down on them as they sat there, with the bow of the canoe wedged into the roots of a tree. And Dallas had only got so far as his first sight of the marching men coming from Manaera when Lindlay interrupted him by beginning to sneeze loudly.

“What under the sun is this?” asked Prentice, rubbing his eyes. “There’s dust over everything; don’t you feel it? It is coming from the sky—put out your hand—falling like rain.”

Sure enough, there was descending a thin, impalpable substance, accompanied by a choking and disagreeable sensation that grew in intensity.

Dallas could not go on with his tale of wonders. In frightened silence they sat there gasping. “The volcano!” he managed to whisper at last, and as he pronounced the word there came a shivering glare from the east like an immense sheet of heat lightning. In a few minutes there came the jar of another explosion that set the waters rocking. Almost immediately rain began to fall, clearing the atmosphere and making breathing easier. At the same time a breeze stirred from the west, driving away the fumes, and from that direction came also flashes of real lightning and the growling that presaged a tropical thunderstorm.

Soon the branches about them were almost beaten down by the weight of water that fell from the

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heavens. There was to be no more story-telling that night. With the great watery ropes of rain there had come a furious wind, and all were busy baling the canoe with their hands and keeping the craft from turning over.

The monkey men, who had been driven from their nests to seek safety on the ground by the furious storm, greeted, at the eastern edge of the swamp the next day, their returning guests, who had with them a young Bangwali prince, evidently of high birth from the mark and golden bracelet on his arm. The bobtail "jackal" that had been left in their keeping, after a preliminary sniff at the new arrival's ankles, had leaped into his embrace, with whining cries of welcome lapped frantically at his face and neck.

* * * * *

The last explosion that had rent the sky that night caused fear and wonderment throughout a radius of four hundred miles; the inhabitants of the country that stretched to the seacoast will ever remember it, and captains of vessels traversing the Mozambique Channel recorded in their ships' logs the strange muddy rain and dust that descended on their decks. From Zanzibar to the north and as far south as Delagoa Bay the coast dwellers remembered the curious red sunsets and the white, gritty powder that, where no rain had fallen, had changed the green of forest and meadow to a dull gray.

Along the ridges of the rocky escarpment that

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stretched to the north had been felt two distinct tremors of the earth. Unknown to everyone, all these things had marked the passing of a people from the earth.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN MEMORIAM MOMENTI

IT is a far cry, as the story writers say, from the island forest and its kindly little inhabitants to the front-room of a big house not far from one of New York's big avenues, but let us set the scene and introduce the characters.

A tall woman, beautifully gowned, whose brown hair was plentifully besprinkled with gray, sat in a low chair before the open fire. Leaning against the mantelpiece with folded arms stood a young man whose light yellow hair threw into strong relief his bronzed complexion. Beside him, with one foot on the fender, stood a slighter figure, admiring, apparently, the tips of his patent leather boots. Something that he had said had caused all three to laugh. The tall woman, shading her eyes from the firelight, glanced from one to the other. "Oh, yes, it's all right to make light of it," she said, "but think of me all the time, wondering what had become of you; for the last seven nights I have wakened and stolen down to your rooms when you were asleep to make sure that I had you with me once again."

"You didn't have to look to see if Lindlay was there," smiled the shorter of the two young men, for

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they seemed boys no longer to Mrs. Rathbone's eyes. "I could hear him snoring through the walls."

"Too bad we couldn't persuade him to stay longer," remarked the lady. "But it seemed a shame even to ask it."

"I remember his once saying that there was something doing up at Kiley Brook at this time of the year," said Dallas, looking at the clock. "I think that what hastened him principally was the recollection of that girl who waved her hand to us when we drove away from The Sportsmen's Rest. You remember her, Tombo?"

"I sure do," replied Prentice. "When is Professor Duane coming?"

"He'll be here any minute," replied Mrs. Rathbone, "and now if he asks you to lecture at the Smithsonian——"

"He'll be jolly well disappointed," put in Dallas. "Of course, I'm answering for myself. If my friend, the orator——"

"Now look here, Chui, none of that. It's mostly your story, anyhow. And whether your reputation would stand the pressure or not, I don't know. They've got to take your word for a lot, and I've got the honest-faced Lindlay to back up my story, and 'pigmies is pigmies' and can be proved. When it comes to stone houses, and ivory, and stores of gold, and a private Yellowstone Park on the top of a mountain, people are apt to smile and nudge one another; and when the mountain goes off like a——" the speaker stopped and extended his hand—"I beg your pardon,

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old chap," he continued. "It was very thoughtless of me."

"Oh, that's all right," returned Dallas, "you weren't trying to hurt my feelings."

Every time, when telling his story, which he had been forced to do more than once during the week that he had been back at home, he had been deeply affected when it came to the recital of the probable fate of the gentle Nolana, the giant King, and his brave and contented people.

Mrs. Rathbone, who seemed more interested in the fact that she really had her two boys back again than in what had happened to them, came back to the subject.

"It has not been a year yet since you left, but it seems such ages. When I got that cable from Mombasa, telling me that you were safe, I think my hair stopped growing gray."

"We sent it from Port Florence," Dallas said, "the day the steamer landed from Mwanza."

"It was as if we had a special train from the very day we got out of the woods, and we came straight through. Of course," Prentice added, "we had to stop and get some clothes, for if you'd seen your eldest son, as I saw him, attired in a shield and a feather head-dress and a union birthday suit, you'd believe we had to stop somewhere, and Lindlay had to go to a barber; we insisted on that."

"And do you mean to say that all the way back on the train and the steamer you told none of your adventures?"

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"Well, you see, we'd agreed upon that," Dallas observed dryly. "If we'd begun talking at Mwanza, we might never have got home at all. They might have held us up to account for what had become of Geibler and Mann, and poor Frankel, so we put it off until we reached Mombasa, then wrote to the German authorities; it was the simplest way." He drew a long breath. "The one thing that disappoints me," he added, "is that Friederich Gottlieb will never hear the story."

"Poor man," responded Mrs. Rathbone, sadly, "I did what I could for him, but it was very little. I think he felt sorry for getting you into such a series of dangers; you know, I knew nothing of it until he told me, and I thought at first I could never forgive him. The dumb negro disappeared shortly after the funeral."

"Oh, we traced him all right," observed Prentice. "He had booked a passage on a tramp steamer for Aden, and that's about as near as he could get to Somaliland, where probably he has three or four wives and a family."

The footman appeared at the door. "Professor Duane," he announced.

Mrs. Rathbone rose to greet a distinguished-looking man with a white beard, who wore the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor on the lapel of his evening coat.

"Well, young travelers," he said, "you look as if you'd put years on your shoulders since the last time I saw you. I've come for a long evening."

"But we'll have dinner first and then adjourn for

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the séance," said Mrs. Rathbone lightly. "And, mind you, I'm going to sit up with you."

Dallas slipped his arm around his mother's waist, and she in her turn placed her hand on Prentice's shoulder.

"I should think, mother," observed the elder boy, "that you'd be tired of hearing it over and over."

"Sometimes," returned Mrs. Rathbone, "I don't think I listen very carefully. I just keep looking and looking and thanking God that I have my two boys back with me safe and sound."

* * * * *

"It looks to me," said the Professor, as he turned the golden bracelet over in his fingers, "like some work I have seen in the Museum at Alexandria, and yet it is a little different from anything Egyptian. It is more like a piece that I remember having examined in the collection of the Grand Duke Alexis at Petersburg; it came from Asia Minor. Yes, this is Phœnician; yes, Phœnician surely. It is probably in the neighborhood of two or three thousand years old."

"But how did these things get to the top of a mountain in Africa?" asked Prentice.

"That's a mystery," answered Professor Duane slowly, as he gazed into the fire, "but in our studies and researches we run across much that baffles us. The Phœnicians were great explorers and travelers, and beyond doubt they had been down the East African coast; maybe they had formed settlements. Like men nowadays, they, too, were cursed with the quest for

IN MEMORIAM MOMENTI

gold. But one thing that you have told me, he went on, "interests me extremely; it is about the river that flowed from this wonderful source westward into the swamp, and the other stream that passing partly underground, as we know African rivers do, joined the Semiuyu. I doubt if there is any further water that flows into the big lake from the southward, and, if so, Itanzu, as you call it, must be the source of the Nile."

"That was what Gottlieb said," put in Prentice, "and here is the only white man that ever saw it."

Dallas said nothing; it was not his nature to claim honors or put himself forward. His thoughts ran back to that wonderful journey past Boromi.

Prentice's next words called him to the present moment. "What is the name of that river, Dal, the Kerosiney, wasn't it? I suppose it flowed like some kind of oil?"

"The Korosani," corrected Dallas, simply.

"I should like to have got a sight of this Bangwali tribe," remarked the Professor. "From their cranial formation it might be easy to trace their origin."

"There's one left," said Dallas. "We bade farewell to him at Nairobi."

"It's quite sad to think of him all alone," interposed Mrs. Rathbone. "I feel like making a trip, if only to thank him for all that he did for you."

"He said he'd wait for us," Prentice smiled. "Perhaps we'll go there again and we'll take you with us."

"And you'll take me, too," said the Professor. "We'll have a personally conducted party."

"Not forgetting the oldest veteran of us all," Dal-

RIFLE AND CARAVAN

las observed, pulling the ears of Jock, the terrier, who with his adaptable disposition had fitted himself into the customs of society.

It was almost in the gray of the morning when the party broke up. The Professor, who had made copious notes on Mrs. Rathbone's best correspondence paper, had promised to call again. The two adventurers, who felt quite talked out, had halted at the head of the stairway.

"Are you going to write it all up for him, as he requested, Dal?"

"No fear of that," was the response. "If they wouldn't believe Paul de Chaillieu and Friederich Gottlieb, who would believe me?"

"But there's the bracelet, Dal."

"Yes," answered the older boy sadly, "I shall keep that in memoriam."

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