

Into The Primitive

BY ROBERT AMES BENNET
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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, stunned on the boat, 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 scored by Blake. Their first meal was a dead fish.

CHAPTER IV.—The trio started a tent like for shelter. Thirst attacked them. Blake was compelled to carry Miss Leslie on account of weariness. He taunted Winthrop.

CHAPTER V.—They entered the jungle. That night was passed roosting high in a tree.

CHAPTER VI.—The next morning they descended to the open again. All three constructed huts to shield themselves from the sun. They then feasted on coconuts, the only procurable food. Miss Leslie showed a liking for Blake, but detested his roughness.

CHAPTER VII.—Led by Blake they established a home in some cliffs. Blake found a fresh water spring.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Club Age.

It was past two o'clock when the sun, striking in where Blake lay outstretched, began to scorch one of his legs. He stirred uneasily, and sat upright. Like a sailor, he was wide awake the moment he opened his eyes. He stood up and peered around through the half leafless branches.

Over the water thousands of gulls and terns, boobies and cormorants were skimming and diving, while above them a number of graceful frigate birds—those swart, scarlet-throated pirates of the air—hung poised, ready to swoop down and rob the weaker birds of their fish. All about the headland and the surrounding water was life in fullest action. Even from where he stood Blake could hear the harsh clamor of the seawall.

In marked contrast to this scene the plain was apparently lifeless. When Blake rose, a small brown lizard darted away across the sand. Otherwise there was neither sight nor sound of a living creature. Blake pondered this as he gathered his clothes into the shade and began to dress.

"Looks like the siesta is the all-round style in this God-forsaken hole," he grumbled. "Haven't seen so much as a rabbit, nor even one land bird. May be a drought—no; must be the dry season—Whee, these things are hot! I'm thirsty as a shark. Now, where's that softy and her ladyship? 'Fraid she's in for a tough time!"

He drew on his shoes with a jerk, growled at their stiffness, and, club in hand, stepped clear of the brush to look for his companions. The first glance along the foot of the cliff showed him Winthrop lying under the shade of the overhanging ledge, a few yards beyond the sand beach. Of Miss Leslie there was no sign. Half alarmed by this, Blake started for the beach with his swinging stride. Winthrop was awake, and on Blake's approach, sat up to greet him.

"Hello!" he called. "Where have you been all this time?"

"Sleep. Where's Miss Leslie?"

"She's around the point."

Blake grinned mockingly. "Indeed! But I fancy she won't be for long."

He would have passed on, but Winthrop stepped before him.

"Don't go out there, Blake," he protested. "I—ah—think it would be better if I went."

"Why?" demanded Blake.

Winthrop hesitated; but an impatient movement by Blake forced an answer: "Well, you remember, this morning, telling us to dry our clothes."

"Yes; I remember," said Blake. "So you want to serve as lady's valet?"

Winthrop's plump face turned a sickly yellow.

"I—ah—valet?—What do you mean, sir? I protest—I do not understand you!" he stammered. But in the midst, catching sight of Blake's bewildered stare, he suddenly flushed crimson, and burst out in unrestrained anger: "You—you boulder—you beastly cad! Any man with an ounce of decency—" Blake uttered a jeering laugh: "Wow! Hark, how the British lion roars when his tail's twisted!"

"You beastly cad!" repeated the Englishman, now purple with rage. Blake's unpleasant pleasantry gave place to a scowl. His jaw thrust out like a bulldog's, and he bent towards Winthrop with a menacing look. For a moment the Englishman faced him, sustained by his anger. But there was a steely light in Blake's eyes that he could not withstand. Winthrop's defiant stare wavered and fell. He slunk back, the color fast ebbing from his cheeks.

"Ugh!" growled Blake. "Guess you won't blab any more about cads! You damned hypocrite! Maybe I'm not on to how you've been hanging around Miss Leslie just because she's an heiress. Anything is fair enough for you swells. But let a fellow so much

set, and it's perfectly dreadful, you know!"

He paused for a reply. Winthrop only drew back a step farther and eyed him with a furtive, sidelong glance. This brought Blake back to his mocking jeer. "You'll learn, Pat, me b'y. There's lots of things'll show up different to you before we get through this picnic. For one thing, I'm boss here—president, congress and supreme court. Understand?"

"By what right, may I ask?" murmured Winthrop.

"Right!" answered Blake. "That hasn't anything to do with the question—it's might. Back in civilized parts your little crowd has the drop on my big crowd and runs things to suit themselves. But here we're sort of reverted to primitive society. This happens to be the Club Age and I'm the Man with the Big Stick. See?"

"I myself sympathize with the lower classes, Mr. Blake. Above all, I think it barbarous the way they punish one who is forced by circumstances to appropriate part of the ill-gotten gains of the rich upstarts. But do you believe, Mr. Blake, that brute strength—"

"You bet! Now shut up. Where're the coconuts?"

Winthrop picked up two nuts and handed them over.

"There were only five," he explained.

"All right, I'm no captain of industry."

"Ah, true; you said we had reverted to barbarism," rejoined Winthrop, venturing an attempt at sarcasm.

"Lucky for you!" retorted Blake. "But where's Miss Leslie all this time? Her clothes must have dried hours ago."

"They did. We had luncheon together just this side of the point."

"Oh, you did! Then why shouldn't I go for her?"

"I—I—there was a shaded pool around the point, and she thought a dip in the salt water would refresh her. She went not more than half an hour ago."

"So that's it. Well, while I eat you go and call her—and say, you keep this side the point. I'm looking out for Miss Leslie now."

Winthrop hurried away, clenching his fists and almost weeping with impotent rage. Truly, matters were now very different from what they had been aboard ship. Fortunately he had not gone a dozen steps before Miss Leslie appeared around the corner of the cliff. He was scrambling along over the loose stones of the slope without the slightest consideration for his ankle. The girl, more thoughtful, waved to him to wait for her where he was.

As she approached, Blake's frown gave place to a look that made his face positively pleasant. He had already drained the coconuts; now he proceeded to smash the shells into small bits, that he might eat the meat, and at the same time keep his gaze on the girl. The cliff foot being well shaded by the towering wall of rock, she had taken off his coat and was carrying it on her arm; so that there was nothing to mar the effect of her dainty openwork waist, with its elbow sleeves and graceful collar and the filmy veil of lace over the shoulders and bosom. Her skirt had been washed clean by the rain, and she had managed to stretch it into shape before drying.

Refreshed by a nap in the forenoon and by her salt-water dip, she showed more vivacity than at any time that Winthrop could remember during their acquaintance. Her suffering during and since the storm had left its mark in the dark circles beneath her hazel eyes, but this in no wise lessened their brightness; while the elasticity of her step showed that she had quite recovered her well-bred ease and grace of movement.

She bowed and smiled to the two men impartially. "Good-afternoon, gentlemen."

"Same to you, Miss Leslie!" responded Blake, staring at her with frank admiration. "You look fresh as a daisy."

Genial and sincere as was his tone, the familiarity jarred on her sensitive ear. She colored as she turned from him.

"Is there anything new, Mr. Winthrop?" she asked.

"I'm afraid not, Miss Genevieve. Like ourselves, Blake took a nap."

"Yes; but Blake first took a squint at the scenery. Just see if you've got everything, and fix your hats. We'll be in the sun for half a mile or so. Better get on the coat, Miss Leslie. It's hotter than yesterday."

"Permit me," said Winthrop.

Blake watched while the Englishman held the coat for the girl and rather fussily raised the collar about her neck and turned back the sleeves, which extended beyond the tips of her fingers. The American's face was stolid; but his glance took in every little look and act of his companions. He was not altogether unversed in the ways of good society, and it seemed to him that the Englishman was somewhat overassiduous in his attentions.

"All ready, Blake," remarked Win-

throp, finally, with a last lingering touch.

"Bout time!" grunted Blake. "You're fussy as a tailor. Got the



Crept Back Down the Trail.

flask and cigarette case and the knife?"

"All safe, sir—er—all safe, Blake."

"Then you two follow me slow enough not to worry that ankle. I don't want any more of the pack-mule in mine."

"Where are we going, Mr. Blake?" exclaimed Miss Leslie. "You will not leave us again!"

"It's only a half-mile, Miss Jenny. There's a break in the ridge. I'm going on ahead to find if it's hard to climb."

"But why should he climb?"

"Foot, for one thing. You see, this end of the cliff is covered with sea-birds. Another thing, I expect to strike a spring."

"Oh, I hope you do! The water in the rain pools is already warm."

"They'll be dry in a day or two. Say, Winthrop, you might fetch some of those stones—size of a ball. I used to be a fancy pitcher when I was a kid, and we might scare up a rabbit or something."

"I play cricket myself. But these stones—"

"Better'n a gun, when you haven't got the gun. Come on. We'll go in a bunch, after all, in case I need stones."

With due consideration for Winthrop's ankle—not for Winthrop—Blake set so slow a pace that the half-mile walk consumed over half an hour. But his smouldering irritation was soon quenched when they drew near the green thicket at the foot of the cleft. In the almost deathlike stillness of mid-afternoon, the sound of trickling water came to their ears, clear and musical.

"A spring!" shouted Blake. "I guessed right. Look at those green plants and grass; there's the channel where it runs out in the sand and dries up."

The others followed him eagerly as he pushed in among the trees. They saw no running water, for the tiny rill that trickled down the ledges was matted over with vines. But at the foot of the slope lay a pool, some ten yards across, and overshadowed by the surrounding trees. There was no underbrush, and the ground was trampled bare as a floor.

"By Jove," said Winthrop, "see the tracks! There must have been a drove of sheep about."

"Deer, you mean," replied Blake, bending to examine the deeper prints at the edge of the pool. "These ain't sheep tracks. A lot of them are larger."

"Could you not uncover the brook?" asked Miss Leslie. "If animals have been drinking here, one would prefer cleaner water."

"Sure," assented Blake. "If you're game for a climb, and can wait a few minutes, we'll get it out of the spring itself. We've got to go up anyway, to get at our poultry yard!"

"Here's a place that looks like a path," called Winthrop, who had circled about the edge of the pool to the farther side.

Blake ran around beside him and stared at the tunnel-like passage which wound up the limestone ledges beneath the overhanging thickets.

"Odd place, is it not?" observed Winthrop. "Looks like a fox run, only larger, you know."

"Too low for deer, though—and their hoofs would have cut up the moss and ferns here. Let's get a close look."

As he spoke, Blake stooped and climbed a few yards up the trail to an overhanging ledge, four or five feet high. Where the trail ran up over this break in the slope the stone was bare of all vegetation. Blake laid his club on the top of the ledge, and was about to vault after it, when, directly beneath his nose, he saw the print of a great catlike paw, outlined in dried mud. At the same instant a deep growl came rumbling down the "fox run." Without waiting for a second warning, Blake drew his club to him, and crept back down the trail. His stealthy movements and furtive backward glances filled his companions with vague terror. He himself was hardly less alarmed.

"Get out of the trees—into the open!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, and as they crept away, white with dread of the unknown danger, he followed at their heels, looking backward, his club raised in readiness to strike.

Once clear of the trees, Winthrop caught Miss Leslie by the hand and broke into a run. In their terror they paid no heed to Blake's command to

stop. They had darted off so unexpectedly that he did not overtake them short of 100 yards.

"Hold on!" he said, gripping Winthrop roughly by the shoulder. "It's safe enough here, and you'll knock out that blamed ankle."

"What is it? What did you see?" gasped Miss Leslie.

"Footprint," mumbled Blake, ashamed of his fright.

"A lion's?" cried Winthrop.

"Not so large—bout the size of a puma's. Must be a leopard's den up there. I heard a growl, and thought it about time to clear out."

"By Jove, we'd better withdraw around the point!"

"Withdraw your aunt! There's no leopard going to tackle us out here in open ground this time of day. The sneaking tomcat! If only I had a match, I'd show him how we smoke rat holes."

"Mr. Winthrop spoke of rubbing sticks to make fire," suggested Miss Leslie.

"Make sweat, you mean. But we may as well try it now, if we're going to at all. The sun's hot enough to fry eggs. We'll go back to a shady place and pick up sticks on the way."

Though there was shade under the cliff within some 600 feet, they had to go some distance to the nearest dry wood—a dead thornbush. Here they gathered a quantity of branches, even Miss Leslie volunteering to carry a load.

All was thrown down in a heap near the cliff, and Blake squatted beside it, penknife in hand. Having selected the driest of the larger sticks, he bored a hole in one side and dropped in a pinch of powdered bark. Laying the stick in the full glare of the sun, he thrust a twig into the hole and began to twirl it between his palms. This movement he kept up for several minutes; but whether he was unable to twirl the twig fast enough or whether the right kind of wood or tinder was lacking all his efforts failed to produce a spark.

Unwilling to accept the failure, Winthrop insisted upon trying in turn, and pride held him to the task until he was drenched with sweat. The result was the same.

"Told you so," jeered Blake from where he lay in the shade. "We'd stand more chance cracking stones together."

"But what shall we do now?" asked Miss Leslie. "I am becoming very tired of coconuts, and there seems to be nothing else around here. Indeed, I think this is all such a waste of time. If we had walked straight along the shore this morning we might have reached a town."

"We might, Miss Jenny, and then, again, we mightn't. I happened to overhaul the captain's chart—Quillmane, Mozambique—that's all for hundreds of miles. Towns on this coast are about as thick as hen's-teeth."

"How about native villages?" demanded Winthrop.

"Oh, yes; maybe I'm fool enough to go into a wild nigger town without a gun. Maybe I didn't talk with fellows down on the Rand."

"But what shall we do?" repeated Miss Leslie, with a little frightened catch in her voice. She was at last beginning to realize what this rude break in her shelter, pampered life might mean. "What shall we do? It's—it's absurd to think of having to stay in this horrid country for weeks or perhaps months—unless some ship comes for us!"

"Look here, Miss Leslie," answered Blake, sharply yet not unkindly; "suppose you just sit back and use your thinker a bit. If you're your daddy's daughter, you've got brains somewhere down under the boarding-school stuff."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Now, don't get huffy, please! It's a question of think, not of putting on airs. Here we are, worse off than the people of the stone age. They had fire and flint axes; we've got nothing but our think tanks, and as to lions and leopards and that sort of thing, it strikes me we've got about as many on hand as they had."

"Then you and Mr. Winthrop should immediately arm yourselves."

"How?—But we'll leave that till later. What else?"

The girl gazed at the surrounding objects, her forehead wrinkled in the effort at concentration. "We must have water. Think how we suffered yesterday! Then there is shelter from wild beasts, and food, and—"

"All right here under our hands, if we had fire. Understand?"

"I understand about the water. You would frighten the leopard away with the fire; and if it would do that, it would also keep away the other animals at night. But as for food, unless we return for coconuts—"

"Don't give it up! Keep your thinker going on the side, while Pat tells us our next move. Now that he's got the fire sticks out of his head—"

"I say, Blake, I wish you would drop that name. It is no harder to say Winthrop."

"You're off, there," rejoined Blake. "But look here, I'll make it Win, if you figure out what we ought to do next."

"Really, Blake, that would not be half bad. They—er—they called me Win at Harrow."

"That so? My English chum went to Harrow—Jimmy Scarbridge."

"Lord James!—your chum?"

"He started in like you, sort of top-lofty. But he chummed all right—after I took out a lot of his British starch with a good walloping."

"Oh, really now, Blake, you can't expect any one with brains to believe that, you know!"

"No; I don't know, you know,—and I don't know if you've got any brains, you know. Here's your chance to show us. What's our next move?"

"Really, now, I have had no experi-

ence in this sort of thing—don't interrupt, please! It seems to me that our first concern is shelter for the night. If we should return to your tree nest, we should also be near the cocoa palms."

"That's one side. Here's the other. Far to wade across—sharks and alligators; then swampy ground—malaria, mosquitoes, thorn jungle. Guess the hands of both of you are still sore enough, by their look."

"If only I had a pot of cold cream!" sighed Miss Leslie.

"If only I had a hunk of jerked beef!" echoed Blake.

"I say, why couldn't we chance it for the night around on the seaward face of the cliff?" asked Winthrop. "I noticed a place where the ledges overhang—almost a cave. Do you think it probable that any wild beast would venture so close to the sea?"

"Can't say. Didn't see any tracks; so we'll chance it for to-night. Next?"

"By morning I believe my ankle will be in such shape that I could go back for the string of coconuts which we dropped on the beach."

"I'll go myself, to-day, else we'll have no supper. Now we're getting down to bedrock. If those nuts have not been washed away by the tide, we're fixed for tonight; and for two meals, such as they are. But what next? Even the rain pools will be dried up by another day or so."

"Are not sea-birds good to eat?" inquired Miss Leslie.

"Some."

"Then, if only we could climb the cliff—might there not be another place?"

"No; I've looked at both sides. What's more, that spotted tomcat has got a monopoly on our water supply. The river may be fresh at low tide; but we've got nothing to boil water in, and such bayou stuff is just concentrated malaria."

"Then we must find water elsewhere," responded Miss Leslie. "Might we not succeed if we went on to the other ridge?"

"That's the ticket. You've got a headpiece, Miss Jenny! It's too late to start now. But first thing to-morrow I'll take a run down that way, while you two lay around camp and see if you can twist some sort of fish-line out of coconut fiber. By braiding your hair, Miss Jenny, you can spare us your hair-pins for hooks."

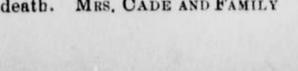
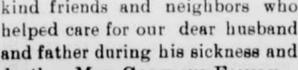
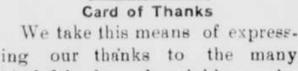
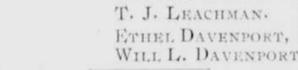
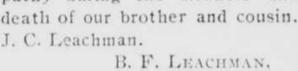
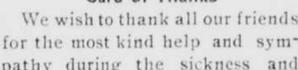
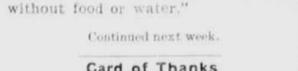
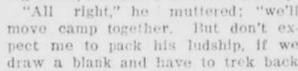
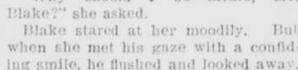
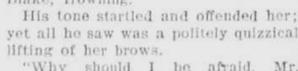
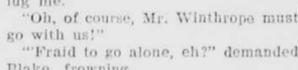
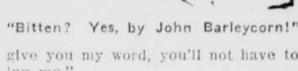
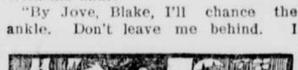
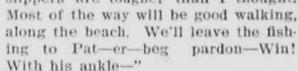
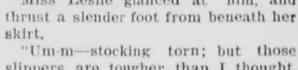
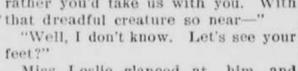
"But, Mr. Blake, I'm afraid—I'd rather you'd take us with you. With that dreadful creature so near—"

"Well, I don't know. Let's see your feet?"

Miss Leslie glanced at him, and thrust a slender foot from beneath her skirt.

"Um—stocking torn; but those slippers are tougher than I thought. Most of the way will be good walking, along the beach. We'll leave the fishing to Pat—er—beg pardon—Win! With his ankle—"

"By Jove, Blake, I'll chance the ankle. Don't leave me behind. I



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"Bitten? Yes, by John Barleycorn!"

give you my word, you'll not have to lug me."

"Oh, of course, Mr. Winthrop must go with us!"

"'Fraid to go alone, eh?" demanded Blake, frowning.

His tone startled and offended her; yet all he saw was a politely quizzical lifting of her brows.

"Why should I be afraid, Mr. Blake?" she asked.

Blake stared at her moodily. But when she met his gaze with a confident smile, he flushed and looked away.

"All right," he muttered; "we'll move camp together, but don't expect me to pack his ludship, if we draw a blank and have to trek back without food or water."

Continued next week.

Card of Thanks

We wish to thank all our friends for the most kind help and sympathy during the sickness and death of our brother and cousin, J. C. Leachman.

B. F. LEACHMAN,
T. J. LEACHMAN,
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Card of Thanks

We take this means of expressing our thanks to the many