

The Wings of the Morning

By LOUIS TRACY
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[CONTINUED.]

"In the cave," he said, "you are absolutely sheltered from all the winds that blow or rain that falls. Our villa, however, is painfully leaky and drafty at present. When asleep, the whole body is relaxed, and you are then most open to the attacks of cold or fever, in which case, Miss Deane, I shall be reluctantly obliged to dose you with a concoction of that tree bark."

He pointed to a neighboring cinchona, and Iris naturally asked why he selected that particular brand.

"Because it is quinine, not made up in nice little tablets, but an natural. It will not be a bad plan if we prepare a strong infusion and take a small quantity every morning on the excellent principle that prevention is better than cure."

The girl laughed.

Curiously enough, the lifting of the veil upon the man's earlier history made these two much better friends. With more complete acquaintance there was far less tendency toward certain passages which under ordinary conditions could be construed as nothing else than downright flirtation. Thenceforth for ten days they labored unceasingly, starting work at daybreak and stopping only when the light failed, finding the long hours of sunshine all too short for the manifold tasks demanded of them, yet thankful that the night brought rest. The sailor made out a programme to which he rigidly adhered. In the first place, he completed the house, which had two compartments—an inner room, in which Iris slept, and an outer, which served as a shelter for their meals and provided a bedroom for the man.

Then he constructed a gigantic sky sign on Summit rock, the small cluster of boulders on top of the cliff. His chief difficulty was to hoist into place the tall poles he needed, and for this purpose he had to again visit Palm Tree rock in order to secure the pulley. By exercising much ingenuity in devising shear-legs he at last succeeded in lifting the masts into their allotted receptacles, where they were firmly secured. Finally he was able to swing into air, high above the tops of the neighboring trees, the loftiest of which he felled in order to clear the view on all sides, the name of the ship Sirdar.



The name of the ship.

fashioned in six foot letters nailed and spliced together in sections and made from the timbers of that ill fated vessel.

Meanwhile he taught Iris how to weave a net out of the strands of unraveled cordage. With this, weighted by bullets, he contrived a casting net and caught a lot of small fish in the lagoon. Among the fish caught they hit upon two species which most resembled whiting and haddock, and these turned out to be very palatable and wholesome.

Jenks knew a good deal of botany and enough about birds to differentiate between carnivorous species and those fit for human food, while the salt in their most fortunate supply of hams rendered their meals almost epicurean.

From the rusty rifles on the reef Jenks brought away the bayonets and secured all the screws, bolts and other small odds and ends which might be serviceable. From the barrels he built a handy grate to facilitate Iris' cook-

ing operations, and a careful search each morning amid the ashes of any burned wreckage accumulated a store of most useful nails.

The pressing need for a safe yet accessible bathing place led him and the girl to devote one afternoon to a complete survey of the coast line. By this time they had given names to all the chief localities. The northerly promontory was naturally christened North cape; the western, Europa point; the portion of the reef between their habitation and Palm Tree rock became Flley Brig; the other section Northwest reef. The flat sandy passage across the island, containing the cave, house and well, was named Prospect park, and the extensive stretch of sand on the southeast, with its guard of broken reefs, was at once dubbed Turtle beach when Jenks discovered that an immense number of green turtles were paying their spring visit to the island to bury their eggs in the sand.

The two began their tour of inspection by passing the scene of the first desperate struggle to escape from the clutch of the typhoon. Iris would not be content until the sailor showed her the rock behind which he placed her for shelter while he searched for water. For a moment the recollection of their unfortunate companions on board ship brought a lump into her throat and dimmed her eyes.

"I remember them in my prayers every night," she confided to him. "It seems so unutterably sad that they should be lost while we are alive and happy."

The man distracted her attention by pointing out the embers of their first fire. It was the only way to choke back the tumultuous feelings that suddenly stormed his heart. Happy! Yes, he had never before known such happiness. How long would it last? High up on the cliff swung the signal to anxious searchers of the sea that here would be found the survivors of the Sirdar. And then when rescue came, when Miss Deane became once more the daughter of a wealthy baronet and he a disgraced and nameless outcast! He set his teeth and savagely struck at a full cup of the pitcher plant which had so providentially relieved their killing thirst.

"Oh, why did you do that?" pouted Iris. "Poor thing; it was a true friend in need. I wish I could do something for it to make it the best and leafiest plant of its kind on the island."

"Very well," he answered, "you can gratify your wish. A tinfal of fresh water from the well applied daily to its roots will quickly achieve that end." The moroseness of his tone and manner surprised her. For once her quick intuition failed to divine the source of his irritation.

"You give your advice ungraciously," she said, "but I will adopt it nevertheless."

A harmless incident, a kindly and quite feminine resolve, yet big with fate for both of them.

Jenks' unwonted ill humor—for the passage of days had driven from his face all its harshness and from his tongue all its assumed bitterness—created a passing cloud until the physical exertion of scrambling over the rocks to round the North cape restored their normal relations.

At last they reached the south side, and here they at once found themselves in a delightfully secluded and tiny bay, sandy, tree lined, sheltered on three sides by cliffs and rocks.

"Oh," cried Iris excitedly, "what a lovely spot, a perfect Smugglers' cove!" "Charming enough to look at," was the answering comment, "but open to the sea. If you look at the smooth riband of water out there you will perceive a passage through the reef. A great place for sharks, Miss Deane, but no place for bathers."

They passed on. While traversing the coral strewn south beach, with its patches of white soft sand baking in the direct rays of the sun, Jenks perceived traces of the turtle which swarmed in the neighboring sea.

"Delicious eggs and turtle soup!" he announced when Iris asked him why he was so intently studying certain marks on the sand, caused by the great sea tortoise during their nocturnal visits to the breeding ground.

"If they are green turtle," he continued, "we are in the lap of luxury. They lard the alderman and inspire the poet. When a ship comes to our assistance I will persuade the captain to freight the vessel with them and make my fortune."

"I suppose, under the circumstances, you were not a rich man, Mr. Jenks," said Iris timidly.

"I possess a wealthy bachelor uncle who made me his heir and allowed me four hundred a year, so I was a sort of

Croesus among staff corps officers. When the smash came he disowned me by cable. By selling my ponies and my other belongings I was able to walk out of my quarters penniless, but free from debt."

"And all through a deceitful woman!"

"Yes." She ventured a further step. "Was she very bad to you, Mr. Jenks?"

He stopped and laughed—actually roared—at the suggestion.

"Bad to me?" he repeated. "I had nothing to do with her. She was humbugging her husband, not me. Fool that I was, I could not mind my own business."

So Mrs. Costobell was not flirting with the man who suffered on her account. It is a regrettable but true statement that Iris would willingly have hugged Mrs. Costobell at that moment.

Rounding Europa point, the sailor's eyes were fixed on their immediate surroundings, but Iris gazed dreamily ahead. Hence it was that she was the first to cry in amazement:

"A boat! See, there! On the rocks!" There was no mistake. A ship's boat was perched high and dry on the north side of the cape. Even as they scrambled toward it Jenks understood how it had come there.

When the Sirdar parted amidst the depths beyond the reef, and this boat must have broken loose from its davit and been driven ashore here by the force of the western current.

Was it intact? Could they escape? Was this ark stranded on the island for their benefit? If it were seaworthy, whither should they steer—to those islands whose blue outlines were visible on the horizon?

These and a hundred other questions coursed through his brain during the race over the rocks, but all such wild speculations were promptly settled when they reached the craft, for the keel and the whole of the lower timbers were smashed into match wood.

But there were stores on board. Jenks remembered that Captain Ross' foresight had secured the provisioning of all the ship's boats soon after the first wild rush to steady the vessel after the propeller was lost. Masts, sails, oars, seats—all save two water casks—had gone, but Jenks, with eager hands, unfastened the lockers, and here he found a good supply of tinned meats and biscuits. They had barely recovered from the excitement of this find when the sailor noticed that behind the rocks on which the craft was firmly lodged lay a small natural basin full of salt water, replenished and freshened by the spray of every gale and completely shut off from all seaward access.

It was not more than four feet deep, beautifully carpeted with sand and secluded by rocks on all sides. Not the tiniest crab or fish was to be seen. It provided an ideal bath.

Iris was overjoyed. She pointed toward their habitation.

"Mr. Jenks," she said, "I will be with you at teatime."

He gathered all the tins he was able to carry and strode off, enjoining her to fire her revolver if for the slightest reason she wanted assistance, and giving a parting warning that if she delayed too long he would come and shout to her.

"I wonder," said the girl to herself, watching his retreating figure, "what he is afraid of. Surely by this time we have exhausted the unpleasant surprises of the island. Anyhow, now for a splash!"

She was hardly in the water before she began to be afraid on account of Jenks. Suppose anything happened to him while she was thoughtlessly enjoying herself here! So strongly did the thought possess her that she hurriedly dressed again and ran off to find him.

He was engaged in fastening a number of bayonets transversely to a long piece of timber.

"What are you doing that for?" she asked.

"Why did you return so soon? Did anything alarm you?"

"I thought you might get into mischief," she confessed.

"No. On the other hand, I am trying to make trouble for any unwelcome visitors," he replied. "I intend to set this up in front of our cave in case we are compelled to defend ourselves against an attack by savages. With this barring the way they cannot rush the position."

On the nineteenth day of their residence on the island the sailor climbed, as was his invariable habit, to the Summit rock while Iris prepared breakfast. At this early hour the horizon was clearly cut as the rim of a sapphire.

He examined the whole arc of the sea with his glasses, but not a sail was in sight. According to his calculations the growing anxiety as to the fate of the Sirdar must long ere this have culminated in the dispatch from Hongkong or Singapore of a special search vessel, while British warships in the China sea would be warned to keep a close lookout for any traces of the steamer, to visit all islands on their route and to question fishermen whom they encountered. So help might come any day or it might be long deferred. He could not pierce the future, and it was useless to vex his soul with ques-



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tionings as to what might happen next week. The great certainty of the hour was Iris—the blue eyed, smiling divinity who had come into his life—waiting for him down there beyond the trees, waiting to welcome him with a sweet voiced greeting, and he knew, with a fierce devouring joy, that her cheek would not pale nor her lip tremble when he announced that at least another sun must set before the expected relief reached them.

He replaced the glasses in their case and dived into the wood, giving a passing thought to the fact that the wind, after blowing steadily from the south for nearly a week, had veered round to the northeast during the night. Did the change portend a storm? Well, they were now prepared for all such eventualities, and he had not forgotten that they possessed, among other treasures, a box of books for rainy days. And a rainy day with Iris for company! What gale that ever blew could offer such compensation for enforced idleness?

The morning sped in uneventful work. Iris did not neglect her cherished pitcher plant. After luncheon it was her custom now to carry a dishful of water to its apparently arid roots, and she rose to fulfill her self imposed task.

"Let me help you," said Jenks. "I am not very busy this afternoon."

"No, thank you. I simply won't allow you to touch that shrub. The dear thing looks quite glad to see me. It drinks up the water as greedily as a thirsty animal."

Iris had been gone perhaps five minutes when he heard a distant shriek, twice repeated, and then there came faintly to his ears his own name, not "Jenks," but "Robert," in the girl's voice. Something terrible had happened. It was a cry of supreme distress. Mortal agony or overwhelming terror alone could wring that name from her lips. Precisely in such moments this man acted with the decision, the unerring judgment, the instantaneous acceptance of great risk to accomplish great results, that marked him out as a born soldier.

He rushed into the house and snatched from the rack one of the rifles reposing there in apple pie order, each with a filled magazine attached and a cartridge already in position.

Then he ran with long strides not through the trees, where he could see nothing, but toward the beach whence

In forty yards the place where Iris probably was would become visible.

At once he saw her struggling in the grasp of two ferocious looking Dyaks, one by his garments a person of consequence, the other a half naked savage, hideous and repulsive in appearance. Around them seven men armed with

guns and parangs were dancing with excitement.

Iris' captors were endeavoring to tie her arms, but she was a strong and active Englishwoman, with muscles well knit by the constant labor of recent busy days and a frame developed by years of horse riding and tennis playing. The pair evidently found her a tough handful, and the inferior Dyak, either to stop her screams—for she was shrieking, "Robert, come to me!" with all her might—or to stifle her into submission, roughly placed his huge hand over her mouth.

These things the sailor noticed instantly. Some men, brave to rashness, ready as he to give his life to save her, would have raced madly over the intervening ground, scarce a furlong, and attempted a heroic combat of one against nine.

Not so Jenks. With the methodical exactness of the parade ground he settled down on one knee and leveled the rifle.

None of the Dyaks saw him. All were intent on the sensational prize



In the grasp of two ferocious looking Dyaks.

they had secured, a young and beautiful white woman so contentedly roaming about the shores of this fetish is-

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