

# The Wings of the Morning

By LOUIS TRACY  
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CHAPTER VII.

**B**EFORE night closed their third day on the island Jenks managed to construct a roomy tent house, with a framework of sturdy trees selected on account of their location. To these he nailed or tied crossbeams of felled saplings, and the tarpulins dragged from the beach supplied roof and walls. It required the united strength of Iris and himself to haul into position the heavy sheet that topped the structure, while he was compelled to desist from active building operations in order to fashion a rough ladder. Without some such contrivance he could not get the top-most supports adjusted at a sufficient height.

Although the edifice required at least two more days of hard work before it would be fit for habitation Iris wished to take up her quarters there immediately. This the sailor would not hear of.

"In the cave," he said, "you are absolutely sheltered from all the winds that blow or rain that falls. Our villa, however, is painfully leaky and drafty at present. When asleep, the whole body is relaxed, and you are then most open to the attacks of cold or fever, in which case, Miss Deane, I shall be reluctantly obliged to dose you with a concoction of that tree there."

He pointed to a neighboring cinchona, and Iris naturally asked why he selected that particular brand.

"Because it is genuine, not made up in nice little tabloids, but a natural. It will not be a bad plan if we prepare a strong infusion and take a small quantity every morning on the excellent principle that prevention is better than cure."

The girl laughed. Curiously enough, the lifting of the veil upon the man's earlier history made these two much better friends. With more complete acquaintance there was far less tendency toward certain passages which under ordinary conditions could be construed as nothing else than downright flirtation. Thereafter for ten days they labored unceasingly, starting work at daybreak and stopping only when the light failed, finding the long hours of sunshine all too short for the manifold tasks demanded of them, yet thankful that the night brought rest. The sailor made out a programme to which he rigidly adhered. In the first place, he completed the house, which had two compartments—an inner room, in which Iris slept, and an outer, which served as a shelter for their meals and provided a bedroom for the man.

Then he constructed a gigantic sky sign on Summit rock, the small cluster of boulders on top of the cliff. His chief difficulty was to hoist into place the tall poles he needed, and for this purpose he had to again visit Palm Tree rock in order to secure the pulley. By exercising much ingenuity in devising shear-legs he at last succeeded in lifting the masts into their allotted receptacles, where they were firmly secured. Finally he was able to swing into air, high above the tops of the neighboring trees, the loftiest of which he felled in order to clear the view on all sides, the name of the ship Sirdar.



The name of the ship.

fished in six foot letters nailed and spliced together in sections and made from the timbers of that ill fated vessel.

Meanwhile he taught Iris how to weave a net out of the strands of unraveled cordage. With this, weighted by bullets, he contrived a casting net and caught a lot of small fish in the lagoon. Among the fish caught they hit upon two species which most resembled whiting and haddock, and these turned out to be very palatable and wholesome.

Jenks knew a good deal of botany and enough about birds to differentiate between carnivorous species and those

out of my quarters penniless, but free from debt."

"And all through a deceitful woman!"

"Yes." She ventured a further step.

"Was she very bad to you, Mr. Jenks?"

He stopped and laughed—actually roared—at the suggestion.

"Bad to me!" he repeated. "I had nothing to do with her. She was humbugging her husband, not me. Fool that I was, I could not mind my own business."

So Mrs. Costobell was not flirting with the man who suffered on her account. It is a regrettable but true statement that Iris would willingly have hugged Mrs. Costobell at that moment.

Rounding Europa point, the sailor's eyes were fixed on their immediate surroundings, but Iris gazed dreamily ahead. Hence it was that she was the first to cry in amazement:

"A boat! See, there! On the rocks!"

There was no mistake. A ship's boat was perched high and dry on the north side of the cape. Even as they scrambled toward it Jenks understood how it had come there.

When the Sirdar parted amidships the after section fell back into the depths beyond the reef, and this boat must have broken loose from its davits and been driven ashore here by the force of the western current.

Was it intact? Could they escape? Was this ark stranded on the island for their benefit? If it were seaworthy, whither should they steer—to those islands whose blue outlines were visible on the horizon?

These and a hundred other questions coursed through his brain during the race over the rocks, but all such wild speculations were promptly settled when they reached the craft, for the keel and the whole of the lower timbers were smashed into match wood.

But there were stores on board. Jenks remembered that Captain Ross' foresight had secured the provisioning of all the ship's boats soon after the first wild rush to steady the vessel after the propeller was lost. Masts, sails, oars, seats—all save two water casks—had gone, but Jenks, with eager hands, unfastened the lockers, and here he found a good supply of tinned meats and biscuits. They had barely recovered from the excitement of this find when the sailor noticed that behind the rocks on which the craft was firmly lodged lay a small natural basin full of salt water, replenished and freshened by the spray of every gale and completely shut off from all seaward access.

It was not more than four feet deep, beautifully carpeted with sand and secluded by rocks on all sides. Not the tiniest crab or fish was to be seen. It provided an ideal bath.

Iris was overjoyed. She pointed toward their habitation.

"Mr. Jenks," she said, "I will be with you at teatime."

He gathered all the tins he was able to carry and strode off, enjoining her to fire her revolver if for the slightest reason she wanted assistance, and giving a parting warning that if she delayed too long he would come and kill her.

"I wonder," said the girl to herself, watching his retreating figure, "what he is afraid of. Surely by this time we have exhausted the unpleasant surprises of the island. Anyhow, now for a splash!"

She was hardly in the water before she began to be afraid on account of Jenks. Suppose anything happened to him while she was thoughtlessly enjoying herself here! So strongly did the thought possess her that she hurriedly dressed again and ran off to find him.

He was engaged in fastening a number of bayonets transversely to a long piece of timber.

"What are you doing that for?" she asked.

"Why did you return so soon? Did anything alarm you?"

"I thought you might get into mischief," she confessed.

"No. On the other hand, I am trying to make trouble for any unwelcome visitors," he replied. "I intend to set this up in front of our cave in case we are compelled to defend ourselves against an attack by savages. With this barring the way they cannot rush the position."

On the nineteenth day of their residence on the island the sailor climbed, as was his invariable habit, to the Summit rock while Iris prepared breakfast. At this early hour the horizon was clearly cut as the rim of a saucer.

He examined the whole arc of the sea with his glasses, but not a sail was in sight. According to his calculations the growing anxiety as to the fate of the Sirdar must long ere this have culminated in the dispatch from Hongkong or Singapore of a special service vessel, while British warships in the China sea would be warned to keep a close lookout for any traces of the steamer, to visit all islands on their route and to question fishermen whom they encountered. So help might come any day or it might be long deferred.

He could not pierce the future, and it was useless to vex his soul with questionings as to what might happen next week. The great certainty of the hour was Iris—the blue eyed, smiling divinity who had come into his life—waiting for him down there beyond the trees, waiting to welcome him with a sweet voiced greeting, and he knew, with a fierce devouring joy, that her cheek would not pale nor her lip tremble when he announced that at least another sun must set before the expected relief reached them.

He replaced the glasses in their case and dived into the wood, giving a passing thought to the fact that the wind, after blowing steadily from the south for nearly a week, had veered round to the northeast during the night. Did

the change portend a storm? Well, they were now prepared for all such eventualities, and he had not forgotten that they possessed, among other treasures, a box of books for rainy days. And a rainy day with Iris for company! What gale that ever blew could offer such compensation for enforced idleness?

The morning sped in uneventful work. Iris did not neglect her cherished pitcher plant. After luncheon it was her custom now to carry a dishful of water to its apparently arid roots, and she rose to fulfill her self imposed task.

"Let me help you," said Jenks. "I am not very busy this afternoon."

"No, thank you. I simply won't allow you to touch that shrub. The dear thing looks quite glad to see me. It drinks up the water as greedily as a thirsty animal."

Iris had been gone perhaps five minutes when he heard a distant shriek, twice repeated, and then there came faintly to his ears his own name, not "Jenks," but "Robert," in the girl's voice. Something terrible had happened. It was a cry of supreme distress. Mortal agony or overwhelming terror alone could wring that name from her lips. Precisely in such moments this man acted with the decision, the unerring judgment, the instantaneous acceptance of great risk to accomplish great results, that marked him out as a born soldier.

He rushed into the house and snatched from the rack one of the rifles reposing there in apple pie order, each with a filled magazine attached and a cartridge already in position.

Then he ran with long strides not through the trees, where he could see nothing, but toward the beach, whence in forty yards the place where Iris probably was would become visible.

At once he saw her struggling in the grasp of two ferocious looking Dyaks, one by his garments a person of consequence, the other a half naked savage, hideous and repulsive in appearance. Around them seven men armed with guns and parangs were dancing with excitement.

Iris' captors were endeavoring to tie her arms, but she was a strong and active Englishwoman, with muscles well knit by the constant labor of recent busy days and a frame developed by years of horse riding and tennis playing. The pair evidently found her a tough handful, and the inferior Dyak, either to stop her screams—for she was shrieking, "Robert, come to me!" with all her might—or to stifle her into submission, roughly placed his huge hand over her mouth.

These things the sailor noticed instantly. Some men, brave to rashness, ready as he to give his life to save her, would have raced madly over the intervening ground, scarce a furlong, and attempted a heroic combat of one against nine.

Not so Jenks. With the methodical exactness of the parade ground he settled down on one knee and leveled the rifle.

None of the Dyaks saw him. All were intent on the sensational prize he prevented at all costs.

He was right. As they came out into the open he saw three men, not two, pushing off a large sampan. One of them was the chief. Then Jenks understood that his bullet had hit the lock of the Dyak's uplifted weapon, with the result already described. By a miracle he had escaped.

He coolly prepared to slay the three of them with the same calm purpose that distinguished the opening phase of this singularly one sided conflict. The distance was much greater, perhaps 800 yards from the point where the boat came into view. He knelt and fired. He judged that the missile struck the craft between the trio.

"I didn't allow for the sun on the side of the fore sight," he said, "or perhaps I am a bit shaky after the run. In any event they can't go far."

A hurrying step on the coral behind him caught his ear. Instantly he sprang up and faced about—to see Iris. "They are escaping," she said. "No fear of that," he replied, turning away from her.

"Where are the others?" "Dead!" "Do you mean that you killed nearly all those men?" "Six of them. There were nine in all."

He knelt again, lifting the rifle. Iris threw herself on her knees by his side. There was something awful to her in this chill and businesslike declaration of a fixed purpose.

"Mr. Jenks," she said, clasping her hands in an agony of entreaty, "do not kill more men for my sake!" "For my own sake, then," he growled, annoyed at the interruption, as the sampan was afloat.

"Then I ask you for God's sake not to take another life. What you have already done was unavoidable, perhaps right. This is murder!" He lowered his weapon and looked at her.

"If those men get away they will bring back a host to avenge their comrades—and secure you," he added. "It may be the will of Providence for such a thing to happen. Yet I implore you to spare them."

He placed the rifle on the sand and raised her tenderly, for she had yielded to a paroxysm of tears. Not another word did either of them speak in that hour. The large triangular sail of the sampan was now belaying out in the south wind. A figure stood up in the stern of the boat and shook a menacing arm at the couple on the beach.

It was the Malay chief, cursing them with the rude eloquence of his barbarous tongue. And Jenks well knew what he was saying.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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