INTO THE PRIMITIVE

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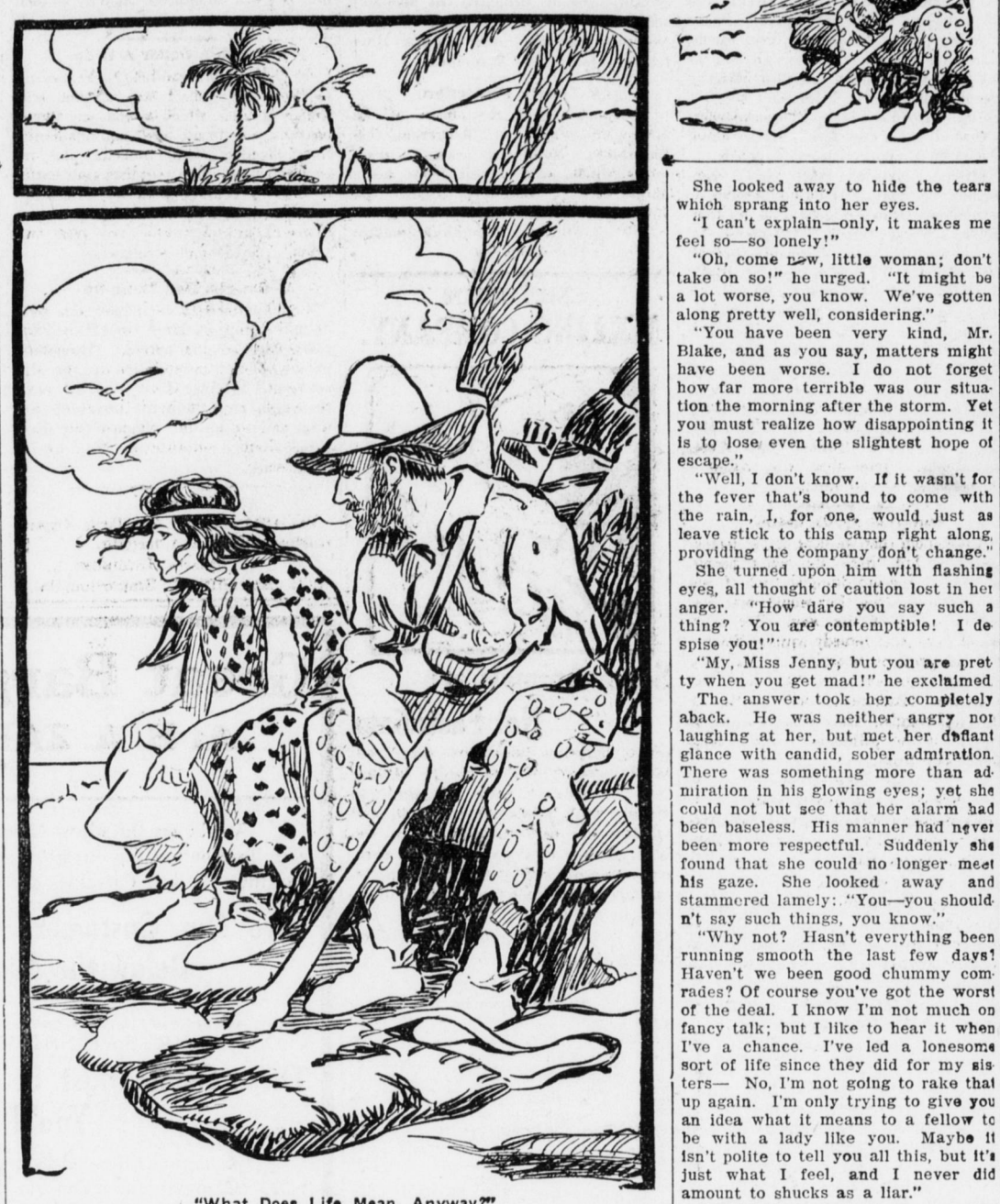


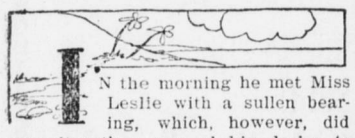
"What Does Life Mean, Anyway?"

SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with the shipwreck of the steamer on which Miss Genevieve Leslie, an American heiress; Lord Winthrope, 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 as preserver of the helpless pair. The Englishman was suing for the hand of Miss Leslie. Winthrope wasted his last match on a cigarette, for which he was scored by Blake. All three constructed hats to shield themselves from the sun. They then feasted on cocoanuts, 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 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. 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 Winthrope, Miss Leslie became frightened. Winthrope 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 its poison to kill game. For the second time Winthrope was attacked by fever. He and Blake disagreed. The latter made a strong door for the private compartment of Miss Leslie's cave home. A terrible storm raged that night. Winthrope stole into her room, but she managed to swing her door closed in time. Winthrope was badly hurt. He died the following morning. The storm tore down their distress flag, so a new one was swung from a bamboo pole. Miss Leslie helped in covering Winthrope's grave with stones.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The End of the World.



IN the morning he met Miss Leslie with a sullen bearing, which, however, did not altogether conceal his desire to be on friendly terms. Having regained her self-control, she responded to this with such tact that by evening each felt more at ease in the new relationship, and Blake had lost every trace of his moroseness. The fact that both were passionately fond of music proved an immense help. It gave them an impersonal source of mutual sympathy and understanding—a common meeting-ground in the world of art and culture, apart from and above the plane of their material wants.

Yet for all his enjoyment of the girl's wide knowledge of everything relating to music, Blake took care that their talks and discussions did not interfere with the activities of their primitive mode of life. As soon as he had finished with the barricade he devoted himself to his tailoring and shoe-making; while Miss Leslie, between her cooking and wood-gathering and daily visits to the cliff for eggs, had much to occupy both her thoughts and her hands.

At first every ascent of the cliff was embittered by a painful consciousness of the cairn over the north edge. Fortunately it was not in sight from the direct path to the headland, and, as she refrained from visiting it, the new happenings of her wild life soon thrust Winthrope and his death out of the foreground of her thoughts. Each day she had to nerve herself to meet the beaks and wings of the despoiled nest-owners; each day she looked with greater hope for the expected rescue ship, only to be increasingly disappointed.

But the hours she spent on the cliff crest after gathering the day's supply of eggs were not spent merely in watching and longing. The inconveniences of carrying the eggs in a handkerchief or in one of the heavy jars suggested a renewal of her attempt at basket-making. Memory, perseverance and a trace of inventiveness enabled her to produce a small but serviceable hamper of split bamboo.

Encouraged by this success she gathered a quantity of tough, wiry grass, and wove a hat to take the place of the flimsy palm-leaf makeshift. The result was by no means satisfactory with regard to style, its shape being intermediate between a Mexican sombrero and a funnel; but aside from its appearance, she could not have wished for a more comfortable head-cover. Before showing it to Blake, she wove a second one for him, so that they were able to cast aside the grotesque, palm-leaf affairs at the same time.

The following morning Blake appeared in an outfit to match her leopard-skin dress. He had singed off the hair of the hide out of which he had made his moccasins, and his hyena-skin trousers quite matched the bristling stubble on his face.

"Hey, Miss Jenny!" he hailed; "what d' you think of this for fancy needlework?"

"Splendid! You're the very picture of an Argentine vaquero."

"Greaser?—ugh! Let me get back to the Weary Willy pants!"

"I mean you are very picturesque."

"That's it, is it? Glad I've got something to call your leopardine gown that won't make you huffy."

"We can at least call our costumes serviceable, and mine has proved much cooler than I expected."

"But our new hats beat all for that—regular sunshades. What do you say?—there's a good breeze— Let's take a hike."

"Not to the river! The very thought of that dreadful snake—"

"No; just the other way. I've been thinking for some time that we ought to run down to that south headland and take a squint at the coast beyond. Ten to one it's another stretch of swamps, but—"

"You think there is a hance we may find a town?"

"About one chance in a million, even for a native village. The slave trade wiped the niggers off this coast, and I guess those that hit out up-country ran so hard they haven't been able to get back yet."

"But it has been years since the slave trade was forbidden."

"And they don't sell beer in Kansas—oh, no! I'll bet the dhows still slip over from Madagascar when the moon is in the right quarter. At any rate, niggers are mighty scarce or mighty shy around here. I've kept a watch for smoke, and haven't seen a suspicion of it anywhere. Maybe the swamps swing around inland and cut off this strip of coast. It looked that way to me when I made that trip along the ridge. But there's a chance it used to be inhabited, and we may run across an abandoned village."

"I do not see that the discovery would do us any good."

"How about the chance of grain or bananas still growing? But that's all a guess. We're going because we need a change."

She nodded and hastened to prepare breakfast, while he packed a skin bag with food and examined the slender tips of his arrows. As a matter of precaution, he had been keeping them in the cigarette case, where the points would be certain of a coat of the sticky poison and at the same time guarded against inflicting a chance wound. But as he was now about to set out on a journey he fitted tips into the heads of his two straightest shafts.

The morning was still fresh when they closed the barricade behind them and descended to the pool. There was no game in sight, but Blake had no wish to hunt at the commencement of the trip. The steady southwest wind had blown the sky clear of its malarial haze and gave promise of a day which should know nothing of sultry calm—a day on which game would be hard to stalk, but one perfectly suited for a long tramp.

Mindful of ticks, Blake headed obliquely across to the beach. Once on the smooth, hard sand, they swung along at a brisk pace, light-hearted and keen with the spirit of adventure. Never had they felt more companionable. Miss Leslie laughed and chatted and sang snatches of songs, while Blake beat time with his club, or sought to whistle grand opera—he had healed his blistered lips some time before by liberal applications of antelope tallow.

Gulls and terns circled about them or hovered over the water ready to swoop down upon their finny prey. Sandpipers ran along the beach within a stone's throw, but the curlews showed their greater knowledge of mankind by keeping beyond gunshot.

Once a great flock of geese drove high overhead, their leader honking the alarm as they swept above the suspicious figures on the beach. Like the curlews, they had knowledge of mankind. But the flock of white pelicans which came sailing along in stately leisure on their immense wings floated past so low that Blake felt certain he could shoot one. He raised his bow and took aim, but refrained from shooting at the thought that it might be a sheer waste of his precious poison.

A little later a herd of large animals appeared on the border of the grass jungle, but wheeled and dashed back into cover so quickly that Blake barely had time to make out that they were buffaloes—the first he had seen on this coast, but easily recognized by their resemblance to the Cape variety. Their flight gave him small concern; for the time being he was more interested in topography than game.

The southern headland now lay close before them, its seaward face rearing up sheer and lofty, but the approach behind running down in broken terraces. Mid-morning found the explorers at the foot of the ridge. Blake squinted up at the bowlder-strewn slopes and the crannies of the broken ledges.

"Likely place for snakes, Miss Jenny," he remarked. "Guess I'd better lead."

Eager as she was to look over into the country beyond, the girl dropped into second place and made no complaint about the wary slowness of her companion's advance. She found the most difficult parts of the ascent quite easy after her training on the tree-ladder. Blake could have taken ledges and all at a run, but as he mounted each terrace he halted to spy out the ground before him. Like Miss Leslie, he was looking for snakes, though for an exactly opposite reason. He wished to add to the contents of the cigarette case.

Greatly to his disappointment and the girl's relief neither snake nor sign of snake was to be seen all the way up the ridge. As they neared the crest Blake turned to offer her his hand up the last ledges, and in the instant they gained the top.

The wind, now freshening to a gale, struck the girl with such force that she would have been blown back down the ledges had not Blake clutched her wrist. Heedless alike of the painful grip which held her and of the gusts which tore at her skirt, the girl stood gazing out across the desolate swamps which stretched away to the southwest as far as the eye could see. She did not speak until Blake led her down behind the shelter of the crest ledges.

"What's the matter?" he demanded. "Didn't I warn you?"

She looked away to hide the tears which sprang into her eyes.

"I can't explain—only, it makes me feel so—so lonely!"

"Oh, come now, little woman; don't take on so!" he urged. "It might be a lot worse, you know. We've gotten along pretty well, considering."

"You have been very kind, Mr. Blake, and as you say, matters might have been worse. I do not forget how far more terrible was our situation the morning after the storm. Yet you must realize how disappointing it is to lose even the slightest hope of escape."

"Well, I don't know. If it wasn't for the fever that's bound to come with the rain, I, for one, would just as leave stick to this camp right along, providing the company don't change."

She turned upon him with flashing eyes, all thought of caution lost in her anger. "How dare you say such a thing? You are contemptible! I despise you!"

"My, Miss Jenny, but you are pretty when you get mad!" he exclaimed.

The answer took her completely aback. He was neither angry nor laughing at her, but met her defiant glance with candid, sober admiration. There was something more than admiration in his glowing eyes; yet she could not but see that her alarm had been baseless. His manner had never been more respectful. Suddenly she found that she could no longer meet his gaze. She looked away and stammered lamely: "You—you should n't say such things, you know."

"Why not? Hasn't everything been running smooth the last few days? Haven't we been good chummy comrades? Of course you've got the worst of the deal. I know I'm not much on fancy talk; but I like to hear it when I've a chance. I've led a lonesome sort of life since they did for my sisters— No, I'm not going to rake that up again. I'm only trying to give you an idea what it means to a fellow to be with a lady like you. Maybe it isn't polite to tell you all this, but it's just what I feel, and I never did amount to shucks as a liar."

"I believe I understand you, Mr. Blake, and I really feel highly complimented."

"No, you don't, any such thing, Miss Jenny. Own up, now! If I met you to-morrow on your papa's doorstep you'd cut me cold."

"I should if you continued to be so rude. Have you no regard for my feelings? But here we are, talking nonsense when we should be going—"

"Is it nonsense?" he broke in. "What does life mean, anyway? Here we can be true friends and comrades—real, free living people. It can't be that you want to go back to all those society shams after you've seen real life! As for me, what have I to gain by going back to the everlasting grind? I don't mind work; but when a man has nothing ahead to work for but a bank account, when it's grind, grind, grind till your head goes stale and all the world looks black, then there's no choice but throw up your job and go on a drunk, if you want to keep from a gun accident. Maybe you don't understand it. But that's what I've had to go through, time and again. Do you wonder I like to fancy an everlasting picnic here, with a little partner who wouldn't let me come within shouting distance of her in the land of lavender—trousers and peek-a-boos?"

"Mr. Blake, really you are most unjust! I could not be so—so ungrateful, after all your kindness. I—we should certainly be glad to number you among our friends."

"Drink and all, eh?"

"A man of your will-power has no need whatever to give way to such a habit."

"Course not, if he's got anything in sight worth while. Guess, though, my folks must have been poor white trash. I never could go after money just for the fun of the game. No family, no friends, no—what-you-call it?—culture— What's the use? I have a fair head for figures; but all the mathematics that I know I've had to catch hot off the bat. It's true I grubbed my C. E. out of a correspondence school; but a fellow has to have an all-round, crack-up education to put him where it's worth while."

"You still have time to work up. You are not much over 30."

"Twenty-seven."

"Twenty-seven! I should have thought— What a hard life you must have had!"

"Hard work? Well, I suppose Panama did do for me some. But it wasn't so much that. Few fellows could hit up the pace I've set and come out at all."

"I do not understand."

"Just what you might expect of a fellow in my fix—all kinds of gamble and drink and—the rest of it."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Too Much Advice.

"You's got to put a certain amount o' dependence on yohsef," said Uncle Eben. "De man dat goes aroun' lookin' foh too much advice is liable to find hisself in de position of de gem man dat gits so interested readin' de time table dat he misses his train."

If you are a business man, did you ever think of the field of opportunity that advertising opens to you? There is almost no limit to the possibilities of your business if you study how to turn trade into your store. If you are not getting your share of the business of your community *there's a reason.* People go where they are attracted—where they *know* what they can get and how much it is sold for. If you make direct statements in your advertising see to it that you are able to fulfill every promise you make. You will add to your business reputation and hold your customers. It will not cost as much to run your ad in this paper as you think. It is the persistent advertiser who gets there. Have something in the paper every issue, no matter how small. We will be pleased to quote you our advertising rates, particularly on the year's business.

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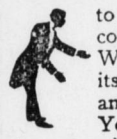

to the public through the columns of this paper. With every issue it carries its message into the homes and lives of the people. Your competitor has his store news in this issue. Why don't you have yours? Don't blame the people for flocking to his store. They know what he has.

Enlarging Your Business

If you are in business and you want to make more money you will read every word we have to say. Are you spending your money for advertising in haphazard fashion as if intended for charity, or do you advertise for direct results?

Did you ever stop to think how your advertising can be made a source of profit to you, and how its value can be measured in dollars and cents. If you have not, you are throwing money away.

Advertising is a modern business necessity, but must be conducted on business principles. If you are not satisfied with your advertising you should set aside a certain amount of money to be spent annually, and then carefully note the effect it has in increasing your volume of business; whether a 10, 20 or 30 per cent increase. If you watch this gain from year to you will become intensely interested in your advertising, and how you can make it enlarge your business.

If you try this method we believe you will not want to let a single issue of this paper go to press without something from your store.

We will be pleased to have you call on us, and we will take pleasure in explaining our annual contract for so many inches, and how it can be used in whatever amount that seems necessary to you.

If you can sell goods over the counter we can also show you why this paper will best serve your interests when you want to reach the people of this community.