

The First Man to Come Back

By CLEVELAND MOFFETT

ON the eastern slope of the Andes there is a wild and dreaded region, the poisoned arrow country, which has recently been traversed for the first time by an English expedition, headed by Captain James Campbell Besley. This region lies between two great rivers, the Rio Huallaga and the Rio Ucayale, rushing tributaries of the Amazon, which pour their mighty floods through dense South American forests. Here dwell tribes of fierce Indians, whose hatred for white men is like that of the wildcat or the rattlesnake. They fight with poisoned arrows so deadly that a scratch of the tainted barb means death; at least, no antidote has yet been found for the concentrated vegetable poisons in which the darts are dipped.

To pass through this region, therefore, means almost certain death. Caspar Whitney, in his book, "The Flowing Roads," speaks of it as the barrier beyond which white men may not pass, and of six expeditions that have entered here in recent years (two were from Chicago and four from various parts of South America) not one returned to tell the story. Captain Besley's was the seventh expedition.

Who is Captain Besley? He is an Englishman of fortune, a great traveler, a fine polo player, and a man who knows wild animals and wild men from having hunted them and faced them all over the world. In the Boer War he was one of Kitchener's fighting scouts. He stands six feet two, he is lithe and quick in his movements, and his hair is white as snow.

In 1912, having tired of other things, Besley decided that he would have a try at this poisoned arrow country. There was exploration work to be done for the Peruvian government; there were the sources of the Amazon to be better located; there were two Americans, O'Higgin and Solfan (members of one of the lost expeditions), to be searched for, dead or alive; there were the rubber atrocities reported by Sir Roger Casement to be investigated; there were strange diseases of the natives to be studied; and altogether the thing seemed rather worth while, so the Captain organized his expedition and started. And he came through. The trip cost him \$50,000 and indescribable suffering; but he came through.

The Dogs Saved Them

THERE were days and nights when the expedition, six white men and a dozen native porters (more or less loyal), lived with the poisoned arrow peril hanging over them, and the deeper they penetrated into the forest the more closely their silent enemies drew about them.

"If it hadn't been for our dogs," said Captain Besley, "they would have got us sure, every man of us; but our dogs knew their business. There were eleven of them, all trained, Airedales, hounds, and Belgian police dogs, and a wonderful Scotch collie named Napoleon that I had clipped close against the terrific heat. Poor Napoleon!

"Those dogs knew that the Indians were tracking us to kill us, and whenever a band would come near they would sniff and jump high in the air to warn us of the danger, and then we would get busy with shovels and axes and machetes and build a barricade. Sometimes, under favorable conditions, our Indians could smell the

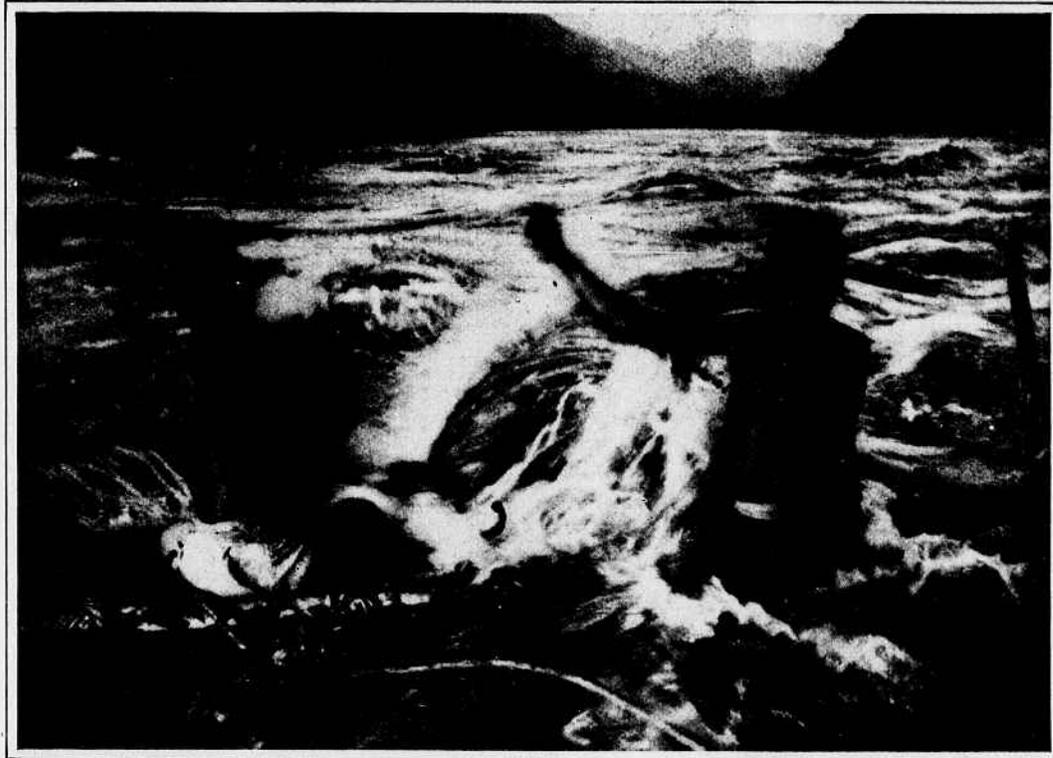
SEVEN expeditions have set out to explore the poisoned arrow country in the heart of South America: six have never been heard from again. The seventh was Captain Besley's. The trip cost him \$50,000 and indescribable suffering; but he came through—and this is his story.

enemy, and once we heard their tomtoms in the distance."

"How many of the enemy were following you?"

"I don't know. We hardly ever saw them: only glimpses of heads or arms behind the trees. In one fight there were about seventy against us. It wasn't so very funny, the singing of their darts and arrows and the chunk, chunk, chunk as

ated male condor, one of the huge birds that soar over vast solitudes of the snow-bound Andes. Besley had often heard from the natives that condors are dangerous creatures if interfered with in their mating or breeding season; but he thought little of these tales. He was accustomed to greater perils, and had forgotten all about condors, having seen none of them for months, when one day in the moun-



This remarkable picture was taken when shooting furious rapids at the rate of a mile a minute. The camera was lashed fast to the raft.

they buried themselves in the logs. The darts (from blow guns) were like knitting needles about a foot long and made of wood hardened in the fire and very sharp. The arrows, shot from bows, were eight or ten feet long, and had feathers running round the shaft like the rifling in a gun barrel to make them fly true."

"And the tips were poisoned—darts and arrows?"

"Yes."

"Did they hit any of your party?"

His face darkened. "In our big fight we lost poor Jerry Anderson, our natural historian. They struck him in the chest, and Dr. G. H. Henderson—he was making a study of tropical diseases—they shot twice in the arm. And they got Napoleon."

"You couldn't do anything for them?"

"I did all I could, permanganate and morphine; but it was no use. The doctor lived four days and Anderson eight. They were fine, brave Englishmen. Those Indians paid for it; but it was too late."

Nearly Killed by a Condor

AMONG other dangers faced by Captain Besley was one of a most unexpected sort. He was nearly killed by an infuri-

eyes, its raw red head, its white-feathered collar, bristling in rage, and he wished for his rifle.

Holbrook dared not shoot for fear of hitting his comrade, and the only thing that saved Besley was a moment of respite when the condor, after a vicious blow from Besley's boot heel, swept upward to gain strength for a new attack, whereupon the photographer raised his rifle and fired, just as the bird, screeching its hate, shot downward to finish its victim.

This happened in an untraveled wilderness near the head waters of the Amazon, 11,000 feet above the sea.

This Photographer No Quitter

THE expedition had a thrilling experience in descending the Rio Huallaga. For thirty-six days they floated down this perilous river on a huge raft, built to stand the suction of treacherous whirlpools at the foot of furious rapids that make the Huallaga dreaded by the most expert native boatmen. It was Holbrook's ambition to take motion pictures of these rapids as they shot through them, although Besley declared the thing impossible.

"You're crazy, Jack!" said the Captain. "We'll go through there at fifty miles an hour. The *bogadores* (paddle men) will be lashed to the logs, and—why, your camera would be smashed to pieces and you'd be swept overboard."

It was evidently impossible, but Holbrook proceeded to do it. He scooped out holes in the buoyant balsa logs for his tripod legs to rest in, and lashed the camera fast with lianas so strongly that it stood at the back of the raft like a tree. And when they entered the raging waters, when the whole sixty-foot structure was spun about like a top in the whirlpool and was smashed through jaws of jagged rock and hurled ahead a mile in a minute through blinding spray, still somehow Jack Holbrook ground out his film. And when an immense wave crashed over them and tore one of the *bogadores* away from his lashings, so that he was saved only by a miracle (and by Captain Besley's skill) still Holbrook stuck to his camera and ground away.

The result was one of the most remarkable motion pictures ever taken of a murderous river in the height of its fury.

Adventures with Snakes

THERE was constant danger from snakes, not only in the jungles, where huge serpents squirmed along the river banks and hung from the branches of trees, but at great mountain heights among the Inca ruins, where they came upon very small and venomous adders. One day the Captain witnessed a fight between a hoglike tapir weighing 400 pounds and a boa constrictor. It took the snake exactly two minutes to crush the tapir to death in its powerful folds; whereupon the Englishman, needing hog meat for his Indians, finished the boa with his rifle.

"Were any of your party bitten by venomous snakes?" I asked Captain Besley.

"Yes," he said, "four of my men were bitten; but we had our little medicine chest and managed to save them. It was a case of strap the tourniquet tight above the wound and then quick with a hypodermic of permanganate of potash."

tains of Peru, near the Bolivian border, they caught sight of a great nest in a hole of a ruined Inca wall.

There was a hen condor sitting on her eggs, and immediately Besley signaled to Jack Holbrook to get the picture. The wall was about eighty yards away across a deep ravine, and while the camera man adjusted his telephoto lens the explorer stood watching, rifle in hand, so interested in the mother bird that he never noticed a black speck in the sky like a distant aeroplane, that came nearer and nearer. It was the male condor, his wings spreading sixteen feet, that was sweeping downward from the blue heavens to the rescue of his mate.

There was no sound, no cry; but suddenly the great bird struck the man with the tip of its wing, and the man went over like a child's toy. Then, with talons that could lift a sheep, the condor struck at his fallen enemy. The Captain was helpless. His rifle had been knocked from his hands, and he was dazed by the swift attack. He lay on his back and kicked at the bird with heavy boots. The guardian of the silent heights came at him meaning to kill—there was no doubt about that. Besley saw its wicked brownish-black