

INTO THE PRIMITIVE

BY ROBERT AMES BENNET
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SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with the shipwreck of the steamer in 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, shunned on the boat, because of his roughness, became a hero preserver of the helpless pair. The Englishman was suing for the hand of Miss Leslie. Winthrop wasted his last match on a cigarette, for which he was scored by Blake. 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. Blake recovered his survivor'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. Miss Leslie's white skirt was decided upon as a signal. Miss Leslie made a dress from the leopard skin. Overhearing a conversation between Blake and Winthrop, Miss Leslie became frightened. Winthrop became ill with fever. Blake was poisoned by a fish and almost died. Jackals attacked the camp that night, but were driven off by Genevieve. Blake constructed an animal trap. It killed a hyena. On a tour the trio discovered honey and oysters. Miss Leslie was attacked by a poisonous snake. Blake killed it and saved his poison to kill game. For the second time Winthrop was attacked by fever. He and Blake disagreed. The latter made a strong door for the private compartment of Miss Leslie's cave home.



"I Know Already—I Know All."

CHAPTER XIX.—Continued.
"Mr.—Mr. Blake, pray do not get excited—I mean, please excuse me. I'm—"
"You're coming down sick!" he said.
"No, no! I have no fever."
"Then it's the sun. Yet you ought to keep up there where the air is freshest. I'll make you a shade."
She protested, and withdrew, somewhat hurriedly, to her tree.
In the morning Blake was gone again; but instead of a note, beside the fire stood the smaller antelope skin converted into a great bamboo-ribbed sunshade.
She spent the day as usual on the headland. There was no wind, and the sun was scorching hot. But with her big sunshade to protect her from the direct rays, the heat was at least endurable. She even found energy to work at a basket which she was attempting to weave out of long coarse grass; yet there were frequent intervals when her hands sank idle in her lap, and she gazed away over the shimmering glassy expanse of the ocean.
In the afternoon the heat became oppressively sultry, and a long slow swell began to roll shoreward from beyond the distant horizon, showing no trace of white along its oily crests until they broke over the coral reefs. There was no breath of air stirring, and for a time the reefs so checked the rollers that they lacked force to drive on in and break upon the beach.
Steadily, however, the swell grew heavier, though not so much as a cat's-paw ruffled the dead surfaces of the watery hillocks. By sunset they were rolling high over both lines of reefs and racing shoreward to break upon the beach and the cliff foot in furious surf. The still air reverberated with the booming of the breakers. Yet the girl, inland bred and unversed in weather lore, sat heedless and indifferent, her eyes fixed upon the horizon in a vacant stare.
Her reverie was at last disturbed by the peculiar behavior of the seawolf. Those in the air circled around in a manner strange to her, while their mates on the ledges waddled restlessly about over and between their nests. There was a shriller note than usual in their discordant clamor.

upon the seashore. Beneath the giant spread of the baobab all was blackness.
Something moved in a bush a little way down the cleft. A crouching figure appeared, dimly outlined in the starlight. The figure crept stealthily across into the denser night of the baobab. The darkness closed about it like a shroud.
A blinding flash of light pierced the blackness. The figure halted and crouched lower, though the flash had gone again in a fraction of a second. A dull rumbling mingled with the ceaseless boom of the surf.
A second flash lighted the cleft with its dazzling coruscation. This time the creeping figure did not halt.
Again and again the forked lightning streaked across the sky, every stroke more vivid than the one before. The rumble of the distant thunder deepened to a heavy rolling which dominated the dull roar of the breakers. The storm was coming with the on-rush of a tornado. Yet the leaves hung motionless in the still air, and there was no sound other than the thunder and the booming of the surf.
The lightning flared, one stroke upon the other, with a brilliancy that lit up the cave's interior brighter than at mid-day.
In the white glare the girl saw Winthrop, crouched beneath her upswung door; and his face was as the face of a beast.

CHAPTER XX.

The Hurricane Blast.

FOR a moment that seemed a moment of eternity she lay on her bed staring into the blank darkness. The storm burst with a crashing uproar that brought her to her feet with a shriek. Her giant tree creaked and strained under the impact of the terrific hurricane blasts that came howling through the cleft like a rout of shrieking fiends. The peals of thunder merged into one continuous roar, beneath which the solid ledges of rocks jarred and quivered. The sky was a pall of black clouds, meshed with a dazzling network of forked lightning.
The girl stood motionless, stunned by the uproar, appalled by the blinding glare of the thunderbolts; yet even more fearful of the figure which every flash showed her still lurking beneath the door. A gust-borne bough struck with numbing force against her upraised arm. But she took no heed. She was unaware of the swirl of rain and sticks and leaves that was driving in through the open entrance.
On a sudden the door shook free from its props and whirled violently around on its balance-bar. There was a shriek that pierced above the shrilling of the cyclone—a single human shriek.
The girl sprang across the cave. The heavy door swished up before her and down again, its lower edge all but grazing her face. For a moment it stopped in a vertical position and

hung quivering, like a beast about to leap upon its prey. Too excited to comprehend the danger of the act, the girl sprang forward and shot one of the thick bars into its socket.
A fierce gust leaped against the outer face of the door and thrust in upon it, striving to burst it bodily from its bearings. The top and the free side of the bottom bowed in. But the branches were still green and tough, the bamboo like whalebone and the shrunken creepers held the frame together as though the joints were lashed with wire rope. Failing to smash in the elastic structure or to snap the crossbar it was as if the blast flung itself alternately against the top and bottom in a fierce attempt to again whirl the frame about. The white glare streaming in through the interstices showed the girl her opportunity. She grasped another bar and shot it into its socket as the lower part of the door gave back with the shifting of the pressure to the top. It was then a simple matter to slide the remaining bars into the deep-sunk holes. Within half a minute she had made the door fast from the first bar to the sixth.
A heavy spray was beating in upon her through the chinks of the framework. She drew back and sought shelter in a niche at the side. Narrow as was the slit above the top of the door, it let in a torrent of water, which spouted clear across and against the far wall of the cave. It gushed down upon her bed and was already flooding the cave floor.
She piled higher the coconuts stored in her niche, and perched herself upon the heap to keep above the water. But even in her sheltered corner the eddying wind showered her with spray. She waded across for her skin-covered sunshade, and returned to huddle beneath it, in the still misery and terror of a hunted animal that has crept wounded into a hole.
During the first hurricane there had been companions to whom she could look for help and comfort, and she had been to a degree unaware of the greatness of the danger. But in the few short weeks since she had caught more than one glimpse of Primeval Nature—she of the bloody fang, blind, remorseless, insensate, destroying, ever destroying.
True, this was on solid land, while before there had been the peril of the sea. But now the girl was alone. Outside the straining walls of her refuge, the hurricane yelled and shrieked and roared—a headless, formless monster, furious to burst in upon her, to overthrow her stanch old tree giant, that in his fall his shattered trunk might crush and mangle her. Or at any instant a thunder-bolt might rend open the great tower of living wood, and hurl her blackened body into the pool on the cave floor.
Once she fancied that she heard Blake shouting outside the door; but when she screamed a shrill response, the blast mocked her with echoing shrieks, and she dared not venture to free the door. If it were Blake, he did not shout again. After a time she began to think that the sound had

been no more than a freak of the shifting wind. Yet the thought of him out in the full fury of the cyclone served to turn her thoughts from her own danger. She prayed aloud for his safety, beseeching God that he be spared. She sought to pray even for Winthrop. But the vision of that beastly face rose up before her, and she could not—then.
Presently she became aware of a change in the storm. The terrific gusts blew with yet greater violence, the thunder crashed heavier, the lightning filled the air with a flame of dazzling white light. But the rain no longer gushed across on the spot where her bed had been. It was entering at a different angle, and its force was broken by the bend in the thick wall of the entrance. After a time the deluge dashed aslant the entrance, gushing down the door in a cataract of foam.
Another interval, and the driving downpour no longer struck even the edge of the opening. The wind was veering rapidly as the cyclone center moved past on one side. The area of the hurricane was little more than thrice that of a tornado, and it was advancing along its course at great speed. An hour more, and the outermost rim of the huge whirl was passing over the cleft.
Quickly the hurricane gusts fell away to a gale; the gale became a breeze; the breeze lulled and died away, stifled by the torrential rain.
Within the baobab all was again dark and silent. Utterly exhausted, the girl had sunk back against the friendly wall of the tree, and fallen asleep. She was awakened by a hoarse call: "Miss Jenny! Miss Jenny, answer me! Are you all right?"
She started up, barely saving herself from a fall as the big unhusked nuts rolled beneath her feet. The morning sunlight was streaming in over her door. She sprang down ankle-deep into the mire of the cave floor, and ran to loosen the bars. As the door swung up, she darted out, with a cry of delight: "You are safe—safe! Oh, I was so afraid for you! But you're drenched! You must build a fire—dry yourself—at once!"
"Wait," said Blake. "I've got to tell you something."
He caught her outstretched hands, and pushed them down with gentle force. His face was grave, almost solemn.
"Think you can stand bad news—a shock?"
"—What is it? You look so strange!"
"It's about Winthrop—something very bad—"
She turned, with a gasp, and hid her face in her hands, shuddering with horror and loathing.
"Oh! oh!" she cried. "I know already—I know all!"
"All?" demanded Blake, staring blankly.
"Yes; all! And—and he made me think it was you!" She gasped, and fell silent.
Blake's face went white. He spoke in a clear, vibrant voice, tense as an overstrained violin string: "I am speaking about Winthrop—do you understand me?—Winthrop. He has been badly hurt."
"The door swung down and struck him, when he was creeping in."
"God!" roared Blake. "I picked him up like a sick baby—the beast!—stead of grinding my heel in his face! God! I'll—"
"Tom! don't—don't even speak of it! Tom!"
"God! When a helpless girl—when a—!" He choked, beside himself with rage.
She sprang to him, and caught his sleeve in a convulsive grasp. "Hush, for mercy's sake! Tom Blake, remember—you're a man!"
He calmed like a ferocious dog at the voice of his master; but it was several minutes before he could bring himself to obey her insistent urging that he should return to the injured man.
"I'll go," he at last growled. "Wouldn't do it even for you, but he's good as dead—lucky for him!"
"Dead!"
"Dying. You stay away."
He went around the baobab and a few paces along the cleft to the place where a limp form lay huddled on the ledges, out of the mud. Slowly, as though drawn by the fascination of horror, the girl crept after him. When she saw the broken, storm-beaten thing that had been Winthrop, she stopped, and would have turned back. After all, as Blake had said, he was dying—
When she stood at the feet of the writhing figure, and looked down into the battered face, it required all her will-power to keep from fainting. Blake frowned up at her for an instant, but said nothing.
Winthrop was speaking, feebly and brokenly, yet distinctly: "Really, I did not mean any harm—at first—you know. But a man does not always have control—"
"Not a beast like you!" growled Blake.
"Ow! Don't 't me! I say now, I'm done for! My legs are cold already—"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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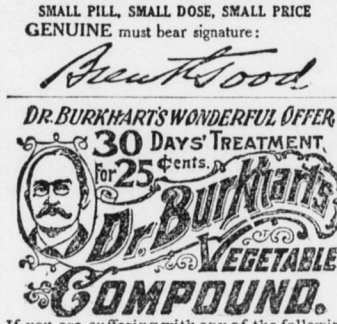
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