

IN THE MORNING OF TIME

tribe, amazed and quaking with awe, was extended like a fan over a front of three or four hundred yards. Seeing that the perilous sagging of the crust was at once relieved, Grôm then ordered the tribe to advance cautiously, keeping the same wide-open formation, while he himself brought up the rear.

But in a few minutes everyone, from Grôm downwards, came to a halt irresistibly, in order to watch the monstrous drama unfolding behind them.

For nearly half a mile to either side of their immediate rear, between the still unbroken surface of the dust-brown expanse and the edge of the trampled grassy plain, stretched a sort of canal, perhaps ten paces wide, of brown-black, glistening pitch, beaten up with thrashing antlers, and tossing heads that whistled despairingly through wide nostrils, and heaving, agonizing bulks that went down slowly to their doom. After several ranks of the herd had been engulfed those next behind turned about in terror and fought madly to force their way back from the fatal brink. But the inexorable masses behind them rolled them on backwards, and slowly they too were thrust down into the pitch, till the canal was filled to the brink, and writhed horribly along its whole length. By this time, however, the alarm had spread through the rest of the sambur ranks. By a desperate effort they got themselves turned, and went surging off to the left in a direction parallel to the edge of the plain of death.