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that the flames were forced inwards instead of outwards, or the boats would never have reached safety. I thought that we might even be compelled to retreat to the open sea, but such was not the case. The fire burned itself out with extraordinary rapidity. One moment the whole of the inner pool was a lake of liquid fire, the next it was black as the grave, heavy with the odour of burning petrol, the surface of the water moving sluggishly under a sheeting of thick oily scum.

Then we entered again. We had no fear of anyone disputing our entrance, for nothing human could have withstood the fiery blast which we had witnessed.

"He has escaped," cried Withington. There was a note of infinite regret in his voice.

"He must have had wings like a bird or fins like a fish, then," replied Sanders, "and as I did not see that he was gifted with either I'm no thinking that I would not rather be hanged than escape in that same fashion."

Is there anything more to tell? I think not. It goes without saying that we did not leave the spot until we had searched minutely every nook and corner for traces of Mannering and his companion. But of him or of his belongings we found no sign. The fire had licked the cavern which had been his dwelling-place as bare as the rock face. There was nothing to show that either of them had reached the beach upon