

INTO THE PRIMITIVE

BY ROBERT AMES BENNET
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SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with the shipwreck of the steamer on which Miss Genevieve Leslie, an American heiress, Lord Winthrop, an Englishman, and Tom Blake, a brusque American, were passengers. The three were tossed upon an uninhabited island and were the only ones not drowned. Blake recovered from a drunken stupor, Blake, shunned on the boat, because of his roughness, became a hero as preserver of the helpless pair. The Englishman was suing for the hand of Miss Leslie. Blake started to swim back to the ship to recover what was left. Blake returned safely. Winthrop wasted his last match on a cigarette, for which he was scolded by Blake. Their first meal was a dead fish. The trio started a ten mile hike for higher land. Thirst attacked them. Blake was compelled to carry Miss Leslie on account of weariness. He taunted Winthrop. They entered the jungle. That night was passed roosting high in a tree. The next morning they descended to the open again. All three constructed huts to shield themselves from the sun. They then feasted on coconuts, the only procurable food. Miss Leslie showed a liking for Blake, but detested his roughness. Led by Blake they established a home in some cliffs. Blake found a fresh water spring. Miss Leslie faced an unpleasant situation. They planned their campaign.

CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

Blake and Miss Leslie turned to stare at the droves of animals moving about between them and the border of the tall grass. Miss Leslie was the first to speak. "They can't be cattle, Mr. Winthrop. There are some with stripes. I do believe they're zebras!"

"Get down!" commanded Blake. "They're all wild game. Those big ox-like fellows to the left of the zebras are eland. Wheel! wouldn't we be in it if we owned that water hole? I'll bet I'd have one of those fat beves inside three days."

"How I should enjoy a juicy steak!" murmured Miss Leslie.

"Raw or jerked?" questioned Blake.

"What is 'jerked'?"

"Dried."

"Oh, no; I mean broiled—just red inside."

"I prefer mine quite rare," added Winthrop.

"That's the way you'll get it, damned rare—Beg your pardon, Miss Jenny! Without fire, we'll have the choice of raw or jerked."

"Horror!"

"Jerked meat is all right. You cut your game in strips—"

"With a penknife!" laughed Miss Leslie.

Blake stared at her glumly. "That's so. You've got it back on me—Butcher a beef with a penknife! We'll have to take it raw, and dog-fashion at that."

"Haven't I heard of bamboo knives?" said Winthrop.

"Bamboo?"

"I'm sure I can't say, but as I remember, it seems to me that the varnish-like glaze—"

"Silica? Say, that would cut meat. But where in—where in hades are the bamboos?"

"I'm sure I can't say. Only I remember that I have seen them in other tropical places, you know."

"Meantime I prefer coconuts, until we have a fire to broil our steaks," remarked Miss Leslie.

"Ditto, Miss Jenny, long's we have the nuts and no meat. I'm a vegetarian now—but maybe my mouth ain't watering for something else. Look at all those chops and roasts and stews running around out there!"

"They are making for the grass," observed Winthrop. "Hadn't we better start?"

"Nuts won't weigh so much without the shells. We'll eat right here."

There were only a few nuts left. They were drained and cracked and scooped out, one after another. The last chanced to break evenly across the middle.

"Hello," said Blake, "the lower part of this will do for a bowl, Miss Jenny. When you've eaten the cream, put it in your pocket. Say, Win, have you got the bottle and keys and—"

"All safe—everything."

"Are you sure, Mr. Winthrop?" asked Miss Leslie. "Men's pockets seem so open. Twice I've had to pick up Mr. Blake's locket."

"Locket?" echoed Blake.

"The ivory locket. Women may be careless, Mr. Blake, but I assure you, I did not look inside, though—"

"Let me—give it here—quick!" gasped Blake.

Started by his tone and look, Miss Leslie caught an oval shaped object from the side pocket of the coat, and thrust it into Blake's outstretched hand. For a moment he stared at it, unable to believe his eyes; then he leaped up, with a yell that sent the droves of zebras and antelope flying into the tall grass.

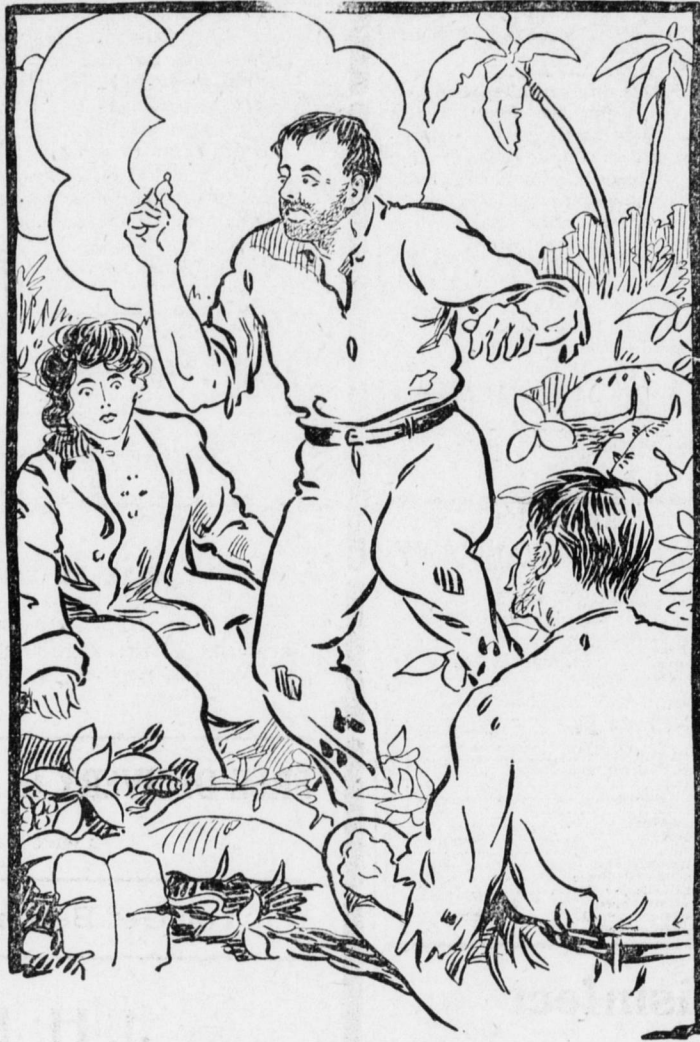
"Oh! oh!" screamed Miss Leslie. "Is it a snake? Are you bitten?"

"Bitten?—Yes, by John Barleycorn! Must have been fuzzy drunk to put it in my coat. Always carry it in my job pocket. What a blasted infernal idiom I've been! Kick me, Win,—kick me hard!"

"I say, Blake, what is it? I don't quite take you. If you would only—"

"Fire!—fire! Can't you see? We've got all hell bent! Look here."

He snapped open the slide of the supposed locket, and before either of his companions could realize what he would be about, was focusing the lens of a surveyor's magnifying-glass upon the back of Winthrop's hand.



"Bitten? Yes, by John Barleycorn!"

The Englishman jerked the hand away—

"Ow! That burns!"

Blake shook the glass in their bewildered faces.

"Look there!" he shouted, "there's fire; there's water; there's birds' eggs and beefsteaks! Here's where we trek on the back trail. We'll smoke out that leopard in short order!"

"You don't mean to say, Blake—"

"No; I mean to do! Don't worry. You can hide with Miss Jenny on the point, while I engineer the deal. Fall in."

The day was still fresh when they found themselves back at the foot of the cliff. Here arose a heated debate between the men. Winthrop, stung by Blake's jeering words, insisted upon sharing the attack, though with no great enthusiasm. Much to Blake's surprise, Miss Leslie came to the support of the Englishman.

"But, Mr. Blake," she argued, "you say it will be perfectly safe for myself here. If so, it will be safe for myself alone."

"I can play this game without him."

"No doubt. Yet if, as you say, you expect to keep off the leopard with a torch, would it not be well to have Mr. Winthrop at hand with other torches, should yours burn out?"

"Yes; if I thought he'd be at hand after the first scare."

Winthrop started off almost on a run. At that moment he might have faced the leopard single-handed. Blake chuckled as he swung away after his victim. Within ten paces, however, he paused to call back over his shoulder: "Get around the point, Miss Jenny, and if you want something to do, try braiding the coconut fiber."

Miss Leslie made no response; but she stood for some time gazing after the two men. There was so much that was characteristic even in this rear view. For all his anger and his haste, the Englishman bore himself with an air of wellbred nicety. His trim, erect figure needed only a fresh suit to be irreproachable. On the other hand, a careless observer, at first glance, might have mistaken Blake, with his flannel shirt and shouldered club, for a hulking navy. But there was nothing of the navy in his swinging stride or in the resolute poise of his head as he came up with Winthrop.

Though the girl was not given to reflection, the contrast between the two could not but impress her. How well her countryman—coarse, uncultured, but full of brute strength and courage—fitted in with these primitive surroundings. Whereas Winthrop—and herself—

She fell into a kind of disquieted brown study. Her eyes had an odd look, both startled and meditative—such a look as might be expected of one who for the first time is peering beneath the surface of things, and sees the naked Realities of Life, the real values, bare of masking conventions. It may have been that she was seeking to ponder the meaning of her own existence—that she had caught a glimpse of the vanity and wastefulness, the utter futility of her life. At

the best, it could only have been a glimpse. But was not that enough?

"Of what use are such people as I?" she cried. "That man may be rough and coarse—even a brute; but he at least does things—I'll show him that I can do things, too!"

She hastened out around the corner of the cliff to the spot where they had spent the night. Here she gathered together the coconuts husks, and seating herself in the shade of the overhanging ledge began to pick at the coarse fiber. It was cruel work for her soft fingers, not yet fully healed from the thorn wounds. At times the pain and an overpowering sense of injury brought tears to her eyes; still more often she dropped the work in despair of her awkwardness. Yet always she returned to the task with renewed energy.

After no little perseverance, she found how to twist the fiber and plait it into cord. At best it was slow work, and she did not see how she should ever make enough cord for a fish-line. Yet, as she caught the knack of the work and her fingers became more nimble she began to enjoy the novel pleasure of producing something. She had quite forgotten to feel injured, and was learning to endure with patience the rasping of the fiber between her fingers, when Winthrop came clambering around the corner of the cliff.

"What is it?" she exclaimed, springing up and hurrying to meet him. He was white and quivering, and the look in his eyes filled her with dread.

Her voice shrilled to a scream: "He's dead!"

Winthrop shook his head.

"Then he's hurt!—he's hurt by that savage creature, and you've run off and left him—"

"No, no, Miss Genevieve, I must insist! The fellow is not even scratched."

"Then why—?"

"It was the horror of it all. It actually made me ill."

"You frightened me almost to death. Did the beast chase you?"

"That would have been better, in a way. Really, it was horrible! I'm still sick over it, Miss Genevieve."

"But tell me about it. Did you set fire to the bushes in the cleft, as Mr. Blake—"

"Yes; after we had fetched what we could carry of that long grass—two big trusses. It grows 10 or 12 feet tall, and is now quite dry. Part of it Blake made into torches, and we fired the bush all across the foot of the cleft. Really, one would not have thought there was that much dry wood in so green a dell. On either side of the rill the grass and brush flared like tinder, and the flames swept up the cleft far quicker than we had expected. We could hear them crackling and roaring louder than ever after the smoke shut out our view."

"Surely, there is nothing so very horrible in that."

"No, oh, no; it was not that. But the beast—the leopard! At first we heard one roar; then it was that dreadful snarling and yelling—most awful squalling! The wretched thing

came leaping and tumbling down the path, all singed and blinded. Blake fired the big truss of grass, and the brute rolled right into the flames. It was shocking—dreadfully shocking! The wretched creature writhed and leaped about till it plunged into the pool. When it sought to crawl out, all black and hideous, Blake went up and killed it with his club—crushed in its skull—Ugh!"

Miss Leslie gazed at the unnerved Englishman with calm scrutiny.

"But why should you feel so about it?" she asked. "Was it not the beast's life against ours?"

"But so horrible a death!"

"I'm sure Mr. Blake would have preferred to shoot the creature had he a gun. Having nothing else than fire, I think it was all very brave of him. Now we are sure of water and food. Had we not best be going?"

"It was to fetch you that Blake sent me."

Winthrop spoke with perceptible stiffness. He was chagrined, not only by her commendation of Blake, but by the indifference with which she had met his agitation.

They started at once, Miss Leslie in the lead. As they rounded the point she caught sight of the smoke still rising from the cleft. A little later she noticed the vultures which were streaming down out of the sky from all quarters other than seaward. Their focal point seemed to be the trees at the foot of the cleft. A nearer view showed that they were alighting in the thorn bushes on the south border of the wood.

Of Blake there was nothing to be seen until Miss Leslie, still in the lead, pushed in among the trees. There they found him crouched beside a small fire, near the edge of the pool. He did not look up. His eyes were riveted in a hungry stare upon several pieces of flesh, suspended over the flames on spits of green twigs.

"Hello!" he sang out, as he heard their footsteps. "Just in time, Miss Jenny. Your broiled steak'll be ready in short order."

"Oh, build up the fire! I'm simply ravenous!" she exclaimed, between impatience and delight.

Winthrop was hardly less keen; yet his hunger did not altogether blunt his curiosity.

"I say, Blake," he inquired, "where did you get the meat?"

"Stow it, Win, my boy. This ain't a packing house. The stuff may be tough, but it's not—er—the other thing. Here you are, Miss Jenny. Chew it off the stick."

Though Winthrop had his suspicions, he took the piece of half-burned flesh which Blake handed him in turn and fell to eating without further question. As Blake had surmised, the roast proved far other than tender. Hunger, however, lent it a most appetizing flavor. The repast ended when there was nothing left to devour. Blake threw away his empty spit and rose to stretch. He waited for Miss Leslie to swallow her last mouthful and then began to chuckle.

"What's the joke?" asked Winthrop.

Blake looked at him solemnly.

"Well now, that was downright mean of me," he drawled; "after robbing them, to laugh at it!"

"Robbing who?"

"The buzzards."

"You've fed us on leopard meat! It's—it's disgusting!"

"I found it filling. How about you, Miss Jenny?"

Miss Leslie did not know whether to laugh or to give way to a feeling of nausea. She did neither.

"Can we not find the spring of which you spoke?" she asked. "I am thirsty."

"Well, I guess the fire is about burnt out," assented Blake. "Come on; we'll see."

The cleft now had a far different aspect from what it had presented on their first visit. The largest of the trees, though scorched about the base, still stood with unwithered foliage, little harmed by the fire. But many of their small companions had been killed and partly destroyed by the heat and flames from the burning brush. In places the fire was yet smouldering.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Navigates" His Farm.

A story which almost parallels that told of Capt. Gray, the sailor-farmer of Toddy Pond, who is said to carry a compass on his plow to run the furrows straight, comes from Cranberry Isles. One sea captain, who enjoys the proud distinction of owning one of the very few horses on the island, got alarmed for fear that he would lose his bearings in the recent smoke, and on the voracious accounts of sober citizens took the binnacle from the vessel and strapped it alongside the seat of his wagon, fearing that the weather might become so thick that he would lose his bearings and have to navigate in what was worse than a fog. It is currently reported that he shouts at his team to turn to starboard or port, instead of the more conventional landlubber terms usually employed. — Kennebec (Me.) Journal.

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