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(Continued from Page 23)

We had gathered in a little group at the bottom of the chasm, some forty feet beneath the mouth of the cave...

We withdrew hurriedly from the chasm, our minds full of this new development and its bearing upon our plans.

On discussing the situation we determined that our best course was to continue to coast round the plateau in the hope of finding some other means of reaching the top.

We made a march that day which totaled some two and twenty miles without any change in our prospects.

It was a very different Challenger who greeted us in the morning—a Challenger with contentment and self-congratulation...

"You have found a way up?" "I venture to think so."

"And where?" "For answer he pointed to the spiraling pinnacles upon our right.

"Our faces, or mine at least, fell as we surveyed it. That it could be climbed had our companion's assurance, but a horrible abyss lay between it and the plateau.

"We can never get across!" I gasped. "We can at least reach the summit," said he.

"When we are up I may be able to show you that the resources of an inventive mind are not yet exhausted."

After breakfast we unpacked the bundle in which our leader had brought his climbing accessories.

"It's blocked!" said he. "The roof has fallen in."

We have shaken off some of that horrible insect life which is the bane of tropical travel.

There is a chill in the air after dark, and we had all drawn close to the blaze.

The night was moonless, but there were some stars, and one could see for a little distance across the plain.

Well, suddenly out of the darkness, out of the night, there swooped something with a swish like an aeroplane.

The whole group of us were covered for an instant by a canopy of leathery wings, and I had a momentary vision of a long, snake-like neck, a fierce, red, greedy eye and a great snapping beak.

CHAPTER X. Summaries No Longer Skeptical.

THAT night I am still speaking of the first day of our circumnavigation of the plateau—a great experience awaited us and one which forever set at rest any doubt which we could have had as to the wonders so near us.

What occurred was this: Lord John had shot an ajouti, which is a small, piglike animal, and, half of it having been given to the Indians, we were cooking the other half upon our fire.

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our dinner. A huge black shadow, twenty feet across, skimmed up into the air. For an instant the monster wings blotted out the stars, and then it vanished over the brow of the cliff above us.

"Professor Challenger," said he, in a solemn voice, which quavered with emotion, "I owe you an apology, Sir. I am very much in the wrong, and I beg that you will forgive what is past."

It was handsomely said, and the two men for the first time shook hands. So much we have gained by this clear vision of our first pterodactyl. It was worth a stolen supper to bring two such men together.

On the sixth day we completed our first circuit of the cliffs and found ourselves back at the first camp beside the isolated pinnacle of rock.

It was certainly a brilliant idea. The tree was a good sixty feet in height, and if it fell only the right way it would easily cross the chasm.

What were we to do now? Our stores of provisions, supplemented by our guns, were holding out well, but the day must come when they would need replenishment.

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CHAPTER XI. The Half Breed's Revenge.

SEATING himself with a leg overhanging the abyss on each side and his hatchet slung upon his back, Challenger hopped his way across the trunk and was soon at the other side.

"At last!" he cried. "At last!" "I gazed anxiously at him, with a vague expectation that some terrible fate would dart at him from the curtain of green behind him.

Summerlee was the second. His wiry energy is wonderful in so frail a frame. He insisted upon having two rifles slung upon his back, so that both professors were armed when he had made his transit.

"We had turned away from the edge and had penetrated about fifty yards of close brushwood when there came a frightful, rending crash from behind us.

"At last!" he cried. "At last!"

Far down at the base of the cliff I saw a man in a white shirt and dark trousers, with a rifle slung over his shoulder, looking up at us.

CHAPTER XII. Penetrating Maple Whites' Land.

AND now we had to decide upon our immediate movements. We shifted our position from among the tick laden bushes until we came to a small clearing thickly surrounded by trees upon all sides.

Our first care was to make some sort of list of our own stores, so that we might know what we had to rely upon.

What occurred was this: Lord John had shot an ajouti, which is a small, piglike animal, and, half of it having been given to the Indians, we were cooking the other half upon our fire.

There is a chill in the air after dark, and we had all drawn close to the blaze.

I was still drinking in this wonderful panorama when the heavy hand of the professor fell upon my shoulder.

"This way, my young friend," said he. "Vestigia nulla retrorsum. Never look rearward, but always to our glorious goal."

The level of the plateau when I turned was exactly that on which we stood, and the green bank of bushes, with occasional trees, was so near that it was difficult to realize how inaccessible it remained.

"Not only a fellow countryman, my good sir," said Challenger, "but also, if I may be allowed to enlarge your smile, an ally of the first value. This beech tree will be our savior."

"By George," cried Lord John, "a bridge!" "Exactly, my friends, a bridge! It is not for nothing that I expended an hour last night in focusing my telescope upon the situation.

Under his direction I cut such gashes in the sides of the tree as would insure that it should fall as we desired.

It was certainly a brilliant idea. The tree was a good sixty feet in height, and if it fell only the right way it would easily cross the chasm.

Our young friend has the thews and sinews," said he. "I think he will be the most useful at this task. I must beg, however, that you will kindly refrain from thinking for yourself and that you will do exactly what you are told."

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saw as I looked over a tangled mass of branches and splintered trunk. It was our beech tree. Had the edge of the platform crumbled and let it through?

"What about the other one?" It took two of them to lever that tree over the edge.

"I could have shot him, but I let him go. He may have had no part in it. Perhaps it would have been better if I had killed him, for he must, as you say, have lent a hand."

Now that we had the clew to his action each of us could cast back and remember some sinister act upon the part of the half breed—his constant desire to know our plans, his arrest outside our tent when he was over-hearing them, the futile looks of hatred which from time to time one or other of us had surprised.

"We were too astounded to speak. We could only stand there staring in amazement. A great broken bough upon the grass showed whence he had gained his leverage to tilt over our bridge. The face had vanished, but presently it was up again, more frantic than before.

"We nearly killed you with a stone at the cave!" he cried. But this is better. It is slower and more terrible. Your bones will whiten up there, and none will know where you lie or come to cover them.

Had the half breed simply wrought his vengeance and then escaped all might have been well with him. It was that foolish, irresistible Latin impulse to be dramatic which brought his own downfall. Roston, the man who had earned himself the name of the "Flail of the Lord" through three countries, was not one who could be safely taunted. The half breed was descending on the farther side of the pinnacle, but before he could reach the ground Lord John had run along the edge of the plateau and gained a point from which he could see his man.

There was a single crack of his rifle, and though we saw nothing, we heard the scream and then the distant thud of the falling body. Roston came back to us with a face of granite.

"I have been a blind simpleton," said he bitterly. "It's my folly that has brought you all into this trouble. I should have remembered that these people have long memories for blood feuds and have been more upon my guard."

"What about the other one?" It took two of them to lever that tree over the edge.

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only was clear. He was our one trusty link with the outside world. On no account must he leave us.

"No, no!" he cried. "I not leave you. Whatever come, you always find me here. But no able to keep Indians. Already they say too much Curupuri live on this place and they go home. Now you leave them me no able to keep them."

It was a fact that our Indians had shown in many ways of late that they were weary of their journey and anxious to return. We realized that Zambo spoke the truth and that it would be impossible for him to keep them with us.

"Make them wait till tomorrow, Zambo," I shouted; "then I can send letter back by them."

"Very good, sarr! I promise they wait till tomorrow," said the negro. "But what I do for you now?"

There was plenty for him to do, and admirably the faithful fellow did it. First of all, under our directions, he

is the pacemaker. Behind him, only a few yards in his rear, bounded the huge ebony figure of Zambo, our devoted negro. Even as we looked he sprang upon the back of the fugitive and hung his arms round his neck. They rolled on the ground together. An instant afterward Zambo rose, looked at the prostrate man and then, waving his hand joyously to us, came running in our direction. The white figure lay motionless in the middle of the great plain.

Our two traitors had been destroyed, but the mischief that they had done lived after them. By no possible means could we get back to the pinnacle. We had been natives of the world; now we were natives of the plateau. The two things were separate and apart. There was the plain which led to the canoes. Yonder, beyond the violet, hazy horizon, was the stream which led back to civilization. But the link between was missing. No human ingenuity could suggest a means of bridging the chasm which yawned between ourselves and our past lives. One instant had altered all the conditions of our existence.

It was at such a moment that I learned the stuff of which my three comrades were composed. They were grave, it is true, and thoughtful, but of an invincible serenity. For the moment we could only sit among the bushes in patience and wait the coming of Zambo. Presently his honest black face topped the rocks and his herculean figure emerged upon the top of the pinnacle.

"What I do now?" he cried. "You tell me and I do it!"

It was a question which it was easier to ask than to answer. One thing

Finally he descended and carried up two other packets of mixed goods—a box of ammunition and a number of other things, all of which we got across by throwing our rope to him and hauling it back. It was evening when he at last climbed down, with a final assurance that he would keep the Indians till next morning.

"E. S.—The more I think the more desperate does our position seem. I see no possible hope of our return. If there were a high tree near the edge of the plateau we might drop a return bridge across, but there is none within fifty yards. Our united strength could not carry a trunk which would serve our purpose. The rope, of course, is far too short, that we could descend by it. No, our position is hopeless—hopeless!"

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Well, suddenly out of the darkness, out of the night, there swooped something with a swish like an aeroplane.

CHAPTER XIII. No Human Ingenuity Could Suggest a Means of Bridging the Chasm.

undid the rope from the tree stump and threw one end of it across to us. It was not thicker than a clothesline, but it was of great strength, and, though we could not make a bridge of it, we might well find it invaluable if we had any climbing to do. He then fastened his end of the rope to the package of supplies which had been carried up, and we were able to drag it across. This gave us the means of life for at least a week, even if we found nothing else.

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