

The Wings of the Morning

By LOUIS TRACY
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[CONTINUED.]

"Then you will be gratified promptly. These are our sentinels. Come with me to allot his post to the most distant one."

He picked up a fagot with its queer attachment, shouldered a rifle and smiled when he saw the businesslike air with which Iris slung a revolver around her waist.

They walked rapidly to Smugglers' cove, and the girl soon perceived the ingenuity of his automatic signal. He securely bound the block of wood to a tree where it was hidden by the undergrowth. Breaking the bullet out of a cartridge, he placed the blank charge in position in front of the hammer, the case being firmly clasped by a bent nail. To the trigger, the spring of which he had eased to a slight pressure, he attached a piece of unraveled rope, and this he carefully trained among the trees at a height of six inches from the ground, using as carriers nails driven into the trunks.

The ultimate result was that a mere swish of Iris' dress against the taut cord exploded the cartridge.

"There!" he exclaimed exultantly. "When I have driven stakes into the sand to the water's edge on both sides of the cove, I will defy them to land by night without giving us warning."

"Do you know," said Iris, in all seriousness, "I think you are the cleverest man in the world."

He was manifestly pleased by the success of his ingenious contrivance and forthwith completed the cordon. To make doubly sure he set another snare farther within the trees. He was certain the Dyaks would not pass along Turtle beach if they could help it. By this time the light was falling.

"That will suffice for the present," he told the girl. "Tomorrow we will place other sentries in position at strategic points. Then we can sleep in the castle with tolerable safety."

By the meager light of the tiny lamp they labored sedulously at the rope ladder until Iris' eyes were closing with sheer weariness. Neither of them had slept much during the preceding night, and they were both completely tired.

The first streaks of dawn were tipping the opposite crags with roseate tints when the sailor was suddenly aroused by what he believed to be a gunshot. He could not be sure. He was still collecting his scattered senses, straining eyes and ears intensely, when there came a second report.

Then he knew what had happened. The sentries on the Smugglers' cove post were faithful to their trust. The enemy was upon them.

At such a moment Jenks was not a man who prayed. Indeed, he was prone to invoke the nether powers, a habit long since acquired by the British army—in Flanders, it is believed.

There was not a moment to be lost. He rushed into Iris' room and gathered her in his arms. He explained to the

on the score of danger to the precious burden he carried. Now there was no time for thought. Up he went, hand over hand, clinging to the rough pole with the tenacity of a limpet and taking a turn of the rope over his right wrist at each upward clutch. At last, breathless, but triumphant, he reached the ledge and was able to gasp his instructions to Iris to crawl over his bent back and head until she was safely lodged on the broad platform of rock.

Then before she could expostulate he descended, this time for the rifles. These he hastily slung to the rope, again swarmed up the pole and drew the guns after him with infinite care.

"Now we are ready for them," he growled, lying prone on the ledge and eagerly scanning both sides of Prospect park for a first glimpse of their assailants.

For two shivering hours they waited there until the sun was high over the cliff and filled sea and land with its brightness. At last, despite the girl's tears and prayers, Jenks insisted on making a reconnaissance in person.

Let this portion of their adventures be passed over with merciful brevity. Both watch guns had been fired by a troop of tiny wou-wou monkeys. Iris did not know whether to laugh or cry, when Jenks, with much difficulty, lowered her to Mother Earth again and marveled the while how he had managed to carry forty feet into the air a young woman who weighed so solidly.

They sat down to a belated breakfast, and Jenks then became conscious that the muscles of his arms, legs and back were aching hugely. It was by that means he could judge the true extent of his achievement.

CHAPTER IX.

THE sailor went after those monkeys in a mood of relentless severity. Thus far the regular denizens of Rainbow island had dwelt together in peace and mutual good will, but each diminutive wou-wou must be taught not to pull any strings he found tied promiscuously to trees or stakes. As a preliminary essay Jenks resolved to try force combined with artifice. Failing complete success, he would endeavor to kill every monkey in the place, though he had in full measure the inherent dislike of Anglo-India to the slaying of the tree people.

This, then, is what he did: After filling a biscuit tin with good sized pebbles he donned a Dyak hat, blouse and belt, rubbed earth over his face and hands and proceeded to pelt the wou-wous mercilessly. For more than an hour he made their lives miserable until at the mere sight of him they fled, shrieking and gurgling like a thousand water bottles. Finally he constructed several Dyak scarecrows and erected one to guard each of his alarm guns. The device was thoroughly effective. Thenceforth, when some adventurous monkey, swinging with hands or tail among the treetops in the morning search for appetizing nut or luscious platan, saw one of those fearsome bogies, he raised such a hubbub that all his companions scampered hastily from the confines of the wood to the inner fastnesses.

During each of the two daily examinations of the horizon, which he never omitted, Jenks minutely scrutinized the sea between Rainbow island and the distant group. It was perhaps a needless precaution. The Dyaks would come at night. With a favorable wind they need not set sail until dusk, and their fleet sampans would easily cover the intervening forty miles in five hours.

He could not be positive that they were actual inhabitants of the islands to the south. The China sea swarms with wandering pirates, and the tribe whose animosity he had earned might be equally noxious to some peaceable fishing community on the coast. Again and again he debated the advisability of constructing a seaworthy raft and endeavoring to make the passage. But this would be risking all on a frightful uncertainty, and the accidental discovery of the eagle's nest had given him new hope. Here he could make a determined and prolonged stand, and in the end help must come. So he dismissed the navigation project and devoted himself wholly to the perfecting of the natural fortress in the rock.

That night they finished the rope ladder. Indeed Jenks was determined not to retire to rest until it was placed. He did not care to try a second time to carry Iris to that elevated perch.

One of the first things he contemplated was the destruction if possible of the point on the opposite cliff which commanded the ledge. This, however, was utterly impracticable with the ap-

pliances at his command. The top of the rock sloped slightly toward the west, and nothing short of dynamite or regular quarrying operations would render it untenable by hostile marksmen.

During the day his rifles at ninety yards' range might be trusted to keep the place clear of intruders. But at night—that was the difficulty. He partially solved it by fixing two rests on the ledge to support a rifle in exact line with the center of the enemy's supposed position, and as a variant on the outer rest he marked lines which corresponded with other sections of the entire front available to the foe.

Even then he was not satisfied. When time permitted, he made many experiments with ropes reeved through the pulley and attached to a rifle action. He might have succeeded in his main object had not his thoughts taken a new line. His aim was to achieve some method of opening and closing the breech block by means of two ropes. The difficulty was to secure the preliminary and final lateral movement of the lever bolt, but it suddenly occurred to him that if he could manage to convey the impression that Iris and he had left the island the Dyaks would go away after a fruitless search. The existence of ropes along the face of the rock—an essential to his mechanical scheme—would betray their whereabouts or at any rate excite dangerous curiosity. So he reluctantly abandoned his original design, though not wholly, as will be seen in due course.

In pursuance of his latest idea he sedulously removed from the foot of the cliff all traces of the clearance effected on the ledge, and, although he provided supports for the tarpaulin covering, he did not adjust it. Iris and he might be perdu there for days without their retreat being found out. This development suggested the necessity of hiding their surplus stores and ammunition, and what spot could be more suitable than the cave?

So Jenks began to dig once more in the interior, laboring manfully with pick and shovel in the locality of the fault with its vein of antimony.

Rainbow island had given him the one thing a man prizes above all else—a pure yet passionate love for a woman beautiful alike in body and mind. And now it was to endow him with riches that might stir the pulse of even a South African magnate, for the sailor, unmindful of purpose other than providing the requisite cache, shoveling and delving with the energy peculiar to all his actions, suddenly struck a deep vein of almost virgin gold.

To facilitate the disposal at a distance of the disturbed debris he threw each shoveful on to a canvas sheet, which he subsequently dragged among the trees in order to dislodge its contents. After doing this four times he noticed certain metallic specks in the fifth load which recalled the presence of the antimony. But the appearance of the sixth cargo was so remarkable when brought out into the sunlight that it invited closer inspection. Though his knowledge of geology was slight, he was forced to believe that the specimens he handled so dubiously contained neither copper nor iron pyrites, but glittering yellow gold. Their weight, the distribution of the metal through quartz in a transition state between an oxide and a telluride, compelled recognition.

Somewhat excited, yet half skeptical, he returned to the excavation and scooped out yet another collection. This time there could be no mistake. Nature's own alchemy had fashioned a veritable ingot. There were small lumps in the ore which would only need alloy at the mint before they could be issued as sovereigns, so free from dross were they.

Iris had gone to Venus' bath and would be absent for some time. Jenks sat down on a tree stump. He held in his hand a small bit of ore worth perhaps £20. Slowly the conjectures already pieced together in his mind during early days on the island came back to him.

The skeleton of an Englishman lying there among the bushes near the well, the Golgotha of the poison filled hollow, the mining tools, both Chinese and European; the plan on the piece of tin—ah, the piece of tin! Mechanically the sailor produced it from the breast pocket of his jersey. At last the mysterious sign "32 divided by 1" revealed its significance. Measure thirty-two feet from the mouth of the tunnel, dig one foot in depth, and you came upon the mother lode of this gold bearing rock. This, then, was the secret of the cave.

The Chinese knew the richness of the deposit and exploited its treasures by quarrying from the outer side of the hill. But their crass ignorance of modern science led to their undoing. The accumulation of liberated carbonic acid gas in the workings killed them in scores. They probably fought this unseen demon with the tenacity of their race until the place became accursed and banned of all living things. Yet had they dug a little ditch and permitted the invisible terror to flow quietly downward until its potency was dissipated by sea and air they might have mined the whole cliff with impunity.

The unfortunate unknown, J. S.—he of the whitened bones—might have done this thing too. But he only possessed the half knowledge of the work-



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Up he went, hand over hand.

girl as he ran with her to the foot of the rock that she must cling to his shoulders with unflinching courage while he climbed to the ledge with the aid of the pole and the rope placed there the previous day. It was a magnificent feat of strength that he essayed. In calmer moments he would have shrunk from its performance if only

ing miner and while shunning the plague stricken quarry adopted the more laborious method of making an adit to strike the deposit. He succeeded, to perish miserably in the hour when he saw himself a millionaire.

Was this a portent of the fate about to overtake the latest comers? Jenks, of course, stood up. He always stood square on his feet when the volcano within him fired his blood.

"No," he almost shouted. "I will break the spell. I am sent here by Providence, not to search for gold, but to save a woman's life, and if all the devils of China and Malay are in league against me I will beat them!"

The sound of his own voice startled him. What was all the fuss about? With a barrow load of gold he could not buy an instant's safety for Iris, not to mention himself. The language difficultly was insuperable. Were it otherwise the Dyaks would simply lumbung him until he revealed the source of his wealth, and then murder him as an effective safeguard against foreign interference.

Iris! Not once since she was hurled ashore in his arms had Jenks so long forgotten her existence. Should he tell her? They were partners in everything appertaining to the island. Why keep this marvelous intelligence from her?

Yet was he tempted, not ignobly, but by reason of his love for her. Once years ago, when his arduous professional studies were distracted by a momentary infatuation for a fair face, a woman had proved fickle when tempted by greater wealth than he possessed. For long he was a confirmed misogynist, to his great and lasting gain as a leader of men. But with more equable judgment came a fixed resolution not to marry unless his prospective bride cared only for him and not for his position. To a staff corps officer, even one with a small private income, this was no unattainable ideal. Then he met with the shame and agony of the court martial. While his soul still quivered under the lash of that terrible downfall Iris came into his life. He knew not what might happen if they were rescued. The time would quickly pass until the old order was resumed, she to go back to her position in society, he to become again a disgraced ex-officer, apparently working out a mere existence before the mast or handing plates in a saloon.

Would it not be a sweet defiance of adversity were he able, even under such conditions, to win her love and then disclose to her the potentialities of the island? Perchance he might fall. Though rich as Croesus, he would still be under the social ban meted out to a cashiered officer. She was a girl who could command the gift of coronets. With restoration to her father

and home, gratitude to her preserver would assuredly remain; but, alas, love might vanish like a mirage! Then he would act honorably. Half of the stored wealth would be hers to do as she chose with it.

Yes, this was a possible alternative. In case of accident to himself and her ultimate escape he must immediately write full details of his discovery and intrust the document to her, to be opened only after his death or six months after their release.

The idea possessed him so thoroughly that he could brook no delay. He searched for one of the notebooks taken from the dead officers of the Sirdar and scribbled the following letter:

Dear Miss Deane—Whether I am living or dead when you read these lines, you will know that I love you. Could I repeat that avowal a million times in as many varied forms I should find no better phrase to express the dream I have cherished since a happy fate permitted me to snatch you from death. So I simply say, "I love you." I will continue to love you while life lasts, and it is my dearest hope that in the life beyond the grave I may still be able to voice my love for you.

But perhaps I am not destined to be loved by you. Therefore, in the event of my death before you leave the island, I wish to give you instructions how to find a gold mine of great value which is hidden in the rock containing the cave. You remember the sign on the piece of tin which we could not understand. The figure 32 denotes the utmost depth of the excavation, and the 1 signifies that one foot below the surface, on reaching the face of the rock, there is a rich vein of gold. The hollow on the other side of the cliff became filled with anhydrous gas, and this stopped the operations of the Chinese, who evidently knew of the existence of the mine. This is all the information the experts employed by Sir Arthur Deane will need. The facts are unquestionable.

Assuming that I am alive, we will, of course, be copartners in the mine. If I am dead, I wish one-sixth share to be given to my uncle, William Anstruther, Crosshwaite Manor, Northallerton, Yorkshire, as a recompense for his kindness to me during my early life. The remainder is to be yours absolutely.

ROBERT ANSTRUTHER.

He read this remarkable document twice through to make sure that it exactly recorded his sentiments. He even smiled sarcastically at the endowment of the uncle who disinherited him. Then, satisfied with the perusal, he tore out the two leaves covered by the letter and began to devise a means of protecting it securely while in Iris' possession.

At that moment he looked up and saw her coming toward him across the beach, brightly flushed after her bath, walking like a nymph clothed in tattered garments. Perceiving that he was watching her, she waved her hand and instinctively quickened her pace. Even now, when they were thrown together by the exigencies of each hour, she disliked to be long separated from him.

(Continued on Sixth Page)