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QUITE TOO SWEEPING.

BY NIXON WATERMAN.

There once was a woman so wofully neat
That she swept her whole family into the
street.
She lectured on tidiness, day after day,
Till her children ran off to the neighbor's
to play.
And, sometimes, the "lord of the manor"
would roam
From his beautiful house which was never
a home.
'Twas a splendid expression of beauty and
art,
But it did not possess home's one requisite,
heart.
But this woman worked on with her brush
and her broom,
With her servants she battled through
room after room;
She waxed and she polished her beautiful
floors
Till her friends hardly ventured inside of
her doors.
Her carpets so velvety one would release
To walk on, until he had dusted his shoes;
Her chairs all so tidied, without and
within,
That to sit on them seemed little less than
a sin.

Her children had toys which they never
spread
O'er immaculate floors; nor could cookies
or bread
Be eaten where crumbs might be scattered
about,
For her house was like "wax-work" within
and without.
Of dust, just the least little innocent bit
Would bring on something akin to a fit.
And a tidy or picture a trifle awry
Could never escape her most diligent eye.
Her children grew up and they hurried
away
As soon as they could, scarcely caring to
stay
Where brooms were a-whisking; they
sighed for a nest,
Still neat, but inviting a spirit of rest.
And the day when the last of her little
ones left,
And the home of their smiles was forever
bereft,
She said, while for dust she still searched
up and down,
"They know I'm the finest housekeeper in
town."
—Good Housekeeping.

FIGHTING BY FIRELIGHT.

BY DAVID KER.

"If they come at all, they'll
come to-night!" Thus briefly
and plainly, with true Anglo-
Saxon coolness, did our sturdy
leader inform us that, within a very
few hours, hundreds of armed savages
(and cannibals to boot) might be ex-
pected to fall upon our unarmed com-
pany of fifty-nine souls, two of whom
were women, and seven more helpless
invalids prostrated by the terrible
African fever.

Our vessel had been cast away at the
mouth of a small West African river
three nights before, and had not our
boats providentially touched the shore
at the very point where two white
traders had established themselves, a
few months before, we should prob-
ably have been (as our Irish doctor
poetically phrased it) "the dearest men
alive!" Even as it was, when we at
length succeeded in landing (after a
series of sensational adventures too
long to be told here), we had to show
fight at once with oars, boat hooks,
and even fists, against the marauding
natives, who seemed bent upon strip-
ping us of what few clothes the sea
had spared.

But when once fairly housed after
their five hours in open boats beneath
the pelting African rain my brave com-
rades accepted the situation with thor-
ough British stoicism, and made them-
selves as comfortable as could be ex-
pected where fifty-nine persons were
cramped into a trading station origi-
nally built for two. No stranger could
have found any token of peril or hard-
ship in the merry talk and ringing
laughter of these men who had just
lost all they had except their lives, as
they sat there around the one small
lamp which our kind host's limited re-
sources could furnish, chatting, singing,
telling tales of adventure, reading the
two or three soaked and tattered books
which I had luckily brought ashore in
my pockets, or drowning the moan of
the night wind and the thunder of the
breakers on the bar with the lusty
chorus of an impromptu parody on
"So Early in the Morning."

"The sun it baked us black and brown,
The scorpions sauntered up and down,
And the flies kept gadging about like
bees,
Till you couldn't draw breath without
swallowing six;

"Where we were wrecked that morning,
Where we were wrecked that morning,
Where we were wrecked that morning,
Before the break of day."

Briskest and blithest of all was poor
Frank V—, Stanley's famous lieutenant
on the Lower Congo, who, little
dreaming of the miserable end that
awaited him in the hideous swamps of
the Niger not many months later, was
the life and soul of our party. And yet
all this time he knew well—and we all
knew it as well as he did—that there
was but a step between us and de-
struction.

For the first two days after the
wreck, however, there was no sign of
mischief, our fierce neighbors being
fully occupied with the picking up of
the countless waifs and strays which
kept drifting ashore from our poor old
steamer, while some of the bolder
spirits among them, defying in their tiny
canoes the fury of a surf that would
have beaten any other craft to atoms,
went out to the wreck itself, and
helped themselves as freely as Robin-

son Crusoe. We could not look sea-
ward in quest of a possible sail with-
out seeing a swarm of human ants
creeping up and down the two tall
masts which stood gauntly up out of
the sullen waters that had engulfed
our lost vessel, and witnessing a hack-
ing of sails and a chopping away of
cordage from which our poor captain—
already heart-broken at the loss of his
ship—turned away his eyes with a
stiffed groan.

I may observe in parenthesis that
the natives of West Africa can fairly
claim at least one clause of the bitter
old Levantine proverb, "The Greek
wines steal all heads, the Greek
women steal all hearts, and the Greek
men steal everything." Nothing is
"too hot or too heavy" for the savage
of the Guinea coast. With him thieving
is one of the fine arts; and while other
thieves steal for the baser motive of
gain, he steals in the spirit of an artist,
for the mere pleasure of taking what
does not belong to him, however use-
less it may be. The true West African
will steal a Latin dictionary, a sextant,
a map of ancient Greece; and in sev-
eral of the native villages which I
afterward visited higher up the river
I found spoils quite as incongruous as
these. I have known a "Kroo boy"
spend a whole afternoon aboard a ship
in patiently unscrewing the brass knob
of a ventilator, which could be of no
possible use to him when he had got
it; and such a case is by no means
unique.

Seeing the worthy savages so fully
employed, we began to hope that, after
all, the occupation of robbery might
prove more attractive to them than
that of murder. But, as third-rate
novelists say when they want to be
impressive, "the time was coming, and
it came."

Our captain had foretold (as I have
said) that the third night would be
the critical one; and his seventeen years'
experience of African savages gave
special weight to his opinion, in which
our two trader hosts fully concurred.

The wary traders saw at once that
their small garrison would have no
chance of being able to defend against
a determined attack the wide circuit
of the pallsades which inclosed the
station, and wisely decided upon trying
to hold the house itself till the tribe
beyond the river, with which they were
on friendly terms, could come up to
the rescue. This, indeed, they had al-
ready done on a similar occasion some
months before, when a band of sav-
ages had assailed the "factory" at mid-
night. The house was completely sur-
rounded, and the besiegers, despite the
heavy fire poured upon them through
the loopholes of the barred doors and
shutters, were pressing close up to it
to set it on fire, when all at once, in a
momentary lull of the hideous uproar,
there was heard far away amid the
dark thickets a faint tinkling sound,
growing ever louder and nearer. That
sound was as sweet to the ears of the
fainting garrison as Havelock's High-
land war pipes to the hard-pressed de-
fenders of Lucknow, for it told them
that the friendly chief's followers (dis-
tinguished by the small brass bells at
their necks) were advancing against
the assailants, who knew better than
to await their approach.

Our hosts rapidly made all their
preparations, and, having posted their
native musketeers in various parts of
the building, placed two sentinels out-
side, with orders to fire a signal shot
at the first sign of the enemy's ap-
proach, when (thanks to the glorious
tropical moonlight) they would have
ample time to do, the brushwood hav-
ing been cut away to a considerable
distance on every side of the house.
All being now ready, our leaders sig-
nificantly advised us to lie down and
sleep while we could. At such a crisis
the suggestion sounded like a mockery;
but (as I have had good cause to know)
men can slumber even on the brink of
destruction, and scarcely had we laid
our heads upon our mail bags—which,
gallantly saved from the wreck by the
captain and purser, were now serving
us as pillows—when we were all fast
asleep.

Bang!

Clear, sharp and stunning came the
report of a heavy musket from with-
out, instantly followed by a second
shot, and then by a confused clamor
of hoarse outcries.

Instantly we were all on our feet,
and ready for action; but I think the
boldest among us—and our party con-
tained more than one man whose cour-
age might have matched the stoutest
paladin of Froissart—was not wholly
free from that sudden tightening of
the heart which a man is wont to feel
when fairly driven to bay, and about
to struggle for life and death.

We sprang to the windows that over-
looked the courtyard on the side facing
the river, naturally supposing that we
were attacked. And so we were—by
an enemy more terrible and cruel and
irresistible than the fiercest cannibal
in Central Africa.

The red glare of a watch fire kindled
by our vigilant sentinels, and the fitful
light of the sinking moon, showed us
a strange and fearful sight. Half a
dozen goblin figures were leaping wild-
ly to and fro only a few paces from
the house, and flourishing blazing
torches, which they swept along the
ground like scythes ever and anon,
while the flames of these firebrands
threw the contortions of their gaunt
frames and grim faces into startling
and hideous relief against the inky
blackness of the background, through
which glimmered spectrally the white
seething foam of the unresting sea.

From the spot where this demon
dance was in progress down to the
farthest pallsade the whole courtyard
seemed covered with a sheet of black
water, quivering, glistening and trem-
bling incessantly. We were still gaz-
ing blankly at this bewildering spec-
tacle, when the fatal truth was forced
upon us by the cries of the black torch
bearers, who shouted, or, rather
screamed—

"The drivers! The drivers!"

Then the full horror of this ghastly
dilemma burst upon us at once.

The terrible "driver ants" of West
Africa, whose devouring jaws can in
one night turn the carcass of an ox
into a clean-picked skeleton, were upon
us in an army millions strong; and
should they succeed in forcing their
way into the house our only way of
escape from being actually devoured
alive would be an instant flight down
to the beach, a night upon which, un-
sheltered from the drenching rain
which a mighty black cloud was fast
bringing up against us from the sea,
would be nothing short of certain
death to the delicate women and fever-
stricken invalids of our company.

There was no time to lose. Barely
ten paces divided the advancing
swarms from the front of the house;
and should they once reach it all would
be over. Darting like lightning down
the little wooden stepladder that led
to the courtyard, each of us seized a
firebrand, and we fell upon the invad-
ers like men who were fighting for
their lives, and for other lives dearer
than their own.

All that passed after that moment
was like the confused terror of a
frightful dream. The ceaseless sweep
of our flaming scythes, mowing down
the destroyers by thousands, only to
be replaced by fresh thousands in an-
other moment—the frantic yells and
wild gestures of our black followers—
the fitful and unearthly glare of the
firelight amid the utter darkness—the
deepening gloom of the coming storm,
blotting out the cold splendor of the
moonlight—all were, indeed, like the
visionary horror of one of those ghastly
nightmares in which one seems inevit-
ably doomed to struggle forever with
some hideous peril, and to struggle in
vain.

More than once it seemed as if the
battle must go against us after all;
and our hearts sank as we saw the

bleeding arms and limbs of our native
helpers, upon which the greedy de-
stroyers fastened with such deadly
tenacity as to let themselves be torn
asunder rather than unclinch the grasp
of their cruel jaws. Do what we would,
on came the invaders over the blasted
corpses of their comrades like a rising
tide. We might as well have striven
to drive back the infowing tide of the
sea.

But, while some of us were fighting
their vanguard, others, under the di-
rection of the experienced traders, were
laying blazing splinters of wood in a
line along the front of the charging
column, and meeting it with an im-
passable barrier of fire, whence the
rising wind, luckily in our favor, blew
the flames right into the ranks of the
assailants, destroying more of them
than we could mow down with our
firebrands.

Little by little, human energy and
skill began to prevail over blind ani-
mal ferocity; and at length, to our in-
describable relief, we saw the line of
their march gradually slant off to the
right, in a direction which would carry
them past the house into the "bush"
beyond it. Before the first drop of the
gathering storm had fallen all was
over and we were saved; and the deep
"Thank God!" uttered by a brave mis-
sionary whose sick wife was among
those for whose lives we had been so
desperately battling found an echo in
the heart of every man amongst us.—
Waverley Magazine.

MACHINE LAYS RAILROADS.

Puts Down the Ties and Rails at the Rate
of Three Miles a Day.

At the rate of three and a half miles
a day a peculiar piece of mechanism
is laying the tracks of the Cincinnati,
Richmond and Muncie Railroad. This
track-laying machine automatically and
accurately lifts the ties and rails into
position, the most drudging labor in
all railroad construction. It also fur-
nishes the motive power for its own
construction train.

There were stretches of roadbed over
which the construction train moved at
the rate of 1800 feet an hour. The ma-
chine utilized was one which differs in
many essentials from that which has
been used west of the Mississippi
River. One of the most interesting
features is the manner in which the
material is delivered to the roadbed,
and the comparatively few men re-
quired for the different operations, as
the ties and rails are lifted and moved
from the cars on which they are carried
to the roadbed, being connected and
spiked while the train is in motion.

An endless chain carrier puts the ties
in position, while a crane suspended
upon a steel truss lowers the rails in
advance of the construction train. In
this manner the engineers in charge
of the road hope to run into Cincinnati
many weeks earlier than they could
otherwise have done.

The machine weighs fifty tons, and
was made in Scanton, Pa. It is the
only one of its kind in existence, and its
inventor, Mr. Hurley, who accompanies
the machine, spent ten years in perfect-
ing it and thousands of dollars on mod-
els before success crowned his efforts.

The work done upon the Cincinnati,
Richmond and Muncie road demon-
strated that a force of about forty com-
petent men were all that were required
to operate the machine to its fullest
capacity, and that when conditions are
favorable over three miles of track in
a day of ten hours could be put down
without difficulty, while an average of
over two and one-half miles could be
recorded. The gearing on which the
material is conveyed from the platform
through the machine can be operated
at the same rate of speed at which the
train is moved, or its speed can be
doubled. The weight of the rails
handled include the heaviest used for
standard gauge construction, some of
them averaging 400 tons to the mile.—
Cincinnati Enquirer.

A Successful Writer.

A newspaper writer who has recently
come to this city from the West was
made a member of the Pen and Pencil
Club. He is a bright chap, and is
known to be successful as a writer.
His financial success is also acknowl-
edged. An old member who seldom
visits the club dropped in the other
night just as the new member was
leaving.

"Who is that?" he asked of one of his
friends.

"Oh, he's all right," replied the other;
"makes heaps of money writing."

"So!" said the other. "What does
he write—verses, novels, plays?"

"Gad! What do you take him for—an
amateur? No, sir. He writes adver-
tisements."—Philadelphia Ledger.

HOW MANY?

How many bowls to make a bowlder?
How many shoals to make a shoulder?
How many lambs to make a llama?
How many drams to make a drama?
How many bats to make a battle?
How many rats to make a rattle?
How many folks to make a focus?
How many croaks to make a crocus?
How many quarts to make a quarter?
How many ports to make a porter?
How many fans to make a phantom?
How many banns to make a bantam?
How many aches to make an acre?
How many fakes to make a fakir?
How many wraps to make a rapture?
How many caps to make a capture?
How many sums to make a summer?
How many plums to make a plumber?
How many nicks to make a nickel?
How many picks to make a pickle?
How many capes to make a caper?
How many tapes to make a tapir?
How many tons to make a tunnel?
And how much fun to make a funnel?
—Justice Ingersoll, in St. Nicholas.



Doctor—"Get out and take the air."
Merger Magnate—"Bosh! The air ain't
worth taking."—Detroit Free Press.

Some seamstresses do naught but shirk,
Some of them sew supreme;
Some of them only seem to work,
Some only work to seam.
—Philadelphia Record.

"We've had to dismiss our coach-
man." "For what reason?" "Oh, he
got too ambitious. He wanted to be
paid regularly."—Life.

"I told papa your poems were the
children of your brain." "What did he
say?" "Said they were bad enough to
put in the reform school."—Judge.

Mother—"You naughty boy, you've
been playing with these Sniff children
again!" Wellington—"No, I ain't, ma!
I just been fighting 'em."—Chicago
News.

Tommy—"How does Jimmy like his
new work?" Johnny—"Oh, he says
there's nothin' the matter with it ex-
cept the pay an' the hours an' the
work."—Glasgow Times.

Mr. Jones—"That young Snodgrass
acts as if he was one of the family."
His Only Daughter—"How so, papa?"
Mr. Jones—"Why, he acts scared when
your mother's round."—Puck.

"I s'posed it might be the first time
you went trout fishin'." "Of course it
isn't." "Well, I don't know. With
some folks it's a long spell before it
don't look like the fust time."—Puck.

Downer—"I am glad it is good form
not to wear a watch with a dress suit."
Upper—"Why?" Downer—"Because I
never have my watch and my dress
suit at the same time."—Pick-Me-Up.

There was a lady named Hannah,
Who skillfully played the pianah;
Said the critics, "To tell
The truth, she plays well,
And yet we don't like her mannah!"
—New Orleans Picayune.

"John," whispered the wife, in the
middle of the night, "I think I hear
some one running in the cellar." "Go
to sleep, dear," said the husband; "it's
only the gas meter."—Yonkers States-
man.

Mrs. Hatterson—"I am really super-
stitious about it. When the doctor
comes once, there is no telling how
many visits he will make." Hatterson
"That isn't superstition—that's busi-
ness."—Life.

Visitor (to lunatic who is allowed to
do a little gardening)—"I say, old chap,
you've got your barrow wrong way
up." Lunatic—"Yes; thanks very
much. I used to have it the right way
up, but when I did they put bricks in
it."—Judy.

"But your country is so new," said
the foreigner; "you have no traditions."
"Oh, I dunno. We've got old enough
to have men here who can hold their
grandchildren on their knees and tell of
experiences they had when they were
professional baseball players."—Chi-
cago Record-Herald.

A New Headlight.

A recent improvement in railroad lo-
comotive headlights is to send a beam
of light vertically from the locomotive,
as well as straight ahead. The column
of light, rising from the locomotive,
can be seen from a great distance,
even though a hill should intervene to
hide the ordinary headlight and dull
the sound of the whistle. The search-
light effect used aboard ships is thus to
some extent utilized. An approaching
locomotive with this device always sig-
nals its coming with a "pillar of fire"
by night, producing an impressive as
well as most useful result.

Man's Inhumanity.

The man who keeps his feet covered
at night is no friend of the early rising
fly.—Cleveland Plain-Dealer.