



"NEVER!" HE EXCLAIMED, DRAWING HIS REVOLVER.

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CHAPTER XV.

AGAINST MEN AND DOGS.

On, on they ran. They had almost got out of sight in the darkness, when they heard shouts followed by the report of fire-arms and the sharp firing of bullets, which told them that they were discovered.

They were after them now. On, on flew the fugitives, till at last they reached the forest. Plunging into its dark shadows, they were safely sheltered from their enemies bullets, but they dared not stop.

On, on they hurried in the darkness. They could hear the pursuers now as they came; there were more of them now, for the natives had joined in the chase. On they came, men shooting and dogs barking.

"They are driving us to the river," whispered Harry. "Can you swim, Tom?"

"Yes," she panted.

"Good!" exclaimed Harry. "But you will have to take off some of your rags, for the water is deep and runs swift, and you can't swim with your dress on. Ah, here we are, he said. "Come, quick, Tom, off with your outside clothes! Don't be afraid—off with 'em, for our lives depends on it." And suiting the act to the word, he stripped off his coat and vest.

"O Tom!" he cried, reproachfully, as she hesitated.

"Am I to lose you again? Won't you do this for me?"

"Yes, yes," she replied, "I will."

"Here, give me your clothes," he said, "and I will tie

them up in my coat. There," he ejaculated, as he tied the bundle and flung them over his shoulder. "Come, Tom, take hold of my belt and hang on, so we won't get separated in the darkness. Hold fast, Tom," he said, encouragingly, as he led the brave little girl out into deep water; and then, with long, powerful strokes struck out into the dark, swift tide.

On gaining the middle of the stream, they turned down and swam along with the swift, rolling current.

Their pursuers had gained the river bank by this time and were running swiftly up and down the shore in search of canoes which were soon found and, in them, set out in pursuit.

On, on, down the swift tide the fugitives swam. They could hear the splash of the paddles; they could hear the voices of the men—they were near to them now. Ah, there was one canoe that had gone past them on the right; there was one just even with them on the left; would they be discovered?

The canoe on the left, turned to right and shot directly in ahead of them.

"Easy, Tom, easy," whispered Harry. "Come this way and let's see if we can get to the shore. Ah, here's a good place to land; the shore is low and swampy—one of those low and swampy jungles—yes, we'll try it." And swimming noiselessly to the shore, they crawled out and started across the narrow strip of sand that separated the river from the jungle.

"Keep close to me, Tom, so they won't see your white clothes," whispered Harry, trying to hide her from the pursuers.

But the keen-eyed Kafirs had seen something white creeping swiftly from the river to the jungle; and, in a moment, were paddling swiftly toward the spot.

"After them, after them!" shouted Jante, who happened to be in one of the nearest boats. "Almighty, it is they! Here's the missy's track."

"Where are they? Which way have they gone?" shouted one of the Bosses, who came running up. "Where are they Jante, where are they?"

"In the jungle, Boss Fritz. Come, let's follow—where are the dogs?" cried Jante, excitedly.

Shortly, the dogs were brought and put upon the trail.

"Oh, the dogs!" wailed Tom. "They are after us. O God!" she cried in despair, as a few minutes after entering the swamp they heard the dogs give tongue as they set off on the trail.

"Darn the dogs!" muttered Harry. "I'll silence their tongues if they'll come near enough so I can see them."

On, on, through the swamp hastened the fugitives; sometimes wading in water up to their arm-pits, sometimes on dry land, sometimes crawling upon their hands and knees through the growth of bushes, sometimes running swiftly through the air.

On came the pursuers, or three of them at least—Jante and the two Dutchmen—for the natives, not having any particular motive of their own in the pursuit, had stopped at the edge of the jungle.

Guided by the two dogs who were very careful to keep at a safe distance, the pursuers had no difficulty in following the fugitives.

They were gaining now, for little Tom was so exhausted by her long flight that she was scarcely able to keep on her feet.

"O Harry," cried Tom, "leave me and save yourself! They will murder us both if they catch us. Leave me—perhaps that they'll take pity on me because I am only a girl and not murder me. But they will kill you and me too, for fear I might testify against them. Kiss me, Harry, and ask God to protect me, then go."

"No, Tom, I will never do that. If they get you away from me again, then I will do the best I can to escape that I may come to your rescue; but I will never give you up—never!" he declared.

"O Harry—"

"Hush—they are coming," interrupted Harry.

"Go, Harry, while you can," coaxed Tom.

"Never!" he exclaimed; and drawing his revolver, just as Jante burst into view from the dense growth of jungle grass, his one eye gleaming and a smile of triumph upon his ugly visage, Harry sent a bullet crashing through his ugly head.

Then commenced a skirmish in the darkness. For an hour it lasted, without loss to either side; when finally, the besieging party drew off.

"Now what?" asked Tom. "What do they mean now?"

"I don't know," replied Harry. "Perhaps they'll wait for daylight. If they do, just let them wait, they won't gain anything by it. I can shoot better in the daytime, too."

"More likely that one of 'em will go for help," suggested Tom.

"Devil take the whole Kafir nation!" exclaimed Harry. "I wouldn't wonder but that's just what they are up to."

"Let's don't wait to see," cried Tom. "Let's get out of here. Come, I am rested a little now. But, O Harry! Where are my clothes? What have you done with them?"

"Crotch-al-hemlock!" exclaimed Harry in dismay. "I don't know—I never thought of them before. I have lost them somewhere sure."

"O dear! what shall I do?" wailed poor Tom.

"Never mind, Tom," said Harry, consolingly; "you are better dressed now than the young ladies of this country are in the habit of dressing. You don't look bad; you make a pretty good looking boy—most too good looking. If it wasn't for your hair and you were not quite so pretty, we might pass you off for a boy all right."

"O Harry, please don't make fun of me! I ain't to blame—I did just as you told me to."

"Tom, I am not making fun of you, I never was more in earnest in all my life. I mean every word I say and more too."

"What do you mean, Harry?"

"Just this," said Harry, "let's make a boy of you—"

"O Harry, I can't—I—"

"But you can, Tom. Let me fix you up; it will save us lot's of trouble and it may save our lives, too. It will throw our enemies off the track and you won't attract so much attention—for a pretty girl is a rare sight in this country and will attract more attention than Barnum's great show does in America."

During this conversation, the fugitives had been making all the time that they possibly could on their flight. Having gained the high ground now, they found the way easier and less difficult, and as a consequence made better time; and as it was nearly morning, and hearing nothing of their pursuers, they stopped to rest.

"Here's a good place beside this old log," said Harry. "Come and lie down. I will cover you up with leaves and you can lie there and sleep for a while, while I rustle around and get something for our breakfast. There," he said, "that's a good bed;" and covering her with leaves, he sat down beside her and watched. A half hour passed and, as little Tom was sleeping soundly and there was no signs of their pursuers, Harry had dropped off into a doze and sat nodding dreamily when the cry of a parrot startled him.

"Well, well," he yawned, rousing himself; "well, I do believe I was almost asleep." Arising, he paced to and fro for a few seconds, then stopping, he looked down upon the sweet, innocent face of the little sleeper and muttered:

"Poor Tom, I know that you are just about starved. I wonder if I can't find something that we can eat? If I only dared to shoot, I could soon provide us a good square meal; but I dare not do it. But I will see what I can find." So saying, he started off, watching all the while for any indication either of food or enemies.

Some twenty minutes had passed and he had had the rare good luck to find some wild fruit that looked delicious to his hungry eyes, that was sweet and juicy to the taste

Gathering what he could carry in his arms, he hurried back, thinking what a pleasant surprise it would be for little Tom.

But alas! the surprise was on the other hand and of altogether a different nature than pleasant; for, on reaching the place where he had left his little companion, he found to his horror and dismay that she was gone.

"O my God!" he cried, as he stood horrified and for a time unable to think or act. "O my God, she is gone, she is gone!"

"Tom, Tom!" he shouted, but no answer came. What could he do?

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CHAPTER XVI.

SOLD INTO SLAVERY.

But young Harry was not a man that would give up in despair. Dearly as he loved little Tom, and terrible as was the shock, he did not for a moment give up to his feelings; but setting himself about, he soon discovered the cause of his companion's disappearance.

Yes, there were the tracks of two men—undoubtedly the two Dutch bosses whom Jante had brought from the Kafir village to help him procure the diamond. They had followed, not daring to attack the fugitives openly, hoping to gain some advantage—to steal upon him unawares. They had seen Harry when he set out to search for food and had watched and waited till he was out of sight, then had crept upon the sleeping girl and carried her away.

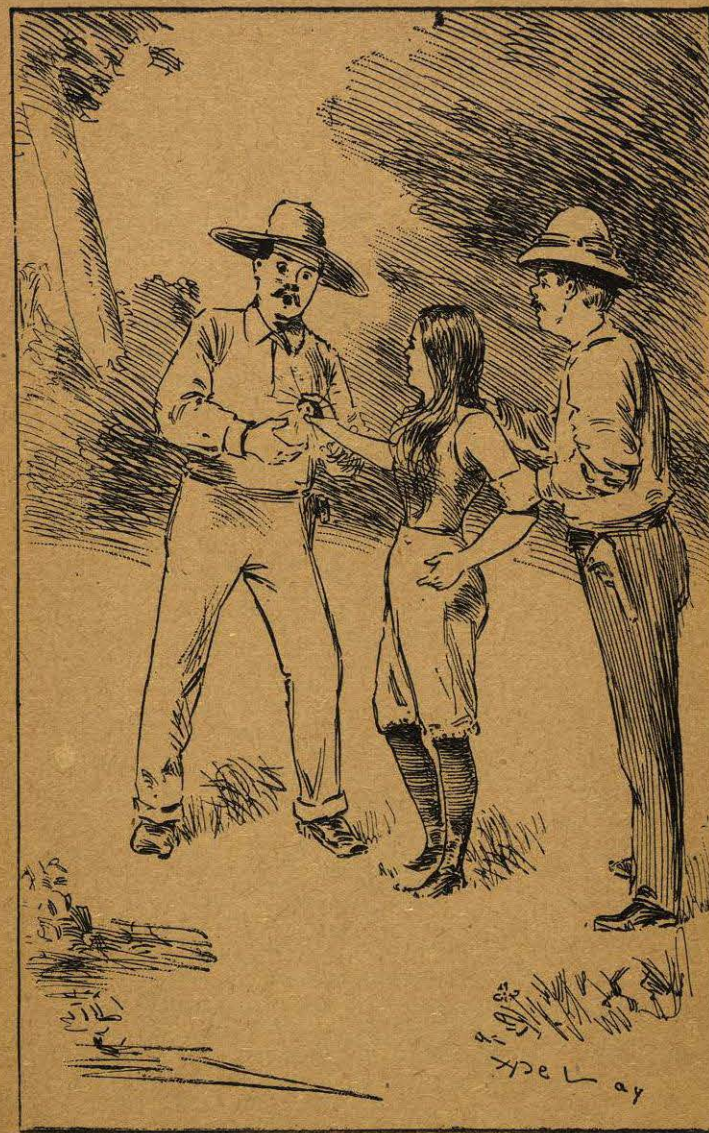
"O Harry!" she murmured, as she felt herself dragged from her warm nest; and opening her sleepy eyes, she looked up into the rough, bearded faces of the two Dutchmen. But before she could utter a cry, a rough hand was placed over her mouth and she was dragged swiftly away.

On reaching the shelter of the dense forest, the kidnapers paused and, turning upon the frightened girl, demanded—

"De tiamondt, missie, vare ish de tiamondt!"

"O sir!" cried Tom. "Will you let me go if I will give you the diamond?"

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TOM HANDED HIM THE DIAMOND.

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"Yah, yah, mine leetle missie. Gafe us de tiamondt und ve leffy you goes."

"Thank you, mynheer Fritz," cried Tom, joyously; and she handed him the diamond.

"Ha, yah, missie Tom, yer knows ole Fritz?" said the boss, eying her suspiciously.

"May I go now, mynheer?" pleaded Tom, anxiously.

"Nine; you cooms mit us," growled old Fritz.

"But you said I might go—"

"Yah, yah, you goes mit us right away off kwick as tam," he said.

"I won't do it!" cried Tom, angrily. "Let me go!" she cried, struggling desperately with the two strong men as they seized her and hurried her away.

On through the woods for a couple of miles they hurried, when they came out into a broad trail made by a traders' caravan.

Following the trail for a mile, they came upon the traders just as they were starting out for a long day's journey.

"Ah!" exclaimed old Fritz, "they are Moors; yah, ve sells leetle missie to oom. She puy us soom grub und soom whiskey. Yah, yah, dot ish besser, py jing. Ve not keeps him, for she makes us trooble all de time, und ve not kills him, for dot fool Harry leaves us alone not any more, nine never, py jing."

So saying, he sought the trader who, happening to be an old man and having all the wives, perhaps, that he could well support, some three or four of whom were with him—perhaps that that had some influence with him—declined to purchase. But after some further

parleying and a good deal of talk upon the part of the Dutchmen, an offer was made by the old shark and was quickly accepted by Tom's captors.

All day the caravan hurried along beneath a burning sun. Though Tom was well provided for, as she had a seat with the other women up on the camels, it seemed to her that the day would never come to an end. But it did; for, as I presume, in fact I have heard, that all things must end, so ended this day.

The caravan went into camp near a small village, where they would stop for a day to trade with the natives.

Tom was well provided for, and in spite of her anxiety for her lover, and being so tired and sleepy, was soon fast asleep.

How long she had slept, she knew not, but it was midnight or after when she awoke and looked about her. Everything was still. The women were all asleep.

"Now," she said to herself, "is my time", and creeping silently from the tent, she soon found herself alone. The old trader had no fear of her trying to escape—not knowing anything about her previous history—and had left her at liberty to share the tent with the other women.

"Now," mused Tom, "is my time. I know Harry will be on the watch for me and I will go"; and stealing softly from the camp, she crept away in the darkness.

On, on, till the outer edge of the camp was reached, and then just as Tom, with a low murmured "Thank

God!" started down the road, a dark form rose up directly before her and, before she had time to cry out, she was seized in a pair of strong arms and dragged into the dark, impenetrable shadows of the jungle.