

THE LAKE OF LONG SLEEP

Thrilled with the wonder and the horror of it, Grôm drew a deep breath and relaxed the tension of his watching. He was just about to turn and order the tribe forward again, when he was arrested by the sight of a vast cloud of dust rolling up swiftly upon the left flank of the retreating sambur.

A confused cry of alarm went up from the watching tribe, as they saw a forest of waving trunks appear in the front of the dust-cloud. A second or two more and a long array of mammoths emerged along the path of the cloud. Among the mammoths, here and there, raced a black or a white rhinoceros, or a towering, spotted giraffe. Behind this front rank, vague and portentous through the veiling cloud, came further colossal hordes, filling the distance as far as eye could see.

This advance looked as if nothing on earth, not even the lake of pitch, could ever stop it, and certain of the tribe started to flee. But Grôm, after a moment of misgiving and hasty calculation, checked the flight sternly. He must, at all risks, see the incredible thing that was about to happen. And he felt certain that, at this distance out upon the crust of the gulf, the tribe would be secure.

The stupendous wave of dust and waving trunks and galloping black bulks thundered up at a terrific pace, and fell with irresistible impact upon the flank of the marching sambur. These unhappy beasts went down like grass before it. They were rolled flat, trodden out like a fire in thin grass, annihilated. And the screaming, trumpeting