

LOST IN
THE WILDS
OF BRAZIL

JAMES H. FOSTER

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JAMES H. FOSTER

A large wildcat was greedily devouring the remains of a small deer.

LOST IN THE WILDS OF BRAZIL

JAMES FOSTER

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Lost in the Wilds of Brazil

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THE EXPLORATION SERIES
By JAMES FOSTER
LOST IN THE WILDS OF BRAZIL
CAPTURED BY THE ARABS
SECRETS OF THE ANDES
THE FOREST OF MYSTERY

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
<u>I</u>	A Startling Discovery	1
<u>II</u>	Firebugs at Work!	12
<u>III</u>	Valuable Information	19
<u>IV</u>	The Treacherous Crook	30
<u>V</u>	A Worth-while Offer	42
<u>VI</u>	Off for the Wilds of Brazil	49
<u>VII</u>	New York—And On	58
<u>VIII</u>	The Beginning of Trouble	62
<u>IX</u>	A Daring Rescue	71
<u>X</u>	In the Heart of the Jungle	83
<u>XI</u>	On the Alert	93
<u>XII</u>	A Fearful Sight	98
<u>XIII</u>	The Death Struggle	107
<u>XIV</u>	The Deserted Village	116
<u>XV</u>	Danger at Hand	122
<u>XVI</u>	A Thrilling Encounter	132
<u>XVII</u>	Terrible Peccaries	140
<u>XVIII</u>	A Nightmare Experience	150
<u>XIX</u>	The Call for Help	157
<u>XX</u>	Fighting Against Heavy Odds	165
<u>XXI</u>	Magnificent Country	174
<u>XXII</u>	Lost in the Wilds of Brazil	180
<u>XXIII</u>	Terrible Cries of Savages	188
<u>XXIV</u>	The Hideous Village	199
<u>XXV</u>	Reunion at Last	210
<u>XXVI</u>	The Terrible Battle	227
<u>XXVII</u>	Human Heads Still Dripping!	232

CHAPTER I

A Startling Discovery

“LOOK here, Joe. There’s something stirring. I know the signs. Our dads wouldn’t keep together constantly, studying maps and reading books and making frequent trips to the museum, for nothing. It——”

“You’re right, Bob. They certainly must have something important in mind. And I have an idea as to what it is.”

“Another expedition into the unknown,” cut in Bob Holton, in tones that implied certainty.

“But where, do you suppose?” asked Joe Lewis, his brown eyes sparkling with interest.

“More than I know,” the other youth replied. “Could be any place. But wherever it is, I’ll bet they’ve been there before. They just travel from one end of this little old world to another in search of birds and reptiles and animals, and they always find them.”

“And always will,” added Joe with strong conviction. “Why,” he went on, becoming even more absorbed, “do you remember the time they went to Africa in search of a white rhinoceros?”

“Yes. Looked high and low for several months, and finally got one after all hopes had been abandoned. Oh, it takes them to do it. Just let the curator mention the things wanted, and if it’s at all possible, our dads will get them. All specimens are alike to——”

He was interrupted by the sound of footsteps from the side of the house and turned to see who the person might be. While he is looking expectantly, it might be well to tell who the boys were, and what had been their experiences up to the time this story opens.

Bob was a big fellow, strong and muscular, and endowed with the ability to do the right thing at the right time. He was one of the star players on the high school football team. Everyone liked him—he was so straightforward and sympathizing and trustworthy.

Joe was of medium size, with almost black eyes and a naturally dark complexion. He was lighter and less robust than his friend, but was possessed of

fierce courage and bravery. He never started a thing without finishing it.

Mr. Holton and Mr. Lewis, fathers of the youths, were noted naturalists and collectors of specimens for museums and zoos. They had been nearly everywhere and always welcomed any hint that might start them on a new trip into the unknown. The two men had met several years before at a convention of scientists, and took a great liking to each other. As they both lived in Washington, D. C., they agreed to work together in behalf of a large museum, and Mr. Lewis made an attempt to purchase the residence next to that of his friend. He was at last successful in acquiring it, and then began the warm friendship between the two youths, Bob and Joe.

The boys were together much of their time and got along excellently, following in their fathers' footsteps as much as possible by taking hikes into the woods to study nature. Fresh with the vigor of youth, they were having a grand time together, but would have had a still greater one had they been permitted to accompany the men on the various scientific expeditions.

"You're only freshmen," Mr. Holton had told them, about three years before. "Wait till you're juniors or seniors, and then perhaps we will consider taking you along."

Now the boys were in their senior year, or would be when school opened the coming fall, and were eagerly anticipating the future.

"If they'd only make a trip this summer," said Joe, shortly after school had closed. "Then we might——"

Let us return to the boys, as they cast glances at the side of the house. The sound of footsteps grew louder, and the next moment Bob's father came into view.

"Hello, Dad."

"Hello, Mr. Holton."

The naturalist returned the greetings and then made his way to a porch seat. Several moments he spent in lighting a cigar. Then he turned to the youths.

"What's all this praise you've been giving Mr. Lewis and me for our scientific work?" he asked, trying hard to suppress a smile.

The young men grinned. They had not suspected this.

"You got it right," returned Joe. "You two have done as much for the museum as anyone else in this old U. S. And that's as straight as a lion's tail when he's about to charge."

Mr. Holton laughed unbelievably.

“I know your game,” he chuckled. “You’re paving the way to accompany us on that Brazilian trip we’re about to take. Right?”

Bob and Joe jumped to their feet in wild excitement. A trip to Brazil! Think of that! Then their supposition was correct. Something was stirring after all.

Mr. Holton guessed their thoughts and broke the short period of suspense.

“It’s an expedition to the jungles of the Amazon,” he explained, as the boys seated themselves and listened with breathless interest. “Going to get specimens of fauna for the museum. In addition, we wish to make a study of several wild Indian tribes there. It’s a trip I’ve always wished to take, but, strange to say, I’ve never had the opportunity. You boys probably know that this region is one of the least-known on the face of the globe. It has the world’s heaviest forests, some of the most savage of people, and a wide variety of birds and beasts.”

“Great!” blurted out Joe in a strange, animated tone. “How wonderful it would be! Away out in the wildest of Brazilian wilds, seeing strange and astonishing things—things that only a very few have the opportunity of seeing.”

“It’s my idea of adventure,” declared Bob, taking up where his friend had left off. “Why can’t you arrange to take us with you?”

The scientist eyed the young men intently with an expression of sympathy.

“Then you want to go that badly?” he asked, and then his eyes fell. He had been young himself once. How often had he visualized this very mission! How many times had he tramped through the heavy Western woods, imagining himself in a great tropical forest, with its mysteries, thrills, and tragedies! If those longings could only have been satisfied when they were strongest!

For over a minute Mr. Holton stared thoughtfully at the floor. Then, with twinkling eyes, he glanced up at the boys.

“What would you give to go with us?” he asked, his face brightening.

“What!” cried Bob, with a look that combined delight with bewilderment. “You mean that we can go?”

“Not exactly,” was the reply. “I just asked you what you’d give to go.”

“Everything!” blurted out Joe. “Everything we’ve got—and then some. Oh, do take us, Mr. Holton,” he went on more pleadingly. “We’re old enough by now to take care of ourselves.”

“I’d like to have you,” the naturalist said. “And so would your father. But your mothers——” Here he stopped. It was unnecessary to continue. The youths understood.

“But I’m sure they’ll consent,” Bob said, with a certainty that he was far

from feeling. “Especially if they know you are willing to have us.”

“Of course there’s a possibility,” the man assured them. “But I wouldn’t be too sure of it. You know how they are. Unwilling to have their sons take any unnecessary risks. Well, perhaps they’re right,” he went on, tapping the chair thoughtfully. “Perhaps it isn’t best to tax good fortune too much. You boys are young and have a great future before you. What if anything should happen——”

“But, Dad,” Bob pleaded, “nothing will happen. We’d be with you and Mr. Lewis—and anyone else who would be along. Nothing has happened to you so far. You’ve always come back O.K.”

“We’ve had some narrow escapes, though,” with a shaking of the head. “Fever, wild beasts, savages, hurricanes—there’s no limit to the number of tragedies that may befall an expedition into the unknown. But then,” his tones became more lively, “you boys want to go with us regardless of these dangers, and if I must say so, I believe you’d make a good showing. I’ll talk the matter over with Mr. Lewis and your mothers and let you know later how things look.”

“Fine!” cried Bob, overwhelmed with joy. “Now tell us some more about this mission. What section of Amazonia do you intend to explore?”

“The lower middle,” was the response. “We intend to follow the Amazon to the Purús River, where we’ll branch off and travel by native canoes for approximately five hundred miles.”

Joe gave a long whistle.

“Five hundred miles by canoe!” he gasped, almost unbelievably. “Seems almost impossible. How can you take food enough along?”

“Does seem sort of absurd. But we’ll manage it. And we expect to live on game and fish to a certain extent. Everything will have to be timed to a dot. We won’t dare stay any longer than our food supply lasts. When that begins to get low, back to civilization we’ll go.”

“How long do you expect to be gone?” Bob asked.

“We—ll, perhaps three or four months. We want to get as much done as possible. You see,” he explained, “as I said before, our stay is limited to the supply of provisions we have with us. If it were possible to carry enough, I would like to spend at least six months there. What a wonderful opportunity to study primitive man in his everyday life.”

“Should think it would be rather dangerous,” remarked Joe. “He might object and study you instead. Headhunters, I mean.”

“It’s a chance we have to take,” was the reply. “But after all, if we treat them kindly there is little danger. Human nature is much the same all over the

globe.”

“I’ll trust you to come out all right,” Bob said.

“We hope to,” the scientist returned. “And we also hope to add greatly to the world’s knowledge of Brazil and its animal inhabitants.”

“At present that isn’t very much, is it?” Joe asked.

“You can’t exactly say that,” Mr. Holton answered, “for a large amount is known about different sections that have been more or less frequented by civilized man. But when you refer to the deeper, more inaccessible regions, then it’s different. Of course there have been numerous expeditions sent out to explore these unknown sections, but even now there is a large and interesting field open to the scientist.”

“Well,” said Bob, after a short silence, “I only hope that Joe and I may go with you.”

“We’ll see about it,” his father replied. “But I can assure you that consent from your mothers will not come without considerable—— Well! Look who’s here. Come on the porch and sit down, Ben.” He referred to Joe’s father, Mr. Lewis, who, as usual, was to be his intimate companion during their stay in Brazil.

Mr. Lewis was a man of medium height, with sparkling blue eyes and a complexion that was extremely bronzed.

“Hello, friends,” he greeted, seating himself and wiping the perspiration from his brow. “I suppose,” he said to Mr. Holton, “you’ve been telling the boys about our coming expedition to South America. Right?”

“Right!” echoed Bob. “And not only that, but Joe and I are going with you.”

“What’s that!” Mr. Lewis cried in surprise.

“Yes,” Bob’s father returned, “they’ve put in their request to be a part of the expedition. What do you think of it?”

“Well—a—I hardly know. How do you think their mothers will look at it?”

Mr. Holton shook his head.

“Impossible to say,” he answered. “But we can all guess. Still, if we see fit to take the boys along, we can put the matter before them. They may consent after considerable pleading.”

“Hurrah!” cried Joe, in tones of gratitude. “And I’m sure——”

He stopped suddenly and sniffed the air sharply.

“There’s something burning,” he said quietly, and then moved around the

house.

The next instant he was back, pale-faced and panic-stricken.

“Our garage is on fire!” he cried. “It’s all ablaze!”

CHAPTER II

Firebugs at Work!

AT Joe's ominous words, Mr. Lewis leaped to his feet.

"Come on," he said in wild excitement. "We can't get there any too quickly, for not only are the cars in danger but a satchel of valuable papers as well."

"Something in connection with our expedition to Brazil?" asked Bob's father, as he took second place in the race to the garage.

"Yes. They're very important. I should have taken them in the house at once."

As they turned to look at the scene, a feeling of helplessness crept over them, for already the blaze had leaped high in the air, and the crackling sound told that the fire had made considerable headway.

Bob rushed into the house and telephoned the fire department. Then, with Mrs. Lewis and Joe's sister, he moved back outside, to see that the structure was blazing even higher.

Meanwhile the others had unlocked the doors and were inside, doing their best to roll out the cars. But the smoke was so thick that they were making little headway.

"Quick!" cried Mr. Holton. "Where are the keys, Ben?"

"I don't know. I—I can't seem to find them. Should be in my pocket. No, guess I left them in the house."

The next instant he was gone, leaving his friends to survey the situation more carefully.

"It strikes me," remarked Bob thoughtfully, "that if we wait for him to return with the keys it will be too late."

"But what—how——" Mr. Holton stammered, but was interrupted by his son.

"The only way that I can see is to break the glass in one of the doors. Then we can get inside to release the emergency brake. How about it?"

"I'd hate to do that, my boy. Yet there seems to be no other way out."

As Bob had stated, it was evident that if they were to wait for the keys the

cars would be badly burned. There was a possibility that the gasoline tanks might even explode, for at intervals particles of ignited timber fell from the blazing roof and missed them only a few inches. Rapidly the flames crept downward. Already they were halfway down the wall and moving like lightning. There was no time to lose. Something must be done!

“Come on,” Bob urged, entering the garage once more. “We must get those cars out at any cost.”

He looked about for some object with which he could break a glass, but could see nothing.

“If there was only a board, or even——”

“Here,” came from his father, moving on up with a sharp piece of metal, “let me do it.”

There was a crash, a splintering of glass, and the next moment Mr. Holton was inside. It took but a second to release the parking brake, and then the car rolled easily out of danger.

“There,” panted the naturalist, rubbing his hand over his forehead. “Now to get to the coupé.”

Just then there came the sound of fire bells, and before they had attended to the other car, several fire trucks pulled up in front of the house. Their occupants were easily attracted to the scene of the fire, and they lost no time in hurrying back.

“Quick!” yelled Joe, almost panic-stricken. “Let’s get Dad’s private car out. The enamel is already off the left front fender.”

Again Mr. Holton made use of the iron pipe, and the remaining automobile was pushed out just in time to avoid a large section of the roof that suddenly caved in.

“A narrow escape!” breathed Bob, stopping only for a moment to examine the finish that had been slightly scorched.

“A very narrow one,” returned Joe, as he thought of what would have happened had the roof fallen on the top.

By now two lines of hose had been attached, and firemen were working unflinchingly to check the cruel flames which, owing to a strong north wind, were protruding several yards beyond the roof. Occasionally a spark would fly over to the house, and this did not in the least simplify the efforts of the fire fighters.

A large crowd had gathered to view the spectacle and included several of

Bob's and Joe's friends who lived near by.

"Some blaze, eh, fellows?" was the comment made by John Peterman, a classmate in school.

"The biggest I've seen for an age," put in Tom Rogers, another friend.

"How'd it start?" asked another.

"Beyond us," answered Bob. "Do you have any idea, Joe?"

"No. I'm sure Dad wouldn't have left a cigar stub——"

"Impossible," his chum broke in, "for that blaze started on or near the roof."

Mr. Lewis had now joined the others, and his delight was beyond words when he saw that the cars had been removed in time to avert disaster.

"I kept thinking that I could find the key," he said. "I finally did, but not in time to save them."

Gradually the flames were diminishing, and if the firemen kept up the good work it promised to be over in a short time.

"Good thing that your garage is quite a distance over," remarked Joe to his friend. "One is bad enough without having two on fire."

Finally the last blaze was extinguished amid a rousing cheer from the crowd, and, after closer examination inside, the firemen left the scene, and the crowd gradually thinned until no one was left but Bob, Joe, their fathers, and a few neighbors.

"Covered by insurance, isn't it?" inquired Bob of Mr. Lewis, as they cast a resentful look at the charred beams of the structure that had once been a fine garage.

"Yes, but this may delay our expedition to Brazil for a week or two until I can look after the reconstruction of it. That is"—he glanced at Mr. Holton—"unless your father objects."

"Not in the least," came from that individual. "In fact," he went on, "that is about the only way out."

Bob and Joe walked into the burned building. All about were ashes—ashes that had once been the roof of the structure. The charcoal smell was strong about them.

"Don't know where we'll keep the cars tonight," said Joe, glancing up through the hole in the roof.

"Guess we can find room in our garage," his friend replied. "We only have the one car, and it doesn't take up all the room by any means."

"Awfully good of you."

Suddenly Bob uttered an exclamation that brought his friend hurrying to his side.

“What is it?” Joe asked.

For answer the other youth pointed to a small tin box that was black from being in the fire. It had hung on the wall behind an old radiator hood, which had a moment before fallen to the floor.

“What could that be?” Bob Holton asked. “Does it belong to your dad?”

Joe reached up and took it down from its hanger.

“Has a hole in the top. And what’s that thing protruding from the side?”

“Beyond me. Could be a—— Great Scott! Come on. We must get it to your father at once.”

Bewildered, Joe followed his friend to the back door, where the two men were still conversing.

“What does this mean?” asked Bob coolly, handing the box to Mr. Lewis.

The latter examined it closely for a moment. Then, suddenly grasping the meaning, he stared at the others.

“Firebugs at work!” he exclaimed, fumbling the box nervously. “Someone set the garage on fire!”

CHAPTER III

Valuable Information

AT the remark Mr. Holton gasped in astonishment.

“Who would it be?” he asked. “Has anyone got anything against you?”

“Not that I know of,” Joe’s father replied. “Let me think.”

He assumed a mood of thoughtful anxiety, and Mr. Holton took the small box for a closer examination. It was about eight inches square, with a hole in the top out of which protruded a short iron stem. Inside, an alarm clock was still ticking.

“Hmm! That fire was probably set for ten o’clock,” Mr. Holton murmured, as he noticed that it was now nearly eleven.

“How long ago do you suppose it was set?” inquired Bob.

“Impossible to say,” the response came. “It couldn’t have been more than twelve hours ago, however.”

Mr. Lewis looked up.

“I can think of several people who could be bad enough to do this,” he said thoughtfully. “But I cannot say which one it would be.

“First I might mention a man who wanted to buy some specimens from me, but I declined to sell them. He had a sour disposition, and his temper was thoroughly aroused when, after he had offered large sums of money, I refused him. Said he’d get even some time.”

“What’d he want with them?” Joe asked.

“Wanted to sell them to a well-known museum. You see they were very rare birds that I got in New Zealand, and he’d have been offered a large sum for them.”

“Could be the very man!” Mr. Holton said. “Who else might have done it?”

“A rival naturalist,” the other returned. “Name is Davis—Thomas T. Davis. Perhaps you remember, Howard. The fellow with the gold eyeglasses and scarred face. Said he got it when a tiger sprang at him. Always——”

“Yes,” Mr. Holton interrupted, his eyes bright with sudden recollection. “The museum employed him awhile, didn’t it?”

Joe's father nodded.

"He always had a dislike for me," he went on. "Didn't like it at all when I headed that expedition to central Asia."

There was a short silence. Then Mr. Lewis made a resolution.

"I'm going to put this matter in the hands of detectives," he said. "They may be able to figure it out."

"That's the thing to do," Bob agreed. "Seems to me, though, that this first man you mentioned is responsible. The one who wanted to buy the specimens from you."

"Could be. But I am very much in doubt as to whether he would do such a thing."

"Are you certain that there is no one else that has anything against you?" Mr. Holton questioned.

"No. Not certain. But fairly sure."

Suddenly Bob's face lightened, and he turned to Mr. Lewis.

"Do you know where this man lives? The one who wanted to buy the specimens from you, I mean."

"Why—yes," Mr. Lewis faltered. "That is, I have it in my memorandum. What do you want with it?"

"Don't know that it'll be any good at all. But we could inquire of his neighbors what kind of man he is."

"Good idea. Better let me go, though."

Bob shook his head.

"Joe and I haven't anything else to do," he argued, "and we'll be glad to do it."

"All right. Come in the house and I'll put his name and address on paper."

In a short time Mr. Lewis was back with a folded paper, which he handed to Bob.

"Now use tact in getting your information," he said. "Remember, don't let the people you inquire of in on the secret."

"We won't," came the response, and after securing permission to use Mr. Holton's sedan, they left for the man's address.

What would they find? Would the people living near know anything about this person? Would the youths find that he had moved and, owing to his criminal record, had told no one of his new location? These questions were in the minds

of Bob and Joe as they went farther toward their destination.

After a twenty-minute ride they pulled up on a poor cross street near the city limits and gazed to their left at a small house set back from the sidewalk. Directly beside it was another house of slightly better appearance.

“That’s the place,” pronounced Bob. “Doesn’t look like anyone’s at home.”

“Let’s go to the house next to it,” suggested Joe, getting out of the car. “We’ll trust to luck that the occupants are not related to the man we’re after.”

The boys made their way to the door and knocked. For over a minute they waited in silence. Then, as it was evident that there was no one at home, they turned to leave. But at that moment a small car moved up to the curb and stopped. Two men got out and started toward the house where the alleged crook lived. But the second they caught sight of Bob and Joe they turned back to their car.

“Come on,” whispered Bob. “Let’s follow them. I have a notion that one of those fellows is the man we’re after.”

Joe nodded in agreement.

“Did you notice how strange they acted when they saw us?” he asked. “Perhaps they thought we were officers that had come to arrest them.”

The youths made their way to their automobile and had the motor started just as the other car whizzed away.

For over ten minutes they followed cautiously, and they were satisfied that the men had not noticed them. Then at last they turned up a dilapidated street and stopped in front of a small, weather-beaten house. Here they left the car and went inside, while Bob and Joe stopped a square away.

“Let’s go up and look around,” suggested Joe.

As quietly as possible, the boys walked up to the house.

“Come around to the back,” beckoned Joe. “There might be a window.”

His supposition proved correct, for they found one before they reached the back porch. The glass was out and the opening was boarded up fairly tight, but there were several large cracks.

Cautiously Bob leaned up close and peeped inside. Then he turned to Joe.

“Four men inside,” he whispered. “Two of them are the ones we followed. Wait! Let’s hear what they’re saying.”

Again he leaned over to the window, this time to listen. Joe squeezed up close that he might hear also.

“Where do you suppose he is?” one man was saying in a gruff voice.

“Left town, mebbe,” another answered. “Just plain slipped out on us, an’ him owin’ us a lot of dough.”

“The dirty tramp!” a third said with an oath. “We’ll get him, don’t you worry. No guy can put anything over on us!”

“He’s afraid of the cops, no doubt,” the first said. “Maybe—— But say! Speakin’ of cops, we saw a couple of guys at the house next door to him, and nobody lives there. Haven’t for two months. They might have been detectives.”

“He means us,” whispered Joe. “We scared them off, I guess.”

The man who had been silent now spoke.

“You may be right,” he said. “It don’t take them detectives long to get on a guy’s trail. If you stick around where you been keepin’ yourself they’ll get you sure. That’s prob’ly the reason why this guy ain’t home. Give him time. He’ll settle with us.”

But the first man was impatient.

“We want our dough now!” he bawled. “We was supposed to have it at noon an’ he didn’t come. He owes us a good many bucks, and for the spark machine too. He was supposed to pay for that, you know.”

Bob and Joe looked at each other. The spark machine!

“That proves it!” Bob whispered, gritting his teeth. “They’re the fellows that set your dad’s garage on fire, all right! We’ll make them——”

“Shhh!”

“But listen, Tim,” one of the men was saying, “there ain’t any use to get hot-headed yet. I know this guy pretty well. I’ve done a lot for him and he’s done a lot for me. He’s never backed out on me yet. He’s got plenty of money, even if he is tryin’ hard to get more.

“Here’s what let’s do. Let’s give him till tomorrow night, and then if he don’t pay us we can go after him.”

“All right.” And the agreement was made.

Bob and Joe looked at each other. What were they to do now? They had secured evidence that these men were the guilty ones. Now would it be best to report the matter to the police at once, or had they better wait longer for any further information that the crooks might unknowingly give them?

“Let’s wait a few more minutes,” suggested Joe. “They might leave the house just as we made for our car, and then it would be too bad.”

Bob thought this good advice, and he leaned against the house to wait. Joe remained at the window.

For a minute there was silence inside. Then the man called Tim got up from his chair and started for the door.

"Where you goin'?" he was asked.

"Over to see if I can't collect that dough," he growled. "Anybody want ter go with me?"

"What's the use?" one fellow asked. "We was there not more than an hour ago."

"All right. Leave it to me."

He walked on toward the door.

"Come on," muttered Joe. "Let's get to our car before he gets away."

As hastily, yet as quietly, as possible the youths ran around the back of the house and through the alley for a distance of about a square. Then they turned out to the street and to their car.

Joe had the motor started just as the crook left the curb.

"Let's head him off," suggested Bob. "We can easily get there before he does if we cut across and not take the through street."

"Good idea," and the car was turned up a narrow cross street.

Before long the boys were in the neighborhood of the house occupied by that man who had indirectly set Mr. Lewis's garage on fire by hiring criminals experienced in that line to do it.

"Be careful and don't get too close," warned Joe, as they neared the structure.

"O. K. Let's go around the alley. We can park there for a few minutes and nobody will know anything about it."

The car was turned into the alley and parked almost directly behind the house. Then the youths got out to stretch their legs and decide on a plan of action.

"How will we work it?" asked Joe, glancing around to see if anyone happened to be watching them.

For a moment there was no answer. Then Bob had an idea.

"Let's walk up to the back door," he said. "There are a lot of trees and shrubbery close and we can hide behind them until we are sure that everything is all right."

Joe agreed, and they made their way as quietly as possible.

When close enough, they saw that the door was shut and the blinds were

drawn. It was evident that no one was at home.

Suddenly there came a noise from the front of the house and both boys concealed themselves behind a large clump of bushes.

“Someone’s coming around to the back door,” breathed Bob.

“Probably that’s Tim who came back here to collect the money owed him. The fellow we headed off, I mean. Yes, it’s he,” Joe observed, peeking down the side of the house.

The sound of footsteps grew louder, and the next minute the man stepped around the corner, fists clinched and face scowling.

“Come on,” said Bob, and leaving his place of hiding he launched himself with full force on the back of the crook.

CHAPTER IV

The Treacherous Crook

WITH an oath the man shook Bob off and turned to deal with him.

“You?” he growled in surprise. “You, little more than a kid, would dare to fight Tim Donnanahan? Why, I’ll——”

The sentence remained unfinished, for at that moment Bob’s fist shot out with lightning rapidity and caught the man squarely between the eyes. Without an outcry he went sprawling to the ground and rolled over.

For a second he remained dazed. Then he recovered himself and regained his feet.

Summoning all his power he lunged forward, mouth foaming and eyes glaring with rage.

It was easy to see that Bob was dealing with no weakling. His heaving chest was in itself a symbol of strength, as were also the powerful arms and heavy body. But then neither was Bob a weakling, as he had displayed so many times before. True he did not delight in fighting, but when called upon he was able to give a good account of himself. If the truth be known, he had not only won cups and letters in high school football and basketball, but in boxing as well. Joe was lighter and less robust, although by no means easy to knock out.

Now, as the young men faced this crook, there was a strong desire to win in their minds. Here was a chance—perhaps the only one they would have—to bring these men to justice for their cruel, underhanded way of getting even with Mr. Lewis for a trivial matter.

They possessed two fears. What if this fellow had a gun with him and thought nothing of using it? And what if the arch-crook would emerge from the house?

“If he only stays away,” thought Bob, as he cleverly ducked the large fist that came with all force.

For nearly five minutes the fight kept up, neither of the participants gaining anything.

Then suddenly the man swung around in an unguarded moment and sent his fist crashing into Bob’s jaw. Taken unawares, the youth went to the ground,

almost unconscious.

Grinning in triumph, the crook was reaching for a revolver when Joe leaped forward and threw him on his side. The impact hurled the gun several feet away, and both made for it.

But Bob was there first! He had struggled to his senses while Joe did his part to prevent calamity.

“Get back!” Bob commanded, flashing the automatic in the man’s face. “It’s all over now!”

For a moment the fellow could not believe that the tide had turned. He stared first at Bob and then at Joe, muttering to himself. Once he started forward, but, as the gun was pressed in his face, he shrank back, apparently giving himself over to any fate.

“Get goin’,” Joe commanded, advancing a step or two.

The order was obeyed, and they marched out to the alley, where Mr. Holton’s car remained, unmolested.

“Now,” said Bob, handing the key to Joe, “I’ll get in the back seat and guard this man, and you get in front and drive us to the police station.”

No conversation was carried on during the trip, for the boys resolved to take no chances.

“At any minute he might attempt a get-away,” thought Joe, as he increased the speed as much as was consistent with safety.

Through streets and side streets they went, until at last they found themselves near the city’s business district. It was thought best not to travel on the busy thoroughfares for fear of attracting attention.

After rounding a sharp corner, Joe found it necessary to stop quickly at a traffic signal.

Directly to the right was a horde of people, gathered to witness a ceremony of the Salvation Army. There were fully thirty in the crowd, and shrill notes of a trumpet attracted more spectators constantly.

Suddenly Bob and Joe were taken in total surprise. Their captive leaned out of the car window and, hailing the crowd of people, cried, “Help! A hold-up! Help!”

Immediately the people’s attention was attracted, and with wonder and curiosity they rushed toward the screaming man.

The two youths, because of the suddenness of the unexpected happening, could not immediately master the situation.

The crowd enfolded the car and rushed toward Bob and Joe, against whom the criminal had directed them.

“Well, of all the rotten experiences!” muttered Bob Holton, as a tall man grasped him by the arm none too gently. And upon glancing behind he saw that Joe, too, had been taken a mistaken prisoner.

So their captive had won out after all! Thus it seemed to the boys, but they clinched their fists, and Bob especially was determined not to be beaten so easily.

True they might wait and explain matters to the police, and if they did not believe, perhaps the judge would. But there was too much chance of losing, even though there was a possibility of winning.

The next instant they saw that it would be impossible to settle later, for the crook, deciding it best to take advantage of the situation, opened the door of the car, and with the words, “Arrest these fellows,” he ran down the street, leaving the crowd to stare in surprise and wonder.

Thinking it useless to explain to the people in time to recapture the man, Bob suddenly sent his fist crashing into the man who still had hold of his arm with such force that he went down in a dazed condition.

For a second the youth was free and, gathering courage, he broke through the mass of people and dashed down the street in pursuit of the escaped criminal, who could be seen some two blocks ahead.

“I ought to catch him after awhile,” the youth thought, as he noted that the man was rapidly losing ground.

Several more minutes brought pursuer and pursued to the Potomac River, and Bob feared that the man might attempt to swim across but was mistaken.

The youth was now close upon him, and when they came to a small clump of shrubbery, Bob resolved to end the chase.

“Here goes,” he thought, and, exerting himself to the utmost, he caught up and aimed his foot in the man’s path.

With an exclamation of rage the fellow went down head first in a clump of bushes.

Immediately he was up, and with a hoarse bellow he aimed a blow at his young enemy’s chin. But Bob dodged and with expert quickness sent his fist smashing into the man’s nose.

Stunned, dazed, bewildered at this youth’s daring, he again took flight, Bob at his heels.

Had the revolver not been taken from him by the crowd of people, Bob would have been tempted to open fire.

Suddenly a man appeared not far away, and Bob called to him for assistance. The stranger finally grasped the meaning, and not questioning the cause of the chase, started after the criminal from another direction.

“We’ve got him,” panted Bob, as he came within an arm’s reach. “It’s all over now.”

And so it was. With a terrific crack to the chin the youth sent his enemy to the ground unconscious.

“But what does this all mean?” demanded the stranger who had helped in the capture.

“He’s a criminal,” Bob answered. “Set a garage on fire. Tell you later if you’ll give me your name and address. Mine’s Bob Holton. I live at——Wait, here’s one of Dad’s cards.”

The stranger accepted the card and in turn gave his name and address, but it was evident that he was very much puzzled about the whole affair.

The criminal’s eyes were opening, and he squirmed about uneasily. At last he seemed fully revived and sat up.

“Where’s an officer?” Bob asked, looking about.

“Here,” came a shout, and the next moment a policeman stepped up, looked at the downed captive and then at Bob.

“Take this man to the police station,” the youth directed.

“You’re certain you’ve got the goods on him?”

“Yes. I’ll come along with you.”

Tim Donnanhan slowly responded to the officer’s command to “rise an’ get goin’,” and they started to a police telephone, where a call for a patrol wagon was to be made.

Meanwhile Joe, who was left behind in the car when Bob made his escape, had resolved to free himself if it were at all possible. He saw that it would be impossible to break away as his friend had done, for the crowd was all the more determined to bring him to justice as a “hold-up man,” which they didn’t doubt that he was. So the only thing left was to do his best to make them believe what he told them.

“I tell you it’s a mistake,” he pleaded. “This first fellow that got away is the guilty person. We caught him after he had set fire to my father’s garage. We were taking him to the police station when he pulled his gag about being held up. You

noticed he lost no time in getting away, didn't you? Would a man who wasn't guilty have done such a thing?"

His tones were so much in earnest that many of the people were inclined to believe him.

"He's telling the truth, all right," declared one man, nodding.

Several policemen now came up on motorcycles, and Joe again told his story.

"My friend is still after the crook down the street," he said, as finishing words.

"All right," one of the officers replied, as if he believed. "Suppose we go down the street and investigate. I'll get in the car with you."

Joe, glad of the chance to prove that he had told the truth, did as directed.

A little farther down they pulled up beside the crowd that had gathered at the spot where Bob had caught the criminal.

"There they are," pointed out Joe, as he saw his friend, a policeman, and Tim Donnanhan making their way to a telephone.

"Bob did get him," observed Joe, overwhelmed with joy.

The car was stopped beside them, and a short discussion was held.

Bob was asked to tell his story, and the policemen noted that it exactly coincided with that told by the other boy.

"Looks like a clear case on you," one of the officers said to Tim Donnanhan, but the man remained silent.

"I'll go with you fellows to the garage that burned," the other officer said to Bob and Joe. "And meanwhile," he went on, "we'll send police out to get those other crooks you were talking about."

Bob took the wheel, and in less than fifteen minutes they pulled up in front of Joe's house and got out.

Mr. Lewis and Mr. Holton came out to meet them.

"What's it all about?" the latter asked, as he noted the policeman.

"We've caught the fellows that set fire to Dad's garage," Joe answered, and then proceeded to tell of their experiences.

When he had finished, the men looked at their sons with intense admiration and praise. It was evident that the youths had gone beyond their expectations.

"It was a brave deed!" commended Joe's father, patting them on the back.

But Bob protested.

“We didn’t do much. Catching that fellow wasn’t so hard.”

“You got the whole gang indirectly,” corrected Mr. Lewis. “Now,” he continued, “you fellows are entitled to a reward. What would you like to have?”

“Nothing,” returned Bob. “It wasn’t worth much. We came out all right and had a lot of fun at that.”

“I won’t have it that way,” rejected Mr. Lewis. “You boys must have a reward for your services, and I’m going to see that you get it. What would you like?”

There was a short silence. Then Joe’s eyes twinkled, and he resolved to venture a bold question.

“Let us go with you on that trip you’re about to take to the wilds of Brazil,” he said quietly.

CHAPTER V

A Worth-while Offer

BOTH Mr. Lewis and Mr. Holton smiled. It was evident that they had not expected this.

“That’s the only thing that’ll satisfy you?” the former asked, his mind working rapidly.

The young men nodded.

“We’ll be careful and do all we can for the good of the expedition,” said Bob anxiously. “Please arrange to take us along.”

There was a period of suspense. Then the men looked at each other.

“What will we say?” Joe’s father asked, totally undecided.

Mr. Holton had been mentally debating the subject. Now he was ready for an answer.

“Let’s let them go,” he said. “They’re as big and strong as we and are usually equal to any crisis. You see what they did to this gang of men. Shows they are resourceful, and that’s what you have to be in a strange land where danger lurks at every step. In my opinion they’d be a valuable asset to the expedition.”

The youths looked at Mr. Holton gratefully. They felt that the battle was nearly half won.

For nearly a minute Mr. Lewis was silent. Then he spoke with decision.

“I think you’re right, Howard,” he said. “We’ll have a talk with their mothers this afternoon, and I am of the opinion that they’ll give their consent if we go at them right.”

“Fine!” cried Bob joyously. “Do your best to win them over. I think they’ll agree to let us go, especially since they have so much faith in you. But say! You haven’t told us who all intend to make up the expedition. There isn’t to be a large number, is there?”

“No,” Mr. Holton answered. “We only intended to have three, Mr. Lewis, an anthropologist, and myself, but if you boys accompany us the number will, of course, be raised to five. And perhaps,” he went on, “that would be better than to

have so few. You see it isn't like an expedition into Africa, where there are plenty of native carriers to bear your provisions. We'll have to rely more on our own resources and be extremely careful that we don't get lost. Several million square miles of jungle is a wide area to cut into, especially when so much of it is unexplored."

"Should think it would be great fun," commented Joe, mentally picturing the many thrills that promised to make the trip interesting.

"It will be," Mr. Holton returned. "But it will also have its dangers. These are mainly of human character. Why, it is said that there are tribes of Indians so uncivilized that they think nothing of——"

"Ahem!" Mr. Lewis cut in purposefully.

"What were you going to say?" Joe asked.

"Perhaps I'll tell you some other time," came the reply. "Right now I think I'll have a look at my firearms. In all probability they need oiling."

He left for the house, and the others remained for several minutes longer. Then Mr. Lewis departed also, leaving the youths to themselves.

"What do you suppose Dad was going to say—about the savages, I mean?" Bob asked, glancing around to make sure that the men were gone.

"Something that shouldn't go into our young ears," smiled Joe and then turned to the house.

As he did so he happened to glance out at the street, to see that two men were making their way up to the house. Each carried a small hand satchel. That they were strangers Joe guessed at once, although they might not be to his father and Mr. Holton.

Joe waited until the men were close and then turned to meet them.

"Naturalists by the names of Lewis and Holton," one man said. "Can we find them here?"

"Yes," Joe replied, wondering what was meant. "Come in the house and I'll call them."

The strangers did as directed, and Joe went around to find his father and Mr. Holton.

Bob took a chair on the porch.

Joe found the men cleaning their rifles. Neither could explain who the strangers were.

"Perhaps they're from the museum," said Bob's father, as he and Mr. Lewis left for the living room of the Lewis home.

During the discussion Bob and Joe remained on the porch, not wishing to intrude on the naturalists' private affairs. They were not there long, however, till Mr. Holton called them in with the others.

"Boys, this is Mr. Weslowe, and this, Mr. Duncan, both of the Neuman Film Corporation. The young man on my left is Joe Lewis; on my right, Bob Holton, my son."

After a few casual remarks, Mr. Holton proceeded to tell why the representatives from the film corporation were there.

"You see, they learned of our proposed expedition into the wilds of Brazil," he explained, "and they have come to make a business proposition. Suppose one of you continues," he ended, looking at the men, "for if these young men are to be a part of the expedition they should know about this."

"As you know, we are with the Neuman Film Corporation," Mr. Weslowe explained. "Now this house is always on the lookout for an opportunity to take motion pictures of little-known places, and here is certainly an opportunity. Unexplored Brazil! Ah! What a chance!"

"The minute Neuman learned of this expedition they lost no time in sending us out here to make an offer—one that we sincerely trust you will take up."

He stopped to open his satchel and get out a folded paper. Then he continued:

"We want you to take motion pictures of Brazil for our company. Will you do it?"

For a few seconds no one answered. Then Mr. Lewis leaned forward.

"Won't it be difficult?" he asked.

"On the contrary," Mr. Duncan returned. "Very simple. Hardly anything to it. We'll give you complete instructions and will not hold you strictly responsible for any lost film. In fact it nearly always happens that at least several score feet of film are lost on such an expedition, where wet and damp have so much to do with the success of the pictures taken."

"Of course," said Mr. Weslowe, "we realize that yours will be an expedition for the good of science, not to take moving pictures. It is for this reason that we will willingly place the responsibility, which isn't very much, in the hands of these young men here—your sons."

"Now this will not mean," he assured them, "that they must put in all their time for this cause. We only wish several scenes along the journey. For instance, you might start by taking a movie of Pará, or whatever other city you first reach. Then several hundred feet may be used along the mainstream of the Amazon,

showing the gradual progress of the expedition. When you turn onto a less-known river, that's when we want the real show to start. The country you'll pass through will be wilder, and the pictures will be more interesting. But once again let me assure you that the apparatus we'll furnish will be of the simplest design, and you need not worry about not meeting with success as far as that goes. And we'll pay you well for your trouble. Here's the contract. Read it over. See what you think of it."

He passed the paper to Mr. Holton, who shared the reading with Bob, Joe, and Mr. Lewis.

CHAPTER VI

Off for the Wilds of Brazil

“WELL?”

It was Mr. Weslowe's voice after the scientists and their sons had finished reading the contract.

Mr. Holton nodded.

“It's all right,” he declared. “Contains nothing whatever that would be objectionable.”

Mr. Lewis agreed.

“We'll leave the matter to the boys,” he said. “They'll be the ones who will have charge of taking the pictures. And let me say that you can rely on them.”

“You haven't said that we can go yet,” remarked Bob. “How about our mothers? Will they consent?”

“Yes,” Mr. Lewis answered. “They finally agreed. We were planning to make it a surprise later.”

“What!” cried Bob, while Joe gasped in astonishment.

“Fine!” blurted out Joe, after he had regained his breath. “We don't know how to thank you enough. And I'll be more than glad to accept this offer to take the movies. Bob will, too, I'm sure.”

“All right,” Mr. Weslowe said. “Here's a pen. You men, as the ones in charge of the expedition, must sign here.”

They did as directed, and then the representatives prepared to depart.

“The film, machine, and other equipment will be here inside of a week,” Mr. Duncan said. “And you'll find it as simple as we explained.”

Then they took their leave.

“A chance to make some money,” said Mr. Lewis to the youths, as they seated themselves on the porch awaiting the evening meal.

“Yes,” said Bob. “And I know we'll find it interesting.”

“What kind of a camera do you suppose they'll furnish?” Joe asked.

“Probably the small, simple kind that requires no tripod. All you do is press

a button and the film is automatically exposed. But you'll have to follow the instructions closely or the whole thing will be a total failure. And to a certain extent, Mr. Holton and I will be held responsible."

Practically all of the next day was spent in the business district purchasing various articles to be used on the coming great adventure. In the evening when they returned home they were satisfied with everything they had bought. Bob and Joe were especially delighted with the new rifles that their fathers presented them, for they were of the very latest design.

"I suppose they'll bring down anything," said Bob, in reference to the guns.

"Anything but elephants, rhinos, and the like that have extremely tough hides," his father answered. "You needn't fear them, though, for we won't come across them in South America."

"What is considered the most dangerous game of that continent?" asked Joe.

"The jaguar, generally," was the response. "He sometimes attains a length of nearly six feet and is extremely powerful. He has been known to attack a mustang, swim with it across a river, and place it in the thick bushes. Again he has been seen to open fish and heavy turtles with his powerful claws."

"Poisonous snakes are also dangerous," said Mr. Lewis, "although they seldom attack a man without first being disturbed."

"There's a remedy for every such bite, isn't there?" inquired Joe.

"Yes. That is, for nearly every one. The strange part of it is that one antidote may be totally ineffective against one kind of poison, while it has effect on another. You see there are several types or classes of venomous reptiles, and each has a different type of poison. Hence several antidotes have to be carried so as to take no chances."

"Anacondas are not poisonous, are they?" asked Joe.

"No," replied Mr. Holton. "They are constrictors, that kill their victims by crushing them to death. Another name for them is 'water boa,' because they are found near a stream or mud hole. You boys probably know that they are among the world's largest snakes, often being thirty feet in length and thicker than a man's leg. They are capable of crushing an ox to death, and often tear up small trees by the roots."

Joe shuddered.

"I don't think I'd care to meet one of them," he said. "Especially since I'm not an excellent shot like you and Dad."

“And Bob,” added Mr. Lewis. Really Bob was not far behind the naturalists in marksmanship.

After the preparations for the trip were fully completed, the youths and their fathers rested, for the coming venture was to be a tiresome one, and it was wholly unwise to use too much of their energy that was to be so much needed later.

Meanwhile reconstruction work was being done on Mr. Lewis’s garage, and the workmen promised to have the task completed in three days.

“Won’t have to worry about that,” Bob assured his chum’s father. “You can just take it easy until the time comes to leave for Brazil.”

Mr. Lewis nodded but found out later, as did Mr. Holton, that to rest was impossible, much as they would have liked to. Frequent trips to the museum had to be made, visits to various libraries were necessary, and they found at last that a journey to Baltimore was inevitable. As might be expected, they were greatly fatigued when, although every matter was settled, only two days remained before the long mission into the unknown.

That afternoon Professor Bigelow, a noted anthropologist who was to be a part of the expedition, arrived at Mr. Holton’s home, where he was to remain until the expedition would leave. He was a rather small man, with heavy gray hair and a swarthy complexion that the boys rightly guessed was due to his many missions into strange lands to study primitive people. He at once took a great liking to the youths, and together they discussed many strange happenings, which the professor related in breath-taking tales. He told of adventures in darkest Africa, where many little-known clans of natives were studied. He thrilled his listeners with stories of narrow escapes from the Dyaks of Borneo, of journeys into Ecuador to investigate the savage head-shrinkers, into India, Mongolia, Venezuela, islands of the South Seas, and many other strange places. Yes, it was a great life—that pursued by an anthropologist.

“Two more things I’d like to know,” said Bob, the next afternoon. “First, what food will we take along?”

“That is all arranged,” his father replied. “A company in New York packed our provisions in light tin containers that are airtight and will float on water. You don’t need to worry about our having enough, for we took into consideration the possibility of a long, unexpected delay. What’s your other question?”

“This: Where do we sail from, New York? And on what ship?”

Mr. Holton gasped in astonishment.

“What!” he cried. “You don’t know that yet? I thought we discussed that

matter several days ago.”

“If you did, I wasn’t there,” Bob returned, grinning. “We’ve been so busy with preparations that I haven’t given it a thought.”

“All right, I’ll tell you. We sail from New York on the steamer *Empire*, a vessel of ten thousand tons. It is scheduled to arrive in Macapá, which is several miles inland on the Amazon, in twelve days. Fairly good time, considering a stop at the West Indies.”

At frequent intervals Mrs. Holton and Mrs. Lewis expressed the desire for their sons to give up the thought of accompanying the expedition, but the boys did their best to convince their mothers that, while there were dangers attached, they were not as numerous as one might think.

“Come to think of it, you can’t blame them, though,” said Joe. “We’re rather inexperienced in the art of exploring.”

“We’ll come through all right,” Bob assured him. “Oh! How I wish the time would pass quicker!”

Despite Bob’s desire, the great day of leaving took its time in coming. But when it did arrive, everyone was in readiness.

“Weather’s cool and the sky’s clear,” observed Joe, as he and Bob lugged their belongings out to the front porch of Bob’s home, where the members of both households were to gather before the party would leave.

“Just the right temperature,” declared Mr. Holton, who had moved up in time to hear his son’s chum.

The train was to leave for New York at ten o’clock and the party barely had time to get breakfast and prepare themselves and their possessions, which, by the way, included the motion-picture cameras and several thousand feet of film, sent ahead by the Neuman Film Corporation.

Bob and Joe—and the others to a less degree—had studied the instructions on how to take motion pictures and felt that it would be an easy matter to carry them out.

Shortly after breakfast Mrs. Holton and Mrs. Lewis drove the family cars out in front, and the others carried out their belongings and got inside.

“The last we’ll see of good old Washington for several months to come,” sighed Joe, as he cast a final look at the homes they were leaving behind.

There were tears in the eyes of Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Holton as they gave the youths and their fathers a warm farewell. Professor Bigelow also took part in the leave-taking, for he was well liked by all. Bob’s smaller brother and Joe’s

sister gave tender good-byes, and with one last adieu the adventurers made their way down the platform and to the New York Limited.

CHAPTER VII

New York—And On

THE trip to New York, while interesting, was without incident, and they were glad to stretch their legs in the Pennsylvania Terminal, where hundreds of people from all parts of the country were assembled.

“Now what?” asked Joe, after a bountiful lunch.

“Better get to a hotel,” replied Mr. Holton, picking up his bags.

The party walked outside and hailed a taxi, the driver of which agreed to take them to a comfortable hotel near the waterfront.

“An outside room,” observed Bob, as he glanced at his ticket and followed the others to an elevator.

Their sleeping quarters were on the seventeenth floor, where a wonderful view of lower Manhattan and the waterfront could be had.

“Fairly high, but could be a lot higher,” observed Joe, as he gazed out at the scores of other tall buildings that were grouped about them.

“The trend is upward,” remarked Mr. Lewis. “Imagine how old New York will look fifty years from now, when there may be buildings two hundred stories high!”

“Suppose we go down and see how things look from the street,” suggested Mr. Holton. “Been a long time since we’ve been here.”

The remainder of that day was spent exploring Manhattan Island. They turned in early in the evening, for they were very tired.

“Tomorrow,” said Bob, as he threw himself on the bed, “we’ll see sights for sore eyes.”

And they did. The scene at the dock was one of absorbing interest to all, even as much as the men had witnessed it. Ships from all countries were anchored in dense rows, their crewmen busy loading and unloading cargoes. Boxes and bales were being piled in great stacks, awaiting transfer by motor truck. Passengers and spectators crowded closely around the sections where passenger liners were anchored.

“Here we are,” said Mr. Holton, pointing to a medium-sized ship between

two other smaller boats. “The *Empire*. Looks staunch enough.”

The others agreed and then made their way up the gangplank. A white-clad officer came out to meet them and upon receipt of their tickets directed them to their staterooms.

“Large and comfortable,” commented Bob, as he set down his baggage and looked about.

“All you could ask for,” said Joe, who was to share the room with his chum.

The youths spent several more minutes in examining the articles furnished them for the voyage. Then Bob turned toward the door.

“Let’s go out on deck,” he suggested. “It won’t be long until the ship lifts anchor.”

On deck they found everything in readiness for the voyage, and the scene of action below was interesting to the extreme. Crewmen hurried back and forth with ropes, boxes, bales, and other objects, intent upon a purpose. Visitors scurried off the ship and stood by to witness the leaving.

“Everyone probably wishes he were going with us,” said Bob, as the crowd grudgingly stepped back for the gangplank to be pulled in.

The next instant the long-drawn, deep whistle of the boat sounded, and with the ringing of gongs the engines started. A streak of foam arose between the hull and the dock, and the ship started moving.

“Good-bye, America!” shouted Joe, leaning far out over the rail.

“Yes,” affirmed Mr. Holton. “It’s the last we’ll see of good old New York for many weeks to come.”

Mr. Holton, Mr. Lewis, and Professor Bigelow turned and walked to the other end of the deck. Bob and Joe remained where they were.

Neither of the youths said anything, for they were busy with their thoughts.

Who knew what perils might befall them before they would again see that land they so dearly loved?

CHAPTER VIII

The Beginning of Trouble

BOB and Joe found the ocean voyage very interesting, for it was something new to them. The waves, sea gulls, flying fish, an occasional shark, the painted horizon, and the ship itself all held their undivided attention and made them thrill at the fact that they were living through an experience that only a comparative few had the opportunity of enjoying.

They spent much of their time on deck, enjoying the never-ending charm of the ocean. Thus far the weather had remained peaceable enough, and both boys expressed a desire for it to continue thus. They had never witnessed a hurricane, but had heard from their fathers of how destructive a tropical ocean storm could really be.

"The ship looks strong enough to come through safely," remarked Joe, as he cast eyes about the deck.

"Yes," his friend replied. "She's built on the stoutest possible lines."

Section by section the youths explored the *Empire* and were much impressed by everything they saw. They visited the various passenger quarters, the bridge, the enormous kitchens, the hold, and last and most interesting, the engine rooms, where mammoth turbines turned harmoniously and kept the ship at a smooth, even gait. The vessel interested them greatly, and while not built on the enormous proportions of the huge liners that sailed between American and European ports, it was large enough to keep the youths wondering.

"One of the many man-made wonders," said Bob, as he thought of how complex the engines were.

One of the things that impressed the boys most was the large supply of provisions that were taken along. There were literally tons of food, water, novelties, and other goods stored in great rooms, and every bit was to be used on this one voyage. Artificial refrigeration kept perishable food fresh and wholesome.

Early the next day Bob and Joe showed their first signs of seasickness. They had been standing at the rail watching the rolling of the waves and were growing rather tired when Joe turned about, his face pale and of a yellowish

color.

"I think I'll go to my berth," he said, his voice unsteady.

"What's the matter? You——"

"It came at last," smiled Mr. Lewis, who had moved up to the youths. "I seldom knew it to fail. Seasickness is almost sure to be felt on the first voyage one takes. Bob, I'm betting that before two hours will have passed you'll be as bad off as Joe. Of course," he went on in a tone that he tried to keep serious, "let's hope you'll have better luck, but the chances are against you."

Mr. Lewis's prophecy proved correct. In fact it was less than one hour later that big Bob, after heroically postponing the dreaded seasickness as long as he possibly could, turned and went to his berth to join his stricken comrade.

"Too bad," remarked Mr. Holton, closing the door of the stateroom after cautiously peeping in. "Perhaps their next voyage—if they take any more—will be free from unpleasantness."

Throughout the remainder of that day the boys' condition remained unchanged. If anything, they were worse off than before, and neither would look at a bite of food of any kind.

"This is terrible," moaned Joe to his father, the professor, and Mr. Holton, who went in to see how the youths were.

"Cheer up," Mr. Holton said in lively tones. "You can surely stand a couple of more days."

He was right. It was two days later when the boys began to show signs of recovery. Then only very slowly did they resume their natural cheerfulness.

"Too bad we had to miss so much," mourned Bob. "But I'll admit there wasn't much to see."

"Nothing but water," said Joe and then turned to go into the cabin. As he did so he happened to glance down at the stern and pointed for Bob to follow his gaze.

Leaning against the rail were the boys' fathers conversing with an elderly bearded man, with a uniform that distinguished him as the ship's captain. He seemed good-natured and humorous, for occasionally he would cause the men to laugh so hard that they would have to grip the rail to maintain their balance.

"Come over, boys," Mr. Holton said, glancing up.

They did so.

"This," he continued, "is Captain Crowell, chief officer of the *Empire*. Captain, this is Joe Lewis, and this, Bob Holton, the young men we were telling

you about. What do you think of them?"

The old officer spent nearly a minute in looking the boys over. Then he turned to the naturalists.

"Spirited-looking chaps," he grinned. "Look as if they'd like to deprive Brazil of every bit of animal life in it. Better not let them have a rifle. The jaguars will all make for cover."

"Roasting us, are you?" retorted Bob.

"No. What creature, no matter how fierce, wouldn't be afraid of two mates who captured a gang of desperate criminals all by themselves? You don't need to worry about these fellows," he said to their fathers. "They'll take care of themselves and you, too, perhaps."

Bob and Joe took a liking to the old seaman and intended to discuss many problems with him in the future.

"Maybe he can suggest something to do to while the time away," said Bob the next day, when Captain Crowell was again referred to.

"That reminds me," the other youth blurted out. "There's a swimming pool in the second deck. Let's go up."

Bob readily agreed, and they were soon floating calmly about.

"We'd better get as much out of this as we can," remarked Joe. "There won't be a chance to enjoy this sport in Brazilian waters."

"No," put in Bob. "The alligators and piranhas and other dangerous forms won't give us a chance to even wade."

The youths were not the only ones to invade the swimming pool, however. As they neared the tropics, and the temperature steadily went up, people from all over the ship enjoyed its cool retreat, the pool becoming almost crowded. It was great fun. Nothing to do but just splash about.

Games also held the boys' attention. Shuffleboard, quoits, deck tennis, horseshoes, and other activities played an important part in the daily life, and in times when they desired more quiet entertainment, the library, with its scores of books of all types, afforded interesting occupation.

Many leisure hours were spent conversing with Captain Crowell, who always had a humorous tale to tell. On one occasion, when they had been at sea nearly a week, Bob and Joe happened upon him standing at the rail, gazing up at the sky, on his face a worried expression.

"Big storm coming," he said, after the salutation.

"A storm!" cried Joe and then looked upward.

Sure enough, clouds were banking heavily, and the sun was nowhere in sight. A stiff breeze had arisen, and with this came the smell of rain.

An officer came up and handed a slip of paper to the captain. He read it, and then, with a parting word for Bob and Joe, he turned and went toward the bridge.

The boys looked at each other. Were things going to turn out for the worse? Surely something serious was wrong, or the captain would never have acted in such manner.

“Getting darker,” Bob said, as he noted that the clouds were joining.

“Won’t be long before it’ll rain,” prophesied Joe, and he was correct, for it was less than ten minutes later that a heavy drizzle fell, forcing the chums into the cabin.

There they turned and looked out at the sea, which was rapidly getting higher. The wind was blowing fiercely, its velocity increasing with each minute.

“Well, boys, what do you think of it?”

It was Mr. Holton’s voice. He and his two companions had moved up to the glass, as had a number of other people.

“Suppose you answer that question,” replied Bob. “You’re in a better position to know than we are.”

“I believe we’re in for a bad one,” was the opinion voiced by Professor Bigelow. “But how long it will last is hard to say.”

Mr. Lewis nodded. “Tropical hurricanes are very uncertain,” he said. “Sometimes they last only a few hours, while at other times they keep up for two and three days.”

The boat was now rocking violently, and many people had difficulty in keeping their footing. Bob and Joe took chairs that were fastened securely to the floor. They intended to remain awake all night if the storm did not subside.

But exhaustion was stronger than their intentions, and finally they stumbled to their stateroom, ready for a night’s rest.

“Storm or no storm, I’m going to turn in,” Bob said, and then lost his footing and went sprawling to the floor, with Joe on top of him. The ship had suddenly tilted as she struck a mountainous wave.

“Wow!” cried Joe, gripping a water pipe and righting himself. “Better hold tight from now on or we’re likely to get a bad spill.”

By almost a miracle the youths undressed. Then they tumbled into their berths, to go to sleep at once.

About midnight they were awakened by a shrill, long-drawn whistle, and all the sleep knocked out of them, they were on their feet in an instant wondering what was meant by that unusual sound in the dark of the night.

CHAPTER IX

A Daring Rescue

“WHAT is it?” asked Joe, as he hurriedly slipped on his clothing.

“Beyond me,” Bob answered. “Come on. Let’s go out on deck. We may be able to find out.”

The ship was rocking terribly, and the boys found it difficult to keep their footing. But they finally managed to catch hold of a rail, and from then on it was easier.

Several other passengers were up also, intent upon investigating the strange whistle.

“Maybe the boat’s sinking,” suggested Joe.

Bob shook his head.

“Probably isn’t that. At least let’s hope not.”

With beating hearts the youths came up to the glass and turned to look out at the angry sea. Then their expression changed.

A short distance from the *Empire* was a small fishing schooner, its prow out of sight in the water. On the stern stood a score or more men, waving their arms frantically. It was evident that they were panic-stricken, for several of them occasionally shouted for help. The little boat tossed about violently on the crest of the mountainous waves, her front deck gradually fading from view. Every minute it seemed that the end would come.

“It’s sinking fast!” cried Joe. “Why don’t some of our crew do something?”

“They are. Look.”

Farther up on the *Empire*’s deck fifteen or twenty men, under the direction of officers, were busy lowering lifeboats, although it looked out of reason to let them down on that sea.

Suddenly Bob turned and started toward his berth.

“Where you going?” Joe asked.

“To get the motion-picture camera. Here’ll be a good chance to take some pictures. There’s plenty of light around here.”

The next moment he was gone, and Joe turned to the deck.

The roar of the storm was deafening, and the wind howled ruefully through the funnels and masts. It was as though the end of the world were coming.

In less than five minutes two lifeboats were lowered, four or five men in each one. Then slowly they made their way toward the doomed schooner.

Bob now returned with the movie camera and cranked away, delighted to get an opportunity to film such an unusual happening.

The boys, however, were not the only ones to watch the daring attempt at rescue. In fact the glass was now crowded with people, and Mr. Holton, Mr. Lewis, and Professor Bigelow came up and wormed their way to their companions.

“Most thrilling thing I ever saw!” exclaimed Mr. Holton, as he breathlessly directed his gaze at the puny boats, which wallowed heavily and threatened to be swamped at every moment.

On and on went the rescue boats, their occupants bailing furiously. Now and then they threatened to capsize but always righted themselves.

In what seemed to be a long period of suspense to the spectators, the *Empire*’s crew reached the fishing schooner, which was now far under water.

One by one the fishermen climbed into the lifeboats, although it was necessary to give sharp commands to prevent disorder.

When the last of the men from the doomed boat stepped into the lifeboats, the officer in charge gave the word, and they started back to the *Empire*.

The return trip threatened to be more perilous, for the boats were very low in the water with the added load. Hurriedly the oarsmen set to work, so that they might be a good distance from the schooner when it sank, for a whirlpool would be created, meaning certain disaster to all around it.

Once a giant wave passed over the little boats and they disappeared from view, amid gasps from the spectators. But the danger was soon over, and the lifeboats emerged unharmed, the crewmen bailing rapidly.

They were barely at the *Empire*’s side when the schooner sank. With a last look at the scene of disaster, the fishermen boarded the ship. They were water-soaked and shivering with cold, but were too glad that they had been saved from the hungry depths of the sea to make any complaints.

“They’re Portuguese,” observed Professor Bigelow, as the fishermen came nearer.

The men muttered several words of thanks to the *Empire*’s crew, but it was clear that few understood them. Professor Bigelow, however, picked up the

meaning at once and translated to his companions. Mr. Holton and Mr. Lewis had a slight knowledge of that language, but could not keep up with the excited men.

“The captain says it’s too bad they had to lose the schooner,” Professor Bigelow said. “He said they did their best to save it from going down, but had to give up. They did not intend to be this far at sea, but the storm gave them no chance of turning back.”

In a short time the excitement was over, and most of the passengers again retired, for the next morning they were to sight the West Indies.

Bob was overjoyed at the success he had had in taking the movies of the rescue and knew they would be a hit with the Neuman Film Corporation. They were the first of any importance that had been taken on the ship, and, as Joe said, a little action now and then does a lot to liven up a thing.

The next morning the storm had completely subsided, and true to schedule the *Empire* sighted Porto Rico. There was a scramble of passengers who had reached their destination.

“Probably think they’ll be carried on,” smiled Bob, as a rather nervous man fled down the stairs.

At first the shoreline was so dim as to be hardly distinguishable from the low clouds, but it gradually grew more plain. At last trees and houses could be made out, and then the skyline of San Juan loomed up in the distance.

“Looks like a city,” remarked Joe.

“It is,” his father replied. “Has over eighty-five thousand inhabitants.”

“Will we have time to go ashore?” asked Bob.

“Yes. The ship remains in port for about three hours,” Mr. Holton answered.

As the *Empire* approached the city, she backed her engines and moved slowly into port, where a small crowd of people were massed to give greeting.

Several other boats, large and small, were anchored at the busy docks, and the *Empire* steamed in between two freighters, one of which was being loaded with sugar.

“Sugar is one of the principal exports,” explained Professor Bigelow, as the exploration party prepared to leave the ship on a tour of the city.

As soon as they were in port, the gangplank was lowered. The adventurers made their way down, among a score of other passengers, many of whom were to leave the ship here.

Bob and Joe were at once impressed by the native residents, for there was a

great variety of races. Spaniards were the most numerous, but there were also Negroes, mulattoes, French, Americans, and a small sprinkling of Indians.

“Quite a variety,” commented Joe. “Though it is possible to see this very thing in parts of New York.”

The explorers found that it would be comparatively easy to walk to various places of interest, and, after passing the former governor-general’s palace, they resolved to take in as much of the city as they could in two hours.

They found that the city was built on Morro Island, although the mainland could be easily reached by the numerous bridges. The streets were regularly laid out, and in the white quarters the residences were rather attractive.

“Doesn’t look much like America, though,” said Joe.

The exploration party reached the *Empire* with thirty minutes to spare, and they took chairs on deck to watch the busy dock below.

All too soon the whistle of leaving blew, and visitors scrambled down the gangplank. Then, with one long blast the ship slowly steamed out to sea, leaving Porto Rico behind.

At last they were on the final stretch. There would be no more stops till they reached South America. Then only short stays at Paramaribo and Cayenne, which were important seaport cities about two hundred miles apart.

“How long will it be until we again see land?” asked Bob, as he and the others sat on deck.

“Two days,” replied his father. “No doubt that they’ll seem like a long time, too.”

And they did. Bob and Joe were no more vexed than the others, however, for the men were also anxious to get started into the unknown. But when at last they did sight South America they forgot the past and looked into the future.

The boys, with their cameras in hand, were the first to reach the prow. They were closely followed by their fathers and the professor, who also crowded in for a first view.

At first, land was only a speck far out on the horizon. Then only gradually did it take on form and color.

“We’re nearing Paramaribo,” pronounced Mr. Holton, as he made out the outline of the city.

“What country is it in?” asked Joe.

“Dutch Guiana,” the professor answered. “One of the smallest nations in South America.”

The *Empire* steamed into a port nearly as busy as that of San Juan, although most of the boats were small.

For a second time the gangplank was lowered, and as the explorers had a half-hour to spare, they started on a short walking trip of the city.

“Quite a bit different from San Juan,” said Bob, as he noted that many of the people were native Indians.

The others nodded. None of them had been here before, and they naturally took a great interest in these unusual surroundings. In fact Professor Bigelow was the only one who had ever seen South America before, but this did not lessen his enthusiasm.

The streets were, for the most part, narrow and straight, cutting one another at right angles. The party was surprised to find the houses extremely low, hardly any of them exceeding two stories. Some were built of brick, but most were of cane plastered with mud.

Several minutes were spent in rambling over the various quarters of the city. Then they went back to the ship, which was now nearly ready to sail.

“South America is all right to visit,” remarked Joe, “but I don’t think I’d care to live here.”

The others agreed with him.

“And yet,” said Professor Bigelow, “there are a number of cities that are very well developed. Take Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, for instance. They are large, clean, and well kept. A street in Buenos Aires looks very much like a street in the United States.”

Soon the *Empire* was off, having unloaded a large cargo of American goods. Several passengers also took their leave here.

From then on the scientific party was restless and eager to get started into the unknown. As one nears his goal, he nearly always finds it hard to wait through the last few stretches. Bob and Joe especially were excited, for it was their first adventure. Their hearts throbbed as they eagerly anticipated the coming days.

That evening they arrived in Cayenne, the capital of French Guiana, and, as before, took a short trip about the city. It was much the same as Paramaribo, however, and they were glad to board the *Empire* again for the last leg of the long journey.

It was about six hundred miles to Macapá, the *Empire*’s destination, and the party settled back in anticipation.

Neither of the boys did anything of importance. They were too enthusiastic over the coming great adventure.

“Let’s take it easy on deck,” suggested Bob, and they arranged chairs for all of the party that cared to rest.

“There’s nothing like enjoying the spell of the ocean,” remarked Mr. Holton.

A few days later Captain Crowell announced that they were sailing up the mighty Amazon, and the explorers were thrilled to the bone. The Amazon! At last one of their strongest ambitions had been fulfilled. Bob and Joe were overjoyous, for they had had a strong desire to see this great water system.

“Doesn’t look like a river to me,” said Joe as he tried in vain to see the shore.

“Over a hundred miles wide at the delta,” said Bob. “It’s the greatest river system in the world.”

For several hours they steamed on up the great river, past small settlements, plantations, and green islands. Occasionally they would get a glimpse of beautiful wild vegetation, and their hearts would beat fast. Then, almost without knowing it, they came to Macapá.

There was a fairly good port, and the vessel took her place between two small river steamers. The long ocean voyage had come to an end.

CHAPTER X

In the Heart of the Jungle

“**N**OW what?” asked Joe, as the party passed on down the gangplank.

“Better get our belongings together first,” said Mr. Lewis. “Then we can make inquiries about the leaving of a boat that’ll take us to our destination.”

“But what about finding a place to stay overnight?” asked the professor.

“You needn’t worry about that.”

All looked around, to see that Captain Crowell had moved up behind them.

“I heard what you said,” he remarked. “And let me say that you are welcome to your berths on the *Empire* until we leave for New York. That may be tomorrow, or it may be the next day. Go on up and make yourselves at home.”

The party accepted the invitation with warm thanks. Then they moved on up to the boat.

“Pretty soft,” smiled Bob, as they sat on deck. “We might have hunted for hours before finding rooms.”

It was late that night when the party retired, but all slept well and awoke the next morning ready for any plans that might be made.

After breakfast Mr. Lewis and Mr. Holton left for the dock, where they would make inquiries about the leaving of a boat for farther upstream. Bob and Joe followed a road out of town to see the country.

They hiked for perhaps two miles, looking sharply about. Then, as there was not much new to see, they turned and went back to town, desirous of finding out what information, if any, their fathers had gained about the leaving of a boat.

By luck the boys met their fathers in the main street, and there were smiles on the men’s faces.

“Pat us on the back,” smiled Mr. Holton, so overjoyed that he could hardly keep his composure.

“What!” cried Bob. “You’ve found a boat so soon?”

The naturalists nodded.

“By chance we met the captain of a small freight vessel that happens to be going up the Purús to Acre, on the Bolivian frontier,” said Mr. Holton. “Sheer

luck, I call it. Any other time it would have been necessary to wait three or four weeks before finding such an opportunity. Of course we wouldn't have waited that long, though. We would have found it necessary to take two boats, one to Manáos, and one on up the Purús. But the way things are now—" he smiled broadly—"we're all set for a pleasant voyage, with no stops till we reach our destination."

"When does the boat leave?" inquired Joe.

"In less than three hours," his father answered. "That means we'll have to hurry and get packed."

They walked on down the dock to the *Empire* and found Professor Bigelow in the library. He looked up smilingly and placed his book back on the shelf.

"What did you find?" he asked.

Mr. Holton told of obtaining passage on the boat to the Purús, and the anthropologist was delighted beyond words. The delay was maddening to him, even though he was able to keep his time occupied.

It did not take the party long to get their possessions together, and after locating Captain Crowell and thanking him for the use of the berths, they left for the newly chartered boat, which was anchored farther down the pier.

"Small but staunch-looking," commented Bob, as they came to it.

"Built on rather speedy lines, too," added Mr. Lewis.

They lugged their baggage up on deck, to be met by the burly captain, who in his rough attire was a strange contrast to Captain Crowell. He was good-natured, however, and readily showed the explorers to their sleeping quarters.

"Hope you have a jolly voyage," he boomed, leaving for the cabin.

"I told you boys wrong when I said we don't stop till we get to our destination," Mr. Holton corrected himself, as the party started out to the rail. "The boat stops at Manáos, but only for a couple of hours. We'll have time to go about the city."

A little later the boat's whistle sounded, and then came the faint chugging of the engines.

"We're off!" cried Joe excitedly. "Off on the last stretch of our journey."

Soon the waterfront of Macapá was left behind, and the *Selvas*, for that was the vessel's name, steamed out to the middle of the mighty Amazon.

The explorers did not move from deck until one of the crew announced that the noon meal was ready.

"Wonder what we'll have to eat?" asked Joe, as they went into the dining

room.

“Probably salt pork and a few other dishes of cured food,” returned Mr. Lewis, and he was right.

“It’s all right for a change, anyway,” said Bob.

The boys spent the remainder of that day in exploring the boat and were impressed by everything they saw. Aside from the fact that it was rather old, it was worthy of the great river on which it steamed.

“Let’s hear something about Manáos,” Bob said to his father that night. “If we are to see it soon, I’d like to know what to expect.”

“It’s a wonderful city,” Mr. Holton replied. “Large stores, office buildings, hotels. If what I’ve heard is correct, we will be astonished.”

And they *were* astonished. In fact, when they pulled into the busy port, the boys’ eyes almost popped from their heads. Even after hearing about Manáos from their fathers, they could not believe that they would find anything like this away out in the heart of the vast wilderness.

“Has a rather impressive skyline,” observed Joe, gazing ahead at the outlines of the hotels and office buildings.

“Many of the structures are new,” put in Professor Bigelow. “The city’s growth has been rather rapid. But now,” he went on, “suppose we get off the boat and take a short trip about town.”

The adventurers easily procured a map of the city. Then they boarded a street car for a ride down the principal business street.

“Modern is right,” commented Bob, gazing out at the large buildings, hotels, theaters, and stores.

They passed many points of interest, including the Theatre of Manáos, the many parks and gardens, schools and colleges, and monuments and statues. And to cap all this, they spent several minutes in one of the most complete museums they had ever been in.

“Truly a great city in the heart of the forest,” said Mr. Holton, as they prepared to board the boat for the continuation of the journey.

They got to the *Selvas* with barely five minutes to spare. Already the crew were making ready for the long voyage that was to follow.

Shortly later they were again in the midst of the forest, after having left Manáos behind.

“I see we’re not the only passengers on the boat,” said Professor Bigelow, glancing across at two men who sat near the stern.

“Probably they’re rubber gatherers who have a plantation farther down,” was the opinion voiced by Mr. Lewis, and his guess was right, as they later found out when an acquaintance sprang up between the Brazilians and the Americans.

That acquaintance was delightful and tended to relieve the monotony of the trip. The men, Acmio and Piemo by name, took a liking to the explorers and told of many strange sights of the jungle. They knew nothing, however, of the region the expedition was going to penetrate.

“I bet we won’t find anything, either,” said Joe. “No one seems to have been far in the interior.”

At last the *Selvas* came to the Purús River, and down this it steamed.

“Considerably narrower than the Amazon,” observed Bob. “But at that it’s a good many rods across.”

“The Purús is noted for its crooked course,” remarked Professor Bigelow. “The sand bars occur with such regularity that the natives reckon distances by counting the number of them.”

At this time of year the water was rather high, for the rainy season was barely over.

They steamed on for the greater part of that day before coming to a settlement, and this was small and crude. They did not stop, although several men came out to greet them.

As they steamed farther, the river became more crooked. In fact it was often impossible to see more than three hundred feet ahead. And as they penetrated deeper into the jungle, vegetation became more dense. Great clusters of bright-colored flowers lined the banks, tall trees showed themselves above the other growth, parasitic vines wound themselves around forest giants. Ferns, high grass, small bushes, oddly shaped stalks—all these caught the eyes of the explorers.

After a long journey they reached the mouth of the Tapauá, and at a small town between the two rivers the boat stopped. Here the adventurers got off.

It seemed strange to set foot on ground out here away from civilization. Why, it was almost like another world! For some time Bob and Joe could not realize that they were now in the very heart of the great Amazon jungle.

The captain of the *Selvas* had given the party a letter of recommendation to a Brazilian who would be able to fit them out with boats and Indian crew. He lived at the edge of the town, and to that place they went, led by Mr. Holton.

They found the man sitting idly in his thatched house. He was very tall and slender, but looked to be possessed of great strength.

“You are Senhor del Pereo?” asked Mr. Holton in the native tongue.

“*Sí*,” the man replied.

Bob’s father took out the letter and handed it to him.

He read carefully for several moments. Then his face lighted.

Sure he would help them. Anyone who was a friend of the captain was a friend of his. It would be easy to get a boat—or boats, for that matter—and he knew of several trustworthy Indians who would readily act as guides. But he knew nothing about the distant country. Few people did. It was a land of mystery.

Mr. Holton translated to Bob and Joe. Then he again turned to the Brazilian.

“You will lead us to the boats and guides now?”

“Yes.”

They started out, the Brazilian in the van.

He led them around the village to a large native hut, in front of which sat several semi-naked Indians. They were on their feet in an instant when they caught sight of Senhor del Pereo, and with friendly greetings listened to what he had to say.

For several minutes he conversed with them in their native tongue, and in the end they nodded in acceptance.

“They will go,” he said to the explorers. “They will be your guides in an unknown country.”

CHAPTER XI

On the Alert

“Now the next thing is to get boats,” said Mr. Holton.

Senhor del Pereio announced that it would be possible to get them at once, without having to have them constructed, and the explorers were delighted.

He led them down to the river bank, where two large canoes were aground. Each was about thirty-five feet long and capable of carrying a ton and a half of cargo with ease. Mr. Holton and Mr. Lewis were amazed.

“They are not native canoes,” Mr. Lewis said, as he noted the deep, full lines and high freeboard.

The Brazilian explained that they had been used by a party of British hunters on the Purús River, and were purchased when the men were through with them for a small sum.

“Got it all over Indian boats,” remarked Bob, glancing farther down at several that were moored.

The Indians had accompanied them to the boats, and now Senhor del Pereio introduced the ones who were to be a part of the expedition. There were six of them—three to attend to each boat. All were large, strong fellows, capable of any kind of work required by the venture, and the Brazilian assured the explorers that they could be relied upon.

After attending to a few more matters with Senhor del Pereio, the party set about loading their provisions and supplies in one of the boats; the other was to be used as a storeplace for the specimens they would collect.

Bob and Joe did a good share of the work. Then occasionally they would take motion pictures.

When the last box was lifted up, Mr. Holton gave the sign, and, with parting words with the Brazilian who had done so much for them, they got in the foremost canoe and were paddled upstream by the crew. At last they were off for the unknown.

“Now for the fun,” smiled Joe, as he cranked the movie camera and looked expectantly into the green depths of the bordering jungle.

“I suppose you’re referring to hunting,” said Mr. Lewis. “Well, we’ll do plenty of that a little later. But first we want to penetrate a large distance from any outposts of civilization.”

At the start, the river was rather wide, but it promised to narrow later.

They glided swiftly on for perhaps three hours. Then Mr. Lewis suggested that they stop for the noon meal. Meanwhile, the crew could be resting.

The boats were brought to a stop at a large sand bank, and all climbed out to stretch their legs after such a long journey in more or less one position. Bob and Joe felt like running and shouting.

“Like to go in for a swim,” said Bob, wiping the perspiration from his streaming brow.

“So would everyone else,” returned Mr. Lewis. “But with the alligators and piranhas and other dangerous aquatic forms it’s absurd even to think of such a thing.”

“Are they this close to the Purús?” asked Joe. “I thought they were found deeper in the jungle.”

Mr. Holton shook his head.

“Piranhas and alligators are very common all through this region,” he said.

Mr. Holton and Mr. Lewis got out a ration of food, while Bob and Joe attended to minor tasks. Professor Bigelow looked after the plates and utensils.

In a short time the meal was prepared, and all ate in quiet contentment. The food tasted good after those three long hours of constant traveling.

Bob and Joe glanced at the frowning jungle, which was but a short distance away. It seemed to challenge the explorers to penetrate its leafy depths, although in many places this was almost impossible.

“Quite a variety of trees,” observed Bob, his eye scanning the edge. “I suppose there are hundreds of different kinds.”

“There are,” answered Professor Bigelow. “All different kinds, from mahogany to bacaba palms. Much of the wood is worthlessly soft and useless, but mahogany and a few others are shipped to all parts of the world. There would be a much greater amount sent out, though, if it were all buoyant. The fact that many of the logs are not prevents them from being floated downstream.”

The explorers spent several minutes in the shade of a large tree, talking and chatting merrily. Then the professor suggested that they move on, and the others were more than glad to do so.

“You’re right,” Mr. Lewis told the professor. “We want to cover as much

ground as possible today.”

The provisions were packed in the boat. They then boarded, to be paddled upstream by the Indians.

There was plenty of room to move about, and the youths shifted their positions frequently. Not because they grew tired of the scenery, however, for at every yard there was something new to see. Bright-colored flowers lined the banks, red-leafed bushes were common, tall palms, grotesque vines, ferns, plants of all kinds that baffled the boys. Occasionally they would pass dead branches covered with living orchids. Then again there were trees that themselves had flowers. Once they came to a tree over fifty feet high with wide, spreading branches that were covered with yellow blossoms.

Often the river would bend sharply, making necessary utmost caution by the crew. On one such occasion the explorers were engaged in conversation when suddenly a loud splash from ahead made them look up. Then, as they rounded the bend, they saw something that made them jump to their feet and grasp their rifles.

CHAPTER XII

A Fearful Sight

ON the bank not far away were at least fifteen large alligators, their hideous jaws partly open as they basked in the hot sun. Frequently one would plunge into the water to cool itself, and then there would be a terrific splashing about.

As soon as possible, the Indians stopped the boats, and the explorers viewed the creatures with a terrible awe. Here was their first encounter with the wild life of Brazil. Here, not far away, were some of the most terrible reptiles of South America.

For some time the alligators did not seem to notice the human invaders. Then they one by one crawled off the bank and sank a few inches beneath the water.

“Evidently don’t care for our company,” said Joe in a low tone. He had brought the movie camera to his shoulder and was taking in the unusual sight.

It was thought best not shoot any of the reptiles for fear of causing an undue commotion. Then, too, it would prove difficult to get the victims in the boat with so many others around.

In a short time no traces of the creatures were left, and the Indians again turned to the paddles.

“Is it safe to go on?” asked Joe.

“Yes,” the professor replied. “They probably won’t attack the boats. And if they should they could do little or no damage to the stout hulls.”

For a few seconds he conversed with the Indians. Then the party resumed the journey, keeping a close watch about.

No more was seen of the alligators, and the explorers again were quiet. But now they were more anxious than ever before, for the past experience had stirred their sporting blood and made them long for a jaunt in the forest. Even Professor Bigelow was affected, and he sat fingering his rifle as if awaiting another such incident.

“Alligators and crocodiles are very much alike,” said Mr. Lewis, wishing to break the silence. “The only difference is in the canine teeth. In the alligator they fit into pits in the upper jaw; in the crocodile they fit into notches. Otherwise

they look alike.”

“Which is the most ferocious?” inquired Joe, thoroughly interested.

“Scarcely any difference,” his father returned. “Both are bad enough when they’re after you.”

For a time the adventurers paddled near the center of the river, in order to avoid heavy piles of brush that lay near the shore’s edge. They did not feel like talking. The mid-afternoon sun beat down upon them until they were dripping with perspiration. Why, even summer Florida weather was nothing to this!

The water glistened like silver. It was almost impossible even to cast eyes upon it, for the reflection of the sun was extremely blinding.

For entertainment and amusement the boys’ fathers and Professor Bigelow related some of their experiences, which Bob and Joe never grew tired of hearing. The naturalists told of encounters with wild animals; the professor, of savage people. Bob and Joe sat in silence, marveling that before long they could tell of happenings probably as much or more breath-taking.

Suddenly, as they neared a patch of bright red bushes, Mr. Holton called to the Indians to stop the boat.

“What is it?” asked Bob, and then his gaze followed that of his father.

Not far away on a low branch was a large oriole, almost the size of a crow, with a red and white bill, and yellow, green, and brown plumage. It uttered not a word, although no one doubted that it could.

“We must have that bird,” whispered Mr. Holton. “It is rather rare, and few of them are in museums. Keep quiet now, while I get a small gun.”

The others obeyed. The naturalist found a suitable shotgun. He raised it to his shoulder, took careful aim, and pulled the trigger.

The next moment there was a terrible screeching and wailing. The bird fluttered about for a brief second, then fell into the water.

“You got him,” said Bob joyously. “You——Well, of all things!”

The reason for his exclamation was not far to seek. No sooner had the bird struck the water than a rather small fish darted to the surface, caught the bird by the breast, and bit it in two. It evidently did not like the taste, however, for the remains of the bird’s body were left to float on the water.

“Stung!” exclaimed Mr. Holton, regaining his breath. “The piranhas spoiled the chance of getting that specimen.”

“So that fish was a piranha?” asked Joe, looking to see if he could locate it in the dark water.

“Yes,” Mr. Lewis returned. “They’re mean creatures, all right. Got a temper like a bull. They’ll attack anything from jaguars to people, and they usually do the job right. I once heard of a man devoured by them in a very short time.”

“It wasn’t very large,” said Bob. “Looked about like a pickerel to me.”

“It isn’t their size,” his father returned. “It’s their ferocity—and strong, sharp teeth.”

“Let’s don’t worry about the bird,” consoled the professor. “We’ll probably see more of them later on.”

The naturalists resolved to follow the professor’s advice and regard the matter as one of the many discouragements that could be expected at almost any time.

“After all, we didn’t lose much,” said Mr. Lewis. “But then—but then——”

As they paddled on, signs of life became more frequent. Once there was a small flock of bright red birds, and the naturalists had more luck in bringing them in as specimens. None was shot near the river; only those on shore were aimed at. A little later they saw the first monkeys since they had turned down this river. They had often heard the little creatures in the depths of the jungle, but had never been successful in getting a glimpse of them.

Along toward evening Mr. Lewis suggested that they go ashore and pitch camp for the night. His friends agreed, and after making sure that the Indians were willing, he gave the word and the boats were turned into a little cove, where they were tied to a stout tree.

“Plenty of room around here,” observed Bob, as he got out and stretched his legs. “No trees within a radius of several score feet. Ought to be fairly good protection against night marauders.”

The tents and poles were untied, and after locating a suitable site the stakes were driven to the ground, the poles hoisted, and the hammocks hung.

Then a bountiful supper was prepared, and the party ate hungrily. Bob and Joe especially partook of large quantities, for their appetites were those of youth.

After the meal the explorers sat in a group, chatting merrily. Even the Indians took part in the conversation, answering many of the whites’ questions about the jungles they were passing through. Bob and Joe had trouble in understanding them, but their fathers translated whenever there was any difficulty.

A little later, darkness fell suddenly, and with it came the chill of night.

“Seems strange that the nights should be so cool when the days are so hot,”

remarked Bob, going into the tent for a coat.

“Does at that,” said Mr. Lewis. “But it’s true of all tropical places.”

Soon the sky became dotted with countless numbers of twinkling stars. Soon afterwards the moon came out in full splendor, flooding the boundless expanse with enchanting light, and casting a reflection on the water beautiful beyond description.

The explorers were filled with awe as they sat staring into the vast jungle, thrilled that they were the only inhabitants on this wild shore.

For some time no one spoke. Then Mr. Holton rose and looked at his watch.

“Getting late,” he said, walking over to a box of supplies.

“Yes,” agreed Professor Bigelow. “I suggest that we turn in.”

The others agreed, and they attended to last-minute tasks.

“Ordinarily it is the Indians’ duty to stand guard,” said Mr. Lewis, glancing at the brawny crew, several of whom had fallen asleep. “But since they’ve worked hard and unflinchingly, and are nearly worn out, I suggest that we whites take turn about on this first night. We’ve had it comparatively easy all day. Then, too, it will increase their respect and liking for us. What do you think?”

“I’m all for it,” declared Professor Bigelow. “Now who is to have the first watch?”

It was decided to draw straws, the person getting the shortest to be the first guard.

By chance the short piece fell to Bob, and he took his place just outside the tents, sitting on one of the boxes, a rifle in ready grasp. The others retired to their hammocks.

For over a half-hour Bob stared quietly into space, glancing occasionally at the sparkling river. Then he decided to change his position.

But at that moment there came a crashing sound on the far side of a group of palm trees.

The youth was on his feet at the instant, wondering what the noise meant. Then he decided to find out.

“It’s only a short distance from camp,” he thought. “There’s no harm in going over there.”

Grasping his rifle, he stole quietly in the direction of the strange commotion.

It did not take him long to reach the patch of trees. Then he wormed his way through the tall grass for a distance of perhaps twenty feet.

The next instant he shrank back, for the sight that met his eyes was fearful and repulsive.

CHAPTER XIII

The Death Struggle

BESIDE a patch of bushes was a large wildcat, greedily devouring the remains of a small deer. Most of the deer's body has been torn to pieces, so that only the head remained intact. There was a terrible stare from the wide eyes that caused Bob to shudder in disgust.

The tiger-cat was evidently very hungry, for it would scarcely bite out one section when it would tear into another, crunching horribly. Occasionally it would shift its position and sample various parts of the body. It finally crouched at the stomach, and in no time stripped the flesh from the bone.

The sight was not wholly to Bob's liking, but he could not tear himself away. After all, the occasion was not one so terrible. All wild creatures must eat, and this is the only way they know.

Bob lifted his eyes from the feast to the great cat, and for the first time saw how beautifully marked it was. Why had he not noticed that before? Probably because he was much more impressed by the meal. The wildcat's fur was of a light brown, spotted and barred with black and darker brown. Its abdomen was pure white, and seemed spotlessly clean. It looked about four feet long, exclusive of the tail.

"Doesn't look very ferocious," Bob thought, but he knew what would probably happen if the creature were to discover him in its domain.

For several minutes the feast continued, the animal's hunger seeming to increase rather than lessen.

Suddenly there came a rustling sound from behind a low shrub.

Instantly the cat was on its feet, tail erect, eyes staring.

The rustling sound continued, and a moment later another cat of the same type leaped out into the clearing, took in its surroundings carefully, and then made for the body of the deer.

But it did not get far. A moment later the first tiger-cat crouched itself and sprang at the invader's throat. Then a terrific combat took place, the memory of which was to remain with Bob for many years to come.

The creatures thrashed constantly about, each trying to inflict a death

wound. They growled horribly, and occasionally one would cry out in pain. Sometimes they reared up on hind legs, biting and tearing fearfully. Then again they would be on top of each other, stamping and tearing to the height of their ability. For nearly five minutes the fight continued, and by now it was evident that the invader was getting the worst of it. Instead of being on the offensive it slunk back, trying in vain to ward off the assaults of its enemy. Suddenly it fell back, as a vital part was pierced. The first tiger-cat had won.

A few more minutes were spent in awaiting any further movements from the defeated, but as none came the victor resumed its feast.

“All over,” Bob muttered to himself. “A swell fight, too. I wouldn’t have missed it for anything. But say! This fellow would be a fine specimen for Dad and Mr. Lewis. I wonder if I can plug him. Don’t think the dead one will be of much use to them, it’s so badly mauled.”

The moon was still shining down brightly, and it was nearly as light as day. This was both an advantage and a disadvantage. True, it would be much easier to get a good aim at the animal, but the light would make Bob much more easily seen. Still he resolved to chance it.

Gripping his rifle firmly, he parted the bushes and rose to his feet. But the slight commotion caused the tiger-cat to turn about, and rage came into its eyes as they lighted on the youth. What was this new type of creature that had come to interrupt the feast?

Bob raised his rifle to his shoulder and awaited a chance to fire an effective shot. But none came. The great cat crouched to spring.

“I’ve got to get him,” said Bob, gritting his teeth.

Then, as the animal launched itself into the air, the youth took rapid but careful aim and fired.

The bullet sped true, entering the open mouth.

The tiger-cat fell at the boy’s feet, twitched about for a moment, and then lay still.

“Hurrah!” Bob cried, exulted beyond words. “I got him. And what a fine specimen.”

The rifle shot had aroused the rest of the expedition, and they came running out, wondering what was meant.

“What’s up?” demanded Mr. Holton, as he first caught sight of his son.

“Plenty,” Bob replied and led them to the bodies of the wildcats.

Everyone cried out in surprise and amazement at sight of the beasts.

“Ocelots,” pronounced Mr. Lewis. “I didn’t know that they were this common. How did you happen to come across them?”

Bob was obliged to relate the entire experience. He told of how he had come across one of the creatures at the body of the deer, of the thrilling combat that took place when the other ocelot arrived, and of shooting the survivor. The party listened with breathless interest, and even the Indians demanded a translation.

“An unusual happening,” said Professor Bigelow, looking at Bob in admiration and wishing that he had been present.

“Takes old Bob to do it,” smiled Joe. “And that required some nerve, too. The first wild animal he’s ever met.”

“It’s a case where the first is one of the most savage,” remarked Mr. Lewis, directing a glance at the creature’s sharp canine teeth. “The ocelot is next only to the jaguar in ferocity and daring.”

“Not much left of the deer he was feasting on,” observed Joe. “I suppose he would have left little more than the skeleton if Bob hadn’t so rudely interrupted him.”

Mr. Holton and Mr. Lewis procured knives and began the task of skinning the creatures. It was believed that both could be used, as the one that had been previously killed was not as badly mauled as Bob had thought.

In a short time the skinning was completed, and they again retired for the night, Bob remaining throughout the remainder of his watch. Nothing more happened that night, however, and they awoke the next morning to witness a beautiful sunrise. Breakfast was soon over, and then began the task of breaking camp.

“Let’s hurry,” urged Professor Bigelow. “We want to cover twenty miles today, if possible.”

“And we will if rapids don’t bar our way,” said Mr. Lewis.

Soon the belongings were packed in the boats, and they started on up the river. Meanwhile Bob and Joe were taking motion pictures quite often and were always on the lookout for new sights. Many times did they regret that they had been unable to film Bob’s experience of the night before.

The men kept their time occupied in writing notes and collecting specimens, which were growing in number hourly. Already there was an abundance of game. Monkeys quite often were crowded in the trees, birds of brilliant plumage were more numerous, various small animals darted out, and once Joe caught a glimpse of a wild pig running through the underbrush.

“When are we going ashore?” asked Bob. “Looks like here is a good chance to get some specimens.”

“It undoubtedly is,” Mr. Holton returned. “And we would try our luck now if Professor Bigelow were not anxious to find a strange tribe of Indians that’s reputed to be somewhere in this region. When we locate it we can stop and stay at one spot as long as the professor chooses, for game will probably be abundant, and we will have the chance to get scores of specimens.”

That day they made nearly twenty-five miles, and all were delighted that no rapids loomed up to hinder them.

“There’s nothing that puts you at more inconvenience than rapids,” said Professor Bigelow, as they sought out a place to camp for the night.

They found the spot they wanted beside a rocky knoll, not far from the river. There was a small open space a short distance away, and to this the party made. Again preparations were made for the night, and then the evening meal was prepared.

“Let’s turn in early,” suggested Mr. Holton, after they had finished eating. “The three Indians in the back boat complained that one of the clamps for an oar is loose, and it may take quite a while to repair it. For that reason we must be up early in the morning.”

The clamp, they discovered later, had been split through, making it necessary to carve out a new one. To do this was not easy, for suitable wood had to be cut and measurements taken. All told, there was a delay of over three hours.

“Now let’s go,” urged Professor Bigelow, his patience almost exhausted.

Day after day the miles were laid behind them in both a pleasant and disagreeable manner. In times when treacherous rapids offered a hindrance, they struggled unflinchingly, often knee deep in the water or mud. But there were chances for relaxation, when there was nothing to do but take it easy in the high seats of the boats. Bob and Joe could not fully realize that they were not in a dream but that this was the real thing—a wild, untamed land in the very heart of vast Amazonia.

“It’s great, Joe, old boy,” said Bob, when over a week had passed. “I’ve often visualized this expedition, but my expectations are far surpassed.”

One morning when they were paddling swiftly along, Professor Bigelow uttered a cry of delight and pointed to the bank.

“Indians!” he cried excitedly. “At last we’ve found a band of Indians!”

CHAPTER XIV

The Deserted Village

PROFESSOR Bigelow was right. On the shore not far away were a dozen or more native huts, grouped in a cluster about one that was larger and more carefully built. All about on the ground were various objects of daily life, such as wooden machetes, pots and kettles of clay, pieces of wood, and hides and skins of animals. But, strain their eyes as they did, the explorers could see no Indians.

The explorers were uncertain as to whether it would be safe to go ashore, but finally Professor Bigelow resolved to take the chance. He was as excited as a boy, and seemed not able to wait until the boats could be turned to the river bank.

The crew, however, were a bit dubious about the venture into an unknown village. They had heard stories of how explorers had been massacred by savage Indians, and as they had never been far as this upstream, they were at a loss to know how the strange tribe would treat them.

Still if the strange scientist was bound to hazard it they would go, although they would be ready for instant flight if necessary.

The boats were brought up alongside the bank and made secure to small trees. Then the explorers climbed out and looked about.

“An ideal site for a village,” said Joe, glancing about.

“Trust the natives to pick out the best spots,” said Bob.

Slowly and cautiously they walked toward the village, gripping their rifles tightly. When within a short distance from the foremost hut they stopped, and the professor, who had studied the languages spoken in this region, called out loudly in the native tongue—or rather what he thought to be the native tongue.

There was no answer, and the explorers proceeded on into the habitation.

“No signs of life anywhere,” said Professor Bigelow.

“Perhaps another tribe invaded and killed the inhabitants,” suggested Mr. Lewis, glancing about.

“No,” disagreed the professor. “There is evidence that the place has been recently inhabited. For instance, look at those ashes over there,” pointing to a

place where a fire had been built. "They are not very old. I know the signs. We can look for the tribe at almost any time now."

"Seems strange that the women and children went away too," said Mr. Holton, almost unbelievably.

"They often do it," answered the professor. "The women, you see, do almost as much as the men. In many cases they do much more. They many times go along on excursions into the forest to carry the weapons and the trophies of the hunt. And as this is a rather small settlement, we can take that for granted."

"When do you think they'll return?" asked Bob.

"That is hard to say," was the reply. "It is all according to how long they have been out. They may be back in a few hours, or it may be a week. But," he added, "I am all for waiting. The chances are we'll be all right."

They explored the huts and found them to be very substantially built. There were few pieces of furniture in them, but the largest hut, which was undoubtedly the chief's, contained several articles of interest to the visitors. There were brightly decorated pots and kettles, carved sticks, jaguar hides, spears and clubs, bows and arrows and blowguns.

"Quite an elaborate display of implements," remarked Joe, examining a blowgun with interest. This weapon was about ten feet long, round and tapering, and covered with a glossy substance resembling glue. At each end it was bound with heavy cord made from vines. A quiver of arrows was attached to it, and, with utmost care lest they be poisoned, he took one out. It was about three feet long and sharp as a needle.

There were many other objects of domestic use lying and hanging about, and they were examined especially by Professor Bigelow, who had found himself in an anthropologist's paradise. Baskets, closely woven from a strange type of straw, were filled with farina; bone tubes for snuffing were strewn about, and many kinds of ornaments hung on wooden pegs.

Bob's attention was attracted to a kind of necklace, which was strung with the teeth of some wild animal—unless, but this was hardly probable, they were human teeth.

"Not human," smiled Mr. Holton. "Can't you tell a monkey's molars when you see them?"

"Sorry, but I'm not as much of a naturalist and zoölogist as you are," laughed Bob.

Meanwhile Joe was cranking the movie camera, filming the entire village. As a matter of fact he had been engaged in doing this since they first sighted the

village.

“These ought to be interesting scenes,” he confided to Bob, as the two walked toward the river bank.

“They will be,” was the reply. “Tend to break the monotony of the constant river-traveling.”

At the shore they found several native canoes tethered to trees. They were mere dugouts, but they looked staunch and strong enough to stem almost any current.

The youths spent several more minutes at the bank; then they made their way back to the others.

“What’d you find?” asked Mr. Lewis.

“Only native canoes,” Bob answered. “Only——”

He stopped and listened. What was that he had heard?

Again it came to his ears, this time louder and nearer.

“Sounds like someone’s shouting,” said Joe. “Sounds like——”

“Indians!” cried Professor Bigelow. “The Indians are returning!”

CHAPTER XV

Danger at Hand

“QUICK! Let’s get to the boats at once!” cried Mr. Holton. “It won’t do for them to find us here in the village.”

The explorers hastened to the river bank with all the speed they could put into their legs. Not until they were safe in the boats did they draw a breath. Then they cast glances about the shore.

The shouting grew louder, and the next moment twenty-five or thirty semi-naked Indians burst into the clearing and made for the huts. But one that was evidently the chief called them back and pointed to the river, where the explorers’ canoes were moored.

“Now’s the time to act,” muttered Professor Bigelow, getting out of the boat.

He strode up to within fifty feet of the Indians, throwing his hands apart in a gesture of friendliness. Then he called out something that the other whites did not understand.

Immediately there was a turmoil of excited chattering, in which the chief took the biggest part. Then the latter called back to the professor, who listened eagerly. In the end there was a smile on his face.

“It’s all right,” he said to the explorers, beckoning them to come ashore.

“Sure there’s no danger?” asked Mr. Lewis.

“It will be safe. The chief welcomed us into the village.”

Mr. Holton was the first one out of the boat, followed by Joe, Mr. Lewis, and Bob. The crew trailed.

They did not think it wise to bring their rifles, for the Indians might suspect them. But each had a revolver in his holster, and it was Mr. Lewis who warned them to be on the lookout for any treachery.

Professor Bigelow waited for them to come nearer. Then he led the way into the village.

For several minutes he carried on conversation with the chief and seemed to have little or no trouble in understanding him. The Indian regarded him soberly

most of the time, but at several of the professor's remarks he smiled broadly.

"The professor's building up a feeling of good will," grinned Bob, a new glow of respect for the scientist coming over him.

"He'll manage those savages all right," said Mr. Holton, as he recalled some of the encounters with savage people that had been told of Professor Bigelow.

The conversation ended with an introduction of the other whites to the Indians, and after a few more casual remarks Professor Bigelow resolved to tell why they were there.

While the remainder of his party waited in ignorance of what was being said, he related the details of the expedition: why it had been organized, what its purposes were, and where it intended to explore. All this he put in the simple language of the natives, and although it was difficult to convey many ideas correctly, he succeeded admirably.

The chief's answer was that he and his people would furnish information about their daily life, and, if the whites so desired, they would also help in getting specimens. The big Indian stressed the point that these were the first white people he had ever seen, although several of the older members of the tribe had met a party of them many years ago.

Professor Bigelow translated what had been said, and the naturalists were joyous. They could gain many things by remaining here with these simple people.

As soon as the novelty had worn off, the chief, whose name was Otari, escorted the party to one big hut, where they were to remain at night during their stay at the village.

"Plenty of room here," observed Joe, glancing about the thatched walls.

"Yes," Bob agreed. "Not a bit crowded. It's one of the best dwellings in the settlement."

Much room as there was, however, there were only a few pieces of native furniture and implements. A large box-like table, assembled with wooden pegs, stood in the middle of the room. Beneath it were five or six clay pots and containers, each washed clean. In one corner were two bows and arrows and a blow gun.

"They sure use poor taste in furnishing a house," grinned Bob. "But I suppose for them it's sufficient."

Professor Bigelow thought it wise to bring in their belongings from the boats, but the others were a bit dubious about the safety of them.

“We can leave the crew to guard them when we are away,” he said. “I don’t think even that will be necessary, for I have a light, portable safe that I take on all expeditions such as this.”

He opened a large box and took out several flat pieces of metal. To his friends’ astonishment they were easily lifted, although they looked to weigh seventy pounds each.

“They are magnalium,” he explained. “About the lightest and strongest metal there is.”

There were lock clamps at the edges of each piece, and these were fitted into each other. In a short time a large safe stood before their eyes.

Bob gasped in astonishment.

“That’s a new one on me,” he confessed. “Never heard of anything like it.”

“It’s also new to me,” said Mr. Lewis. “I knew there were such safes, but heretofore I have never seen one.”

“But,” hesitated Mr. Holton, “what kind of an explanation will we give the Indians? It occurs to me that they would take this as a kind of insult. Might get it in their heads that we thought they would steal something.”

“Restrain yourself from worrying about that,” the professor consoled him. “I’ve used this before many times. As an explanation, we’ll simply say that the safe is a place to store the belongings where we can have them easily at hand. Then, too, it will prevent any of the children from curiously straying into our hut to meddle with things. I’ve never yet had any trouble.”

The safe was large enough to hold the professor’s typewriter, paper, a few books, and various other essential objects. In addition, there was room for rifles, ammunition, knives and preparations used in skinning, and several other articles that it was best to lock up.

“It’s just the thing,” remarked Joe. “Now we can be sure that valuable possessions will always be here when we get back from a hunting trip.”

“I will probably spend most of my time in here writing and conversing with the natives,” Professor Bigelow said. “So when you are out you can be doubly sure that things will be all right.”

It was now about meal time, and the chief wanted to bring the explorers dishes of native food, but they thanked him, saying that they would use their own provisions.

“For my part I don’t care for any of their delicacies,” grinned Joe. “You can never tell what you’re getting.”

“True enough,” laughed Mr. Holton. “For that reason we’ll stick to our own grub.”

After lunching bountifully, the explorers rested on the straw beds and felt much better for it. When an hour had passed, Mr. Holton rose and walked over to the supplies.

“Let’s go out specimen-collecting,” he suggested, getting out a rifle and small shotgun.

Bob and Joe were on their feet in an instant, their faces radiant with delight. At last had come a chance to explore the jungle, with its many thrills, wonders, and tragedies. How they had longed for it!

“Can’t get there any too soon for me,” said Bob, grasping his rifle.

Mr. Lewis also agreed, and they started out toward the back of the village, Bob and Joe in the lead.

There was a fairly well blazed trail at the edge of the last hut, and the hunters resolved to follow it.

“Probably won’t be much large game along this path, but there will undoubtedly be others branching off from it,” remarked Mr. Holton, as he took the lead and plunged into the jungle.

That jungle interested the youths immensely, for the variety of tropical vegetation was wide. Trees of all types grew one beside another, their leaves coming in contact with each other. Many of the trunks were encircled with parasitic vines, which, in many cases, caused the trees to be stunted. All about on the ground were shrubs and bushes and tall grass that hindered walking.

“Have to be careful here,” warned Mr. Lewis, carefully avoiding a low shrub studded with sharp-pointed thorns.

“Right,” agreed Bob’s father. “Keep a ready hand on your rifles, for there are countless creatures that may be dangerous.”

Although the jungle seemed thick at the start, it was nothing to what they found it later on. Vegetation was certainly dense. Large clusters of ferns barred the way, their enormous leaves suggesting forests of prehistoric times. Gay flowers loomed up here and there, tempting the hunters to stop and marvel at their beauty. Oddly shaped plants were numerous, among them being a stalk that grew straight up for a distance of perhaps ten feet, then spliced and fell to the ground in several places.

Bob and Joe had expected much, but this was beyond any of their anticipations. Nature was certainly bountiful in displaying her art in these little-known places.

After a fifteen-minute hike they reached a region of thick bushes, many of which bore sharp-pointed thorns that were far from pleasant to encounter. Even with their heavy clothing, they emerged with torn garments and with bruises that stung and pained severely. But the unpleasantness was lost before the many tropical wonders that presented themselves.

Suddenly a flock of white birds flew overhead, and Mr. Lewis and Bob fired their shotguns together. At once four fell to the ground, amid the terrible screeching of the others.

“Egrets,” said Mr. Holton, upon examining the birds.

As the hunters moved on they added many other birds and small animals to the collection. One of the most remarkable of the latter was a large ant-bear, with a long, slender head that terminated into a toothless mouth. The creature was about four feet long, with a bushy tail protruding another two feet.

Bob and Joe did their part in the specimen-collecting, and they at once won the recognition of their elders for their accurate shooting. Bob was especially praised, for he was not far behind the men in marksmanship.

The hunters had been out several hours when Mr. Lewis suggested that they get back to the village.

“Professor Bigelow and the others may worry about us,” he said. “In my opinion we have been out long enough for the first time.”

The others agreed, and they were about to retrace their footsteps when Joe caught sight of something that turned his blood cold.

CHAPTER XVI

A Thrilling Encounter

PROTRUDING from a tree bough not ten feet away was a long, sinister snake, its evil eyes glistening in what little sunlight penetrated the dense jungle. Whether it was poisonous Joe did not know, but he knew that even though it were not it would be dangerous to the extreme.

As cautiously as possible he nudged his companions, and then the naturalists held their rifles tighter. Here, only a short distance away, was a jararaca, one of the most poisonous of Brazilian reptiles—a snake that often was known to take the aggressive.

For a moment there was silence—an ominous silence that ended in a blood-curdling hiss.

Mr. Holton and Mr. Lewis raised their rifles and took long and careful aim. Bob followed suit, although he was not sure that his aim would be true.

Then, just as the snake prepared to strike, the men fired simultaneously, and Bob pulled the trigger a second later.

In such a crisis it was necessary that their bullets take effect, and they did.

The reptile's head was shattered into a horrible pulp that was all but sickening, and the great body lashed about in pain. For several minutes the movements continued; then, as life faded out, the snake became less active, finally stretching out into one last mass.

"Whew!" breathed Bob, relaxing for the first time. "That was some encounter."

Mr. Holton nodded in affirmation.

"If we had been stung by those terrible fangs it would have been the last of us," he said, casting a resentful look in that direction.

"The venom is extremely powerful," remarked Mr. Lewis, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "It is yellow in color, and takes effect almost immediately. The nervous system becomes paralyzed in a very short time."

"A pleasant way to die—I don't think," muttered Joe, shrugging his shoulders.

They made a wide circle about the reptile's body and started on the return journey.

"I'd like to have it as a specimen," remarked Mr. Lewis, referring to the jararaca. "But in its shattered condition it would not be worth the taking."

The hunters rested awhile under the shade of a large hardwood tree, whose branches extended out over a great distance. Then Mr. Holton took up his belongings, and the others did the same.

Gradually the jungle became less dense, and at last they came to the village, where they were given a hearty greeting by the Indians, who were glad to see the hunters back in the village. They found Professor Bigelow in the hut, his hands flying over the keys of the typewriter.

At first he did not notice them, thinking they were Indians, but finally he lifted his gaze.

"What kind of luck did you have?" he inquired absently.

The others hesitated a moment at the professor's almost unconscious question. It was evident that the anthropologist was becoming deeply absorbed in this work of observing the daily life of the little-known Indians. Then, with a wink at the others, Mr. Holton decided on a preposterous answer to see how the professor would take it.

"We brought down two tigers and an elephant," he said, in as sober tones as he could summon.

"Hmm. Well, that's fine"—the typewriter still clicked rapidly. "I suppose you'll have them skinned at once?"

Bob and Joe could not help breaking out in laughter, and the naturalists joined them. Professor Bigelow looked up in surprise.

"I must confess I wish I could see something humorous," he said, stopping his writing for a moment and looking at his companions in wonder.

The others were laughing all the harder now, and poor Professor Bigelow was bewildered beyond words. Only an explanation would satisfy him.

As soon as Mr. Holton could regain his breath he hastened to assure the professor that it was nothing about his person that caused the laugh, but only his intense scientific enthusiasm. He joined in the merriment also when the joke was told.

"That's one on me," he said mirthfully. "I guess I was too deeply engrossed in this manuscript."

The remainder of that day was spent rather idly, for, hot as it had previously

been, it seemed to grow all the more stifling. Bob remarked that he did not feel like doing anything but loafing, and the others were none different.

The next day Bob, Joe, and their fathers again started out on a collecting trip and added many new specimens to the already large assemblage. They brought in gorgeously colored macaws, screamers, woodpeckers, trumpeters, finfoots, waxbills, and many other birds. They shot many small animals, including a type of opossum, a large lizard, and an armadillo. It was indeed a large number of specimens that the naturalists prepared that night.

“So far, everything is working out fine,” smiled Mr. Lewis, as he put the fauna up for exhibition.

Meanwhile the chief, Otari, was helping Professor Bigelow as best he could and gave him several articles of daily use as a present, in return for which the professor gave the Indian beads and mirrors and other objects dear to all primitive people.

“I have enough material now to write several books,” the professor said joyfully. “The museum certainly will welcome this information. And these articles that the chief gave me—well, they will tickle the museum heads greatly.”

Time tended to increase rather than lessen the number of daily interests to the explorers, and they found themselves living as in a dream. The great tropical forest about them added an enchantment to the work, and the simple, primitive people that they were living with caused them to imagine themselves living in prehistoric times.

“It’s great, Joe, old boy,” said Bob, deeply stirred. “Who would have ever thought that away out here in the wilderness it would be possible to come across things so interesting?”

“Yet,” said Joe, “I suppose they wouldn’t be interesting to everyone.”

One day, when the party had been at the Indian village nearly a week, Bob and Joe asked permission to go into the forest and try their luck at getting specimens.

“All right,” Mr. Holton replied. “But don’t get too far away.”

Bob picked out a rifle and Joe a small shotgun, and after parting words with their elders they made for the jungle.

The trail was one that they had never taken, and it was consequently necessary to be doubly careful to pick the right branch. But they had little difficulty, as the main path was much wider than the branches.

In no time they were engulfed by the jungle, which was here even thicker than they had previously found it. Monkeys were more numerous in the tree

boughs, and they peered doubtfully at the white hunters who had invaded their land.

Joe raised his shotgun and brought several down, intent upon leaving them at the spot until they would return to the village.

“So far, so good,” remarked Bob. “Wonder what else we’ll come across?”

“Time will tell,” Joe replied.

On and on they trekked, keeping a sharp lookout on all sides. Once Bob lost his footing and went sprawling on the ground.

“Better be more careful,” warned Joe.

Suddenly there came a loud snort, and the youths were on the alert at the instant.

Gripping their guns tightly, they stopped and waited.

Again it came, and the next minute they caught sight of a wild pig, or peccary, rustling the tall grass not far away.

“Keep still,” whispered Bob, raising his rifle. “Maybe I can get him. Then we can have meat—and his hide as a specimen.”

Several moments Bob spent in taking careful aim. Then he pulled the trigger.

Bang! Oink! Oink! Silence.

“Hurrah!” cried Joe. “Killed him dead as a doornail. Now to get his——”

He stopped suddenly as he caught sight of something that froze him with horror. Not fifty feet down the path rushed a drove of peccaries numbering at least twenty.

CHAPTER XVII

Terrible Peccaries

“RUN!” cried Bob in tones of mortal terror.

He tore down the path at full speed, closely followed by Joe, who was panting furiously.

The youths had a start of less than fifty feet, but how long they could keep in the lead they well knew, for hardly any creature, large or small, could elude the tireless chase of peccaries.

They dared not glance back for fear of stumbling, but feared that the wild pigs were gaining rapidly.

What would the boys do? How could they ever escape that furious drove?

Suddenly Joe's foot slipped and he went down, his face as pale as death. He looked appealingly to Bob.

Bob wheeled about and brought his rifle to his shoulder. The nearest peccary was not more than ten feet away. The youth took hasty aim, then pulled the trigger.

At the report of the gun the animal fell, gasping and writhing about.

Bob worked the bolt on his rifle. He took a second aim at the next peccary and killed it.

For a moment, at least, the jungle was cleared, and by now Joe had arisen to his feet, although the pain in his ankle was terrific.

“Come on,” beckoned Bob. “We must get away at once. The rest of them will be here in a moment. Can you make it?”

“I—I guess so. My ankle hurts terribly, though.”

Not far away there was a large hollow, the place where the roots of a tree had been before a hurricane had uprooted them. To this the boys made with all speed. If they could only reach it in time there might be a chance of escape, for the peccaries would find it hard to climb the steep bank.

The youths scrambled down the edge and tumbled to the bottom. Then they began the task of climbing the opposite side. They reached the top just as the drove started down, and for the first time felt that they had a good chance of

escaping.

"Make for the trail," panted Joe. "Then we might get back to the village."

They kept up the fast pace for a distance of several hundred yards, and then, panting and gasping, they slowed down to a trot.

"Guess we've thrown them off the track," breathed Joe, hobbling along almost on one foot.

"Let's hope so," Bob answered, glancing around for a brief moment.

At last they parted the foliage and burst into the village, their faces red with fatigue, their bodies dripping with perspiration.

Mr. Lewis came out to meet them, and he glanced up in some surprise.

"What happened?" he asked, sensing that the youths had met with some misfortune.

"Peccaries!" returned Bob. "A drove of peccaries! Doesn't that mean something?"

"Ah!" the naturalist exclaimed. "Well, it's no wonder you're so worn out. Let's hear about it."

Mr. Holton and Professor Bigelow now came running out, along with a few Indians.

Bob related their narrow escape from the wild pigs, and Mr. Holton shook his head gravely.

"You don't want any more such encounters," he said. "Good luck like that couldn't happen twice."

"At that, we would have got away sooner if Joe hadn't sprained his ankle," said Bob.

"A sprained ankle is a bad thing to have when in a wild land," said Professor Bigelow, with a grim smile. "It often proves one's own undoing. But now," he added, "I'm off to converse with the chief. I'm getting a wealth of information about these strange people."

But though he was meeting with success, the professor was destined not to be satisfied in prolonging his stay in this village. It happened in this way. The explorers were seated about the campfire one evening when the chief happened casually to mention a strange Indian tribe that lived in the remote beyond. At once the anthropologist was on the alert, ready to hear anything that Otari might say.

"Tell me something about them," urged the scientist in the native tongue.

The chief explained that little was known about the tribe, except that the

members were extremely warlike and did not hesitate to kill anyone that looked to be an enemy. Often they were cannibalistic, boiling their victims in huge clay kettles. Asked how he knew about them, Otari replied that one of his tribe, a born rover and adventurer, happened to come across them when on an exploring expedition in the upper reaches of the river. At first he was taken prisoner but was later released and allowed to return down the river.

For nearly five minutes after Otari had finished, Professor Bigelow was thoughtfully silent, absorbed in picturing the journey into the unknown. How wonderful it would be to visit this strange tribe! What an opportunity to win recognition from eminent men of his profession!

“How far away is this place?” he asked at last.

How far? A journey of many, many days through wild, heavily forested country. It would not be safe to attempt the journey.

The professor then asked the chief how he thought the unknown tribe would treat the explorers, and the big Indian shook his head doubtfully.

“*Otanima turutee nevark* [take big chance],” he said vaguely, and then proceeded to point out the many dangers that would accompany the venture.

But despite the Indian’s warning, Professor Bigelow was determined to investigate this unknown tribe. It was more than likely that Otari was influenced by native superstition and that the dangers that he feared were largely imaginative. After all he (Professor Bigelow) had looked up many other strange people in various parts of the world and had had little difficulty in winning their good will. Even the wildest of savages, if well treated and presented with gifts, were more or less easily won over. Surely this tribe would not be worse than others he had visited.

Professor Bigelow sought out his companions and put the facts before them, not hesitating to tell them that the venture would probably be dangerous and fraught with displeasures. But he pointed out much stronger that there would be a wonderful opportunity to study the most primitive of men, in addition to finding many strange, or perhaps unknown, animals.

The others listened intently, and in the end they were very thoughtful.

Bob and Joe remained silent. Here was a time when they thought it best not to voice an opinion, for they had had no experience in the work of exploring.

“If it were not for the fact that the boys are with us I would answer ‘yes’ at once,” said Mr. Lewis. “But since they are, I hardly know what to say.”

“It would be terrible if anything should happen to them,” put in Mr. Holton. “But they have proven that they are able to take care of themselves in almost any

predicament, and we wouldn't need to worry about them. Still, that wouldn't prevent anything from happening to the whole party. Yet Professor Bigelow has shown that he has an enormous amount of ability to handle savage people, and I'd be willing to bet that in the end we'd come out all right. What do you think of it, Ben?"

"I'm willing to go if you are," Mr. Lewis replied. "As you said, we'll probably have little or no trouble."

"Then you'll go?" the professor asked.

The others nodded.

"Fine! I assure you that I will do all in my power to bring about friendly relations. And I might add that Otari has consented to give me a list of words of the strange tribe's language. He got them from the fellow that wandered into their domain.

"Now the next thing," he continued, "is to get our belongings together and pack them in the boats. You can start doing that now, while I look up Otari. I'll be back in a very short time."

The next minute he was gone, and the naturalists and their sons began the task of packing their provisions in the boats. For some time no one spoke. Then Mr. Lewis put down a box he was carrying and turned to the others.

"We don't want to have any bloodshed if we can possibly prevent it," he said gravely. "But there may be a time when we'll find it necessary to use our rifles in order to protect our lives. In that case, every man must be depended upon to be wide awake and do his part in the shooting. Let's hope that nothing like that happens, but as there is a possibility, it is best to be on the safe side. I think it might be wise to construct sides and a top on the boats, so as to ward off spears and poisoned arrows—if any should come our way. We can get the Indians to help us, and Otari will point out the best wood to use. What do you say?"

"I'm all for it," replied Bob. "It might mean the difference between life and death."

Professor Bigelow and Otari now came in, and the plan was explained to them. At once the professor gave his approval, and translated to the chief, who in the end sent men into the forest to pick out the best wood to be used in building the enclosure. Then the work of carrying the expedition's belongings to the boats was resumed.

In a short time the Indians were back with a good supply of a light but tough wood, and the adventurers at once set to work at building the sides and top

on the boats.

First the sides were built up to a height of about three feet; then a top was placed over about half of the length and fastened on securely. The material was so light that no difference in the standing of the boat was noticed. Yet Otari said that the tough wood would withstand a blow from any kind of native weapon. To prove this, he ordered one of his men to shoot an arrow at close range, and the sharp-pointed missile merely glanced off the wood and fell into the river.

The explorers were well pleased with this floating fort, and stood for some time admiring its staunch construction.

“Now to get to the other boat,” said Mr. Lewis, picking up a hammer and nails.

In less than an hour the second enclosure was built on the other canoe, and it appealed also to the explorers.

“Let’s get started at once,” said Professor Bigelow.

The last of their belongings was packed into the compartments, and then, with a sincere farewell to Otari and his tribe, the crew paddled them upstream on another stretch of the great river journey.

What new adventures and thrills awaited them?

CHAPTER XVIII

A Nightmare Experience

IT did not take the explorers long to pass a group of islands not far upstream, one of the landmarks that Otari had told them about, and as the islands were a number of miles from the village, they felt that they were making a rapid start.

The country was gradually becoming wilder and more beautiful, but with this came an increase in the number of dangerous obstacles that had to be avoided. On the shore the jungle was denser than they had ever seen it before. In many places, to attempt to penetrate its depths would be difficult and perilous, and disaster would come upon anyone who would not blaze a trail.

The variety of fauna was still greater, and many new specimens did the naturalists add to their already large collection. Birds and beasts and reptiles all fell at the report of the explorers' rifles.

Finally they came to a wide tributary, which forged off from the main stream, making the two rivers form a perfect V. This was the second of Otari's landmarks, and the explorers felt that another important distance had been covered.

"The current's rather rough," said Bob, his eyes following the course of the tributary.

The explorers passed the stream by, not thinking it wise to chance an exploration of it.

The next day their adventurous spirits proved their own undoing. They had been paddling constantly after the morning meal when suddenly they came upon another tributary, this time branching out at right angles from the main stream. There was something about that river that made the explorers want to follow its rough course.

"Probably doesn't continue far," was the opinion given by Mr. Holton. "Let's turn the boats up for a considerable distance. We may come across something totally different."

The others agreed, for there was a possibility of finding almost anything in this out-of-the-way tributary.

"But we must not stray too far from the Tapauá," warned Professor

Bigelow, as the crew turned the boats in that direction.

For the first hour the country remained much the same. Then they reached a region where rocky crags protruded out from the shore, making it necessary for the crew to be doubly careful in guiding the boats. And with this danger came the possibility of another, for the current was growing stronger. A terrific rapids could be only a short distance downstream. At last, much to the surprise of all, they came to another river, running at right angles to the one they were on.

A thought struck Bob.

“Do you remember that tributary we passed yesterday that formed a V with the Tapauá?” he asked. “Well, I’ll bet this is it. It runs almost parallel with the Tapauá, and we’ve come upon it by taking this course that runs at right angles.”

“By George, you may be right,” agreed Mr. Lewis, suddenly grasping the meaning. “What say we turn down it and see if Bob isn’t right? If he is we’ll gradually fork over to the Tapauá and be where we were yesterday afternoon.”

The others did not object, for they were curious to know whether or not Bob was right.

The current gradually grew stronger, carrying the boats ahead at a much swifter pace. Although this afforded the crew a chance to rest, it worried the explorers, for it was plain that a rapids was somewhere ahead.

They paddled on, however, confident that they were not near enough to be in danger.

“We’ll continue for a while,” said Mr. Holton. “Then we may be able to find out what is ahead of us.”

The words had scarcely left his mouth when the boats rounded a corner, not two hundred feet above a seething, boiling rapids, its waters rushing madly past protruding rocks.

There was no time to lose. Something must be done at once!

“Stop the boats!” cried Mr. Lewis in Portuguese to the crew.

The Indians heard, and struggled with all their might against the rapidly increasing current, but their efforts were in vain. The boats had gained too much momentum.

The cruel water carried them on at terrific speed, which was increased several fold when they went into the rapids. Then they realized that there was little use trying to stop. The forces of man were puny indeed compared to that terrific onslaught of foam.

“Make for the middle of the stream!” commanded Mr. Holton. “Even then it

will tax our efforts to the utmost.”

The whites grabbed poles and what other objects they could find and did their part in keeping the foremost boat at as near the middle of the river as they could. But even with the added help it was extremely difficult to guide straight.

The crew had the paddles, and they were doing their best to steer the boats away from the banks. They succeeded fairly well, for the river was still several score feet wide.

But grave misfortune awaited them.

Not far away was a small island, stretching several hundred feet along the course of the river. The distance between the river bank and the island shore was little more than twenty feet, hardly room enough for the boats to get through. And to make matters worse, there were several large boulders protruding near the bank. Disaster seemed almost certain!

In the face of this grave danger the explorers remained calm, determining to save themselves and the boats if it were at all possible. But how?

With sinking hearts they saw the boats head directly for the rocks, where they would immediately be dashed to pieces.

“We must—we’ve got to do something!” cried Professor Bigelow, rapidly losing his nerve.

Bob and Joe were nearest the bank, and anything that could be done was up to them.

Summoning all his power, Joe thrust a sturdy pole into the roots of a large tree that grew almost in the water. He little expected anything to come of the act, but it was a last resort.

Much to the surprise and relief of all, the sudden impact forced the boat back into midstream, although Joe was nearly thrown overboard by the clash.

Bob drew a sigh of relief. A narrow escape! Perhaps the closest they would ever be to death and yet evade it.

But what of the other boat? The whites were so intent upon guiding the one they were in that they completely forgot about the one that trailed.

They quickly glanced around, to see that it had escaped also, and was dashing along behind. How the good luck was brought about they never knew.

“That was a wonderful act on your part,” praised Mr. Holton, turning a moment to Joe.

The latter shook his head.

“Don’t know how I happened to think of it,” he said modestly. “I didn’t

expect any good from it, though.”

The others also took part in the commendation, and Joe was glad to turn the conversation to their present predicament.

“Looks like we have a fair chance now,” he remarked, glancing far ahead.

Then suddenly they struck a seething whirlpool and were spun around broadside to the terrific current.

CHAPTER XIX

The Call for Help

“QUICK!” yelled Mr. Holton to anyone who might hear. “Turn the head around or we’ll be swamped at once.”

The Indian who was steering heard and was doing his best to swerve the craft about, but he was having little luck. The terrible rapids was reluctant to yield to the puny efforts of a mere human being.

Water was now dashing into the boat, and if this were to continue there could be but one outcome—tragedy!

This time it was Bob who came to the rescue.

Pushing the Indian aside, he jumped into the seat and caught hold of the paddle, at the same time giving the rudder a swift turn about.

There was a roar and a swish, and the next moment the boat had swerved around and was facing the current head first, leaving the treacherous whirlpool far behind.

“Great work, son!” panted Mr. Holton. “You saved the day that time.”

It was now evident that the worst was over, for the current was gradually losing its terrible force. Slowly but surely they were pulling away from the perilous rapids, and if their good fortune continued, they would soon be in calm waters.

“Unless,” said Joe soberly, “we strike another whirlpool.”

But no other whirlpool barred their way, and soon they were safely riding the calm ripples farther downstream.

For the first time they were given a chance to relax. Their faces were red from exertion; their bodies were dripping with perspiration. In short, they were greatly fatigued.

“The most thrilling adventure we’ve had since we started,” remarked Bob, rubbing his forehead.

“It was a terribly narrow escape,” affirmed Professor Bigelow, not bearing to think of the tragedy that was so closely averted.

“We owe our lives to you boys,” praised Mr. Lewis. “It was your thought

and action that prevented the boat from being dashed to pieces. First Joe came across with a plan that kept us from striking the rocks. Then Bob swerved the boat around out of the whirlpool. If it hadn't been for you——”

“Forget it!” Bob dismissed the subject as best he could, and then asked his friends’ opinion of where they now were.

“Probably halfway to the junction with the mainstream,” replied Mr. Holton. “That rapids carried us along at a terrific speed.”

His opinion proved correct, for they reached the Tapauá early the next morning and turned the boats to retrace the distance covered the day before.

“Might as well consider that much time wasted,” said Joe. “For about a day the journey will be a repetition of what it was two days ago.”

They did not mind the delay, however. That is, all but Professor Bigelow, who was anxious to find the strange tribe that Otari had spoken about. Every mile that went behind them lagged, to him, till it seemed that he was almost in a nightmare. Even after they had made up for the lost time and were paddling several score miles farther upstream, he was irritated. It was clearly evident that his impatient scientific enthusiasm was getting the better of him.

As they traveled on, his anxiety increased rather than lessened, for they were getting nearer the region occupied by the savages.

“The old boy’s so excited he can hardly wait,” smiled Joe, aside to his chum.

“He’s anxious to test his wits against the cannibals,” returned Bob. “Wants to stay for dinner, maybe.”

They camped that night on a wide sand bank, at the base of a rocky knoll. After the evening meal, they sat in a group about the firelight, chatting merrily, despite the fact that they were near, or perhaps in, the cannibal country.

They turned in early, and the night passed without incident.

“Well,” smiled Mr. Holton the next morning as he went about preparing breakfast, “nothing happened to disturb our deep slumber.”

“Perhaps we are not quite near enough the dangerous territory,” replied Professor Bigelow. “But according to Otari, we shouldn’t have to travel much farther.”

That morning, for the first time, two of the crew began to show signs of uneasiness. It was Bob who first noticed them talking in muffled tones, and upon listening, he found that they did not like the idea of going into this unknown country that was the abode of wild savages. But as they appeared to come to no

conclusion, Bob turned to help prepare the meal.

After breakfast they paddled on upstream in search of a suitable hunting area, for the naturalists wished to go ashore and add to their collection.

At every point of the compass the scenery was beautiful beyond description. There were steep, jagged cliffs, densely overgrown with the brilliant green of tropical vegetation; tall forest giants, towering a hundred feet into the sky; gorgeously colored flowers that sent their sweet fragrance far afield.

Mr. Holton broke the enchanted silence. "Here we are," he said, singling out a stopping place.

The boats were turned into a little cove, behind which was a stretch of smooth country.

The naturalists and their sons picked out guns and prepared to leave on a hunting trip, but Professor Bigelow announced that he would remain at the boats to read.

"Don't see how he can read on a morning like this," murmured Joe. "This cool air gets under my skin and cries 'action, *action!*'"

They decided to take all but two of the crew with them to help carry in specimens, and strangely enough the two Indians who remained behind were the ones Bob had heard talking about not liking the prospect of penetrating into this unknown country.

Bob wondered if it would be safe to leave things as they were. For a moment he thought of appealing to the others to change the situation, but thought better of it and followed on into the forest. After all, nothing would probably come of the happening.

"We want to get a jaguar today if it's at all possible," said Mr. Lewis, his keen eyes scanning the surrounding trees, as if he expected to find one of the big cats lurking there.

"A jaguar!" repeated Joe. "Fine. We'll get one if there's any around."

They tramped on for about five minutes before seeing any game but monkeys and bright-colored birds. Then Mr. Lewis caught sight of a long, lithe body gliding over the tangled underbrush.

The others saw, too, and they raised their rifles and fired.

The snake was immediately made into pulp, and the hunters ran up to examine it.

"Coral snake," said Mr. Holton, recognizing the striped body. "Whether it's poisonous I don't know. Here is one reptile that cannot easily be distinguished as

to whether it is of the harmless or poisonous variety.”

The reptile was no good as a specimen, and they passed it by.

Suddenly Mr. Holton stopped still in his tracks and pointed to a low tree bough not far away. The others looked and then shrank back in awe.

There, resting peacefully in the shaded depths of a limb, was a huge, powerful jaguar, its spotted coat showing in strange contrast to the surrounding jungle.

“Back,” whispered Mr. Holton, slowly raising his rifle.

Carefully the naturalist took aim, while the others stood by with ready rifles.

Bang! The bullet sped true.

There was a terrific pawing and clutching at the bough, but to no avail. A second later the great cat fell to the ground, moved convulsively for a moment, and then lay still.

“Hurrah!” cried Bob. “Our first jaguar.”

“The biggest and most dangerous animal of South America,” chimed in Mr. Lewis.

At once the skin was ripped off and then placed in a bag carried by the crew.

A little later Bob was several score feet behind the others, examining a peculiar plant that had small blue flowers. As he started to pluck one he suddenly heard a faint cry that seemed to come from the direction of the river.

At first he thought it was some strange bird, but when he heard it again he was immediately on the alert. That a bird? Absurd. But what could it be?

Then a thought struck him, and he almost turned pale. It was Professor Bigelow!

He called to the others to follow and then turned and ran with all speed to the boats.

CHAPTER XX

Fighting Against Heavy Odds

BOB had often run in track races at high school, but never had he equaled the pace that was now taking him to the boats. It was as though wings had suddenly lifted him through space at an alarming rate of speed.

The youth had all he could do to prevent coming in contact with thorns and fringed plants, but he did his best. But what of thorns when Professor Bigelow needed help?

On and on he went, swinging his rifle over shrubs and bushes. At times it was necessary to hold his arms high above his head to prevent striking limbs and other projections.

At last, after what seemed a terribly long time, he parted the foliage and gazed ahead to see what was happening. Then a look of rage came on his face.

On the river bank a terrific struggle was taking place between Professor Bigelow and the two Indians who had been left behind. The men had the professor down, and the latter's face was ghastly white as strong arms and hands tried to choke him into unconsciousness. Occasionally he would manage to call out a muffled cry for assistance.

For a moment Bob took in the situation carefully. Then he rushed at the men with rage and fury and landed on the back of the one nearest, bearing him to the ground with a thud. The Indians glanced up in surprise at this abrupt interruption, and they turned to deal with this new enemy.

One of the men gained his feet and launched himself with all force at Bob's side, the impact hurling the youth from the back of the first man. But Bob shook the fellow off and threw an arm around his neck with the strength of one in desperation. There was a terrific struggle, and the two thrashed about, neither able to gain the upper hand. Bob gripped the Indian's neck with all his strength, and the man's face began to turn purple from the terrific strain. It was clearly evident that he would soon be put out of the fight.

But the other Indian was not motionless. In fact if it had not been for him, the youth would have had the better of the first fellow, for he was slowly giving out. But suddenly Bob felt a heavy body landing on his back and had to release

his hold on the first man.

This again gave the Indians the advantage, and they were quick to sense their chance.

Bob soon saw that he could gain nothing as things were. He must resort to some other means.

Professor Bigelow was now beginning to show signs of life, but he was so badly battered that what little he did to help amounted to nothing, for he was soon sent sprawling to the ground.

Suddenly Bob gained his feet, intent upon resorting to boxing, a method that the Indians probably knew little about.

A quick glance around showed that his friends had arrived and were making for the boats as fast as they could. But it was only a glance, for the Indians were rushing at him with redoubled force.

Bob caught the first man squarely between the eyes and sent him sprawling to the ground in a dazed condition. The other Indian saw that it would be useless to continue the fight, for the other whites were returning fast.

He turned and made for the boat, Bob at his heels. The youth suspected that the man was going after a gun, and he was right. But he hardly had the revolver in his hand when Bob pounced upon him and wrenched the weapon from his grip. One hard blow put him out of the fight.

Then, for the first time, Bob drew a long breath. He was panting and gasping from exertion, but he hurried over to Professor Bigelow.

“Are you all right?” he asked.

“Yes,” the professor replied, getting to his feet. And then: “That was a wonderful fight you put up, Bob. If you had come much later, the Indians would have escaped with the boat and our provisions.”

“So that was their game!” said Mr. Lewis angrily, glancing at the still limp Indian on shore. “They wanted to put you out and then escape with the boats, leaving us here to starve!”

He drew his fist, and for a moment it looked as if another fight were going to take place.

“Just for that we should desert them,” gritted Joe.

“Can hardly do that,” said Mr. Holton. “It would amount to the same as murder for robbery, and such punishment is unjust. Now if they had killed one of our party it might be different. Even then I’d hesitate to do it.”

“But they’ve got to have some kind of punishment,” persisted Joe. “Who

knows but that they'll attempt the same thing later?"

"We'll have to keep a close lookout," returned the professor. "If we see any more treachery we won't dare take any more chances."

The other members of the crew could not understand the actions of the two would-be deserters, and at once cast them aside as traitors, calling them names which, had they been translated into English, would have been extremely shocking to civilized persons.

In a short time the two Indians emerged into consciousness, and they sat awaiting any fate that might be thrust upon them. The explorers were at a loss to know what to do with the men, but they finally decided to give them hard jobs in full view of all, so that they could neither escape again with the boats nor get the others of the crew to thinking their way.

"Probably won't have any more trouble," remarked Mr. Lewis, as they prepared to start up the river again. "We'll keep a sharp lookout, and if we see any more dishonesty we'll act accordingly."

The specimens were prepared, and they resumed the journey up the river, hoping that few more days would pass before they found the unknown Indians. The whites were anxious and yet rather fearful to come in contact with them, fortified as the boats were. Professor Bigelow, however, took the matter lightly, and often when his friends thought of his numerous visits to strange tribes, many of them hostile, they were inclined to cast aside their worries and leave the future happenings to him. For surely, with his wide experience, he could see to any predicament.

"We want to make good time today," said Mr. Holton. "Twenty-five miles, at least."

"We will," Joe's father assured him. "Unless," he added, "more rapids hold us back."

"I don't think—I hardly believe they will," Professor Bigelow said, but this was a statement of hope rather than of conviction.

Bob and Joe constantly took motion pictures of the country they were passing through, and often they took the cameras with them on hunting trips, to photograph not only wild life but any adventures that they might have. The number of feet of exposed film had grown to nearly a thousand, and they intended to make it several more before they "closed" the picture. They were allowed four thousand feet and fully expected to use all of it.

The next day after the fracas with the traitorous Indians, they were paddling swiftly along when suddenly there was a jar and a crash, and the foremost boat

was sent aside and heading in the opposite direction. At once the explorers were on their feet and had their rifles in ready grasp. They cautiously peered over the side into the river, half expecting to see a dozen or more savages leap out and make for the boat.

But no savages came. Instead there arose a large black body, nearly ten feet long, shaped like a seal, with the faintest suggestion of fins protruding from its side. For a moment it glanced about, then swam on up the river.

"A manatee," said Mr. Holton. "Or sea-cow, if you prefer that name."

"Sure is a whopper," observed Joe. "Looks like it might be dangerous. Is it?"

"No," his father replied. "One of the most harmless animals of South America."

Mr. Lewis raised his rifle to bring the creature down as a specimen, but just as he prepared to pull the trigger it darted below the water and swam off at a rapid pace, leaving a thin streak of ripples behind. Then the naturalists saw that shooting would mean only a waste of bullets.

A few miles on they came upon another rapids and saw that it would be necessary to lay a portage of logs along the river bank in order to get the boats through. Anxious to make time, they worked untiringly and had the task completed in a short time.

"Now to get the boats through," said Mr. Holton, beginning to unload their contents.

The canoes were heavy, even with the provisions removed, and it required all the combined strength of the whites and the Indian crew to get them beyond the rough stretch. But the undertaking was finally finished.

Next the provisions were carried around, placed in the boats, and the latter were moved into the river. At last the strenuous task was completed.

"Ready to go again?" asked Joe.

"It's about noon," said Professor Bigelow. "I suggest that we get a lunch."

The others agreed, and an ample repast was prepared.

Then Mr. Lewis advised that they take it easy under low palm trees. The others, with the exception of Bob and Joe, were glad of a chance to repose. The boys, however, were restless and eager to explore the surrounding territory. Unlike their elders, their tireless limbs cried out for action, even after hard labor.

"We'll be careful and not take any chances," Joe assured the men.

But had they realized what dangerous country they were in, they would

never have started out.

CHAPTER XXI

Magnificent Country

THERE was a rocky hill not far away, and it was Joe who expressed a desire to go over and climb to the top.

“Fairly high,” he remarked. “Ought to be able to get a good view of the surrounding territory.”

“Yes,” Bob agreed. “Maybe we can catch sight of an Indian village in the distance. The unknown tribe! Be fine if we could be the ones to locate it, wouldn’t it?”

“Sure would. Professor Bigelow would be delighted beyond words. Think of the rumpus he’d kick up if we announced that we’d found the savages he’s been hunting.”

It was a distance of less than a half-mile to the foot of the knoll, and the youths made it in a very few minutes. Then they began the task of climbing the jagged side. There was little vegetation to hinder their progress, although twisted vines and shrubs were rather numerous on the ground.

“The undergrowth offers footholds that we could not otherwise find,” said Bob. “Here’s a place where it comes in handy, even though most of the time it’s merely something to avoid.”

At last, panting and perspiring, the youths reached the top of the hill and then turned to glance down below. Jungle, jungle, jungle! Nothing but heavily wooded country stretched before them. As far as the eye could see the great tropical forest loomed up—in green, brown, red. It was as though all the world were covered with dense vegetation. The boys turned about.

On the other side was the river, winding through gulches and hills and stretching out of sight in the distance. Opposite the hill were the boats, and under trees not far away were the explorers resting peacefully in the shade.

It was a spectacular view, and Bob and Joe spent several minutes in silently gazing down.

“No evidence of human habitation anywhere around,” remarked Bob, trying to single out a settlement somewhere in the distance.

In the vast, silent jungle sound travels far, and realizing this, the youths

shouted to the others, to let them know of their commanding position.

“Now let’s get down from here and tramp on through the forest,” said Joe, finding a foothold in the heavy soil.

It was necessary to exercise more care in descending, for the rocks were pointed and dangerous to step on. A safe place had to be felt out cautiously.

The youths reached the bottom in a very short time, however, and followed a narrow trail that wound out of sight.

“Be impossible to cut through this jungle if there were no trails of any kind,” said Bob, his keen eyes unable to penetrate the tangled mass of vegetation on either side of them.

“Not without a machete, anyway,” nodded Joe. “Even then it would be a hard job.”

The youths hiked on until they came to a small stream that emptied into the river. They sat down on the bank to take in their surroundings.

On the other side of the stream was a break in the ground that indicated the presence of a gully—how steep, they did not know. They resolved to find out as soon as they had rested.

“Unless,” said Joe, “we can’t get across the creek. Never can tell how many alligators and piranhas have migrated here from the river.”

He picked up a stone and threw it with all his strength into the muddy water, hoping to arouse any life that might be lurking sluggishly out of sight. Once he thought he detected a slight ripple other than that caused by the stone but was not sure.

“Don’t believe I care to wade it,” backed out Bob. “Wouldn’t feel funny to have a toe nipped off by a piranha, or worse yet, to be carried into an alligator’s lair. Suppose we throw a log across for safety.”

They spent several more minutes sitting on the bank in idleness. At last Joe got up and looked about the near-by jungle.

“No logs around here,” he called to Bob, who had wandered along the bank.

Further search was not in vain. A small tree that had been uprooted by a hurricane lay in a patch of bushes not far away, and it was carried to the stream and thrown across. Then the youths began carefully walking along its narrow surface.

Bob reached the other side first, and he warned his friend to be careful. Joe was, and in a few moments also had crossed the log.

“Now let’s see what’s beyond that ravine,” he said.

They walked over to the edge and then halted abruptly, awe-stricken and spellbound at the wonderful panorama that stretched out before them. They were standing at the brink of a two-hundred-foot canyon, which sloped down and back up to form a perfect U. At the very bottom was a large grove of huge red flowers, which added not a little to the beauty of the scene.

“Some view,” breathed Joe, gazing far ahead at the distant jungle.

Bob nodded. “Bet we can see twenty miles or more,” he said. “And nothing but dense jungle.”

The youths spent several more minutes in looking off into space. They could not tear themselves away from the wonderful view. It seemed almost impossible to come suddenly upon such a gulch in a land that seemed fairly level.

At last Bob shouldered his rifle as a signal to move on.

“Can’t spend too much time here if we expect to do any more exploring,” he said, looking at his watch. “They’ll expect us back in another hour.”

“Where’ll we go next?”

“No difference to me. How about down the hill?”

They hiked down the gradual slope of the canyon, although the jungle was in places impenetrable.

When about halfway down, Joe stopped suddenly, his face an ashen gray, his limbs trembling. Bob’s eyes opened wide, and he clutched his rifle tightly.

The next moment there came a horrid hiss, and the thirty-foot anaconda lunged forward.

CHAPTER XXII

Lost in the Wilds of Brazil

THE largest snake of Brazil was about to strike and enfold the youths in its terrible coils. And that could mean but one thing—death in an awful form.

Slowly Bob and Joe raised their rifles and took careful aim at the horrible head. They must not miss. Here, if ever, was a need for accurate shooting.

There came another hiss, and the reptile glided still closer, its wicked eyes gleaming in the sunlight. It was moving stealthily, as if wondering which of the boys to make for.

“Now!” whispered Bob and a second later pulled the trigger.

Bang! Bang! Two rifles spoke, but only one found the mark. It would have been a difficult task for even an expert marksman to strike that small swaying head. And Bob and Joe were not expert marksmen, although the former was much better than the average.

But the bullet had only glanced the top of the head and had done no real damage. The reptile was only more enraged.

“Run!” cried Joe, as he saw that the anaconda was preparing to strike.

“One more shot,” whispered back Bob, again raising his rifle. “I’m afraid we couldn’t get far if we ran.”

Again the rifles spoke, and this time, thanks to the young hunters’ courage, both bullets smashed into the head and shattered it. The great snake thrashed about in its death struggle, the coils describing circles and curves. At last it quieted down and lay still. For the first time it had been defeated.

Bob and Joe waited several minutes for any other signs of life, but none came. They moved up to examine the great body, which lay stretched out over a radius of fifteen feet.

“Thicker than a man’s leg,” observed Joe, who was still unsteady from the terrible encounter.

“An unusually large specimen,” commented Bob. “Think of the excitement our dads would stir up if they could see it.”

“They might take it back to the States,” said Joe. “Only—I doubt if it would

be much good to them with the head shattered as it is.”

The boys spent several more minutes in examining the anaconda. Then, unwilling to lose precious time, they started on down the decline. They intended at least to reach the other side before turning back.

“Steep along here,” said Joe, as they came to a rocky edge.

“Couldn’t fall far,” his friend remarked. “The heavy vegetation would catch you before you’d fallen ten feet. But even then I wouldn’t care to lose my balance and come up against a tree.”

The young explorers stumbled on to the bottom and then began the ascent of the opposite side.

Suddenly they heard a vicious snarl and looked back to see that a large, powerful jaguar was poised ready to spring. Its wicked eyes shone like beads as it bared its sharp teeth.

Slowly the youths raised their rifles and took steady aim. Joe was the first to pull the trigger, and a moment later Bob followed.

A part snarl, part whine came from the beast, and it weaved as if going to fall. But it righted itself and then again prepared to spring.

“It’s up to you, Bob,” murmured Joe in a tone that he tried to keep steady. “My rifle’s empty. Can’t get it loaded in time.”

Bob frowned.

A second later he raised his gun to fire, but it caught on a sharp protruding branch and was wrenched from his grasp. With a frightened glance at the huge cat he turned to run, and Joe was at his heels.

The boys well knew that they had little chance of escape in that dense jungle, but they resolved to retreat as fast as their legs would carry them. And the fact that the jaguar was severely wounded gave them courage to run with all the strength they could muster.

“Good thing you got him in the leg,” panted Joe, as they made for a faintly outlined path not far away. “We wouldn’t have had a chance in the world otherwise.”

As Joe said, the boys would have proved no match for the animal’s agility had it not been wounded. Even as it was, they knew that the great cat was gaining rapidly. In no time it would be upon them.

A few yards down, the path branched into several directions. They chose the one to the right, for no reason at all. It offered no better chance of escape than did the others.

“Oh!” groaned Joe, imagining that he could feel the hot breath of the beast. “We can’t keep this up much longer.”

The youths refused to lose heart, however, and continued as rapidly as they could. At several other places the trail branched, and they followed the widest and most clearly defined. They had no notion of where they were going. In fact they did not care, as long as they were outdistancing their terrible enemy.

At last they found it impossible to continue the flight. Their breath gone completely; their hearts were beating like triphammers.

With a sudden movement Bob wheeled about and brought out his hunting knife, just as the jaguar prepared to spring. The great cat lunged forward, bearing the youth to the ground. As he fell, Bob summoned all his strength and plunged the sharp blade of the knife deep into the animal’s side at a point where he judged it would find the heart. His aim was true. With one last cough the beast rolled over and lay still. The knife plus Bob’s courage had proven too much for even its brute strength.

For a time the youth could not speak. At last he managed to blurt out a few almost unintelligible words to Joe, who had been helpless to render aid during the death struggle.

Joe sighed and shook his head. “Another narrow escape!” he breathed, picturing what would have happened had not Bob made use of his hunting knife.

The boys spent only a short time in examining the great cat, for they were anxious to get back to the boats at once.

“Let’s hurry back to camp,” moved Bob, looking at his watch. “We’ve been gone several hours. Doesn’t seem possible, does it?”

But little did the young hunters dream that they were miles from the boats and their elders—that they had unknowingly penetrated deeper and deeper into this dense jungle.

After one last look at the great jaguar, the chums started back down the trail, heading for the boats. They wondered what kind of a reception their fathers would give them after being gone so long.

Ten minutes of constant hiking brought them to a spot where the trail branched into four or five other paths, each winding in a slightly different direction from the others. Which branch should they take to get back to camp?

“Strange,” mused Joe. “I thought sure we could pick out the right branch. But you know we didn’t have much time for thought when that jaguar was chasing us.”

The youths spent fully ten minutes in trying to decide on which trail they

had turned out, but in the end they were no more enlightened than they were at the start. They tried to remember some landmark that might be suggestive but could not. The heavy Amazonian jungle had proven too much for their memories.

But they refused to admit that they were beaten, and at last chose the middle trail, as it seemed more like the one they had followed. There was no use giving up without showing fight. They walked on constantly and at last came to another place where the path branched. Here again they were at a loss to know which direction to take.

“Believe it’s the one to the left,” concluded Joe, scratching his head thoughtfully.

“I’m sure I don’t know,” the other said. “But if you think you’re right, we may as well follow it.”

They did follow it. One, two, three miles they hiked. But where was the canyon?

“We’re surely on the wrong course,” said Bob, glancing at his pedometer. “Three miles is farther than we went before. And we haven’t come to the spot where I dropped my gun yet. Suppose we go back and try another trail.”

Joe was willing, and they retraced their footsteps, at last coming to the place where the path branched.

“Suppose we try the one to the right,” suggested Joe, and they did.

But when, after a half-hour’s tramp, they made no more headway than before, they saw the futility of continuing on this trail. Again they went back and took another direction. And again they failed to come to Bob’s rifle. The youths continued the search for several hours, never ceasing. But each time they met with failure. The cruel Brazilian forest was not to be conquered by man.

Finally, exhausted and baffled to the extreme, they sat down on a decaying tree trunk. The stark truth had at last dawned on them. They were lost—lost in the wilds of Brazil!

CHAPTER XXIII

Terrible Cries of Savages

“**O**H, why did we have to wander so far away!” moaned Joe, rapidly losing his nerve. “We should have known better than to try to penetrate this endless jungle.”

Bob was equally touched, but he resolved to keep up hope. There was no use in tamely submitting to fear so soon. One more search might bring them to the river, and then it would be easy to find the boats.

“We’ll come out all right,” he said, “although I’ll admit we’re in a tight fix.”

The youths rested for nearly a half-hour. Then their strength—and to some extent their hope—restored, they again took up the task of finding the right trail.

Back and forth they hiked, confident that at last they would happen upon it. But search as they did, their efforts were in vain. The cruel Brazilian jungle was not to be conquered by man.

At last, satisfied that nothing could be gained by continuing such efforts, Joe moved that they take one of the other trails in the hope that it would lead them to the river.

“All right,” said Bob. “No use trying to find the one we followed when running from the jaguar.”

Joe had reloaded his rifle, and Bob had placed his hunting knife ready for instant use. They were taking no chances on meeting some formidable jungle beast.

The path that they now followed was wider than the others and consequently was more likely to lead to some definite spot. But neither of the chums was sure that they were heading for the river. It might lead them fifty miles away, for all they knew. Still they hiked on.

“Do you know,” remarked Bob, when another hour had passed, “that I’m beginning to think that these trails were not cut by wild animals! They’re too closely defined. Now take this one, for example. See how wide it is? And look over there. The vegetation’s been *cut* by a machete.”

Joe grew suddenly pale. He clutched his rifle tighter.

“You mean—savages?” he demanded, at the same time looking sharply about.

“I may be wrong,” Bob said quietly, “but that is my opinion. And as we’re about in the region inhabited by the savage tribe that Professor Bigelow was searching for, it seems that these paths could have been cut by them. What do you think?”

“I’m all too afraid that you’re right,” was the reply. “And we’ll have to be very careful from now on. At the slightest unfamiliar sound we’ll have to hide.”

Bob groaned.

“If I only had my rifle,” he cried. “Or if I had brought my revolver it wouldn’t be quite as bad.”

But there was no use regretting something that could not be helped, and Bob and Joe resolved to meet conditions as they were. Perhaps if it should happen that Indians discovered them, it would be best not to use their weapons except in self-defense. If the natives’ good will could be gained, it would not only help them but be of benefit to Professor Bigelow also.

All the remainder of that afternoon the youths tramped on up the trail, hoping to burst at last upon the river. They were tired and downhearted when finally they stopped by a small spring of cool water. Experience had taught them that in the great majority of cases these jungle springs were ideal drinking places and that only a very few were poisoned. So they drank freely of the refreshing liquid and felt much better for it.

“Better stop here for the night, hadn’t we?” asked Bob, taking in the surrounding country.

“Yes,” his friend replied. “There’s a good place to sleep,” pointing to a large hollow in the ground.

A little later darkness fell suddenly, and with it came the usual chill of the atmosphere. Joe had some matches in a small waterproof box, and he took them out and ignited the dry branches of an uprooted tree. The fire blazed lively up into the black reaches of the jungle, giving off heat that was welcomed by the two chums as they sat close together.

Before retiring, they took account of their weapons and ammunition. Joe’s rifle was the only firearm in their possession, but both boys had a large supply of cartridges that should last a long time. With cautious use they might make them satisfy their needs for several days. But after that? Still there was no use worrying about the future. They could let it take care of itself. At present they were safe.

“I’ll take the first guard,” said Bob, half an hour later. “You turn in and get several hours’ sleep. I’ll call you when the night’s half over.”

Joe grudgingly consented. He had intended to stand watch first.

Bob heaped the fire up high and had a good supply of fuel ready to keep it blazing constantly.

But when ten minutes had passed he smothered it down to half the size it had been. It was not wise to keep it too high, for though it was a sure protection from wild animals, it might attract the attention of hostile Indians.

“Have to prevent that at any cost,” the young man thought.

Bob sat moodily fingering his rifle, gazing into the dark depths of the jungle. From afar came a terrorizing howl of some beast that had fallen victim of a stronger enemy. Shortly later there came another howl of different origin. Then another, another, until the whole jungle rang with fiendish cries.

It was enough to frighten anyone, and Bob stared rather fearfully into the surrounding forest, wondering what tragedies were going on at that moment.

“Probably scores of creatures being killed,” he thought, shifting uneasily.

Nothing happened throughout his watch, and he at last moved over and tapped Joe on the back. The latter jumped to his feet as if shot, and gazed fearfully about, as if expecting to see a band of cannibals rush in on them. But a moment later he smiled sheepishly.

“Guess I was dreaming,” he said, taking his position on a log.

Bob readily sympathized with his chum, for the day had been a strenuous one, and their endurance had been taxed severely.

“We’ll surely find a way out tomorrow,” Bob said, curling up in the hollow.

“Hope so,” was the reply.

Joe’s watch was also devoid of incident, and late the next morning he called the other youth from his slumber.

They were obliged to begin the day without any breakfast, although they were extremely hungry. They could have shot some small animal, but Bob thought it wise to wait until noon.

“By that time,” he said hopefully, “maybe we’ll have found the river—or something else.”

They followed the same trail until Joe stopped and looked about.

“We’re not getting any place as things are,” he said. “Seems to me the river should be over in that direction.”

“I think so too,” agreed Bob. “There should be plenty of branch paths that

would take us over there.”

They found one before another five minutes had passed, and turned onto its narrow surface.

“The world’s greatest jungle,” mused Bob, shaking his head.

“Sure is a whopper,” the other agreed. “Wonderful. I had no idea it would have such a wide variety of plants, and that it could be so dense.”

All that morning the boys spent in vainly searching for the river. The trail that they had turned onto continued, but where it would lead to they did not know. It might have gradually circled several miles out of the way.

During that desperate search the chums saw a large number of all types of wild animals, although none happened to be dangerous. Monkeys crowded thickly down to the lowest boughs, small gnawing creatures darted across the path, brightly colored birds flew swiftly overhead. Occasionally the boys could get a glimpse of a snake slinking through the underbrush. It was a wonderful menagerie and could have been enjoyed to the full had they not been in such a terrible plight.

“Do you know,” remarked Bob, his eyes on a small creature, “I believe these animals are used to seeing people.”

Joe looked around inquiringly.

“Now take that small furred creature that just passed,” Bob continued. “Did you notice how wary it seemed? One glance at us was enough to send it running back at full speed. They never did that before. Now here’s what I think: we’re in a country inhabited either by rubber gatherers or Indians. Why rubber gatherers would be so far from civilization I don’t know, unless——”

“I don’t think they would be,” interrupted Joe. “We didn’t come across any boat that they might have come in. And of course they wouldn’t have come all these hundreds of miles by land.”

“Then it’s Indians. Savages, cannibals, maybe, for all we know. It’s their bows and arrows that have scared these wild animals out of their wits.”

The youths knew not what to make of the situation. There could easily be Indians in this region, for Professor Bigelow was almost sure they were near the strange savage tribe that Otari told about. But how the natives would treat these two lone whites was a mystery. If there should be a battle the youths knew that their rifle could be relied upon only as long as the supply of cartridges lasted. Then they would be compelled to surrender.

“I have a plan,” stated Joe, several minutes later. “If anything should happen that we are discovered by savages, it might be best to act extremely

exhausted, as if we couldn't stand up a minute longer. We could even fall in our tracks before they quite get sight of us. The chances are they would sympathize with us and take us into their village."

"Then what?"

"We could gain their friendship and have them lead us to the river."

"Fine!" cried Bob Holton, his hope renewed. "Takes you to think of some plan to get us out of danger. Most likely we could carry it out, for these savages are only grown children when it comes to catching on to anything unusual. But we'd have to be very careful and keep a close watch for any treachery."

Along toward noon the youths began to look for game. They were by now furiously hungry and felt as if they could devour almost any creature that would fall at the report of their rifle.

They did not have to wait long before a large duck-like bird flew over and perched on a tree bough, not twenty feet away. Joe handed his rifle to his chum.

"Take a shot at it," urged Joe. "We may not see another chance as good."

Bob aimed carefully and fired just as the bird prepared to take flight. A moment later feathers flew and the creature fluttered to the ground.

"Hurrah!" cried Joe. "Now we eat!"

A fire was built of dead wood in the vicinity, and the young hunters' quarry was placed over the flames to bake. Before long a delicious odor filled the clearing, and the youths prepared a feast fit for a king.

"Roast duck! Think of that!" cried Joe.

The bird tasted good, despite the fact that it was rather tough. Bob and Joe ate heartily, until only a small portion was left. Then they stretched themselves on the soft grass for a short rest.

"I feel like getting some sleep," remarked Joe. "But of course——"

He stopped suddenly and strained his ears to listen.

Bob looked inquiringly but remained quiet.

A moment later there came a long, weird chant that cut through the thin jungle air with remarkable clearness. It was repeated several times, always nearer. Never before had the youths heard anything like it, and they were intensely bewildered.

Bob looked inquiringly at his friend, but the latter could give no explanation.

"Beyond me," he muttered.

Again the cry came, and then the boys jumped to their feet in horror.

“Savages!” cried Bob excitedly. “Indians—wild Indians. They’re coming this way!”

CHAPTER XXIV

The Hideous Village

“OH!” groaned Bob hopelessly. “Guess it’s all up with us.”

“No, it isn’t,” the other youth retorted. “You remember what we said to do in such an emergency, don’t you? Act extremely exhausted, as if we couldn’t move another foot. Lie on the ground—do anything to make them feel sorry for us. They will if the thing is carried out right.”

The cries were gradually getting louder, indicating that the Indians were coming closer. Occasionally some savage would chant louder than the others, and then there would be a grand chorus of shouts and yells.

“They’re getting nearer,” muttered Joe. “Come on, let’s lie on the ground. Act as if you’re half dead.”

The youths threw themselves on the soft grass and awaited developments.

They had not long to wait.

A figure burst into view from around a bend in the trail. Another, followed by fully twenty other savages, their gruesome faces showing surprise and bewilderment at sight of the youths.

Who were these persons—persons of a strange color? Were they enemies? Were they on the ground waiting for a chance to kill? What was that strange long thing that was beside them? What were they doing here? Had they been sent down from the sky to bring destruction to villages, or had they wandered from an unknown region in the remote beyond?

For fully ten minutes the savages were silent. Then they began chattering loudly and moved stealthily up to the boys, bows and arrows and blowguns in readiness.

Bob and Joe waited in terrible suspense, half expecting to be pierced by deadly weapons. The youths longed to move about, if only for a moment. Once Joe felt an itching along his back, and the desire to scratch was almost uncontrollable, but he finally managed to remain quiet.

An Indian that was evidently the chief felt of the boys’ bodies and limbs carefully, while his men looked on, ready to send an arrow at once if necessary. At last, after feeling the beating of the boys’ hearts, the native regained his feet

and conversed with the others.

Then Bob and Joe were picked up by strong arms and carried through the jungle.

Where would they be taken? What was to be their fate? Could they gain the friendship of the savages? These questions were in the youths' minds as they were being carried along the trail.

"Maybe they're going to put us in boiling water," thought Joe, and he shuddered in spite of himself. "But then," he finally reasoned, "they probably won't do that. After all, very few tribes are cannibalistic."

How long the tramp continued, Bob and Joe did not know, but at last, after what seemed several hours, they came to a spot where the path broadened into twice the original width, and a few minutes later they parted the bushes and came to a large native village, where at least sixty wild Indians were walking about. At sight of the warriors and their burdens the Indians rushed forward and crowded around, their eagerness to get a view of the strange people resembling that of small children at a circus.

There was a turmoil of excited chattering, in which everyone took part. Questions flew thick and fast, and it was all the warriors could do to answer them.

Bob and Joe were placed in one of the native huts and for a short time left to themselves. There was a crude door at the entrance, and this was shut to keep out the curious.

Then for the first time they opened their eyes and looked about.

"We're in a fairly large hut," whispered Bob, glancing about. "And there are several pieces of furniture to keep us company. Over there is a kind of a table, laden down with pots and—— Hurrah! There's our rifle. What do you know about that!"

"They're certainly generous," admitted Joe. "It's a wonder they didn't take it and start pulling the trigger, which would no doubt have resulted in five or ten of them getting their brains blown out."

"But now," mused Bob, "what do you think? What'll they do with us?"

"I don't happen to know," was the response. "But we'll——"

He ceased abruptly, as he noticed that the door was opening. The youths took a sitting position and tried to act as innocent as they could.

A second later the chief entered, followed by ten others. They stopped short when they noticed that the boys were sitting up, and stared in wonder.

Bob and Joe threw their hands apart in a gesture of helplessness and smiled gratefully. Bob beckoned the men to come in the hut.

They stood undecidedly at first, but finally, convinced that these strangers meant no harm, moved on in the dwelling.

Then the boys did all they could to convey the idea that they were thankful to the Indians for saving them from death from exhaustion, and in the end it looked as if they had succeeded. Not until the big chief smiled, however, did they feel secure, for there were grim looks on the faces of all the savages. But when the chief showed his teeth in friendship, the youths felt that the battle was won. With the head native on their side things looked a great deal brighter.

"Now for something to eat," said Bob to his chum. "I'm not particular what it is, just so it's nourishing."

He put his hands to his mouth, and began working his jaws as if chewing. Then he imitated drinking. The chief understood, and he gave directions to one of his men, who dashed off to another part of the village.

Meanwhile the others stood gazing at the youths, who in their sun-tanned condition were scarcely less dark than the Indians themselves.

In a short time the Indian returned with plates and pots of food, which he placed on the ground beside them.

"Do you suppose the stuff's all right?" asked Joe, hesitating to begin eating.

"Don't know why it wouldn't be," Bob returned. "Why should they poison us? At present we're too much of a curiosity to kill. They'll at least wait for the novelty to wear off."

The food tasted good despite the fact that the boys were ignorant as to what it was. They ate heartily, and in a very short time their strength was restored.

Then by signs they asked permission to walk around the village. At first the natives hesitated, but at last the chief nodded in approval, and the youths got to their feet.

"If we could just speak some of their language," said Bob, as they went out of the thatched house.

"Be easy then," affirmed Joe. "But maybe we can get them to take us to the river, and then Professor Bigelow can talk with them."

The chief led the way around the settlement, pointing with pride to many articles that were the results of the Indians' handiwork. Many objects were totally new to the boys, and they viewed them with interest. But when they came to one large hut they saw something that turned their blood cold with horror.

Hanging thickly on the walls were scores of dried human heads, their features perfectly preserved. In fact the ghastly trophies were so thick that there were no cracks between them.

Bob and Joe glanced around the room in terrible awe. Suddenly, as they turned about, their eyes fell on something that again caused them to be horror-stricken, this time more than before.

Near the corner were two heads that were—white!

“Explorers,” breathed Bob, rather nervously. “Or were they missionaries? At any rate these heads were those of white men—and they’ve been killed for their heads!”

The youths felt fairly sick, and once Joe reeled as if to fall. But he got a grip on himself and resolved to take matters as they were. At present they were in no danger. The terrible and yet genial chief seemed to be their friend. But how soon his lust to kill would come to the surface they did not know.

They spent no more time at the horrible trophy house, for it contained such things as one might see in a nightmare. Bob and Joe made up their minds to seek out something more pleasant.

They found it in a large board that had lines crossing and crisscrossing from one side to the other. The chief got out a box and took out several wooden pegs, which he placed in the spaces on the board. He moved them back and forth and laughed.

“Must be some kind of a game,” concluded Bob, thoroughly interested.

The boys spent several hours in touring the village, and although they were constantly enfolded by the crowd of curious savages, they enjoyed the experience. It was unique and different, but they felt some repulsion for the various activities carried on by these heathen people.

“All right for a visit,” mused Joe, “but I don’t think I’d care to live here.”

“I’d feel a whole lot safer back in the boats with our dads and the professor,” said Bob, as he thought of the hideous dried human heads. “Still,” he went on, “I suppose we should do all we can to help Professor Bigelow. Here is a chance for him to get plenty of information of the kind that he wants most.”

Late that afternoon Bob and Joe took the rifle and, motioning for the chief to follow, started into the jungle just back of the village. They intended to give the native a real surprise and thrill, such as he had never before had.

At last he went with them, probably wondering what the strange whites had in mind, but willing to find out.

“Maybe we can show him how to kill a jaguar,” said Joe, keeping a sharp watch over the forest.

No game was in the immediate vicinity of the village, owing to the frequent hunting trips made by the savages. But when they had gone several miles there came fresh signs that wild creatures were close by.

Suddenly they caught sight of a large tapir rooting in the tall grass.

Bob took the rifle and, motioning to the Indian, he pointed to the gun and then to the animal.

A moment later he pulled the trigger.

At the report of the weapon the big Indian jumped in fright and was on the verge of running back to the village, when Bob pointed again to the gun and then to the tapir, which was now dead. Then for the first time the chief caught the meaning, and he looked at the boys with something like worship in his eyes.

What strange magic was this? A long thing that spouted fire had killed a tapir instantly, without a struggle. These people must be gods.

From that moment on, the chief's friendship for the youths increased to devotion, which at times promised to be embarrassing. But Bob and Joe did not care. This would be all the better opportunity for Professor Bigelow to secure information on the savages' daily life and customs.

The three hunters trudged on farther, hoping to stir up more game. The boys wished particularly to get a shot at a jaguar, so that the power of the gun could be demonstrated still further.

“The old boy'd just about throw a fit if he saw the rifle pot off the king of Brazilian wild beasts,” smiled Joe.

At last they burst through a thick mass of vegetation and found themselves on the bank of a small stream.

At once Bob and Joe were wild with delight, for this stream evidently was a tributary of the river. And the river was what they wanted to find above all else.

“Hurrah!” cried Joe, overwhelmed with delight. “We've as good as found our party already!”

CHAPTER XXV

Reunion at Last

THE chief was puzzled by the actions of Bob and Joe, and the boys realized it, but there was no use trying to explain. It would take more than signs to convey the idea that more whites were near the river.

“Suppose we try to get him to go with us,” suggested Joe. “Think he will?”

“Hard to say. We’ll find out.”

The youths beckoned the Indian to come with them, and they were surprised to find that he did so without hesitation.

“He probably intends to do anything we ask from now on,” said Bob. “Our ability to kill wild beasts with fire was too much for him. Maybe he thinks he’ll die like the tapir if he refuses.”

There was a narrow trail along the bank of the stream, and Bob led the way down it, followed by Joe and the chief. The boys intended to make as much time as possible, for they wished to reach the river as soon as they could. How far away it was, they did not know. Perhaps a large number of miles.

“If we can just keep the chief with us everything will turn out fine,” said Bob.

All the rest of that day they trudged on, keeping their rifle ready for any savage jungle beast that might show itself. The Indian kept with them tirelessly, and many times he proved of valuable assistance in pointing out the easiest course through the underbrush.

Along toward evening they stopped at a large open space that was devoid of vegetation.

“Better stay here for the night, hadn’t we?” asked Joe.

“Yes,” Bob replied. “You stay here and build a fire while the chief and I go in search of game. Don’t think you’ll be in any danger. We’ll be back in a short time.”

Bob and the Indian started out down the bank of the stream, confident that they would see game sooner or later.

They had not far to go.

At a sharp bend in the trail a small animal, the name of which Bob did not know, darted out and made for the water.

But it did not get there.

Bang! came the report of the rifle, and the bullet sped straight. The creature fell dead at once.

This time the Indian did not show signs of fear, for he knew what was to come. Instead he looked at Bob with awe and wonder in his eyes.

Back at the clearing they found that Joe had started a large fire. The warmth of it felt good as the chill of the fast-approaching night fell.

"You did have some luck, didn't you?" observed Joe. "Wonder if it'll be good eating."

"Hope so."

The animal was skinned with Bob's hunting knife and placed over the fire to bake. Then the three sat together to witness the falling of night. As usual it came suddenly, and they huddled closer to the fire.

In time the animal was thoroughly baked, and then they began the meal.

Suddenly the chief got up and dashed through the jungle out of sight, leaving the youths to wonder at this sudden departure.

"Think he's gone?" asked Joe, trying to catch sight of the Indian through the dense vegetation.

"Doesn't seem possible that he'd desert us as abruptly as this," replied Bob. "He seemed to be all our friend."

The youths waited silently, almost convinced that the man had left for good.

But a moment later he emerged from the jungle as suddenly as he had disappeared. In his arms were several varieties of what was evidently wild fruit.

He ran toward the boys with a smile as he glanced first at the roasted animal and then at the fruit he was carrying. When he reached the fire he deposited the stuff near, and then sat down to eat.

"A welcome addition to the meal," said Bob joyfully. "Takes these savages to know what all the vast forest contains that's nourishing."

Nevertheless the young men were careful to see that the Indian ate first before they sampled any of the wild fruit.

"Take no chances," remarked Joe. "Ten to one he means no harm, but it's best to be on the safe side."

The chief ate of everything, however, and then the boys followed suit. They found that all of the fruit was delicious, with flavors that they had never before

tasted.

There were large, round melons, like a cross between a watermelon and a cantaloup. There were bulbs resembling potatoes, bunches of small bright-colored berries, and wild bananas.

It was a meal unlike any that the boys had ever eaten. They felt like savages themselves, and were delighted that soon they would come to the river.

“Won’t it be wonderful to see our party again?” asked Joe, deeply touched.

“Sure will,” Bob replied. “But we don’t want to be too sure that everything will turn out all right. Something else may turn up that’s not expected.”

After the feast the three sat in silence, watching the moon float silently and majestically over the great jungle.

At last Joe turned to put more fuel on the fire.

“Hadn’t some of us better turn in?” he asked. “We’ve had a tough time of it today and need rest.”

Bob agreed, and they set about arranging watches.

“I’ll be the first guard,” announced Joe. “You and the chief curl up by the fire and get some sleep. I’ll call you in a few hours. We’d better not disturb the Indian tonight.”

Thus it was arranged, and Joe sat idly beside the fire, his rifle near by.

His watch passed without incident, and at last he tapped Bob on the back. They changed positions, Joe retiring and Bob keeping a lookout for intruders.

Despite the fact that Bob had a strange feeling that something would happen, the night passed peacefully, although the youth was confident that wild animals were just beyond the zone of firelight.

In the morning Joe and the Indian were up early, preparing to hike on. The former still did not know where the boys were going or what their purpose was, but he showed no signs of hesitation.

“We want to see the river today,” remarked Bob, as they again took up the trail.

“I think we will,” the other youth returned. “We made good time yesterday, and if the luck continues, we will today.”

All morning they tramped without a stop. They were tired and exhausted, but did not wish to lose time until necessary.

About noon they came to another clearing, and Bob moved that they stop for the noon meal.

The chief and Joe went into the jungle a short distance away to gather wild

fruit, which alone was to serve as their meal.

In a short time they returned with a bountiful supply, and then the feast began.

“Several new additions to our menu today,” remarked Bob, as he noticed that there were cocoanuts, roots like carrots, and a plant resembling cane.

The three ate heartily of everything, and then they started on.

“Stream’s getting wider,” observed Bob, several hours later.

“Yes,” returned Joe. “The river shouldn’t be very far away.”

He had scarcely uttered the words when they rounded a sharp curve and found themselves at the junction with the river.

For a moment the youths could hardly believe their eyes. Here at last was the thing they had been searching for all these days—the thing that would lead them to their fathers and the others of the party. Never had anything looked so good to them.

“At last!” breathed Joe, too delighted for words. “Now let’s hurry on up to the boats.”

“How do you know we should go up?” demanded Bob. “They could be easily farther downstream as well.”

“I know it,” was the response. “But it seems to me that I remember passing this stream several hours before we stopped.”

“All right. Let’s go.”

They had to search quite a while before a path was found that followed the river.

“If we keep up this good time, we’ll surely see the boats today—if they’re there to see,” said Bob, as he led the way up the trail.

Notwithstanding this, they hiked on constantly for the remainder of the afternoon without coming to the explorers’ boats.

“Perhaps if we fire rifle shots it will attract their attention,” said Joe, and he sent out three shots, repeating at intervals.

“What’s that?” said Joe, raising a hand for silence.

“Thought I heard an answering report,” he said. “But maybe—— Yes, there it is again. And there.”

Two shots had sounded from afar, and at once the boys responded with Joe’s rifle.

“Now let’s move on upstream,” said Bob. “If we can meet them halfway it

will be all the better.”

The youths again followed the trail, the Indian chief close behind them. They realized that the answering reports had come from afar and that it would take no little hiking to get to them.

About every five minutes Joe raised the rifle and fired, each time receiving an answering shot.

Finally, after an hour's constant traveling, they heard a crashing sound in the jungle not far ahead, and they were on the alert at once.

A moment later Mr. Lewis and Mr. Holton emerged and looked about.

Their eyes fell on Bob and Joe, and the men rushed forward in intense relief and thankfulness.

“Boys!” cried Mr. Holton, almost unable to believe his own eyes.

The next instant they were stammering out words of thanksgiving at finding their sons alive and apparently none the worse for their experience.

“We didn't see how you could possibly escape tragedy,” said Mr. Lewis gravely. “Getting lost in the vast Amazon jungle is a serious thing, especially when you have no food of any kind with you.”

“All the time we were in doubt as to how we'd come out,” said Bob. “Worst part of it was that we were afraid to hike far for fear of getting farther away from the river, but we knew we couldn't get any place sitting down.”

“Tell us all about it,” urged Mr. Holton, and the youths related their experience from start to finish. They told of shooting the jaguar, of the necessary abandoning of Bob's rifle, and of the flight that followed. And at last of coming across the strange tribe of Indians that was probably the one Professor Bigelow had been searching for.

“A fearful experience,” breathed Mr. Lewis, when the youths had finished. “Not many could have had such good luck. If you hadn't come across the Indians, your fate would probably have been sealed by now.”

“But wait,” hesitated Joe, with a sudden recollection. “Here's the chief of the tribe we got in with. We finally got him to come with us.”

He glanced around, but the Indian was nowhere in sight.

“Strange,” mused Bob. “He was here a few minutes ago. Could he have left?”

He called loudly, but it was unnecessary. The man had only stepped behind a bush, undecided as to whether to come in sight of the other whites, and at once left his place of concealment and walked out warily.

Bob and Joe beckoned for him to move up to them. At first he was uncertain, but finally concluded that it would be safe to venture nearer.

The boys introduced him as best they could by signs, and although it was rather awkward, they felt that much of his uncertainty vanished before the cordial attitude of Mr. Lewis and Mr. Holton.

“Now we must get to the boats,” Joe’s father said. “Professor Bigelow will be worried about us, if he is not by now.”

They hiked on up the river, the chief following.

“Won’t the old boy be surprised when he finds that Professor Bigelow can talk with him!” smiled Joe, as they rounded a long bend.

“That isn’t a strong enough word,” laughed Mr. Holton. “Still,” he hesitated, “we don’t want to be too sure that this Indian is from the tribe that the professor was searching for.”

The boats were several miles distant, and it would require several hours’ traveling to get to them. But the whites were all overly anxious and made good time.

At last, after passing through a thick grove of palms, they sighted the boats in the distance.

Professor Bigelow came running up at once, a broad smile of thankfulness on his bronzed, scholarly face. He gave the boys a welcome almost as warm as that of Mr. Holton and Mr. Lewis. The crew, too, took part in the reception and muttered words of joy at seeing Bob and Joe alive and unharmed. Even the Indians who had previously attempted desertion joined in, outwardly at least.

“But look here, Professor,” said Bob. “We’ve found the savage tribe you were searching for and have brought you the chief.”

“What!”

For answer Bob motioned for the Indian, who was standing several score feet down the path, to come closer. He grudgingly did so, and the professor was taken completely aback in surprise and joy. His eyes opened wide, and it was some time before he could regain his composure.

“How can I ever thank you enough?” he muttered, his eyes on the sober Indian. “We might have searched for days and days and then not found the tribe.”

He turned to the chief and said something that the others did not understand. At once the savage’s face lightened, and he began chattering so rapidly that the professor had to put up a hand for silence.

“I’m sorry, but I’m not that familiar with his language,” laughed the professor. “I think, though, that if he’ll talk slowly I may be able to understand him. Luckily he’s from the same tribe that Otari told about.”

Again Professor Bigelow turned to the Indian and this time asked him to talk more slowly.

He did, and a long conversation followed. It was broken and awkward, but in the end the professor gained a large amount of information. There was a smile on his face as he turned to the others.

“He says he will tell me all I want to know about his people if I will go with him to his settlement. His people will treat us all right. I don’t think there is cause to worry about that. What do you think about going?”

“All right with me,” returned Mr. Holton. “That was one purpose for coming up here, you know. And the chances are that we’ll find an abundance of fauna in those remote forests. I’m all for it.”

“Fine,” burst out Professor Bigelow. “Then we’ll go at once. But first,” he hesitated, “we’ll have to decide who will go and who will stay with the boats.”

“Why not take the boats with us?” suggested Joe. “The stream that Bob and I followed to the river is deep, even if it isn’t wide. I think we can easily paddle through.”

The others gave their approval at once, and they moved on up to the boats.

They decided to get a lunch first, however, for all were tired after the day’s strain. The chief was in no special hurry to get back to the village, as he had often left on long hunting trips alone.

Soon after the meal the provisions that had been taken out were packed in the boats, and then all climbed in.

“Now let’s make time,” urged Mr. Lewis, and the crew paddled them upstream.

The afternoon was rapidly wearing away, and before long it would be night.

At last Mr. Holton called to the crew to stop the boats.

“It’s unsafe to paddle farther,” he said. “Suppose we turn up into that little bay over there.”

The suggestion was carried out. Then they made camp.

“Hope nothing happens tonight,” said Bob, as he prepared to turn in for the night.

“I’m with you there,” his chum returned. “Somehow I’ve had enough thrills for a while.”

But he had no way of knowing how soon action would present itself in a big way.

The next morning they were up early, preparing to resume the journey

shortly after breakfast. The chief of the strange tribe told Professor Bigelow that they should reach his village late that day, if all turned out well.

"I'm not especially anxious to get back among those wild men," Bob said aside to his chum. "But we must do all we can to help Professor Bigelow."

Late that afternoon the chief said something to the anthropologist and pointed to a clearly defined trail that wound away through the heavy vegetation.

"He says that here is where we leave the boats and head for his village," the scientist told the others in animated tones.

"Fine!" exclaimed Mr. Lewis, also delighted that the journey had come to an end. "There's a place that will act as a harbor," pointing to a groove in the shore.

He directed the crew to paddle the boats to land, and as soon as this was done all climbed out and made the crafts fast to staunch trees.

Professor Bigelow turned to the savage and conversed for several minutes. Then he moved to the boats.

"The village isn't far away," he said. "It will be safe to leave our provisions here for the time being."

As a precaution, however, and also because the naturalists wished to secure new specimens, they carried their rifles and a good supply of ammunition.

The chief led the way along the path, the others close at his heels. The path was so well cut that they had no trouble in walking along briskly. A half-hour, the Indian said through Professor Bigelow, would be all the time required to get to the village.

Suddenly the explorers heard a faint screaming and shouting that came from the village, and at once the chief began chattering nervously.

Professor Bigelow gave a groan and translated to the others.

"He says that probably a fight is taking place between his tribe and another," said the scientist.

"What!" cried Mr. Holton excitedly. "Then that means that we whites may have to use our rifles after all. Ask him if the other tribe is using poisoned arrows."

The savage nodded in affirmation when the question was put before him, and the whites tightened their grips on their weapons.

"I guess this means that we're in for some excitement," Bob confided to his chum, as the party again followed the trail.

Ten minutes later they parted the foliage and came abruptly within full view

of the village. All uttered cries of consternation at the furiousness of the battle that was taking place between the two savage tribes.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Terrible Battle

SPEARS and arrows and darts flew thick and fast, striking down many a man on both sides. Fierce cries filled the atmosphere and made the Americans shudder. Here in the untamed wilds of Brazil was taking place as terrible a battle as the world had ever known. Savages—wild, hostile Indians—were the participants, and no people anywhere were more terrible when excited to insane fury.

For some time none of the explorers spoke. They were too captivated by the scene. But at last Mr. Holton turned thought into action.

“Get your rifles in readiness,” he commanded. “It’s up to us to drive this tribe away. The chief’s men seem unable to do it.

“Now we’re all good shots,” he went on. “Suppose we fire a volley of bullets and see if we can’t make them leave without bloodshed. If we can’t, we’ll have to shoot to kill. Come on, now.”

The whites raised their rifles, and, one at a time, pulled the triggers. Five shots rang out, much to the surprise of the savages. But as no damage seemed to be done by the strange reports, the Indians regained confidence and sent spears and arrows in the explorers’ direction. As a result, one of the crew went down, wounded in the thigh.

“We’ll have to shoot to kill,” said Mr. Lewis at once.

He raised his rifle and, taking careful aim, fired at the nearest native, who went down instantly.

Mr. Lewis’s shot was followed by those of the other whites, and at once panic ensued among the invading savages.

After only a thin defense, they took to their heels with cries of fright and bewilderment, leaving their dead and wounded behind.

“Guess that drove them off all right,” said Bob with a grim smile. “Come on, let’s——But wait! Look! The chief’s tribe is worshipping us.”

Bob was right. The Indians had fallen to their knees, waving their arms and muttering words that were not understood even by Professor Bigelow.

Even the chief, accustomed as he was to the rifles and the whites' power to bring down animals, bowed his head in awe at his tribe's deliverance.

It was a most embarrassing situation, and for a time the explorers were at a loss to know what to do next.

Finally Professor Bigelow walked forward and uttered kind words, at the same time raising hands for the savages to rise to their feet.

He succeeded well. At once they got to their feet and resumed something of their usual attitude, although they were not quite convinced that these people were not gods.

The chief went forward and conversed with them so rapidly that Professor Bigelow could not keep up.

"He's telling of his visit to our camp," the scientist said. "He perhaps considers it a much-prized experience."

As soon as the chief had finished, the Indians jabbered excitedly, eager to get all the details. Occasionally they would look at the whites as if they considered them super-beings.

"They can't get over the thought that we have higher powers than they have," mused Bob. "But maybe," he hesitated, his thoughts going back to the terrible trophy chamber of dried human heads that was one of the tribe's prized possessions, "it will be just as well to let them go on thinking that way. It would be hard to say when they might turn against us if they thought we were ordinary persons."

"Turn against us?" demanded Mr. Lewis, rather surprised. "What makes you think they would do that? They seem all right."

"Don't know that they would," Bob replied, exchanging meaning glances with Joe. "Still it's wise to be on the safe side."

It was evident that Bob's significant statement had the men highly puzzled. Finally Professor Bigelow demanded an explanation.

"There's nothing to it—except that these people are headhunters," said Joe. "If you don't believe it just take a look at the place where they keep the heads. And say! They've killed a couple of white men, too."

Astonished gasps came from Mr. Holton and Mr. Lewis, but not from Professor Bigelow. Anthropologist as he was, he had suspected this from the start. Very few *savage* tribes in the wilds of Brazil did not have that custom.

Suddenly a groan made all turn about, to see that the Indian of the crew who had been wounded by a spear had regained consciousness. His side

apparently pained severely, for on his face was a look of agony.

Mr. Holton got to work at once.

“Ask the chief if we can have some water,” he said to Professor Bigelow. “Bob, suppose you run down to the boats and bring a box of antiseptic. Go as fast as you can. Meanwhile we’ll be taking care of others that were wounded.”

Bob grabbed a rifle and dashed off down the path for the stream.

He reached the boats in record time and hurriedly got out a box of first-aid materials. Then he made his way back to the village.

But he had gone only a few yards when a fluttering noise caused him to look up.

At once his jaw dropped in astonishment, and a look of surprise and wonder came on his face.

CHAPTER XXVII

Human Heads Still Dripping!

THE sight that Bob beheld was one that few hunters and scientists have the opportunity of seeing. Strange sights were common enough in all little-known lands, but this was indeed a wonder of wonders.

Not thirty feet in the air a bird resembling an eagle was carrying a half-grown tapir with apparently perfect ease, although the tapir was three times heavier than itself. The tapir was very much alive, as indicated by its writhing movements, but these availed it nothing. It might as well have been caught in an iron vise.

For several minutes Bob stared spellbound, taken completely aback.

Finally he called himself to action and raised his rifle.

“Dad and Mr. Lewis would no doubt welcome the addition of such an unusual specimen as this eagle,” he thought and then pulled the trigger.

The report of the gun was immediately followed by the dropping of the bird and its prey. It fluttered about for a moment and then lay still. The tapir had been killed instantly by the fall.

Much to Bob’s surprise, the bird could be lifted easily, and he hastened on to the Indian settlement, confident that the naturalists would nearly throw a fit over the strange eagle.

And he thought right. Mr. Holton and Mr. Lewis exclaimed in delight and surprise when they caught sight of Bob and the strange creature he was carrying.

“Where did you ever find it?” asked Mr. Lewis, and Bob was forced to tell of the entire experience.

“The great hairy eagle,” pronounced Mr. Holton, when the youth had finished. “I thought they were confined to the jungles of Guiana, didn’t you, Ben?” he asked of Joe’s father.

“Yes,” was the reply. “Never heard of their being found here. Such is unusual indeed. The claws are the most powerful of any known bird.”

But there was little time for further examining the specimen, for the wounded Indians needed treatment. The member of the crew was looked after

first, and then they turned to the chief's men, many of whom were seriously wounded. As for those who had been struck by poisoned arrows, treatment was unnecessary, for death had set in long before.

The better part of an hour was spent in giving first-aid to the unfortunate savages, and in the end they felt that a large number of lives had been saved by their actions.

"But don't think that the natives have no cure for human ills," said Professor Bigelow. "The chances are that they know of many remedies that surpass those of civilization in curing properties."

When the task was completed, the Indians invited the whites to come in the main hut and participate in a feast in honor of their ability to drive off the hostile invaders. The invitation was accepted at once, for the explorers were all very hungry.

"Wonder what they'll give us to eat?" asked Joe, as they went into the thatched hut.

"Perhaps it'll be better not to know," Bob grinned.

Whatever it was, however, it tasted good, and they ate heartily of everything.

"Now I'm going to get in touch with the chief, whose name I recently learned is Reemikuk," announced Professor Bigelow. "But first, however, I must have my typewriter. That means a trip to the boats."

"And while he's doing that, Mr. Lewis and I can have a look about the village," Bob's father said. "Perhaps you boys can show us the places and things of interest. Will you do it?"

"To be sure we will," returned Joe. "But first," he said with a grim smile, "you must prepare yourselves to see things that are unpleasant."

"What do you mean?" his father demanded.

For answer the youths led the way to the trophy house and its hideous contents.

Impulsively the naturalists shrank back in disgust at the scene. Never had they laid eyes on such a place of horror before.

"To think," muttered Mr. Lewis, "that even these wild people could do such hideous things!"

But despite the gruesomeness of the place they spent several minutes there, unable to tear themselves away from its terrible fascination.

At last Mr. Holton made for the outside.

“Now for something more pleasant,” he said. “What is there, boys?”

“Plenty,” answered Joe. “There are games and baskets and carvings and....”

All the remainder of that day was spent in examining the many articles of interest made by the simple savages.

When at last they went back to the hut that was to be theirs during their stay at the village, they found the professor in earnest conversation with the chief and a witch doctor.

The Indians were talking slowly, so that the scientist could pick up every word. He glanced up at the other whites only for a moment, so deeply engrossed was he in what the savages were telling him.

“He seems to be enjoying himself immensely,” observed Joe aside to his chum.

“No doubt about it,” Bob replied. “And look how the Indians are regarding the typewriter. Probably think it’s another of the whites’ magics.”

Professor Bigelow was enjoying himself. Every strange custom of the savages appealed to him as a wonderful item to put in the book he intended to write about the primitive inhabitants of these wild regions. But two days later something happened that, although considered a very interesting custom by the anthropologist, was not to the liking of the other whites. A band of twenty-five warriors had gone into the upper reaches of the river several days before, and now they returned laden with—human heads!

“Ugh! Me for the hut,” said Bob, a sickly feeling creeping over him as he viewed the ghastly trophies.

And the others, with the exception of Professor Bigelow, felt the same way. The anthropologist, however, seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the terrible scene.

“How thrilling a custom!” he said to his friends that night, as they prepared to retire.

For answer the others only groaned.

But if the explorers thought the mere carrying in of human heads was gruesome, they were to witness something still more terrible before a week would pass.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Forced Get-away

“**B**OB!”

“Joe!”

“Did you see it?”

“Yes. Human bones! These savages are *cannibals*!”

It was night—a dark, lowering night. The moon was nowhere in sight. Not a star twinkled down from the heavy jungle sky. Huge, roaring fires blazed in front of the chief’s large hut, while about them danced scores of painted savages, shouting and screaming and gesticulating.

It was a scene wild enough to strike terror to the heart of anyone. Bob and Joe gazed fearfully into the raging mob, wondering if the lives of them and their companions would be taken for the feast.

The boys moved over to their elders, who were standing at the other side of their thatched dwelling.

“Cannibals!” Professor Bigelow was muttering. He had seen too.

Mr. Holton and Mr. Lewis nodded, on their faces a grave expression. They were so taken aback as to be almost speechless.

“I think perhaps we had better get away from here,” said the professor, who, although deeply attentive to scientific work, knew when he was in a dangerous situation. “I know enough of the ways of primitive people to surmise what they’ll probably do to us if we stay. Their appetites for human flesh will be so stimulated that they will no doubt kill us also. Lucky that this happened as late as it did. I wouldn’t have wanted to leave so soon if I had not secured about all the information there is to be obtained about them.”

Just before leaving, Bob and Joe got out their cameras and took motion pictures of the gruesome feast, and in the end they were almost convinced that nothing of this kind had ever been shown on the silver screen.

With the aid of flashlights, whose beams, by the way, were concealed from the savages, the explorers had gathered their belongings together and were now ready to leave for the boats. Of course it would be perilous traveling at night

through the jungle, but the chance had to be taken.

At that moment an Indian entered their hut, glanced about, and then started to call to the others.

Displaying a quickness remarkable for his size and weight, Mr. Holton launched himself full force at the fellow, sending him to the ground unconscious.

“Now let’s get away—quick!” he said. “There’s no telling when the whole tribe will be in here after us.”

As quietly as possible, the explorers and their Indian crew dashed away down the trail for the stream, never looking back, but fearing that they would hear the screams of the cannibals at any moment.

The flashlights rendered traveling easy, and as they had been over the trail many times, they reached the boats in record time.

Their possessions were piled inside. Then they climbed hastily in and were paddled swiftly away.

It was not until they had reached the main stream that they felt safe. Then they turned the boats downstream on the journey back to the coast.

“It isn’t wise to tax good fortune too much,” said Mr. Lewis, as the narrow stream faded in the distance. “We came up here for two definite purposes, and we’ve accomplished them both. First, Professor Bigelow has made a rather extensive study of little-known Indians, and second, Mr. Holton and I have collected hundreds of specimens for the museum. You boys have met with success in taking moving pictures, also. Now that our work is finished, we’d better get to the Purús at once.”

However, “at once” was a bit too hastily, for there were dangerous rapids that had to be portaged, totally unknown animals that diverted the naturalists’ attention, and a hundred and one reasons for making slow progress, even downstream. But at last they sighted the Purús in the distance.

“Now to hunt up Senhor del Pereo, the man who fitted us out with our boats and crew,” said Mr. Holton.

They found that individual in his house at the edge of the little town that rested between the two rivers.

He was more than glad to see the explorers back after such a long, perilous journey, and insisted that they remain at his house overnight, or until a boat could be found that would take them to the Amazon. The explorers accepted the invitation at once, glad of the chance to partake of the comforts of civilization after those long weeks into the unknown.

The next day they were fortunate in getting passage on a boat bound for Manáos. It was a small steamer, scheduled to reach its destination in less than five days.

At Manáos the explorers had another streak of good luck, finding a large liner that would take them straight to New York.

Down the mighty Amazon they steamed, at last coming into the port at Pará for a short stay.

After a walk about town, the Americans again boarded the vessel for the trip to New York.

It was an ideal evening as they steamed majestically out of the busy harbor and turned toward the United States.

“Do you know, Joe, old boy,” remarked Bob, as they sat with their elders on deck in the light of the full moon, “the farther away we get from the region we explored the more I prize our experience.”

Joe nodded.

“It was great,” he agreed. “And just think. We were lost—lost in the wilds of Brazil.”

Transcriber's Notes

The four books in this series have been transcribed in the same manner. This means that in some books, table of contents and or/list of series names have been added.

Except in cases of obvious typographical errors, archaic and inconsistent spelling has been retained.

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