



A Thrilling
Adventure
Story

THE JADE HUNTERS

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THEY were a strange trio of young men who were encamped one evening in a deep mountain ravine near Hsipaw, which is near Lashio, which again is near the Kunlong Ferry over the Salween river which marks the extreme eastern boundary between the Southern Shan States of Burma and the Yunnan state of China.

There was Dickinson from Chicago, tall and lean, all wire and whipcord, with an

eye like a hawk over his rifle which he was popularly supposed to pray to, and which reposed just now under his leg as he sat on the "Willesden-proofed" ground cloth of their tent.

There was "Snake" O'Shane, the Scotch-Irishman of medium height and powerful build, of whom it was said that he tracked tigers on foot, and who had been a miner, hunter, prospector, wild animal catcher, orchid seeker, and half a dozen other

things during the twenty four years of his eventful life, yet who was given to assert in a soft, college-bred sounding voice that he had "never met with an adventure."

These two had lived through many things together, and were just then trying to decide some means of shooting a magnificent bull elephant in a small herd which they had located in the foothills below and getting quietly away with the ivory and the feet. For there is much profit in elephant's feet, and even the hide, if properly disposed of. Yet extreme caution was necessary, for the elephant, it should be explained, is taboo, sacred to the Government of India, which imposes a heavy fine on its slayer and then thoughtfully grabs the ivory as well.

Recently, one Shevlin, a writer man from New York, who was in search of copy, had been added to the party. He came with a letter of introduction from a mutual friend, a brother in the craft in Rangoon, who had from time to time gathered many strange tales from the twain, which he had duly converted into print, greatly to his own profit.

Said the friend: "If you want real live stuff, you must get to Snake O'Shane's camp in the Southern Shan States. Something happens to him every week. The Shan States are about as big as Texas, but you take the little tin railway up to Lashio, and the first man you ask will be able to tell you where Snake may be found."

SHEVLIN was duly grateful and a few days later arrived at Lashio where he had no difficulty in finding a little Shan hunter who volunteered to lead him to the

camp. There he was received with open arms and all the hospitality which white men who foregather in the uttermost ends of the earth show to one another; and the evening in question found them snugly ensconced in their waterproof tent, finishing their supper of venison chops, while a thin drizzle fell depressingly without,

"As I was saying," observed Snake from behind a grotesquely carved pipe; "if you wanted adventures you would have done better to look for them in the library in Rangoon. You will find nothing of that sort up here"

"But Burton told me," began Shevlin—

"Shut up, you fellows, and listen!" broke in Dickinson, holding up his hands.

In the silence which ensued they became aware of a heavy, shambling footfall and an occasional clatter of stones rolling down the ravine above.

"Bear!" said Dickinson, laconically, "Let's go and fetch him in, Snake." Snake listened intently for a moment. Then with a faint smile, "Too confounded wet," he said. "Besides, Shevlin's tobacco is too good to waste. Let him go and have an adventure."

"Yes, I'll go," said Shevlin eagerly.

"No, no!" interposed Dickinson, hastily. "Shooting bear at night is a bad business, especially when he is above you. You know how they roll down right on to a man and claw him up sometimes fierce."

Shevlin's lips came together in a thin, straight line. "I'm going anyhow," said he

doggedly. "This is my first chance, and you've got to let me take it." With that he snatched up his rifle and slipped out into the night.

"We'd better go after him." said Dickinson anxiously. "He's got all the nerve that's necessary, but this needs experience."

"Dick, my boy," replied the other with a grin, "You're getting old. That footfall is just a shade too heavy for bear. It's man. And if it was a white man, I should say he was drunk, from the way he is staggering around; but as there are no white men here, it must be one of the hill men, and they're all friendly. Shevlin won't come to any harm."

"I guess you're right. Hand over that tobacco pouch and let's get comfortable."

"Hello there." came presently from without.

"Show a light, will you? I've got a sick man here." And Shevlin emerged from the darkness supporting 'a native who staggered and whose teeth chattered with cold.

"Huh! Ague fever!" said Dickinson. "And he's got it bad, too. Dig up the quinine bottle, Snake. Gee! He's all in. I wonder he got as far as this at all."

The men busied themselves about doctoring the sick man and preparing some hot broth and warm blankets, and when he was fed and comfortably wrapped up, he thanked them feebly. "The white men are very kind." he said, "I will send my spirit back to them— Oh, I speak truth," he went on, seeing them exchange glances. "This is the end. I will

die of this fever which-shakes my bones asunder."

Then, after a pause- "Let the white men search for my bag and take forth the stone from therein. I give it to them for their kindness."

SHEVLIN took up the beautifully ornamented grass bag which all Shans carry in place of a pocket, and took from it a lump of stone about three pounds in weight, brown with earth on the outside, and showing a clean, shiny break at one portion where it had evidently been broken off from a larger piece of the same material. The broken surface was milk white with bright green blotches in one corner.

"Say! What's this, you fellows?" he said, handing it to Dickinson, who glanced at it, and they bent over it eagerly. "Phew! That's jade, and the best kind, too. True nephrous amorphous. That lump is worth forty dollars at Chinee Chang's store in Lashio. Tell me, O Shan, where did you get this?"

"Ha, ha!" croaked the old man. "Would the white man go and search for more? Let him be advised and stay here hunting the wild buffalo. It is less dangerous. For that piece of stone am I now about to die. For such rock did I go up into the country of the people who make the little heads; and they came upon me, and would have slain me; but I fled and hid for a day and a night in a swamp where the fever-devil caught me which is now about to eat me up. Yet if you so desire, will I tell. Draw near, white men, my breath is very feeble, and I cannot speak much; yet will I make such haste as I may and tell of the finding

of that atone—Ay, and of much more like it. The road is long and beset with many dangers, but there is much wealth in that place.” Here he raised himself convulsively on his elbows while his hollow eyes blazed with the reminiscence, “Listen, white men! The stone from which I broke that piece was half as high as a tall man; and there were many others besides.”

“Howly Mother!” interposed Snake, with a strong brogue which he always relapsed into when excited. “If ut’s ahl uv the same quhality ut’s wurrth a fortin’.” Then he checked himself and proceeded. “Do you remember, Dick, that splendid great block of white jade that those Burmans got out of the Mogaung mines, about three cubic feet in size? Well, some Chinese agent gave them \$40,000 for it. The Chinks will pay any price for good jade in big lumps.”

Shevlin’s eyes bulged “Great Scott! Is there all that money in it?—But look at the old man. Quick! He is in a bad way.”

IT was true. The effort had been too much for him, and he now lay gasping feebly. Dickinson slipped his arm under him and raised him up, pressing a brandy flask to his lips. “Tell us the road, O’Shan. The way to get to that place?” His voice broke to a falsetto in a sudden frenzy of fear lest death should come and take the secret with him. But presently the liquor began to take effect. It partially revived the old man; and slowly and painfully, with many interruptions of shivering and chattering teeth, he gasped out his feeble instructions,

“There is a river, O white men. A swift stream with many cataracts, which comes

in from the east above the Kunlong Ferry. Five days journey up the valley of this river is a great bend where the swirl of the waters in flood season has washed a deep basin out of the bank. There lie the stones, exposed. Great, and many of them. But the way is full of dangers, und the country is a country of devils. Those did I escape, only to fall into the hands of the fever-devil which devours me. Very soon shall I go now, white men, I have seen the spirit face that comes to those of my people who are about to die. Give me again to drink and let me rest.”

The quavering voice died away. Snake sat frowning at the fire for some minutes. At last, “Boys,” he said, “It’s a big, bad business. He means the Shway Ta Chaung river, which leads right into the Meng Lem Hills, where the Wild Wa tribes live. Yes, I have always heard that there was jade among those little devils; and once, on a pole, at an altar, erected to a waterfall spirit, I saw a Wild Wa head with great jade earrings.”

“Yep!” nodded Dickinson. “That was what he meant when he spoke about the people who make the little heads. It’s a mighty tough proposition.”

Here Shevlin could contain himself no longer.

“Look here, you two; I am out of all this. I don’t understand. What are little heads, and Wild Was, and Meng Lems, anyhow?”

“The Meng Lem, my boy,” explained Snake, “is just a district, practically unknown, and unexplored on account of these Wa tribes. There are two kinds of Was, the tame and the wild. The tame

ones merely kill all strangers at sight; but the wild ones have a hobby of collecting heads. In fact, head-hunters - Festive jokers, who in some mysterious way smash, tip and extract all the bones out of a skull and dry it, so that it shrinks up to the size of a grape fruit while still retaining the features, I believe a certain number of heads are necessary to a man before he is admitted to be a full-fledged warrior, and a certain number are needed to procure a wife, etc. It's just a picturesque variation of the scalp-hunting propensities of the 'Noble Red Man.' White jade with green spots is lovely stuff, but. I'd just hate to see my head as big as an orange stuck up on a pole."

"But surely that is among themselves. Would they attack well armed white men?"

"That would just depend on how many white men there were, and how many Was. Why, it is partly on their account that the government of India didn't carry out the scheme of extending the railway line from Lashio to tap the Western Chinese trade at Tali Fu. The survey party reported that, in addition to the engineering difficulties presented by the country, a further serious objection was the fierce attitude of the Was, who killed several of the party and made exploration impossible. Dr. Schonert, a big ethnological bug, went up with them, and wrote a very interesting account of how they extract the bones out of the skull and pickle it in some sort of astringent juice so that it shrinks into a ghastly miniature of itself. They are wicked people to deal with, and it is a wicked country to travel

in. That jade stands a very good chance of staying where it is."

"Oh, quit croaking!" broke in Dickinson. "Snake is half Scotch, you know, Shevlin, and he is as 'canny as the dell' until the Irish half of him gets up and takes a running jump at something. Here! You might as well test that specimen, Snake, and you had better go to sleep. Shevlin. I will sit up with the old fellow."

ABOUT an hour later Snake came to Dickinson, who dozed as he sat by the side of the sick man. The fire just outside the open flap of the tent had burned low, and hissed and sputtered under the rain drops. He stirred the other with his knee. "Dick, old man, this stuff goes one better than nephrite even. It's real jade. Silica 49.5, magnesia 31, and specific gravity 3.33. It's worth the risk if there's enough of it,

"Old faker!" grumbled Dickinson. "I knew you intended to go all along."

The voices woke the old man, who seemed quieter, but very weak. Catching sight of the stone in the dim light, he feebly beckoned them to draw near.

"Throw it away, white men," he whispered, "and think no more on it. Evil luck attends the thing. I, who am very near to death, say it. Behold, the face of my spirit hangs in the smoke without, gazing with troubled eyes. I see the stone wrapped up in death. Look! The spots on it are not green, but red against the white. *Red drops of blood* on a white man's skin—I have spoken, and—I go." And so he died.

By the next morning the rain had ceased and the sun shone brightly. The dying man's forebodings, which had seemed so mysterious the night before, were lightly dismissed, and they determined to get the Jade,

Eventually it was decided that the three of them should make the attempt alone. They were to take two pack mules to carry back whatever they might find, and work their way up the valley, traveling only at night.

Having once decided, no time was lost; and the same evening found them already in the valley of the Shway Ta Chaung. They traveled light, taking only the most necessary tools, and their rifles. These latter to be used only in the case of utmost need; for they did not propose to attract attention by any unnecessary shooting. For provisions they carried canned goods, so as to dispense with fire, and a large supply of "*mon tsazia*" or leathery unleavened bread used by the natives.

MEMORIES of that journey came to them later as nightmares. Progress was deadly slow. They struggled along by the treacherous moonlight, tripping over roots and stumbling into slimy pools, from which they emerged covered with great leeches which attached themselves voraciously to all exposed portions of their bodies. Once a dark shadow dropped lightly from an overhanging limb in front of them, and disappeared snarling into the undergrowth. They dared not use their rifles for fear of attracting attention. By day they lay up in the bushes and rested as men who are dog tired, while noxious insects crawled over them.

It was not till the early part of the sixth night that they came to the place, marked by a great bend in the river, as the old man had said, where they could distinguish in the pale moon light great brawny looking boulders laid bare by the rush of the monsoon floods round the bend. The soil was a sandy clay. In such soil jade might be found. Breathlessly Dickinson and Snake raced across while Shevlin held the mules, and began chipping and examining by the aid of a small dark lantern.

The first—the second—the third, up to the sixth stone they tested proved to be valueless quartz. Their hearts began to sink. What if the old man's story had been but the ravings of delirium?

SNAKE looked up and found Dickinson gazing at him with wide eyes. He voiced the thought that was uppermost in both their minds. "There's still a chance. There's always a dozen quartz to one of jade. Come on. Seven's my lucky number, let's try that big one"

As they made their way towards the rock indicated, Dickinson stumbled over a smallish, smooth worn stone half imbedded in the sand, and cursed it as they went ahead with a venom wholly unwarranted by the circumstances. "Half a minute," he pulled up suddenly, "That seemed awful heavy for its size. I'm going back." He picked it up and handed it to the other. "Chip it, Snake, while I hold the light."

Snake took a firm grip on one end and struck a practised glancing blow with his hammer. A long, narrow silver of Stone

flew off, disclosing a dark greenish surface.

With a slow smile he handed it to Dickinson, who turned it to the light, and then, dropping it, stretched out his hand. Snake took it in a great grip.

That was all. Just a faint tremor of the muscles to indicate that these two stood with a fortune lying all around them. "Green don't amount to very much," said Dickinson quietly; "but if there's one, there must be more. The old man's story was true after all. Funny; it was the seventh stone we tried, too. Come on, let's hurry."

Silently they went from one stone to another, chipping with indifferent success till they came to a large boulder about four feet high at the apex. As Snake stooped to chip it he caught the glint of a shiny surface. "This has been chipped before" he said, as he turned the light on to it.

The break was milk white with bright green spots in the corner.

"The old man's very stone." he whispered, "Clip the other end, Dick, and see if it goes right through." Dickinson smashed off a great splinter with his hammer. "Milk all the way," he cried. "Gosh! There's twenty-five thousand bucks in that stone if we can get it away. Whoopee! Hey, Shevlin, come and look."

"Ss-ht. Not so much noise, you great clown" put in the other warningly as Shevlin raced up. "We can't afford to take any but the very best; but this is good enough. Now what I propose is to get the

mules hitched and drag it on bamboo rollers over to that little island there. The water looks quite shallow, and there is plenty of cover to hide up in. We can get a fire going under it there right away so as to split it up; though we must be very careful about screening in all around. Then tomorrow we can cut it up and pack it and by evening we ought to be able to get away."

"What is the tremendous hurry?" asked Shevlin, "We have got here quite undisturbed, and it seems a pity to go before prospecting around for the very best quality there is in the place"

"Have you not heard that owl hooting from the hill side?"

"Yes, of course, but you surely aren't superstitious enough to believe that that means bad luck coming to us."

"No, not superstitious, my boy; but there it just a faint suspicion about that bird's voice; and I never heard one of these little brown owls hoot three in succession before; so under the circumstances, I am not taking any chances."

By daylight the next morning the great stone had been split in two with fire and partly sawed up into portable sections of a beautiful opaque white color with here and there a vivid green blotch, making the most valuable variety of jade stone.

Shevlin was whistling softly to himself as he worked at a block with a thin steel saw. Dickinson was opening a can of pork and beans; while Snake busied himself carefully balancing and loading the pack saddles with sections of stone.

Suddenly a streak of yellow light quivered through the air between them with a curious z-zip-pfut sound, causing Shevlin to spring to his feet and exclaim "Great Scott! What was that?" Receiving no reply, he looked round to find Snake and Dickinson already pressed flat to the ground, each behind a rock with their rifles thrust over the top.

"Lie down, you boob, and take cover in a hurry," shouted Dickinson, while Snake carefully stretched out a hand and, gripping him by the ankle, neatly tumbled him onto his face. "Grab your rifle and watch the opposite bank. That's where that arrow came from. And pretty good shooting, too, at that distance."

For a tense half hour they waited motionless, watching for some movement on the opposite bank; but the jungle remained unmoved, unbroken.

At last, "Dick, I've got to go out and investigate," said Snake.

"For God's sake, don't. They'll pin you to a certainty."

"No, they won't; besides I don't believe there is anybody there. Anyhow, I can skirmish along till I strike the jungle some fifty yards higher up, and then work my way down. It is absolutely necessary to find out how matters stand."

"I guess you're right, Snake; but I wish you'd let me go."

"No, it is better than you should watch out and cover me. You are the quicker shot. Good bye, old friend—in case—bye-bye, Shevlin."

A warm grip of the hand, and he was gone. Dickinson gave a sigh of relief. "Now you'll see some stalking, Shevlin, my son. If that nigger is laying up anywhere there, it's going to be unhealthy for him."

In spite of his confident tone, however, it was evident that Dickinson was anxious for his friend's safety.

FOR what seemed an interminable time they waited in breathless suspense, every moment expecting to hear either a shot, or a savage yell of triumph according as to which might see the other first.

"I can't stand it," groaned Shevlin. "I will have to run out and see what is happening."

Just then the bushes opened opposite them, and Snake appeared. He ran lightly over the sand and called across. "The beggar has gone. I found the place where he sat and watched us leaning on his bow, then I followed his tracks leading straight up the hill. He has gone to bring the whole district down on us. I thought that owl sounded rather amateurish, I fancy he must have watched us all night, and was hooting for assistance. We have got to hurry all we know."

"How much start do you reckon we have got, Snake?"

"Some three or four hours, I should say. These mountain villages are generally pretty scattered, and it will take quite that time to collect enough of them to attack us."

"I guess we're in a tight place. Four hours start don't amount to anything. They can signal ahead and cut us off anywhere they

like. The mules won't be of any use. Besides, there are only two."

"Look here, you fellows," interposed Shevlin excitedly. "Why shouldn't we make a raft and go down the river. It is nearly all rapids, but I noticed as we came up that they were by no means impossible."

"Bully for you, boy!" shouted Dickinson. "We can make a bamboo catamaran in a couple of hours. They are awful heavy, and fairly unstable; but nothing can smash them, and in this current we will sure knock some speed out."

Three men set to work for their lives on this suggestion immediately. For nearly three hours they labored fiercely at their craft, at the end of which time they had produced a very serviceable catamaran, braced with wooden struts, and securely lashed. Of course such a boat had no pretensions to be watertight, but it was quite unsinkable.

Shevlin surveyed it with pride. "Won't she need some ballast?"

"Why, sure. We can put some of our jade stone in, but we don't want to do that before we carry her out of this thicket down to the water's edge."

"Dick," said Snake as he inspected the lashing of their boat. "you have got the best eyes. Just peek out and see if there are any signs of the beggars."

Dickinson made his way cautiously to the fringe of the undergrowth and peered carefully at the bushes opposite. Suddenly his rifle sprang to his shoulder. A sharp yell followed the report, and a hideous

semi-naked figure leaped clear of the bushes and sprawled face downward on the sand. As it fell, another man betrayed his presence by a quick movement of alarm. A second shot followed on the instant, and the man sank slowly back to the ground. Sudden movements in the bushes at various points indicated that more men were retiring deeper into the undergrowth; but Dickinson was too old a hunter to waste cartridges on anything he could not distinguish definitely.

"The place is just crawling with them," he reported on his return to the others. "I guess they are just waiting for some more to arrive before attacking us."

"Well, we must rush our boat into the water on the other side of our island and then paddle all we know. I'll take the front and look out for rocks. You take the back, Dick, and watch my steering signals. And you sit in the middle, Shevlin, and try to keep those fellows on the bank busy with your rifle. They are sure to rush out as soon as they see us in the boat."

Everything being now ready, they carried their craft to the other side of their tiny island and halted just within the fringe of the bushes to take breath and to pile in a few of the best pieces of jade as ballast. Then, with a rush, they ran her into the water.

Their appearance was heralded by a long drawn yell from a watcher on that side of the stream some three hundred yards below who now spring into full view on a pinnacle of rock and began frantically waving his arms to his friends on the other bank.

Snake halted a moment, snapped his sights up to three hundred, and with a quick aim, fired.

The savage raised himself convulsively on his toes, quivered a moment, then lurched slowly forward and fell, with arms extended like a graceful diver, head first into the water, a hundred feet below.

"I thought they would have signalled that side," commented Snake as he stepped

into his place in the boat and seized his paddle. "Now, boys, let her rip. An' the deil take the hindermost."

There was a wild chorus of fierce yells from the crowd on the bank as the little catamaran shot from behind the island, followed by a combined rush from cover and a shower of spears and arrows. But the rapid stream already had the boat in its grip, and whirled it out of range before any damage could be done.



THE savages set up a howl of disappointment. But they wasted no time in lamenting. After a short consultation they turned and darted into the jungle again.

"Now what deviltry have they got in their minds?" queried Shevlin.

"Huh! I know," replied Dickinson, "They are going to cut across country and intercept us lower down. Probably at that place where the banks close in and the stream shoots through two narrow gorges, one shortly after the other. But we may beat them to it yet."

With a rush and a cloud of spray they swooped down the frequent rapids. Bumping into rocks, shooting over others half submerged; always on the verge of capsizing but saved from final disaster by the superb steering of Snake in the bow and the quick response of Dickinson in the stern. Eventually they swept round a great curve and came in view of the two points mentioned by the latter, one half a mile below the other.

At both points was a crowd of Wa warriors, who raised a yell as they sighted the boat.

"Hell!" hissed Snake between his set teeth. "If one lot doesn't get us the other will. But," he added grimly, as he took up his rifle, "there will be some mighty sick Was first. There is just a chance, boys, that our speed will take us through. The current is tremendous down those narrow passages. You keep her straight, Dick, when we get in; and Shevlin and I will see what we can do with our revolvers,"

The motion was too great for accurate rifle practice; though Snake succeeded in dropping one man before the boat felt the grip of the first rapid. Here he changed his rifle for his revolver, and the next moment with a yell they shot into the race.

THEY saw the fierce faces, in which yellow eyeballs glared with horrible distinctness, swooping up to meet them: and in the same glance they could clearly discern several horrid objects like little monkey's faces with long hair, that dangled from belts of many of the warriors.

Then came a confused roar of rushing waters and fierce voices. Through the flying spray they were aware of the wild waving of arms and a jostling of nude bodies, into the thick of which they fired at random and the next moment they were through.

Snake sat cursing softly at his arm, from which the blood dripped. Shevlin leaned forward with his head buried in his arms; and Dickinson cheered defiantly, waving his paddle, in which an arrow still quivered.

"Come ahead, fellers," he shouted. "Get your paddles to it. We want to get through the next crowd before the last lot can join them."

"That's so," agreed Snake, as he proceeded to bind his arm with his handkerchief, using his teeth to tie the knots. Meanwhile, turning to Shevlin, "Come, buck up, my boy," he said. "We are through half of the worst."

But Shevlin still lay with his head sunk on his arms, apparently unable to pull himself together.

"Come on, old man, you mustn't let yourself go like that, Brace up. With any sort of luck we will soon be through."

Still no response.

"Hey! Shevlin. What's the matter?" he cried, getting alarmed. "Sit up. Speak!"

"My God!" suddenly shouted Dickinson from behind. "He's dead. There's an arrow feather sticking out above his shoulder."

IT was too true. Shevlin had been shot behind the shoulder blade. The arrow piercing his heart, while the barbed head protruded below his chest. He had just sunk forward in his seat over a block of jade on which his hands rested in an almost natural position.

The tragedy of it quite unnerved them; and they both sat gazing wide-eyed into vacancy while the boat drifted aimlessly with the current, "Poor old Shevlin! Poor fellow!" Snake kept repeating. Then with sudden fury, "The brutes! Oh, the devils! I feel like going ashore and wading into them, but it would be madness, of course, and it would do no good. We'll probably join him very shortly anyhow. That rock is much lower than the last, and they can hardly fail to get us. Well, I don't think I care much, one way or the other. Come on, Dick, old boy, let us see what our Kismet holds for us."

"Hold on, Snake, I've got an idea."

"An idea? What ideas can be of any use to us now?"

WHY shouldn't I create a diversion?"

"Meaning how?"

"I mean that we might pull up a little till that last lot, as you just said, joins the crowd in front."

"So there'll be twice as many to shoot at us?"

"No. Twice as many to shoot at. See here: if we give them a little time you can bet that every nigger in this locality will be collected on that cliff. Well, why shouldn't I go ashore behind those rocks where they

can't see us, and creep round some two or three hundred yards below them. Then when you rush the boat through I can keep them busy by shooting into the thick of them."

"It's a desperate chance; but any plan is better than none in the present fix. What if you run into some of them? Why can't we both try to get away together?"

"I tell you there won't be a Wa within miles who won't be waiting on that rock. It'll be dead safe for me; but one of us has got to get through with the boat to pick the other up lower down. They would easily overtake us on land, knowing the country as they do."

"It's a mighty slim chance, but still it's a chance. I hate to let you go, Dick. How shall I know when you are ready?"

"I'll fire a shot as a signal."

"I'll never hear it from down there above the noise of the rapids. But I tell you what. When I've put you ashore I'll keep the boat's nose showing from behind the rocks to engage their attention and hold them expectant; and I can watch them at the same time. You begin shooting as soon as you are ready, and when I see a commotion among them I'll let her rip."

TEN minutes later Dickinson stepped quietly ashore at the place agreed upon and slipped into the silent tangle. From the cliff below could be heard the yells of the savages as they leaped up and down on their rock platform like great monkeys. There followed a nerve-racking period of suspense for Snake, watching from the prow of the boat.

Ten minutes passed—fifteen. Still no sign. His brain conjured up a thousand possible accidents which he worried over one after the other. Then his mind wandered gloomily to their dead friend lying within touch behind him; filling him with a fierce resentment against the fiends who had done this thing. Thus he brooded, apathetic of the future.

All at once he was aware, of something happening, and on the Instant both mind and muscles were alert with suppressed action. One of the leaping savants had stumbled and fallen; but instead of rising he lay in a grotesque attitude where he fell. His companions gathered round him in astonishment. Suddenly another pitched onto his face and lay twitching horribly.

With the first sign of trouble Snake had driven his paddle into the water and shot the boat out into the stream. As the suck of the rapid made itself felt, a third ape-like creature jumped up with a howl and caught his arm between his teeth. Dickinson was firing out of the magazine with almost the rapidity of a machine gun, the reports being quite drowned in the roar of the waters.

THE effect of this silent death winging its way out of nowhere was terrifying to the superstitious savages. Fearfully their minds flew to conjectures about the wood demons and malignant water sprites that they worshipped. Some fled incontinently. Others remained undecided, running aimlessly about and not knowing in what direction the danger lay.

The boat swooped down abreast of them scarcely noticed.

A small group of the boldest spirits rushed to the edge and hurled their spears, one of which stuck quivering a few inches from Snake's eyes, looming distorted through the blinding spray.

Another second and the rock was behind him. The swift current had the boat in its grip and whirled it on. Three hundred yards lower down Dickinson ran out to the water's edge. With a great wrench of his paddle, Snake turned the heavy canoe and ran it onto the beach. Dickinson hurled himself in, pushing off as he did so; and the next minute the two were shaking hands hysterically congratulating each other on their escape.

Yet in their moment of exultation came the bitter thought of their friend, and the heavy task of burying him. Shevlin had shown himself plucky in danger and cheerful under difficulties, and the hardships they had gone through in company had drawn them very closely together.

By evening they were far from the scene, and they paddled ashore at a convenient spot where the river left a high bank of dry sand, in which they scraped a shallow grave. As they lifted the body out of the boat, Dickinson suddenly gripped Snake by the arm.

“Great heaven, man! Look at the stone.” He whispered hoarsely.

There, where formerly green blotches had appeared on the milk white surface, were drops and splashes of blood.

"What did the old man say before he died? The spots are not green, but red. Snake, what does it all mean?"

"I don't know. These hill people are all weird anyhow. Possibly it's only a very curious coincidence. But let's put the poor fellow away and get through with it."

THE hastily dug grave was soon filled again, and for a few moments they stood by. Snake slowly removed his hat followed by Dickinson.

"I fancy we ought to say something but I don't know how. Anyway, he lived like a white man, and died like a white man; and I guess that counts for more than anything we could ever say—Well, good-bye old fellow—Come along, Dick. We aren't out of danger yet, and we can't wait around here too long."

There is little more to tell.

It took them but two days to go down where it had taken six nights to come up. On the evening of the second day they swept out of the Shway Ta Chaung above the Kunlong ferry and paddled down to Lashio. From that point they traveled in comparative luxury by the little twenty-two inch-gauge railway down to Mandalay. There they found a ready market for the small quantity of jade they had been able to save. A Chinese dealer made them a lump offer of \$6,000 for the lot, which they promptly closed with.

The dealer remarked as he handed over the check that he would always be a buyer for any quantity of the same stuff.

Snake and Dickinson exchanged glances. "Not from us," they exclaimed unanimously.