

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 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 using 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 dozing high in a tree. The next morning they descended to the open again. All three constructed hats 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. Blake recovered his surveyor's magnifying glass, thus insuring fire. He started a jungle fire, killing a large leopard and smothering several cubs. In the leopard's cavern they built a small home. They gained the cliffs by burning the bottom of a tree until it fell against the heights. The trio secured eggs from the cliffs.

CHAPTER XI.—Continued.

Miss Leslie sighed. "Why did you speak of them? I am still hungry enough to eat more eggs—a dozen—that is, if we had a little salt and butter."

"And a silver cup and napkins!" added Blake. "About the salt, though, we'll have to get some before long, and some kind of vegetable food. It won't do to keep up this whole meat menu."

"If only those little bamboo sprouts were as good as they look—like a kind of asparagus!" murmured Miss Leslie.

"I've heard that the Chinese eat them," said Winthrop.

"They eat rats, too," commented Blake.

"We might at least try them," persisted Miss Leslie.

"How? Raw?"

"I have heard papa tell of roasting corn when he was a boy."

"That's so; and roasting-ears are better than boiled. Win, I guess we'll have a sample of bamboo asparagus a la Leslie!"

Winthrop took the penknife and fetched a handful of young sprouts from the bamboo thicket. They were heated over the coals on a grill of green branches and devoured half raw.

"Say," mumbled Blake, as he ruminated on the last shoot, "we're getting on some for this small hole of a coast house, and chicken ranch and vegetables in our front yard. We've got old Debbie Cruse beat, hands down, on the start-off, and he with his shipful of stuff for handicaps!"

"Ah, yes; but the thread?" put in Winthrop.

"The coconut fiber would hardly do," said Miss Leslie, forgetting to dry her eyes.

"No. We could get fairly good fibers out of the palm leaves; but catgut will be a whole lot better. I'll slit up a lot for you, fine enough to sew with. And now, let's get down to tacks. No offense—but did either of you ever learn to do anything useful in all your blessed little lives?"

"Why, Mr. Blake, of course I—"

"Of course what?" demanded Blake, as Miss Leslie hesitated. "We know all about your cooking and sewing. What else?"

"I—I see what you meant. I fear that nothing of what I learned would be of service now."

"Boarding-school rot, eh? And you, Winthrop?"

"If you would kindly name over what you have in mind."

"Um!" granted Blake. "Well, it's first of all a question of a practical—practical, mind you,—knowledge of metallurgy, ceramics, and how to stick an arrow through a beef roast."

"I—ah—I believe I intimated that I have some knowledge of archery. But I doubt—"

"Cut it out! You'll have enough else to do. Get busy over those bows and arrows, and don't quit till you've got them in shape. Leave my bow good and stiff. I can pull like a mule can kick. Well, Miss Jenny; what is it?"

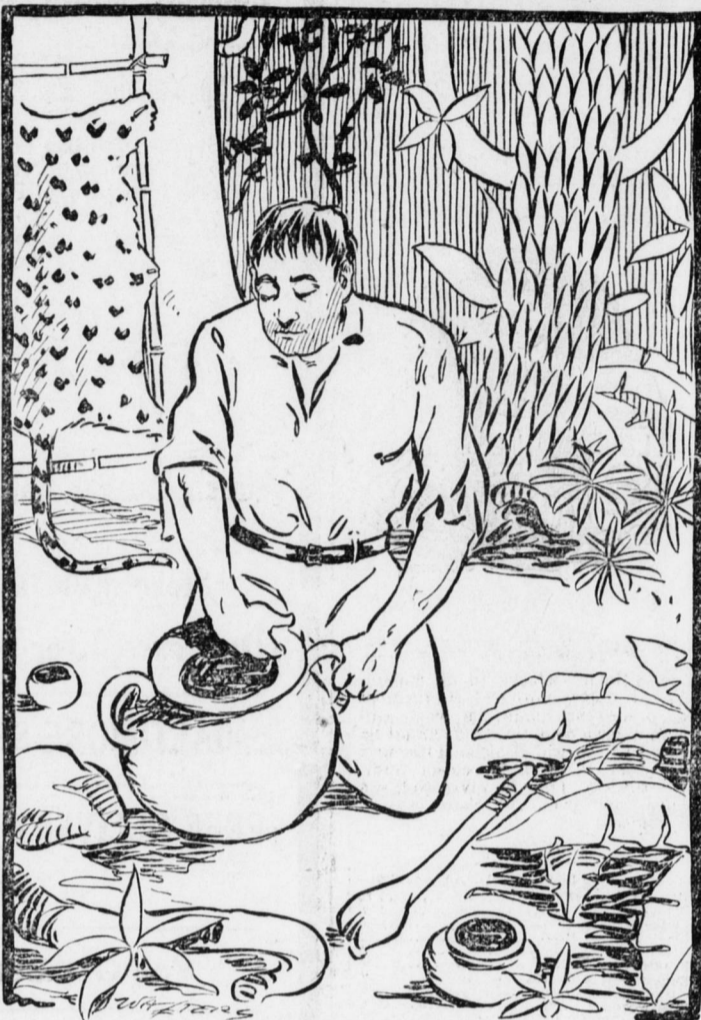
"Is not—has not ceramics something to do with burning china?"

"Sure!—china, pottery, and all that. Know anything about it?"

"Why, I have a friend who amuses herself by painting china, and I know it has to be burned."

"And that's all!" grunted Blake. "Well, let me tell you. When I was a little kid I used to work in a pottery. All I can remember is that they'd take clay, shape it into a pot, dry it, and bake the thing in a kiln. We've got to work the same game somehow. This kind of eating will mean dysentery in short order. So there's going to be a bean-pot for our stews, or Tom Blake'll know the reason why. Nurse up that ankle of yours, Win. We'll trek it to-morrow—coconuts, and maybe something else. There's clay on the far bank of the river, and across from it I saw a

THE PRIMITIVE



He at Once Began Experiments in the Art of Pottery.

just because we've failed to stick out a signal that'd catch the eye twice as far off as any other color than scarlet. Do you suppose I worked my way up from axman to engineer, and did not learn anything about flags?"

"But it is all really too absurd! I do not know the first thing about sewing, and I have no thread nor needle."

"It's up to you, though, if you want to help. My sisters sewed mighty soon after they learned to toddle. 'Bout time you learned— There, now; I did not mean to hurt your feelings. You've made a fair stagger at cooking, and I bet you win out on the dressmaking. For needle you can use one of these long, slim thorns—poke a hole, and then slip the thread through, like a shoemaker."

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streak that looked like brown hematite."

CHAPTER XII.

Survival of the Fittest.

THE next four days slipped by almost unheeded. Blake saw to it that not only himself but his companions had work to occupy every hour of daylight. When not engaged in cooking and fuel gathering, Miss Leslie was learning by painful experience the rudiments of dressmaking.

At the start she had all but ruined the beautiful skin of the mother leopard before Blake chanced to see her and took over the task of cutting it into shape for a skirt. But when it came to making a waist of the cub fur, he said that she would have to puzzle out the pattern from her other one. Between cooking three meals a day over an open fire, gathering several armfuls of wood, and making a dress with penknife, thorn, and catgut, the girl had little time to think of other matters than her work.

Winthrop had been gazed at as hunter in ordinary. His task was to keep Miss Leslie supplied with fresh eggs and each day to kill as many of the boobies and cormorants as he could skin and split for drying. Blake had changed his mind about taking him when he went for coconuts. Instead, he had gone alone on several trips, bringing three or four loads of nuts, then a little salt from the seashore, dirty but very welcome, and last of all a great lump of clay, wrapped in palm fronds.

With this clay he at once began experiments in the art of pottery. Having mixed and beaten a small quantity, he molded it into little cups and bowls, and tried burning them over night in the watch-fire. A few came out without crack or flaw. Vastly elated by this success, he fashioned larger vessels from his clay, and within the week could brag of two pots suitable for cooking stews, and four large nondescript pieces which he called plates. What was more, all had a fairly good sand glaze, for he had been quick to observe a glaze on the bottoms of the first pots, and had reasoned out that it was due to the sand which had adhered while they stood in the sun.

He next turned his attention to metallurgy. The first move was to search the river bank for the brown bog iron ore which he believed he had seen from the farther side. After a dangerous and exhausting day's work in the mire and jungle, he came back with nothing more to show for his pains than an armful of creepers. Late in the afternoon, he had located the haematite, only to find it lying in a streak so thin that he could not hope to collect enough for practical purposes.

"Lucky we've got something to fall back on," he added, after telling of his failure. "Pass over those keys of yours, Win. Good! Now untangle those creepers. To-night we'll take

turns knotting them up into some sort of a rope-ladder. I'm getting mighty weary of hoofing it all around the point every time I trot to the river. After this I'll go down the cliff at that end of the gully."

Winthrop, who had become very irritable and depressed during the last two days, turned on his heel, with the look of a fretful child.

To cover this undiplomatic rudeness, Miss Leslie spoke somewhat hurriedly. "But why should you return again to the river, Mr. Blake? I'm sure you are risking the fever; and there must be savage beasts in the jungle."

"That's my business," growled Blake. He paused a moment, and added, rather less ungraciously: "Well, if you care, it's this way—I'm going to keep on looking for ore. Give me a little iron ore, and we'll mighty soon have a lot of steel knives and arrow-heads that'll amount to something. How're we going to bag anything worth while with bamboo tips on our arrows? Those bear tusks are a fizzle."

"So you will continue to risk your life for us? I think that is very brave and generous, Mr. Blake!"

"How's that?" demanded Blake, not a little puzzled. He was fully conscious of the risk; but this was the first intimation he had received or conceived that his motives were other than selfish—"Um-m! So that's the ticket. Getting generous, eh?"

"Not getting—you are generous! When I think of all you have done for us! Had it not been for you, I am sure we should have died that first day ashore."

"Well, don't blame me. I couldn't have let a dog die that way; and then, a fellow needs a Man Friday for this sort of thing. As for you, I haven't always had the luck to be favored with ladies' company."

"Thank you, Mr. Blake. I quite appreciate the compliment. But now, I must put on supper."

Blake followed her graceful movements with an intentness which, in turn, drew Winthrop's attention to himself. The Englishman smiled in a disagreeable manner, and resumed his work on the bows, with the look of one mentally preoccupied. After supper he found occasion to spend some little time among the bamboos.

When at sunset Miss Leslie withdrew into the baobab, Winthrop somewhat officiously insisted upon helping her set up her screen in the entrance. As he did so, he took the opportunity to hand her a bamboo knife, and to draw her attention to several double-pointed bamboo stakes which he had hidden under the litter.

"What is it?" she asked, troubled by his furtive glance back at Blake.

"Merely precaution, you know," he whispered. "The ground in there is quite soft. It will be no trouble, I fancy, to put up the stakes, with their points inclined toward the entrance."

"But why—"

"Not so loud, Miss Genevieve! It struck me that if any one should seek to enter in the night, he would find these stakes decidedly unpleasant. Be careful how you handle them. As you see, the sharper points, which are to be set uppermost, run off into a razor edge. Put them up now, before it grows too dark. You know how ninpins are set—that shape. Good-night! You see, with these to guard the entrance, you need not be afraid to go to sleep at once."

"Thank you," she whispered, and began to thrust the stakes into the ground as he had directed.

He had not been mistaken. The vague doubts and fears which she already entertained would have kept her awake throughout the night, but thanks to the sense of security afforded by the sword-bayonets of her silent little sentries, the girl was soon able to calm herself, and was fast asleep long before Blake awakened Winthrop.

Immediately after breakfast, Blake—who had spent his watch in grinding the edges from a stone and experimenting with split and bent twigs—put Winthrop's keys in the fire, and began an attempt to shape them into a knife-blade. To heat the steel to the required temperature, he used a bamboo blowpipe, with his lungs for bellows.

Winthrop turned away with an indifferent bearing; but Miss Leslie found herself compelled to stop and admire his dexterous use of his rude tools.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

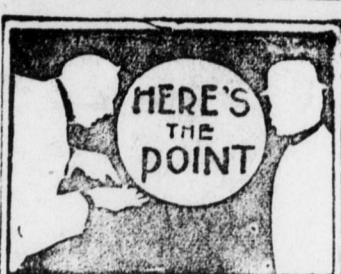
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