

nicked him was a clear thousand-yarder."

Tony grunted, aware that to men of Peyton's calibre such things as honour and truth carry no weight.

"Pity you haven't had the training I've had," ended Peyton. "Er—how d'you get the brute's head off?"

Tony showed, touching the beautiful thing lovingly; for, when all was said, it was still his by his right hand's cunning.

Peyton had not the instincts of a gentleman. He was purely and unrelievedly a boulder, and Tony's senses were raw to savageness before the head was off and set on Peyton's back that he might struggle campward with it.

The miles to be passed were many; the ground was incredibly rough; the fresh breeze of morning had forged the still heat of noon-day.

Peyton's joints were loosed by exhaustion, and when he flagged and fell, Tony's tongue scourged him to the labour again. Tony was getting such small consolation out of this as the situation held, and he chuckled when Peyton grew a deep plum-colour and the veins of his neck swelled.

The burdened man stumbled, flung the stark thing from him, and grovelled.

"Tony—oh, I say! Do carry it a bit. Please. Just a mile—half, then. Till I get my second wind. Do, old chap!" He hesitated before Tony's expressionless face. "I'll pay you for it," he said.

"Oh, you almighty boulder!" cried Tony's heart, but his lips distilled cold scorn. "You say it's your kill? Well then; you'll lump it yourself. I've nothing to do with your beastly arrangements. Why didn't you drive him home first?"

Then Peyton, having an assortment of languages at command, applied them freely, until Tony's desire for direct blows shrunk him to a flabby penitence. At the pool in the flax-swamp they drank and

fed. The halt sent the sun well to the westing, but it did not greatly refresh Peyton. The very marrow of the man had dripped from him; his knees shook, and he crowed in his breath.

A clipped quarter-mile further and the head pitched on its raw neck into the bracken. Tony's eyes flooded with a sudden glorious hope.

"Peyton, are you coming back for this to-morrow?"

Peyton staggered on blindly.

"Ne—never. Ne—never, I tell you."

"Peyton! Do you give up all claim to this head?"

"Y—yes. Don't talk of it. It makes me sick—"

"Then I'll take it home myself," said Tony in solemn joy.

It was a simple thing now. So simple that he wondered he had not foreseen it. The matter could wait until Peyton left, and then all Southland men should learn—breathing envy—that Tony Lascelles had shot a sixteen-pointer in Otago Central.

He heaved up the head and trudged forward.

"You bullock!" growled Peyton, stumbling after.

But Tony's cup of delight ran over. What though the raw skin flapped his neck, and the unhandiness of the burden taxed his muscles in many new-learned places. Those antlers were his. His very own. And moreover, Peyton had already borne the burden half the distance. This was a pleasure to be rolled on the tongue until Tony should be an old man.

His serenity was unbroken, and his limbs ached bitterly when they made the tent in the firelight. Tony cast himself down straightway, and his chest laboured like an ungreased crank.

Walt dropped on a knee in plain admiration, and Peyton, being partially recovered, pulled a hand from his trouser-pocket and held out silver to Tony.

"Thanks, Tony. Don't know how I'd have got the thing back by