

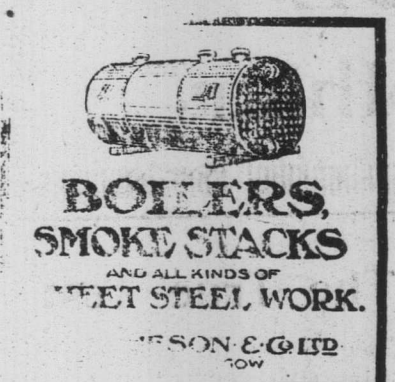
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Printed notices containing further information as to conditions of proposed Contract may be seen and blank forms of Tender may be obtained at the Post Offices of Newport Point, New Port, Gascons, L'Anse a la Barbe, Port Daniel East, Port Daniel Centre and at the office of the Post Office, Inspector at Quebec.

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## With Edged Tools

By HENRY SETON MERRIMAN  
Author of "The Sowers," "Roder's Corner," "From One Generation to Another," Etc.  
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The man called Joseph grinned. Nature had given him liberality of the whetstone for indulgence in that relaxation, and Durnovo smiled rather contentedly. Joseph was grabbing at the long reedy grass, bringing the canoe to a standstill, and it was some moments before his extensive mouth submitted to control.

"I presume you are Mr. Durnovo?" said the man in the stern of the boat, rising leisurely from his recumbent position and speaking with a courteous savor fair which seemed slightly out of place in the wilds of central Africa. He was a tall man with a small aristocratic head and a refined face, which somehow suggested an aristocrat of old France.

"Yes," answered Durnovo. The tall man stepped ashore and held out his hand.

"I am glad we have met you," he said. "I have a letter of introduction to you from Maurice Gordon of Loango."

Victor Durnovo's dark face changed slightly. His eyes—blue, fever shot, unhealthy—took a new light.

"Ah!" he answered. "Are you a friend of Maurice Gordon's?"

"There was another question in this, an unasked one, and Victor Durnovo was watching for the answer. But the face he watched was like a deftly carved piece of brown marble, with a courteous, impenetrable smile.

"I met him again the other day at Loango. He is an old Etoulan, like myself."

This conveyed nothing to Durnovo, who belonged to a different world, whose education was, like other things about him, an unknown quantity.

"My name," continued the tall man, "is Meredith—John Meredith—sometimes called Jack."

They were walking up the bank toward the dusky and uninviting tent. "And the other fellow?" inquired Durnovo, with a backward jerk of the head.

"Oh, he is my servant."

Durnovo raised his eyebrows in somewhat contemptuous amusement and proceeded to open the letter which Meredith had handed him.

"Not many fellows," he said, "on this coast can afford to keep a European servant."

"I understand," answered Meredith, with a half suppressed yawn, "that the country gets finer further up; more mountains."

The proprietors of very dark eyes would do well to remember that it is dangerous to glance furtively to one side or the other. The attention of dark eyes is more easily felt than the glances of gray or blue orbs.

Jack Meredith's suspicions were aroused by the suspicious manner of Durnovo.

"There is no white man knows this river as I do, and I do not recommend it. Look at me, on the verge of jaundice; look at this wound on my arm, it began with a scratch and has never healed. All that comes from a month up this cursed river. Take my advice. Try somewhere else."

"I certainly shall," replied Meredith. "We will discuss it after dinner. My chap is a first rate cook. Have you got anything to add to the menu?"

"Not a thing. I've been living on plantains and dried elephant meat for the last fortnight."

"Doesn't sound nourishing. Well, we are pretty well provided, so perhaps you will give me the pleasure of your company to dinner? Come as you are;

no ceremony. I think I will wash, though. It is as well to keep up these old customs."

CHAPTER VII

IN that part of Africa which lies within touch of the equator life is essentially a struggle. There is hunger about, and where hunger is the emotions will be found also.

Now, Jack Meredith was a past master in the concealment of these, and, as such, came to Victor Durnovo in the guise of a new creation. He had lived the latter and the larger part of his life among men who said, in action if not in words, I am hungry or I am thirsty; I want this, or I want that; and if you are not strong enough to keep it, I will take it from you.

This man was different, and Victor Durnovo did not know, could not find out, what he wanted.

He had at first been inclined to laugh at him. What struck him most forcibly was Joseph, the servant. The idea of a man swaggering up an African river with a European manservant was so preposterous that it could only be met with ridicule; but the thing seemed so natural to Jack Meredith, he accepted the servitude of Joseph so much as a matter of course that after a time Durnovo accepted him also as part and parcel of Meredith.

Joseph took off his coat, turned up his sleeves and proceeded to cook such a dinner as Durnovo had not tasted for many months. There was wine also, and afterward a cigar of such quality as appealed strongly to Durnovo's West Indian palate.

The night settled down over the land while they sat there, and before them the great yellow equatorial moon rose slowly over the trees. With the darkness came a greater silence, for the myriad insect life was still.

"So," said Durnovo, returning to the subject which had never really left his thoughts, "you have come out here for pleasure?"

"Not exactly. I came chiefly to make money, and to get out of the illusions of my youth, and I am getting on very well. Picture book illusions they were. The man who drew the pictures had never seen Africa."

The evening had turned out so very differently from what he had expected that Durnovo was a little carried off his equilibrium. Things were so so close and pleasant in comparison with the habitual loneliness of his life. The fire crackled so cheerily, the moon shone down on the river so grandly, the subdued chatter of the boatmen imparted such a feeling of safety and comfort to the scene, that he gave way to that impulse of expansiveness which ever lurks in West Indian blood.

"I say," he said, "when you told me that you wanted to make money, were you in earnest?"

"In the deadliest earnest," replied Jack Meredith in the half mocking tone which he never wholly learned to lay aside.

"Then I think I can put you in the way of it. Oh, I know it seems a bit premature; not known you long enough and all that. But in this country we don't hold much by the formalities. I like you. I liked the look of you when you got out of that boat so cool and self possessed. You're the right sort, Mr. Meredith."

"Possibly for some things. For sitting about and smoking first class cigars and thinking second class thoughts I am exactly the right sort."

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**GOLD DUST makes hard water soft**

But for making money, for hard work and steady work, I am afraid, Mr. Durnovo, that I am distinctly the wrong sort."

There was a little pause. Durnovo looked round as if to make sure that Joseph and the boatman were out of ear shot.

"Can you keep a secret?" he asked suddenly.

Jack Meredith turned and looked at the questioner with a smile. His hat had slipped to the back of his head, the light of the great yellow moon fell full upon his clean cut splinted face. The eyes alone seemed living.

"Yes! I can do that."

"I can see you're a gentleman," Durnovo said. "I'll trust you. I want a man to join me in making a fortune. I have got my hand on it at last. But I'm afraid of this country. I'm getting shaky; look at that hand. I've been looking for it too long. I take you into my confidence, the first corner, you'll think. But there are not many men like you in this country, and I'm beastly afraid of dying. I want to get out of this for a bit, but I dare not leave until I see things going."

"Take your time," said Meredith, quietly and soothingly. "Light that cigar again and lie down. There is no hurry."

Durnovo obeyed him meekly.

"Tell me," he said, "have you ever heard of similitude?"

"I cannot say that I have," replied Jack. "What is it for, brown boots or spasm?"

"It is a drug, the most expensive drug in the world, and yet he must have it, they cannot do without it, and they cannot find a substitute. It is the leaf of a shrub, and your hatful is worth a thousand pounds."

"Where is it to be found?" asked Jack Meredith. "I should like some in a sack."

"Ah, you may laugh now, but you won't when you hear all about it. The scientific chaps called it similitude, because of an old African legend which, like all those things, has a grain of truth in it. The legend is similitude. He can hang on to a tree with one leg and tackle a leopard with his bare hands—that's similitude. At home they are only just beginning to find out its properties. It seems that it can bring a man back to life when he is more than half dead."

There is no knowing what children are brought up on it may turn out to be. It may double the power of the human brain; some think it will."

Meredith was leaning forward, watching with a certain sense of fascination the wild, disease stricken face, listening to the man's breathless periods. It seemed that the fear of death, which had got hold of him, gave Victor Durnovo no time to pause for breath.

"Yes," said the Englishman, "yes, so on."

"There is practically no limit to the demand that there is for it. At present the only way of obtaining it is through the natives, and you know their manner of trading. They send a little packet down from the interior, and it very often takes two months and more to reach the buyer's hands. The money is sent back the same way, and each man who fingers it keeps a little. The natives and the leaf in the forests by the aid of trained monkeys and only in very small quantities. Do you follow me?"

"Yes, I follow you."

Victor Durnovo leaned forward until his face was within three inches of Meredith's, and the dark, wild eyes flashed and glared into the Englishman's steady glance.

"What," he hissed—"what if I know where similitude grows like a weed? What if I could supply the world with similitude at my own price? Eh-h-h! What of that, Mr. Meredith?"

He threw himself suddenly back and wiped his dripping face. There was a silence, the great African silence that drives educated men mad and fills the imagination of the poor heathen with wild tales of devils and spirits.

Then Jack Meredith spoke without moving.

"I'm your man," he said, "with a few more details."

Victor Durnovo was lying back at full length on the hard, dry mud, his arms beneath his head. Without altering his position, he gave the details, speaking slowly and much more quietly. It seemed as if he spoke the result of long pent up thought.

"You shall want," he said, "at least \$2,000 to start it, for we must have an armed force of our own. We have to penetrate a cannibal country of the fiercest devils in Africa. It is a plateau, a little plateau of two square miles, and the negroes think that it is haunted by an evil spirit. When we get there we shall have to hold it by force of arms, and when we send the stuff down to the coast we must have an escort of picked men. The bushes grow up there as thick as gooseberry bushes in a garden at home. With a little cultivation they will yield twice as much as they do now. We shall want another partner. I know a man, a soldierly fellow, full of fight, who knows the natives and the country. I will undertake to lead you there, but you will have to take great care of me. You will have to have me carried most of the way. I am weak, devilish weak, and I am afraid of dying, but I know the way there, and no other man can say as much. It is in my head here; it is not written down. It is only in my head, and no one can get it out of there."



(To be continued.)

Shanghai, April 12.—Ten million people are reported starving in China. The Chinese government has contributed \$4,000,000, and \$500,000 has been received from foreign sources. A dollar, the relief committee reports, will save one life until the harvest, June 25, and \$10,000,000 are needed. The whole amount cannot be raised in China. The situation is desperate and Americans are urged to give \$3,000,000 in the next few weeks, not for Christian, but for humanitarian work. It is suggested that it would be best to cable money to the American consul here, James Linn Rodgers, as supplies can be purchased in Shanghai.

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