



ELL, if that isn't rotten luck," said Tony Lascelles. "When we've given that fool Peyton the Chimney, too!"

Walt growled his disgust in his throat, for it was over strong for selected words; and Peyton, whom

Tony's hurried rising had trampled into the earth, fell out of the tent-opening less than half-clothed, and disconnectedly wrath.

"Stag," said Walt in curt answer. Peyton swept the universe with his glasses, picked up on the Chimney hill that which the other men watched bare-eyed, and purred in fat delight.

From their feet the snow-grass blew in ruddy ripples to the tail of a birch bush that stuck to the steep hill-side in black density. Topping the bush, splayed out lean spurs, and rounded gullies, and straight-edged ravines. Behind all, and crowning half the earth, notched ranges rose white to the flushing sky—all to make background for one stag of the fourth year. He stood, monstrous and tense with life, on the snub nose of a bluff, and belled out his challenge to the world and to the sun that was coming up to listen. The antlers showed like naked branches of a

tree, and his coat was sleeked with the night's dew.

"It's my beat!" Peyton snatched his things from every-whither in blankest confusion. "You said last night I could have the Chimney. It's a royal, I tell you. It's a bub-bub-blessed fourteen-pointer. I counted—an' we've never got a sniff of more than a ten-tine before. I don't want any breakfast. Where's my—"

"Oh, go slow, for Heaven's sake!" said Tony in the wrath of a hunter. "You won't hit a hill unless it's the size of a mountain if you go losing your head that way. Keep cool, can't you, you silly owl? Of course it's your beat. Who said it wasn't? And don't you go shooting all over the shop, Peyton. A Mauser's too funny for that kind of thing."

It was Peyton's boast that he had shot eighteen men with the identical carbine that he was now scratching out of the case. That was in the Boer war, and no man on Mindoorie believed it. Peyton did not, himself. But to require of a man that he should make a story and believe it is rank ingratitude.

Peyton had turned up at Mindoorie some three months back, giving Lane to understand that they were of one blood, and might, with mutual happiness, be of one purse also. He stuck like a burr, and