

BY  
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CHAPTER I.

The Writing and the Mark.

**T**HE events here related happened many years ago when I was a boy of sixteen, living with my uncle in the back-woods of Canada.

My mother was dead; my father, a well-known naturalist, had gone on a scientific expedition to South America, leaving me with his elder brother. Plenty of good food, hard work, and life in the open air had made me very strong. I could manage a canoe like an Indian, keep the larder supplied with fish, sit in the saddle for hours at a stretch, swim like a duck, and put a bullet into a target at two hundred yards nine times out of twelve.

I was fairly well educated, but no book-worm, and thought much more of shooting a deer than of construing a passage from Virgil.

I tell you these things so that you may not think me to have been a dreamy boy with his head full of strange fancies, like my cousin Dick for instance, who spent his time composing rubbishy verses that no one would read. Had the incident happened to him I should have called it a cock-and-bull story, and the family would have enjoyed a hearty laugh at his absurd notions.

As it occurred to me, however, it was no laughing matter. I will tell you the story but you must make your own explanations. Call it a dream, a lucky chance, or what you will, I shall not grumble, because I cannot account for the mystery any more than you can.

One night I went to bed as usual about ten o'clock. I was very tired, having been out hunting with my cousin Sam, who was ten years older than I. As a rule my sleep lasted till getting-up time, but on this particular occasion I woke about midnight. The light from a full moon streamed through the window, showing everything in the little bedroom quite clearly. A man stood right in the track of light, with his face turned toward me. I saw at once that it was my father, but did not feel the least surprise at his presence.

"Get some paper, Frank" said he, "and write."

Slipping out of bed I found a piece of paper and lead and followed him to the dressing-table. Motioning me to spread the paper out he placed a hand on my wrist and I began to write, though knowing nothing of the characters which my pen traced.

When my father removed his hand I stopped writing, and he disappeared. I remember thinking this rather curious, but from that moment till Sam called me in the morning my mind is a blank.

A glance at my right wrist cleared my brain, or muddled it still more, whichever you like. Where my father's hand had pressed was a dark blue patch, on which soap and water made no impression. This reminded me of the paper which still lay on the dressing-table.

This is what I had written in big, sprawling letters, certainly through no will of my own. "Help! Latitude 5.40 S., Longitude 77.6 W." What it meant I knew no more than the man in the moon.

I went down to breakfast with the paper in my pocket feeling rather scared. My aunt was the first to notice the blue patch, but I would not answer any questions till after the meal. Then we held a solemn family council, at which I told the story just as you have read it.

Sam said "Fudge!" and offered to get the marks out with pumice-stone; my uncle lit his pipe and smoked with the gravity of an Indian chief. Cousin Ella wept softly, saying she should never dare sleep again, while aunt Mary solemnly pronounced my father to be dead.

Opening his note-book, Dick instantly began to write a poem on the subject, but, stopping suddenly, he fetched a big old atlas and placed it on the table.

"Do you know where Lat. 5.40 S., Long. 77.6 W., is?" he asked, at which I shook my head dolefully, geography not being one of my strong points, though I was well up in topography when it came to deer-runs, trapping beaver, and that sort of thing.

Dick opened his atlas and his eyes at the same time.

"Very odd" he remarked, "as likely as not Uncle Maurice is about there somewhere. It is in Peru."

"And the last we heard of him was from Lima," observed Aunt Mary.

"Odd!" remarked my uncle thoughtfully. "I hope nothing has happened to the poor fellow; but anyway I don't see how we can help him."

"Frank's had a queer dream" said Sam, "and it's upset him. There's nothing to worry about."

There is no doubt that we should all have accepted this explanation gladly but for the blue mark. Who made that? And how?

Sam scrubbed at it till his arm ached and my wrist was sore, but with no other result. The intensity of the dark blue colour did not lessen in the least.

All that day I went listlessly about my work, my thoughts taken up with the mysterious dream of the preceding night. Uncle David said nothing and I got no sympathy from Sam, but the others shared my distress.

By the evening I had worked myself into a dreadful state of mind. The more I thought the matter over the more certain it seemed that my father was in some great danger and needed my help.

"Try to dismiss the subject from your

mind, my boy," said Uncle David. "All will come right. Very likely we shall have a letter from your father in a day or two. He'll be very much amused when he hears of your dream."

"I'm going to look for him" said I desperately. "That warning didn't come for nothing."

This unloosed all their tongues at once, but nothing they could say had any effect on me. Some terrible evil threatened my father and go to his assistance I would, even if I had to tramp the continent over on foot.

Now Uncle David, though very prosperous for a pioneer, had little ready cash, but my mother who had a small fortune in her own right had left her money to me, and I resolved to use every penny in prosecuting the search.

At first my kind-hearted relatives would not hear of the plan; they foretold all manner of evils and placed every obstacle in my path. My uncle refused point-blank to let me have the money, till at last by sheer force of pegging away I wore down his opposition.

Even then he gave his consent with extreme reluctance, comparing me with Don Quixote, much to the advantage of that worthy knight.

However, as soon as the matter was finally decided, they all showed me much kindness, and Sam, who had been the greatest scoffer, offered to go with me.

"You can't do anything by yourself" said he with rough good humour, "only get lost or killed, and a pretty yarn we shall have to tell your father when he comes home. Who would believe we are living at the end of the nineteenth century? If the authorities get to hear of our wild-goose chase they'll pop us into a lunatic asylum."

"And serve you both right!" said his father.

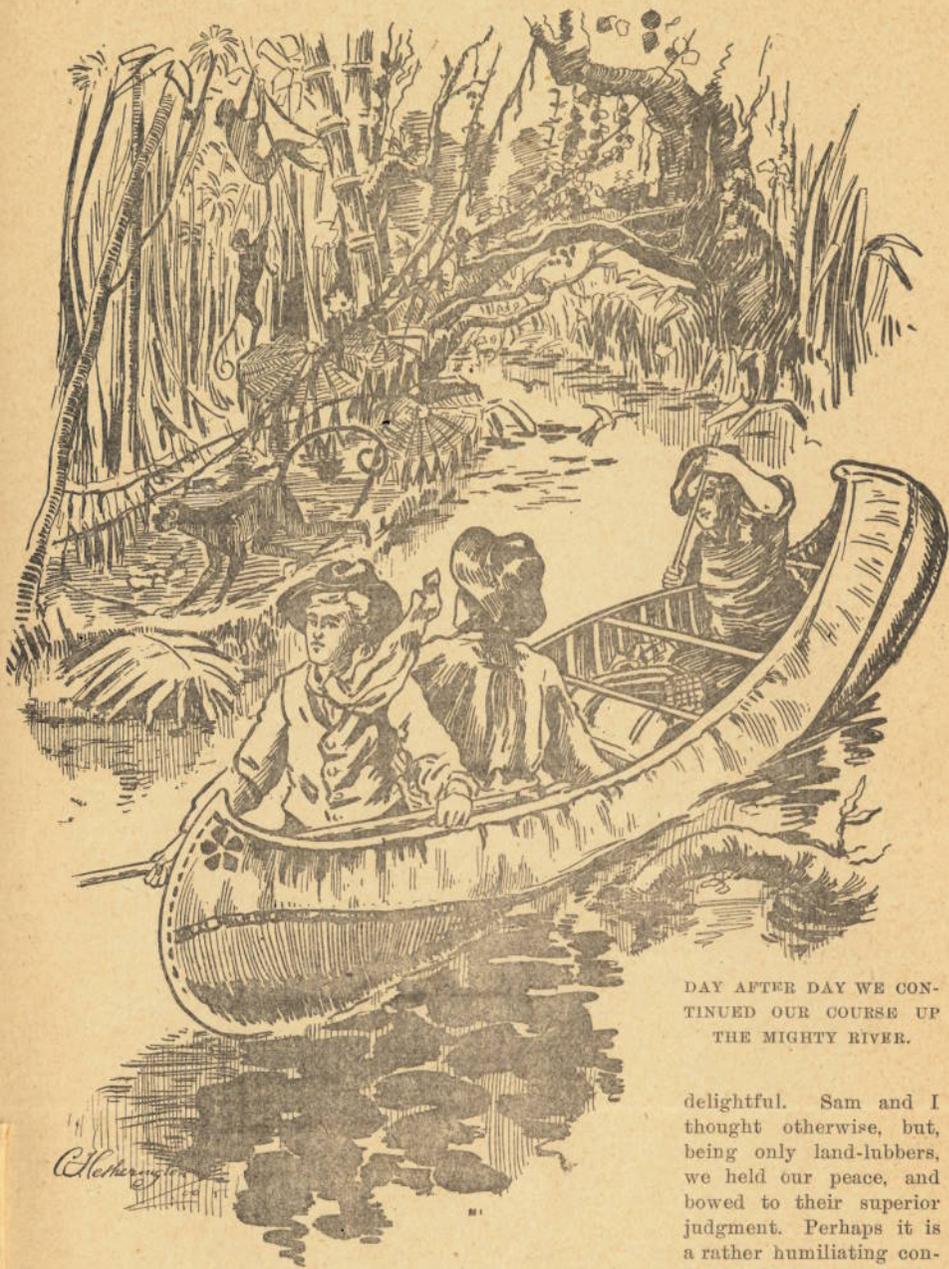
Of course I was very pleased to have Sam's company. He was a tall strapping fellow, utterly fearless, a mighty hunter, and skilled in all the arts of the backwoods. A trusty comrade and true as steel was Sam Bread as you could read in his open face and firm eyes.

Once the affair was decided on we were long in making a start. Our plan was cross the States to San Francisco, and take ship for Lima, whence we could begin our search.

Sam was in excellent spirits, pretending we were bound on a pleasure trip.

"Send a wire to 'Frisco if you hear Uncle Maurice!" said he. "We shall start the 'Empire.' If we're gone, telegraph the Consul at Lima; we're sure to look up."

There was much handshaking and a weeping on the part of Ella and Aunt as we said farewell; a piece of advice



DAY AFTER DAY WE CONTINUED OUR COURSE UP THE MIGHTY RIVER.

delightful. Sam and I thought otherwise, but, being only land-lubbers, we held our peace, and bowed to their superior judgment. Perhaps it is a rather humiliating confession, but I came to the

run into unnecessary danger from Uncle David; a stanza or two from Dick, who vainly pressed us to take his copy of verses with us, and then we were off.

There is no need to describe our journey in detail. We reached Frisco without encountering any adventures, and as there was no message from home we duly booked our passage to Lima in the Fairy Queen.

According to the sailors, the Fairy Queen was a beautiful sea-boat, and the weather was

conclusion that a life on the ocean wave was a little bit out of my line.

The Fairy Queen did not go to the bottom though she made numerous desperate efforts to bury herself in the deep, while the playful waves had a distressing habit of sweeping the decks clear of everything not securely fastened. Sam did not appear to be in particularly high spirits during the voyage, and when we got safely ashore at Lima he said many uncomplimentary things about the

Fairy Queen which I grieved to hear.

Under happier circumstances I should have been delighted with the strange and unfamiliar sights surrounding us, but my anxiety on my father's account was so great that I hardly noticed them.

As soon as we were free of the ship our very first visit was to the British Consul. To Sam's surprise there was no message from Canada, but the Consul was able to give me some news of my father.

"I do not know where he is now, but he is certain to return to Lima" said he. "I have several boxes of specimens here which he collected in his trip across the continent. He left here by train for Opipo. After that he would strike directly into the forest, but I have not heard of him since."

"Was he in good health?" asked Sam.

"Oh yes, and in capital spirits. His trip had been very successful and he was delighted with his specimens."

"And you do not think he was in particular danger?"

Our host shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"A man like Mr. Breadon is always in danger. He takes his life in his hands from day to day. Death may meet him at any minute. It is not always easy to avoid the bite of a deadly serpent or the poisoned arrow of a suspicious Indian. Still, there is no reason why he should be in greater danger now than at any other time."

The Consul was so kind and so full of sympathy that I made up my mind to tell him just what had led to my visit.

He listened with great courtesy to the end.

"It is a strange tale" said he, "but the experience of a long life has taught me that there are many things in nature which we cannot hope to understand. However, the main thing is to reach this spot as quickly as possible. Can you use a steering compass?"

Sam laughed gaily.

"Oh yes," he answered. "This won't be our first exploring trip; we have both served an apprenticeship in the back-woods of Canada."

The Consul seemed relieved at this. I daresay he had thought we were novices in forest travelling. However, he was very kind, doing everything in his power to help us. From a large chart he drew a map of the district, tracing in the rivers, hills, forests, marking off the various distances, and drawing in red ink what he considered the best routes.

He wished us to take a native guide, but, after some discussion we concluded to go alone as we knew nothing of Indians or their ways.

From him we learned that the railway ended at Opipo where it would be necessary to provide ourselves with a canoe, since most of the journey must be done by water, and with a certain amount of provisions.

"There is not much danger to be feared from wild animals" he concluded, "but there are poisonous reptiles in the woods and alligators in the river. As to the Indians, I should advise caution. Those near the towns will do you no harm, but there are strange stories told of wild tribes who are supposed to dwell in the interior. Their very existence even can only be traced to rumour."

"We shall keep our eyes open" said Sam. "We haven't come all this way to be potted by natives."

"Almost at the last moment our little party received an addition in the shape of a young Scottish resident named Sandy Macpherson. A whisper of our business having reached him, he begged to be allowed to accompany us.

The Consul assured us that we could not find a better partner, and indeed the very appearance of the young Scotchman was sufficient recommendation.

"It's a queer sort of trip" explained Sam, "and I don't know that there's any return service."

"We'll make one" said Sandy quietly, "or if not we'll just have to stay there!"

"Right!" said Sam, and a grip of the hand pledged us without the need of speech to stand by each other. When there is real work to be done with Death in the background there is very little palaver. I have known men make more fuss over a lost sixpence than Sandy ever showed when death was at his shoulder trying hard to jog him into another world.

He was very useful to us from the outset. His knowledge of the people, of Portuguese, and of the *patois* which the Indians spoke enabled him to get what was required with ease. He took charge of the commissariat and transport departments, and managed both well.

"We'll buy a canoe at Opipo" said he. "Then we shan't have the trouble of packing it on the train."

I asked what kind of place Opipo was, and he laughed.

"It is the railway terminus" he answered. "There are huts and Indians, a river and a forest. Perhaps there is more forest than anything else."

Even my anxious state of mind could not prevent my smiling at the rate of travelling. The engine-driver was in no hurry; the guard would stop the train anywhere to pick up a stray passenger; while Sam and I fumed and fretted at the snail's pace.

However, Opipo was reached at last, and carrying our stores, we accompanied Sandy to the one house where travellers could find accommodation.

Since I was eager not to lose time, the young Scot let it be known that we wished to buy a canoe, and very soon had the choice of several! Having selected one he stowed away the provisions, and volunteered to spend the night in our new craft.

"We'll all go down" said Sam "and watch by turn. There's no need to knock you up at the start. We shall want all our strength before the trip's done with."

So we spent that night in the canoe, moored at the side of the broad river, with tall reeds fringing the banks, and mighty trees behind through whose far-spreading branches the moon shone faintly.

The first watch had fallen to me, and, while my companions slept, I sat in the stern of the boat with eyes and ears wide open, and a loaded revolver close at hand. Strange thoughts filled my brain and I conjured up weird fancies, sitting there in the silence and darkness.

I knew perfectly well that the world would have laughed at my foolish search, begun on such a flimsy pretext, and yet in my heart I felt certain that somewhere in the dense forests before us my father lay awaiting my help.

Where he would be found or what danger he was in I knew not. I had formed no definite plan, except to journey as accurately as possible to the latitude and longitude I had written down in such a mysterious manner.

What would happen then must be left to fate.

So, thinking of our strange errand and keeping guard against any unknown danger, I sat and watched till it was time to waken Sam; then, wrapping myself in a blanket, I lay down to sleep.

\* \* \*

## CHAPTER II.

### Latitude 5°40 S., Longitude 77°6 W.

Before proceeding with the account of our adventures I must mention a little circumstance, trifling in itself, and merely perhaps the result of chance, though it did not appear so to me.

We had breakfasted on the bank and Sandy was straightening things in the canoe when Sam drew attention to the blue mark on my wrist.

"It's fading out, Frank!" said he in a whisper.

A glance at the mark showed that he was right. The dark blue had become several

shades lighter, and I was seized with a great fear.

What did it mean? Was it mere chance or had it anything to do with the object of our journey? Was it a sign that my father was already passing beyond my help? Put down baldly in black and white these questions look very silly, but in my excited state I could not get them from my mind nor find an answer.

Sam pooh-poohed the idea at once.

"If it's a sign at all" he exclaimed cheerfully, "it either means that Uncle Maurice is out of danger or that you're on the right track. Look at it in that light, if you will cram your head with such silly rubbish."

No out-of-the-way fancies ever disturbed my cousin's brain, and though without his help the expedition would probably have collapsed, he fully believed we were bound on a fool's errand.

Sandy, to whom during the voyage in the canoe we told the story, was of the same opinion.

"Verra like your father's at home by this time" said he. "However, it's a grand trip ye're having, and a little adventure never comes amiss to a lad of mettle. It'll servé to talk about when ye're an old man yerself."

Fortunately the hard work kept me from brooding overmuch. The current was strong and though the wind helped us when it blew from the right direction, we had sometimes to struggle against both wind and current.

Day after day we continued our course up the mighty river without seeing a human being. On both sides of the stream the forests stretched away for miles and miles. Majestic trees whose names were unknown to me covered the ground thickly, rearing their tall tops to heaven.

Here huge patches of chinchona met the view, there a bed of cactus, which Sandy told us formed good food for animals. Now we went sweeping by acre upon acre of wonderful ferns, tree-like in their height and thickness, giving place presently to grasses so high that a regiment of cavalry might have hidden among them undiscovered.

Lofty and graceful palms jostled stupendous thistles, while over and between the noble timber crept and climbed a vegetable world of parasites, forming a network of leaf and stem so thick as to be impenetrable. Strange flowers of brilliant hue hung in festoons or made triumphal arches from tree to tree, while the foliage was a mass of wonderful colouring, fairy green, rich brown, purple and gold.

Humming birds with bright metallic plumage flew by in dozens, gaudily tinted parrots wheeled and screamed and chattered overhead, troops of grinning monkeys followed us along the banks playing such antics that

we roared with laughter. Now and again we saw a lazy alligator lying like a log and utterly indifferent to our presence, but we were not out for sport, and passed by, without firing a shot.

"We'll use our ammunition on them coming back" said Sam, "if there is any left."

By this time I was becoming very impatient, and felt quite glad when one day my cousin, after using his instruments, announced that we should have to leave the river.

"Better find a good hiding-place for the canoe," advised Sandy. "We haven't seen any Indians yet, but that doesn't prove there aren't any about. We should be in a tight fix if we found the canoe gone on our return!"

Accordingly we pushed on to a place on the right bank where the water formed a tiny cove. It was an ideal spot for our purpose. Great trees and ferns crowding down to the water's edge flung their branches and fronds over the stream, forming a leafy screen which hid our little craft like a thick curtain.

We slept on board that night and as soon as day dawned prepared for our Quixotic

journey. Sam and Sandy fastened the canoe securely, then we saw to our revolvers and ammunition, put up three bags of provisions, and, having made a hearty meal, set out, Sam leading the way, axe in hand in order to blaze the trees.

A detailed description of our march would be dreary reading. The first step into the forest was like a plunge into an abyss of gloom. Massive trees enveloped us on all sides; overhead their interlocked branches formed a dense canopy shutting out the light of heaven; our feet trod upon a tangled mat of undergrowth; rough edged grasses tore our clothes scarring our flesh with ugly cuts. And, to crown all, we were going on a quest which two of the three voyageurs believed utterly hopeless!

But you must not think my companions showed any sign of their bad faith. They trudged along cheerfully, never uttering a word of complaint, and doing their best to keep up my spirits.

For I was growing dreadfully nervous. The trees talked to me; the patter of their falling



BY ITS LIGHT WE SAW THAT A SET OF CLUMSY STEPS DESCENDED INTO THE WELL.

leaves formed sentences in my brain, the snapping of a twig was a cry of agony, the hoarse chattering of an ambushed monkey turned into an appeal for help.

Yet, even if my father were anywhere near, how was it possible to find him when we could not see three yards in any direction?

Sandy's one hope lay in the Indian tribe popularly supposed to live somewhere in the interior.

"I have often heard of them" said he, "though no one has ever seen them. But if there is such a tribe they would be sure to know if a white man has been in the district."

So we toiled on, literally cutting a path, blazing the trees as we proceeded, and sleeping at night in the forked branches.

On the third evening we came near to ending our journey altogether. The day had been very sultry, not a breath of air stirred, flocks of birds were flying riverward, and the monkeys, gathered in conclave, were chattering uneasily.

"We're going to have a storm" said Sam, "and a rough one. I should feel safer in the open. It won't be pleasant here when these timber giants get knocking their heads together."

"Hurry along then!" exclaimed Sandy. "Though we aren't likely to get out of this tangle. Halloa! There's a warning blast from the bugle!"

The wind had risen suddenly and it swept through the forest like the roar of artillery. The heavy boom of thunder followed, and long rods of brilliant lightning, twisted and curled like fiery serpents, leaped from sky to earth. The massive trees rocked like fishing-smacks at sea, great branches crashed to the ground, and even some of the forest giants themselves toppled over with hurricane force.

Panting, breathless, with torn garments and bleeding faces, we struggled on, hoping against hope to escape from this horrible destruction.

The hurricane increased in fury. Crash! Crash! went the riven trees, split asunder from root to topmost bough. Here one, there a dozen fell with a mighty bang, while we stumbled along hand in hand with death.

At last when the storm had spent its strength we came, half blinded and worn out, to an open space many acres in extent. Whether the work of man or of nature we could not tell, but the instrument used was fire. The ground was covered with charred trunks, and stumps of trees hidden by the long luxuriant grass which had sprung up since the work of destruction.

Well away from the confines of the forest we lay down, thankful at having escaped with our lives. The storm still raged but with far

less violence, and presently ceased almost as suddenly as it had begun.

"Narrow shave, that" said Sam coolly. "I thought we should all have gone under. I vote we have our supper and stay here for the night. What do you fellows say?"

"Stay here by all means" answered Sandy. So we ate our food, and, while the young Scot took the first watch, Sam and I tried to sleep.

It was quite dark when Sandy awakened me.

"Hush!" said he in a whisper. "Don't make a noise! Either I'm dreaming or there's something very queer going on. Put your ear to the ground and listen."

I did so and started back in astonishment saying, "Music!"

"It's either Indians or fairies, and I'm not much of a believer in fairy tales."

By this time Sam was awake and he, too, heard the strange music sounding like weird chants which came apparently from beneath our feet.

"I wonder if this is Sandy's wild tribe?" he asked, and at that moment it was borne in upon me like a flash of lightning that we were standing above my father's prison.

That his explorations had led him in this direction we knew, and what more likely than that he should have been captured by a wild and lawless tribe of Indians?

I whispered these ideas to my companions, and, though even then they thought me light-headed, both agreed that we must find out something about these unseen musicians.

Stealthily as snakes we crawled over the ground, guided by the music, which in one direction sounded louder and more clear.

"That will lead us to the entrance" whispered Sandy, and five minutes later we lay with our heads half over a hole in the ground which Sam had discovered.

"Keep watch, you two" said he. "I'm going to strike a match."

By its light we saw that a set of clumsy steps cut in the side descended into the well, and after a hasty consultation we decided to go down.

"Steady, for your lives!" whispered Sandy impressively. "If once we get into the clutches of these Indians there's small chance of our getting out again."

One by one we descended with infinite caution, feeling our way step by step, afraid even to breathe loudly lest the sound should betray our presence to some lurking and unseen foe.

At the bottom we found ourselves in a kind of bear-pit, and another match showed us a low archway leading into a vaulted passage, along which the sounds of the mournful chants poured in a powerful swell.

My heart beat high with excitement but I had no wish to draw back, and, bending my head, I passed through the archway followed by my comrades.

By degrees the darkness lessened, we began to see more clearly, and presently there burst upon our gaze a blaze of artificial light.

Instinctively we sank to the earth, and lay staring in utter amazement at the magnificent and totally unexpected sight.

The narrow passage opened directly into a spacious hall, the floor of which was composed of bright-coloured patterned tiles. On the smooth walls were painted the pictures of animals, some of which were easily recognised, while others were quite unfamiliar. Numerous statues and specimens of sculpture in relief were ranged round the sides, with strange forms of uncouth monsters executed in stone and covered with mystical hieroglyphics.

The ceiling was encrusted with diamonds and precious stones which flashed and sparkled with great brilliance. Right opposite us stood a broad platform carpeted with beautiful skins, while, suspended from the ceiling in some ingenious manner, hung an imitation sun of gold.

On a golden stool in the centre of the platform, sat an old old man, clothed in a crimson robe whose long folds swept the ground. The skin of his face was yellow and dried like parchment, but a fierce light glowed in his deeply sunken eyes.

To right and left of him stood a group of musicians with various instruments, while several hundred Indians in rapt attention squatted on the floor facing them.

Beneath the golden sun was a huge stone basin filled with inflammable materials, while close at hand was an iron net whose use I could not divine.

The centre of the floor was bare save for a ring of Indians, perhaps a dozen in number, who spun round and round chanting in unison with the music. They were tall men with long lank black hair, skin of cinnamon hue, and deep-seated eyes glowing with excitement.

They had square heads flattened at the back, with foreheads low and receding. Their lips were full and rounded, and they had heavy massive lower jaws. They were clad in skins and carried huge spears which they whirled above their heads as they danced round ever faster and faster.

Suddenly I beheld a sight that chilled the blood in my veins. In the centre of the spinning circle stood a man with his hands bound together. He was very pale and weak as if from long imprisonment, but he held his head erect, and his face showed no sign of fear.

I looked at Sam. His lips formed the words "Uncle Maurice!"

My limbs quivered with excitement, and I knew not what to do. Without a doubt my father was about to be sacrificed in connection with some religious ceremony. This was the opinion of us all, and we made it known to each other by signs.

But how to prevent it? I tried to think of some plan till my head grew dizzy with the strain. Whatever we did must be done at once, since it was plain that the Indians intended to sacrifice their victim that very night.

Louder and louder the musicians played, swifter and swifter the ring revolved, while into the swelling chant burst a wild fierce note of exultation, whose purport no one could mistake. Only the squatting figures were still and motionless as if a breath had petrified them; and who could tell how soon the signal would sound which should change them into a mob of pitiless demons?

The old man on the golden stool nodded his palsied head, while his eyes gleamed like coals of fire. The dancers swung aloft their massive spears and leaped a man's height in their frenzy. The fatal moment was fast approaching, and still we crouched in hiding like nerveless babes.

We were not skilled in cunning, and I doubt if any craftiness would have helped us. One desperate chance there was, and I shrank from it only because it would bring my companions face to face with death.

But they saw it too, and by signs urged me to the venture.

Sam passed me his long sharp-bladed knife, which had many a time stood us in good stead in the Canadian forests. Then he and Sandy drew their revolvers.

The madness of the ceremony was creeping into the blood of the musicians; a throbbing excitement passed through the images on the floor; the time was nearly ripe.

Cat-like I crept to my feet, then without sound or word of warning sped lightly over the tiled floor, and, leaping into the midst of the circle, severed the prisoner's bonds.

"Quick, father!" I cried, "we have come to save you!"

One savage alone retained his presence of mind, but his quickness cost him his life. As he raised his huge spear to send crashing through my head a loud report rang out and he fell dead.

Without a moment's pause I hurried my father across the hall and into the passage, leaving Sam and Sandy to cover our escape.

Bending our heads we pushed along quickly into the well and up the clumsy steps to the open space.

Here we waited, listening to the sharp cracks of the revolvers, till Sam and Sandy



IN THE CENTRE OF THE SPINNING CIRCLE STOOD A MAN.

appeared. It was getting lighter now and they quickly caught sight of us.

"Go on!" cried Sam hoarsely. "You can't do us any good! Go on, you stubborn young cub! Do you hear? Into the forest and make for the blazed trees!"

"Come father," I urged. "We shall only do them harm by waiting."

He was very weak and out of trim for running, but with my arm half supporting him he managed to cross the open at a fair pace. Looking round as we plunged into the undergrowth I saw Sam and the young Scot scramble from the well, and, at the same

time, far from the rear came a blood-curdling yell.

But, though we knew it not, the danger was past.

Startled by the suddenness of the rescue, and cowed by the dreaded firearms, the Indians did not venture to enter the forest.

Our two comrades dashed across the open, Sam in front, Sandy halting now and then to level his revolver.

That was the last I saw of them till they caught me up as I rested with my father on a bed of fern some little distance from the blazed track.

Then it was, with genuine grief, we all saw why Sandy had lingered. His face was white and bloodless, but there was a red stain on his clothes beneath his heart.

The brave fellow had said nothing of his hurt, but now it could no longer be concealed.

I was for binding it at once, but, smiling sadly, he whispered "It will do no good. The arrow must have been poisoned for I feel death in my veins."

That was a very sorrowful time for us, and my poor father's grief was pitiful. It would have been better, he said, to have let him die, rather than sacrifice so brave a man in the prime of life.

Sandy smiled cheerfully. Life was sweet but he had no fear of death, and, except ourselves, he left none behind to mourn for him. This he told us, and the knowledge comforted us.

We did what was possible to ease his pain, but the poison had got into his blood and was rapidly doing its deadly work. There is no need to dwell on the sorrowful scene. Just at the end the pain left him for a moment; he smiled at us, whispered a faint good-bye, and so passed forth into the great Unknown.

Sam and I dug a shallow grave, and, placing the body in it, filled it with leaves and ferns, and weighted it with heavy branches so that it might be undisturbed by wild animals and Indians alike.

Then, sad at heart, we proceeded on our jour-

ney, Sam, being the stronger, supporting my father while I played the scout and kept a sharp look-out for hidden foes.

But, as I have said, the Indians did not pursue, and our only perils were those of the forest. As my father was very weak we travelled slowly, talking little, for the death of the brave young Scot weighed down our spirits.

The marked trees were useful guides, and we reached the canoe without incident, when all of course became plain sailing. Beyond keeping our craft clear of the banks there was nothing to be done; the current took us down to Opipo at a rapid rate.

Here my story really ends. At Lima we took ship for San Francisco, but our passage was not booked in the Fairy Queen, and in due course we arrived at our Canadian home.

Of course we had a grand reception, kisses and tears and laughter, and an Epic Poem from Dick which he offered to read aloud for our benefit.

How my father came to be captured, and what he saw in the Indian temple I wrote down from his lips, but the story is too long to relate here.

One other thing only I must tell. Just when it went away, the sorrow at Sandy's death and the excitement of my father's rescue prevented me from observing, but, on our arrival at Lima, the blue mark on my wrist had entirely disappeared!

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## SIR REDVERS BULLER, V.C.

**T**HERE are few subjects so fascinating, and, if rightly studied so useful to the average boy, as the life-story of a man who has risen to eminence in his particular calling. Whether he be soldier or sailor, author or musician, merchant prince or man of science, a Franklin braving the perils of the icy Arctic, or an Arkwright striving to perfect a new invention, we watch his struggles with interest, we trace his life step by step, record his sayings, note the traits of his character, till often we know him a thousand times more intimately than we do even our every-day acquaintances.

And this study of biography is a good thing. It teaches us lessons which consciously or unconsciously we treasure up and rarely forget. It shows us that, for the most part, the men whom we regard with so much respect are not different from ourselves, that if we choose their success may be ours, and that any ordinary, healthy boy can make for himself a good position.

For there is really nothing wonderful about

success, and biography lays bare the secret. It can all be summed up in hard work, a strong will, and the readiness to seize or make an opportunity. Choose your goal, make up your minds to get there, don't be tempted to turn aside into the flowery paths that lead to inglorious ease, and you are bound, sooner or later, to win.

Let us take as an example the subject of the present sketch. The motto of Sir Redvers Buller V.C. might well be 'Thorough.' He has earned it in work and at play, as a country squire, as a soldier in time of peace, and as a leader of men on the deadly battle-field.

The Bullers were originally a Cornish family, but Sir Redvers is a son of Devon, the county which has given to England such famous men as Drake, Hawkins, Grenville and Raleigh, to quote a few among those whose names are cherished throughout the empire.

He was born in 1839 at the family seat of Downes, near Crediton, and received his education at Eton, but when eighteen years of age entered the army as an ensign in the

King's Own Rifles. Even before joining his regiment a nasty accident nearly put an end to his military career.

The story is told by Mr. Gosse in the *North American Review*. Always passionately devoted to outdoor exercise, he was engaged in lopping branches from a tree when he cut his right leg very severely. The surgeon declared that the leg must come off or the patient would die, but Buller, replying that he would rather die with two legs than live with one, refused to have it amputated, and after a time he recovered.

The young ensign's first experience of active service was in the China War of 1860, where he took part in the attack on the Taku Forts, and in the march to Peking, for which he received the medal, with two clasps.

Ten years later Buller, now a captain, accompanied the then Colonel Wolseley on what is known as the Red River Expedition to quell a rebellion of French half-breeds led by Louis Riel. As it happened there was no fighting, but the hardships of the journey were terrific. Twelve hundred miles of a wilderness of forest and water had to be crossed. Now, the men were toiling at their oars, again, they were unloading the boats to carry or drag them and their packages over varying distances, to avoid the dangerous waterfalls.

In all this Captain Buller bore his share, and gained the reputation of a fearless, strong-willed officer, strict in discipline, but unwilling to set any man a task which he could not himself perform. He was in fact one of the 'Come' not 'Go' class of officers.

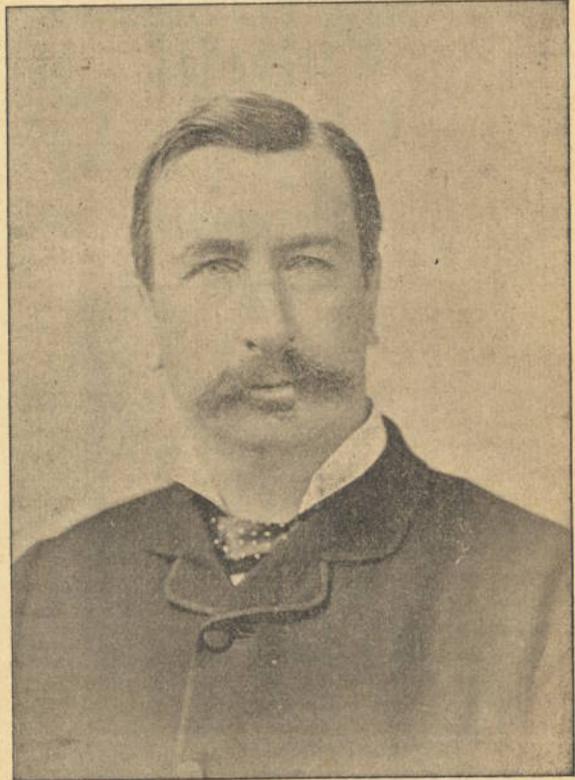
In 1873 he entered the Staff College, but within a year was again campaigning with Wolseley, this time in Ashanti. Here he acted as Chief of the Intelligence Department, and did his work with that thorough-going resolution which began to single him out as a 'coming-man.' He had one or two narrow escapes, suffered a short but sharp attack of fever, and was slightly wounded, but returned home to receive promotion and the decoration of a Companion of the Bath.

He was now Major Buller, C.B., and succeeding, through the death of his eldest brother, to the family estates in Devonshire, he settled down to the life of a country squire, farming, gardening, building cottages, hunting, breeding cattle, gaining prizes at Agricultural Exhibitions with as much

earnestness as he had displayed in soldiering. And here you see revealed the secret of his success; fighting or fruit-growing, helping to organize a military expedition or a shooting party, he was bound to be thorough.

We see this again in South Africa, when in 1878 he volunteered for service in the Kafir War. Here he took over the Frontier Light Horse, afterwards known as Buller's Horse, which did excellent work.

Off duty and in private life he is described by those who know him best, as a pleasant, genial man, tender of feeling, chivalrous to women,—as indeed no English *gentleman* could fail to be—and with a deep religious humility.



In the field he was stern, silent, and grim-holding his men with a tight rein, but always just and upright, and a thorough hater of shams. No hardship daunted him, he quailed before no danger, laughed at fatigue, showed himself here as before, a true leader of men. And if the dashing Irregulars feared their commander they gave him no little love, and unbounded respect.

After the Kafir expedition came the Zulu War, when Buller's Horse formed part of the column commanded by Colonel Evelyn Wood V.C. The terrible disaster at Isandlwana checked our arms, and for a space Wood's

column alone was in a position to hold the field. An entrenched camp was formed at Kambula, whence Buller with his light horsemen made many successful raids on the Zulus, swift, silent, daring raids that struck terror into the hearts of the enemy, who named the gallant leader, "the Steam Engine."

There is not space to describe these actions, but some account must be given of the fight on the Inhlobane Mountain, for there, Lieutenant-Colonel Buller did those daring deeds, which gained for him the coveted V.C., and the praise of a nation.

With Piet Uys, a brave Boer, and several hundred horsemen, he had gone to destroy a Zulu stronghold. A second detachment had started later, and Sir Evelyn Wood followed with his Staff. About nine o'clock in the morning, Buller, who had reached the plateau, captured 2,000 head of cattle and dispersed the natives, suddenly saw a Zulu army 20,000 strong, approaching the mountain.

There was no course open but to retreat down the narrow, rugged, and precipitous path. The first man up, Buller was the last to descend. On and on came the Zulus, firing incessantly, till at last they were near enough to fling their assegais. Slowly and in confusion the horsemen retired. Exulting cries rang out from the pursuers, men dropped riddled by bullets, wounded horses screamed in agony, the whole force was within an ace of being wiped out.

But the heart of the tried warrior quailed not for a second. He knew his duty and did it. First in attack, last in retreat! He would shelter his men as long as possible, and if need were, die for them. Not lightly and without counting the cost, but because Duty called. A little band of heroes, eight in number including Lieutenant Everitt, stayed with him; a tiny rearguard. They fired again and again, but the Zulus came on in a mad rush. Four of the gallant defenders were slain outright, the lieutenant's horse was assailed.

Instantly Buller swung the young officer out of the way, saved him from certain death, seized carbine and ammunition, told him to go down quickly, and with the heroic three stayed a while longer to cover the retreat. All honour to that dauntless rear-guard!

But there was yet more to be done, and the grim fighter was equal to it. Four men's lives he saved that day, risking for himself a horrible death. Overtaking Trooper Randal whose animal was exhausted, he bore him out of the field. Then, looking back, he beheld Captain D'Arcy panting along on foot with the fierce Zulus scarcely a hundred yards in the rear. A few minutes more and the terrible spears would be up to the shaft

in his quivering flesh, but help was at hand. Fearless of death, if he could save another, the strong man turned and raced back. It was a case of "touch and go." He reached him in time, D'Arcy got his foot in the stirrup, swung on the horse's back, and even as the yelling savages poised their spears, Buller dashed off. Who shall say that he had not earned the decoration most coveted by the soldier?

And that same evening when news arrived in camp that a few stragglers were still out on the veldt, he immediately led a dozen volunteers into the pitchy darkness to rescue them.

And thus throughout the campaign Colonel Buller proved his worth. Brave as the bravest soldier in his force, alert, resourceful, untiring, he earned the warm praises of his superiors, while the people at home realised that a fresh star was rising in the military horizon.

Once again with Wolseley, in 1882, he saw service, this time at Kassassin and Tel-el-Kebir which procured him the honour of knighthood and various decorations. In 1884 he was appointed Brigadier-General to Sir Gerald Graham and played a conspicuous part in the battle of El Teb, against the Sudanese Arabs, while a fortnight later the firmness and bravery of his brigade saved the day at Tamai, converting what might easily have been a disastrous defeat into a decisive victory.

He was now gazetted Major-General, and as Lord Wolseley's Chief of Staff, had a great share in the labours of the Relief Expedition, undertaken to bring General Gordon away from Khartum. As every one knows the expedition arrived too late, and to General Buller was entrusted the difficult task of bringing back the Desert Column, which he did in a very brilliant manner.

In 1890 he was made Adjutant-General to the Forces, and eight years later became General Commanding at Aldershot. When the dispute with the Transvaal developed into war, Sir Redvers Buller was appointed to lead, and his selection was received with universal applause. The events in South Africa are of too recent occurrence to be discussed, and indeed as yet they are imperfectly known. But one thing is certain; the words spoken by Sir Evelyn Wood after the Zulu war are as true now as then "Careful of his men's lives" he said, "reckless of his own, untiring and unflinching in the performance of his duty." And here in a nutshell lay the characteristics of the man who bore the brunt of the early fights in the contest which we may hope is drawing to a close.

J. O. E.