

I tell you that all is over between us, and from this hour you may beware a woman's outraged feelings.'

The man came nearer and seized her arm.  
'What do you mean by that, you—fool? Don't you know that you are in my power?'

'I know that you are in mine, sir. Listen! I give you one week to get out of this country. At the end of the seventh day from now I shall tell everything to Mr and Mrs Brady, and they will set the police on your track. I will show you no mercy, for you have abused my pity and tried to drag me down to your own base level, and now your mask is off I know you to be unworthy of a good woman's regard or help. I have placed as much food as I could honestly take in the old hollow gum tree as usual. It is for the last time. Now go!'

But instead of going the man caught the girl's other wrist and forced her to her knees. Holding her down with his left hand, he raised the gun that he held in his right, and placed the muzzle against her temple.

'Now,' he hissed between his teeth, 'you're in my power, my girl, for life or death. Will you do as I want you or no?'

'Never!' shrieked the girl in tones of desperate firmness. Brady saw her white face upturned in the moonlight. Then a dark cloud swept over the shining orb of heaven, and through the sudden darkness rang out the report of a pistol.

When the echoes had died out and the cloud sailed on, the moon shone calmly down on a silent group of three—the body of Alfred Miles shot through the heart by John Brady, who had flung away his revolver to bend over the fainting form of Lydia Brown.

It is Christmas Eve. Shearing is over, and a delicious sense of well-earned restfulness pervades the place. In the kitchen old Larry is helping the shepherd's wife to stone raisins for an English plum-pudding, while a fine turkey turns his toes to the ceiling ready to do honour to the great festival of to-morrow. From the garden steals the mingled scent of rose, and myrtle, and sweet syringa, and in the scented side by side, Mrs Brady and her 'young friend Miss Brown' are seated, enjoying the freshness of the summer night. For Lydia will return no more to her Cinderella state in the kitchen, but remain as companion to her former mistress till other duties call her away.

John Brady is there too, meditating over his pipe. They are all three very quiet to-night.

The old lady dreams of many a Christmas-tide long passed away, of faces that have vanished in the dim vistas of half-forgotten times, of 'the glad days of youth that are no more.'

Lydia, happy in the sense of relief from the heavy burden that was wearing out her young life, rests peacefully in the present.

But John Brady lets his fancy soar on to the rose-tinted future, and over a space of time, he sees another Christmas Eve. He sees the dear old face of his mother just as it is now, and beside it that of her daughter Lydia, brighter, clearer than ever before. He sees this faithful, true-hearted wife place her hand in his and look up at him with eyes of trustful love. And he thinks how they will go on side by side, stepping down life's hill together, pausing each Christmas Eve to recollect the past till the long eternal day shall dawn where the chimes of Heaven ring in the never-ending reign of Peace—the everlasting Christmas.

### DECEPTIVE TRUTH.

THERE are circumstances under which the most truthful and creditable statements may be both misleading and unwelcome. During a certain voyage of a Down-East vessel, the mate, who usually kept the log, became intoxicated one day, and was unable to attend to his duty. As the man very rarely committed the offence, the captain excused him, and attended to the log himself, concluding with this: 'The mate has been drunk all day.'

Next day the mate was on deck, and resumed his duties. Looking at the log, he discovered the entry the captain had made, and ventured to remonstrate with his superior.

'What was the need, sir,' he asked, 'of putting that down on the log?'

'Wasn't it true?' asked the captain.

'Yes, sir, but it doesn't seem necessary to enter it on the log.'

'Well,' said the captain, 'since it was true, it had better stand; it had better stand.'

The next day the captain had occasion to look at the log, and at the end of the entry which the mate had made he found this item:

'The captain has been sober all day.'

The captain summoned the mate, and thundered: 'What did you mean by putting down that entry? What was the need, I say? Am I not sober every day?'

'Yes, sir, but wasn't it true?'

'Why, of course it was true!'

'Well, then, sir,' said the mate, 'since it was true, I think it had better stand; it had better stand.'

The mate then took his departure hastily, dodging the marlinspike as he went.

### SUNSET.

(BY MARY ROWLES JARVIS.)

WITH splendour of farewell the sun goes down:

The far pavilions of the dying day

Are hung with gold and marvellous array,

Revealing in their depths so radiant grown,

A light as of the rainbow round the throne;

But while on our horizon, lone and gray,

The long, reluctant glory dies away,

On other shores the light of day is sown

For noontide harvest—this sweet afterglow

As a sunrise promise elsewhere appears.

Wherefore, O heart, rejoice! life's setting sun,

Whose slow departing but as death we know,

Make's heaven's high dawning—where, with blinding

beam

We whisper 'Ended,' angels write 'Begun!'

## WILD LIFE AT THE ANTIPODES.

### How South Sea Islanders Poison their Arrows.

By EDWARD WAKEFIELD, LATE M.H.R.

THERE is in India a little serpent, only a few inches long, called *Echys carinata*, which is so horribly venomous that its bite is capable of causing death in two or three seconds. Not a single case is known of recovery from the bite of Echys, without any fabric intervening; but in most instances the sufferer has been paralyzed with intense agony almost instantaneously, the blood has coagulated in the veins and a spasm of the heart has terminate existence almost before any remedy could be even attempted. In British India alone it is shown by carefully collected statistics that more than 20,000 persons are destroyed annually by wild beasts, including snakes, and more than four-fifths of the casualties are attributed to the latter. It is well-known, too, that snakes are employed among the natives to a terrible extent for purposes of secret murder. A deadly serpent, such as the Echys, or the more notorious, but really less formidable, cobra, is so confined in a hollow bamboo cane that its head just barely protrudes at the end, and the assassin, carrying this diabolical weapon, which looks like a harmless walking staff, in his hand, approaches his enemy quite unsuspected, and touching him unawares with the end of the staff, causes the snake to plunge its lethal fangs into his defenceless flesh. The victim is found dead, perhaps, on his couch or divan, or in a



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chair at table, or seated in some lovely secluded garden, where his treacherous foe and he may have retired together to enjoy the shade and the perfume. His death is set down to sunstroke or fever or any other of the sudden diseases that are common in that country; and, in accordance with the local custom, his body is hurriedly reduced to ashes or consigned to the public receptacle for the dead before any inquiry can be made.

### A NARROW ESCAPE.

A friend of mine, who occupied an important consular post at Singapore, had a very narrow escape from death like this. He had a Malay house steward who alone had access to his bedroom. This man was most apparently devoted to him, but the wife of one of the under-servants having complained that the steward had offered her an affront, the consul had severely reprimanded him and forbidden him to speak to the woman again on pain of dismissal. The next morning my friend, who was an exceedingly early riser, left his couch at the first rays of dawn, and went as usual to the marble tank in a recess from his bedroom, where he always began his toilet with a shower bath. He was on the point of stepping into the tank, when his attention was attracted by something glittering in the half-darkness. He stepped back and drew the lattice, admitting the full light of the morning. There, in the marble basin, where in another moment he would have placed his bare foot, lay coiled up an Echys, with head erect, prepared to spring. He summoned the steward, but he was nowhere to be found, and he was never heard of again. The other servants killed the snake, which had undoubtedly been placed there by the steward from a motive of revenge.

In parts of South America, notably in the little known country at the sources of the Amazon, the natives have a preparation called wourali or woural, which is one of the most deadly poisons known. They use it for poisoning the tips of the tiny darts which they propel from a blow-pipe with the mouth, to kill birds or even small animals, and the effect is generally fatal. The bird, or beast or man—for the wourali is generally not a ferocious people, sometimes employ wourali for killing one another—becomes almost immediately paralyzed, or overcome with drowsiness, the slightest prick of a poisoned dart being sufficient to produce these symptoms, and either dies with great muscular contortion or else is killed by some other weapon as soon as reduced to helplessness by the poison.

### WHAT IS IT?

Scientific men are at a loss to discover the secret of wourali. They cannot even agree as to whether it is an animal, a vegetable, or a mineral poison. The celebrated English naturalist, Frank Huxford, took a deep interest in this question, and after many laborious and very perilous experiments, came to the conclusion that the main ingredient of wourali was snake poison, but there were other ingredients, intensifying or preserving the snake poison, the nature of which he could not determine. Sir Robert Schomburgk, a German savant of very high standing, made a special journey to the Amazon country to investigate the origin of wourali. After infinite pains and adventures he ascertained that all the wourali that is made comes from a very limited area, where it is prepared with the most impenetrable mystery by a priestly caste amongst a particular tribe of natives, who sell it for an exorbitant price to other tribes. He spent months in the endeavour to get into the confidence of these subtle chemists, who were powerfully impressed by his own acquaintance with the secrets of nature, but all in vain. They could neither be outwitted nor coaxed. Schomburgk, however, obtained from them a quantity of the poison perfectly fresh, and found it was extraordinarily deadly in that state. After careful analysis and innumerable experiments he satisfied himself that it was a purely vegetable poison, an extract from the beans or seeds of a tropical plant, *strychnos toxifera*, of which he obtained specimens, mingled with some inert medium for convenience of transport.

This theory, however, has been seriously shaken, if not actually demolished, by its being shown that wourali is entirely an external poison. That is to say, it operates solely by being introduced into the blood from outside, and has no effect if taken into the system through the stomach. Birds and animals which are killed by darts poisoned with wourali are perfectly wholesome to eat, and the Amazon natives get all their food that way. *Strychnos toxifera*, which is neither more nor less than strychnine, on the contrary, is entirely an internal poison. It is not at all injurious if introduced into the blood from outside, but if taken into the stomach it produces muscular paralysis and death in a few seconds. Thus the secret of wourali remains undiscovered.

### DEADLIEST OF ALL.

I come now to the deadliest poison of all, taking into account its durability, or rather indestructibility, as well as its fatal effect. Every human being carries about a great quantity of the material for making this poison without knowing it; and it is often made and applied with deadly results, quite unconsciously. It consists of the fluids of the human body, which under certain morbid conditions, produce the most virulent poison known. The frightful disease called blood poisoning is caused by some particle of this substance getting into the healthy blood and curdling or inflaming it so that it no longer serves its vital purpose. Many a doctor has lost his life by the mere prick of a needle which he had wetted with this poison in sewing up a wound. Now, how the savages of the Pacific Islands came to know of the existence of this natural poison, if I may call it so, can not be explained; for they have not even the rudiments of medical science. But that they have been only too familiar with it from time immemorial is certain. It is a curious fact that the farther you go from the equator the less dangerous the savages are; while the nearer you approach the equator, the more you need be on your guard against barbarous practices which seem not only inhuman but anti-human. The use of poisoned weapons is almost entirely confined to the inhabitants of those exquisitely beautiful groups of islands which lay under the equator or within a few degrees to north or south of it. These people, such as the Solomon Islanders or the Santa Cruz Islanders, some of whom are among the finest physical specimens of mankind, are the most horrible savages on earth. They spend their whole life in bloodshed, and are not only cannibals but addicted to the use of poison as the main, if not the only, weapon of war. They have spears and arrows pointed and barbed with sharp bone or wood hardened in the fire, and everyone of these is poisoned, so that the least graze, scarcely enough to draw blood, is fatal. Commodore Goodenough, commanding the British squadron in those seas, died in indescribable torment from a wound so slight that it was not believed at first he had been touched at all; and more deaths have occurred among sailors and traders from this cause than from any other. A bundle of arrows from the Solomon Islands was sent to England many years ago, and deposited with other curiosities in a museum in Colchester. A gentleman, visiting the museum, foolishly handled these weapons and, feeling the point of one of the arrows, inflicted a prick like that of a pin. He died of it, in raving agony, three days afterwards. The symptoms are invariably those of tetanus, or lockjaw, a malady for which no remedy has ever been discovered.

### HOW DID THEY DISCOVER IT?

Where do these savages get their atrocious poison and what does it consist of? They get it from their own flesh and blood, and it consists of nothing but the fluids of the human body. When they want a supply of poisoned weapons, they take a number of corpses after a battle, or kill a number of prisoners expressly, and, having left the bodies to rot in the burning equatorial sun for some days, they stick them full of spear and arrow heads, which they leave there for weeks or months, or until the bodies are entirely dried up. That is the whole process. When these spears and arrows are drawn out, they are imperishably steeped in poison as deadly as that of Echys carinata or wourali—a poison which is absolutely destructive of the life of the creature whose blood it touches.

The possession of the secret of poisoning by means of putrefied animal fluids by the most degraded of the human family is all the more remarkable, because the most advanced men of science have only recently discovered the explanation of the phenomena produced by that poison. The putrefaction of the animal fluids itself brings into existence a multitude of microscopic living organisms, germs or microbes, as they are now called; and it is the introduction and infinite multiplication of these in the healthy blood that produces paralysis and death. I have seen a man-of-warman, a magnificent specimen of vigorous, redundant manhood, wounded so slightly by a poisoned arrow that he himself laughed at it, and scarcely any abrasion was visible, yet reduced before sundown to utter helplessness and consigned to the deep by his horror-stricken shipmates before another day had passed.