

# THE ARGOSY.

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## AN AFRICAN SECRET.

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*An experience in the heart of the Dark Continent. The strange manner in which an American chances on a fellow countryman of whom he is in search, and the terrifying chain of incidents to which association with him gives rise.*

### CHAPTER I. A MAN IN THE AIR.

FOR more than an hour it had been a steady ascent, and when, at last, these two wanderers in the heart of Africa emerged from the blind forest, they saw a considerable stretch of comparatively barren upland before them.

They halted as with one will and gazed across it.

“Well, Pan,” said one of them, in a cheerful voice from which months of roughing it had not taken the Yankee twang, “it’s not yet noon. We’d better keep on and have our midday snooze among the trees at the top there.”

He pointed to what seemed to be a fringe of forest along the horizon at the summit of the slope.

“Yes, Mr. Bradshaw,” the other assented quietly.

They resumed their march without further words, the American striding a little in advance of his companion, who

seemed, therefore, to be more a servant than a guide.

So it was, indeed, for although the black man had been engaged on the strength of his extraordinary familiarity with the interior of equatorial Africa and the tribes that dwell there, the American had long since pushed on to regions as little known to the guide as to himself; and this fact added to Bradshaw’s unassuming gift of leadership, caused Pan instinctively to follow rather than lead, or even presume so far as to walk abreast of his employer.

His full name was Pantonga, or something like that. Maybe he had been endowed with a long string of names besides, but if so, he himself had forgotten them, and when Bradshaw made his acquaintance at St. Paul de Loanga, the black had smilingly said that white men, if they began by calling him Pantonga, speedily shortened it to Pan, and that it might as well be Pan

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from the start.

Pan's trade, if so it could be called, was that of assistant to explorers.

You know, every white man who makes a bit of an excursion into Africa is an "explorer." He may never venture to step aside from the well beaten caravan roads, or plunge so far into the wilds that a card with Uncle Sam's stamp on it will not overtake him. Nevertheless, and particularly in his letters to his local paper, he is an explorer.

There is room in immense Africa for many such, and it is not a difficult matter to pick them up if you look for them at any of the few important seaports. As that is just what Pan was shrewd enough to do, he had come in contact with many Englishmen and Americans, to say nothing of the fact that he had had his first lessons in the real business of exploring from the great Stanley.

He would not have been able to follow this vocation if he had not been possessed of far more intelligence than the average African, and being thus favored in the way of ability and opportunity, he had acquired a good working knowledge of the English language, a consideration of no little value to a man like Bradshaw.

Moreover, Pan had a smattering, at least, of many a tribal language and dialect, and on the rare occasions where words failed him, he could rival deaf mutes in the facility with which he

made his wants known by signs.

Altogether Pan was about as near the ideal for guide, companion, and servant as one could hope to find, and his present employer had had no reason to be other than satisfied with him.

"You know, Pan," said Bradshaw, after they had tramped a time in silence, "the most singular thing about this country is something that is a long way from it."

As he spoke he flicked the perspiration from his cheeks with his fingers.

"Yes?" responded Pan, uncomprehending.

"I'm alluding to the sun, my esteemed friend," continued Bradshaw in an airy way that he often adopted when conversing with the black. "The sun, as perhaps you have observed, is quite some distance away."

"I have walked many days' journey," said Pan gravely, "and never have caught up with it."

Bradshaw chuckled. "And yet," he rambled on, "the same sun shines on America, but, so help me the respected memory of Sam Hill, it never bakes, boils, fries and sizzles human beings there as it does here, not even in City Hall Park, New York, which is the hottest place on a summer day, Pan, that my country knows."

"I should like to see it once," remarked Pan.

"Oh, once! A thousand times!" cried Bradshaw, vehemently.

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Then he drew a long breath and shook his head as if to dismiss thoughts that might make him wish to retrace his steps before he had accomplished the task that brought him to Africa.

"The odd thing is," he continued lightly, "that in America the grass and trees grow up just as they do here. They never grow downward. They're mostly green, too. Of course, the ferocious beasts that drag our wagons and others that bark at our heels are somewhat different from the playful lions and dignified elephants that one meets here, but after all the really singular thing about Africa is the sun. It wasn't so bad while we were crawling through the jungle, but here it's—it's—confound it, Pan! it has baked such a hard crust over all my ideas that I can't get one of 'em out."

"I am sorry, Mr. Bradshaw," said Pan, so sincerely that the American laughed outright.

"You beat Sam Hill, Pan," he chuckled, and then, suddenly changing his manner, "we don't want to get much further from the caravan, do we?" he asked.

By caravan, Bradshaw meant his pack train.

There is no making a real journey in Africa without one. Bradshaw's train consisted of a score or more of blacks, all of whom were as much lower in intelligence than Pan as Pan was supposedly lower than his employer.

They carried camp utensils, they

cleared away undergrowth when it obstructed progress, and they were prepared to carry the white traveler himself if at any time he tired of walking.

That was often enough, if Bradshaw's loud grumbling conveyed a particle of truth, but thus far he had not permitted himself to be carried a rod. On the contrary, he had forced the pace, and to such purpose that three of his original train had been unable to stand it, and they had been sent back to the coast at different intervals with letters to be mailed home.

Bradshaw never could endure to refer to his cohort as "train." He told Pan that the word was too suggestive of better modes of traveling, and Pan, though comprehending but dimly his employer's meaning, obediently abandoned the word, and never referred to the company as other than "the caravan."

At this time the caravan was resting in the forest. It had occurred more than once during the journey that the travelers found they had adopted an impracticable route. On such occasions Bradshaw and Pan went on alone for the purpose of discovering, if possible, a better way.

Often, too, this pair made side excursions of considerable extent even when no exigency of the journey had arisen to demand such effort.

Responding to Bradshaw's question, Pan pointed toward the summit of the

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slope up which they were toiling.

"I think," said he, "there must be a river beyond there. We can soon tell."

"I wouldn't mind giving my feet a chance with a few days on a raft," grumbled Bradshaw.

As they neared the forest, which proved to be much less extensive than it had appeared to be from below, a large bird with brilliant plumage soared away from a tree and hovered for a moment as if in curiosity over the travelers' heads.

Instinctively Bradshaw's hand reached for the rifle that was slung across his back, but it was a spasmodic motion merely. The weapon was left untouched.

He had been too long in the wilds to feel more than transient temptation for game that could be of no possible use to him. During the first month of his wandering he had shot many a bird for its feathers, many a beast for its skin, intending to take such trophies home; but all had been thrown away, and now he shot only when necessity demanded it.

Bradshaw threw himself down under the first tree he came to, and, lying on his back, stretched arms and legs to their full extent after the manner of soldiers who have brief opportunity to rest while on march.

"Not a step further," he said, "until the sun begins to go westward."

Pan followed suit without comment, and for a few minutes they rested in

silence. They were not sleeping, though, and presently, when Pan perceived that his employer was awake, he said:

"Mr. Bradshaw, I wish you would tell me about Sam Hill. From other Americans I have heard much about your great chiefs, but until you came I think I never heard the name of Sam Hill."

Bradshaw smiled at the little patches of blue sky visible through the foliage. It was not only that the artless question amused him, but it awakened pleasant memories of his boyhood which had been passed mainly in a Vermont village where the mythical "Sam Hill" was such a universal by word that the habit of using it stuck to him unconsciously even after years of city life and association with cultivated people.

"What chiefs of ours are you most familiar with, Pan?" asked Bradshaw.

"I know that your George Washington was a very great man," answered the African, "and your General Grant. I have also heard often of P. T. Barnum."

Pan, pronounced the initials of the great showman's name as if they were a name in themselves, and he was much astonished when Bradshaw burst into laughter.

"Petey Barnum!" exclaimed the American between his laughs. "Oh, the ingenuous simplicity of untutored man! O Sam Hill! It's all right, Pan, my valued mentor. Petey Barnum was a

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great man, and no mistake. And so was Sam Hill. I'll tell you about him. Sam Hill was——”

The history of Sam Hill got no further. The men were startled by a strange sound, a loud swish! as if a giant lash had been whirled through the air.

Both sat up suddenly to see what it portended. They did not at the moment perceive what had caused the noise, but their eyes were shocked by a spectacle that caused them to forget it.

High in the air, it seemed at least a hundred feet, was the almost nude body of a black man whirling over and over. Something fluttered from his neck, what they had no time to guess, for the body, at its extreme height when they caught sight of it, fell rapidly and landed with a heavy jar a few yards from where they sat.

Bradshaw got up and ran quickly to the spot. Pan followed more slowly.

“Dead, of course,” said Bradshaw, in a low tone, as he viewed the well nigh shapeless mass of bruised flesh. “But what the mischief can it mean?”

“An execution,” muttered Pan, as he stooped over the dead man and studied the form intently.

“Execution?” repeated Bradshaw, aghast.

“Yes,” said Pan, and he took up the end of the thing that had fluttered from the victim's neck.

It seemed to be a tough, fibrous reed. “This,” continued Pan, “this—I cannot

tell the right word for it——”

“Thong,” suggested Bradshaw.

“Yes. It was tied to a tree and, as you see, it has broken. That explains how the body came to be flying through the air. But, Mr. Bradshaw!” and Pan drew back quickly without rising, “we must not stay here! We are in the greatest danger!”

Ordinarily quick to adopt the suggestions of the African when facing a crisis, Bradshaw on this occasion was not sufficiently alert. The grewsome spectacle had not only shocked him, but it had aroused all that aggressive repugnance with which a civilized man resents barbarity.

With no suspicion whatever as to the cause of the tragedy, he was stirred with indignation that might easily have led him to retaliation in the interest of the victim. In short, the American's fighting blood was up, and he recoiled from the very idea of retreat.

Nevertheless, his months of experience in the wilds had taught him some measure of discretion, and it was only after the briefest hesitation that he undertook to follow his guide's advice.

He heard Pan's voice whispering, “Down, Mr. Bradshaw!” and was in the act of stooping when he saw that he was too late. A number of black forms appeared suddenly in the fringe of trees, springing as it seemed from out of the ground. They approached him.

It would have been the height of folly to stoop then, and it would have

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been equally impolitic to make any offensive demonstration. So Bradshaw stood motionless save for a gesture of friendly greeting.

Several of the savages were evidently stirred to hostility at sight of him, for they began at once to make threatening motions, but one who appeared to be their leader restrained them by gesture and spoken command, and they all came on quietly but rapidly.

Bradshaw noticed that their dull eyes glowed with unmistakable surprise, a manifestation quite uncommon to other savages with whom he had come in contact.

The ordinary African had impressed him as curious only concerning what the passing white man might give him in the way of trinkets. These fellows looked as if they had never seen a white before, and as if they were bewildered at discovering such a being.

They halted a few paces away, and, paying not the slightest attention to the body of the black, fixed their wondering eyes upon the living white man.

There was a brief interval of silence, and Bradshaw repeated his friendly gesture. The leader responded in kind, and then, in a guttural voice said something which Bradshaw recognized as a very imperfect Dutch patois, but which he could not understand.

Guessing that it was an inquiry as to whether he spoke that language, he shook his head and replied, "No, English."

"How much?" asked the leader, then.

Bradshaw smiled, the question was such a plain intimation that this man, at least, had had dealings with English speaking traders.

"I no sell," he replied, with a struggle to limit his speech to the simple words with which these people were probably familiar; "I buy——"

"No! no!" the black interrupted impatiently; "no sell, no buy. How much you?" and he held up three, four and five fingers in succession.

"Oh!" said Bradshaw, "you want know how many of me? Me, alone," and he held up one finger.

He inferred that a question of this sort referred only to the number of whites in his party, blacks seldom counting for anything to their fellow natives.

The leader's face was stolid, but it was fairly evident that he received the statement with incredulity, so Bradshaw continued persuasively:

"Me friend. Me cross country. Me pay you. No want land. No want ivory."

This eloquent address was intended to convey the idea that he was simply an explorer traveling for personal pleasure, and with no thought of claiming any of the country he traversed in behalf of a distant king; and further that he was willing to pay tribute for the privilege of a peaceful transit through the territory occupied by this tribe.

If he thought of it at all he took it for granted that they would suppose that he

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was accompanied by a train of pack bearers.

Up to this time there had been no difficulty worth mentioning in gaining the assent of tribes to a journey across their lands. Solemnly conducted negotiations always ended with a distribution of flimsy trifles to the chief men, and by so doing lightened the burden of one of the carriers to a considerable extent.

The black was silent for a moment, seeming to consider the matter. Then he said, "You come talk chief," which Bradshaw interpreted to mean that he was invited to conduct his negotiations at the tribe's headquarters.

It occurred to him then to wonder what had become of Pan, for that accomplished linguist was essential to the satisfactory transaction of business with the natives, and moreover, on all previous similar occasions Pan had stood at his side from the beginning to vouch for him and clear up knotty points either in language or the terms of the bargain.

Pan was not in evidence, although of necessity he could not be far away. Bradshaw was impelled to call to him, but so great was his confidence in Pan's loyalty and shrewd sense that he refrained from doing so, telling himself that Pan's absence must be owing to some good reason that would appear in due time.

Accordingly Bradshaw nodded assent to the leader's suggestion, and

the leader, after a glance at the dead black and a few words to his companions in their own incomprehensible language, led him away among the trees.

## CHAPTER II. WHAT THE STRANGE NOISE MEANT.

BRADSHAW felt quite at ease. There was nothing in the immediate circumstances to cause alarm. If these savages saw fit to execute one of their number by some extraordinary means that Pan had not had time to describe, surely that could bode no harm to a passing traveler.

There was no doubt that after the customary parley the king would accept the white man's presents and permit him to proceed on his way unmolested even if not guarded from possible attack by other tribesmen.

Moreover, and this would have impelled Bradshaw to risk much for the sake of the interview, this king might be able to throw some light upon the problem which the American had come to Africa to solve.

It was a little irritating that Pan should have held back at this juncture, but inasmuch as these savages had some knowledge of languages other than their own, Bradshaw had no doubt that somehow he would be able to get through the negotiations successfully

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alone.

They had hardly more than entered the sparse forest when they came to the edge of a gully perhaps thirty feet deep.

The depression was plainly artificial. The original surface must have been composed of a thin layer of loose stones which had been removed to permit of excavating the sandy soil beneath.

At the bottom were numerous indications that the work of excavation was still in progress. Crude tools were lying about, and there was a coarse wire screen such as is used in civilized countries for sifting sand.

This article surprised Bradshaw greatly, for within a thousand miles he had not seen one other thing that suggested civilized methods of labor, save the materials he carried with him.

More conspicuous than the sand heaps and the screen were two savages who evidently were awaiting the return of those who had gone out to meet the American. One of them was of stature almost imposing, and his native dignity was enhanced by a more generous supply of clothing than graced the persons of the others.

His distinguishing garment consisted mainly of a brightly colored sash that was wound about his shoulders and across his chest. It seemed to be quite thick in places, as if the strands from which it was woven had become knotted in the process.

This man's companion was of a type like the rest, low brow, squat nose,

protuberant lips, and that apathetic expression of the eyes that tells of abject subjection rather than docility. He stood a little back of the other, and protected him from the sun by holding up a shade made from long, stiff leaves.

Bradshaw naturally inferred that the well dressed individual was the king of the tribe, and he noticed that the monarch's eyes bulged with surprise when he saw the group at the edge of the gully.

"Very odd," thought Bradshaw; "these English speaking negroes seem to be more unfamiliar with white men than any I have yet come across."

He looked around for any sign of the tribe's habitations, but saw none. Directly across the gully, about fifty feet away, the forest continued unbroken.

At the left there was an outlet, as if the excavation had been conducted from that direction, but where it led he could not see, and there was little time for observation, for he had to descend the steep side of the gully by a rude path that called for the greatest care to keep from pitching headlong.

Arrived at the bottom, Bradshaw made extravagant signs of respect for the king, who apparently received them unmoved while he listened to what the leader of the party had to say in explanation of the stranger's advent.

Bradshaw, of course, could not understand a word, but aside from possible references to the dead black man, he presumed that the conversation



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was about himself.

Presently he of the bright sash addressed him in fair English:

“How did you come here?”

“Your majesty,” answered Bradshaw, pointing to his feet, “you see my only means of locomotion. O king——”

“I am no king,” interrupted the black, impatiently, “but no matter. Go on.”

Surprised beyond measure not only at the black’s command of English, but at his denial of royalty, Bradshaw was nonplused for an instant, and the black repeated, “How did you come here?”

The American’s native humor was stirred, and he smiled good humoredly as again he pointed to his feet, but before he could add to his answer with spoken words, the black interposed:

“Yes, but how to this spot? What led you here?”

“Nothing, your highness,” said Bradshaw, then, with perfect frankness. “I am traveling across Africa at my own will. I am not the agent of any government, I do not come to claim possession of any land. I merely wish to pass on without disturbing anybody.”

“That is impossible!” exclaimed the black, with marked emphasis; “but you do not answer my question.”

“As to how I came to this particular spot? I thought I had done so. Accident, your highness. I had no idea any tribe lived hereabout, or worked here, especially a tribe that would use such implements as that,” and he pointed to

the wire screen.

The face of “his highness” was sternly forbidding.

“You have said that you are alone,” he remarked; “that cannot be true.”

“My carriers,” said Bradshaw, “are distant a half day’s journey.”

“Where?”

Bradshaw pointed toward the west.

“Are no other white men with you?”

“None, your highness.”

“You are the only man of your race who ever set foot within this sacred region.”

The black’s tone and manner were extremely menacing, and at last Bradshaw began to feel a bit nervous as to the outcome of the negotiations toward which he had looked so confidently.

He wished heartily that Pan were at hand to help him out. Nevertheless he gave not the slightest inclination of alarm when he answered, “My chief desire, your highness, is to get out of this region without delay.”

“You shall be gratified,” said the black.

He addressed a few words to his followers and looked up toward the edge of the gully. Bradshaw followed his gaze, but saw nothing to arrest his attention.

“You wish to go out by the way you came?” asked his highness.

“Yes, in order to rejoin my carriers,” said Bradshaw. “But before I go I should like to tell you just why I am in

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Africa. Perhaps you can give me valuable information. Certainly in all my journey I have not met anybody who seemed so likely to be of assistance to me."

"Do you promise never to come here again?"

"Willingly."

"And that you will never tell anybody the way to this sacred place?"

"Inasmuch as I doubt if I could find my way here again, that is easily promised, your highness."

"What is it you wish to know?"

"I am trying to learn the fate of a fellow countryman who, ten years ago, landed at St. Paul de Loanda and set out soon afterwards for the interior. His friends have not heard from him since."

The black dignitary looked at Bradshaw almost pityingly for an instant.

"There is little pleasure," he said, "in jesting with a dead man. Your friend's fate was doubtless similar to your own."

"Your highness seems to threaten," Bradshaw began, when the black made a slight gesture, which was immediately followed by a pressure upon the American's arms.

Bradshaw made a quick, violent effort to move them, but speedily gave it up, for he saw that he had been pinioned securely. A thong similar to that which he had seen on the dead man's neck had been cast about him and made fast before he could stir.

"Your highness' jest takes a very

practical turn," said Bradshaw, coolly.

"My men have learned to do their work well," was the significant reply.

A half dozen blacks had leaped beside Bradshaw at the moment when the thong was cast about him. He could feel that others were behind, holding the thong. There was no possible mistaking the sinister aspect of the situation.

Bradshaw bitterly accused himself of imprudence, while at the same time he could not see how he could have acted otherwise. How could he suspect that here was a tribe that differed so radically from the simple minded people whom he had met elsewhere in the dark continent? Why should he not have supposed that ordinary methods would avail with them as with others?

"I can endure your jesting," he cried sternly, "but you know better than to do me the slightest harm. The civilized country whose speech you have learned has long arms."

"Not long enough to reach to central Africa," responded the black dignitary, contemptuously, as he again directed his gaze upwards.

Again Bradshaw followed his eyes. He saw that several of the blacks had climbed up to the top of the excavation. They were all standing now at the base of a tall, very slender tree that was rooted within a yard of the edge.

There were no branches on this tree within twenty feet of the ground. Above that the foliage was abundant.

One of the men bent over at the base

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of the tree, another got upon his back in a stooping posture, a third climbed upon the back of the second, and then the three gradually stood up.

The top man proceeded to "shin" his way up the trunk, while the other two stooped again to permit another man to mount their backs.

This process was continued until four men were climbing up to the foliage. They went so far that it seemed as if the tree must break under them.

It swayed perceptibly under the weight of the first, and he, laying hold of a short branch near the crest, depended from it so that the top of the tree began to bend over the excavation.

When his comrades climbed further up, their weight bent the tree still further in the same direction until gradually the top sank so low that the men's toes touched the bottom of the excavation. The tree was then like a giant hoop, for it was more than bent double, the crest being lower than the roots.

Bradshaw watched this operation with growing apprehension and horror. He began to perceive what had caused the extraordinary phenomenon of a man's body whirling a hundred feet in the air, and he now understood what the dignitary meant by assuring him that he should be allowed to leave the place at once by the way he came.

If further proof as to the correctness of his surmises were needed it was furnished by an accident.

One of the men who had helped bend the tree down lost his hold and dropped to the ground. Relieved of so much weight, the tree instantly began to swing back to an upright position, and the other men in alarm let go also.

In a flash the tree rose and towered straight at the top of the excavation as before; and as it swept its leafy crest upward there was that fearful *swish*, as of a mighty lash, that had startled Bradshaw when he was resting at the border of the forest with Pan.

It was appalling, this living engine of murder, with its terrific power and marvelous elasticity. No guillotine could be more certain, no hangman's rope more dreadful.

Bradshaw turned his eyes from the tree, that swayed slightly from the impetus of its rise, and looked at the black dignitary.

"Quite a tree you've got there," he remarked with a drawl.

The tall black's impassive demeanor was visibly shaken by the American's nonchalance.

"What!" he cried; "don't you realize that that is the way you'll take from this sacred place? That thus we assure ourselves against your return?"

"Oh!" said Bradshaw, "you use the tree as an elevator, do you? It seems a little unhandy to bring the thing down. I should think, now, that tree would serve your purpose better if it was split up and made into bows."

"To shoot you with?" snapped the

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black.

“Oh, no; I didn’t come to Africa to be shot.”

“But you did to die!”

“I think not. I’m hunting for a man. If you can’t or won’t give me any information about him, the sooner you send me on my way, the better. You see, my carriers over there won’t know what’s become of me.”

“They never will know!” cried the black, beside himself at the American’s indifference. “The tree will be brought down again, and when it rises next time you will be hurled into eternity.”

“That’s quite a throw,” drawled Bradshaw, “and no tree in Africa is equal to it.”

With a snort of rage, the black turned to his men and gave commands in quick, harsh tones. Obediently several started again up the side of the excavation to the base of the tree. Two others stepped up to Bradshaw and tied a fibrous thong about his neck.

“Rather close for a hot day,” he remarked.

“Do not dream your impudence will save you,” exclaimed the black; “you’ll whine loudly enough within fifteen minutes, but that will not avail you either. It is your fate to die because you ventured to set foot upon this sacred place.”

The men were beginning again to shin up the tree. For all his indifferent demeanor, Bradshaw’s heart was thumping at a rapid rate, and he

wondered that no flush betrayed his intense anxiety.

Fifteen minutes! Could anything happen in that time to save him? Would Pan come back? What could be hoped for from Pan with all these twenty against him?

Even if the entire force of carriers could be brought up they would be useless against such bloodthirsty barbarians as these. But what had become of Pan? It did not seem like him to desert his employer even in this overwhelming crisis.

Bradshaw was far from making light of the situation. It appealed to him with all possible force and seriousness, but his tone was cool, crisp, and businesslike when next he addressed the black leader.

“I don’t know what there is in this place to make it sacred or so important for you to keep it hidden,” he said, “but I have no interest in it. I told your subordinate that I expected to pay for peaceful transit here as I have done elsewhere. I presume he understood me. I shall be glad to hear your terms while your men are getting that tree down again.”

“Ha!” exclaimed the black, contemptuously; it was almost a laugh, and if it had been quite one, Bradshaw would have been inspired by hope; for there are possibilities in a man who can see humor in things.

“I have some matters that might be useful to you in your work here,”

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Bradshaw added.

He was thinking of the two spades in his outfit. They had been invaluable to him more than once during the long journey, but he could sacrifice them better than a trip skyward via that tree, and he had perceived early that this was not the kind of savage to whom it would do to offer the trinkets usually current in such transactions.

"You interest me," sneered the black. "I thought you would offer a string of beads, or possibly a top hat."

"No, no, not to you," said Bradshaw; "I prefer to hear your terms. If I can meet them I will do so."

"It is not my habit to waste words," responded the dignitary, recurring to his former cold style of utterance, "so we will not discuss the matter further. As for the matters you hint at, I shall be glad to make use of them. They will be in my possession by nightfall if your carriers are no further away than you said they were."

Bradshaw felt his heart sink deeper than it had done when the savages pinioned him, or when he saw his impending doom in the rising of the tree. It was not his own fate now that concerned him. That was settled unless he could make some effect with one last stroke that he held in reserve.

But even if the conviction were not deepening that his own fate was sealed, he yet would have grieved at the doom awaiting his faithful carriers.

He had not been long enough in

Africa to arrive, as so many whites insensibly do, at the feeling that "niggers" are merely animals to be sacrificed if need be to the exigencies of the superior race. To him the black man was still a human being, and he regretted, oh! so bitterly, that he had admitted the near presence of his caravan, and not only that, but had frankly pointed out the direction in which it lay.

It would be the simplest thing imaginable for these ruffians to fall upon the carriers unawares and put them to slaughter, if they did not add inconceivable tortures. Bradshaw wished that he had practised deceit, but in speaking the truth he had followed the policy advised and invariably pursued by Pan in dealing with the simple minded natives. Ah! where was Pan now?

"You will not get them unless I let you have them," said Bradshaw, sternly.

The tree top was descending under the weight of five men this time.

"You are still bold," said the dignitary; "do you not believe that in one minute you will fly to your death?"

"No!" shouted Bradshaw with all the force of his lungs, and so explosive and stentorian was the sound that all the blacks, even including their leader, were startled.

Bradshaw was beginning to make his last desperate play.

"No!" he shouted again; "I am protected by mighty spirits! They will

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not suffer me to be harmed, and they will strike with instant death the man who tries to harm me!”

The black dignitary gave his victim a prolonged stare. What it portended, whether his superstitious fears had been in the least aroused, Bradshaw could only guess.

This strange man, so superior to the thick lipped savages who obeyed him as if they were slaves, might be as far removed from superstitious influence as Bradshaw himself.

It was the leader alone who could be frightened, for without Pan to convey his meaning to the others, the victim might declaim in English to the last chapter without producing the slightest effect. This thought was all too clearly framed in Bradshaw’s mind.

As the savages pushed him roughly over the ground until the foliage of the bended crest brushed his face, he seemed to see the pages of his book of life opening one after the other before his eyes.

There were pages devoted to his happy boyhood, and these, quickly turning, gave place to others descriptive of his early struggles in the city; fair pages, these, for fortune had favored him, and all were illuminated, all from boyhood on, by one sweet, girlish face whose tender eyes looked out upon him trustfully; and here, where should be but the prologue to the larger book, was a page that terminated abruptly in blood red letters:

FINIS.

Working apparently from habit rather than from express command, for he of the bright sash said nothing to them, the blacks tied the thong that bound Bradshaw’s neck to the tree trunk, and stood aside.

Those whose weight had bent the tree down were still holding to it. The victim fixed his eyes unflinchingly upon the leader. Death in this horrible form might come, but it should not be accompanied by the expected whining.

The dignitary raised his right hand high above his head.

“Summon your protecting spirits,” said he, “for when I lower my hand the tree will hurl you to death.”

“The tree will not rise!” cried Bradshaw loudly.

Even then, while a sneer distorted the face of the black, the hand began to descend.

“Farewell, Irene!” was Bradshaw’s mental cry, his lips remaining tightly closed, his eyes fixed as ever upon the face of his murderer.

## CHAPTER III. RETREAT.

THE hand fell sharply to the black dignitary’s side, and the men who held the tree leaped away.

There was a momentary, uncomfortable tug at Bradshaw’s throat, but not even his heels were lifted from

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the ground. A light breeze set the foliage of the bended crest to rustling. It seemed as if the tree were sighing regretfully at its incapacity to rise.

Well nigh shocked with amazement at the justification of his prophecy, Bradshaw began to cry "You see——" when his words were lost in a loud report from the top of the gully. It was followed instantly by another. With the first report, the black leader leaped straight into the air, and with the second his attendant executed gymnastics of a similar sort.

It was all accomplished in a second. At the first sign that the tree was failing to do its deadly work, the dignitary's lips had parted as with unutterable rage, his eyes had bulged, and he had seemed on the point of leaping forward to attack the prisoner.

The shot struck him before he had stirred, and when he leaped, it was to fall lifeless at Bradshaw's feet. The attendant stumbled and fell across the body of his master.

The other blacks, momentarily paralyzed at the inaction of the tree, were thrown into a panic by the shots. They set up a howl of dismay as they saw their leader fall, and ran with all possible speed out of the gully.

They were still in sight when Bradshaw heard steps hurriedly descending the steep path at his back, and in another instant Pan was at his side, his smoking rifle in one hand, a heavy hunting knife in the other.

Bradshaw tried to speak, but his voice, so strong when the peril was greatest, utterly failed him. He could only choke inarticulately, and there was a mist before his eyes.

"We must hurry, Mr. Bradshaw!" exclaimed Pan, as with quick strokes he severed the thongs that bound his employer's arms and neck; "they have left you your rifle. Together we can give them a good fight, but we must get into a better position. They might surround us here."

Before he had finished speaking, Pan had freed the American, and they immediately climbed up the side of the gully, passing as they did so the base of the death dealing tree.

Bradshaw glanced at it, and saw that just where its curve was sharpest the trunk had been cut almost through. The severed fibers protruded like a thousand needles. A little more and the entire tree would have fallen into the gully.

Arrived at the top, and panting from the exertion, Bradshaw grasped Pan's hand in a hard clasp.

"Well done, old fellow," he began, but Pan interrupted energetically:

"Not now, Mr. Bradshaw! The danger is still great. Hurry!"

Pan had already started on a run, and the American followed, unslinging his rifle as he tore along. When they came into the open, near where they had rested, a flock of vultures rose screaming from the ground.

Bradshaw knew what it meant, and

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his heart sickened as it flashed across him how narrowly he had escaped serving them as food; but he cast no glance in the direction of their pitiable prey, for Pan seized his arm and pointed along the line of the forest toward the entrance to the gully.

A number of black men were in sight, peering at them and apparently in doubt as to whether pursuit should be given.

One, the same probably who had led the party that came upon Bradshaw, seemed to be urging the others to action.

Bradshaw and Pan halted as with one will, wheeled about, and sent a pair of bullets toward their foes. Then, without so much as a glance to determine the effect of their shots, they ran on again down the long slope up which they had toiled in the morning, and abated none of their speed until they had come well within the forest at the bottom.

There Bradshaw leaned breathless against a tree, while Pan looked back through the foliage, scanning the broad stretch of upland narrowly.

"I think," said he, "they do not follow, but they may be able to fall upon the caravan before we get there. We should lose no time."

"They only know in a general way where the caravan is," responded Bradshaw, as he started on again.

"True, but they know the forest as we do not."

"Don't you think we've scared them out of any further hostility?"

"Those few? Yes, perhaps; but there must be many more, and with such leaders there will be no end to their war upon us."

"You did for their leader right enough. He won't give us any more trouble."

"There must be others to take his place. You noticed him, Mr. Bradshaw?"

"I should say I did! He was an able controversialist."

Pan frowned slightly, an indication that he had come upon a new word and one that conveyed no meaning to him.

"I suppose so," he said, deferentially; "yes, if you say so, but you noticed something else, perhaps?"

"He seemed to me quite unlike the other fellows," Bradshaw responded; "not only in his remarkable familiarity with my language, but in appearance."

"I am glad you saw that, for you will understand how great the danger is as long as we remain anywhere near this tribe. That man was not of the tribe he commanded."

"What was he, then?"

"I do not know. It is all strange, but I think perhaps he was an Arab."

"By Jove! yes! The nose and lips were of the Arab type, though his hair and color were more like the ordinary native. But I guess he was an Arab sure enough, Pan."

"Then," said Pan, earnestly, "you see



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the danger. There are more of them. This leader will be succeeded by another, and the other will have the same reasons for killing you as this one did. The Arabs reach far in Africa.”

“I see the danger, Pan, but it beats me why this fellow should have been so set on killing me. He talked a lot of rubbish about the sacred place.”

“I heard most of it and I do not understand it. We may find out before we go much further.”

Bradshaw was deeply impressed by Pan’s seriousness. Never given to anything but gravity of demeanor, Pan nevertheless was not inclined to worry.

Up to this time he had met all the emergencies of the journey with unmoved calmness, as if all that could happen in Africa was an old story to him. Now he was thoroughly disturbed, and so intent was his anxiety to reach the caravan before the savages could make an attack, that Bradshaw refrained from asking about his apparent desertion.

All energy was bent to making progress through the forest, and to such good purpose that they came upon the carriers within three hours after their retreat from the gully.

Nothing had happened at the camp, and before any move was made, rest and refreshment were absolutely necessary to the American and Pan. They ordered their pickets to take posts further than usual away, and while they were eating, Pan told his share in the

events at the gully.

## CHAPTER IV. A MEETING IN THE WILDS.

“IT is a common thing in Africa,” Pan began, “to use a tree in executions. I knew what had happened almost as soon as I saw the man’s body flying through the air, but I did not then guess and do not know now what led to it. I only know that it must have been something serious.”

“I wonder,” Bradshaw remarked, “whether it was as serious as my walking innocently into that sacred hole in the ground?”

“Very likely,” responded Pan, gravely, “but in any case it meant that the tribe was in an excited condition, and therefore dangerous to approach. I knew that men would be sent up to learn what had become of the body, for usually the thong holds and the victim is left swaying at the tree top. I believed it would be dangerous for us to be found looking at the body, but there was another reason that came to me very suddenly.

“It is said that somewhere in Africa is a tribe that is exceedingly rich in such things as black men prize. Many wild stories are told about this tribe. They say the king has hundreds of wives who are bought at high prices all over the continent; that the chief men have many things that are made in distant

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countries; and that they are so powerful that no nation has ever beaten them in battle.

“What makes them so rich nobody can say, but it is believed that they kill every stranger who enters their territory, and that no one ever has escaped them. This may explain how they possess things that were made in your country, or in Europe, but I am telling you only what I have heard. It may not amount to anything.”

“Do you think this is the tribe?” asked Bradshaw.

“I do not say so even now,” replied Pan, cautiously, “but that thought came to me when we were looking at the dead man’s body. There is so much mystery about this tribe I speak of that some have declared that it does not exist. No one has ever been able to say where its chief town lies. The most that has been said has been to point to the interior with the words ‘many months’ journey.

“We have come a long distance. We have crossed countries where no white man had been before. The language of these people—I heard them speaking together at the tree—is strange to me; that is, most of it, though I think I could make myself understood by them.”

“No doubt about that, Pan. You could get on in Iceland.”

“I have never been there. But, Mr. Bradshaw, I am trying to explain how I came to desert you.”

“Great Scott!” cried the American, “you don’t need to explain that after the

way you rescued me. I am more anxious to know how you managed it.”

“It was very simple, though an accident might have spoiled it all. You remember that I was stooping when I spoke to you. I supposed you would do so also, and when I saw that you remained standing and that those men were coming up, I was frightened, not only for you, but myself. I hated to run away and I dared not rise. I was a coward for a moment, Mr. Bradshaw.”

“I guess that didn’t last long,” said Bradshaw, smiling.

“No. I saw that I had not been seen, and as the men were busy with you they were not likely to see me. So I wriggled away in the grass, knowing that if they were friendly no harm would come of my disappearance, and that if they meant mischief I might be able to help you later.

“As soon as they took you to that place they had dug out of the hill, I crept up to the edge and listened. It was plain enough to me that they meant to kill you, and I cannot tell you how frightened I was then, for I had seen the force of that tree. I thought at first of shooting the chief before they bound you, but knowing that there must be more of them not far away, I feared that would only bring on us a greater number than we could possibly handle.

“Then I saw a way to disable the tree, and I knew that if that could be done the men would be so scared that for a time they would not try to do

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anything.

“You see, the black men think these execution trees are controlled by powerful spirits, and if a tree should fail to act, they would suppose that the spirits had turned against them. I saw that I could disable the tree and shoot the chief, too, which would be sure to throw them into worse confusion.”

“Good logic, Pan.”

“Eh? Yes, I suppose so. If you say so, of course it is. Well, I was nearly caught when the tree broke away from the men, for at that moment I began to work with my knife. I was greatly afraid they would see the gash I had made on the trunk when they came up again, and as the tree sprang up as if it hadn't been cut at all, I feared I shouldn't be able to cut enough in time to have any effect. It proved, though, that when the tree was upright the gash was only a thin line on the bark, and the men didn't see it.

“Now, Mr. Bradshaw, you know that if you bend something that is very strong, but also very—what is the word?”

“Elastic?” suggested Bradshaw.

“Is that like rubber?”

“Exactly, Pan.”

“Elastic, then, that if you draw a sharp knife across it where the bend is greatest, you cut easily. You know what I mean. I miss some words.”

“It's all clear now,” said Bradshaw. “The fibers being strained by the process of bending, will part more quickly if you apply a knife to them

than would be the case if the fibers were in their ordinary condition.”

“That must be it, if you say so. Any way, the knife cut like cheese—no, not so easily as that, but while it would have taken me an hour to cut through that tree with my hunting knife, heavy and sharp as it is, if the tree had been standing straight, when it was bent I cut as far as was necessary in—well, in time to save you.”

“And a good job it was, too, Pan!” cried Bradshaw, springing up. “What is the next thing? March?”

“I think so, Mr. Bradshaw, as fast as possible, and we should always select a camping place where we can easily defend ourselves.”

In short order the caravan was on its way.

It was slow progress for the carriers. Bradshaw and Pan had left the train at sunrise that morning because it seemed that they had plunged into an impassable wilderness. They had gone out to seek a better route, and the forest was no less troublesome now than it was then. There was nothing for it, however, but to struggle on, for they believed it would be certain destruction to make for the open upland.

They came to no suitable place for camping before nightfall, and had to make the best shift they could in the jungle. Extra precautions were taken to guard against surprise: pickets were doubled, and Bradshaw and Pan took turns in patrolling the outskirts of the

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camp.

No disturbance of any kind occurred, and the next day, when they pushed a few miles further in the same toilsome fashion, they were still unmolested.

With every hour that passed, Bradshaw's confidence grew stronger, and he would have made for the open if he had followed his own judgment, but Pan was simply obdurate in his insistence that caution was still necessary, and Pan had proved himself too trustworthy to be summarily overruled.

Four days more were spent in laborious marching through seemingly interminable thickets, when at length the ground began to slant upward, and they came at last to comparatively open hill country.

Bradshaw had fretted a good deal over the slow progress, and was finding it extremely irksome to be held down to Pan's ideas. Pan, meantime, took all the grumbling with impassive gravity, as if that were a necessary part of the game, but he stuck to his advice with unexampled persistence.

"Now," said Bradshaw, when they came to the first open place, "we can go on as if we had a right to live."

"I don't know," Pan responded; "I wish we could come to a river and make rafts so as to get further and faster away from that tribe."

"Nonsense!" cried his employer, "we're on safe enough ground by this time."

Pan made no reply, but there was that in his grave expression that showed he doubted. He made no further objections, however, to proceeding according to Bradshaw's desire, and that night, when they camped in a ravine near the summit of the ridge they had been climbing, they resumed the ordinary devices for protection from assault by men or beasts.

Since leaving the neighborhood of the execution tree they had had but one little episode to relieve the dull monotony of the march, and that, considering that they were in the heart of Africa, would hardly be worth the telling if it were not for the bearing it had on subsequent matters.

It was on this last day and after they had struck into the hills.

One of the carriers was at the moment a little in advance of the party, and next behind him were Bradshaw and Pan. Suddenly the carrier came leaping back, his mouth agape with terror. There was no need to ask what was the matter, for a deep growling sounded near.

"A lion!" exclaimed Bradshaw, his voice vibrant with the pleasurable excitement of encountering big game.

Their rifles in readiness, he and Pan went on a few paces until they found themselves confronted by a lioness.

She faced them growling and whisking her tail, while her eyes seemed to be on fire with determination. A young cub, who looked as innocent as

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any kitten, was sitting beside her, staring with unmistakable interest at the intruders.

“She’ll fight hard,” whispered Pan. “If it hadn’t been for her cub she would probably have run from us.”

Bradshaw was aiming, and as Pan ceased, he fired. The great beast leaped her length into the air and fell motionless, save for the last quivering of death.

“Too easy,” said Bradshaw, “but it will do to talk about at home.”

Just then Pan fired at the cub, but not before Bradshaw had knocked up the muzzle of his rifle so that the bullet went cutting leaves off the tree tops.

“Why——” began Pan, in amazement, and then stopped abruptly, as if he would not venture to question his employer’s proceedings.

“We’ll capture the cub,” said Bradshaw. “He’s too young to be dangerous.”

“If he’s with us,” Pan suggested, “it may bring other lions about.”

“So much the better. If I don’t have a brush with something once in a while I shall grow rusty.”

Pan had done so much advising and insisting recently that he evidently felt unequal to opposing this freak of his employer, and the upshot was the speedy capture of the cub.

The little fellow, startled at what had happened, but evidently uncomprehending his loss, made not the slightest resistance, and though he

whined a good deal, he trotted on after one of the carriers as docile as a lamb. When they made camp for the night he was tethered near Bradshaw’s shake down.

“What do you think you will do with him?” asked Pan.

“I haven’t got that far,” the American answered. “He’d make a fine souvenir to take home, though seriously I have no idea that can be managed. I have saved his life from sudden impulse, and ever since then I’ve been wondering whether it wouldn’t have been much more sensible to put him out of the way.”

“I think so,” said Pan; “of course it is so if you say so.”

This ambiguous speech, which might be interpreted as a reflection upon his good sense, tickled Bradshaw hugely, and he chuckled some time over it, much to Pan’s mystification.

“As long as we’ve got him, Pan,” said Bradshaw, at length, “we’ll feed him well, and if it seems best to get rid of him we’ll do it in some quick, easy fashion.”

It was then near sundown. The simple business of camp making had been finished, and the cooks of the party were preparing supper.

Bradshaw and Pan had gone out to the mouth of the ravine to determine the advisability of posting a picket there through the night.

Suddenly Pan seized his employer by the arm and drew him behind a tall

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shrub.

"Look!" he whispered; "a little to the right. He's back of that rock."

Instinctively Bradshaw had unslung his rifle, and he held it now in readiness for quick firing as he peered in the direction Pan indicated.

For just an instant he saw nothing; then from behind the rock, a boulder that stood quite by itself at the mouth of the ravine, a man stepped cautiously forth and gazed steadily toward them.

He was half nude, and such garments as he wore were of the kind used by savages; but even in the gathering gloom of early evening the most casual glance showed that he was not a native of the wilds.

His skin was dark, but it had the rich hue of sun bronzed white.

His hair was long and unmarked by kinks. Moreover, a long beard depended from his chin and covered the greater part of his face. A light gust set it to fluttering, and as he stood with one hand upon the boulder, solitary in this vast wilderness, he might have seemed like a druid of old awakened after centuries of sleep.

Bradshaw slowly lowered his rifle, and, still gazing at the stranger, placed his hand on Pan's shoulder. He gripped hard into his companion's flesh, and Pan noticed that his employer was trembling violently.

After a moment thus Bradshaw's agitation ceased.

"Wait here," he said, and, handing

his rifle to Pan, he walked from behind the shrub and went toward the stranger.

The latter seemed to hesitate an instant as he saw Bradshaw approaching, but it was only for an instant. He left the rock and met the American half way.

"What country are you?" he asked, and at the sound of his voice Bradshaw started and gazed more earnestly upon the old man's sunburned features.

It was a harsh, hoarse tone, having something of the native African guttural in it.

"I am from America," Bradshaw answered, slowly.

This statement evidently made no impression on the other, for he went on directly:

"I was sure I saw the smoke of a campfire. I come to warn you. Put out your fires at once, go back the way you came, and let no man see you until you are at least a hundred miles away."

"I thank you for your warning," said Bradshaw, speaking with manifest difficulty while he continued to search the old man's features; "and it seems good to hear my home speech from one who learned it where I did. Is it possible that it does not give you pleasure to see and speak with a fellow countryman?"

The old man listened to him impassively.

"I did not say I was an American," said he; "that I have some interest in men of your race is clear enough, I suppose, from the fact that I have come

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up here to warn you of your danger.”

“What is this danger?”

“Not more than two miles below there is the chief town of the most powerful and most bloodthirsty tribe of men in all Africa. Nothing will persuade them to spare the life of any white man who enters their kingdom.”

Bradshaw paused long before responding, and when he spoke he leaned forward, piercing the other’s eyes with his own.

“Not even yours, Mr. Murdock?” he said.

### CHAPTER V.

#### A TOKEN OF HOSPITALITY.

THE old man leaped as did the black dignitary when Pan’s bullet pierced his heart. His bearded lips parted, his eyes dilated, he threw up both hands and clenched them as if he would strike Bradshaw down. Then he wheeled about and set off down the ravine on the dead run.

Bradshaw made after him instantly and overtook him easily within a few paces.

“Mr. Murdock!” he cried, “do not run from me! I have come all this way into Africa to find you. Don’t you know me, Mr. Murdock? Don’t you remember \_\_\_\_\_”

“You are mistaken, young man,” gasped the other, struggling violently but vainly in Bradshaw’s grasp; “My

name is not Murdock. Go away while there is a chance that you may do so in safety.”

“Come with me, Mr. Murdock.”

“No, never; my name is not Murdock, I tell you!”

“Don’t try to deceive me, Mr. Murdock. You betray yourself by the effort. I come as a friend.”

“I’ll not believe it. I never saw you.”

“You knew me in my boyhood.”

“It is a lie. Unhand me, I say!”

Up to this the old man had not ceased to writhe and wrench this way and that to be free. He now gave over and stood, panting and trembling, glaring fearfully at his captor.

“I beg you to be calm, Mr. Murdock,” said Bradshaw, then: “it breaks my heart to compel you to listen \_\_\_\_\_”

“I’ll not listen,” panted the old man, hoarsely.

“You must. I come with a message from Irene.”

A pitiful gasp choked in the old man’s throat, and his muscles, still tense from excited resistance, suddenly yielded and became powerless.

“She sent me to Africa to find you,” added Bradshaw, gently, and he relaxed his hold.

The old man came near to falling and might have done so had not the younger caught and sustained him.

“Irene!” the harsh voice spoke in a fluttering whisper. “Oh, my daughter!” and the old man shook now with

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sobbing.

There were tears in Bradshaw's eyes. Murdock's denial of his identity, his frantic resistance to friendly appeal, were matters of profound mystery to the young traveler; but there was contagion in the overwhelming emotion evoked by the mention of Irene; and Bradshaw's own feelings were deeply stirred by this sudden coming upon the object of his long search.

"Come up to the camp, Mr. Murdock," he said, persuasively; "there is much that we will want to talk about, and if there is danger from below we shall be safer up there than here."

Murdock controlled himself with evident effort and looked up the ravine. He saw Pan standing a few rods from them with a rifle in each hand.

The faithful black man had drawn near when the struggle began in order to be of assistance to his employer if there should be need.

"Who is that?" asked Murdock, suspiciously.

"One of my men," Bradshaw answered; "a loyal fellow and unusually intelligent for a native."

"Does he speak English?"

"Fluently."

"Then I'll stay here and listen to what you have to say. I won't risk being overheard. Send him back to your camp."

"As you will, Mr. Murdock," and Bradshaw beckoned to Pan.

The black man came up slowly,

looking at Murdock instead of his employer.

"You may go back to the camp, Pan," said Bradshaw, "and tell the men that no one of them is to come this way before I return."

Without a word Pan turned about and went slowly up the ravine. His last glance was at Murdock. It was not until he had disappeared from view that Bradshaw discovered his rifle leaning against a rock beside him.

"You say my daughter sent you," said Murdock, in controlled, almost sullen tones, "and you have made me betray myself. It will be well for you if it does not prove a trick. Who are you?"

"It is no wonder you do not know me," Bradshaw answered, "for after all these years it was only with difficulty that I recognized you. I do not think I should have done so if I had not been on the lookout for you so long."

"My appearance——" Murdock began, and then checked himself abruptly. "You have not answered me."

"I am Elmer Bradshaw, Mr. Murdock. Surely you remember me."

"I knew your father, I think."

"And have I faded from your recollection?"

"No. You used to play with Irene, didn't you?"

"In old Vermont. Yes, Mr. Murdock."

"I should not have known you. You were a child then."

"And I was at college when you left



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the country.”

“I should probably never have thought of you again if you hadn’t found me,” Murdock went on as if he had not heard Bradshaw; and there was a note of resentful harshness in his voice.

“I can quite understand that you would have no interest in me as a boy,” said Bradshaw, “but I have not forgotten you, and your many friends speak often of you.”

“What do they say?” asked Murdock, with a trace of eagerness.

“They regret your long absence. Many of them believe that you are dead.”

“Let them believe it!” exclaimed the old man, with a startling access of energy.

“Irene never would believe it,” said Bradshaw, quietly.

“Ah! Irene!” and the harsh voice was again subdued; “what of her? Is she well?”

“She was when I left America, months ago. She longs to see her father.”

The tropical darkness had gathered so quickly that now it was almost impossible for the men to see each other’s faces clearly. Murdock no longer made an effort to do so. He looked toward the ground, and often his voice suggested that of a man mumbling in his sleep.

“She is a woman grown by now,” said he; “she gave promise of great

beauty.”

“Irene is most beautiful,” responded Bradshaw, with an effort to speak calmly that would have been only too plain to an ordinary observer.

Murdock apparently failed to observe his emotion, for he went on almost mechanically:

“Has she married?”

Bradshaw drew a deep breath and held it with lips hard pressed for a moment before he replied.

“She has not, Mr. Murdock. Irene is too anxious about the fate of her father. She longs to have his consent and blessing.”

“To her marriage?”

“Yes.”

“Why is she not content with her mother’s assent? Does her mother oppose her?”

“Mr. Murdock, your wife died four years ago.”

The old man continued to gaze at the ground. Not the slightest movement indicated that the information aroused emotion of any kind.

“She died,” Bradshaw continued, after a pause, “with your name on her lips. For a long time she had been failing. Nothing was the matter, so far as medical science could say. She simply faded gradually, and when she had passed on, the physicians agreed with the general opinion that her heart was broken by your disappearance from her life.”

Still Murdock stood motionless and

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another pause ensued.

"It is better so," he muttered at last. "Irene is young. She is therefore happy, or will be so."

"Irene will be most happy if you come home with me," said Bradshaw.

"Why is she so insistent? I do not understand——"

"Why should a daughter long to see her father?" interrupted Bradshaw, with some vehemence; "think of it. Mr. Murdock! She is alone in the world. She loved you as a child, she loves you now that she is a woman. Would it not be strange if she didn't want to see you?"

"I did not mean that," Murdock replied rather hastily; "all this comes on me so suddenly and unexpectedly that perhaps I am confused. How comes it that she has not believed the reports of my death? I suppose such reports have been current. And how comes it that she sends you on the almost hopeless search for me here in Africa?"

"I am anxious to tell you that. I love your daughter, Mr. Murdock. I have been in love with her ever since I can remember."

Bradshaw hesitated from the embarrassment that all honest men feel in discussing the deepest secrets of their hearts, but Murdock gave neither word nor sign to assist him. So, after a moment, he went on:

"I think there never has been any more question about Irene's affection than about mine. I asked her to be my wife a long time ago. She made me the

happiest man in America by consenting, but there was no thought on either part of a speedy marriage. I had not more than made my start in life, her mother was beginning to fail, and you were absent."

"My absence didn't need to make any difference," mumbled Murdock.

The young man felt a throb of pain. That this father must have been insensible to family affection was a discovery he had expected to make, that is, if it should prove that Murdock had been alive and free all these years; but to awaken only a slight semblance of it now, was doubly distressing from the fact that the daughter, who should have called forth the tenderest feelings in Murdock, was Bradshaw's sweetheart.

It seemed barbarous to stand there and try to convince Murdock by argument that it was natural that his daughter should yearn for his presence and guidance. Yet just that had to be done, and the young man spoke with the greater intensity from the very restraint that he necessarily felt in saying things that implied reflections upon his sweetheart's father.

Murdock listened without comment to the story of his daughter's troubles after her mother's death. There were legal questions of an embarrassing nature, for no evidence existed that her father was dead, and the disposition of property that might be hers, and might be willed by him to others, was a difficult matter.

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Bradshaw told how a temporary solution had been reached by Irene setting aside a large fraction of the modest estate which might by any possibility be in dispute, and reserving for her own use only what was absolutely necessary for her maintenance.

"Then," said Bradshaw, "my own affairs prospered. I came into possession of what is ordinarily called a fortune. I wanted to share it with Irene. There was no longer any possible reason for her not becoming my wife so far as my ability to care for her was in question.

"She recognized that and told me that she could not be content to seek her own happiness while there was doubt about her father. She stubbornly believed you were alive, picturing you as a prisoner in the hands of savages, waiting hopefully for rescue. Irene believed that if you could be found your freedom could be bought.

"I told her I would search for you. I have been expecting to learn that you were put to death by savages somewhere here in Africa, though when I set out I had become more than half convinced by Irene's confidence that you were alive. I am here, then, to purchase your freedom, to do all in my power to help you to rejoin your daughter. That you love her is clear, and by that love, Mr. Murdock, I beg you not to return to the town of the blacks, but go with me to my camp whence we

will start at once, this night, for the coast."

Murdock shifted restlessly from one foot to the other. It was the first movement he had made during the narration and appeal. After long hesitation he said:

"It would be impossible for me to start tonight. Such action would bring the whole tribe in pursuit at once and escape would be out of the question. But you'd better start back at once, Elmer. The warning I gave you was genuine."

"I shall not leave without you, Mr. Murdock," responded Bradshaw, firmly.

"Why wait for me?" asked the old man. "I can follow when the opportunity arrives. Why sacrifice Irene's chance of happiness? Return to her, Elmer, with my blessing. Say that I gladly assent to her marriage with you, that I have no idea of despoiling her of the little property I had accumulated, and that I will return when I have accomplished what I am here for. It will be much better that way."

"What can you hope to accomplish here that will be worth more than a civilized life and your daughter's affection?"

Murdock was silent a long time.

"It will be better," he said finally. "Irene will admit as much when I return."

"Mr. Murdock," said Bradshaw, in decided tones, "if I had found proof of your death, I should have returned to

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America before now, and Irene would have been satisfied. She would never forgive me, and I should never forgive myself if, having found you alive, I should return without you."

His persistence seemed to rearouse the old man's resentment, for his voice, that had been subdued during his later remarks, was harsh again as he said:

"To linger here will mean your death, young man."

"As well die here trying to help Irene as return to America without you," retorted Bradshaw.

"You are determined to risk staying, then?"

"Until you consent to go with me."

There was another long interval of silence. At length, with a deep sigh that seemed to announce that he had come to a decision, Murdock said:

"It is all the more important, then, that you put out your campfires and do everything possible to prevent your presence becoming known."

"Shall we not start at once?" asked Bradshaw eagerly.

"No. I have said that would be impossible, but it shall be as soon as I can see the opportunity to do so with safety. I know the situation here, and you must trust me."

"I will, and I do, Mr. Murdock."

"That is right. Meantime, having no fires, and being under necessity of shooting no game, you will suffer for food. I will see that you are supplied."

"It won't be necessary. We have

supplies that will do very well for a time. We can dispense with fresh meat."

Murdock stirred uneasily. He lifted his face and looked toward Bradshaw, but it was too dark now for either to see the other more than dimly.

"I am sorry," said Murdock, in that low, sullen tone that he had used earlier in the conversation, "that you reject the little hospitality that I can offer."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Bradshaw, with a sharp twinge of regret, "I didn't mean to do anything of the kind. You seemed to fear that we should be in want and I intended only to reassure you."

"You have come so far and are so kind," muttered Murdock, "that I should like to share with you what little I have."

"Please pardon my apparent rudeness," pleaded Bradshaw; "by all means send up some meat. I shall be delighted to think that in a way I am at your table. I used to take dinner at your house sometimes when I was a boy, you know."

"Yes," said the old man doubtfully, as if he failed to remember the circumstance, or as if he were thinking of other things; "I will bring you a dish prepared by myself. It will not be safe to send it. There is no one I can trust sufficiently. But I do not want any of your people to see me. That might be dangerous, too."

"I shall respect your wish, but how shall we arrange it?"

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"I will be back within an hour. When I am near your camp I will whistle softly. Come out then alone and meet me."

"And at that time perhaps you can say when we may start for the coast."

"Perhaps."

"Till then, Mr. Murdock."

Bradshaw held out his hand, but in the darkness the old man did not see it. There was no similar offer on his own part. With a mumbled "good by," he had turned abruptly and started down the ravine.

It was with mingled elation and sadness that Bradshaw hurried back to camp. There was natural exultation that his quest had met with success.

All his friends at home, all except Irene, had said that it would be the veriest wild goose chase. They not only believed that Mr. Murdock was dead, but they had no idea that any trace of him, or knowledge of his fate could be found. And here he was alive and well.

Well, yes, physically; but mentally? That half framed query placed a load of apprehension on Bradshaw's heart that he could not reason away.

Dressed little better than a savage, it was significant that he had forgotten such an apparently trivial thing as a hand shake with a fellow countryman. It was by no means so significant as his grudging consent to return to civilization and his daughter, and yet, there might be strong if not good reasons for that.

Bradshaw told himself that there must be reasons, mistaken ones, probably, but nevertheless reasons of a sort to account for Mr. Murdock's long desertion of his home.

As he went up the ravine the buoyancy of youth helped him partly to dispel the depression. The best of it all, he thought, was that Mr. Murdock was alive.

Association with civilized men would speedily restore him to his former self. That long absence from home could not be forgotten, but it could be forgiven.

"There must be no campfires, Pan," said Bradshaw, as soon as he arrived at the camp.

"Did he say so?" inquired the black man, quietly.

"Yes. He tells me we are very near the most hostile and powerful tribe on the continent."

"Then we must put our pickets far down in the ravine."

"No, Pan. Post no guard in that direction."

"Did he say so?"

"Certainly!" and Bradshaw's tone was a bit sharp, for he was irritated at Pan's evident distrust. "That is the man whom I have been hunting all over Africa."

"I know; that is, I supposed so. I do not like him, Mr. Bradshaw."

"I see you don't, but that can't make any difference. Confound it, Pan! that man is my sweetheart's father. He knew

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me when I was a little boy. He came out to warn us, not knowing that there was anybody here whom he knew. Of course his advice is to be trusted."

"Yes, certainly. Of course it is if you say it is. But I do not like him."

"Oh, bosh!" and Bradshaw turned away in disgust. He could not have told why he felt so resentful of Pan's demeanor. There was a strange mixture in his own feelings that he shrank from analyzing. He wanted to rejoice heartily in the discovery of Mr. Murdock, and he could not. That cloud of depressing apprehension hung over him, and Pan's words made it deeper.

Not that he distrusted his sweetheart's father; it was more as if he feared that it might have been better for all concerned if Mr. Murdock never had been found; but Bradshaw would not permit himself to entertain that thought, and it was only natural that he should vent his uncomfortable feeling upon the faithful Pan.

"I'm hungry as a dog," he said presently. "Mr. Murdock is going to bring me some food as a matter of hospitality, but I can't wait for it. Have them get me something, Pan."

"It is ready," said the black; "I have been waiting for you."

"So! you mean well, don't you, old fellow? Here, shake hands, will you?"

Pan gravely gave Bradshaw his hand. "You are very kind to me," he said.

"Nonsense! I'm not half as

appreciative as I ought to be. Never mind, Pan. You just go on doing what you think is right and let me sputter."

It was a genuine relief to Bradshaw to "make it up" so quickly with his loyal assistant, and during supper they talked freely of possible plans for the return journey to the coast as soon as Mr. Murdock should say that he was ready to accompany them.

Pan was evidently at pains to say nothing to suggest that he was suspicious, and only once hinted at his anxiety.

"What did Mr. Murdock say was the name of the tribe?" he asked.

"He didn't say," replied Bradshaw, "and I forgot to ask him."

"That is too bad."

"Are you thinking it may be the tribe you told me about the other day?"

"It might be. I will try to find out tomorrow. I'd rather not leave the camp tonight."

"Of course not! You mustn't think of such a thing. Couldn't get on very well if they should catch you, Pan."

After supper, Bradshaw treated himself to a smoke. Tobacco was one of the few luxuries carried on the expedition, and he had been very chary as to the use of it lest his supply be exhausted before the end of the long journey. This night, however, his mind was so bestirred with conflicting thoughts that he felt a positive need of the soothing drug.

The campfires had been

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extinguished according to orders, and pickets were posted in all directions except the mouth of the ravine. It was Bradshaw's intention to place a guard there also after Mr. Murdock had come again and returned.

He said nothing of this to Pan, but having lighted his pipe with precaution that not even the flare of his match should reveal the presence of his party, he puffed away with a considerable degree of contentment until a low whistle apprised him of Mr. Murdock's approach.

He rose instantly, as did Pan also, and a number of the blacks crept up to them.

"Tell the men to be quiet, Pan," said Bradshaw; "It is my friend. I am going out to meet him."

"Not alone, Mr. Bradshaw?"

"Yes, alone. You must stay here."

Pan caught his employer by the sleeve. His voice was husky and tremulous.

"Let me go with you, Mr. Bradshaw," he pleaded. "You do not know what trap——"

"Trap, Pan!" exclaimed Bradshaw, his former irritation rising again; "remember, this man is my friend."

"Yes, if you say so; but Mr. Bradshaw, let me go. You shall not venture there alone. I insist——"

"Oh! you do! See here, Pan," and Bradshaw freed himself roughly from his assistant's grasp, "you'll stay where you are and remember your place. I

believe I am master here."

There was a sound in the black man's throat very like a sob.

"It shall be as you say," he said sadly.

Bradshaw strode away thoroughly angry. "This comes of permitting a servant too many liberties," he said to himself. "I shall have to be more stiff with Pan on the return march."

He came upon Mr. Murdock within a hundred yards of the camp. His form was barely distinguishable.

"The tribe do not suspect your presence in the vicinity as yet," Murdock whispered. "You will be cautious about exposing yourselves to view in the daytime?"

"Surely," answered Bradshaw, "and you will not compel us to remain here long, I hope."

"No, but great caution will be necessary to my departure. I will come again in the morning. Possibly we can start then."

"I hope so."

"I must not linger now. Later I will make all clear, but my absence from the village, if noticed, might ruin all. Here is food. I did not bring meat. I thought later of a cereal with which you are probably not familiar. I like it much and I hope you will. It is especially good just before turning in for the night."

"Thank you, Mr. Murdock. I am sure I shall like it. I shall rest easy now that I have seen you again."

"Did you think I wouldn't come

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back?"

"No, your word satisfied me, but after such a long hunt I'd rather keep you with me. You understand?"

"Yes. I must get back. Good by."

Murdock slipped away as abruptly as he had done before. After listening for a moment to his retreating footsteps, Bradshaw went back to the camp.

Pan was standing as if rooted to the spot where he had received his employer's last command.

"Here I am, Pan," said Bradshaw, in a tone that conveyed reproof. "You see your tremors were not justified. You may post a picket in the ravine now."

"You have brought something, Mr. Bradshaw."

"Yes, a cake, or something of that kind, that my friend made for me. I'm not hungry now, but I'll sample it and then turn in."

Pan reached out in the darkness and snatched the cake from his employer's hands.

"What the mischief——" Bradshaw began angrily.

"The cub has not been fed," interrupted Pan, in an agitated whisper. "This will do for him."

He had leaped to the spot where the cub was tethered.

"Come here, you impudent rascal!" exclaimed Bradshaw. "You're carrying familiarity too far, my fine fellow," and he strode up to Pan.

"Listen, Mr. Bradshaw!" said the latter, with such an intense accent of

earnestness that Bradshaw paused in wonder.

He heard the cub crunching something, and despite Murdock's warning he struck a match to see what was going on.

Pan had given the little beast a fragment of the cake. It had been partly swallowed, when in the flare of the match, Bradshaw saw the cub suddenly stagger, work his jaws as if trying to be rid of the morsel, and stumble upon his side while his legs quivered convulsively; and before the match went out the cub was dead.

"Good God!" gasped Bradshaw, sick with horror.

Immediately he struck another match and with shaking hand held it over the cub to be certain that he had seen aright. Then he looked at Pan. The black man held the rest of the cake toward him.

"Mr. Bradshaw," he said, "shall your slave eat of this to convince you that you should let it alone?"

## CHAPTER VI. MURDOCK'S QUEST.

BRADSHAW recoiled from the proffered cake with a gesture of horror.

"There must be some mistake," he said.

"It may be so," answered Pan, with his customary gravity; "of course it is if you say so, but the cake is poisoned."

"Mr. Murdock could not have known



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it.”

“Perhaps, if you say so, but the cake is poisoned.”

This quiet iteration of the appalling truth fairly prostrated the American.

“I must sit down and think,” he said faintly. “Oh, Irene! what message shall I take home to you, my darling?”

They went to his shake down and for a full minute Bradshaw sat with his head in his hands, trying to bring the bewildered tumult of his thoughts to order. It was Pan who broke the silence.

“May I speak?” he asked.

“Oh, help me, Pan!” Bradshaw moaned. “A second time you have saved my life.”

“I would have eaten the cake myself if the useless cub had not been at hand,” said Pan; “I was so sure of treachery! If the cub had not died so quickly, I should have left you, for I knew that I was troubling you.”

“Do not dream of excusing yourself, Pan. It only adds to my grief. And yet, I cannot easily believe that Mr. Murdock knew what he was doing.”

“You do not need to think of that now, Mr. Bradshaw.”

The black’s tone of quiet assurance did much to soothe Bradshaw’s agitation.

“I have been utterly unmanned,” he said, “but I will pull myself together. What is the first thing, Pan?”

“You noticed how quickly the poison acted, Mr. Bradshaw?”

“Indeed, yes,” answered Bradshaw,

with a repressed shudder.

“So, then,” continued Pan, “if it was intentional it means that we must act quickly. We should not take risks. It is right to hope that your friend meant honestly, but we should act as if he intended the mischief that would have been done.”

“And that means that we should move from here at once.”

“Yes, Mr. Bradshaw. If this treachery should be followed by a night attack the trouble will come quickly.”

“And they must not find us here!” exclaimed Bradshaw, springing up with all his natural energy.

He saw how probable it was that, if Murdock were in league with the savages, as was horribly possible, the supposed death of the white leader of this expedition would be followed immediately by the extermination of the carriers.

The men were aroused and all the pickets called in. As quietly and speedily as possible they got their traps together and climbed up the side of the ravine whence they proceeded slowly along the crest of the ridge in the direction where they presumed lay the chief town of the tribe.

This was a strategic move agreed upon by Bradshaw and Pan on the theory that if the savages attacked and found that the party had gone, they would infer that a retreat had been made in a contrary direction.

Not much distance was traversed, for

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they feared to come too close to their enemies, and when a halt was made, half the men were posted as pickets, the ravine top being covered at every possible point of vantage.

Then through the long night they watched and waited. No stealthy step of man or beast came to disturb them. The failure of the tribe to attack seemed no less a mystery than Murdock's treachery, and the suspense was all but unbearable.

Toward morning Bradshaw threw himself upon the ground and slept fitfully till sunrise. When he opened his eyes Pan was approaching.

"We chose a good place in the darkness," said he; "will you come and see?"

Bradshaw followed him among the trees that covered the hilltop to a point where there was a sheer descent of two hundred feet or more. So steep was it that no tree found rooting there and the view eastward was unimpeded.

To their left lay the mouth of the ravine. Before them stretched a broad plain terminating in low hills upon the further side.

The sun's rays glistened upon a river that flowed from the distant hills through the plain and past a large town in the middle, the nearest houses of which seemed to be about a mile away.

Even as they stood there they could distinguish men moving about the town and congregating in a square before the largest building in the place.

"That must be the king's house," said Pan, "and something unusual is going on; but if we must fight we can give them a hard battle here."

"Yes," responded Bradshaw, "they can hardly surround us."

"I am going to the town," Pan continued, and he began to divest himself of his civilized garments.

"Have you thought of the risk?"

"Yes, and what greater risk can there be than remaining here with no knowledge of the real situation?"

"You are right, Pan, and I am more than hopeful that you'll come out of it successfully. Ah! see there!"

He caught Pan by the arm and directed his attention to that part of the plain that lay between them and the town.

Less than half a mile away they saw a man whose waving beard distinguished him as Murdock, running rapidly toward the ravine. Now and again he crouched and proceeded more slowly, and he was evidently at pains to take all advantage of trees and other objects that might screen him from view of persons in the town.

"What can it mean?" exclaimed Bradshaw. "Undoubtedly he's on his way to see me."

"To learn whether his trick succeeded," said Pan.

"But why should he hurry? Why dodge being seen from the town? Doesn't that show that he must have been ignorant that the food he brought

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was poisoned?"

"I cannot tell. I think—but no matter; you will meet him, I suppose?"

"Surely, Pan."

"And this time I know you will be on your guard. So I shall go on to the town."

"But what if he should bring word that it is necessary to retreat at once?"

"Then retreat—if you trust his word. I will overtake you if I come away from the town alive. Good by, Mr. Bradshaw."

The black was already on his way down the steep hillside and Bradshaw went back to camp and thence to the ravine where he had first encountered Murdock.

Murdock had not yet arrived. After a moment of anxious thought Bradshaw concealed himself and waited.

Presently he heard a cautious stirring of bushes, and he saw Murdock's face peering from a mass of tropical foliage.

The old man's brows were knit, his lips parted, and his bronzed cheeks had a hue of ghastly pallor. He looked and listened intently for several seconds and then crept carefully forth and proceeded up the ravine.

Bradshaw followed with the utmost care, losing sight of Murdock from time to time.

At length he saw the old man standing beside the dead body of the cub. Both hands clenched were raised high in air, his head was thrown far back on his shoulders, and his limbs

were trembling.

It seemed to Bradshaw an attitude of infinite despair. He was thrilled at the sight, though he knew not how to interpret it.

With a long fluttering sigh, Murdock let his hands fall to his side. Then he began to scan the ground.

Signs of a recent camp were plain enough, and to one familiar with the wilderness there was no great difficulty in discovering the route taken by the retreating party.

Murdock presently began to ascend the side of the ravine. Then Bradshaw stepped forth from his concealment.

"Here I am, Mr. Murdock," he said, in a tone that he tried to make natural and cordial.

The old man whirled about at the first sound and for an instant stared at Bradshaw with bulging eyes. Then he ran tottering to where Bradshaw stood, fell on his knees, placed one trembling hand on Bradshaw's wrist and with the other plucked the hem of his coat.

"Thank God! thank God!" he gasped repeatedly.

"What is the matter, Mr. Murdock?" asked Bradshaw, trying to make the old man rise, and almost recoiling from him as he did so. "Calm yourself and tell me."

"Your camp was deserted," chattered Murdock, "and—and——"

He tried to look Bradshaw in the eyes and, failing to keep his own gaze steady, stared about him vacantly while

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he seemed at loss for words.

“Did you think something had happened to me, Mr. Murdock?” Bradshaw asked.

“I feared—Oh! I feared—but it matters nothing. You are alive and all will perhaps be well.”

“What was it you feared?” insisted Bradshaw; “I must know, Mr. Murdock.”

The old man looked around him helplessly.

“That food,” he stammered almost inaudibly; “after I got back to the town I—I discovered that there was something wrong with it. An enemy meant mischief for me. I feared you had eaten it.”

“I thought you said you prepared it yourself.”

“I—I did. The stuff was put in while my back was turned. What did you do with it, Elmer?”

The old man’s dishonesty was so palpable that Bradshaw was hard put to it to refrain from denouncing him; but Murdock was Irene’s father!

“Before I could eat it,” he answered, “the cub got at it. You see how it served him,” and he pointed to the dead beast.

Murdock appeared to be terribly shocked.

“Awful!” he whispered; “Oh! Elmer! you didn’t suspect me?”

“How could I suspect you, Mr. Murdock?”

The old man looked this way and that, spatted his hands together in the

most nervous fashion, and shifted restlessly on his feet. Ever and again his eyes met Bradshaw’s, but not to linger in a steady glance.

In his own eyes there gleamed that low kind of cunning that overreaches itself and is easily discovered. Bradshaw noted it and was more and more repelled, but his mission in Africa was to save this man, and he held himself firmly to the purpose.

“The fear of what might have happened to you has upset me completely,” whined Murdock, “but it is well now. Where have you placed your men?”

“Where they can resist attack better than here,” Bradshaw replied without indicating the direction.

He wanted to ask Murdock further about the poisoned cake; why he had not returned as soon as he discovered it? Why he had waited till morning? Why, then, he approached a friendly camp so cautiously, and other obvious questions that could not fail to confuse the old man and involve him in a mesh of contradictions if he should continue his deceit.

But not only was Bradshaw restrained by sentiment from convicting his sweetheart’s father of abominable crime, but there was a deeper question the answer to which could be gained only by patient observation. Having once attempted to kill the man who came to help him, why should Murdock now be so anxious to know that he was

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alive?

The answer came by inference much sooner than Bradshaw could have hoped it would.

“You gave me a scare about the tribe, you know,” he added to his reply to Murdock’s question, preferring that the old man should think that the lie about the cake had been accepted as truth.

“Yes, I remember,” said Murdock, “and I want to tell you more about the tribe. I want to go with you now, Elmer, if you will take me with you?”

“I came to Africa to find you and take you home,” Bradshaw responded; “I have told you that I should not start back without you. I stand by that.”

Murdock’s extreme nervousness continued to manifest itself in weak gestures and quavering voice, but he spoke more connectedly and rapidly.

“It is most fortunate,” said he, “that I did not stay with you as you asked me to last night, for something has happened below there that I could not have learned. A small party of men who had been absent from the town for a long time returned unexpectedly before sunrise this morning, bringing information that has set the whole tribe in commotion.

“So important was it that the king was awakened and I was called, too, for I have been the king’s adviser for some time. Thus I learned speedily what had happened.

“These men reported that they had

been attacked by a white man of marvelous power who not only escaped miraculously from the death they sought to inflict upon him, but that he had called thunderbolts from heaven that struck down Dirik, the high priest who was in charge of the tribesmen. They say, too, that this wonderful white man had a black slave who attended him, and that these two have taken possession of the sacred place where dwell the spirits that protect the tribe.

“There are other details, but these are the main facts as presented by the frightened blacks. Listening to them, and knowing of your presence here, and thinking of your journeying about the country, I inferred that this wonderful white man must have been you, Elmer.”

“Yes,” said Bradshaw, “I guess it was. The only difficulty with the story is that I didn’t take possession of their sacred hole in the ground. I ran away as fast as I could.”

“That doesn’t matter. The blacks are superstitious to the last degree, and if you killed Dirik as they say, after escaping somehow being killed by their tree of execution, you may be sure they were too panic stricken to observe whether you retreated or pursued. Besides, they may not be telling the entire truth. Having been scared by your apparent overpowering of their guardian spirits, they may have invented other details to excuse their desertion of the place.”

“Probably they have done so unless

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it happens that there is another white man traveling through Africa who had a similar experience to mine and who didn't run away but settled down in the sacred hole."

"No, no! that cannot be!" cried Murdock in great excitement; "it must have been you. I am sure of it."

"Well," said Bradshaw, soothingly, "call it so. The question can be settled easily enough if it's important. Where was the place that this affair occurred?"

"Ah!" and Murdock was more excited than before, "that is what I do not know! I must know! You must tell me! It is most important to me, and to you, Elmer."

"I should think it more important to start for the coast as soon as possible."

"No, not till we have gone to that place where you met Dirik and his men. I have been trying to find it for many long years. We must not return to America without going there. Why! Elmer, that is the richest diamond mine in all Africa!"

### CHAPTER VII. DISCOVERY OF THE DIAMOND MINE.

So, then, the mystery of Murdock's behavior was partly cleared. He had fallen a victim to the diamond fever and taken up association with a tribe of savages in the hope of finding a valuable mine.

Possessed by that idea, he had resented the appeal of friends and daughter to return home and had gone so far as to attempt the life of the man who had come thus far in the friendly effort to save him.

Then, when he discovered that this man might be able to guide him to the long sought mine, he had repented his villainy, and his repentance went no further than selfish interest.

It was not that he feared Elmer Bradshaw had been killed. His anxiety and regret were aroused solely by the fear that he had put out of the way the one man who could aid him in the discovery of the mine.

Bradshaw saw as much as this and it framed itself in his mind, while the old man was speaking, with all the suddenness and clearness of a revelation. How much more lay behind Murdock's extraordinary conduct he did not, could not dream.

This revelation alone was enough to cause him the severest struggle in determining what course he should pursue.

His overwhelming impulse was to leave the wretched old man to his fate; but Murdock was Irene's father! It would be faithlessness to her to let any effort go untried that might induce him to return not only to his home, but to his former upright self.

Was there any hope for the latter consummation? Could any man who had descended to murder be redeemed?

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Bradshaw could not answer these questions, but in the very light of their hopelessness, his resolution was then and there taken. Come what might, he would be loyal to the idea that had inspired his long journey.

He would shut his eyes to Murdock's crime, to his infatuation with regard to the diamond mine, to all save the one purpose of the expedition: the restoration of Murdock to his daughter.

From this resolution Bradshaw never wavered, though more than once thereafter it seemed as if he would go mad with apprehension and dismay as the bitter truth became revealed in brighter and brighter light.

The tumult in his thoughts was not reflected in his face. On the contrary, so great was his effort at self control as he framed his resolution, that he seemed wholly unaffected by Murdock's declaration about the mine.

"Don't you understand, Elmer?" cried Murdock. "You have discovered a mine of incalculable richness."

"Mr. Murdock," responded Bradshaw. "Irene's happiness is more to me than all the diamonds in the world."

"Ah! you are a young man, Elmer——"

"And you are Irene's father."

"Yes," and Murdock trembled as with palsy; "I think of Irene. I would make her rich, Elmer, rich beyond her wildest dreams. She shall have a palace, jewels, servants by the score——"

"This is childish, Mr. Murdock, and

unworthy of you!" exclaimed Bradshaw; "your daughter would rather have her father near her than be possessed of all that money can procure."

"She is a woman, Elmer. Women think more of the affections than men do, and they do not realize the importance of money."

"I, too, Mr. Murdock, would surround Irene with all possible comforts and luxuries. I am not fabulously rich, but I can provide her with all she can possibly ask for."

"Perhaps, Elmer, but think of the greater security in multiplying your fortune a hundred fold! Come! you will show me this mine and we will share it."

"I will take you back to Irene, Mr. Murdock."

"You shall, but as a rich man. And your own fortune, Elmer——"

"Is sufficient."

"Then go back with it to Irene and comfort her. Tell me where the mine is and I will soon return, and what I bring with me will more than compensate for my absence."

"Will all possible wealth restore your wife to life?"

Murdock shuddered violently and his pleading tone changed to one that was harsh with wrath.

"I see," he cried, "you will not tell me! Perhaps you mean to go back there alone and rob me of what I have been so patiently trying to gain. Very well,

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Elmer, try it. I will go back to the town and inform the king. He will scour the country for you and not rest until he has killed you and exterminated your followers.”

The old man turned about as if he would put his threat into instant execution. Bradshaw seized him and held him firmly.

It may be that the struggle of the evening previous was in his mind to deter him from futile resistance, and it may be that the threat was but a ruse to bring Bradshaw to terms; at all events he was passive in Bradshaw's grasp, waiting for the younger man to speak.

“Wait, Mr. Murdock,” said Bradshaw; “remember, I know nothing about this mine except what you have vaguely told me. I do not know that the place where I had my adventure was a mine, though it may be so. How do you know that a mine exists?”

“I want to tell you, Elmer. I will give you all the information that I have been years in acquiring if you will promise to help me gain possession of the mine.”

“I will do anything in reason to induce you to return to America with me, but I must know clearly what I am about.”

“Yes, that is right. Then listen, Elmer. The tribe that holds this country is superstitious, powerful and bloodthirsty to the last degree.”

“What are they called?” asked Bradshaw, as he released the old man and pointed to a moss covered stone on

which Murdock seated himself.

“Marotse. Their king is Bangwe, and while he, in ordinary respects, is an absolute monarch, and while he profits by the mine that lies within his territory, he does not know where it is and he is himself ruled by three Arabs who have played upon his superstition until they are able to work the mine for their own gain and that possibly of confederates at a distance.”

“Was the man Dirik, I think you called him, whom Pan shot, one of the three?”

“Yes. The others, fortunately for us, are away and will not return for a long time. Arabs in Africa, as perhaps you know, are traders, and their traffic is mainly in slaves. They are the terror of most tribes, but the Marotses, so far in the interior, had not suffered from them until Dirik and his partners appeared. I may not know all the details of Dirik's first ventures here, and such as I know I have been long in getting, but I know enough to be sure of the situation.

“These three Arabs were the forerunners of a great slave hunting expedition. Following the usual custom, they planned to buy a number of people from Bangwe, the king, or, failing to make a bargain, to bring a small, well armed body of their followers and subdue the tribe.

“Before they had approached the king they accidentally discovered a deposit of diamonds that seemed to be and probably is inexhaustible. Here was



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business that might be made far more profitable than slave dealing. The question was how to utilize their discovery.

“There were a number of obvious considerations to take into account. If they subdued the tribe and thus gained possession of the diamond field, knowledge of their conquest would in time spread over the continent and come to the ears of Europeans.

“Now Arabs are held in suspicion by whites of all nationalities, and there is a general effort to prevent the slave trade. That in itself would be likely to cause interference with the designs of these three, but more than that, if they opened up diamond mines and dealt openly in their product, there would certainly ensue an influx of Europeans who would deprive the Arabs of their discovery, or at least rival them in operating it.

“More important than these considerations, however, was the possibility of turning the discovery to their individual profit. That they determined to do without incurring the hostility of the Marotses, which would give them constant trouble, whereas they saw a way to make allies of the tribe.

“To begin with, they blackened their already dark skins so as to disguise their nationality as far as possible. Then, having presented themselves to the king, they shrewdly took advantage of circumstances to play upon his

superstitious nature and his gratitude as well.

“For generations the Marotses’ chief town had been upon the bank of the Banje river, and the river had gradually changed its course. The change was not perceptible to the blacks, but it had turned the site of their town to an unwholesome marsh. The result was a pestilence, which the Marotses attributed to the malign influence of spirits.

“They had sacrificed to their gods in vain, and at the time when Dirik and his partners appeared, a favorite son of Bangwe was stricken. Dirik told Bangwe that the Marotse gods had fled, and that himself and companions were high priests of other gods who were desirous of finding a new country where they could live in quiet.

“Dirik said his gods would not only drive away the evil spirits that were inflicting the tribe with pestilence, but would protect the king, make him exceedingly rich, and bless the kingdom generally.

“It was only too evident that the old time gods were useless, and Bangwe told Dirik to prove the efficiency of the new gods by curing his son. With a great amount of ceremony and mystery, Dirik took the ailing boy somewhere up into the hills where, naturally enough, he speedily recovered.

“That settled it. Bangwe killed off the priests who had been beating their tom toms vainly against the pestilence,

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and told Dirik to install his gods without delay. Dirik then imposed a condition to the effect that the actual residence of the gods should remain forever unknown even to the king. Bangwe agreed, and to fasten his hold more securely, Dirik directed the whole town to migrate to a more wholesome locality at a little distance.

"Imposing ceremony attended this matter, the Arabs making it a feature of alleged religion and saying nothing about hygienic conditions. As a result the pestilence abated and the entire tribe believed in the new gods and yielded the most implicit obedience to the three high priests.

"Having once got their hold on Bangwe and his people, it was a simple matter for the Arabs gradually to impose other conditions to the continued good will of the gods. Men were necessary to the working of the diamond mine. So they informed the king that the gods needed servants whose lives must be devoted to the gods. In this way they contrived to get all the help they needed.

"Whenever Dirik calls for them a number of men are told off from the tribe and they accompany him, where, no man knows except yourself, Elmer, and they never return.

"I suspect that periodically Dirik executes his workmen in order to terrify the others into absolute subjection. At all events until this morning no one who ever went to the supposed home of the

gods returned from it save the Arabs themselves."

Murdock paused, and Bradshaw asked:

"How do the Arabs market their product?"

"Two of them make a journey annually to the Transvaal. They are there now. Ah! they must have accumulated an immense fortune by this time."

"In that case, I wonder they have not retired before now to enjoy the fruits of their venture."

"Retire!" cried Murdock; "retire, Elmer, with millions left untouched in the ground? You do not realize what it means to devote one's life to the quest for fortune."

"No," thought Bradshaw, "I don't, and I hope I never shall."

"Where is the man," Murdock continued, "who ever had enough? The more you get the more you want, and I can as soon think of these Arabs giving up the mine as that I would give it up myself if I had found it."

"Then I'd better not show the way to it."

Murdock stared in momentary surprise. Then he perceived that he had blundered, and tried speedily to right himself.

"My case is different," he stammered. "I am growing old. Many years have been spent in fruitless effort to make the fortune I desire. Now all I ask is to be able to go home with a good

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showing for my effort, and that can be had if you will help. You will, I know you will. You promised——”

“I made no promise,” Bradshaw interrupted. “I clearly left my course to be decided in the light of reason. You haven’t told me all yet. What are your relations to the Marotses?”

“My relations with the tribe?” repeated Murdock, blankly; “what can that have to do with it? Not,” he added hastily, “that I would reserve anything.”

“I don’t see anything embarrassing in my question,” said Bradshaw; “I am naturally curious to know how you have managed to pick up as much information as you have, and how you have kept out of the Arabs’ way. Dirik gave me to understand that it was death to a white man to enter this territory. You said as much yourself, you know, when you first met me last night.”

“Oh!” and Murdock seemed to be relieved; “of course there’s nothing embarrassing in that. I didn’t understand you, and, in fact, I was coming to that matter.

“It was after my arrival that the Arabs, or, as the tribesmen always call them, the high priests, made it an iron law that no stranger of any race or color should be permitted to live if he set foot on Marotse territory. So in one sense I am no exception. The three priests were all absent when I came.

“One of the king’s high officers had mutinied. I suppose it was a part of the trouble that grew out of the semi

revolution effected by the Arabs. At all events, this fellow tried to subvert the government and dethrone Bangwe. By the merest accident I came upon the king just as the rebel was about to assassinate him.

“Of course I had no interest in the matter other than to promote my own ends, and those would better be subserved by maintaining established authority than by risking the favor of an insurrectionary party.

“It was really quite a crisis for me, for I could have aided either side, or I could have refrained from action, which, as matters stood, would have been the same thing as aiding the insurgent. So I shot the insurgent.”

Bradshaw started, not at the tragedy narrated, but at Murdock’s cold blooded manner of relating it. The old man observed the effect of his narrative, and was proceeding to justify his course at length, adducing, however, no better arguments than he had already indicated, when Bradshaw interposed.

“Never mind,” he said sharply; “you shot him. What happened then?”

“Naturally enough, the king was grateful. The death of the insurgent settled the rebellion, and there was no more trouble of that kind. Bangwe entertained me to the extent of his limited notions of royal hospitality, and eventually made me his adviser, a kind of prime minister, you know.”

“But what induced you to remain? Surely the dignity of office under such a

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——”

“The diamonds, Elmer, the diamonds!” cried Murdock. “Don’t you understand that that had been my sole incentive to exploration ever since I set forth?”

“Had you heard of the mine then?”

“Yes, by tradition. I had come upon some very vague reports of the existence of diamond fields far north of those in the Transvaal, and I was hunting for them. I believed I was on the right track when I came to the Marotse kingdom, and I was convinced of it after I had met the Arabs.

“They were very suspicious of me at first, and but for the fear of alienating the king altogether, and thus bringing on themselves unnecessary trouble, they would have had me executed. A kind of compromise was effected by which I was allowed to remain, with restrictions upon my movements and authority, and with the understanding that any other white man who came should be put to death immediately.

“I accepted the situation, partly because I had to, for otherwise I should have been killed, and partly because I was confident that in time I could overreach the Arabs and learn where the mine was.

“At one time I taxed Dirik with my belief in the mine, and drew from him admissions that more than satisfied me that I was right. I tried to get him to take me into the scheme, but there I failed.”

“But, Mr. Murdock,” said Bradshaw,

“how could you have hoped to profit single handed if you had discovered the location of the mine?”

“I can’t answer that question in detail. When you left America could you have told precisely what you would do in Africa? Of course you couldn’t. Circumstances were your guide, just as they have been mine, just as they would have been had I been able at any time to find the mine, just as they are now that I have found a way to find it.”

## CHAPTER VIII. PAN’S ADVENTURE.

THE strain upon Bradshaw’s nerves was not a little relieved by Murdock’s frankness. After getting well started upon his narration, he had shown few symptoms of that frantic nervousness that marked the first part of the conversation, though ever and again his eyes glowed with that low cunning that suggested things he might have told had he been so inclined.

There was enough in what he did tell to occupy Bradshaw’s thoughts, and he gave little concern to what might have happened that was not set forth in the narrative. What might happen now was more to the point.

“What is going to be the result?” he asked, “of this return of the diamond diggers?”

“Nothing, I hope, until Dirik’s partners get back. Long before that has

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happened we can have gained the mine, dug a lot of diamonds, and intrenched it to resist attack.”

“I see. But what makes you so confident nothing will happen meantime?”

“I have advised Bangwe to that effect.”

“And you did that to enable us to gain time?”

“Certainly, Elmer.”

“Doesn’t it strike you that the Marotses have any right to what lies in their country?”

Murdock stared in evidently genuine amazement.

“Is it quite fair,” Bradshaw persisted, “after enjoying the hospitality and confidence of a king, to desert and trick him as you suggest doing?”

“Man alive!” exclaimed Murdock, then, “I never heard such questions raised in Africa. Rights of the savages? Why, Elmer, to begin with, I took up with these people for the sake of getting at the diamonds, and it is pretty late to raise these fine distinctions which don’t hold on this continent, any way. Then, as for the diamonds, the Marotses don’t care for them. They have no use for them, no idea of their value. It’s a thousand to one that the men who worked under Dirik never knew what they were about.”

“But you said the king profited by the gems.”

“Certainly. The Arabs have kept their word. Their ‘gods’ frequently bring to

Bangwe the sort of things he likes most, and the entire tribe benefits indirectly. As a matter of fact, the arrangement has been a good thing for the Marotses.”

“Then I say that it is a pity that Pan had to kill Dirik.”

“Oh!” cried Murdock, rising and shaking his fists in the air, “your sentimentalism puts me out of all patience with you. Here we are wasting time——”

“See here,” interrupted Bradshaw, severely, rising also, “as the representative of your daughter I am the man whose patience is to be considered.”

Murdock’s anger collapsed instantly, and he became again the nervous, cringing wreck he had been at first.

“I didn’t mean to offend you, Elmer,” he whined. “You see, I have stuck to this project so long that I don’t think of much else as——”

“That is just what is the matter with you. You ought to think of your daughter.”

“I do, Elmer, I do. Have I not told you I wish to make her rich?”

“I don’t care to hear that argument again. We must discuss matters connected with our return to the coast.”

“The first thing, then, is to tell me where the mine lies. Did you not say it was to the west?”

“I didn’t say one thing or the other.”

“But you will?”

“I’ll see about it when Pan returns from the Marotse town with definite

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information as to the plans of the tribe.”

Murdock’s jaw dropped as if he were stricken with horror.

“Has your man gone to the town?” he asked.

“He has, and I have little doubt that he will return in safety.”

“Then, Elmer,” and Murdock raised a shaking hand above his head, “you must promise me now to take me to the mine. Your man will probably not return. He will be discovered, and that will set the king’s forces upon you. In such an event I shall probably not be able to save you, and in short, if you do not promise I shall inform——”

“You have already threatened to betray me, Mr. Murdock.”

“You use a hard word. Perhaps you will understand how determined I am when I tell you that my purpose in coming last night to warn you was not to save your life, but judging from the smoke of your fires that white men were here, I wanted to frighten them away lest they discover the mine and despoil me of what should be my property.”

“You speak of your determination,” retorted Bradshaw; “do you forget mine? I have come to Africa for a purpose that I intend to fulfil. Whether we go to the coast via the mine or not remains to be seen, but to the coast we go together, and you will stay with me from this time on.”

Murdock looked at the young man with an expression of mingled hatred and fear. Presumably he not only saw

the hopelessness of attempting direct resistance, but perceived also that his one chance of going to the mine lay in submission, for he drew a long fluttering breath and whined:

“You do not need to be so severe with an old man, Elmer. I am willing to remain with you.”

“Then,” said Bradshaw, “we’ll go up to the camp and wait for Pan.”

It seemed likely that Murdock had been up all night, and that sleepless hours combined with unusual excitement had exhausted him; for, when he arrived at the camp, he threw himself upon the ground and slept for hours.

Pan returned about noon. With him was a young woman, a native of the Marotse tribe.

The moment he saw her and before any explanations were begun, Bradshaw noticed that she was of exceptionally good appearance for an African. In the eyes of a black man she would undoubtedly have been a beauty.

“I had begun to fear,” was all Bradshaw said by way of greeting.

“I hope I shall never have to take such a dangerous trip again,” Pan responded. “If it had not been for the excitement down there, which causes some confusion, I don’t think I could have come out of it alive.”

“And you’ve done better; brought a captive, I see.”

“No, not a captive. I trust in your generosity, Mr. Bradshaw, to save her.”

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“From what, Pan?”

“Death. She was sentenced to die this afternoon.”

“What was her offense?”

“That she was the daughter of the man whom we saw killed by the tree off yonder.”

“Great Scott! we get mixed more and more with that tree affair at every turn.”

“I do not understand you, Mr. Bradshaw.”

The American pointed to where Murdock lay sleeping.

“He wants me to take him to that hole in the ground,” said Bradshaw. “He swears it is a diamond mine.”

“It may be so,” returned Pan, showing no interest in the matter, “and if you care to go, it may be as well to march in that direction.”

“We’ll talk it over, but my belief is that we should take the course that will bring us quickly to the coast. Meantime you may be sure I will do what I can to protect the woman, but I’d like to know how you identify her as the daughter of that man who was a victim of the tree.”

“By this,” and Pan handed Bradshaw a trinket, made apparently of bone.

While Bradshaw was looking at it, Pan added: “When it comes to deciding on the way to the coast you mustn’t overlook the fact that we are rather more than half way across the continent. It may prove easier to go on to the Indian ocean shore than return to the Atlantic. We are not many days’ journey

from the Zambesi river. The river we see in the plain below flows into the Zambesi, and if we wish to strike that great waterway, our most direct route would take us past the hole that now you call a mine.”

“That’s decidedly interesting!” exclaimed Bradshaw, “for I’ve been more than half convinced that we should have to take in the mine for the purpose of humoring him,” with a jerk of his head toward Murdock. “He’s a hard customer to handle, Pan.”

“I like him no more than before,” said the black, “but if you must take him, you must.”

“That sums it up; but what is this trinket?”

“I took it from the body of the man who was killed by the tree. It is a family totem, and I took it because I recognized it as such, thinking it might possibly be useful to us. I don’t know that it will serve us, but it has served her.”

“She has one like it, I suppose.”

“Yes; I saw it in her hand and noticed the similarity. It seems that the men at the mine were of this tribe——”

“I have already learned that.”

“And of their return? Well, it has made a great commotion down there. They seem to think that a terrible invasion is threatened, and they are preparing their defenses.”

“Aren’t they going to make a move in the direction of the mine?”

“Apparently not. Their language is

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very hard for me, but I got the idea that there is some strange notion among them that it is forbidden for any of the tribesmen to go to the sacred place. You see, they regard the mine as sacred just as that man did whom I shot."

Thereupon Bradshaw told Murdock's story of the mine. Pan listened without comment until the end.

"I think he told the truth," he said then. "Of course the Marotses do not know anything about mines. They think the place is the home of their gods and that men who go there and never return have somehow failed to please the gods. I learned that much from the woman. As fast as I learn her language better I shall know more about these people."

"Of course you are sure she can be trusted?"

"Very sure, Mr. Bradshaw. It was not very far from the king's house that I saw her. She was in the grasp of a soldier, and he, like many others in the town, appeared to be in a panic. She was struggling to free herself, and her wrist being bared for an instant I saw the totem and recognized it.

"I saw at once that she might give information that would be useful to us, so I got close to her and showed her the totem I had taken from the dead man, making her a sign which she understood to mean that I would befriend her if possible.

"Just then the king himself and two or three warriors, evidently officers of high rank, came hurrying by. The

warrior who had the woman called out to them asking, as I understood it, for instructions. One of the chiefs shouted back something which the warrior understood to be a command to let the woman go, for he immediately released her.

"She turned and fled, but hardly had she got started when the chief who had given the command chanced to look back, and seeing what had happened, he shouted again at the warrior. Plainly the chief's first order had been misunderstood, for the warrior set out after the woman to recapture her.

"I put out my foot, tripped the warrior and gave him a push that sent him sprawling. Then I ran after the woman, hurried her around the nearest house, and so by many turns through the town to the plain whence we came here by a roundabout way."

"That was an adventure and no mistake!" exclaimed Bradshaw; "but, Great Scott and Sam Hill! what risks you ran!"

"Yes," said Pan, simply, "it couldn't have been done if it hadn't been for the general confusion. I have managed to learn from the woman that the returning party brought news of the death of her father, whereupon the decree went forth that she must die, and likewise all the other members of the dead man's family. It seems she was the only near relative. The Marotses believed that the anger of the deities could be—what is the word?"



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“Appeased?” suggested Bradshaw.

“Yes, appeased only by slaying all of the offending man’s family.”

“Well, we must take her to a place of safety, which means out of the Marotse kingdom. Get all the information you can from her, Pan.”

“I shall do so, Mr. Bradshaw.”

They then discussed the problem of getting to a seaport with the least difficulty. Bradshaw was averse to going near the mine on account of the possible difficulty of getting Murdock away from it; but, on the other hand, there was the problem of managing him without going there, and as Pan had become satisfied that the shortest cut to the Zambesi was by that route, it was decided to take it.

If the Marotses had been peaceful it would have been a simpler thing to go via the river flowing through their chief town; but that was altogether out of the question, and as there were other towns to the north, all of which would have to be avoided, there was nothing for it but a long detour, which meant much the same route that had been pursued previously. This had one distinct advantage: the way had been broken, and progress, therefore, could be comparatively speedy.

Murdock opened his eyes just as the discussion was concluding.

“Are you going to the mine, Elmer?” he asked.

“Yes,” said Bradshaw; “we shall start at once.”

A gleam of intense satisfaction lit up Murdock’s eyes and he sprang to his feet almost with the alacrity of a young man.

“I will do anything to help,” he cried. “Let me be a carrier, so that we may gain time.”

The blacks were even then finishing their preparations for the march. As Murdock looked around to see what he might set his hand to, he saw the woman whom Pan had brought from the town.

Instantly his face clouded with a most ferocious expression and he turned to Bradshaw, saying:

“How the devil did she get here?”

“Pan brought her,” Bradshaw answered, with marked deliberation. “They were going to execute her down there.”

“Why didn’t he let them do it, then?”

Murdock’s tone was well in keeping with the expression of his face. It aroused the attention of the woman, who had been sitting mournfully quiet, a little apart, ever since her arrival.

She looked up, saw Murdock for the first time, and immediately gave plain signs of extreme alarm.

Pan, who had gone to give some order to the carriers, was also attracted by Murdock’s voice, and he came back hastily.

“That question doesn’t deserve an answer,” Bradshaw was saying.

“She must go back to the town,” cried Murdock, “or no; that might be

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dangerous, for she would betray us. Better that she be put out of the way here."

Bradshaw was so profoundly shocked at this brutal suggestion that he hardly had the voice to say, "She goes with us."

Murdock stamped his foot and shook his fist.

"She shall not go," he cried. "You choose between us, Elmer."

"Mr. Bradshaw," said Pan, "excuse me, but I know you must take your friend with you. You need not take the woman if she is in your way. She shall not go back to the Marotses. I will take her with me."

"And leave me, Pan?" asked Bradshaw.

"Yes, Mr. Bradshaw, leave you and your friend."

"Well, by Sam Hill, I guess not! Mr. Murdock the matter admits of no argument. The woman goes, and you go, too. If you choose to go as a prisoner, that is your own affair, but as a prisoner, you won't see the diamond mine, nor be released until we are on the ocean."

Murdock panted inarticulately, staring from Bradshaw to the woman and Pan. Evidently he was struggling between his mad desire to see the mine and some equally mad hostility against the unfortunate woman.

Bradshaw had found his voice, and he could not restrain it at once.

"If you were anybody but Irene's

father," he said, "you would be left to your fate. Perhaps you would like to go back to the Marotses now? You have been absent long enough to justify King Bangwe in giving you a peculiarly warm welcome."

"I cannot go back now," whispered Murdock, his eyes still wandering; "the king would regard me as a deserter. And the mine! After all these years! I must see it, Elmer. You must forgive an old man's quick temper. Don't think ill of me, Elmer."

His voice had reverted to his characteristic whine.

"Oh! don't appeal to me like a sick child," exclaimed Bradshaw; "be a man and behave yourself," and he turned in disgust to give directions to the carriers.

Immediately he heard Murdock speaking in a low tone to the woman, and he swung about again. The woman was shrinking away from Murdock and looking terribly frightened, while Pan stood beside her, his usually placid brow wrangled by a frown.

"I do not know all he says, Mr. Bradshaw," said Pan, directly, "but he is threatening her."

"Murdock!" cried Bradshaw, sternly, "that woman is under my protection. Treat her accordingly or it will be the worse for you."

Murdock's bronzed cheeks paled. He mumbled something unintelligible and turned away.

Bradshaw looked at him steadily for several seconds, and satisfied that self

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interest would prevent him from leaving the party, went about his work with a heart on fire with conflicting emotions.

He had been obliged to threaten Irene's father. He was obliged to harbor this man whose character had become distorted to the vilest degree of savagery. He was distraught by the immeasurable grief it would be to Irene to learn the facts about her father's downfall.

And yet, he saw no other possible course than to adhere to his resolution and take Murdock home to America.

### CHAPTER IX. MURDOCK AND MTEMA.

THE party was soon on the march. With one forerunner as an advance guard, Bradshaw and Pan were in the lead. The woman walked beside Pan, and immediately after them came Murdock, silent and sullen.

No event of importance attended the first stage of their journey. For an hour or two Bradshaw kept a man far in the rear to apprise him of any possible pursuit by the Marotses; but it seemed that whatever the tribesmen might be planning to do, their suspicions had not been aroused concerning a party of invaders so near their town.

Eventually, therefore, the expedition proceeded as usual, and as time passed, Bradshaw's buoyancy once more asserted itself. He was far from being

assured when he thought of Murdock, but he gave as little thought as possible to that uncomfortable subject.

It was such a relief to be on the way home again that he could not do otherwise than hope that with a return to the associations of civilization, Murdock would be restored to some enduring semblance of his former self.

Bradshaw counted heavily on the influence Irene would have over her father. It seemed impossible that in his daughter's presence Murdock would continue to manifest the savage traits that he had acquired by long residence among the Africans.

In order to stimulate the reawakening of better feelings, Bradshaw had a pack of clothing opened the first time the party paused for rest.

"Mr. Murdock," he said gently, "I should think it was about time you had a new suit. I'll be your shopkeeper. How'll this do for a 'hand me down?'" and he held forth a suit of light cloth with a gesture to suggest the typical second hand clothing dealer.

There was no change in Murdock's expression to show that he appreciated or even understood the pleasantry.

"I'll do anything you say, Elmer," he answered submissively, as he took the garments.

He put them on and seemed to shrink from the glances of his companions.

"They feel a bit strange," he said

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sullenly.

"I shall be surprised if they do not make you feel more like returning home," Bradshaw responded.

Murdock made no further remark, and the matter was not mentioned again.

They camped that night at the edge of the great forest through which they had traveled so blindly to the kingdom of the Marotse, and next day plunged into it along their beaten track. It was nothing like so tedious as before, the main reason being, perhaps, that now there was a definite end in view.

The same order of march was maintained, Pan ever keeping at the side of the Marotse woman, with whom he kept up an incessant conversation, partly in spoken words and partly by signs. He told Bradshaw that he was learning her language.

"What is your friend's name, Pan," inquired Bradshaw, "if you've got that far?"

"Mtema," Pan replied.

Bradshaw puckered his lips in a vain attempt to pronounce the first two letters satisfactorily together.

"I give it up," he said, with the first approach to a laugh he had known for days; "tell her not to be offended if I make it plain 'Tema."

"She is very grateful to you, Mr. Bradshaw," said Pan.

Struck by a new thought, Bradshaw took the first opportunity to speak to Pan out of Murdock's hearing.

"Has she given you any reason," he

asked, "for Murdock's savage hostility to her?"

"No. We do not mention him, for he is constantly listening to us, and of course he understands all she says."

"Try to dodge him, then, and ask her."

"When I can understand her well enough," Pan replied.

Murdock, indeed, seemed to keep Mtema under constant surveillance. He had not spoken to her after Bradshaw's threat to make him a prisoner, but he remained persistently near her except when a halt was made for meals.

At such times Pan was occupied with various duties, and Mtema sat by herself. Murdock then hung around the campfire, seeming to take great interest in the cooking, and offering from time to time to help.

This puzzled Bradshaw and aroused the gravest apprehensions. He had one experience with cooking on the Murdock plan, and he wanted no other.

It was natural enough that a white man should feel the need of something to do, but why he should not be content to throw himself down and rest after a toilsome march and let the blacks attend to the menial work, was not clear.

It was a horrible thought that this man's long familiarity with the African wilderness might have enabled him to pluck poison from the rank vegetation along the way and mix it unseen with the food that was being prepared.

"Mr. Murdock," Bradshaw said at

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the end of the second day, "I'd much rather you let the men look after the cooking. They're used to it, and I find it doesn't do to get them in the way of thinking that they can have assistance for every little thing."

"Very well, Elmer," Murdock responded in a tone that was repellently subservient, "it shall be as you say."

He sat down, with a long sigh, and presently asked:

"How much farther is it to the mine, Elmer?"

Bradshaw could have told him, but prudence vaguely warned him not to do so.

"It's a long journey," he replied; "I'll tell you when we get there."

"By watching the movements of Dirik and his partners," Murdock went on, "I had become satisfied that it was about a week's journey, but they may have taken a roundabout way for the purpose of concealing the place more effectually. I had also come to the conclusion that the mine lay to the south of the town, and we are going northward."

"We are on the way to it," was all Bradshaw would say.

With each day after this Murdock had some similar question to ask, and once he tried to draw Bradshaw into a discussion of plans for working the mine. Bradshaw, however, fought shy of the subject, dismissing it so curtly that Murdock did not refer to it again.

He was more and more restless as

time passed, showing in many ways an excitement that he had great difficulty in repressing.

"You mustn't get your hopes too high," Bradshaw suggested; "the mine isn't likely to be such a valuable matter as you think."

"Only take me there!" was Murdock's reply. "I can see that we must be approaching it by the marks along the route of your previous journey."

On the fifth day they made a much longer stretch than usual. Bradshaw forced the pace with the idea of camping that night within easy reach of the mine by the succeeding noon.

It was his firm intention to keep his word to Murdock by showing him the mine and then insisting that the journey be resumed at once, and he believed it would be easier to execute this plan if the stages were so arranged that there should be no halt for a night within the vicinity of the mine.

The result was the utter exhaustion of apparently every member of the expedition when night fell. Bradshaw himself was the first to yield to sleep, and his slumber was deep.

Not so with Pan. Ever watchful and indefatigable, his eyes were wide open long after all others had been breathing heavily. He even got up and moved cautiously about the camp, inspecting the pickets, and taking a long look in the darkness at Murdock's motionless form.

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The old man seemed, like the rest, to be wrapped in unconsciousness, and at length Pan returned to his shake down and tried to sleep.

Probably it was the first time in his life that he found it impossible. Leg weary though he was, he could not still his apprehensive thoughts.

A long time passed fretfully. The small noises of the forest were infernally loud to his unusually sensitive ears, but no other sounds broke their monotony.

At length he sat up suddenly, but with the greatest care not to make the least noise.

No movement was distinguishable unless it might be the rustling of the warm night breeze in the foliage. The heavy breathing of the men was plain enough, and now and again one of them turned restlessly.

Pan started to lie down again, and checked himself. He put his hand to his brow and felt drops of perspiration there.

It was all but totally dark, and, though Bradshaw lay very near him, he could barely make out the outlines of his employer's recumbent form.

All was as it should be there, and Pan turned his eyes in the direction of Mtema's sleeping place.

He could distinguish nothing. Embers of the camp fire still glowed, but they cast no light upon her.

Noiselessly he got on hands and knees and crept toward her.

Half way he paused, conscious of a sound that did not accord with the ordinary noises of night.

What it was he could not make out. It seemed to cease as soon as he stopped to listen.

Pan crept on again. He was close to Mtema now, when something, a ripe nut, probably, fell from a tree among the glowing embers of the fire, causing a tiny flame to flash momentarily.

By its light he saw Murdock, on hands and knees also, bending over the sleeping woman. The old man's hand was raised and a long blade gleamed beneath it.

With one leap Pan was upon him. He wrenched the knife away just as the blade was descending and, catching Murdock by the throat, pushed him over against a tree trunk, holding him there as with a grip of steel.

Mtema sat up with a low cry of terror.

"Be still!" whispered Pan to her in the Marotse tongue; "you are safe. The master must not be disturbed."

The woman shrank away a little, but made no other sound. Pan looked at Murdock, the fire giving just light enough to distinguish his features at such short range.

Murdock had grasped Pan's wrist, trying to break the black's fearful clutch, and his jaws were parted in the vain effort to breathe.

"What's up?" came drowsily from Bradshaw.

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“Nothing of consequence,” answered Pan, in a steady voice; “I stumbled upon a root.”

“We’ll put arc lights around the camp hereafter,” said Bradshaw, with a yawn; “better go to sleep.”

“Yes, Mr. Bradshaw.”

Bradshaw turned over and in half a minute was sound asleep again.

Pan never moved his eyes from Murdock’s and the tragic tableau endured until the old man was purple and his limbs began to quiver convulsively.

Then the black, pointing the knife at Murdock’s heart, whispered “Silence!” and relaxed his grip.

The air rushed into Murdock’s lungs with a gasp and a rattle that seemed likely to arouse the whole expedition, but nobody stirred.

“I think I will call Mr. Bradshaw,” whispered Pan, “and kill you before his eyes.”

“Oh! spare me, Pan,” whispered the old man; “I did not know what I was doing. I walked in my sleep.”

“That is a lie,” said Pan, calmly, “but you are his friend, and I must spare you.”

“Yes!” whispered Murdock, eagerly catching at the one favorable point, “Bradshaw would never forgive you if you harmed me. I will make you rich, Pan——”

“Stop!” interrupted Pan, in a low but intensely angry tone; “keep that kind of talk for villains like yourself.”

He reached out for Murdock’s throat again, and held up the knife as if he were unable to resist the impulse to slay the old man on the spot.

Murdock was horribly alarmed.

“Don’t!” he whined piteously: “don’t, Pan! I won’t hurt the woman. I’ll let her alone, you may be sure of it.”

“Get back to your place,” said the black, rising.

The old man slowly stood up. He was shaking so violently that he could hardly keep his feet.

“You won’t tell Bradshaw, Pan?” he asked. “Think how it would disturb him. You are very fond of Bradshaw, Pan, and you wouldn’t do anything to give him heedless trouble. I will——”

“I am thinking of all that,” Pan interrupted. “Get to your place.”

Murdock stumbled across the camp to his shake down and collapsed rather than lay down there.

Pan spoke briefly to Mtema and then stationed himself midway between the two, where he remained, broad awake, till morning.

## CHAPTER X. DIRIK’S DIAMONDS.

BRADSHAW explained his plan for the day’s movements as soon as he waked. Pan listened with occasional nods of approval, and at length said:

“I can think of nothing else, Mr. Bradshaw, but I have a favor to ask.”

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"You may be sure it is granted, old fellow."

"I wish, then, you would walk with your friend. I like him no more than at first, and it is unpleasant to have him always so near to me and Mtema."

"I don't suppose 'Tema is so very fond of him, either, is she?"

Pan averted his eyes.

"Let us march behind the carriers," he said.

"Certainly," answered Bradshaw; "you'll come up fast enough if there's any need of your help. I don't know what will happen to Murdock when once he sees the mine he's hunted for so long, but I presume I can manage him alone quite as well as with a hundred assistants."

Murdock approached them, hesitatingly. He glanced askance at Pan as if to discover whether the black had reported the episode of the night, and his voice was more than ordinarily tremulous as he asked:

"Shall we reach the mine today, Elmer?"

"I expect so," Bradshaw responded, "but we cannot halt there long. We must make for the Zambesi."

"Not halt there!" cried Murdock, excitedly; "why, what are we going there for?"

"To let you see it, I suppose, and because it is on our way."

"But, Elmer, think of the diamonds!"

"Would you linger there to be overwhelmed by the Arabs and the

Marotses?" demanded Bradshaw.

"They won't come, Elmer. I'm sure of it. The Marotses would be afraid to approach the place unless they were so ordered by Dirik's partners, their high priests, and the priests have gone to the Transvaal. Ask the woman. She will tell you that I speak the truth."

"I am not doubting you, but——"

"And before the priests could arrive," Murdock went on passionately, "we could fortify the place so as to resist any attack they could possibly make. You see, the Marotses do not use firearms; the Arabs have prevented that."

"I won't discuss it," said Bradshaw, sharply.

Nevertheless he had to discuss it in one way and another during the ensuing march, for Murdock was so frantic with excitement that he talked persistently and would not be quieted. It looked to Bradshaw as if the only way in which he could accomplish the purpose of his journey to Africa would be to make Murdock a prisoner and so compel his presence with the expedition.

Against that plan was the terrible possibility that any such measure might undermine the last vestige of sanity the man possessed. He was even now little short of a monomaniac on the subject of the diamond mine, and not a harmless one at that, as Bradshaw had occasion to know. He might readily be thrown into total mental wreck by any violent opposition to his desires.



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So it was with a very heavy heart that Bradshaw at last saw stretching before him the long, bare slope that led to the place of the execution tree.

"Is it up there?" asked Murdock, eagerly following Bradshaw's gaze.

Turning to Pan, Bradshaw said, "I will go on ahead with one man to see that the way is clear."

"Let me go! let me go, Elmer!" cried Murdock, well nigh beside himself.

"Yes," said Bradshaw, patiently, "you can go, too. It will give you so much more time, if the mine proves to be deserted, to pick up loose diamonds."

The sarcasm was lost on Murdock.

"There won't be anybody there," he responded, "you may be sure of that; and if there were we could drive them away easily enough. Come on! We waste so much time."

Rather than yield to his mad impatience Bradshaw took more time than was necessary in making arrangements for the scouting trip. He disposed of the expedition within the shelter of the forest and had a picket placed at the very edge whence a view could be had up the slope to a point not far from the mine. Then he arranged a little code of signals in accordance with which the men were to follow or remain in concealment, as circumstances might demand.

Murdock fumed and fretted during all this, and Bradshaw paid not the slightest attention to him until, worn out

with waiting, the old man set off alone.

"Come back, Murdock!" commanded Bradshaw, then, with all sternness; "you shall not go one step unless you agree to obey orders, and the first disobedience will mean binding you hand and foot for the rest of the journey."

Thoroughly scared, the old man returned and promised abjectly to obey.

At last they set out, and Murdock made the pace. There was no restraining him further than to require caution when they came near the sparse forest at the top of the slope. Having little doubt that the place was deserted, Bradshaw went straight toward the mine.

He insisted on a slower pace and greater care as they went in among the trees, and with considerable caution the three drew up to the edge of the excavation and looked down.

Nobody was there, and it seemed as if nobody had been there since the routing of the blacks two weeks previously. The sand heaps were undisturbed, the crude tools were lying about, and in the very center of the pit were two skeletons, one lying across the other, both picked clean by vultures.

The scanty clothing that had been worn by the victims of Pan's bullets, was little disturbed, and the bright scarf of the high priest, with its bulging lumps, was more than conspicuous.

"Dirik's scarf! his badge of office! See!" cried Murdock wildly, and he began at once to descend the steep path.

## THE ARGOSY

Bradshaw let him go. No harm evidently could come to him, and it was undoubtedly better to let him work off his accumulated excitement as rapidly as possible.

So Murdock was left in the mine while Bradshaw and his one companion went back to give the signal for the advance of the rest of the party.

Bradshaw did not hurry. He was harassed with doubts as to what course should be pursued. This was the most critical stage in his mission, and he wished it were well over.

He waited until he saw his men defile from the forest below and begin the ascent of the slope. Then he returned to the mine.

Murdock was on his hands and knees before the sand heap behind the screen, pawing over the dirt, examining every pebble he found and tossing aside those that seemed to him unpromising. He was muttering unintelligibly, meanwhile, and when he heard Bradshaw coming down he looked up for an instant.

Bradshaw paused in his descent to look curiously at the execution tree. It was beginning to wither. He shuddered as he recalled how narrowly he had escaped death from it.

When he came to the bottom he sat upon a loose rock and watched Murdock thoughtfully. What should be done with him? He had left the sand heap and run to the bank at the end of the excavation. There he seized a pick

and began vigorously to ply it. As fast as he loosened a handful of dirt, he stooped and pawed it over.

"Diamonds are not so plentiful as you thought they would be, are they?" asked Bradshaw.

"It's diamond dirt, sure enough," replied Murdock, without looking up. "Oh! what a fortune lies right in our hands! Wealth, Elmer, wealth untold, if I could only find one little pebble to indicate where to hunt for more."

"Would you know a diamond if you saw it?"

At this Murdock raised his head in astonishment.

"I didn't put in a year at Kimberley for nothing," he said.

Then he went frantically at his work again, running from spot to spot, picking here and there, and thrusting his fingers into the soil.

"You've got good spades in your outfit," he panted; "with them we shall make famous progress. Will the carriers be up soon, Elmer?"

Bradshaw made no response. Sick at heart, he rose and started toward the mouth of the excavation to see what lay beyond. Murdock called after him:

"Find another pick, or something in the way of a shovel, Elmer. We may make a haul before night that will be worth the interest on your entire fortune for a year."

Once out of the excavation, which curved sharply where it entered the hillside, Bradshaw found himself at the

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head of a lane that led straight down to a river not very far away.

His heart leaped at the sight. On their first visit to this place, Pan had asserted that there must be a river on this side of the ridge, and here it was close at hand.

Doubtless it was a confluent of the Zambesi, and from here on the journey would be comparatively easy.

As the lane was well trodden, showing that it was a passage from the mine to the river, it occurred to him that possibly the waterway would involve the necessity of passing through the chief town of the Marotses; for Dirik's routed workmen had returned to the town in canoes, thus proving that the river was their thoroughfare.

To learn what he could on this point he went on to the margin of the river, passing on the way a number of huts where undoubtedly the black miners had lodged. There was no sign of life in or about them now.

At the river's edge were plain indications of a landing place for canoes, but there were no signs of boats or other craft. Bradshaw had dimly hoped that a raft might be there that had been left behind by the Marotses. The lack of one was a small matter except for the time that must be consumed in felling trees and constructing such a craft.

As he stood there he picked up a stick and threw it far out upon the water. It floated rapidly away in a

northeasterly direction. That was satisfactory, for it meant that this river flowed from and not to the Marotse town.

Then Bradshaw felt a slight tinge of uneasiness. It had taken his expedition six days to march from the neighborhood of the mine to the outskirts of the town; and the morning after his arrival there the routed blacks had come in canoes. They had worked their way against the current, a strong one, as the floating stick showed, and it had taken them six days, for there could be no doubt that they started immediately after the death of Dirik.

How long would it take a party of warriors to come from the town to the mine, considering that the current would be in their favor?

It was an anxious question, for whatever the answer, it seemed that his party was liable to attack at any moment. The Marotses might have started already in spite of their superstitious aversion to intruding upon the home of their gods.

There could be no doubt whatever that in time the Marotses would come; for when Dirik's partners returned from the Transvaal they would incite the entire tribe to war rather than lose their property.

So it was with a heart heavier than before that Bradshaw retraced his steps to the mine. On the way he heard Murdock laughing and crying aloud incoherently. The sounds were horribly

## THE ARGOSY

thrilling, suggesting as they did the complete wreck of the old man's mind.

Bradshaw hurried, and when he rounded the curve in the excavation, he saw Murdock kneeling beside the skeletons.

He had Dirik's bright scarf in his hands, and he was ripping it apart at every spot where there had seemed to be a knot in the fabric.

"Ha! ha!" he shouted as he observed Bradshaw approaching, "see here! Diamonds, Elmer, diamonds!"

He held up a pebble that he took from a fold of the scarf and then thrust it into his pocket.

"It was Dirik's hiding place," he raved on, ripping the fabric as he talked and cramming the pebbles into his pockets; "he well knew that it was a safe place, for his person was sacred to the Marotses, and not one of them would have dared touch a diamond once it was placed in the scarf, not even if the blacks knew how valuable the stones were. But I dare!"

Bradshaw halted at a little distance, repelled by the spectacle. Murdock tore away at the scarf much as a wild beast tears at a meat covered bone, and when next he extracted a pebble he held it toward Bradshaw.

"I said I would share with you, Elmer," he cried, "and I will keep my word. Here, come and get it."

Then, as Bradshaw did not move, Murdock arose and ran toward him. He clung to the scarf as he ran, and the

fabric being wound about the skeleton, dragged it along the ground after him.

"Stop that!" cried Bradshaw.

Murdock halted, looked around, and kicked the bones to free the scarf.

"I tell you to stop, you miserable fiend!" exclaimed Bradshaw catching Murdock by the arm and shaking him violently. "Have you no shred of humanity left in your savage body?"

Murdock stared and chattered with the shaking.

"What should we care for a nigger's bones, Elmer? Think of the diamonds! Here, take this one, and we will share the rest turn in turn."

"I don't want it," said Bradshaw, turning away.

"Don't want it?" screamed Murdock. "What are you thinking of? Perhaps you think I'm not sharing even, eh? Well, then, if you're such a fool as to refuse these diamonds I'll keep 'em myself. I won't make you another offer," and mumbling more and more incoherently, he squatted on the ground and resumed his task of ripping the scarf to pieces.

## CHAPTER XI. THE DEPTHS OF INFAMY.

SHORTLY after this, Pan and Mtema appeared at the top of the excavation. Bradshaw directed that the carriers be taken around the hillside to the huts formerly occupied by the Marotses.

"We shan't have to waste time

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setting up a camp," he said, "but can get to work at other things without delay."

"You're not going to work the mine, I hope," Pan responded.

Bradshaw shook his head.

"I'll join you below," he said, "and tell you there what I think should be done."

Accordingly he left the excavation and waited for his men at the huts.

As soon as the carriers had come and had disposed of their burdens, he gave orders for the decent burial of the skeletons, and as Murdock had done plucking them by that time, this was accomplished without arousing any outcry from him.

With seemingly exhaustless energy he applied himself again to prodding the walls of the pit. He appeared to have forgotten Bradshaw's repugnance to the very subject of diamonds, for once when the latter was near, the old man remarked, without looking up:

"By tomorrow, Elmer, we can get at this systematically. I'll examine the ground meantime, so that we can know just where to set the niggers to digging."

Bradshaw ignored him, and as they went down to the river bank he said to Pan:

"I'm convinced at last that he is insane."

"It may be," Pan answered with gravity that was unusual even for him; "it may be; of course it is so if you say so, but I do not think it."

"How can it be otherwise?" Bradshaw asked fretfully; "you have seen how he has acted ever since the march began, and you see what he is doing there."

"Yes, Mr. Bradshaw, I have seen, and I know."

"Know what? You speak as if you knew something that I haven't yet discovered."

Pan tried to evade an answer.

"You have decided to have a raft built, I suppose," he said.

"Yes," Bradshaw responded, looking curiously at his companion. "Set the men to work, for no time should be lost, and then tell me what's on your mind."

Pan summoned the carriers at once as if fearful that Bradshaw would change his intentions. He busied himself in superintending operations more than was necessary, and at length Bradshaw told him to desist.

"You are holding something back from me, Pan, old fellow," he said, "and I won't have it. Let the men work by themselves. They know well enough what to do. Tell me, Pan."

"Ah! Mr. Bradshaw," exclaimed Pan, as if the words choked him, "I have lost the opportunity to do you the greatest possible service. I should have killed that man last night when to do so would have been justifiable in your eyes. Then you would not have been obliged to take him home."

"Killed him last night?" repeated Bradshaw, slowly and in great

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amazement; "what do you mean?"

Then Pan told him about Murdock's attempt to murder Mtema.

"Madman!" exclaimed Bradshaw.

"I think not," Pan continued; "he may be mad on the subject of diamonds but there is reason enough in his other actions. I have wondered and wondered whether I ought to tell you. It will put a new load of sorrow on your heart."

"You must tell me, Pan," said Bradshaw, calmly, "now that you have gone so far. I am sure nothing can make the man seem worse to me than he now does."

"But it makes your problem harder."

"Great Scott! can it be harder than it is now?"

"You shall say. The man is no longer of your race. He has become a savage."

"That has been painfully evident for some time."

"You do not take in my full meaning, Mr. Bradshaw. Murdock has joined the tribe. He is a Marotse."

Bradshaw frowned dubiously.

"That is not exactly surprising," he said; "Murdock himself told me how King Bangwe made him a sort of prime minister. That meant a pretty close alliance with the tribe."

"Yes, but did he tell you that it included a formal initiation to membership in the tribe? Mtema has told me about it. There was a great ceremony, lasting quite a day, in the course of which Murdock renounced his native country and his religion, and

adopted the pagan religion of the Marotses."

"You see, nothing surprises or shocks me now," said Bradshaw, with a sad smile. "I did not know that Murdock had gone so far as that, but it is all in keeping with his desperate purpose to find this mine."

"It is a consistent feature of his mania. Having set his mind to the accomplishment of this purpose, he halted at nothing that might promote his ends. He justifies his recent desertion of the tribe and his deception of the king by the fact that it was his original, deliberate intention to do so if the opportunity arose. Mind you, Pan, I'm not justifying him in the slightest degree. I am merely pointing out that his apparent adoption of Marotse citizenship and the Marotse religion, were only apparent."

"It was a false course, but it was deliberately chosen for the end that he thinks he has at last accomplished. That end, of course, involves his return to civilization as a rich man, and the critical question will be to convince him that he is now rich enough with the diamonds he found today to return with us and without further delay."

Pan's grave face was drawn with anguish as he listened patiently to his employer's argument. Noting the expression, Bradshaw added:

"Doubtless you wonder that I am willing to take back with me a man who has become so degraded as to attempt

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murder. I am not exactly willing to do so, but I feel that I have no choice. If he is insane, as I still think, or if there is any chance for his redemption, it will be better for him to place him in the care of his family, to say nothing of the tender interest the one near member of Murdock's family will have in his welfare."

"Mr. Bradshaw," cried Pan, in a low voice tense with pain, while his grave eyes were lustrous with sympathy, "it may be a question as to which family has the right to care for Murdock, or be cared for by him."

"Which family?" Bradshaw repeated blankly, the dark truth beginning to throw its shadow over him.

"He took a Marotse wife eight or nine years ago. It was an essential feature of his initiation into the tribe, and he did not gain the entire confidence of the king until his child was born."

Bradshaw could utter only a low moan of distress.

The horrid stain at last laid bare, Pan spoke with more freedom and directness than he had at first.

"You can see now," he said, "strong enough reason for every crime this man has committed and attempted. Doubtless he does wish to return to civilization, but you may be sure he does not wish to take a black wife with him. He has the pride of white birth left in him. Could he face his friends and the members of his American family if

they knew that he had adopted savagery with all that that implies?"

"You know well that he could not, and no one knows it better than Murdock himself. That fact explains everything. Shall I go on, Mr. Bradshaw?"

"Yes," groaned Bradshaw, "go on, Pan, and set all in the clearest possible light."

"Then understand first that we have been mistaken about the Marotses. They are not a warlike tribe. To be sure they have their soldiers, and they have had their little wars, and like all Africans of the far interior they are given to bloody practices; but as tribes go, the Marotses are reasonably peaceable. Their reputation for extreme savagery and power is due to the crafty management of the diamond hunting Arabs who have spread reports about them in order to frighten others away."

"Can 'Tema tell you all this?"

"No, but she gives me certain facts which I put with other facts and then draw conclusions. I am not likely to be mistaken."

"No. I have no doubt that you are right. Go on."

"This reputation of the tribe suited Murdock's designs. He was not only fearful of the coming of white men on account of the diamond mine, of which they might take possession, but he dreaded lest some passing traveler should linger long enough to learn his history and take reports of it back to

## THE ARGOSY

America. So, when he saw our campfires he came out to frighten you away, not dreaming, of course, that he would be recognized at once.

“When he found that you knew him he had to face a dangerous crisis and act quickly. If he consented to return with you he would have to abandon hope of finding the mine, and that he could not do. If he persuaded you to help him search for the mine, it was a thousand chances to one that some day you would discover his exact relations to the Marotse tribe.

“There was only one way to solve his problem, and that he tried to do by bringing you poisoned food.

“Why he repented of this attempt is already clear to you, for with the return of Dirik’s men he perceived that through you lay his best chance of finding the mine. You knew where it was. So then he treacherously advised the king to look out for an invasion by way of the river, and stole off to our camp in the belief that he could induce you to go direct to the mine.

“You may say that there was even then some chance that you might discover his shameful course, but, in the first place, he was willing to take great risk for the sake of finding the mine, and in the second place, if you should discover it, there was always the remedy of murder. He would not have tried poison again, but a stab with a knife, a blow with a pick, these might have been tried, and they may yet be

tried, Mr. Bradshaw.”

“I shall be on my guard, Pan,” said Bradshaw, gloomily, as the black man paused impressively. “I suppose his hostility to ’Tema was due to his fear that she would expose the truth just as she has done.”

“Yes. Mtema lived near him. There is a shameful story about a great wrong that Murdock did to her father, but it is not necessary that you should know it. His hostility to her will perhaps be clearer when you know that it was through his influence that her father was sent with Dirik to the mine.”

“Isn’t it possible,” asked Bradshaw, turning for relief to a matter that had no direct bearing upon his problem, “that Murdock had ’Tema’s father sent to the mine in the hope of discovering through him where the mine was located?”

“I can only guess at that,” Pan answered, “but my guess is no; for I believe Dirik, always suspicious, would find cause to execute speedily any man who had been sent up by Murdock’s influence.”

Bradshaw bowed his head, convinced.

“And now,” said Pan, “I suppose the hard question is, what is to be done?”

“I am more than ever sure that he is mad!” cried Bradshaw; “he is hopelessly, incurably insane! I will not think otherwise of my Irene’s father.”

“It is well to think so, but——”

“I will not think otherwise, Pan!”

“Then I will say nothing.”



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"No! no! do not take that attitude. I have need of every thought you can possibly have on the matter."

"I was only going to say that mad or not he is dangerous. He stole the knife with which he attempted Mtema's life from the camp kitchen, undoubtedly with the intention of so disposing of the weapon that suspicion would fall upon one of the carriers. Here he has other weapons at hand, picks and so on, and it might be well to make a prisoner of him at once."

"I think not," said Bradshaw, slowly. "To make him a prisoner would mean either that he must be taken with us, or released when we depart. I cannot at this moment make up my mind to a final course. It seems impossible to take such a moral wreck home with me, and yet, that is what I came to Africa to do. I must have opportunity to think, Pan, and by the time the raft is ready I will be decided. Meantime, with caution, we can prevent any tragedy."

"We cannot be too careful," said Pan, regretfully, "not to let him suspect that Mtema has exposed him. There would be no end of murderous attempts if he knew."

"For the present, then, we will go on as before, but with great watchfulness. I had planned to appeal to Murdock to be satisfied with the plunder he has obtained, but I shall give that up. Perhaps," Bradshaw added bitterly, as he rose to give his attention to raft building, "perhaps I should urge him to

return to his Marotse wife."

"Where he would certainly be killed," said Pan.

## CHAPTER XII.

"THE MAROTSES ARE COMING!"

BRADSHAW did not go up to the mine until it was time for the evening meal. Then he went alone to summon Murdock. He found him seated on a sand heap.

The old man had taken off his coat and spread it over his knees. On it were scattered a score or more of pebbles which he was counting and fondling.

"Dirik's scarf was a good find," he said quietly, as Bradshaw approached, "but it is only an indication of what there is stored up here for us. See this," and he held up a small stone; "I found that myself. It should make a brilliant worth hundreds of dollars in Maiden Lane, and yet I could toss it away without a thought in view of the treasure that is to be uncovered."

Bradshaw was astonished. There seemed to be no trace of madness in the old man's demeanor. His tone was cool and calculating, and his estimate of the stones on his lap was no more than might have been expected from any miner.

Evidently the frantic excitement that had marked his advent to the mine, had been worked off by the tremendous energy with which he had applied

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himself to digging. It came upon Bradshaw with sickening force that Pan might be right in regarding Murdock as a degenerate for whom no palliation in the way of madness could be found.

"We ought to have better mechanical devices than can be had short of a long journey," Murdock continued, "but they will come in time. Dirik could have had them. He brought up this screen, apparently, but I suppose he feared to bring much in the way of implements lest some of the prospectors at the south should follow and learn the location of his bonanza."

"It is supper time," said Bradshaw.

"Well, I'm ready for it. I haven't done so much hard work in many a long day."

The old man carefully stowed the stones in the pockets of his coat and put it on.

"We'll have a long talk this evening," he said, "about putting the place in defensive condition. Some of the men can be occupied with that while others can be put to work directly at digging in the mine."

Was not this evidence of insanity, thought Bradshaw? The tone was reasonable and so, from one point of view, were the thoughts; but how could a sane man forget so quickly that but a few hours previously Bradshaw had manifested unshakable aversion to the whole diamond scheme?

Murdock certainly had forgotten it, though he made no further offer to share

his find with Bradshaw, for he talked as if it were a settled thing that the expedition was to remain there and work the mine.

"The men are busy building a raft," said Bradshaw.

"There's no hurry about that," returned Murdock, calmly. "Of course we must have a raft, but that can be made later. The first thing is to prepare defenses. Don't you think so?"

"We'll see," Bradshaw replied.

Murdock continued to argue on the way to the huts, and after supper he sought to resume the discussion, but Bradshaw begged off on the plea of fatigue.

"Busy yourself as much as you want to in the mine tomorrow, and I will look after outside matters," he said evasively.

"All right," answered Murdock, cheerfully, "but you'd better follow my advice. We're going to be rich; multimillionaires, my boy!" and he slapped Bradshaw familiarly on the back.

Bradshaw recoiled from his touch and had much to do to control himself. In the gathering gloom he could see Pan's eyes glaring hatefully at Murdock. How would this dreadful matter end?

Through the night Bradshaw and Pan kept watch by turns, both fearful that Murdock might be plotting new mischief, or that his delirium, as the American chose to regard it, might recur; but the old man slept till sunrise

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as quietly as a healthy child.

On awaking he went straight to the mine, asking that his breakfast be sent up to him, a request with which Bradshaw was only too glad to comply.

So they saw little of him during the day. He came down to dinner, looked at the unfinished raft, and shook his head gravely.

“Better be preparing defenses,” he said, “though I admit that there’s little reason to hurry them. No Marotse will dare come this way without the leadership of one of the Arabs.”

In fact Bradshaw by no means neglected defenses, though he was at no pains to throw up intrenchments. He and Pan explored the hilltop and found a spot whence a glimpse of the river could be obtained by climbing a tree. The little section of the stream then visible was in the direction of the Marotse town.

They stationed a carrier in the tree with instructions to keep his eyes glued upon the distant river and report instantly the passing of canoes or any other sign of approaching tribesmen.

After the rest of the party had dined one of the men was sent to relieve the man in the tree. In less than half an hour he returned, trembling with terror. He had found the right tree, as he made sure by climbing it and seeing the river, but there was no sign of the man who had been stationed there.

Pan went back with him, Bradshaw remaining to hasten the work on the

raft. The tree was found deserted, just as the second man had reported.

Then Pan went in a direct line from the tree toward the mine. About midway he came upon the dead body of the first carrier. The unfortunate man had been stabbed through the heart, and there were marks upon his throat to indicate that in a struggle he had been prevented from giving a cry of warning by choking.

How many had assailed him could not be told, and the point was unimportant. An inference of much more consequence was that the approaching Marotses had sent on a scout to see if the mine were occupied, and that the guard, having seen the scout pass his tree, had tried to get back to the mine to give warning.

Probably the carrier met the scout, or scouts, on their return from the mine where they must have seen Murdock at work.

It was evident that the carrier had been dead for two or three hours at least. Therefore, the scouts had had time to get far away, and perhaps had already rejoined the oncoming party.

A thousand Marotses might meantime have passed that point in the river that was visible from the observation tree. They might be already at the landing.

This thought lent speed to Pan’s feet as he hurried back to the camp. When he arrived the men were tearing the huts to pieces for the purpose of using the

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material in the completion of the raft.

"The Marotses are coming!" he cried.

"How far away?" asked Bradshaw, quickly.

"I don't know. They may be very near."

"The raft will float us as it is. Tell the men to put our stuff on board."

To this end both Bradshaw and Pan set to work. The blacks, knowing something of the cause for alarm, hurried back and forth between the huts and the river, carrying luggage and placing it upon the raft.

The river bank near the landing was covered with a dense growth of high bushes whose luxuriant foliage shut out all view up the stream. Even when one stood at the further end of the raft he could not see more than a hundred yards away on account of a bend in the stream and a point of land that jutted out from the bank just above the landing.

This was most unfortunate, especially as the river could not be seen at all from any place near the mine, except for the small patch of water revealed at the landing itself where the Marotses had cut away the trees.

"The scouts probably saw no more than Murdock and may report that he is the only one here," suggested Bradshaw, as he and Pan bore a box of food to the raft.

"You forget the man in the tree."

"That's so, but even then they might not have known that he was on guard

there. They evidently didn't see him in the tree."

"I wish they had."

"So? What's your idea?"

"This," said Pan; "seeing only Murdock and one man on guard, they may suppose that he is here alone, or at best with but a few companions. There are none too many of us, but if they had seen the entire party, they might suppose that there were many more, and therefore they would be slower to make an attack. As it is, they may come straight on—there!"

He broke off abruptly, for there was no further need for speculation. A long arrow whizzed through the air, struck the box they were carrying between them, and stuck there.

At the same moment a few blacks who were on the raft disposing of the luggage, set up loud cries and scurried ashore.

"Halt!" cried Bradshaw and Pan together, but the carriers rushed past them unheeding.

"Don't let them desert us, Pan," said Bradshaw, dropping the box; "get them into some sort of order. I may be able to prevent an attack."

He ran out upon the raft and looked up the river. A huge canoe, crowded with armed blacks had just come around the point of land at the bend.

Bradshaw raised both hands, palms open above his head as the best sign of friendliness he could think of.

"Oh, Mr. Bradshaw, they'll kill

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you!” he heard Pan cry.

It flashed upon him then that such must be the outcome if the Arabs held the Marotses to the policy of killing any man who had discovered the location of the mine. Only in that way could they maintain possession of their treasure ground with absolute certainty.

That this was good reasoning, whatever else might be said of it, was immediately apparent; for he had no sooner appeared on the raft and raised his hands, than a shower of arrows were let fly at him. It seemed as if every man in the canoe who was in a position to bend his bow, had shot.

Perhaps from undue haste, or from the fact that the motion of the canoe prevented steadiness of aim, or both, none of the missiles did any damage.

They splashed in the water, went singing over his head, and stuck in the logs of which the raft was constructed.

The volley was not more than despatched when the blacks, with hoarse cries, made ready for another.

“I’m too good a target,” thought Bradshaw, and he retreated.

He saw that his carriers had made for the mine. At the top of the lane Pan was arranging the more courageous of them in line, and distributing the firearms carried by the expedition.

Murdock, attracted by the commotion, had come from the mine, pick in hand, and was prancing about in all his characteristic excitement.

One slender hope occurred to

Bradshaw, and he hurried up the lane, hearing the second volley of arrows clip the foliage and thud in the ground as he ran.

“Murdock,” he cried, “these men doubtless know you. At all events, you can speak to them in their own language. Go down and assure them that the most we want to do is to get away, and that there is no need of a fight about it.”

“Merciful heaven, Elmer!” shrieked Murdock, “do you want me to be murdered?”

“I want to save lives on both sides. Come! I’ll go with you if you’re afraid.”

He caught Murdock by the arm, but the old man held back and struggled violently.

“They’ll fill me with arrows,” he gasped, and when Bradshaw released him in disgust, he fell sprawling in a helpless heap on the ground.

“There’s one more chance—for delay at least,” cried Bradshaw. “Pan, tell the men to fire, one after the other, in the direction of the canoe. If we happen to hit anybody, so much the better, but we may be able to convince them that we’ve got a small army here prepared to fight desperately.”

He set the example by discharging all the chambers of his revolver one after the other in rapid succession. Pan and the others followed suit till the wilderness rang with the fusillade.

“That will do,” said Bradshaw,

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presently, as he reloaded his weapon. "We'll save the rest of our ammunition for business."

### CHAPTER XIII. BATTLE.

THE ruse evidently had the effect intended, for the canoe of warriors did not come into view at the end of the lane. Bradshaw took advantage of every second to encourage his carriers and place them in the most advantageous position for a fierce struggle.

Most of them were easily ordered, for they had had experience in other transcontinental expeditions, and the few who could not recover from the panic into which the coming of the Marotses threw them were left cowering at the far end of the mine.

There was no effective force lost by the timidity of this fraction of the party, for there were not firearms sufficient properly to equip those who were eager to fight.

"Elmer," said Murdock, a moment after his refusal to parley with the Marotses, "you mustn't think me a coward. I——"

"I'm not thinking of you at all," interrupted Bradshaw, curtly; "keep out of the way."

"I want to help," persisted Murdock, following Bradshaw around; "no good would come of my going down there to be shot before I could open my mouth,

but I'll fight for the mine as bravely as anybody. Give me a rifle, or a revolver, Elmer. I'll stand by you and defend the mine as if I were fighting for my family."

"Which family?" demanded Bradshaw, turning suddenly and facing the old man.

He regretted the words as soon as they were uttered, but the mischief if mischief it were, had been done, and the words could not be taken back.

Murdock's jaw dropped and a villainous light flashed in his eyes.

"Never mind, boy!" he rasped, "I'll fight for the mine, and we can settle our account later. Will you give me a gun?"

"There's none to spare," said Bradshaw, turning abruptly to the carriers.

It was probably well for Murdock that the hateful expression of his face and his threatening gesture were not seen by Pan, who had gone to place Mtema where she would be secure from stray shots from the enemy. He came up now and stood for a moment at the head of the lane.

The carriers had been placed under cover of the trees along one side of the lane, so that, if an attack should be made along it, the enemy could be enfiladed after a fashion. Being near the excavation, they could also fire in that direction if the Marotses should disembark elsewhere than at the landing and make their way through the forest to the mine.

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“Think of anything else, Pan?” asked Bradshaw, coming from among the trees and standing beside his black lieutenant.

“Yes, many,” was the quiet answer, “but our force could not be placed in any better way. The men are as well protected as possible from injury by arrows. Listen!”

They gave the closest attention, but could distinguish no sound.

“I must have been mistaken,” said Pan, “but I thought I heard them breaking through the thicket above the landing. It isn’t likely, Mr. Bradshaw, that they will consent to let us off without a fight if for no other reason than that that traitor is with us. If it should be the case that the Marotses are not led by one of the Arabs they may be frightened away by our volley, for, as I told you, they are not a remarkably warlike tribe. But if one of the Arabs is here, he will lead them on and they will follow because of his authority as a priest.

“As I have learned a little of the Marotse language I will meet them, if they do not assault without warning, and see what can be done.”

“It does seem,” said Bradshaw, “as if they might be persuaded into letting us go on without bloodshed, and you are more likely to win them over than Murdock would be. But there’s great danger in it, Pan. Do you suppose they would know the meaning of a flag of truce?”

“If they have an Arab leader, yes, and if they appear at all it will mean that an Arab is with them.”

“Then it must be tried. Let’s not trust to waving a handkerchief, but make a real flag.”

He cut a twig from a bush, trimmed it, and fastened a handkerchief to it with thorns.

“That ought to do the business,” he said, handing the flag to Pan.

Murdock came up to them.

“Will you let me have a weapon of any kind?” he asked in a surly tone.

“No,” answered Bradshaw, firmly, “and you’d better keep out of sight.”

“You think me a coward, but I’ll fight if I have nothing better than a pick to strike with.”

Murdock then went in among the trees where the carriers were waiting. The suspense was becoming intolerable.

“Hadn’t we better scout down to the river?” suggested Bradshaw.

“There they are!” answered Pan, in a low voice, and he started directly down the lane.

He had seen a black face peer out from a bush, and as he went down, holding up his flag, the bottom of the lane filled rapidly with warriors. There were spearmen as well as bowmen, and the latter formed in front, each man of them with an arrow caught in the string, ready to raise and shoot.

Towering above the rest, and standing at one end of the line they formed, was a man who could be none

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other than the Arab leader, Dirik's partner.

Pan went on until he was about midway between the two forces. Then he paused, and Bradshaw, waiting with his carriers among the trees, heard him address some words slowly to the Arab.

"It's a relief that they respect the flag of truce," he half whispered to himself; "we may be able to do something with them."

"We shall have to fight them," responded Murdock, who was beside him and had heard; "better let me take one of your revolvers."

Bradshaw made no reply. He listened intently, as if by so doing he could hear what the Arab replied to Pan. He could hear, indeed, a rumbling voice, but no words. Pan turned his head presently and announced the Arab's reply.

"The high priest of the Marotses will consent to a parley on one condition. He demands that we surrender Murdock."

"Before he will treat with us about anything else?" asked Bradshaw.

"Before he will treat at all," answered Pan.

"For God's sake, Elmer, don't do it!" cried Murdock, catching Bradshaw by the sleeve.

Thrusting him aside, with a frown of disgust, Bradshaw returned this reply:

"Tell the high priest that we can accept that condition only on his solemn promise that Murdock's life be spared."

"Oh, Elmer, don't give me up!"

pleaded Murdock, piteously; "he won't keep any such promise. I won't be given up! I'll fight if you surrender me."

"Hush!" commanded Bradshaw; "I must hear what goes on."

Pan had delivered his party's reply, and now turned to convey the Arab's ultimatum:

"Unconditional surrender of Murdock, or extermination of the expedition. If we surrender Murdock, he will parley."

"Elmer!" began Murdock, in a whimper.

"See here!" interrupted Bradshaw, wrathfully, as he seized the old man by the wrist; "you ought to be shot for supposing I could deliberately sacrifice you. You ought to be turned over to the Marotses to suffer the extreme penalty for your desertion of your king. You ought—ugh! I'm thinking of your Marotse family, do you understand? Now, listen!"

Bradshaw then turned to Pan, who still stood between the forces with the white flag raised above him.

"Tell him to bring on his extermination," said Bradshaw.

Pan faced the enemy once more to repeat the reply of his commander. The words had been uttered loudly, and either the Arab understood the language, or he interpreted aright the ring of defiance in Bradshaw's tones; at all events, ignoring the sacred emblem of truce, and not waiting for Pan to



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speak, he gave the word for his men to shoot.

Two score arrows sped instantly from the bows. Many of them whizzed past Pan, some coming in among the trees where the carriers were in waiting; but one at least struck the faithful black, and he reeled, fell flat upon the ground, rolled over upon his side, and lay motionless.

“Ah, treachery!” cried Bradshaw, in a voice that rang with anguish. “Fire, men! and charge them!”

The carriers understood and obeyed. A volley belched from the cover of the trees, and through the smoke of it Bradshaw and his fighters rushed down the lane.

Murdock snatched a revolver from the hand of an unsuspecting carrier and fell in close behind Bradshaw.

Arrows sang in the air about them, and there were reports of firearms, too, from the enemy. The Arab leader, at least, was provided with the weapons of civilization.

Bradshaw fired as he ran, seeing the enemy but dimly through the smoke, and giving as much attention to avoid stepping upon Pan, whom he failed to see.

He could distinguish the tall form of the Arab, and he made straight toward it. As he ran he observed with pride that his carriers were fighting well, charging with a fury that told of their desperation, if it did not speak for their actual courage.

There was a rapid cracking of firearms, while the buzzing of arrows diminished. As he approached nearer the enemy, Bradshaw saw that the bowmen were drawing aside to let the spearmen receive the charge.

Their spear points were leveled at the charging party, and the Marotse seemed to stand like an immovable wall.

Just as Bradshaw came close to the Arab and was about to fire at him, a number of shots, fired almost simultaneously, thickened the smoke so that he could not see his target.

He halted an instant, and as the smoke thinned, he perceived that the Marotse spearmen were breaking for cover. The bowmen had disappeared altogether, and the tall form of the Arab leader lay stretched at his feet.

That explained the demoralization of the enemy, and knowing that the fight was won, Bradshaw would have restrained his men from unnecessary slaughter, but they were beyond his control, some of them apparently beyond the reach of his voice.

They dashed into the bushes, firing at will, as they had all through the brief battle, and with wild yells chased the panic stricken Marotse to their canoe, which had been beached at the point near the bend.

The first who came to it pushed it out into the water, and later comers swam to it if they were not picked off by the exultant carriers, who banged

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away as long as any ammunition was left.

Meantime, Bradshaw stood looking at the dead Arab for a moment before taking a complete account of the result of the conflict.

"You deserved it," said Bradshaw, "for your treachery, but on account of the Marotses I can't help feeling sorry you had to be killed. It's a misfortune to the tribe."

"It may be so," said a familiar voice behind him; "if you say so of course \_\_\_\_\_"

Bradshaw whirled about at the first sound. He stared a moment at the grave face of his black lieutenant, and took up the characteristic formula:

"It may be Pan come to life. Of course, if he says so it is so, but I do not think so."

"You are quite right, Mr. Bradshaw," said Pan, seriously, "for I haven't been dead."

Then Bradshaw burst into laughter that was almost hysterical. He threw his hat into the air and it lodged in a tree so high up that eventually one of the carriers had to be sent up to get it. He wrung Pan's hand and danced around him until the solemn black man seemed to be alarmed for his employer's sanity.

"And did you really think they had killed me, Mr. Bradshaw?" he asked, when he had an opportunity to speak.

"To be sure I did! Why shouldn't I?"

"Well, perhaps you should, for that was what I meant the Marotses to think,

but I presumed you would know that I was pretending."

"Ha! I promise never to believe anything else of you as long as you live."

"I don't think you mean that, but no matter. One of their arrows gave me a little scratch in the side which won't trouble me. I fell, for I was pretty certain that if I ran back to join you, I would be hit by a bullet before I could get there. As soon as our men fired I rolled aside so as not to be stepped on, got up, and went to fighting with the rest."

"Did you bring him down?" asked Bradshaw, pointing to the Arab.

"I think so," Pan answered indifferently. "You don't know yet what else has happened?"

"No, and I am ashamed of myself. I must see if any of our good fellows are hurt. Some of them seem to be finding targets still."

"Yes, they'll fire as long as there is a Marotse left in sight. I think none of our carriers are severely hurt, but see here."

He turned Bradshaw about and pointed up the lane, where, a few paces distant, lay Murdock, face to the sky.

Bradshaw went up to the old man at once, and his face was very grave. Murdock was dead.

"Hit by a bullet," said Bradshaw in a low voice.

"Yes," Pan responded; "the Arab at least had revolvers. Tell me, Mr. Bradshaw, does this solve your hardest

problem?"

"I think it does, Pan," Bradshaw answered solemnly, "for there is an ancient proverb that I shall take for guidance: *'de mortuis nil nisi bonum.'*"

"What does that mean, Mr. Bradshaw?"

"It means that one should speak nothing but good of the dead."

"Then I should have to be silent," said Pan, turning away.

#### CHAPTER XIV. HOMEWARD.

THE flag of truce was near by. When Pan fell he had thrown it aside, and it had caught in the branches of a bush beside the lane. As if to testify to the desecration of the emblem, an arrow had gone through the cloth.

Bradshaw took the flag down, removed the cloth from the staff, and placed it over Murdock's upturned face. Then he summoned one of the non-combatant carriers, who were beginning to straggle down from the mine, and stationed him near the body to drive away the vultures who were already circling overhead.

As soon as he could get his men together, Bradshaw took an accounting of casualties. It proved, as Pan had said, that none of the carriers was seriously wounded.

Several of them had been clipped by arrows, and one had a hole in his arm

made by a pistol ball; but the medicine chest of the expedition was amply equal to the proper treatment of these injuries, and only the man with the bullet hole was incapacitated for work.

On the attacking side, beside the dead Arab, they found six Marotses. It was gruesomely significant that all were dead. How many had been shot and killed after they took to the water could only be guessed.

A glance at the slain showed that not only did the carriers shoot to kill, but if their first shot failed, they repeated the dose until fatality was assured.

The afternoon was yet young when the battle was over. There was no reason for lingering at the mine, but on the contrary, the best reason for hurrying away from it. There might be another canoe load of warriors on the way under the direction of Dirik's remaining partner. Bradshaw had no thirst for more fighting, and he accordingly hastened preparations for departure.

The raft would have been in better shape for a long voyage if another day's work could have been spent upon it, but it would do for a start, and repairs could be made anywhere, once the expedition was far from possible encounter with pursuing Marotses.

The two spades in the outfit and some of the tools lying about the mine were put to immediate use in making graves for the dead. A general trench was dug for the enemy, but Murdock's body was buried separately.

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While some of the carriers were employed at this task, and others were completing the interrupted loading of the raft, Pan said:

“Dirik’s diamonds, Mr. Bradshaw; what are you going to do with them?”

“Nothing,” answered Bradshaw with a shudder. “In view of Murdock’s long effort to find the mine, he may as well be left in possession of the stones he obtained.”

“Certainly, if you say so,” said Pan, indifferently; “they won’t do him any good.”

“If they would you’d take them from him, I suppose?”

“Perhaps. Yes, I think so.”

“I do not blame you,” said Bradshaw, “for thinking bitterly of Murdock, but you must remember——”

“I know. He was your sweetheart’s father. I am silent,” and the black man went down to the raft whither he had conducted Mtema as soon as the battle was over.

Bradshaw had given little thought to the diamonds until Pan spoke, but there was a matter that he had considered very sadly. He had come to Africa to find Irene’s father, had found him, and must now go home to tell the news of his death.

Following the suggestion of the Latin proverb, he could refrain from disclosing anything more unpleasant than the loss of Murdock’s life in a fight for defense against savages; but what could he say to Irene as to her father’s

thoughts of her? What token could he bring to her that she had been in her father’s thoughts at all?

Suddenly he remembered the small diamond that Murdock had found in the sands of the pit. That had not been rifled from a dead man’s garment; it had been unearthed by Murdock’s own endeavor. Bradshaw had noticed that Murdock placed it by itself when he stowed away the pebbles in his pockets.

He stooped over the old man’s body and put his hand in the pocket where that diamond had been placed. It was there, alone, and Bradshaw took it.

“For aught I know,” he said to himself, “Murdock may have intended this as a present to his daughter. She shall have it, and in its pure rays she shall see nothing but the goodness that ought to have been in her father’s life.”

Two hours before sunset the raft, with all on board, was poled out into the stream. When they had gone so far that they could see beyond the bend, they had a view up the river that extended not less than two miles.

No sign of human life was there. If the surviving high priest should think of pursuit, his quarry was certain to have a long start.

The current bore them swiftly, and when they went ashore for the night, it was with no anxiety as to further conflict with the Marotses.

Two days after leaving the mine they came to the Zambesi. There were then fully fifteen hundred miles of waterway

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between them and the ocean, with difficulties and perils from rapids and cataracts, and many tribes of savages to be passed.

More than once they had to abandon their craft and proceed overland to a point where another could be constructed; once they experienced partial wreck by running upon a submerged rock; often they were delayed by the necessity of parleying with solemn chiefs; but the greatest hostility they encountered was that of nature, and her obstacles were overcome with sturdy persistence.

So, at last, they found themselves at the mouth of the Zambesi, whence it was possible to reach other parts of the world by the contrivances of civilization.

It was a feature of Bradshaw's contract with his carriers to return them to St. Paul de Loanda, far away on the western coast, and he held to it faithfully, great though his longing was to return to America and Irene with all possible speed.

There was no going by a direct route. A trading vessel took the party to Mozambique, where, after a wait of several days, they took passage for Cape Town. Another wait there, a long voyage up the coast, and at last the low Angola hills appeared as blue spots upon the eastern horizon.

Bradshaw and Pan were on deck engaged in earnest conversation. It was a topic that they had discussed often

since leaving the Zambesi.

"It is useless, Mr. Bradshaw," Pan was saying; "I cannot go with you further. I am an African——"

"But not a savage, Pan."

"You are very kind to say so, but my home is here. It is the same with Mtema. My wife will be happier in a country that is comparatively familiar. She will be, even here, far enough away from her kindred."

"I cannot have it so!" exclaimed Bradshaw; "you were born for civilization, if not in it, and 'Tema will be happy wherever you are."

"It may be so. I hope so, but we cannot go with you. After all, Mr. Bradshaw, I am a good deal of a savage. There is too much blood on my hands ——"

"All shed in honest warfare, Pan."

"You always think kindly of me."

"I should be a villain if I didn't! Think of Murdock, Pan."

"Of Murdock!" exclaimed Pan, with a start.

"Yes. There was a man born in civilization who went to live among savages. I knew him when I was a boy, you know, and I am certain that he was not a bad man; but see what association with savages did for him. He not only became one of them in form, but he became degraded in character until the vilest Marotse would blush for him. Now, you have the right instincts, and so has 'Tema. Think how much better civilized associations will be for people

## THE ARGOSY

like you two. I don't see how you can be a better man, old fellow, but you'll be better off among people of good manners and larger knowledge. You must go with me."

The black man shook his head despondently.

"It is impossible," he said. Then, looking Bradshaw directly in the eyes, he went on: "You have asked me to think of Murdock. I will, and this is what I think. You would not care to have constantly near you the man who deliberately shot your sweetheart's father."

"Pan!" gasped Bradshaw.

"I did not mean to tell you, but you force me to, for you will not take no for an answer. You know what cause I had to hate and fear Murdock. I was in love with Mtema almost from the moment when I rescued her in the Marotse town. I also loved you, Mr. Bradshaw, as man loves man. I feared for you every moment, for I did not believe that Murdock would let you take him home, or let you go without him. He was waiting his opportunity. The diamonds were his sole care. For them he would risk anything, as you saw that in the battle, coward though he was, he yet ran into the thick of the fight.

"Well, in that battle I saw him a pace or two behind you. He had a revolver in his hand. I do not pretend to say that I know what was his intention, but I feared, and I watched him more

carefully than I did the enemy. I saw him raise his weapon. In the same line with you was the Arab. Perhaps Murdock aimed at the Arab, but I do not think it. I believe he intended to kill you in view of the Arab in order by that act to make his own peace with the Marotses.

"For days I had felt that the best service I could do you would be to put Murdock out of the way, and thus relieve you of your burden, but you would not have forgiven me. Here was my opportunity. I shot Murdock first, his revolver exploding harmlessly after he began to fall. Then I shot the Arab leader."

"You did what you thought was right," said Bradshaw, in a choking voice, as Pan paused.

"And now you can probably see that it will be better if I and Mtema remain in Africa."

"Yes, Pan, it will be better."

"Do you forgive me, Mr. Bradshaw?"

"Forgive, old fellow? You are a noble man, if ever there was one. There is nothing in my heart for you but gratitude and affection."

\* \* \* \*

While waiting for a steamer in London, Bradshaw had the diamond cut and mounted. Irene wore it at her throat when they were married. No shadow of the dark truth about her father has fallen upon her, and none ever will.