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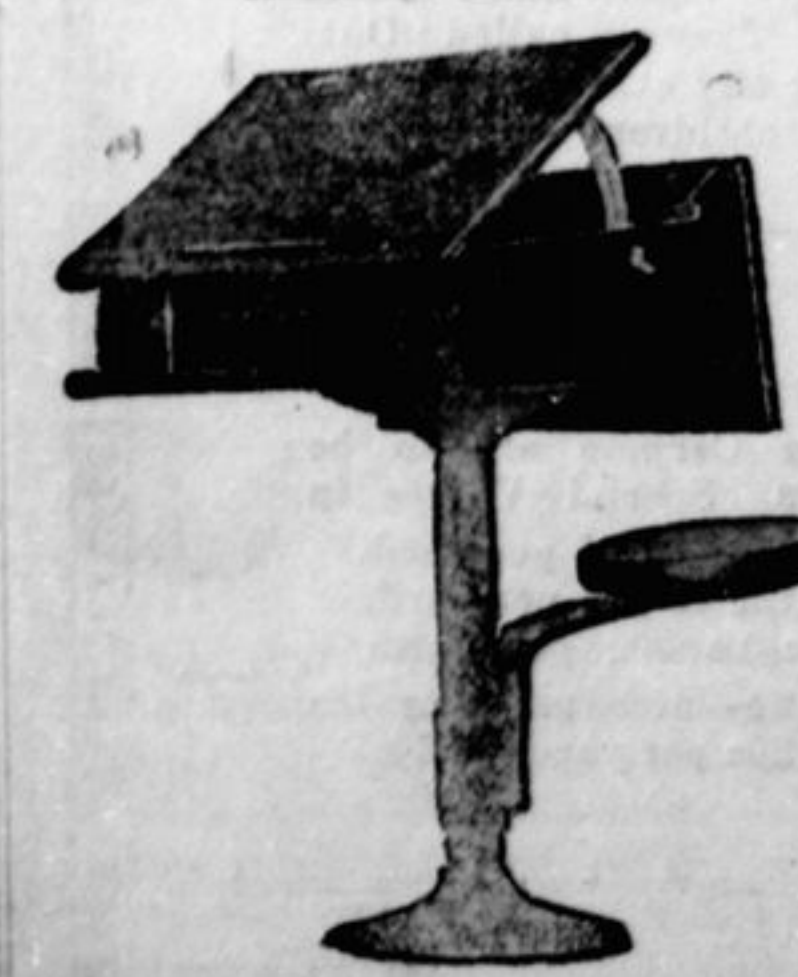
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# The Wings of the Morning

By LOUIS TRACY

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Lucky sense carpentry was effective, though rough. The building was water tight, and he had caulked every crevice with unraveled rope until Iris' apartment was free from the tiniest draft. The very fury of the external turmoil acted as a lullaby to the girl. She was soon asleep, and the sailor was left to his thoughts. Sleep he could not. He smoked steadily, with a magnificent prodigality, for his small stock of tobacco was fast diminishing. He ransacked his brains to discover some method of escape from this enchanted island, where fairies jostled with demons and hours of utter happiness found their bane in moments of frightful peril. Of course he ought to have killed those fellows who escaped. Their samsan might have provided a last desperate expedient if other savages effected a landing. Well, there was no use in being wise after the event, and, scheme as he might, he could devise no way to avoid disaster during the next attack. This, he felt certain, would take place at night. The Dyaks would land in force, rush the cave and but and overpower him by sheer numbers. The fight, if fight there was, would be sharp, but decisive. Perhaps if he re-

turned to the nature of the cavity as well as he understood it at the moment and emphasized his previous explanation of its virtues. Here they might reasonably hope to make a successful stand against the Dyaks. "Then you feel sure that those awful creatures will come back?" she said slowly. "Only too sure, unfortunately." "How remorseless poor humanity is when the veneer is stripped off! Why cannot they leave us in peace? Perhaps if I had not been here they would not have injured you. Somehow I seem to be bound up with your misfortunes." "I would not have it otherwise were it in my power," he answered. For an instant he left unchallenged the girl's assumption that she was in any way responsible for the disasters which had broken up his career. He looked into her eyes and almost forgot himself. Then the sense of fair dealing that dominates every true gentleman rose within him and gripped his wavering emotions with ruthless force. Was his time to play upon the high strung sensibilities of this youthful daughter of the gods, to seek to win from her a confession of love that a few brief days or weeks might prove to be only a spasmodic but momentarily all powerful gratitude for the protection he had given her?

And he spoke aloud, striving to laugh, lest his words should falter: "You can console yourself with the thought, Miss Deane, that your presence on the island will in no way affect my fate at the hands of the Dyaks. Had they caught me unprepared today my head would now be covered with a solution of the special varnish they carry on every foreign expedition." "And yet these men are human beings!" "For purposes of classification, yes. Keeping to strict fact, it was lucky for me that you raised the alarm and gave me a chance to discount the odds of mere numbers. So, you see, you really did me a good turn."

"What can be done now to save our lives? Anything will be better than to await another attack." "The first thing to do is to try to get some sleep before daylight. How did you know I was not in the castle?" "I cannot tell you. I awoke and knew you were not near me. If I wake in the night I can always tell whether or not you are in the next room. So I dressed and came out." "Ah!" he said quietly. "Evidently I snore." Iris retreated, and the sailor, tired out at last, managed to close his weary eyes. Next morning he hastily constructed a pole of sufficient length and strong enough to bear his weight by tying two

sturdy young trees together with ropes. Iris helped him to raise it against the face of the precipice, and he at once climbed to the ledge. Here he found his observations of the previous night abundantly verified. The ledge was even wider than he dared to hope, nearly ten feet deep in one part, and it sloped sharply downward from the outer lip of the rock. By lying flat and carefully testing all points of view he ascertained that the only possible positions from which even a glimpse of the interior floor could be obtained were the branches of a few tall trees and the extreme right of the opposing precipice, nearly ninety yards distant. There was ample room to store water and provisions, and he quickly saw that even some sort of shelter from the fierce rays of the sun and the often piercing cold of the night might be achieved by judiciously rigging up a tarpaulin.

"This is a genuine bit of good luck," he mused. "Here, provided neither of us is hit, we can hold out for a week or longer at a pinch. How can it be possible that I should have lived on this island so many days and yet hit upon this nook of safety by mere chance, as it were?" Not until he reached the level again could he solve the puzzle. Then he perceived that the way in which the cliff bulged out on both sides prevented the ledge from becoming evident in profile, while, seen in the glare of the sunlight, it suggested nothing more than a slight indentation. He rapidly sketched to Iris the defensive plan which the eagle's nest suggested. Access must be provided by means of a rope ladder, securely fastened inside the ledge and capable of being pulled up or let down at the will of the occupants. Then the place must be kept constantly stocked with a judicious supply of provisions, water and ammunition. They could be covered with a tarpaulin and thus kept in fairly good condition.

"We ought to sleep there every night," he went on, and his mind was so engrossed with the tactical side of the preparations that he did not notice how Iris blanched at the suggestion. "Surely not until danger actually threatens?" she cried. "Danger threatens us each hour after sunset. It may come any night, though I expect at least a fortnight's reprieve. Nevertheless I intend to act as if to-night may witness the first shot of the siege." "Do you mean that?" she sighed. "And my little room is becoming so very cozy?" Jenks always accepted her words literally. "Well," he announced, after a pause, "it may not be necessary to take up our quarters there until the eleventh hour. After I have hoisted up our stores and made the ladder I will endeavor to devise an efficient cordon of sentinels around our position. We will see."

Not another word could Iris get out of him on the topic. Indeed, he provided her with plenty of work. By this time she could splice a rope more neatly than her tutor, and her particular business was to prepare no less than sixty rungs for the rope ladder. This was an impossible task for one day, but after dinner the sailor helped her. They toiled late, until their fingers were sore and their backbones creaked as they sat upright. Meanwhile Jenks swarmed up the pole again and drew up after him a crowbar, the sledge hammer and the pickax. With these implements he set to work to improve the accommodation. Of course he did not attempt seriously to remove any large quantity of rock, but there were projecting lumps here and inequalities of floor there which could be thumped or pounded out of existence. It was surprising to see what a clearance he made in an hour. The existence of the fault helped him a good deal, as the percolation of water at this point had oxidized the stone to rottenness. To his great joy he discovered that a few groats with the pick laid bare a small cavity which could be easily enlarged. Here he contrived a niche where Iris could remain in absolute safety when barricaded by stores, while, with a squeeze, she was entirely sheltered from the one dangerous point on the opposite cliff, nor need she be seen from the trees.

Having hauled into position two boxes of ammunition—for which he had scavenged up a special receptacle—the invaluable water kegs from the stranded boat, several tins of biscuits and all the tinned meats, together with three bottles of wine and two of brandy, he hastily abandoned the ledge and busied himself with fitting a number of gunlocks to heavy fagots. Iris watched his proceedings in silence for some time. At last the interval for luncheon enabled her to demand an explanation. "If you don't tell me at once what you intend to do with those strange implements," she said, "I will go on strike."

"If you do," he answered, "you will create a precedent." "I withdraw the threat and substitute a more genuine plea—curiosity," she cried. "Then you will be gratified promptly. These are our sentinels. Come with me to allot his post to the most distant one." He picked up a fagot with its queer attachment, shouldered a rifle and smiled when he saw the businesslike air with which Iris slung a revolver around her waist. They walked rapidly to smugglers' cove, and the girl soon perceived the ingenuity of his automatic signal. He securely bound the block of wood to a tree where it was hidden by the undergrowth. Breaking the bullet out of a cartridge, he placed the blank charge in position in front of the hammer, the case being firmly clasped by a bent nail. To the trigger, the spring of

## CONTINUE

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which he had eased to a slight pressure, he attached a piece of unraveled rope, and this he carefully trained among the trees at a height of six inches from the ground, using as carriers nails driven into the trunks. The ultimate result was that a mere swish of Iris' dress against the taut cord exploded the cartridge. "There!" he exclaimed exultantly. "When I have driven stakes into the sand to the water's edge on both sides of the cove, I will defy them to land by night without giving us warning." "Do you know," said Iris, in all seriousness, "I think you are the cleverest man in the world."

He was manifestly pleased by the success of his ingenious contrivance and forthwith completed the cordon. To make doubly sure he set another snare farther within the trees. He was certain the Dyaks would not pass along Turtle beach if they could help it. By this time the light was falling. "That will suffice for the present," he told the girl. "Tomorrow we will place other sentries in position at strategic points. Then we can sleep in the castle with tolerable safety." By the meager light of the tiny lamp they labored sedulously at the rope ladder until Iris' eyes were closing with sheer weariness. Neither of them had slept much during the preceding night, and they were both completely tired.

The first streaks of dawn were tipping the opposite crags with roseate tints when the sailor was suddenly aroused by what he believed to be a gunshot. He could not be sure. He was still collecting his scattered senses, straining eyes and ears intensely, when there came a second report. Then he knew what had happened. The sentries on the Smugglers' cove post were faithful to their trust. The enemy was upon them. At such a moment Jenks was not a man who prayed. Indeed, he was prone to invoke the nether powers, a habit long since acquired by the British army—in Flanders, it is believed. There was not a moment to be lost. He rushed into Iris' room and gathered her in his arms. He explained to the

girl as he ran with her to the foot of the rock that she must cling to his shoulders with unflinching courage while he climbed to the ledge with the aid of the pole and the rope placed there the previous day. It was a magnificent feat of strength that he essayed. In calmer moments he would have shrunk from its performance if only on the score of danger to the precious burden he carried. Now there was no time for thought. Up he went, hand over hand, clinging to the rough pole with the tenacity of a limpet and taking a turn of the rope over his right wrist at each upward clutch. At last, breathless, but triumphant, he reached the ledge and was able to gasp his instructions to Iris to crawl over his bent back and head until she was safely lodged on the broad platform of rock.

Then before she could expostulate he descended, this time for the rifles. These he hastily slung to the rope, again swarmed up the pole and drew the guns after him with infinite care. "Now we are ready for them," he growled, lying prone on the ledge and eagerly scanning both sides of Prospect park for a first glimpse of their assailants. For two shivering hours they waited there until the sun was high over the cliff and filled sea and land with its brightness. At last, despite the girl's tears and prayers, Jenks insisted on making a reconnaissance in person. Let this portion of their adventures be passed over with merciful brevity. Both watch guns had been fired by a troop of tiny wou-wou monkeys. Iris did not know whether to laugh or cry, when Jenks, with much difficulty, lowered her to Mother Earth again and marveled the while how he had managed to carry forty feet into the air a young woman who weighed so solidly. They sat down to a belated breakfast, and Jenks then became conscious that the muscles of his arms, legs and back were aching hugely. It was by that means he could judge the true extent of his achievement.

CHAPTER IX.

THE sailor went after those monkeys in a mood of relentless severity. Thus far the regular denizens of Rainbow Island had dwelt together in peace and mutual good will, but each diminutive wou-wou must be taught not to pull any strings he found tied promiscu-

ously to trees or stakes. As a preliminary essay Jenks resolved to try force combined with artifice. Failing complete success, he would endeavor to kill every monkey in the place, though he had in full measure the inherent dislike of Anglo-India to the slaying of the tree people. This, then, is what he did: After filling a biscuit tin with good sized pebbles he donned a Dyak hat, blouse and belt, rubbed earth over his face and hands and proceeded to pelt the wou-wous mercilessly. For more than an hour he made their lives miserable until at the mere sight of him they fled, shrieking and gurgling like a thousand water bottles. Finally he constructed several Dyak scarecrows and erected one to guard each of his alarm guns. The device was thoroughly effective. Thenceforth, when some adventurous monkey, swinging with hands or tail among the tree-tops in the morning search for appetizing nut or luscious plantain, saw one of those fearsome bogies, he raised such a hubbub that all his companions scampered hastily from the confines of the wood to the inner fastnesses.

During each of the two daily examinations of the horizon, which he never omitted, Jenks minutely scrutinized the sea between Rainbow island and the distant group. It was perhaps a needless precaution. The Dyaks would come at night. With a favorable wind they need not set sail until dusk, and their fleet sampans would easily cover the intervening forty miles in five hours. He could not be positive that they were actual inhabitants of the islands to the south. The China sea swarms with wandering pirates, and the tribe whose animosity he had earned might be equally noxious to some peaceable fishing community on the coast. Again and again he debated the advisability of constructing a seaworthy raft and endeavoring to make the passage. But this would be risking all on a frightful uncertainty, and the accidental discovery of the eagle's nest had given him new hope. Here he could make a determined and prolonged stand, and in the end help must come. So he dismissed the navigation project and devoted himself wholly to the perfecting of the natural fortress in the rock. That night they finished the rope ladder. Indeed Jenks was determined not to retire to rest until it was placed. He did not care to try a second time to carry Iris to that elevated perch. One of the first things he contemplated was the destruction if possible of the point on the opposite cliff which commanded the ledge. This, however, was utterly impracticable with the appliances at his command. The top of the rock sloped slightly toward the west, and nothing short of dynamite or regular quarrying operations would render it untenable by hostile marksmen.

During the day his rifles at ninety yards' range might be trusted to keep the place clear of intruders. But at night—that was the difficulty. He partially solved it by fixing two rests on the ledge to support a rifle in exact line with the center of the enemy's supposed position, and as a variant on the outer rest he marked lines which corresponded with other sections of the entire front available to the foe. Even then he was not satisfied. When time permitted, he made many experiments with ropes reeved through the pulley and attached to a rifle action. He might have succeeded in his main object had not his thoughts taken a new line. His aim was to achieve some method of opening and closing the breach block by means of two ropes. The difficulty was to secure the preliminary and final lateral movement of the lever bolt, but it suddenly occurred to him that if he could manage to convey the impression that Iris and he had left the island the Dyaks would go away after a fruitless search. The existence of ropes along the face of the rock—an essential to his mechanical

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