

THE LOST WORLD

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

(Continued from Yesterday.)

Madman that I was to linger so long before I died! Up to this he had hunted by scent, and his movements were slow. But he had actually seen me as I started to run. From then onwards he had hunted by sight, for the path showed him where I had gone. Now, as he came round the curve, he was springing in great bounds. The moonlight shone upon his projecting horns, and the enormous teeth in his open mouth, and the gleaming fringe of claws upon his short powerful forearms. With a scream of terror I turned and rushed wildly down the path. Behind me the thick, rasping breathing of the creature sounded louder and louder. Every instant I expected to feel his grip upon my back. And then suddenly there came a crash—I was falling through space, and everything beyond was darkness and rest.

As I emerged from my unconsciousness—which could not, I think, have lasted more than a few minutes—I was aware of a most dreadful and penetrating smell. Putting out my hand in the darkness I came upon something which felt like a huge lump of meat, while my other hand closed upon a large bone. Up above me there was a circle of starlit sky, which showed me that I was lying at the bottom of a deep pit. Slowly I staggered to my feet and felt myself all over. I was stiff and sore from head to foot, but there was no limb which would not move, no joint which could not bend. As the circumstances of my fall came back into my confused brain, I looked up in terror, expecting to see that dreadful head alighted against the walls of the pit. There was no sign of the monster, however, nor could I hear any sound from above. I began to walk slowly round, therefore, feeling in every direction to find out what this strange place could be into which I had been so opportunely precipitated.

It was, as I have said, a pit, with sharply-sloping walls and a level bottom about twenty feet across. This bottom was littered with great goblets of flesh, most of which was in the last state of putridity. The atmosphere was poisonous and horrible. After tripping and stumbling over these lumps of decay, I came suddenly against something hard, and I found that an upright post was firmly fixed in the center of the hollow. It was so high that I could not reach the top of it with my hand, and it appeared to be covered with green moss. Suddenly I remembered that I had

a tin box of wax-vestas in my pocket. Striking one of them, I was able at last to form some opinion of this place into which I had fallen. There could be no question as to its nature. It was a trap—made by the hand of man. The post in the center, some nine feet long, was sharpened at the upper end, and was bladed with the stale blood of the creatures which had been impaled upon it. The remains scattered about were fragments of the victims, which had been cut away in order to clear the stake for the next who might blunder in. I remembered that Challenger had declared that man could not exist upon the plateau, since with his feeble weapons he could not hold his own against the monsters who roamed over it. But now it was clear enough how it could be done. In their narrow-mouthed axes the natives, wherever they might be, had refuges into which the huge saurians could not penetrate, while with their developed brains they were capable of setting such traps, covered with branches across the paths which marked the run of the animals as would destroy them in spite of all their strength and activity. Man was always the master.

The sloping wall of the pit was not difficult for an active man to climb, but I hesitated long before I trusted myself within reach of the dreadful creature which had so nearly destroyed me. How did I know that he was not lurking in the nearest clump of bushes, waiting for my reappearance? I took heart, however, as I recalled a conversation between Challenger and Summerlee upon the habits of the great saurians. Both were agreed that the monsters were practically brainless, that there was no room for reason in their tiny cranial cavities, and that if they have disappeared from the rest of the world it was assuredly on account of their own stupidity, which made it impossible for them to adapt themselves to changing conditions.

I clambered to the edge of the pit and looked over. The stars were fading, the sky was whitening, and the cold wind of morning blew pleasantly upon my face. I could see or hear nothing of my enemy, so slowly I climbed out and sat for a while upon the ground, ready to spring back into my refuge if any danger should appear. Then, reassured by the absolute stillness, and by the growing light, I took my courage in both hands and stole back along the path which I had come. Some distance down I picked up my gun, and shortly afterwards struck the brook which was my guide. So, with many a frightened backward glance, I made for home.

And suddenly there came something to remind me of my absent companions. In the clear, still morning air this sounded far away the sharp, hard note of a single rifle shot. I paused and listened, but there was nothing more. For a moment I was shocked at the thought that some sudden danger might have befallen them. But then a simpler and more natural explanation came to my mind. It was now broad daylight. No doubt my absence had been noticed. They had imagined that I was lost in the woods, and had fired this shot to guide me home. It is true that we had made a strict resolution against firing, but if it seemed to them that I might be in danger they would not hesitate. It was for me now to hurry on as fast as possible, and to reassure them.

I was weary and spent, so my progress was not so fast as I wished; but at last I came into regions which I knew. There was the swamp of the pterodactyls upon my left; there in front of me was the glade of the iguanodons. Now I was in the last belt of trees which separated me from Fort Challenger. I raised my voice in a cheery shout to allay their fears. No answering greeting came back to me. My heart sank at that ominous stillness. I quickened my pace into a run. The zarba rose before me, even as I had left it, but the gate was open. I rushed in. In the cold morning light it was a fearful sight which met my eyes. Our effects were scattered in wild confusion over the ground; my comrades had disappeared and close to the smouldering ashes of our fire the grass was stained crimson with a hideous pool of blood. I was so stunned by this sudden shock that for a time I must have nearly lost my reason. I have a vague recollection, as one remembers a bad dream, of pushing about through the woods all round the empty camp, calling wildly for my companions. No answer came back from the silent shadows. The horrible thought that I might never see them again, that I might find myself abandoned all alone in that dreadful place, with no possible way of descending into the world below, that I might live and die in that nightmare country, drove me to desperation. I could have torn my hair and beaten my head in my despair.

Only now did I realize how I had learned to lean upon my companions, upon the serene self-confidence of Challenger, and upon the masterful, humorous coolness of Lord John Roxton. Without them I was like a child in the dark, helpless and powerless. After a period, during which I sat in bewilderment, I set myself to try and discover what sudden misfortune could have befallen my companions. The white disorderly appearance of the camp showed that there had been some sort of attack, and the rifle shot no doubt marked the time when it had occurred. That there should have been only one shot showed it had been only one who showed it. The rifles still lay upon the ground, and one of them—Lord John's—had the

empty cartridge in the breach. The blankets of Challenger and of Summerlee beside the fire suggested that they had been asleep at the time. The cases of ammunition and of food were scattered about in a wild litter, together with our unfortunate camp-gear and plate carriers, but none of them were missing. On the other hand all the exposed provisions—and I remembered that there were a considerable quantity of them—were gone. They were animals, then, and not natives, who had made the inroad, for surely the latter would have left nothing behind.

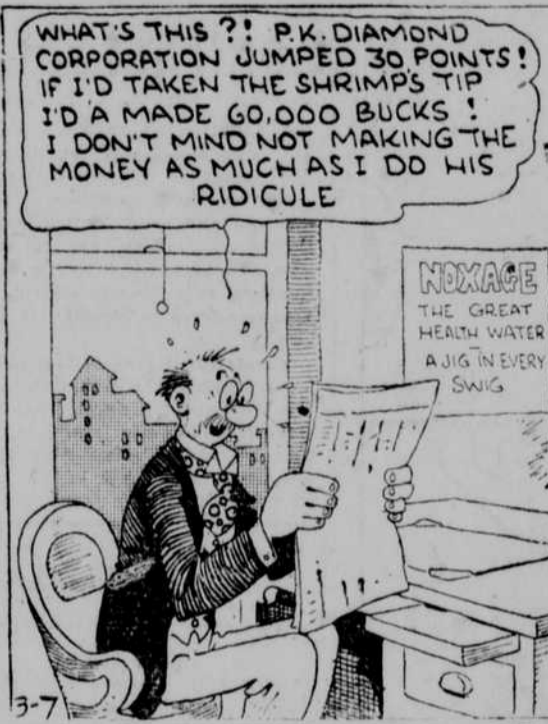
But if animals, or some single terrible animal, then what had become of my comrades? A ferocious beast would surely have destroyed them and left their remains. It is true that there was that one hideous pool of blood, which told of violence. Such a monster as had pursued me during the night could help me to conclusion. Once I lost myself, and I was only by good luck, and after a hour of wandering that I found the camp once more.

to think it out with my confused and weary brain the less could I find any plausible explanation. I searched round in the forest, but could see no tracks which could help me to conclusion. Once I lost myself, and I was only by good luck, and after a hour of wandering that I found the camp once more.

(To Be Continued Monday.)

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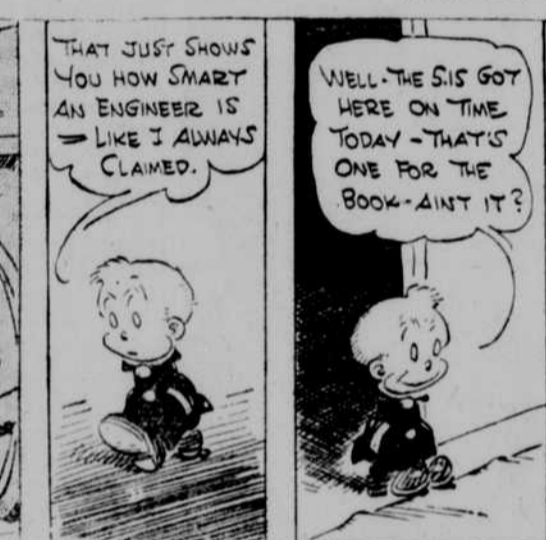
THE NEBBS



BRINGING UP FATHER



JERRY ON THE JOB



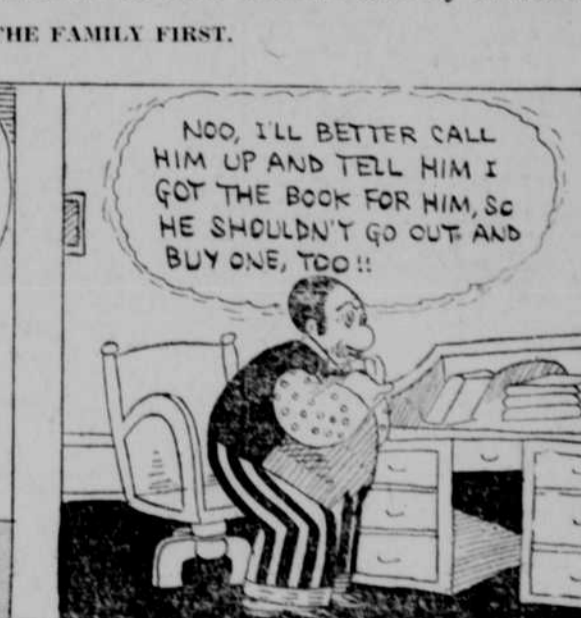
TILLIE, THE TOILER



The Lid's Off.



ABIE THE AGENT



New York --Day by Day--

By O. O. MINTYRE.

Cherbourg, France, March 6.—Cherbourg, despite its age old beauty, is a sort of comic opera town. You see a plethora of whiskers, children in wooden shoes, peasants, more hotel runners and the man from Cook's.

The dinky little tender is captained by a man with the bushiest beard I ever beheld. You think of a colossal fern dish. And the swarm of porters reminds you of real pirates in manner and dress. Mine was a one-eyed specimen and like the rest the tip was greeted with surly disapproval.

Custom inspection is casual. The boat train to Paris transports you through beautiful sections of old Normandy with its vistas of peaceful rolling farmlands. Winter finds the grass green and only the trees show the stark ravages of the cold weather.

A slight breeze accomplishes comfort at Cherbourg as it does anywhere else in France. We were able to have a compartment intended for six to ourselves. The boat train meal is a wonder and is the first touch of French cuisine that makes Paris such a delight.

And a half ride from Cherbourg brings you to Caen, which was the home of William the Conqueror, and it was here that Earl Harold Godwin, the Saxon, took refuge after his banishment from England and made the contract to give the crown to William when he should be restored to his own.

Caen also offers a composite view of the exceedingly beautiful Gothic and Renaissance architecture. Normandy is noted for its fine horses and many of them were to be seen in the streets of Caen. The auto has not yet come to the old city.

It is the custom of many tourists to begin hitting it up on the boat train. Corks begin popping, voices lifted in song and portable gramophones were grinding out their Broadway ditties. Paris in near and restraint somehow goes glimmering.

The outer breakwater and fortifications at Cherbourg were commenced by Louis XVI in 1783 and finished by Napoleon II in 1858. The famous fight between the Alabama and the Kearsarge took place just outside the harbor and was watched from the hill above the town. The conquest of England by the Normans has always interested me and I thrilled to a stroll about the quaint city. In a curio shop I ran into a friend from New York who had arrived on another steamer. Six weeks before we had breakfast together in New York and neither of us knew at the time that our next meeting would be so far from home.

I noticed in the Paris newspapers and the continental editions of London journals purchased at Cherbourg that the cross-word puzzle has gripped Europe as much as America. They are featured on the first pages.

Tripe is a favorite food of Normandy. It is a dish we look about in the States. Here it is served very hot on special plates of what is called "iron stone." These plates are sloping and heat up in cooling down. With suitable genuflections to the Volstead act, it might be explained that it is dangerous to eat tripe and drink water. The people of Normandy wash it down with burgundy. Readers of Francois Rabelais will remember in what high esteem this illustrious connoisseur held this lowly dish.

As I write, we are nearing the outskirts of Paris. Eiffel Tower is etched in the gathering dusk. It is bright with new paint of yellow. And I read on board ship that the tower is nearing a state of decay that has become dangerous. For Paris to lose Eiffel Tower would be like New York losing its skyline. It is one thing every visitor to Paris is certain to remember. We are thundering into Gare St. Lazare.

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By Westover

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