

Nine Days Alone Without Food in a Jungle Namelcss Terrors of Silence and Solitude

Appalling Situation Presented After Craven Desertion By Guides—Reduced to a Penknife For Protection—Slashed By Knife-Like Plants of Dense Undergrowth—A Terrible Nocturnal Visitor—"A Nightmare of Indescribable Magnitude."

Abandoned by the treacherous Munoz, his half-caste guide, and by his Indian boatmen, "to die like a dog in the forest," the author finds himself alone in the trackless wilderness where the swirling tributaries of the Amazon come foaming down from the Andes. He was launched upon the return from an expedition to Iquitos, in which he had been examining the possibilities of aeroplane routes across the jungles, at the behest of Dr. A. B. Leguia, now president of Peru. Before Munoz had finally vanished, Mr. Dyott had the satisfaction of shaking the half-breed to a state of unconsciousness, although this had profited the author nothing but a slight relief to his feelings. For as soon as Munoz recovered somewhat he made good the threat of desertion which cupidity and malice had prompted.

By G. M. DYOTT

WHEN the silence of the forest had once more closed down on the scene I felt absolutely bewildered and stunned by the atmosphere of desolation which swept over me. What was I to do? A difficult question to answer, seeing that no food had been left behind. With a penknife and a small automatic carrying six rounds of ammunition, the prospects of procuring any were zero.

Still there was no need to give up in despair. I was in a good physical condition and able to stand considerable privation if necessary. I soon decided that the best course to pursue was to make straight for the river, and once there work my way along its banks until I came to the Indians, where I might procure other Indians to help me.

It was easier said than done, as the likelihood of finding my way back along the invisible pathway we had come by was so remote that I would have to strike a compass course due north instead and take the chance of encountering good ground on the way. Before setting out I piled up all my belongings neatly under a shelter and covered them over with a number of large leaves so as to keep them dry. The lighter I was laden, the more rapid my progress; therefore I took only my note-book, ink, and a few film tins; these, with my light blanket, made up my entire cargo.

Before starting I wrote up a very careful account of what had transpired, making several copies. I inserted them in the tins, which I taped up securely, my idea being that if the worst came to the worst I would drop them in the river and so inform the outside world of what had happened—assuming, of course, that they were picked up. It seemed just as well to write out the story while it was clear in my mind and I could think coherently, rather than wait until I was in the last stages of exhaustion.

A Dreadful Journey

ARRANGEMENTS all carefully made, I set off downhill, guided by my pocket-compass, and with a grim determination to get back to the Maranon at all costs. Twenty-four hours ago I had been hurrying away from it with all speed, now I was directing my footsteps back to it again with even greater energy and anxiety. Such is the way of the world!

My journey through the forest will always be recalled as a prolonged nightmare of indescribable magnitude.

With the assistance of knives and

axes it is difficult enough to make any headway amongst such a riot of jungle-growth, but without these tools it is well nigh impossible to move in any direction, let alone keep a definite compass course such as I hoped to maintain.

Rather than walk around the numerous obstacles that barred the way and so lose my bearings, I scrambled through or over them, tearing my clothes and cutting my flesh on the innumerable spines which protruded from almost every tree and plant. For a change, likely as it was, vines that trailed underfoot in all directions tripped me up at every turn, throwing me headlong into thickets of thorny undergrowth.

Every effort to save myself only resulted in getting my hands more painfully slashed, for even those plants which looked harmless enough had great spikes—long and sharp as needles, concealed under their innocent foliage, ready to cut and tear at the slightest provocation.

After a few hours I became absolutely terrified of touching anything for fear of incurring further wounds; should a branch happen to be smooth for a change, likely as it was, there would be thousands of ants crawling over it, and they bit and stung like creeping fire.

On one memorable occasion I examined a branch minutely before gripping it to help myself over a bad mud-hole, such as poisonous reptiles frequently inhabit. Seeing that it was free from both thorns and ants I grasped it confidently to swing myself across. As it bent under my weight a cloud of black wasps, whose nest I had not observed at the end of the bough, encircled my head and I fell in the very sludge I was trying to avoid. Beating the air frantically to keep off my assailants, I scrambled to more solid ground.

Branches flew back in my face, blinding me with their blows. My foot got caught in some roots, and to prevent a fall I clutched madly at a creeper that hung like a huge rope from the trees above. With an appalling crash I pulled the whole forest down on top of me—a mass of rotten timber.

From under the debris I crawled; the wasps had given up the chase, but ants were running all over me, and it was some time before I could rid myself of them and collect my disoriented senses sufficiently to proceed. What between ants, thorns, wasps, and innumerable other unknown things which bit and scratched, I was being quickly driven into a state of frenzy.

The hour was now getting late; my course lay uphill, and it was evident that I could not hope to reach the



"A large jaguar appeared out of the shadows, walked over my prostrate form."

river without spending at least one night in the forest.

At the first open spot I collected a few large leaves by way of a mattress to rest on, and with several fronds from nearby palms cut with my penknife, I constructed a fair shelter to keep off the rain.

Left With Pocket Knife

DURING the day I had crossed a stream, and in so doing had lost my small automatic with its six rounds of ammunition. I was therefore left to face all the terrors of a jungle night with no means of protection whatsoever except a small pocket-knife.

Exhausted and aching in every limb I lay down and tried to rest, but the maddening quietude of the surroundings brought no solace to the over-wrought brain; the absolute death-like stillness only accentuated my loneliness and emphasized the insignificance of man who pines his strength against the overpowering jungle.

In my passage through the forest the noise I myself made seemed to be companionable, but now, as I lay still, not a sound was heard unless it was a branch creaking with age, a falling leaf, or some mournful isolated cry of a bird that echoed through the forest like a lost soul.

The daylight faded away little by little; the white trunks of certain trees stood out in ghost-like relief from the rest of their fellows. Not a tremor or even a rustle was perceptible in the green canopy over-

head. Like a funeral pall it descended lower and lower till in the darkness which ensued I felt strangled and suffocated beneath.

At intervals I woke, startled by trivial sounds. Something was walking through the forest, possibly a jaguar or a large snake wriggling through the slime. I distinctly heard the movement of leaves and the snapping of twigs. Whether it was a small animal close by or a large one far away I knew not.

All sense of proportion had deserted me; all I knew was that at any moment something might creep over me—I held my breath and perspired freely—the strain was too great—I stood up. Minutes of suspense followed, then the noise would cease and I lay down again.

The next instant I was startled out of my senses. The leaves close at hand rustled violently, and something cold and clammy dropped over my face. A sickening shudder ran through me from head to foot, as I tried to beat off my assailant, but it was nothing—only one of my palm leaves that had come adrift and fallen across me. In the dark it might have been anything.

So this was the beautiful forest which I had been looking forward to traveling through in peace and quietness. I laughed at the thought of it, and burying my head under my blanket tried to obliterate all consciousness of the outside world.

Daylight returned, and with it new hope and energy to help me in my quest for the river. I set out at once. Again I headed due north over the ridge and down the other side, no horizon to encourage, no patch of blue sky overhead to cheer me on my way. Cracks and openings there were in plenty, and occasionally shafts of sunlight where the forest was more open, but it filtered down into my world as through prison bars.

I groped my way along slowly, laboriously, fearful of touching anything, and hoping against hope to encounter the river any moment. At about four the sound of running water was unmistakable. My energy revived immediately, and pushing forward with renewed vigor a flood of daylight burst upon me. I was on the banks of the Maranon.

It was five or six days since the Maranon and myself had parted company, at which time we were hardly on speaking terms, yet my joy at seeing it again on this occasion was unfeigned; it was like meeting an old friend.

Fate is Cruel

IT still gave forth the same well-known sound and was just as truculent as ever. On all sides were high hills, unfamiliar and thickly wooded, but it was too late to explore further, and I contented myself

with preparing a shelter for the night on a little stretch of soft sand. Here I slept soundly, away from the horrors of the forest and with the comforting thought that to-morrow I would just follow the river bank to the Indians, and in so doing encounter Indians who would assist me in the way the rest would be easy.

With a light heart and an empty stomach I set out early the following morning, but within an hour I was back where I started from in the depths of black despair.

Fate had played me a cruel trick. The banks of the river were jagged masses of rock and quite impassable; in fact, they were a more effective barrier than any forest. Further to add to my difficulties, a spur of hills intervened between me and my goal, which, in my weakened state, I could never hope to cross. I was therefore committed to the only alternative of remaining where I was, on the off-chance that some passing Indian might come to my rescue.

I figured out that with reasonable good luck I could sit still for at least two weeks with only water to drink, whereas to launch out into the forest again meant physical exhaustion and madness within two days. At the time I felt confident that an Indian canoe would be sure to pass sooner or later, since many had passed the lipics during my two days' stay on its banks.

Little did I know that not far round the bend was a cascade of such proportions that even an Indian would not attempt to pass it, except once in a blue moon; but in blissful ignorance of this I settled down to wait and wait.

The past two days had revealed to me an aspect of the forest which I had not come in contact with before except for a brief hour or two after disaster had overtaken my party in the whirlpool. So long as all goes well there is much to please the eye and charm the senses in this vast jungle-garden of the Amazon, but to the man who is so unfortunate as to lose his way, or be abandoned by his men, it becomes a veritable nightmare, the personification of all that is ghastly and appalling; one cannot make the words too strong.

Along in these dense green solitudes, harmless as they may appear, it is the unknown, the unseen, that terrifies. Man feels as if he was battling with an invisible monster ever more horrible than the river, because the latter attacks in the open and its death stroke is relatively quick, whereas the forest ensnares its victim in the dark, and slowly draws its coils tighter, till death comes as a merciful relief.

Reconciled to Death

ON the surface around the tree-tops the forest is beautiful; birds and butterflies disport themselves in the sunshine, nature is seen at her best. Beneath, away down amongst the roots, it is one hideous struggle for predominance in the vegetable world. Man may hack a passage through, but he cannot compete single-handed against the unseen; his track is soon grown over again, and only by constant work can it be kept reasonably clear of obstructions.

To flounder off the path is suicide; it is only a matter of time before he gets caught in the web that the green monster has woven about him, each struggle to get free only entangles him to a worse degree, and robs him of further powers of resistance. The law of the forest is the same as in other walks of life; victory goes to the strong, and in this case it is man who ultimately succumbs.

The first few days my desire for food was absolutely painful; nothing could be found, not even berries or nuts, to satisfy my longing. Then, as my insides collapsed and became accustomed to an empty state, a vague drowsy feeling stole over me that was

not disagreeable. My mind, instead of getting confused, became clear as crystal, and with no physical exertion to weaken me I could think with precision on most involved subjects.

Clear as my mind was it was with the feelings of a hunted animal that I crouched every night under my rude shelter of leaves. Back of me lay the silent forest with its haunting memories, in front the river, still waiting with diabolical patience. Which of the two would claim me in the end? I knew not, cared not, my only wish was to communicate the real details

ments my hopes would run high, then disappointment would follow as I realized my mistake.

On the fifth day there was no doubt about it, and the long-looked-for canoe was coming; deliverance was at hand. Down to the water's edge I rushed, shouting and waving my arms. Nearer and nearer it came, a man standing in the stern, swaying to and fro as his small craft rocked in the racing waters, but, alas! it was only another disappointment to add to my already long list. It turned out to be the trunk of a great tree, with a broken branch sticking up

By this means I never hoped to bring anyone to my assistance. But I did hope to inform the outside world of what had happened, and so contradict the stories Munoz would circulate. If I could but be sure of their doing that I would be satisfied.

Gazing at the river had become a mechanical habit. I had almost ceased to expect help in any shape or form, and the prospects of starving to death no longer caused me any alarm. I put in the time thinking of my friends and the pleasant events of long ago. Although the past was becoming more remote, it seemed to be wrapping itself up more intimately with the future in a most remarkable way. It was as if my life was running backwards, a curious sensation not easily described, but a feeling somewhat akin to it is experienced when seated in a train standing still in a station. On the adjacent track another train starts to move, you think it is you who are going backwards; in reality it is the other train moving forward.

In a similar manner, as I looked at life from the confined quarters of that gravel-bar, I imagined my world was going backwards, and that I was acquiring a new faculty of moving out of time with my surroundings. Before long the past, present, and future would all be merged into one-time would cease to exist, the clock of life would stop.

(Copyright, 1924.)
Next Week: "MAROONED IN A SAVAGE COLONY."

Father Gets Busy

PARSON (to small boy): "Hello Johnny, how is your father going on?"

Johnny: "Oh, dad opened a shop the other day."

Parson: "That's fine. What's he doing?"

Johnny: "Six months' hard. He opened it with a jemmy."—Bristol Evening News.

A Festive Gentleman

A FESTIVE gentleman beat on the door of a pawnbroker's establishment on Boxing Night. "Come down, uncle," he shouted.

Uncle, in a great rage, came down. "What is it?" he demanded. "Want—want know the time?"

"Is that all you know me for?" "Well—well, you've g-got 'n' watch."

Here-Sick!

A LITTLE girl was spending her first night from home. As the darkness gathered she began to cry. The hostess asked, "Are you home-sick?"

"No," she answered, "I'm sick."



These English young ladies simply have to have their cigarettes to get thorough enjoyment out of the winter sports in Switzerland. They are shown "lighting up" during a ski run at Murren.



The water jumps in the English steeplechase courses are formidable looking affairs. To miss means an uncomfortable experience for both horse and rider. Photograph shows Lord Queensborough's "Drummond" starting over the obstacle.



"With a dreadful crash I pulled the whole forest down on top of me—a mass of rotten timber."