

the log. In a second they were down on it; all the meat turned black at once, as if with a shower of soot, and their buzzing was like the wind blowing through a row of wires. You'd laugh at me, stranger, if I were to tell you how savage that sight made me; for, of course, you'll say I ought to have been mighty glad to get off so cheap; but, oh! to see those accursed vermin gorging themselves before my eyes, while I, a man, lay starving! I tell you, all that I felt before was nothing to it!

"Towards afternoon there began a kind of whispering and humming in my ears, getting louder bit by bit. It wasn't the flies, for they were all gone; it was what comes to one on the second or third day of starving to death, and I knew it. Some of my mates that was starved up country used to keep putting their hands to their ears for awhile before they died, saying that they heard something whispering to them. It got stronger and stronger, till the sound seemed to shape itself into an old song that a man I was with in Brazil kept crooning over just before he died. The song was all about a party going across the desert to look for some men that were lost; but the verse that rang in my head then was thus:

"And never a man, and never a beast,
They met on their desolate way;
But the bleaching bones in the hungry sand
Said all that a tongue could say."

And so it kept going over and over, till at last I fairly went off, half slept and half fainted.

"It was late when I awoke, and I can't tell you how I felt at seeing the sun setting again. As the light faded, I felt as if my life was going out along with it, and when it dipped below the horizon, I was ready to start up and stretch out my arm to hold it back, if I'd had the strength. And such a night as that second night was, good Heaven! There's a verse somewhere in the Bible that speaks of 'a horror of great darkness;' I learned it at school, but I never knew what it really meant till then. This time there was no howling of dingoes, no noise of any sort; all was deadly still, as if the world itself, with all that lived and breathed in it, were dead, and I alone kept living, living on. I suppose I must have been getting light-headed with hunger and weakness, for I began to fancy all sorts of queer things. First, I thought I was nailed down in a coffin, and that if I could only move or scream, or even speak, the lid would fly open; but I couldn't. Then it seemed as if I were at the bottom of the sea, and the weight of the water above pressed me down, till I could hardly breathe. All at once I was startled out of my fancies by a sound close to the tent, the like of which I never heard before or since: a low moaning cry, that sounded like 'All alone! all alone!' over and over again. I can't tell to this day whether I really heard it, or only fancied it; but at the time it gave me such a horror, that I nearly went mad.

"The third morning came, and found me nearly at my last. The gnawing pain was gone, and instead of it had come a pleasant drowsiness, like what a man feels when he falls down to sleep in the snow. All the morning I lay in a kind of dream, thinking of nothing, fearing nothing; as quiet as a child at its mother's breast; till all at once I saw something that roused me in good earnest—a black shining thing, like a long strip of velvet, came gliding into the tent. I knew it