The Cave Girl

Edgar Rice Burroughs

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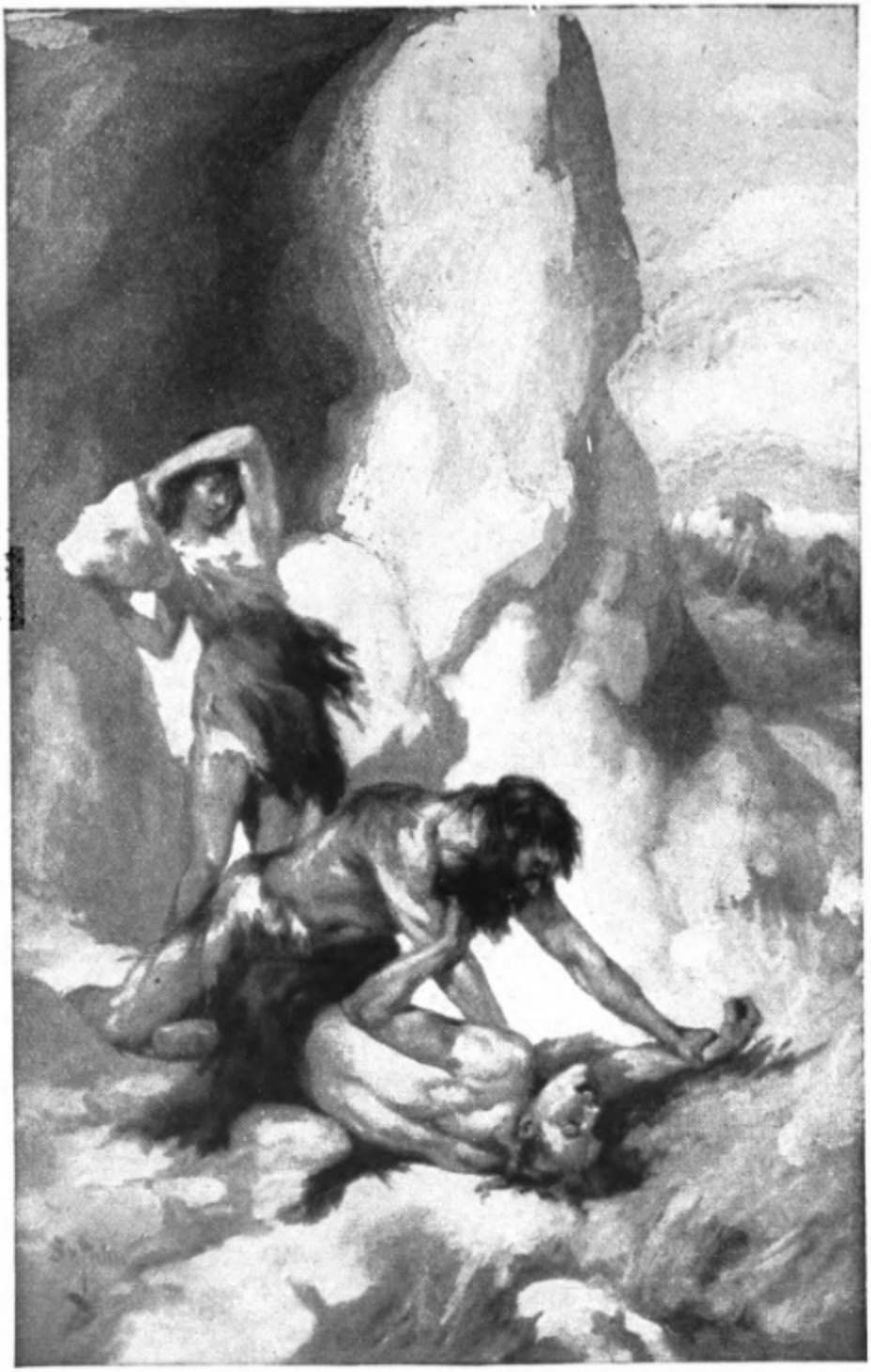

The Cave Girl saves Waldo's life.

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THE CAVE GIRL

BY

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

AUTHOR OF

TARZAN AND THE ANT MEN,
THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT,
PELLUCIDAR, Etc.

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1925

Published March, 1925

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PART I

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THE CAVE GIRL

CHAPTER I

FLOTSAM

THE dim shadow of the thing was but a blur against the dim shadows of the wood behind it.

The young man could distinguish no outline that might mark the presence as either brute or human.

He could see no eyes, yet he knew that somewhere from out of that noiseless mass stealthy eyes were fixed upon him.

This was the fourth time that the thing had crept from out the wood as darkness was settling — the fourth time during those three horrible weeks since he had been cast upon that lonely shore that he had watched, terror-stricken, while night engulfed the shadowy form that lurked at the forest's edge.

It had never attacked him, but to his distorted imagination it seemed to slink closer and closer as night fell — waiting, always waiting for the moment that it might find him unprepared.

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Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones was not overly courageous. He had been reared among surroundings of culture plus and ultra-intellectuality in the exclusive Back Bay home of his ancestors.

He had been taught to look with contempt upon all that savored of muscular superiority—such things were gross, brutal, primitive.

It had been a giant intellect only that he had craved—he and a fond mother—and their wishes had been fulfilled. At twenty-one Waldo was an animated encyclopedia—and about as muscular as a real one.

Now he slunk shivering with fright at the very edge of the beach, as far from the grim forest as he could get.

Cold sweat broke from every pore of his long, lank, six-foot-two body. His skinny arms and legs trembled as with palsy. Occasionally he coughed—it had been the cough that had banished him upon this ill-starred sea voyage.

As he crouched in the sand, staring with wide, horror-dilated eyes into the black night, great tears rolled down his thin, white cheeks.

It was with difficulty that he restrained an overpowering desire to shriek. His mind was filled with forlorn regrets that he had not remained at home to meet the wasting death that the doctor had predicted—a peaceful death at least—not the brutal

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end which faced him now.

The lazy swell of the South Pacific lapped his legs, stretched upon the sand, for he had retreated before that menacing shadow as far as the ocean would permit. As the slow minutes dragged into age-long hours, the nervous strain told so heavily upon the weak boy that toward midnight he lapsed into merciful unconsciousness.

The warm sun awoke him the following morning, but it brought with it but a faint renewal of courage. Things could not creep to his side unseen now, but still they could come, for the sun would not protect him. Even now some savage beast might be lurking just within the forest.

The thought unnerved him to such an extent that he dared not venture to the woods for the fruit that had formed the major portion of his sustenance. Along the beach he picked up a few mouthfuls of sea-food, but that was all.

The day passed, as had the other terrible days which had preceded it, in scanning alternately the ocean and the forest's edge—the one for a ship and the other for the cruel death which he momentarily expected to see stalk out of the dreary shades to claim him.

A more practical and a braver man would have constructed some manner of shelter in which he might have spent his nights in comparative safety

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and comfort, but Waldo Emerson's education had been conducted along lines of undiluted intellectuality—pursuits and knowledge which were practical were commonplace, and commonplaces were vulgar. It was preposterous that a Smith-Jones should ever have need of vulgar knowledge.

For the twenty-second time since the great wave had washed him from the steamer's deck and hurled him, choking and sputtering, upon this inhospitable shore, Waldo Emerson saw the sun sinking rapidly toward the western horizon.

As it descended the young man's terror increased, and he kept his eyes glued upon the spot from which the shadow had emerged the previous evening.

He felt that he could not endure another night of the torture he had passed through four times before. That he should go mad he was positive, and he commenced to tremble and whimper even while daylight yet remained. For a time he tried turning his back to the forest, and then he sat huddled up gazing out upon the ocean; but the tears which rolled down his cheeks so blurred his eyes that he saw nothing.

Finally he could endure it no longer, and with a sudden gasp of horror he wheeled toward the wood. There was nothing visible, yet he broke down and sobbed like a child, for loneliness and terror.

When he was able to control his tears for a

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moment he took the opportunity to scan the deepening shadows once more.

The first glance brought a piercing shriek from his white lips.

The thing was there!

The young man did not fall groveling to the sand this time—instead, he stood staring with protruding eyes at the vague form, while shriek after shriek broke from his grinning lips.

Reason was tottering.

The thing, whatever it was, halted at the first blood-curdling cry, and then when the cries continued it slunk back toward the wood.

With what remained of his ebbing mentality Waldo Emerson realized that it were better to die at once than face the awful fears of the black night. He would rush to meet his fate, and thus end this awful agony of suspense.

With the thought came action, so that, still shrieking, he rushed headlong toward the thing at the wood's rim. As he ran it turned and fled into the forest, and after it went Waldo Emerson, his long, skinny legs carrying his emaciated body in great leaps and bounds through the tearing underbrush.

He emitted shriek after shriek—ear-piercing shrieks that ended in long drawn out wails, more wolfish than human. And the thing that fled

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through the night before him was shrieking, too, now.

Time and again the young man stumbled and fell. Thorns and brambles tore his clothing and his soft flesh. Blood smeared him from head to feet. Yet on and on he rushed through the semi-darkness of the now moonlit forest.

At first impelled by the mad desire to embrace death and wrest the peace of oblivion from its cruel clutch, Waldo Emerson had come to pursue the screaming shadow before him. from an entirely different motive. Now it was for companionship. He screamed now because of a fear that the thing would elude him and that he should be left alone in the depth of this weird wood.

Slowly but surely it was drawing away from him, and as Waldo Emerson realized the fact he redoubled his efforts to overtake it. He had stopped screaming now, for the strain of his physical exertion found his weak lungs barely adequate to the needs of his gasping respiration.

Suddenly the pursuit emerged from the forest to cross a little moonlit clearing, at the opposite side of which towered a high and rocky cliff. Toward this the fleeing creature sped, and in an instant more was swallowed, apparently, by the face of the cliff.

Its disappearance was as mysterious and awesome

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as its identity had been, and left the young man in blank despair.

With the object of pursuit gone, the reaction came, and Waldo Emerson sank trembling and exhausted at the foot of the cliff. A paroxysm of coughing seized him, and thus he lay in an agony of apprehension, fright, and misery until from very weakness he sank into a deep sleep.

It was daylight when he awoke — stiff, lame, sore, hungry, and miserable — but, withal, refreshed and sane. His first consideration was prompted by the craving of a starved stomach; yet it was with the utmost difficulty that he urged his cowardly brain to direct his steps toward the forest, where hung fruit in abundance.

At every little noise he halted in tense silence, poised to flee. His knees trembled so violently that they knocked together; but at length he entered the dim shadows, and presently was gorging himself with ripe fruits.

To reach some of the more luscious viands he had picked from the ground a piece of fallen limb, which tapered from a diameter of four inches at one end to a trifle over an inch at the other. It was the first practical thing that Waldo Emerson had done since he had been cast upon the shore of his new home — in fact, it was, in all likelihood, the nearest approximation to a practical thing which

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he had ever done in all his life.

Waldo had never been allowed to read fiction, nor had he ever cared to so waste his time or impoverish his brain, and nowhere in the fund of deep erudition which he had accumulated could he recall any condition analogous to those which now confronted him.

Waldo, of course, knew that there were such things as step-ladders, and had he had one he would have used it as a means to reach the fruit above his hand's reach; but that he could knock the delicacies down with a broken branch seemed indeed a mighty discovery—a valuable addition to the sum total of human knowledge. Aristotle himself had never reasoned more logically.

Waldo had taken the first step in his life toward independent mental action—heretofore his ideas, his thoughts, his acts, even, had been borrowed from the musty writing of the ancients, or directed by the immaculate mind of his superior mother. And he clung to his discovery as a child clings to a new toy.

When he emerged from the forest he brought his stick with him.

He determined to continue the pursuit of the creature that had eluded him the night before. It would, indeed, be curious to look upon a thing that feared him.

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In all his life he had never imagined it possible that any creature could flee from him in fear. A little glow suffused the young man as the idea timorously sought to take root.

Could it be that there was a trace of swagger in that long, bony figure as Waldo directed his steps toward the cliff? Perish the thought! Pride in vulgar physical prowess! A long line of Smith-Joneses would have risen in their graves and rent their shrouds at the veriest hint of such an idea.

For a long time Waldo walked back and forth along the foot of the cliff, searching for the avenue of escape used by the fugitive of yesternight. A dozen times he passed a well-defined trail that led, winding, up the cliff's face; but Waldo knew nothing of trails—he was looking for a flight of steps or a doorway.

Finding neither, he stumbled by accident into the trail; and, although the evident signs that marked it as such revealed nothing to him, yet he followed it upward for the simple reason that it was the only place upon the cliff side where he could find a foothold.

Some distance up he came to a narrow cleft in the cliff into which the trail led. Rocks dislodged from above had fallen into it, and, becoming wedged a few feet from the bottom, left only a small cavelike hole, into which Waldo peered.

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There was nothing visible, but the interior was dark and forbidding. Waldo felt cold and clammy. He began to tremble. Then he turned and looked back toward the forest.

The thought of another night spent within sight of that dismal place almost overcame him. No! A thousand times no! Any fate were better than that, and so after several futile efforts he forced his unwilling body through the small aperture.

He found himself on a path between two rocky walls—a path that rose before him at a steep angle. At intervals the blue sky was visible above through openings that had not been filled with debris.

To another it would have been apparent that the cleft had been kept open by human beings—that it was a thoroughfare which was used, if not frequently, at least sufficiently often to warrant considerable labor having been expended upon it to keep it free from the debris which must be constantly falling from above.

Where the path led, or what he expected to find at the other end, Waldo had not the remotest idea. He was not an imaginative youth. But he kept on up the ascent in the hope that at the end he would find the creature which had escaped him the night before.

As it had fled for a brief instant across the clear-

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ing beneath the moon's soft rays, Waldo had thought that it bore a remarkable resemblance to a human figure; but of that he could not be positive.

At last his path broke suddenly into the sunlight. The walls on either side were but little higher than his head, and a moment later he emerged from the cleft onto a broad and beautiful plateau.

Before him stretched a wide, grassy plain, and beyond towered a range of mighty hills. Between them and him lay a belt of forest.

A new emotion welled in the breast of Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones. It was akin to that which Balboa may have felt when he gazed for the first time upon the mighty Pacific from the Sierra de Quarequa. For the moment, as he contemplated this new and beautiful scene of rolling meadowland, distant forest, and serrated hilltops, he almost forgot to be afraid. And on the impulse of the instant he set out across the tableland to explore the unknown which lay beyond the forest.

Well it was for Waldo Emerson's peace of mind that no faint conception of what lay there entered his unimaginative mind. To him a land without civilization — without cities and towns peopled by humans with manners and customs similar to those which obtain in Boston — was beyond belief.

As he walked he strained his eyes in every direction for some indication of human habitation — a

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fence, a chimney—anything that would be man-built; but his efforts were unrewarded.

At the verge of the forest he halted, fearing to enter; but at last, when he saw that the wood was more open than that near the ocean, and that there was but little underbrush, he mustered sufficient courage to step timidly within.

On careful tiptoe he threaded his way through the parklike grove, stopping every few minutes to listen, and ready at the first note of danger to fly screaming toward the open plain.

Notwithstanding his fears, he reached the opposite boundary of the forest without seeing or hearing anything to arouse suspicion, and, emerging from the cool shade, found himself a little distance from a perpendicular white cliff, the face of which was honeycombed with the mouths of many caves.

There was no living creature in sight, nor did the very apparent artificiality of the caves suggest to the impractical Waldo that they might be the habitations of perhaps savage human beings.

With the spell of discovery still upon him, he crossed the open toward the cliffs; but he had by no means forgotten his chronic state of abject fear. Ears and eyes were alert for hidden dangers; every few steps were punctuated by a timid halt and a searching survey of his surroundings.

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It was during one of these halts, when he had crossed half the distance between the forest and the cliff, that he discerned a slight movement in the wood behind him.

For an instant he stood staring and frozen, unable to determine whether he had been mistaken or really had seen a creature moving in the forest.

He had about decided that he had but imagined a presence when a great, hairy brute of a man stepped suddenly from behind the bole of a tree.

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CHAPTER II

THE WILD PEOPLE

THE creature was naked except for a bit of hide that hung from a leathern waist thong.

If Waldo viewed the newcomer with wonder, it was no less than the wonder which the sight of him inspired in the breast of the hairy one, for what he saw was as truly remarkable to his eyes as was his appearance to those of the cultured Bostonian. And Waldo did indeed present a most startling exterior. His six-feet-two was accentuated by his extreme skinniness; his gray eyes looked weak and watery within the inflamed circles which rimmed them, and which had been produced by loss of sleep and much weeping.

His yellow hair was tangled and matted, and streaked with dirt and blood. Blood stained his soiled and tattered ducks. His shirt was but a mass of frayed ribbons held to him at all only by the neck-band.

As he stood helplessly staring with bulging eyes at the awful figure glowering at him from the forest his jaw dropped, his knees trembled, and he seemed about to collapse from sheer terror.

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Then the hideous man crouched and came creeping warily toward him.

With an agonized scream Waldo turned and fled toward the cliff. A quick glance over his shoulder brought another series of shrieks from the frightened fugitive, for it revealed not alone the fact that the awful man was pursuing him, but that behind him raced at least a dozen more equally frightful.

Waldo ran toward the cliffs only because that direction lay straight away from his pursuers. He had no idea what he should do when he reached the rocky barrier—he was far too frightened to think.

His pursuers were gaining upon him, their savage yells mingling with his piercing cries and spurring him on to undreamed-of pinnacles of speed.

As he ran, his knees came nearly to his shoulders at each frantic bound; his left hand was extended far ahead, clutching wildly at the air as though he were endeavoring to pull himself ahead, while his right hand, still grasping the cudgel, described a rapid circle, like the arm of a windmill gone mad. In action Waldo was an inspiring spectacle.

At the foot of the cliff he came to a momentary halt, while he glanced hurriedly about for a means of escape; but now he saw that the enemy had

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spread out toward the right and left, leaving no means of escape except up the precipitous side of the cliff. Up this narrow trails led steeply from ledge to ledge.

In places crude ladders scaled perpendicular heights from one tier of caves to the next above; but to Waldo the thing which confronted him seemed absolutely unscalable, and then another backward glance showed him the rapidly nearing enemy; and he launched himself at the face of that seemingly impregnable barrier, clutching desperately with fingers and toes.

His progress was impeded by the cudgel to which he still clung, but he did not drop it; though why it would have been difficult to tell, unless it was that his acts were now purely mechanical, there being no room in his mind for aught else than terror.

Close behind him came the foremost cave man; yet, though he had acquired the agility of a monkey through a lifetime of practice, he was amazed at the uncanny speed with which Waldo Emerson clawed his shrieking way aloft.

Half-way up the ascent, however, a great hairy hand came almost to his ankle.

It was during the perilous negotiation of one of the loose and wabbly ladders — little more than small trees leaning precariously against the perpendicular rocky surface — that the nearest foe-

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man came so close to the fugitive; but at the top chance intervened to save Waldo, for a time at least. It was at the moment that he scrambled frantically to a tiny ledge from the frightfully slipping sapling.

In his haste he did by accident what a resourceful man would have done by intent—in pushing himself onto the ledge he kicked the ladder outward—for a second it hung toppling in the balance, and then with a lunge crashed down the cliff's face with its human burden, in its fall scraping others of the pursuing horde with it.

A chorus of rage came up from below him, but Waldo had not even turned his head to learn of his temporary good fortune. Up, ever up he sped, until at length he stood upon the topmost ledge, facing an overhanging wall of blank rock that towered another twenty-five feet above him to the summit of the bluff. Time and again he leaped futilely against the smooth surface, tearing at it with his nails in a mad endeavor to climb still higher.

At his right was the low opening to a black cave, but he did not see it—his mind could cope with but the single idea: to clamber from the horrible creatures which pursued him. But finally it was borne in on his half-mad brain that this was the end—he could fly no farther—here, in a moment more, death would overtake him.

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He turned to meet it, and below saw a number of the cave men placing another ladder in lieu of that which had fallen. In a moment they were resuming the ascent after him.

On the narrow ledge above them the young man stood, chattering and grinning like a madman. His pitiful cries were now punctuated with the hollow coughing which his violent exercise had induced.

Tears rolled down his begrimed face, leaving crooked, muddy streaks in their wake. His knees smote together so violently that he could barely stand, and it was into the face of this apparition of cowardice that the first of the cave men looked as he scrambled above the ledge on which Waldo stood.

And then, of a sudden, there rose within the breast of Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones a spark that generations of overrefinement and emasculating culture had all but extinguished — the instinct of self-preservation by force. Heretofore it had been purely by flight.

With the frenzy of the fear of death upon him, he raised his cudgel, and, swinging it high above his head, brought it down full upon the unprotected skull of his enemy.

Another took the fallen man's place — he, too, went down with a broken head. Waldo was fighting now like a cornered rat, and through it all he

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chattered and gibbered; but he no longer wept.

At first he was horrified at the bloody havoc he wrought with his crude weapon. His nature revolted at the sight of blood, and when he saw it mixed with matted hair along the side of his cudgel, and realized that it was human hair and human blood, and that he, Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones, had struck the blows that had plastered it there so thickly in all its hideousness, a wave of nausea swept over him, so that he almost toppled from his dizzy perch.

For a few minutes there was a lull in hostilities while the cave men congregated below, shaking their fists at Waldo and crying out threats and challenges. The young man stood looking down upon them, scarcely able to realize that alone he had met savage men in physical encounter and defeated them.

He was shocked and horrified; not, odd to say, because of the thing he had done, but rather because of a strange and unaccountable glow of pride in his brutal supremacy over brutes. What would his mother have thought could she have seen her precious boy now?

Suddenly Waldo became conscious from the corner of his eye that something was creeping upon him from behind out of the dark cave before which he had fought. Simultaneously with the realization

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of it he swung his cudgel in a wicked blow at this new enemy as he turned to meet it.

The creature dodged back, and the blow that would have crushed its skull grazed a hairbreadth from its face.

Waldo struck no second blow, and the cold sweat sprang to his forehead when he realized how nearly he had come to murdering a young girl. She crouched now in the mouth of the cave, eying him fearfully. Waldo removed his tattered cap, bowing low.

"I crave your pardon," he said. "I had no idea that there was a lady here. I am very glad that I did not injure you."

There must have been something either in his tone or manner that reassured her, for she smiled and came out upon the ledge beside him.

As she did so a scarlet flush mantled Waldo's face and neck and ears—he could feel them burning. With a nervous cough he turned and became intently occupied with the distant scenery.

Presently he cast a surreptitious glance behind him. Shocking! She was still there. Again he coughed nervously.

"Excuse me," he said. "But—er—ah—you—I am a total stranger, you know; hadn't you better go back in, and—er—get your clothes?"

She made no reply, and so he forced himself to

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turn toward her once more. She was smiling at him.

Waldo had never been so horribly embarrassed in all his life before — it was a distinct shock to him to realize that the girl was not embarrassed at all.

He spoke to her a second time, and at last she answered; but in a tongue which he did not understand. It bore not the slightest resemblance to any language, modern or dead, with which he was familiar, and Waldo was more or less master of them all — especially the dead ones.

He tried not to look at her after that, for he realized that he must appear very ridiculous.

But now his attention was required by more pressing affairs — the cave men were returning to the attack. They carried stones this time, and, while some of them threw the missiles at Waldo, the others attempted to rush his position. It was then that the girl hurried back into the cave, only to reappear a moment later carrying some stone utensils in her arms.

There was a huge mortar in which she had collected a pestle and several smaller pieces of stone. She pushed them along the ledge to Waldo.

At first he did not grasp the meaning of her act; but presently she pretended to pick up an imaginary missile and hurl it down upon the creatures below — then she pointed to the things she had brought and to Waldo.

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He understood. So she was upon his side. He did not understand why, but he was glad.

Following her suggestion, he gathered up a couple of the smaller objects and hurled them down upon the men beneath.

But on and on they came — Waldo was not a very good shot. The girl was busy now gathering such of the cave men's missiles as fell upon the ledge. These she placed in a pile beside Waldo.

Occasionally the young man would strike an enemy by accident, and then she would give a little scream of pleasure — clapping her hands and jumping up and down.

It was not long before Waldo was surprised to find that this applause fell sweetly upon his ears. It was then that he began to take better aim.

In the midst of it all there flashed suddenly upon him a picture of his devoted mother and the select coterie of intellectual young people with which she had always surrounded him.

Waldo felt a new pang of horror as he tried to realize with what emotions they would look upon him now as he stood upon the face of a towering cliff beside an almost naked girl hurling rocks down upon the heads of hairy men who hopped about, screaming with rage, below him.

It was awful! A great billow of mortification rolled over him.

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He turned to cast a look of disapprobation at the shameless young woman behind him — she should not think that he countenanced such coarse and vulgar proceedings. Their eyes met — in hers he saw the sparkle of excitement and the joy of life and such a look of comradeship as he never before had seen in the eyes of another mortal.

Then she pointed excitedly over the edge of the ledge.

Waldo looked.

A great brute of a cave man had crawled, unseen, almost to their refuge.

He was but five feet below them, and at the moment that he looked up Waldo dropped a fifty-pound stone mortar full upon his upturned face.

The young woman emitted a little shriek of joy, and Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones, his face bisected by a broad grin, turned toward her.

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CHAPTER III

THE LITTLE EDEN

THE mortar ended hostilities—temporarily, at least; but the cave men loitered about the base of the cliff during the balance of the afternoon, occasionally shouting taunts at the two above them.

These the girl answered, evidently in kind. Sometimes she would point to Waldo and make ferocious signs, doubtless indicative of the horrible slaughter which awaited them at his hands if they did not go away and leave their betters alone. When the young man realized the significance of her pantomime he felt his heart swell with an emotion which he feared was pride in brutal, primitive, vulgar physical prowess.

As the long day wore on Waldo became both very hungry and very thirsty. In the valley below he could see a tiny brooklet purling, clear and beautiful, toward the south. The sight of it drove him nearly mad, as did also that of the fruit which he glimpsed hanging ripe for eating at the edge of the forest.

By means of signs he asked the girl if she, too, were hungry, for he had come to a point now where

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he could look at her almost without visible signs of mortification. She nodded her head and, pointing toward the descending sun, made it plain to him that after dark they would descend and eat.

The cave men had not left when darkness came, and it seemed to Waldo a very foolhardy thing to venture down while they might be about; but the girl made it so evident that she considered him an invincible warrior that he was torn with the conflicting emotions of cowardice and an unaccountable desire to appear well in her eyes, that he might by his acts justify her belief in him.

It seemed very wonderful to Waldo that any one should look upon him in the light of a tower of strength and a haven of refuge; he was not quite certain in his own mind but that the reputation might lead him into most uncomfortable and embarrassing situations. Incidentally, he wondered if the girl was a good runner; he hoped so.

It must have been quite near midnight when his companion intimated that the time had arrived when they should fare forth and dine. Waldo wanted her to go first, but she shrank close to him, timidly, and held back.

There was nothing else for it, then, than to take the plunge, though had the sun been shining it would have revealed a very pale and wide-eyed champion, who slipped gingerly over the side of the

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ledge to grope with his feet for a foothold beneath.

Half-way down the moon rose above the forest —a great, full, tropic moon, that lighted the face of the cliff almost as brilliantly as might the sun itself. It shone into the mouth of a cave upon the ledge that Waldo had just reached in his descent, revealing to the horrified eyes of the young man a great, hairy form stretched in slumber not a yard from him.

As he looked, the wicked little eyes opened and looked straight into his.

With difficulty Waldo suppressed a shriek of dismay as he turned to plunge madly down the precipitous trail. The girl had not yet descended from the ledge above.

She must have sensed what had happened, for as Waldo turned to fly she gave a little cry of terror. At the same instant the cave man leaped to his feet. But the girl's voice had touched something in the breast of Waldo Emerson which generations of disuse had almost atrophied, and for the first time in his life he did a brave and courageous thing.

He could easily have escaped the cave man and reached the valley—alone; but at the first note of the young girl's cry he wheeled and scrambled back to the ledge to face the burly, primitive man, who could have crushed him with a single blow.

Waldo Emerson no longer trembled. His nerves

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and muscles were very steady as he swung his cudgel in an arc that brought it crashing down upon the upraised guarding arm of the cave man.

There was a snapping of bone beneath the blow, a scream of pain — the man staggered back, the girl sprang to Waldo's side from the ledge above, and hand in hand they turned and fled down the face of the cliff.

From a dozen cave-mouths above issued a score of cave men, but the fleeing pair were half-way across the clearing before the slow-witted brutes were fully aware of what had happened. By the time they had taken up the pursuit Waldo and the girl had entered the forest.

For a few yards the latter led Waldo straight into the shadows of the wood, then she turned abruptly toward the north, at right angles to the course they had been pursuing.

She still clung to the young man's hand, nor did she slacken her speed the least after they had entered the darkness beneath the trees. She ran as surely and confidently through the impenetrable night of the forest as though the way had been lighted by flaming arcs; but Waldo was continually stumbling and falling.

The sound of pursuit presently became fainter; it was apparent that the cave men had continued on straight into the wood; but the girl raced on

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with the panting Waldo for what seemed to the winded young man an eternity. Presently, however, they came to the banks of the little stream that had been visible from the caves. Here the girl fell into a walk, and a moment later dragged the Bostonian down a shelving bank into water that came above his knees.

Up the bed of the stream she led him, sometimes floundering through holes so deep that they were entirely submerged.

Waldo had never learned the vulgar art of swimming, so it was that he would have drowned but for the strong, brown hand of his companion, which dragged him, spluttering and coughing, through one awful hole after another, until, half-strangled and entirely panic-stricken, she hauled him safely upon a low, grassy bank at the foot of a rocky wall which formed one side of a gorge, through which the river boiled.

It must not be assumed that when Waldo Emerson returned to face the hairy brute who threatened to separate him from his new-found companion that by a miracle he had been transformed from a hare into a lion — far from it.

Now that he had a moment in which to lie quite still and speculate upon the adventures of the past hour, the reaction came, and Waldo Emerson thanked the kindly night that obscured from the

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eyes of the girl the pitiable spectacle of his palsied limbs and trembling lip.

Once again he was in a blue funk, with shattered nerves that begged to cry aloud in the extremity of their terror.

It was not warm in the damp cañon, through which the wind swept over the cold water, so that to Waldo's mental anguish was added the physical discomfort of cold and wet. He was indeed a miserable figure as he lay huddled upon the sward, praying for the rising of the sun, yet dreading the daylight that might reveal him to his enemies.

But at last dawn came, and after a fitful sleep Waldo awoke to find himself in a snug and beautiful little paradise hemmed in by the high cliffs that flanked the river, upon a sloping grassy shore that was all but invisible except from a short stretch of cliff-top upon the farther side of the stream.

A few feet from him lay the girl.

She was still asleep. Her head was pillowed upon one firm, brown arm. Her soft black hair fell in disorder across one cheek and over the other arm, to spread gracefully upon the green grass about her.

As Waldo looked he saw that she was very comely. Never before had he seen a girl just like her. His young women friends had been rather prim and plain, with long, white faces and thin

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lips that scarcely ever dared to smile and scorned to unbend in plebeian laughter.

This girl's lips seemed to have been made for laughing—and for something else, though at the time it is only fair to Waldo to say that he did not realize the full possibilities that they presented.

As his eyes wandered along the lines of her young body his Puritanical training brought a hot flush of embarrassment to his face, and he deliberately turned his back upon her.

It was indeed awful to Waldo Emerson to contemplate, to say the least, the unconventional position into which fate had forced him. The longer he pondered it the redder he became. It was frightful—what would his mother say when she heard of it?

What would this girl's mother say? But, more to the point, and—horrible thought—what would her father or her brothers do to Waldo if they found them thus together—and she with only a scanty garment of skin about her waist—a garment which reached scarcely below her knees at any point, and at others terminated far above?

Waldo was chagrined. He could not understand what the girl could be thinking of, for in other respects she seemed quite nice, and he was sure that the great eyes of her reflected only goodness and innocence.

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While he sat thus, thinking, the girl awoke and with a merry laugh addressed him.

"Good morning," said Waldo quite severely.

He wished that he could speak her language, so that he could convey to her a suggestion of the disapprobation which he felt for her attire.

He was on the point of attempting it by signs, when she rose, lithe and graceful as a tigress, and walked to the river's brim. With a deft movement of her fingers she loosed the thong that held her single garment, and as it fell to the ground Waldo, with a horrified gasp, turned upon his face, burying his tightly closed eyes in his hands.

Then the girl dived into the cool waters for her matutinal bath.

She called to him several times to join her, but Waldo could not look at the spectacle presented; his soul was scandalized.

It was some time after she emerged from the river before he dared risk a hesitating glance. With a sigh of relief he saw that she had donned her single garment, and thereafter he could look at her unashamed when she was thus clothed. He felt that by comparison it constituted a most modest gown.

Together they strolled along the river's edge, gathering such fruits and roots as the girl knew to be edible. Waldo Emerson gathered those she in-

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dicated—with all his learning he found it necessary to depend upon the untutored mind of this little primitive maiden for guidance.

Then she taught him how to catch fish with a bent twig and a lightninglike movement of her brown hands—or, rather, tried to teach him, for he was far too slow and awkward to succeed.

Afterward they sat upon the soft grass beneath the shade of a wild fig-tree to eat the fish she had caught. Waldo wondered how in the world the girl could make fire without matches, for he was quite sure that she had none; and even should she be able to make fire it would be quite useless, since she had neither cooking utensils nor stove.

He was not left long in wonderment.

She arranged the fish in a little pile between them, and with a sweet smile motioned to the man to partake; then she selected one for herself, and while Waldo Emerson looked on in horror, sunk her firm, white teeth into the raw fish.

Waldo turned away in sickening disgust.

The girl seemed surprised and worried that he did not eat. Time and again she tried to coax him by signs to join her; but he could not even look at her. He had tried, after the first wave of revolt had subsided, but when he discovered that she ate the entire fish, without bothering to clean it or remove the scales, he became too ill to think of food.

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Several times during the following week they ventured from their hiding-place, and at these times it was evident from the girl's actions that she was endeavoring to elude their enemies and reach a place of safety other than that in which they were concealed. But at each venture her quick ears or sensitive nostrils warned her of the proximity of danger, so that they had been compelled to hurry back into their little Eden.

During this period she taught Waldo many words of her native tongue, so that by means of signs to bridge the gaps between, they were able to communicate with a fair degree of satisfaction. Waldo's mastery of the language was rapid.

On the tenth day the girl was able to make him understand that she wished to escape with him to her own people; that these men among whom he had found her were enemies of her tribe, and that she had been hiding from them when Waldo stumbled upon her cave.

"I fled," she said. "My mother was killed. My father took another mate, always cruel to me. But when I had wandered into the land of these enemies I was afraid, and would have returned to my father's cave. But I had gone too far.

"I would have to run very fast to escape them. Once I ran down a narrow path to the ocean. It was dark.

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"As I wandered through the woods I came suddenly out upon a beach, and there I saw a strange figure on the sand. It was you. I wanted to learn what manner of man you were. But I was very much afraid, so that I dared only watch you from a distance.

"Five times I came down to look at you. You never saw me until the last time, then you set out after me, roaring in a horrible voice.

"I was very much afraid, for I knew that you must be very brave to live all alone by the edge of the forest without any shelter, or even a stone to hurl at Nagoola, should he come out of the woods to devour you."

Waldo Emerson shuddered.

"Who is Nagoola?" he asked.

"You do not know Nagoola!" the girl exclaimed in surprise.

"Not by that name," replied Waldo.

"He is as large," she began in description, "as two men, and black, with glossy coat. He has two yellow eyes, which see as well by night as by day. His great paws are armed with mighty claws. He——"

A rustling from the bushes which fringed the opposite cliff-top caused her to turn, instantly alert.

"Ah," she whispered, "there is Nagoola now."

Waldo looked in the direction of her gaze.

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It was well that the girl did not see his pallid face and popping eyes as he looked into the evil mask of the great black panther that crouched watching them from the river's further bank.

Into Waldo's breast came great panic. It was only because his fear-prostrated muscles refused to respond to his will that he did not scurry, screaming, from the sight of that ferocious countenance.

Then, through the fog of his cowardly terror, he heard again the girl's sweet voice: "I knew that you must be very brave to live all alone by the edge of that wicked forest."

For the first time in his life a wave of shame swept over Waldo Emerson.

The girl called in a taunting voice to the panther, and then turned, smiling, toward Waldo.

"How brave I am now," she laughed. "I am no longer afraid of Nagoola. You are with me."

"No," said Waldo Emerson, in a very weak voice, "you need not fear while I am with you."

"Oh!" she cried. "Slay him. How proud I should be to return to my people with one who vanquished Nagoola, and wore his hide about his loins as proof of his prowess."

"Y-yes," acquiesced Waldo faintly.

"But," continued the girl, "you have slain many of Nagoola's brothers and sisters. It is no longer sport to kill one of his kind."

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"Yes—yes," cried Waldo. "Yes, that is it—panthers bore me now."

"Oh!" The girl clasped her hands in ecstasy. "How many have you slain?"

"Er—why, let me see," the young man blundered. "As a matter of fact, I never kept any record of the panthers I killed."

Waldo was becoming frantic. He had never lied before in all his life. He hated a lie and loathed a liar. He wondered why he had lied now.

Surely it were nothing to boast of to have butchered one of God's creatures—and as for claiming to have killed so many that he could not recall the number, it was little short of horrible. Yet he became conscious of a poignant regret that he had not killed a thousand panthers, and preserved all the pelts as evidence of his valor.

The panther still regarded them from the safety of the farther shore. The girl drew quite close to Waldo in the instinctive plea for protection that belongs to her sex. She laid a timid hand upon his skinny arm and raised her great, trusting eyes to his face in reverent adoration.

"How do you kill them?" she whispered. "Tell me."

Then it was that Waldo determined to make a clean breast of it, and admit that he never before had seen a live panther. But as he opened his

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mouth to make the humiliating confession he realized, quite suddenly, why it was that he had lied —he wished to appear well in the eyes of this savage, half-clothed girl.

He, Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones, craved the applause of a barbarian, and to win it had simulated that physical prowess which generations of Smith-Joneses had viewed from afar—disgusted, disapproving.

The girl repeated her question.

"Oh," said Waldo, "it is really quite simple. After I catch them I beat them severely with a stick."

The girl sighed.

"How wonderful!" she said.

Waldo became the victim of a number of unpleasant emotions—mortification for this suddenly developed moral turpitude; apprehension for the future, when the girl might discover him in his true colors; fear, consuming, terrible fear, that she might insist upon his going forth at once to slay Nagoola.

But she did nothing of the kind, and presently the panther tired of watching them and turned back into the tangle of bushes behind him.

It was with a sigh of relief that Waldo saw him depart.

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CHAPTER IV

DEATH'S DOORWAY

LATE in the afternoon the girl suggested that they start that night upon the journey toward her village.

"The bad men will not be abroad after dark," she said. "With you at my side, I shall not fear Nagoola."

"How far is it to your village?" asked Waldo.

"It will take us three nights," she replied. "By day we must hide, for even you could not vanquish a great number of bad men should they attack you at once."

"No," said Waldo; "I presume not."

"It was very wonderful to watch you, though," she went on, "when you battled upon the cliff-side, beating them down as they came upon you. How brave you were! How terrible! You trembled from rage."

"Yes," admitted Waldo, "I was quite angry. I always tremble like that when my ire is excited. Sometimes I get so bad that my knees knock together. If you ever see them do that you will realize how exceedingly angry I am."

"Yes," murmured the girl.

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Presently Waldo saw that she was laughing quietly to herself.

A great fear rose in his breast. Could it be that she was less gullible than she had appeared? Did she, after all, penetrate the bombast with which he had sought to cloak his cowardice?

He finally mustered sufficient courage to ask: "Why do you laugh?"

"I think of the surprise that awaits old Flatfoot and Korth and the others when I lead you to them."

"Why will they be surprised?" asked Waldo.

"At the way you will crack their heads."

Waldo shuddered.

"Why should I crack their heads?" he asked.

"Why should you crack their heads!" It was apparently incredible to the girl that he should not understand.

"How little you know," she said. "You cannot swim, you do not know the language which men may understand, you would be lost in the woods were I to leave you, and now you say that you do not know that when you come to a strange tribe they will try to kill you, and only take you as one of them when you have proven your worth by killing at least one of their strongest men."

"At least one!" said Waldo, half to himself.

He was dazed by this information. He had expected to be welcomed with open arms into the best

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society that the girl's community afforded. He had thought of it in just this way, for he had not even yet learned that there might be a whole people living under entirely different conditions than those which existed in Boston, Massachusetts.

Her reference to his ignorance also came as a distinct shock to him. He had always considered himself a man of considerable learning. It had been his secret boast and his mother's open pride.

And now to be pitied for his ignorance by one who probably thought the earth flat, if she ever thought about such matters at all—by one who could neither read nor write. And the worst of it all was that her indictment was correct—only she had not gone far enough.

There was little of practical value that he did know. With the realization of his limitations Waldo Emerson took, unknown to himself, a great stride toward a broader wisdom than his narrow soul had ever conceived.

That night, after the sun had set and the stars and moon come out, the two set forth from their retreat toward the northwest, where the girl said that the village of her people lay.

They walked hand in hand through the dark wood, the girl directing their steps, the young man grasping his long cudgel in his right hand and searching into the shadows for the terrible creatures

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conjured by his cowardly brain, but mostly for the two awesome spots of fire which he had gathered from the girl's talk would mark the presence of Nagoola.

Strange noises assailed his ears, and once the girl crouched close to him as her quick ears caught the sound of the movement of a great body through the underbrush at their left.

Waldo Emerson was almost paralyzed by terror; but at length the creature, whatever it may have been, turned off into the forest without molesting them. For several hours thereafter they suffered no alarm, but the constant tension of apprehension on the man's already over-wrought nerves had reduced him to a state of such abject nervous terror that he was no longer master of himself.

So it was that when the girl suddenly halted him with an affrighted little gasp and, pointing straight ahead, whispered, "Nagoola," he went momentarily mad with fear.

For a bare instant he paused in his tracks, and then breaking away from her, he raised his club above his head, and with an awful shriek dashed—straight toward the panther.

In the minds of some there may be a doubt as to which of the two—the sleek, silent, black cat or the grinning, screaming Waldo—was the most awe-inspiring.

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Be that as it may, it was quite evident that no doubt assailed the mind of the cat, for with a single answering scream, he turned and faded into the blackness of the black night.

But Waldo did not see him go. Still shrieking, he raced on through the forest until he tripped over a creeper and fell exhausted to the earth. There he lay panting, twitching, and trembling until the girl found him, an hour after sunrise.

At the sound of her voice he would have struggled to his feet and dashed on into the woods, for he felt that he could never face her again after the spectacle of cowardice with which he had treated her a few hours before.

But even as he gained his feet her first words reassured him, and dissipated every vestige of his intention to elude her.

"Did you catch him?" she cried.

"No," panted Waldo Emerson quite truthfully. "He got away."

They rested a little while, and then Waldo insisted that they resume their journey by day instead of by night. He had positively determined that he never should or could endure another such a night of mental torture. He would much rather take the chance of meeting with the bad men than suffer the constant feeling that unseen enemies were peering out of the darkness at him every moment.

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In the day they would at least have the advantage of seeing their foes before they were struck. He did not give these reasons to the girl, however. Under the circumstances he felt that another explanation would be better adapted to her ears.

"You see," he said, "if it hadn't been so dark Nagoola might not have escaped me. It is too bad —too bad."

"Yes," agreed the girl, "it is too bad. We shall travel by day. It will be safe now. We have left the country of the bad men, and there are few men living between us and my people."

That night they spent in a cave they found in the steep bank of a small river.

It was damp and muddy and cold, but they were both very tired, and so they fell asleep and slept as soundly as though the best of mattresses lay beneath them. The girl probably slept better, since she had never been accustomed to anything much superior to this in all her life.

The journey required five days, instead of three, and during all the time Waldo was learning more and more woodcraft from the girl. At first his attitude had been such that he could profit but little from her greater practical knowledge, for he had been inclined to look down upon her as an untutored savage.

Now, however, he was a willing student, and

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when Waldo Emerson elected to study there was nothing that he could not master and retain in a remarkable manner. He had a well-trained mind—the principal trouble with it being that it had been crammed full of useless knowledge. His mother had always made the error of confusing knowledge with wisdom.

Waldo was not the only one to learn new things upon this journey. The girl learned something, too—something which had been threatening for days to rise above the threshold of her conscious mind, and now she realized that it had lain in her heart almost ever since the first moment that she had been with this strange young man.

Waldo Emerson had been endowed by nature with a chivalrous heart, and his training had been such that he mechanically accorded to all women the gallant little courtesies and consideration which are of the fine things that go with breeding. Nor was he one whit less punctilious in his relations with this wild cave girl than he would have been with the daughter of the finest family of his own aristocracy.

He had been kind and thoughtful and sympathetic always, and to the girl, who had never been accustomed to such treatment from men, nor had ever seen a man accord it to any woman, it seemed little short of miraculous that such gentle tender-

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ness could belong to a nature so warlike and ferocious as that with which she had endowed Waldo Emerson. But she was quite satisfied that it should be so.

She would not have cared for him had he been gentle with her, yet cowardly. Had she dreamed of the real truth—had she had the slightest suspicion that Waldo Emerson was at heart the most arrant poltroon upon whom the sun had ever shone, she would have loathed and hated him, for in the primitive code of ethics which governed the savage community which was her world there was no place for the craven or the weakling—and Waldo Emerson was both.

As the realization of her growing sentiment toward the man awakened, it imparted to her ways with him a sudden coyness and maidenly aloofness which had been entirely wanting before. Until then their companionship, in so far as the girl was concerned, had been rather that of one youth toward another; but now that she found herself thrilling at his slightest careless touch, she became aware of a paradoxical impulse to avoid him.

For the first time in her life, too, she realized her nakedness, and was ashamed. Possibly this was due to the fact that Waldo appeared so solicitous in endeavoring to coerce his rags into the impossible feat of entirely covering his body.

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As they neared their journey's end Waldo became more and more perturbed.

During the last night horrible visions of Flatfoot and Korth haunted his dreams. He saw the great, hairy beasts rushing upon him in all the ferocity of their primeval savagery — tearing him limb from limb in their bestial rage.

With a shriek he awoke.

To the girl's startled inquiry he replied that he had been but dreaming.

"Did you dream of Flatfoot and Korth?" she laughed. "Of the things that you will do to them tomorrow?"

"Yes," replied Waldo; "I dreamed of Flatfoot and Korth." But the girl did not see how he trembled and hid his head in the hollow of his arm.

The last day's march was the most agonizing experience of Waldo Emerson's life. He was positive that he was going to his death, but to him the horror of the thing lay more in the manner of his coming death than in the thought of death itself. As a matter of fact, he had again reached a point when he would have welcomed death.

The future held for him nothing but a life of discomfort and misery and constant mental anguish, superinduced by the condition of awful fear under which he must drag out his existence in this strange and terrible land.

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Waldo had not the slightest conception as to whether he was upon some mainland or an unknown island. That the tidal wave had come upon them somewhere in the South Pacific was all that he knew; but long since he had given up hope that succor would reach him in time to prevent him perishing miserably far from his home and his poor mother.

He could not dwell long upon this dismal theme, because it always brought tears of self-pity to his eyes, and for some unaccountable reason Waldo shrunk from the thought of exhibiting this unmanly weakness before the girl.

All day long he racked his brain for some valid excuse whereby he might persuade his companion to lead him elsewhere than to her village. A thousand times better would be some secluded little garden such as that which had harbored them for the ten days following their escape from the cave men.

If they could but come upon such a place near the coast, where Waldo could keep a constant watch for passing vessels, he would have been as happy as he ever expected it would be possible for him in such a savage land.

He wanted the girl with him for companionship; he was more afraid when he was alone. Of course, he realized that she was no fit companion for a man of his mental attainments; but then she was a

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human being, and her society much better than none at all. While hope had still lingered that he might live to escape and return to his beloved Boston, he had often wondered whether he would dare tell his mother of his unconventional acquaintance with this young woman.

Of course, it would be out of the question for him to go at all into details. He would not, for example, dare to attempt a description of her toilet to his prim parent.

The fact that they had been alone together, day and night, for weeks was another item which troubled Waldo considerably. He knew that the shock of such information might prostrate his mother, and for a long time he debated the wisdom of omitting any mention of the girl whatever.

At length he decided that a little, white lie would be permissible, inasmuch as his mother's health and the girl's reputation were both at stake. So he had decided to mention that the girl's aunt had been with them in the capacity of chaperon; that fixed it nicely, and on this point Waldo's mind was more at ease.

Late in the afternoon they wound down a narrow trail that led from the plateau into a narrow, beautiful valley. A tree-bordered river meandered through the center of the level plain that formed the valley's floor, while beyond rose precipitous

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cliffs, which trailed off in either direction as far as the eye could reach.

"There live my people," said the girl, pointing toward the distant barrier.

Waldo groaned inwardly.

"Let us rest here," he said, "until tomorrow, that we may come to your home rested and refreshed."

"Oh, no," cried the girl; "we can reach the caves before dark. I can scarcely wait until I shall have seen how you shall slay Flatfoot, and maybe Korth also. Though I think that after one of them has felt your might the others will be glad to take you into the tribe at the price of your friendship."

"Is there not some way," ventured the distracted Waldo, "that I may come into your village without fighting? I should dislike to kill one of your friends," said Waldo solemnly.

The girl laughed.

"Neither Flatfoot nor Korth are friends of mine," she replied; "I hate them both. They are terrible men. It would be better for all the tribe were they killed. They are so strong and cruel that we all hate them, since they use their strength to abuse those who are weaker.

"They make us all work very hard for them. They take other men's mates, and if the other men object they kill them. There is scarcely a moon

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passes that does not see either Korth or Flatfoot kill some one.

"Nor is it always men they kill. Often when they are angry they kill women and little children just for the pleasure of killing; but when you come among us there will be no more of that, for you will kill them both if they be not good."

Waldo was too horrified by this description of his soon-to-be antagonists to make any reply—his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth—all his vocal organs seemed paralyzed.

But the girl did not notice. She went on joyously, ripping Waldo's nervous system out of him and tearing it into shreds.

"You see," she continued, "Flatfoot and Korth are greater than the other men of my tribe. They can do as they will. They are frightful to look upon, and I have often thought that the hearts of others dried up when they saw either of them coming for them.

"And they are so strong! I have seen Korth crush the skull of a full-grown man with a single blow from his open palm; while one of Flatfoot's amusements is the breaking of men's arms and legs with his bare hands.

They had entered the valley now, and in silence they continued on toward the fringe of trees which grew beside the little river.

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Nadara led the way toward a ford, which they quickly crossed. All the way across the valley Waldo had been searching for some avenue of escape.

He dared not enter that awful village and face those terrible men, and he was almost equally averse to admitting to the girl that he was afraid.

He would gladly have died to have escaped either alternative, but he preferred to choose the manner of his death.

The thought of entering the village and meeting a horrible end at the hands of the brutes who awaited him there and of being compelled to demonstrate before the girl's eyes that he was neither a mighty fighter nor a hero was more than he could endure.

Occupied with these harrowing speculations, Waldo and Nadara came to the farther side of the forest, whence they could see the towering cliffs rising steeply from the valley's bed, three hundred yards away.

Along their face and at their feet Waldo descried a host of half-naked men, women, and children moving about in the consummation of their various duties. Involuntarily he halted.

The girl came to his side. Together they looked out upon the scene, the like of which Waldo Emerson never before had seen.

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It was as though he had been suddenly snatched back through countless ages to a long-dead past and dropped into the midst of the prehistoric life of his paleolithic progenitors.

Upon the narrow ledges before their caves, women, with long, flowing hair, ground food in rude stone mortars.

Naked children played about them, perilously close to the precipitous cliff edge.

Hairy men squatted, gorillalike, before pieces of flat stone, upon which green hides were stretched, while they scraped, scraped, scraped with the sharp edge of smaller bits of stone.

There was no laughter and no song.

Occasionally Waldo saw one of the fierce creatures address another, and sometimes one would raise his thick lips in a nasty snarl that exposed his fighting fangs; but they were too far away for their words to reach the young man.

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CHAPTER V.

AWAKENING

"COME," said the girl, "let us make haste. I cannot wait to be home again! How good it looks!"

Waldo gazed at her in horror. It did not seem credible that this beautiful young creature could be of such clay as that he looked upon. It was revolting to believe that she had sprung from the loins of one of those half-brutes, or that a woman as fierce, repulsive, such as those he saw before him, could have borne her. It made him sick with disgust.

He turned from her.

"Go to your people, Nadara," he said, for an idea had come to him.

He had evolved a scheme for escaping a meeting with Flatfoot and Korth, and the sudden disgust which he felt for the girl made it easier for him to carry out his design.

"Are you not coming with me?" she cried.

"Not at once," replied Waldo, quite truthfully. "I wish you to go first. Were we to go together they might harm you when they rushed out to attack me."

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The girl had no fear of this, but she felt that it was very thoughtful of the man to consider her welfare so tenderly. To humor him, she acceded to his request.

"As you wish, Thandar," she answered, smiling.

Thandar was a name of her own choosing, after Waldo had informed her in answer to a request for his name, that she might call him Mr. Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones. "I shall call you Thandar," she had replied; "it is shorter, more easily remembered, and describes you. It means the Brave One." And so Thandar he had become.

The girl had scarcely emerged from the forest on her way toward the cliffs when Thandar the Brave One, turned and ran at top speed in the opposite direction. When he came to the river he gave immediate evidence of the strides he had taken in woodcraft during the brief weeks that he had been under the girl's tutorage, for he plunged immediately into the water, setting out up-stream upon the gravelly bottom where he would leave no spoor to be tracked down by the eagle eyes of these primitive men.

He supposed that the girl would search for him; but he felt no compunction at having deserted her so scurvily. Of course, he had no suspicion of her real sentiments toward him—it would have shocked him to have imagined that a low-born per-

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son, such as she, had become infatuated with him.

It would have been embarrassing and unfortunate, but, of course, quite impossible — since Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones could never form an alliance beneath him. As for the girl herself, he might as readily have considered the possibility of marrying a cow, so far from any such thoughts of her had he been.

On and on he stumbled through the cold water. Sometimes it was above his head, but Waldo had learned to swim — the girl had made him, partly by pleas, but largely by the fear that she would ridicule him.

As night came on he commenced to become afraid, but his fear now was not such a horribly prostrating thing as it had been a few weeks before. Without being aware of the fact, Waldo had grown a trifle less timid, though he was still far from lion-like.

That night he slept in the crotch of a tree. He selected a small one, which, though less comfortable, was safer from the approach of Nagoola than a larger tree would have been. This also had he learned from Nadara.

Had he paused to consider, he would have discovered that all he knew that was worth while he had had from the savage little girl whom he, from the high pinnacle of his erudition, regarded with

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such pity. But Waldo had not as yet learned enough to realize how very little he knew.

In the morning he continued his flight, gathering his breakfast from tree and shrub as he fled. Here again was he wholly indebted to Nadara, for without her training he would have been restricted to a couple of fruits, whereas now he had a great variety of fruits, roots, berries, and nuts to choose from in safety.

The stream that he had been following had now become a narrow, rushing, mountain torrent. It leaped suddenly over little precipices in wild and picturesque waterfalls; it rioted in foaming cascades; and ever it led Waldo farther into high and rugged country.

The climbing was difficult and oftentimes dangerous. Waldo was surprised at the steeps he negotiated—perilous ascents from which he would have snrunk in palsied fear a few weeks earlier. Waldo was coming on.

Another fact which struck him with amazement at the same time that it filled him with rejoicing, was that he no longer coughed. It was quite beyond belief, too, since never in his life had he been so exposed to cold and wet and discomfort.

At home, he realized, he would long since have curled up and died had he been subjected to one-tenth the exposure that he had undergone since the

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great wave had lifted him bodily from the deck of the steamer to land him unceremoniously in the midst of this new life of hardships and terrors.

Toward noon Waldo began to travel with less haste. He had seen or heard no evidence of pursuit. At times he stopped to look back along the trail he had passed, but though he could see the little valley below him for a considerable distance he discovered nothing to arouse alarm.

Presently he realized that he was very lonely. A dozen times in as many minutes he thought of observations he would have been glad to make had there been some one with him to hear. There were queries, too, relative to this new country that he should have liked very much to propound, and it flashed upon him that in all the world there was only one whom he knew who could give him correct answers to these queries.

He wondered what the girl had thought when he did not follow her into the village, and set upon Flatfoot and Korth. At the thought he found himself flushing in a most unaccountable manner.

What would the girl think! Would she guess the truth? Well, what difference if she did? What was her opinion to a cultured gentleman such as Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones? But yet he found his mind constantly reverting to this unhappy speculation; it was most annoying.

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As he thought of her he discovered with what distinctness he recalled every feature of her piquant little face, her olive skin tinged beautifully by the ruddy glow of health; her fine, straight nose and delicate nostrils, her perfect eyes, soft, yet filled with the fire of courage and intelligence. Waldo wondered why it was that he recalled these things now, and dwelt upon them; he had been with her for weeks without realizing that he had particularly noticed them.

But most vividly he conjured again the memory of her soft, liquid speech, her ready retorts, her bright, interesting observations on the little happenings of their daily life; her thoughtful kindliness to him, a stranger within her gates, and—again he flushed hotly—her sincere, though remarkable, belief in his prowess.

It took Waldo a long time to admit to himself that he missed the girl; it must have been weeks before he finally did so unreservedly. Simultaneously he determined to return to her village and find her. He had even gone so far as to start the return journey when the memory of her description of Flatfoot and Korth brought him to a sudden halt—a most humiliating halt.

The blood surged to his face—he could feel it burning there. And then Waldo did two things which he had never done before: he looked at his

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soul and saw himself as he was, and—he swore.

"Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones," he said aloud, "you're a darned coward! Worse than that, you're an unthinkable cad. That girl was kind to you. She treated you with the tender solicitude of a mother. And how have you returned her kindness? By looking down upon her with arrogant condescension. By pitying her.

"Pitying her! You—you miserable weakling—ingrate, pitying that fine, intelligent, generous girl. You, with your pitiful little store of second-hand knowledge, pitying that girl's ignorance. Why, she's forgotten more real things than you ever heard of, you—you—" Words utterly failed him.

Waldo's awakening was thorough—painfully thorough. It left no tiny hidden recess of his contemptible little soul unrevealed from his searching self-analysis. Looking back over the twenty-one years of his uneventful life, he failed to resurrect but a single act of which he might now be proud, and that, strange to say, in the light of his past training, had to do neither with culture, intellect, birth, breeding, nor knowledge.

It was a purely gross, physical act. It was hideously, violently, repulsively animal—it was no other than the instant of heroism in which he had turned back upon the cliff's face to battle with the

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horrible, hairy man who had threatened to prevent Nadara's escape.

Even now Waldo could not realize that it had been he who ventured so foolhardy an act; but none the less his breast swelled with pride as he recalled it. It put into the heart of the man a new hope and into his head a new purpose—a purpose that would have caused his Back Bay mother to seek an early grave could she have known of it.

Nor did Waldo Emerson lose any time in initiating the new regime which was eventually to fit him for the consummation of his splendid purpose. He thought of it as splendid now, though a few weeks before the vulgar atrocity of it would have nauseated him.

Far up in the hills, near the source of the little river, Waldo had found a rocky cave. This he had chosen as his new home. He cleaned it out with scrupulous care, littering the floor with leaves and grasses.

Before the entrance he piled a dozen large boulders, so arranged that three of them could be removed or replaced either from within or without, thus forming a means of egress and ingress which could be effectually closed against intruders.

From the top of a high promontory, a half mile beyond his cave, Waldo could obtain a view of the ocean, some eight or ten miles distant. It was al-

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ways in his mind that some day a ship would come, and Waldo longed to return to the haunts of civilization, but he did not expect the ship before his plans had properly matured and been put into execution. He argued that he could not sail away from this shore forever without first seeing Nadara, and restoring the confidence in him which he felt his recent desertion had unquestionably shaken to its foundations.

As a part of his new regime, Waldo required exercise, and to this end he set about making a trip to the ocean at least once each week. The way was rough and hazardous, and the first few times Waldo found it almost beyond his strength to make even one leg of the journey between sunrise and dark.

This necessitated sleeping out over night; but this, too, accorded with the details of the task he had set himself, and so he did it quite cheerfully and with a sense of martyrdom that he found effectually stilled his most poignant fits of cowardice.

As time went on he was able to cover the whole distance to the ocean and return in a single day. He never coughed now, nor did he glance fearfully from side to side as he strode through the woods and open places of his wild domain.

His eyes were bright and clear, his head and shoulders were thrown well back, and the mountain climbing had expanded his chest to a degree that

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appalled him—the while it gave him much secret satisfaction. It was a very different Waldo from the miserable creature which had been vomited up by the ocean upon the sand of that distant beach.

The days that Waldo did not make a trip to the ocean he spent in rambling about the hills in the vicinity of his cave. He knew every rock and tree within five miles of his lair.

He knew where Nagoola hid by day, and the path that he took down to the valley by night. Nor did he longer tremble at sight of the great, black cat.

True, Waldo avoided him, but it was through cool and deliberate caution, which is quite another thing from the senseless panic of fear. Waldo was biding his time.

He would not always avoid Nagoola. Nagoola was a part of Waldo's great plan, but Waldo was not ready for him yet.

The young man still bore his cudgel, and in addition he had practised throwing rocks until he could almost have hit a near-by bird upon the wing. Besides these weapons Waldo was working upon a spear. It had occurred to him that a spear would be a mighty handy weapon against either man or beast, and so he had set to work to fashion one.

He found a very straight young sapling, a little over an inch in diameter and ten feet long. By

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means of a piece of edged flint he succeeded in tapering it to a sharp point. A rawhide thong, plaited from many pieces of small bits of hide taken from the little animals that had fallen before his missiles, served to sling the crude weapon across his shoulders when he walked.

With his spear he practised hour upon hour each day, until he could transfix a fruit the size of an apple three times out of five, at a distance of fifty feet, and at a hundred hit a target the size of a man almost without a miss.

Six months had passed since he had fled from an encounter with Flatfoot and Korth.

Then Waldo had been a skinny, cowardly weakling; now his great frame had filled out with healthy flesh, while beneath his skin hard muscles rolled as he bent to one of the many Herculean tasks he had set for himself.

For six months he had worked with a single purpose in view, but still he felt that the day was not yet come when he might safely venture to put his newfound manhood to the test.

Down, far down, in the depth of his soul he feared that he was yet a coward at heart—and he dared not take the risk. It was too much to expect, he told himself, that a man should be entirely metamorphosed in a brief half year. He would wait a little longer.

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It was about this time that Waldo first saw a human being after his last sight of Nadara.

It was while he was on his way to the ocean, on one of the trips that had by this time become thrice weekly affairs, that he suddenly came face to face with a skulking, hairy brute.

Waldo halted to see what would happen.

The man eyed him with those small, cunning, red-rimmed eyes that reminded Waldo of the eyes of a pig.

Finally Waldo spoke in the language of Nadara.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Sag the Killer," replied the man. "Who are you?"

"Thandar," answered Waldo.

"I do not know you," said Sag; "but I can kill you."

He lowered his bull head and came for Waldo like a battering ram.

The young man dropped the point of his ready spear, bracing his feet. The point entered Sag's breast below the collar-bone, stopping only after it had passed entirely through the savage heart. Waldo had not moved; the momentum of the man's body had been sufficient to impale him.

As the body rolled over, stiffening after a few convulsive kicks, Waldo withdrew his spear from it. Blood smeared its point for a distance of a foot,

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but Waldo showed no sign of loathing or disgust.

Instead he smiled. It had been so much easier than he had anticipated.

Leaving Sag where he had fallen he continued toward the ocean. An hour later he heard unusual noises behind him.

He stopped to listen. He was being pursued. From the sounds he estimated that there must be several in the party, and a moment later, as he was crossing a clearing, he got his first view of them as they emerged from the forest he had just quitted.

There were at least twenty powerfully muscled brutes. In skin bags thrown across their shoulders each carried a supply of stones, and these they began to hurl at Waldo as they raced toward him. For a moment the man held his ground, but he quickly realized the futility of pitting himself against such odds.

Turning, he ran toward the forest upon the other side of the clearing while a shower of rocks whizzed about him.

Once within the shelter of the trees there was less likelihood of his being hit by one of the missiles, but occasionally a well-aimed rock would strike him a glancing blow. Waldo hoped that they would tire of the chase before the beach was reached, for he knew that there could be but one outcome of a battle in which one man faced twenty.

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As the pursued and the pursuers raced on through the forest one of the latter, fleeter than his companions, commenced to close up the gap which had existed between Waldo and the twenty. On and on he came, until a backward glance showed Waldo that in another moment this swift foeman would be upon him. He was younger than his fellows and more active, and, having thrown all his stones, was free from any burden of weight other than the single garment about his hips.

Waldo still clung to his tattered ducks, which from lack of support and more or less rapid disintegration were continually slipping down from his hips, so that they tended to hinder his movements and reduce his speed.

Had he been as naked as his pursuer he would doubtless have distanced him; but he was not, and it was evident that because of this fact he must take a chance in a hand-to-hand encounter that might delay him sufficiently to permit the balance of the horde to reach him—that would be the end of everything.

But Waldo Emerson neither screamed in terror nor trembled. When he wheeled to meet the now close savage there was a smile upon his lips, for Waldo Emerson had "killed his man," and there was no longer the haunting fear within his soul that at heart he was a coward.

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As he turned with couched spear the cave man came to a sudden stop.

This was not what Waldo had anticipated. The other savages were running rapidly toward him, but the fellow who had first overhauled him remained at a safe twenty feet from the point of his weapon.

Waldo was being cleverly held until the remainder of the enemy could arrive and overwhelm him. He knew that if he turned to run the fellow who danced and yelled just beyond his reach would plunge forward and be upon his back in an instant.

He tried rushing the man, but the other retreated nimbly, drawing Waldo still closer to those who were coming on.

There was no time to be lost. A moment more and the entire twenty would be upon him; but there were possibilities in a spear that the cave man in his ignorance dreamed not of. There was a lightninglike movement of Waldo's arm, and the aborigine saw the spear darting swiftly through space toward his breast. He tried to dodge, but was too late. Down he went, clutching madly at the slender thing which protruded from his heart.

Although one of the dead man's companions was now quite close, Waldo could not relinquish his weapon without an effort—it had cost him considerable time to make, and twice today it had saved his life. Forgetful that he had ever been a coward

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he leaped toward the fallen man, reaching his side at the same instant as his foremost pursuer.

The two came together like mad bulls — the savage reaching for Waldo's throat, Waldo wielding his light cudgel. For a moment they struggled backward and forward, turning and twisting, the cave man in an effort to close upon Waldo's wind, Waldo to hold the other at arm's length for the brief instant that would be necessary for one sudden, effective blow from the cudgel.

The other savages were almost upon them when the young man found his antagonist's throat. Throwing all his weight and strength into the effort, Waldo forced the cave man back until there was room between them for the play of the stick. A single blow was sufficient.

As the limp body of his foeman slipped from his grasp, Waldo snatched his precious spear from the heart of its victim, and with the hands of the infuriated pack almost upon him, turned once more into his flight toward the ocean.

The howling band was close upon his heels now, nor could he greatly increase the distance that separated him from them. He wondered what the outcome of the matter was to be; he did not wish to die. His thoughts kept reverting to his boyhood home, to his indulgent mother, to the friends that had been his. He felt that at the last moment he

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was about to lose his nerve—that, after all, his hard earned manliness was counterfeit.

Then there came to him a vision of an oval, olive face framed by a mass of soft, black hair; and before it the fear of death dissolved into a grim smile. He did not pause to analyze the reason for it—nor could he have done so then had he tried. He only knew that with those eyes upon him he could not be aught else than courageous.

A moment later he burst through the last fringe of underbrush to emerge upon the clearing that faced the sea.

There by a tiny rivulet he saw a sight that filled him with thanksgiving, and farther out upon the ocean that which he had been waiting and hoping for for all these long, hard months—a ship.

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CHAPTER VI

A CHOICE

SEAMEN upon the beach were filling water-casks.

There were a dozen of them, and as Waldo plunged from the forest they looked with startled apprehension at the strange apparition. A great, brown giant they saw, clad in a few ragged strings of white duck, for Waldo had kept his apparel as immaculately clean as hard rubbing in cold water would permit.

In one hand the strange creature carried a long, bloody spear, in the other a light cudgel. Long, yellow hair streamed back over his broad shoulders.

Several of the men — those who were armed — leveled guns and revolvers at him; but when, as he drew closer, they saw a broad grin upon his face, and heard in perfectly good English, "Don't shoot; I'm a white man," they lowered their weapons and awaited him.

He had scarcely reached them when they saw a swarm of naked men dash from the forest in his wake. Waldo saw their eyes directed past him and knew that his pursuers had come into view.

"You'll have to shoot at them, I imagine," he

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said. "They're not exactly domesticated. Try firing over their heads at first; maybe you can scare them away without hurting any of them."

He disliked the idea of seeing the poor savages slaughtered. It didn't seem just like fair play to mow them down with bullets.

The sailors followed his suggestion. At the first reports the cave men halted in surprise and consternation.

"Let's rush 'em," suggested one of the men, and this was all that was needed to send them scurrying back into the woods.

Waldo found that the ship was English, and that all the men spoke his mother tongue in more or less understandable fashion. The second mate, who was in charge of the landing party, proved to have originated in Boston. It was much like being at home again.

Waldo was so excited and wanted to ask so many questions all at once that he became almost unintelligible. It seemed scarcely possible that a ship had really come.

He realized now that he had never actually entertained any very definite belief that a ship ever would come to this out-of-the-way corner of the world. He had hoped and dreamed, but down in the bottom of his heart he must have felt that years might elapse before he would be rescued.

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Even now it was difficult to believe that these were really civilized beings like himself.

They were on their way to a civilized world; they would soon be surrounded by their families and friends, and he, Waldo Emerson Smith-Jones, was going with them!

In a few months he would see his mother and his father and all his friends—he would be among his books once more.

Even as the last thought flashed through his mind it was succeeded by mild wonderment that this outlook failed to raise his temperature as he might have expected that it would. His books had been his real life in the past—could it be that they had lost something of their glamour? Had his brief experience with the realities of life dulled the edge of his appetite for second-hand hopes, aspirations, deeds, and emotions?

It had.

Waldo yet craved his books, but they alone would no longer suffice. He wanted something bigger, something more real and tangible—he wanted to read and study, but even more he wanted to do. And back there in his own world there would be plenty awaiting the doing.

His heart thrilled at the possibilities that lay before the new Waldo Emerson—possibilities of which he never would have dreamed but for the

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strange chance which had snatched him bodily from one life to throw him into this new one, which had forced upon him the development of attributes of self-reliance, courage, initiative, and resourcefulness that would have lain dormant within him always but for the necessity which had given birth to them.

Yes, Waldo realized that he owed a great deal to this experience—a great deal to— And then a sudden realization of the truth rushed in upon him—he owed everything to Nadara.

"I was never shipwrecked on a desert island," said the second mate, breaking in upon Waldo's reveries, "but I can imagine just about how good you feel at the thought that you are at last rescued and that in an hour or so you will see the shoreline of your prison growing smaller and smaller upon the southern horizon."

"Yes," acquiesced Waldo in a far away voice: "it's awfully good of you, but I am not going with you."

Two hours later Waldo Emerson stood alone upon the beach, watching the diminishing hull of a great ship as it dropped over the rim of the world far to the north.

A vague hint of tears dimmed his vision; then he threw back his shoulders, swallowed the thing that

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had risen into his throat, and with high held head turned back into the forest.

In one hand he carried a razor and a plug of tobacco — the sole mementos of his recent brief contact with the world of civilization. The kindly sailors had urged him to reconsider his decision, but when he remained obdurate they had insisted that they be permitted to leave some of the comforts of life with him.

The only thing that he could think of that he wanted very badly was a razor — firearms he would not accept, for he had worked out a rather fine chivalry of his own here in this savage world — a chivalry which would not permit him to take any advantage over the primeval inhabitants he had found here other than what his own hands and head might give him.

At the last moment one of the seamen, prompted by a generous heart and a keen realization of what life must be without even bare necessities, had thrust upon Waldo the plug of tobacco. As he looked at it now the young man smiled.

"That would indeed be the last step, according to mother's ideas," he soliloquized. "No lower could I sink."

The ship that bore away Waldo's chance of escape carried also a long letter to Waldo's mother. In portions it was rather vague and rambling. It

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mentioned, among other things, that he had an obligation to fulfil before he could leave his present habitat; but that the moment he was free he should "take the first steamer for Boston."

The skipper of the ship which had just sailed away had told Waldo that in so far as he knew there might never be another ship touch his island, which was so far out of the beaten course that only the shore-line of it had ever been explored, and scarce a score of vessels had reported it since Captain Cook discovered it in 1773.

Yet it was in the face of this that Waldo had refused to leave. As he walked slowly through the wood on his way back toward his cave he tried to convince himself that he had acted purely from motives of gratitude and fairness — that as a gentleman he could do no less than see Nadara and thank her for the friendly services she had rendered him; but for some reason this seemed a very futile and childish excuse for relinquishing what might easily be his only opportunity to return to civilization.

His final decision was that he had acted the part of a fool; yet as he walked he hummed a joyous tune, and his heart was full of happiness and pleasant expectations of what he could not have told.

To one thing he had made up his mind, and that

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was that the next sun would see him on his way to the village of Nadara. His experience with the savages that day had convinced him that he might with reasonable safety face Flatfoot and Korth.

The more he dwelt upon this idea the more light-hearted he became—he could not understand it. He should be plunged into the blackest despair, for had he not but just relinquished a chance to return home, and was he not within a day or two to enter the village of the ferocious Flatfoot and the mighty Korth? Even so, his heart sang.

Waldo saw nothing of his enemies of the earlier part of the day as he moved cautiously through the forest or crossed the little plains and meadows which lay along the route between the ocean and his lair; but his thoughts often reverted to them and to his adventures of the morning, and the result was that he became aware of a deficiency in his equipment—a deficiency which his recent battle made glaringly apparent.

In fact, there were two points that might be easily remedied. One was the lack of a shield. Had he had protection of this nature he would have been in comparatively little danger from the shower of missiles that the savages had flung at him.

The other was a sword. With a sword and shield he could have let his enemies come to very close quarters with perfect impunity to himself and

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then have run them through with infinite ease.

This new idea would necessitate a delay in his plans; he must finish both shield and sword before he departed for the village of Flatfoot. What with his meditation and his planning, Waldo had made poor time on the return journey from the coast, so that it was after sunset when he entered the last deep ravine beyond the farther summit of which lay his rocky home. In the depths of the ravine it was already quite dark, though a dim twilight still hung upon the surrounding hill-tops.

He had about completed the arduous ascent of the last steep trail, at the crest of which was his journey's end, when above him, silhouetted against the darkening sky, loomed a great black, crouching mass, from the center of which blazed two balls of fire.

It was Nagoola, and he occupied the center of the only trail that led over the edge of the ridge from the ravine below.

"I had almost forgotten you, Nagoola," murmured Waldo Emerson. "I could never have gone upon my journey without first interviewing you, but I could have wished a different time and place than this. Let us postpone the matter for a day or so," he concluded aloud; but the only response from Nagoola was an ominous growl. Waldo felt rather uncomfortable.

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He could not have come upon the great, black panther at a more inopportune time or place. It was too dark for Waldo's human eyes, and the cat was above him and Waldo upon a steep hillside that under the best of conditions offered but a precarious foothold. He tried to shoo the formidable beast away by shouts and menacing gesticulations, but Nagoola would not shoo.

Instead he crept slowly forward, edging his sinuous body inch by inch along the rocky trail until it hung poised above the waiting man a dozen feet below him.

Six months before Waldo would long since have been shrieking in meteorlike flight down the bed of the ravine behind him. That a wonderful transformation had been wrought within him was evident from the fact that no cry of fright escaped him, and that, far from fleeing, he edged inch by inch upward toward the menacing creature hanging there above him. He carried his spear with the point leveled a trifle below those baleful eyes.

He had advanced but a foot or two, however, when, with an awful shriek, the terrible beast launched itself full upon him.

As the heavy body struck him Waldo went over backward down the cliff, and with him went Nagoola.

Clawing, tearing, and scratching, the two rolled

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