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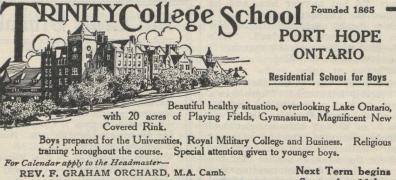
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round askin' this or that?—an old lag

As his courage revived he began to swear—perhaps the courage waited upon the expletives.

"... After goin' through all this!" he spluttered, "an' hunger an' thirst an' fightin'—to be questioned by a crook."

He felt the fierce grip of Whitey's hand on his wrist and stopped himself.

"Say nothin'—more than you can

"Say nothin'—more than you can help," muttered Whitey. Lambaire swallowed his wrath and obeyed.

"W HAT is this about a diamond field?" Amber went on in a "W HAT is this about a diamond field?" Amber went on in a passionless, level voice. "The Government know of no such field—or such river. You have told the Commissioner that you have found such a place. Where is it?"

"Find out, Amber," shrilled Whitey, "you are clever—find out, like we had to; we didn't get our information by asking people,—we went and looked!"

He groped round on the floor of the half darkened bungalow and found his hat.

hat.

"We're leavin' to-morrow," said
Whitey, "an' the first thing we shall
do when we reach a civilized port is
to put them wise to you—eh? It
don't do to have gaolbirds wandering
and gallivanting about British Possessions!" He nodded his head
threateningly, and was rewarded by
that smile which was Amber's chief
charm.

charm.
"Mr. Whitey!" said Amber softly,
"you will not leave to-morrow, the
ship will sail without you."
"Eh!"

"Eh!"

"The ship will sail minus," repeated Amber. "No Whitey, no Lambaire."
He shook his head.

"What do you mean?"
For answer Amber tapped the foolscap which he had taken back from the protesting hand of Whitey. "Somewhere here," he pointed to a place marked with a cross, "near a dried river bed, a man died. I want evidence of his death and of the manner in which he met it, before I let you go."

There was another pause.

There was another pause.

"What do you mean by that, Mr.
Amber?" asked Whitey, and his voice was unsteady.

"Exactly what I say," said the other quietly.

"Exactly what I say, said the other quietly.
"Do you think we murdered him?"
Amber shrugged his shoulders
"We shall know one way or the other before you leave us," he said easily. There was something in his tone which chilled the two men before

which chilled the two men belore him.

"I shall know, because I have sent a search party back to the place where you say you left Mr. Sucton," he went on. "Your late interpreted will have no difficulty in finding the spot—he is already on his way."

Lambaire was as white as death. "We did nothing to Sutton," he said doggedly.

Amber inclined his head.

Amber inclined his head.

"That we shall know," he said.

Walking from the bungalow to the hut which the Commissioner had placed at their disposal, Lambaire suddenly stopped and touched his

companion's arm.

"Suppose," he gasped, "suppose—"
Whitey shook off the grip. "Don't go mad," he said roughly, "suppose

go mad," he said roughly, "suppose what?"

"Suppose—some wandering native—found him and speared him. We'd get the credit for that."

"My God, I never thought of that!"

It gave them both something to think about in the weary days of waiting. They learnt that the word of Amber was law. They saw him once at a distance, but they sought no interview with him. Also they learnt of the presence, at headquarters, of Cynthia Sutton. For some reason this worried them, and they wondered how much she knew.

She knew all, if the truth be told. Dry eyed and pale she had listened whilst Amber, with all the tenderness of a woman, had broken the news the Commissioner had sent.

"I would like to hold out some hope," he said gently, "but that would be cruel; the story has the ring of truth, and yet there is something behind it which we do not know." He

did not tell her of his suspicions. These he had confided to Sanders, and the little man had sent a party back to make an examination of the place where Sutton was buried

"White men die very suddenly in the Alebi," said Sanders. "There is every chance that the story is true— yet they are not the kind of men who

yet they are not the kind of men who from any sentimental consideration would take upon themselves the work of burying a poor chap. That's the part I can't believe."

"What will you do when the search party returns?" asked Amber.

"I have thought it out," replied Sanders. "I shall ask them for no report except in the presence of yourself and the men; this enquiry is to be an impartial one, it is already a little irregular."

Weeks passed—weeks of intoler-

little irregular."

Weeks passed—weeks of intolerable suspense for Whitey and Lambaire, playing bumble puppy whist in the shade of their hut.

Sanders paid them duty calls. He gave them the courteous attention which a prison governor would give to distinguished prisoners—that was how it struck Lambaire. Then one morning, an orderly came with a note for them—Their presence was required at "The Residency." No two men summoned from the cells below the dock ever walked to judgment with such apprehension as did these.

They found the Commissioner sitting at a big table, which was the one notable article of furniture in his office.

office.

Three travel-strained natives in the worn blue uniform of police stood by the desk. Sanders was speaking rapidly in a native dialect which was incomprehensible to anybody else in the room.

Amber, with Cynthia Sutton, sat on chairs to the right of the Commissioner's desk, and two vacant chairs had been placed on the left of the

It was curiously suggestive of a magistrate's court, where the positions of plaintiff and defendant are

well defined.

Lambaire shot a sidelong glance at

Lambaire shot a sidelong glance at the girl in her cool white frock and her snowy helmet, and made a little nervous grimace.

They took their seats, Lambaire walking heavily into his.

Sanders finished talking, and with a jerk of his hand motioned his men to the centre of the room.

"I was getting their story in consecutive order," he said. "I will ask them questions and will translate their answers, if it is agreeable to you?"

Whitey coughed to clear his throat

Whitey coughed to clear his throat, tried to frame an agreement, failed, and expressed his approval with a

nod.
"Did you find the place of the four trees?" asked Sanders of the natives.
"Lord! we found the place," said

Sentence by sentence as he spoke,

Sentence by sentence as he spoke, Sanders translated the narrative.

"For many days we followed the path the white men came; resting only one day, which was a certain feast day, we being of the Su'i Sect and worshippers of one god," said the policeman. "We found sleeping places by the ashes of fires that the white men had kindled; also cartridges and other things which white men throw away."

"How many days' journey did the

away."

"How many days' journey did the white men come?" asked Sanders.

"Ten days," said the native, "for there were ten night fires where there was much ash, and ten day fires, and where there was only so much ash as would show the boiling of a pot. Also at these places no beds had been prepared. Two white men travelled together for ten days, before then were three white men."

"How do you know this?" said San-

"How do you know this?" said Sanders, in the vernacular.
"Lord, that was an easy matter to tell, for we found the place where they had slept. Also we found the spot where the third white man had been left behind."

Lambaire's lips were dry; his mouth was like a limekiln as, sentence by sentence, the native's statement was translated.

"Did you find the white master wivo