

The Free Press' Short Story

JUNGLE POISON

By RUSSELL GORDON CARTER

HE lean blue barrel of a rifle cautiously thrust aside the clogging tree ferns that bordered the small natural clearing. Overhead a macaw flashed blood red in the dazzling noonday sunlight.

The ferns spread farther and farther apart, revealing at last a face that through white, seemed somehow to belong to savage Africa. For several seconds the man gazed in tight-lipped triumph at the two sleeping figures—Ralph Jones and Paul Singleton, of the French African Engineering Company. With rifle in position, he strode abruptly forward.

"Wake up!" The sound of his harsh throaty voice set a multitude of birds to shrieking and calling. The echoes went flying wildly back and forth. Amid the sudden commotion the two young engineers, sitting bolt upright, stared and blinked in stupefaction at the leering face of the man whom they had been trailing for the past three days. "Congo Jack" Decker, wanted for the murder of a company official.

"Well, take a good look at me!" Congo Jack's little bloodshot eyes were fixed on a snap and sparkle with a kind of insane malice. "So you thought to catch me—yes? Well, who's the wise guy now?" Paul shot a quick, longing glance at the two rifles lying just out of reach. Congo Jack laughed maliciously. "Who's the wise guy now?" he repeated. "What are you going to do with us?" Paul gazed full at him.

"What would you have done with me if I'd let myself be captured?" Decker countered. "I'd have taken you back to Fort dePesse and turned you over to the authorities," Paul replied. Congo Jack shrugged his lean shoulders. "Get up!" he ordered thickly. As he strode closer to them, they were aware of the odor of liquor on his breath. "Now march! That's right—straight ahead to where you left your canoe."

Ralph led the way forward among the ferns. At the end of a few minutes the prisoners and their captor were on the muddy south bank of the great river. There in a sheltered cove floated the canoe in which the boys had journeyed up river from Fort dePesse; beside it lay a second canoe, a long dugout with four native paddlers who sat and stared in silence at the newcomers.

"Friends o' mine," Decker observed with a leer. "Black out-throats, all four of 'em!" He extracted the charges from the prisoners' rifles and handed them to one of the natives. "Get ahead," he ordered. As the boys hesitated, he added, with a clenched fist: "Get ahead, or I'll let daylight into you!"

The prisoners could not doubt his words! Stepping forward, they seated themselves in the bottom. Decker took his place in the stern, and the big craft headed upstream. "What are you going to do with us?" Paul demanded again. A long pause followed during which the dripping paddles rose and fell. At last the white man said in a vindictive drawl: "Ever hear of the Swaballs? Well, that's where you're goin'!"

In spite of themselves, Paul and Ralph uttered a gasp. The Swaballs—the most barbarous tribe of all equatorial Africa! "But—why are you taking us there?" asked Ralph in a slightly husky voice. Congo Jack laughed cynically, then was silent.

Paul stared in meditative silence at a big stone jug just beyond his outstretched feet. A faint squeak, then a jingling sound behind him interrupted his thoughts. Turning his head he saw Congo Jack with a brown bottle to his lips.

With voice thick and ragged the man spoke again. "Why are we going to the Swaball jungle—you asked me that, didn't you? Well, I'll tell you. Old Chief Mata-Wall, ever hear o' him? Black-headed old villain! But he's a sort of friend o' mine, and I'm goin' to turn you two over to him—a gift, you know. He can do what he pleases with you! Somethin' else for Mata-Wall—also—that two-gallon jug there in front o' you. Don't know as the old villain ever tasted whiskey."

"Full jerked his head and shoulders sharply about, his eyes blazing. "You mean to say—?" "Whiskey—for the Swaballs," Decker went on imperturbably. "And I miss my guess if they don't stir up trouble! That's my aim, anyhow."

"Paul bit his under lip hard, then faced about again. The paddles rose and fell, rose and fell. "Late afternoon the craft headed northward into a tributary of the great river. The sun dropped behind the jungle wall. The sky changed from copper to pink, then to bright yellow. A full moon rose and poured its mellow light upon the black water.

Towards midnight the party halted and made camp on a broad sandy bar. After a brief meal Congo Jack secured the prisoners' hands behind their backs; then he stretched out upon the warm sand. Paul and Ralph lay side by side, talking in guarded whispers. "Sleep seems out of the question," Ralph was saying. "If we could get our hands free, we oughtn't to touch the dugout without watching the natives."

"It's a bad situation, and that big jug of whiskey makes it ten times worse. Once the Swaballs taste the vile stuff, there's no telling what will happen! They may go stark crazy, kill us and then set off on a wild rampage—"

"Just what Decker wants them to do, stir up trouble so that in the excitement they can get safely out of the country."

"Nobody except a whiskey-drinking idiot would think of such a wicked scheme!" muttered Paul.

Early the next morning the party were on their way again. Shortly before noon they reached the head waters of the tributary stream; there they remained encamped during the hottest part of the day.

In the late afternoon Congo Jack issued an order to his natives. Thereupon three of them lifted the dugout upon their shoulders and set off with it along a jungle path that led westward. The fourth followed with the equipment. Behind him marched the two prisoners, with Congo Jack in the rear.

The party had travelled perhaps an eighth of a mile along the jungle path when the boys were aware of a faint odor which pushed them.

"What is it?" Ralph asked. "Do you smell it?" "It smells like sulphur, and it's getting stronger."

A few minutes later the odor was no longer a mystery. As the prisoners rounded a bend in the path, they spotted a small lake the whole surface of which was shrouded in smoke-like fumes.

"This is the Lake of Fire," said Paul. "No doubt of it. The Swaball villages are up at the other end."

Ralph coughed and wiped his eyes. "I don't like it," he muttered. "The three leading natives had already launched the dugout by the time the boys reached the shore. Among the equipment lying upon the yellow sand stood the two-gallon jug, almost in the water. At sight of it, Paul caught his companion's arm impulsively. "Ralph," he muttered excitedly, "do as I tell you! Don't ask questions. I'll explain later. Run back along the path and stir up a commotion!"

Ralph gazed for an instant with wide questioning eyes at his companion; then he turned abruptly away. Taking half a dozen steps in the direction of the jungle, he uttered a sharp cry and pointed excitedly toward a clump of reeds.

"What do you see, a tiger?" yelled Paul. At the word "tiger," the natives caught up their weapons and advanced slowly toward the reeds.

Paul, forgotten for the moment, leaped forward and withdrew the stopper from the two-gallon jug. Quickly he turned the receptacle on its side in the sand, phosgene water of the lake. He watched the liquor come splashing forth, saw the yellow lake water mingle with the remaining contents. With a quick movement he set the jug upright on the sand and pushed the stopper back into place.

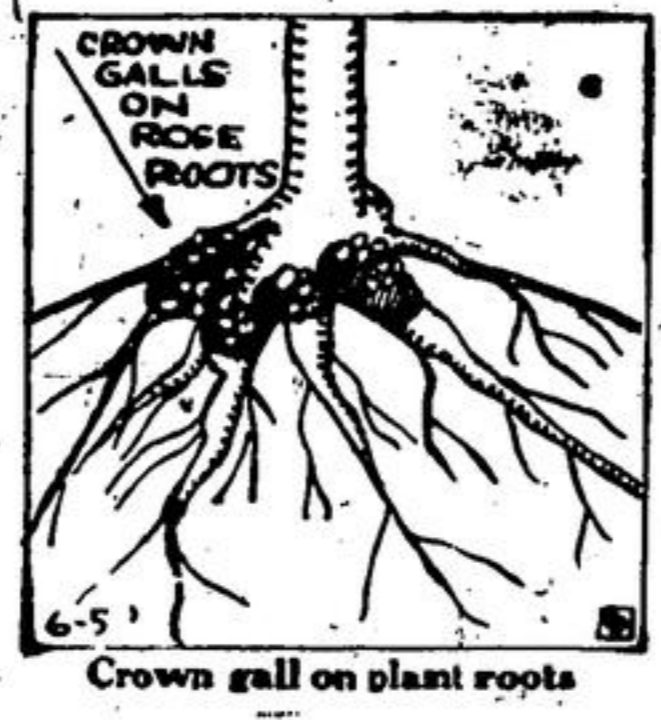
He was standing with arms folded when the natives returned from the direction of the jungle, satisfied that the reeds concealed no lurking tiger.

Five minutes later the party were in the dugout, on their way across the noxious lake. The Swaball villages were situated along the low banks of a broad sluggish river that emptied into the Lake of Fire. As the canoe left the sulphur-laden lake waters and moved slowly up the stream, a young Swaball boy sprang from behind a bush, stared with great startled eyes at the craft and then went running at top speed toward the first village.

The canoe rounded a bend, and there was the first village, a miserable collection of hatched huts, with a multitude of natives standing in groups—women, children, and savage-eyed warriors armed with spears and darts and long murderous-looking knives. Congo Jack spoke to one of his paddlers and lifting a hand, the fellow shouted something to those on shore. Thereupon the Swaball warriors began to talk excitedly among themselves.

Weekly Garden-Graph

Written by DEAN HALLEDAY for Central-Press Canadian



Crown gall on plant roots

Crown gall is a bacterial disease, and plants which are affected by it lose their vigor and become stunted.

The galls are usually formed at the crown of the plant and on nearby portions of the roots, as shown in today's Garden-Graph. Sometimes these galls appear on portions of the plant which have been injured in some manner.

Do not purchase rose bushes which have these galls on their roots. If examination reveals the galls have developed since the bushes were put into the ground, then remove the plants and destroy them. In such cases the surrounding soil should be thoroughly soaked with a solution of corrosive sublimate (1-1000) as the bacteria which cause crown gall can exist in the soil and thus spread to other plants.

er, addressed the chieftain, Mata-Wall, crossed his arms upon his chest and listened with chin lifted. He made no comment. Once he threw a disdainful glance toward the two prisoners. Once he turned his head slightly as the white man pointed toward the dugout. Only when Congo Jack strode to the canoe and returned, bearing the two-gallon jug, did Mata-Wall show any real interest and animation. Evidently he had heard of the virtues of white man's whiskey!

Paul could hear his companion's quick nervous breathing. His own heart was pounding! He had the strange feeling that he was waiting for an explosion that might take the lives of all present. Now the chieftain was lifting the great jug to his mouth. Now his thick ugly lips were against the opening. Now the jug was tilted far up and he was drinking, not slowly, but in great animal-like gulps.

Suddenly the jug slipped from his fingers, and he uttered a roar like that of a wounded tiger! He lashed out right and left with his powerful arms. He clutched at his throat. The next instant, to the consternation of his subjects, he made a wild rush straight for the river. Into it he went head foremost. Up he came, strangling, gasping and belching forth mouthfuls of the vile burning mixture of sulphur water and bad whiskey that he had taken into his stomach.

Congo Jack, as pale as death, stood with shaking knees, watching, unable to move, unable to utter a word. The next instant bedlam seemed to break loose! With a savage yell, Mata-Wall leaped straight for the terrified white man. One of the paddlers got in the way and went down before the infuriated giant's onslaught. Congo Jack dodged, then ran toward the canoe. The chieftain seized the half-empty jug and pursued him across the sand flat.

The white man was beside the dugout, reaching for his rifle, when Mata-Wall hurled the jug.

Only then did Paul and Ralph find the strength to run. They made for one of the huts, crawled inside and lay there shivering.

Mata-Wall himself first entered the empty hut in which the boys were crouching. For an instant they were sure that their last moment had come! The chieftain stood towering above them, his fists clenched, his huge chest rising and falling. Slowly his body relaxed, and he began to speak calmly and with dignity as he lifted a great king. His words were without meaning for them, but his tone and his manner said clearly: "You are the helpless prisoners of the white man who carried jungle poison in a jug. Mata-Wall will do you no injury. The white man is gone. Mata-Wall is satisfied."

Soon after the chieftain had left the hut, a Swaball woman entered with food for the young men.

The following morning, after a formal conference with Mata-Wall, Paul and Ralph embarked in the dugout and set forth for Fort dePesse. They had news of importance concerning Congo Jack Decker!

DENTAL CORPS WELL EQUIPPED

Clinical detachments of the Canadian Dental Corps carry all that the well-equipped dentist would require in his office in two medium wardrobe trunks. They contain tables, stands, a folding dental chair, drawers filled with all necessary dental instruments and supplies. Two other trunks of the same size are the "prothetic laboratory" kits, containing all the equipment for a complete dental mechanic's laboratory. Two other trunks contain a complete X-ray outfit. These trunks make up the triple parts of a truly remarkable field dental equipment.

Shipyard Booming Canada Hustles New Naval Vessels

Life has come back once more in Canada's shipyards. Thousands of workers there now contribute their share in the \$30,000,000 ship-construction program which Hon. C. D. Howe, head of the Department of Munitions and Supply, recently announced.

Work is now continuous in this industry so hard-hit by depression days. Each man employed there seems to realize that he is doing something, in his own way, to help in the organization of the defence of Canada and its Allies. The vessels actually being built, in the 15 Canadian shipyards, are designed for anti-submarine warfare and minesweeping.

A tour at Vickers, in Montreal, shows how readily the business is handled on this side of the Atlantic. In that shipyard alone, more than 900 workers are proceeding at an unusual pace to build the ordered craft.

The considerable activity observed in one of the shipyards may, in a way, reflect the activity going on in the others. Ships are being built rapidly. Speed is necessary for this two-year program, which includes orders for a total of 100 craft, comprising 64 patrol boats and 28 minesweepers.

Four Ships at a Time

Vickers tackled the problem of fast building by starting the construction on four boats at a time in a slip where formerly, the job of laying two keels side by side was considered a remarkable performance. The necessities of this war made that imperative. Experts found enough space, somehow. The four hulls are quite close together, but the shipbuilders find ample room to move about each berth when hanging heavy steel plates accurately controlled by the operation of overhead electric cranes.

Easily Re-habilitated

The men, many of whom had been on no direct relief in the past few months, are experiencing an easy readaptation to their machines and tools. Every one brings back to the plant the joy with which the carpenter lays hands once more on his hammer. After a long period of idleness. Around the hulls, they have erected heavy wooden scaffolds which support the men working on the ships.

Metal workers are busy in the shops punching rivet holes and cutting plates to shape. Others are already laying the finished deck plates for the forecastle. A furnace at the back of the slips keeps a score more of sturdy angle-smiths busy with the constant production of steel frames which must be bent to fit in the ship's hulls or shape. The furnaces throw vivid light in the slip which is already illuminated by the sparks of the welding torches as from a mighty Thor's hammer striking hard on white-hot metal.

No Hustle

Whatever rapidly may be noticed there, no haste, no precipitation is tolerated. Work advances quickly, but good care is taken that everything should be done the right way, and the ships take form from day to day.

Pneumatic riveting machines carry a deafening noise all over the numerous shops of the busy yards. Nowhere else in Canada can one have at least more forth mouthfuls of the significance of the words so current to-day to Canada's "economic front" and "war effort."

The Ship's Engines

In a plant near the ship building berths may be seen those who are manufacturing the ship's engines, according to the most modern technique. Giant electric lathes revolve, cutting the main shafting, the connecting rods, the thrust shafts and boring cylinders. Expert men go about with instruments for measurements to infinitesimal exactitude.

Boilers are set up. Boiler shells made of one and three quarters inch steel plates, are curved by rollers and given their precise diameter. Powerful cranes are lifting up such castings as the 10-ton, best of the engine which is a huge single piece of cast iron. Elsewhere, men are boring out propeller brackets. The various works must be constantly followed up to avoid the slightest mistakes. Slight miscalculation may affect the ship's performance and impair its reliability and effectiveness as an effective war unit.

Wholesale Launchings

Launchings at Vickers should occur soon, and will likely be simultaneous for the four ships. Once this flotilla is afloat, the slip will start once more on its now habitual work, and four more ships will be built. As a matter of fact, the essential parts for the laying of the four other keels are already manufactured.

On the whole surface of the grounds in the shipyard, there is hardly an inch that is left uncovered by tools, sheets of metal in preparation or by the rails on which circulate heavily loaded wagons used for the transportation, from one end of the slip to the other, of all the material.

At noon, the sirens draw the men from their work but bring them back at one o'clock sharp. The ship construction program has already claimed, from the demoralized inertia of idleness, hundreds of these men.

At Montserrat, many of these, mostly youths but also several experienced men who had been employed in construction work during the previous war, have come back to work at Vickers. Canadian and British experts are seen on the spot, visiting thoroughly each part of the different work shops and studying the plans and blue-prints prepared by the designers of these vessels.

Missouri Fur Trader Gave His Name To World's Biggest Game Preserve

At Jasper House in the Fur Trading Days-Top, a fur brigade of the early 70's leaves Jasper House in early winter with dog teams and sleds to trade among Indians in the Canadian Rockies; below, a section of Jasper House, showing the barred window and the legendary favorite vantage point where Jasper Hawes used to keep watch for the arrival of trappers. This picture was posed by the factor of the early 70's.

When the little Hawes boy was christened, somewhere in Missouri, more than a hundred years ago, no one dreamt that he would give his name to a great National Park far away in the Canadian Rockies, the biggest game sanctuary in the world. Jasper's future was unknown to the folk back in Missouri when he was a little fellow. Today, though his name is familiar to thousands of travellers from all parts of the world, his past, his whole life, is a mystery.

His name was Jasper. He was a clerk in charge of one of the North-West Company's posts in the Rockies. Beyond that, little is known about him. He may have been Hawes, or Howes. It may have been England he came from and not Missouri, after all.

Whatever his story, Jasper left his name behind, in a mountain playground that stretches 4,200 square miles; in a lake and a town; and in Jasper Park Lodge, the famous summer resort hotel owned and operated by the Canadian National Railway.

It is unfortunate that Jasper Hawes did not keep a diary, for he knew such men as David Thompson, who traded for furs, fought the Indians and explored the great north-west. Thompson camped one winter on the Columbia level, the greatest step outside the Arctic Circle and one of the world's scenic wonders. He explored at least two of the three big rivers whose sources are in this 110 square miles of glaciers and snow. He traced the Columbia to its mouth in the Pacific and followed the Saskatchewan, which flows into Hudson Bay and the Atlantic. He knew something of the third, too, the Athabaska, which empties into the Arctic.

For thousands of years, the Columbia level held kept its splendor to itself. Then a few adventurers like Thompson found it out. Now it is open to the world. On Dominion Day a new motor road, the Columbia Icefield Highway, connecting Jasper and Banff Parks will be formally opened. For the past two years this road has been open from the town of Jasper to the great Athabaska Glacier, centre of the level in Jasper National Park. It is an 110-mile road, completed July 1st, the completed highway through to the South will be available to tourists.

NEWS SOURCES CONTROLLED. RUMOR LEADS STAMPEDE

One of the most dangerous weapons in the German strategy attack, writes Britannicus, the well known British war and political commentator, is rumor. Developments in recent weeks, moreover, have greatly enhanced the effectiveness of this weapon in German hands. The swarms of refugees which the Germans drive before them in their advance, interspersed with German agents, provide an excellent medium for carrying alarmist rumors. More important still is the occupation by Germany of great sections of European news such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen; the virtual cutting off of others, such as Stockholm, and the control of wireless stations and of the trans-continental cable and telephone services which Germany's aggressions have brought her. This has not only resulted in the drying up of sources of reliable neutral and in particular of American news, but it has enabled Germany to apply with renewed vigor her well-known technique of spreading lies and rumors under neutral guise. Thus the Oslo radio quotes Bergsde when recounting fantastic tales that revolution is breaking out in France. Budapest quotes Copenhagen for a fairy story that French are suing for a separate peace. Rome quotes Stockholm as authority for a fable that British troops are abandoning France and so forth. All these allegedly neutral reports in fact emanate from German sources and are without exception false.

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