

INTO THE PRIMITIVE

BY ROBERT AMES BENNET
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—The story opens with the shipwreck of the steamer on which Miss Genevieve Leslie, an American heiress, Lord Winthrop, an Englishman, and Tom Blake, a brusque American, were passengers. The three were tossed upon an uninhabited island and were the only ones not drowned. Blake recovered from a drunken stupor.

CHAPTER II—Blake, shunned on the night, because of his roughness, became a hero as preserver of the helpless pair. The Englishman was suing for the hand of Miss Leslie. Blake started to swim back to the ship to recover what was left.

CHAPTER III—Blake returned safely. Winthrop wasted his last match on a cigarette, for which he was scolded by Blake. Their first meal was a dead fish.

CHAPTER IV—The trio started a ten mile hike for higher land. Thirst attacked them. Blake was compelled to carry Miss Leslie on account of weariness. He taunted Winthrop.

CHAPTER V.

The Re-Ascent of Man.



AFTERNOON was far advanced and Winthrop was beginning to feel anxious when at last Blake pushed out from among the close thickets. As he approached he swung an unshapely club of green wood, pausing every few paces to test its weight and balance on a bush or knob of dirt.

"By Jove!" called Winthrop; "that's not half bad! You look as if you could bowl over an ox."

Blake showed that he was flattered. "Oh, I don't know," he responded; "the thing's blamed unhandy. Just the same, I guess we'll be ready for callers tonight."

"How's that?"

Show you later, Pat, me b'y. Now trot out some nuts. We'll feed before we move camp."

Miss Leslie is still sleeping.

Time, then, to rouse her out. Hey, Miss Jenny, turn out! "Time to chew."

Miss Leslie sat up and gazed around in bewilderment.

"It's all right, Miss Genevieve," reassured Winthrop. "Blake has found a safe place for the night, and he wishes us to eat before we leave here."

"Save' lugging the grub," added Blake. "Get busy, Pat."

As Winthrop caught up a nut the girl began to arrange her disordered hair and dress with the deft and graceful movements of a woman thoroughly trained in the art of self-adornment. There was admiration in Blake's deep eyes as he watched her dainty preening. She was not a beautiful girl—at present she could hardly be termed pretty; yet even in her dragged, muddy dress she retained all the subtle charms of culture which appeal so strongly to a man. Blake was subdued. His feelings even carried him so far as an attempt at formal politeness when they had finished their meal.

"Now, Miss Leslie," he began, "it's little more than half an hour to sundown; so, if you please, if you're ready, we'd best be starting."

"Is it far?"

Not so very. But we've got to chase through the jungle. Are you sure you're quite ready?"

Quite, thank you. But how about Mr. Winthrop's ankle?"

"He'll ride as far as the trees. I can't squeeze through with him, though."

"I shall walk all the way," put in Winthrop.

"No, you won't. Climb aboard," replied Blake, and catching up his club he stooped for Winthrop to mount his back. As he rose with his burden Miss Leslie caught sight of his coat, which still lay in a roll beside the palm trunk.

"How about your coat, Mr. Blake?" she asked. "Should you not put it on?"

"No; I'm loaded now. Have to ask you to look after it. You may need it before morning, anyway. If the news here are like those in Central America they are d-darned liable to bring on malarial fever."

Nothing more was said until they had crossed the open space between the palms and the belt of jungle along the river. At other times Winthrop and Miss Leslie might have been interested in the towering screw-palms, festooned to the top with climbers, and in the huge ferns which they could see beneath the mangroves in the swampy ground on their left. Now, however, they were far too concerned with the question of how they should penetrate the dense tangle of thorny brush and creepers which rose before them like a green wall. Even Blake hesitated as he released Winthrop and looked at Miss Leslie's costume. Her white skirt was of stout duck; but the flimsy material of her waist was ill-suited for rough usage.

"Better put the coat on unless you want to come out on the other side in full evening dress," he said. "There's no use kicking, but I wish you'd happened to have on some sort of a jacket when we got spilled."

"Is there no path through the thick etc.?" inquired Winthrop.

"Only the hippo trail, and it don't

other to swing the girl up beside him on the branch.

"All right, Miss Jenny," he reassured her as he felt her tremble. "Sorry to scare you, but I couldn't have made it without. Now, if you'll just hold down my legs we'll soon hoist his ludshup."

He had seated her in the broadest part of the shallow hollow, where the branch joined the main trunk of the fig. Heaped with the reeds which he had gathered during the afternoon it made such a cozy shelter that she at once forgot her dizziness and fright. Nestling among the reeds, she leaned over and pressed down on his ankles with all her strength.

The loose end of the creeper had fallen to the ground when Blake lifted her upon the branch and Winthrop was already slipping into the loop. Blake ordered him to take it off and send up the club. As the creeper was again flung down a black shadow swept over the jungle.

"Hello! Sunset!" called Blake. "Look sharp, there!"

"All ready," responded Winthrop. Blake drew in a full breath, and began to hoist. The position was an awkward one, and Winthrop weighed 30 or 40 pounds more than Miss Leslie. But as the Englishman came within reach of the descending loop he grasped it and did what he could to ease Blake's efforts. A few moments found him as high above the ground as Blake could raise him. Without waiting for orders, he swung himself upon the upper part of the creeper and climbed the last few feet unaided. Blake grunted with satisfaction as he pulled him in upon the branch.

"You may do, after all," he said. "At any rate, we're all aboard for the night; and none too soon. Hear that?"

"What?"

"Lion, I guess—Not that yelping. Listen!"

The brief twilight was already fading into the darkness of a moonless night, and as the three crouched together in their shallow nest they were soon made audibly aware of the savage nature of their surroundings. With the gathering night the jungle wakened into full life. From all sides came the harsh squawking of birds, the weird cries of monkeys and other small creatures, the crash of heavy animals moving through the jungle, and above all the yelp and howl and roar of beasts of prey.

After some contention with Winthrop, Blake conceded that the roars of his lion might be nothing worse than the snorting of the hippopotami as they came out to browse for the night. In this, however, there was small comfort, since Winthrop presently reassured his belief in the climbing ability of leopards, and expressed his opinion that, whether or not there were lions in the neighborhood, certain of the barking roars they could hear came from the throats of the spotted climbers. Even Blake's hair bristled as his imagination pictured one of the great cats creeping upon them in the darkness from the far end of their nest limb, or leaping down out of the upper branches.

The nerves of all three were at their highest tension when a dark form swept past through the air within a yard of their faces. Miss Leslie uttered a stifled scream and Blake brandished his club. But Winthrop, who had caught a glimpse of the creature's shape, broke into a nervous laugh.

"It's only a fruit bat," he explained. "They feed on the banyan figs, you know."

In the reaction from this false alarm, both men relaxed and began to yield to the effects of the tramp across the mud-flats. Arranging the reeds as best they could they stretched out on either side of Miss Leslie and fell asleep in the middle of an argument on how the prospective leopard was most likely to attack.

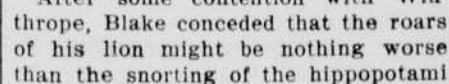
Miss Leslie remained awake for two or three hours longer. Naturally she was more nervous than her companions, and she had been refreshed by her afternoon's nap. Her nervousness was not entirely due to the wild beasts. Though Blake had taken pains to secure himself and his companions in loops of the creeper, fastened to the branch above, Winthrop moved about so restlessly in his sleep that the girl feared he would roll from the hollow.

At last her limbs became so cramped that she was compelled to change her position. She leaned back upon her elbow, determined to rise again and maintain her watch the moment she was rested. But sleep was close upon her. There was a lull in the louder noises of the jungle. Her eyes closed, and her head sank lower. In a little time it was lying upon Winthrop's shoulder and she was fast asleep.

As Blake had asserted, the mosquitoes had either been blown away by the cyclone or did not fly to such a height. None came to trouble the exhausted sleepers.

CHAPTER VI.

Man and Gentleman.



NIGHT had almost passed, and all three, soothed by the refreshing coolness which preceded the dawn, were sleeping their soundest, when a sudden fierce roar followed instantly by a piercing squeal caused even Blake to start up in panic. Miss Leslie, too terrified to scream, clung to Winthrop, who crouched on his haunches, little less overcome.

Blake was the first to recover and puzzle out the meaning of the crashing in the jungle and the ferocious growls directly beneath them.

"Lie still," he whispered. "We're all right. It's only a beast that killed something down below us."

All sat listening, and as the noise of the animals in the thicket died away they could hear the beast beneath them tear at the body of its victim.

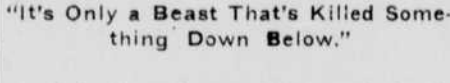
"The air feels like dawn," whispered Winthrop. "We'll soon be able to see the brute."

"And he us," rejoined Blake. In this both were mistaken. During the brief false dawn they were puzzled by the odd appearance of the ground. The sudden flood of full daylight found them staring down into a dense white fog.

"So they have that here!" muttered Blake—"fever-fog!"

"Beastly shame!" echoed Winthrop. "I'm sure the creature has gone off."

This assertion was met by an outburst of snarls and yells that made all



"It's Only a Beast That's Killed Something Down Below."

start back and crouch down again in their sheltering hollow. As before Blake was the first to recover.

"Bet you're right," he said. "The big one has gone off, and a pack of these African coyotes are having a scrap over the bones."

"You mean jackals. It sounds like the nasty beasts."

"If it wasn't for that fog I'd go down and get our share of the game."

"Would it not be very dangerous, Mr. Blake?" asked Miss Leslie. "What a fearful noise!"

"I've chased coyotes off a calf with a rope; but that's not the proposition. You don't find me fooling around in that sewer gas of a fog. We'll roost right here where we're till the sun does for it. We've got enough malaria in us already."

"Will it be long, Blake?" asked Winthrop.

"Huh? Getting hungry this quick? Wait till you've tramped around a week, with nothing to eat but your shoes."

"Surely, Mr. Blake, it will not be so bad!" protested Miss Leslie.

"Sorry, Miss Jenny; but cocoanut palms don't blow over every day, and when those nuts are gone what are we going to do for the next meal?"

"Could we not make bows?" suggested Winthrop. "There seems to be no end of game about."

"Bows—and arrows without points! Neither of us could hit a barn door, anyway."

"We could practice."

"Sure—six weeks' training on air pudding. I can do better with a handful of stones."

"Then we should go at once to the cliffs," said Miss Leslie.

"Now you're talking—and it's Pike Peak or bust for ours. Here's one night to the good; but we won't last many more if we don't get fire. It's flint we're after now."

"Could we not make fire by rubbing sticks?" said Winthrop, recalling his suggestion of the previous morning. "I've heard that natives have no trouble—"

"So've I, and what's more, I've seen 'em do it. Never could make a go of it myself, though."

"But if you remember how it is done we have at least some chance—"

"Give you ten to one odds! No; we'll scratch around for a flint rood and plenty before we waste time that way."

"The mist is going," observed Miss Leslie.

"That's no lie. Now for our coyotes. Where's my club?"

"They've all left," said Winthrop, peering down. "I can see the ground clearly, and there is not a sign of the beasts."

"There are the bones—what's left of them," added Blake. "It's a small deer, I suppose. Well, here goes."

He threw down his club and dropped the loose end of the creeper after it. As the line straightened he twisted the upper part around his leg and was about to slide to the ground when he remembered Miss Leslie.

"Think you can make it alone?" he asked.

The girl held up her hands, sore and swollen from the lacerations of the thorns. Blake looked at them, frowned, and turned to Winthrop.

"Um! you got it, too, and in the face," he grunted. "How's your ankle?"

Winthrop wriggled his foot about and felt the injured ankle.

"I fancy it is much better," he answered. "There seems to be no swelling, and there is no pain now."

"That's lucky; though it will tune up later. Take a slide, now. We've got to hustle our breakfast and find

a way to get over the river."

"How wide is it?" inquired Winthrop, gazing at his swollen hands.

"About 300 yards at high tide. May be narrower at ebb."

"Could you not build a raft?" suggested Miss Leslie.

Blake smiled at her simplicity. "Why not a boat? We've got a penknife."

"Well, then, I can swim."

"Bully for you! Guess, though, we'll try something else. The river is chuck full of alligators. What you waiting for, Pat? We haven't got all day to fool around here."

Winthrop twisted the creeper about his leg and slid to the ground, doing all he could to favor his hands. He found that he could walk without pain, and at once stepped over beside Blake's club, glancing nervously around at the jungle.

Blake jerked up the end of the creeper, and passed the loop about Miss Leslie. Before she had time to become frightened he swung her over and lowered her to the ground lightly as a feather. He followed, hand under hand, and stood for a moment beside her, staring at the dew-dripping foliage of the jungle. Then the remains of the night's quarry caught his eye, and he walked over to examine them.

"Say, Pat," he called, "these don't look like deer bones. I'd say—yes; there's the feet—it's a pig."

"Any tusks?" demanded Winthrop. Miss Leslie looked away. A heap of bones, however cleanly gnawed, is not a pleasant sight. The skull of the animal seemed to be missing; but Blake stumbled upon it in a tuft of grass and kicked it out upon the open ground. Every shred of hide and gristle had been gnawed from it by the jackals; yet if there had been any doubt as to the creature's identity there was evidence to spare in the savage tusks which projected from the jaws.

"Je-rusalem!" observed Blake; "this old boar must have been something of a scrapper his own self."

"In India they have been known to kill a tiger. Can you knock out the tusks?"

"What for?"

"Well, you said we had nothing for arrow points—"

"Good boy! We'll clinch them and ask questions later."

A few blows with the club loosened the tusks. Blake handed them over to Winthrop, together with the whisky flask, and led the way to the half-broken patch through the thicket. A free use of his club made the path a little more worthy of the name, and as there was less need of haste than on the previous evening, Winthrop and Miss Leslie came through with only a few fresh scratches. Once on open ground again, they soon gained the fallen palms.

At a word from Blake, Miss Leslie hastened to fetch nuts for Winthrop to husk and open. Blake, who had plucked three leaves from a fan palm near the edge of the jungle, began to split long shreds from one of the huge leaves of a cocoanut palm. This gave him a quantity of coarse, stiff fiber, part of which he twisted in a cord and used to tie one of the leaves of the fan palm over her head.

"How's that for a bonnet?" he demanded.

The improvised headgear bore so grotesque a resemblance to a recent type of picture hat that Winthrop could not repress a derisive laugh. Miss Leslie, however, examined the hat and gave her opinion without a sign of amusement. "I think it is splendid, Mr. Blake. If we must go out in the sun again, it is just the thing to protect one."

"Yes. Here's two more I've fixed for you. Ready yet, Winthrop?"

The Englishman nodded, and the three sat down to their third feast of cocoanuts. They were hungry enough at the start, and Blake added no little keenness even to his own appetite by a grim joke on the slender prospects of the next meal, to the effect that if in the meantime not eaten themselves they might possibly find their next meal within a week.

"But if we must move, could we not take some of the nuts with us?" suggested Winthrop.

Blake pondered over this as he ate, and when fully satisfied he helped himself up with his club he motioned the others to remain seated.

"There are your hats and the strings," he said, "but you won't need them now. I'm going to take a prospect along the river, and while I'm gone, you can make a try at stringing nuts on some of this leaf fiber."

"But, Mr. Blake, do you think it's quite safe?" asked Miss Leslie, and she glanced from him to the jungle.

"Safe?" he repeated. "Well, nothing ate you yesterday, if that's anything to go by. It's all I know about it."

He did not wait for further protests. Swinging his club on his shoulder he started for the break in the jungle which marked the hippopotamus path.

The others looked at each other, and Miss Leslie sighed. "If only he were a gentleman!" she complained.

Winthrop turned abruptly to the cocoanuts.

Continued next week.

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