

fire, chattering together, and glancing toward the dim, huddled outline on the white man's bed. Only Charley, who as usual had slept somewhat apart, was at first undisturbed. After a moment he raised himself sleepily on his elbow and asked what was the row.

"'Shot at a hyena,' Middleton told him briefly.

"Satisfied with this he fell back asleep.

"Middleton had until morning to figure on meeting the situation. He sat staring into the fire. The hippos were booming, and the moon was striking dimly through a mist. It was a disagreeable, almost an impossible, task this—breaking the news—he realized fully that he should give his mind to it. Strangely enough, for the moment he could not do so. He thought of all kinds of trivial things that circled widely, ever drawing toward a centre, until he was brooding sadly on that most awful of messages Africa tells—the shortness of time, the flickering passage of years, how quickly it all—hardship, toil, thirst, disease that at the time seemed inescapable and interminable—becomes a thing of yesterday. And in that light for the moment he