

CHAPTER IX.

"Who Could Have Foreseen It?"

DREADFUL thing has happened to us. Who could have foreseen it? I cannot foresee any end to our troubles. It may be that we are condemned to spend our whole lives in this strange, inaccoasible place. I am still so confused that I can hardly think clearly of the facts of the present or of the chances of the future. To my astounded senses tue one seems most terrible and the other as black as night.

When I finished my last letter I amted that we were within seven miles from an enormous line of ruddy cliffs which encircled, beyond all doubt, the pinteau of which Professor Challenger spoke. Their height, as we approached them, seemed to me in some places to be greater than he had stated, running up in parts to at least a thousand reet, and they were curiously striated in a manner which is, I believe, charocteristic of basultic upheavals. Some-Dring of the sort is to be seen in Sallsbury crags, at Edinburgh. The summit showed every sign of a luxuriant vegetation, with bushes near the edge and further back many high trees. There was no indication of any life that we could see.

That night we pitched our camp immediately under the cliff-a most wild and desolate spot. The erags above us were not merely perpendicular, but curved outward at the top, so that ascont was out of the question.

in the morning, after a frugal breakfirst of coffee and manior-we had to be economical of our stores-we held a council of war as to the best method or ascending to the plateau above us.

Challenger presided with a solemnity ma if he were the lord chief justice on the bench. Picture him seated upon a rock, his absurd boyish straw hat tilted on the back of his head, his supercitious eyes dominating us from under his drooping lids, his great black beard warging as he slowly defined our preseat situation and our future movements.

"I need not say," said our leader That on the occasion of my last visit I exhausted every means of climbing the cliff, and where I fulled I do not hink any one else is likely to succeed, for I am something of a mountaineer. I had none of the appliances of a rock comber with me, but I have taken the precaution to bring them now. With their aid I am positive I could climb But detached planacle to the summit. Bot so long as the main cliff overhangs it is valu to attempt ascending that. I was hurried upon my last visit by the approach of the rainy season and to the exhaustion of my supplies, Taese considerations limited my time. and I can only claim that I have sur-



We Hald a Council of War.

y-yed about six miles of the cliff to the east of us, finding no possible way What, then, shall we now do?"

There seems to be only one reasontide course," and Professor Summerles. "It you have explored the east we should travel along the base of the cost to the west and seek for a practicable point for our ascent."

That's it." said Lord John. "The odds are that this plateau is of great size, and we shall travel round it until we either had an easy way up it or come back to the point from which

The ground at the foot of the cliff was rocky and broken, so that the going was slow and difficult. Suddenly we came, however, upon something widch cheered our hearts. It was the site of an old encampment, with several emply Chicago meat this, a bottle mad a quantity of other travelecs' de-

paper revealed itself as the Chicago Democrat, though the date had been bliterated

"Not mine," said Challenger. "It nust be Maple White's."

Lord John had been gazing curiously t a great tree fern which overshadwed the encampment. "I say, look at ly it could only be the opening of a his," said be. "I believe it is meant or a signpost."

A slip of hardwood had been nailed to the tree in such a way as to point to the westward.

"Most certainly a signpost," said Challenger, "What else? Fluding blmelf upon a dangerous errand, our pio neer has left this sign so that any party which follows him may know he way he has taken. Perhaps we hall come upon some other hidicalons as we proceed."

We did indeed, but they were of a terrible and most unexpected nature. Immediately beneath the cliff there crew a considerable patch of high bamboo, like that which we had traversed in our journey. Many of these slems were twenty feet high, with charp, strong tops, so that even as they stood they made formidable spears. We were passing along the edge of this cover when my eye was caught by the gleam of something white with n it. Thrusting in my head between the stems, I found myself gazing at a fleshiess skull. The whole skeleton was there, but the skull had detached itself and by some feet nearer to the open.

With a few blows from the machetes of our Indians we cleared the spot and were able to study the details of this old tragedy. Only a few shreds of lothes could still be distinguished, but there were the remains of boots upon the bony feet, and it was very clear that the dead man was a European. A gold watch and a chain, which held tylogesphic pen, lay among the bones There was also a silver eigarette case will "J. C., from A. E. S.," upon the lid. The state of the metal seemed to show that the catastrophe had occur

Who can be be?" asked Lord John Poor devil, every bone in his body eems to be broken."

red no great time before.

"And the bumboo grows through his mashed ribs," said Summerice. "It is fast growing plant, but it is surely seancelvable that this body could have een here widle the canes grew to be twenty feet in length.

"As to the man's identity," said Professor Challenger, "I have no doubt whatever upon that point. As I made my way up the river before I reached you at the fazenda I lustituted very particular inquiries about Maple White. At Para they knew nothing, Fortunately, I had a definite clew, for there was a particular pleture in his sketch book which showed him taking lunch with a certain ecclesiastic at Rosario. his priest I was able to find, and hough he proved a very argumentaive fellow, who took it absurdly amiss that I should point out to him the cor rosive effect which modern science must have upon his beliefs, he none the ess gave me some positive information. Maple White passed Resario four years ago, or two years before I saw his dead body. He was not alone at the time, but there was a friend, an American named James Colver, who remained in the boat and did not meet this ecclesiastic. I think, therefore, that there can be no doubt that we are now looking upon the remains of this ames Colver.

'Nor," said Lord John, "Is there much doubt as to how he met his death. He has fallen or been chucked from the top and so been impaled. How else could be come by his broken bones and low could be have been stuck through y these cames with their points so igh above our heads?"

We moved off in silence and continwed to coast round the line of cliffs, which were as even and unbroken as some of these monstrons Antarctic icefields which I have seen depicted as stretching from horizon to horizon and towering high above the mustheads of

the exploring vessel. to five miles we saw no rift or break And then suddenly we perceived something which filled us with new hope. In a hollow of the rock, protected from rafo, there was drawn a rough acrow in chalk, pointing still to the west-

ward "Maple White again," said Professor Challenger. "He had some presentlment that worthy footsteps would follow close behind him."

"He had chalk, theu?"

the effects I found in his knapsack. I remember that the white one was worn to a stump."

said Summerice. "We can only ach however, that the stone was almed at cept his guidance and follow on to the us, so the incident surely pointed to westward."

We had proceeded some five more upon the plateau. miles when again we saw a white arrow upon the rocks. It was at a point chasm, our minds full of this new de-Best time split into a narrow cleft. In plans. The situation was difficult congratulate each other. The problem Isbeled "Brandy," a broken the opener | side the cleft was a second guidance enough before; but, if the obstructions | is solved," mark, which pointed right up it with of nature were increased by the de-

BITTOW HOPE.

the bottom. We had had no food for

It was not over forty feet across

the ground

til it ended in an acute angle, too straight and smooth for an ascent. Certainly it was not this which our ploneer had attempted to indicate. We made our way back-the whole gorge was not more than a quarter of mile deep-and then suddenly the quick eyes of Lord John fell upon what we were seeking. High up above our heads amid the dark shadows there was one circle of deeper gloom. Sure-

The base of the cliff was heaped with loose stones at the spot, and it was not difficult to clamber up. When we reached it all doubt was removed Not only was it an opening into the rock, but on the side of it there was marked once again the sign of the ar-

Here was the point and this was the leans by which Maple White and his ill fated comrade had made their as

We were too excited to return to he camp, but must make our first exdoration at once. Lord John had an lectric torch in his knapsack, and this had to serve us as light. He advanced, throwing his little clear circlet of vel ow radiance before htm, while in sin de file we followed at his beels.

The cave had evidently been water vorn, the sides being smooth and the floor covered with rounded stones. It was of such a size that a single man ould just fit through by stooping. For fifty yards it ran almost straight into the rock, and then it ascended at an angle of forty-five. Presently this inline became even steeper, and we ound ourselves climbing upon bands and knees among loose rabble which slid from beneath us. Suddenly an exdamation broke from Lord Roxton. "It's blocked!" said he.

Clustering behind blue, we saw in the vellow field of light a wall of broken basalt which extended to the ceiling. "The roof has fallen tu!"

In valu we dragged out some of the leces. The only effect was that the arger ones became detached and threatened to roll down the gradient and crush us. It was evident that the obstacle was far beyond any efforts



which we could make to remove it. The road by which Maple White had scended was no longer available. Too much east down to speak, we stimubled down the dark tunnel and made our way back to the enun.

One incident occurred, however, be ore we left the gorge, which is of imortance in view of what came after-

vard. We had gathered in a little group t the bottom of the chasm, some forfeet beneath the mouth of the cave. when a lauge rock rolled suddenly

downward and shot past us with fremendous force. It was the narrowest scape for one or all of us. We could or ourselves see whence the rock had ome, but our half breed servants, who were still at the opening of the cave, said that It had flown past them and "A lox of colored chalks was among must therefore have fallen from the summit. Lookbus upward, we could see no sign of movement above us amid the green Jungle which topped "That is certainly good evidence," the cliff. There could be little doubt, humanity-und malevolent humanity-

We withdrew harriedly from the bols. A crimpled, disintegrated news the tip somewhat elevated, as if the liberate opposition of man, then our

spot indicated were above the level of case was indeed a hopeless one. And yet as we looked up at that beautiful It was a solemn place, for the walls fringe of verdure only a few hundreds were so gigantic and the silt of blue of feet above our heads there was not sky so narrow and so obscured by a one of us who could conceive the idea double fringe of verdure that only a of returning to London until we had alim and shadowy light penetrated to explored it to its depths.

On discussing the situation we demany hours and were very weary with termined that our best course was to the stony and irregular journey, but continue to coast round the plateau in our nerves were too strung to allow the hope of finding some other means us to halt. We ordered the camp to of reaching the top. The line of cliffs, pltched; however, and, leaving the which had decreased considerably in indians to arrange it, we four, with height, had already begun to trend the two half breeds, proceeded up the from west to north, and if we could take this as representing the arc of a circle the whole circumference could at the mouth, but it rapidly closed un | not be very great. At the worst, then, we should be back in a few days at

our starting point. We made a march that day which rotaled some two and twenty miles without any change in our prospects, may mention that our anerold shows is that in the continual incline which we have ascended since we abandoned our canoes we have risen to no less than 3,000 feet above sea level; hence there is a considerable change both in the temperature and in the vegetation. We have slinken off some of that horrible insect life which is the bane of tropical travel. A few palms still survive and many tree ferns, but the Amazonian trees have been all left behind. It was pleasant to see the concolvulus, the passion flower and the egonia, all remioding me of home, iere among these inhospitable rocks, There was a red begonia just the same olor as one that is kept in a pot in the window of a certain villa in Streatham. But I am drifting into private

CHAPTER X.

Summerlee No Longer Skeptical. MAT night-1 am still speaking of the first day of our circumnavigation of the plateau-a great experience awaited us and one which forever set at rest any doubt which we could have had as to the wonders so near us.

What occurred was this: Lord John and shot an ajoutt, which is a small, piglike animal, and, half of it having been given to the Indians, we were cooking the other half upon our fire. There is a chill in the sir after dark, and we had all drawn close to the blaze: The night was moonless, but there were some stars, and one could see for a little distance across the plain. Well, suddenly out of the darkness, out of the night. There swooped comething with a swish like an aerodane. The whole group of us were overed for an instant by a canopy of eethery wings, and I had a momen tary vision of a long, snakelike neck. derce, red, greedy eye and a great snapping beak, filled, to my nunzenent, with little, gleaming teeth. The iext instant it was gone-and so was our dinner. A huge black shadow. twenty feet across, skimmed up into he air. For an instant the monster wings blotted out the stars, and then vanished over the brow of the cliff hove us. We all sat in amazed silence ound the fire, like the heroes of Virgil when the Harples came down upon them. It was Summerlee who was the first to speak

"Professor Challenger," sald he, in a solemn voice, which quavered with emotion, "I owe you an apology. Sir. I am very much in the wrong, and I beg that you will forget what is past." It was handsomely said, and the two men for the first time shook hands. So

On the sixth day we completed our first circuit of the cliffs and found our elves back at the first camp beside the solated pinuacle of rock. We were a lisconsolate party, for nothing could have been more minute than our in vestigation, and it was absolutely certain that there was no single point where the most active human being ould possibly hope to scale the cliff. The place which Maple White's chalk marks had indicated as his own means of access was now entirely impassa-

What were we to do now? Our stores of provisions, supplemented by our guns, were holding out well, but the day must come when they would need replenishment. In a couple of months the raits might be expected. and we should be washed our of our amp. The rock was harder than marble, and any attempt at cutting a path for so great a beight was more than our time or resources would admit. No wonder that we looked gloomly at each other that night and sought our blankets with hardly a word exchanged. I remember that as I dropped off to sleep my last recollection was that Challenger was squatting, like a monstrons bullfrog, by the fire, his huge head in his hands, sunk apparently in the deepest thought and entirely oblivious to the good night which I wished him.

But it was a very different Challen ger who greeted us in the morning-a Shallenger with contentment and self congratulation shiring from his whole erson. He faced us as we assembled for breakfast with a deprecaring falsemodesty in his eyes, as who should say, "I know that I deserve all that you can say, but I pray you to spare my blushes by not saying it." His beard bristled exultantly, his chest was thrown out and his hand was thrust lure the front of bls Jacket. So: in his fancy, may be see himself sometimes gracing the vacant pedestat in Trafalgar square and adding one more

to the horrors of the London streets. "Eureka!" he cried, his tweth shining through his beard, "Centlemen, you where the face of the cliff was for the velopment and its bearing upon our may congratulate me and we may

"You have found a way up?"

"I venture to think so," "And where?"

For answer he pointed to the spirelke pinnacle upon our right.

Our faces, or mine at least, fell as we surveyed it. That it could be climbed we had our companion's as urance, but a horrible abyss lay beween it and the plateau.

"We can never get across!" I gasped "We can at least all reach the sumnit," said he. "When we are up I may be able to show you that the reources of an inventive mind are not vet exhausted." After breakfost we unpacked the

undle in which our leader had brought

his climbing accessories. From it he

took a coll of the strongest and lightest rope, which was 150 feet in length, with climbing irons, clamps and other devices. Lord John was an experienced mountaineer, and Summerlee had done some rough climbing at various times, so that I was really the novice at rock work of the party. But my strength and activity may have nade up for my want of experience. It was not in reality a very stiff ask, though there were moments which made my halr bristle upon my bend. The first half was perfectly easy, but from there upward it became continually steeper until for the last fifty feet we were literally clinging with our fingers and toes to tiny ledges and crevices in the rock. could not have accomplished it nor could Summeriee if Challenger had not gained the summit (it was extraordinary to see such activity in so unwieldy a creature) and there fixed the rope round the trunk of the considerable tree which grew there. With this us our support we were soon able to scramble up the jagged wail until we ound ourselves upon the small grassy

way, which formed the summit. The first impression which I received when I had recovered my breath was of the extraordinary view over the country which we had traversed. The whole Brazilian plain seemed to lie beeath us, extending away and away until it ended in dim blue mists upon the farthest sky line. In the foreground was the long slope, strewn with rocks and dotted with tree ferns. Farther off in the middle distance, looking over the saddleback hill, I could just see the yellow and green mass of bamoos through which we had passed, and then gradually the vegetation increased until it formed the huge forst which extended as far as the eyes would reach and for a good 2,000 miles evend.

latform, some twenty-live feet each

I was still drinking in this wonderful sanorama when the heavy hand of the rofessor fell upon my shoulder

"This way, my young friend," said e. "Vestigia nulla retrorsum. Never ook rearward, but always to our glo

lous goal.' The level of the plateau when I turnd was exactly that on which we stood, and the green bank of bushes, with oc asional trees, was so near that it was difficult to realize how inaccessible it remained. At a rough guess the gulf was forty feet across; but, so far as I ould see, it might as well have been forty miles. I placed one arm round the trunk of the tree and leaned over the abyss. Far down were the small dark figures of our servants looking un at us. The wall was absolutely predpitous, as was that which faced me.

"This is indeed curious," said the reaking voice of Professor Summerlee I turned and found that he was ex much we have gained by this clear vi- which I clung. That smooth bark and amining with great interest the tree to sion of our first pterodactyl. It was those small, ribbed leaves seemed faworth a stolen supper to bring two millar to my eyes. "Why," I cried

> "Exactly," said Summerlee-"a felw countryman in a far land,"

"Not only a fellow countryman, my ood sir," said Challenger, "but also, f I may be allowed to enlarge your imile, an ally of the first value. This eech tree will be our savior." "By George," cried Lord John, "a sridge!

"Exactly, my friends, a bridge! It s not for nothing that I expended an our last night in focusing my mind upon the situation. I have some recolection of once remarking to our young friend here that G. E. C. is at his best when his back is to the wall. Last night you will admit that all our backs were to the wall. But where will power and intellect go together there is always a way out. A drawbridge had to be found which could be dropped across the abyss. Behold it!"

It was certainly a brilliant idea. The ree was a good sixty feet in height and if it fell only the right way it lenger had slung the camp ax over his bie. Your bones will whiten up there. shoulder when he ascended. Now he and none will know where you lie or handed it to me.

the most useful at this task. I must old.

Under his direction I cut such gashes. u the sides of the tree as would insure that it should fall as we desired. It had already a strong, natural tilt in the direction of the plateau, so that the matter was not difficult. Finally I set to work in earnest upon the trunk. taking turn and turn with Lord John. In a little over an hour there was a loud crack. The tree swayed forward and then crashed over, burying ats branches among the bushes on the farther side. The severed trunk rolled to the very edge of our platform, and for one terrible second we all thought it was over. It balanced itself, however, a few inches from the edge, and there was our bridge to the unknown.

All of us without a word shook hands with Professor Challenger, who raised his straw hat and bowed deeply to each in turn.

"I claim the honor," said he, "to be

the first to cross to the unknown land, | a fitting subject no doubt for some future historical painting."

CHAPTER XI.

The Half Breed's Revenge. NEATING bimself with a leg overhanging the abyss on each side and his hatchet slung upon his back, Challenger hopped his way across the trunk and was soon at the other side. He clambered up and waved his arms in the air.

"At-last!" he cried. "At last!" I gazed anxiously at him, with a rague expectation that some terrible fate would dart at him from the curtain of green behind him. But all was

vanished among the trees. Summerlee was the second. His wiry energy is wonderful in so frall a frame. He insisted upon having two plain below arrested our attention. iffes slung upon his back, so that both nade his transit. I came next and running as one does run when death ried hard not to look down into the horrible guif over which I was pass- is the P ing. Summerlee held out the butt end of his rifle, and an instant later I was thie to grasp his hand. As to Lord John, he walked across-actually walked without support! He must have nerves of fron.

And there we were, the four of us, mon the dreamland, the lost world of Maple White. To all of us it seemed he moment of our supreme triumph. Who could have guessed that it was the prelude to our supreme disaster? Let me say in a few words how the crushing blow fell upon us.

We had turned away from the edge and had penetrated about fifty yards of close brushwood when there came frightful, rending crash from behind



us. With one impulse we rushed back the way that we had come. The bridge was gone!

Far down at the base of the cliff I saw as I looked over a tangled mass of branches and splintered trunk. It was our beech tree. Had the edge of the platform crumbled and let it through? For a moment this explanation was in all our minds. The next, from the farther side of the rocky pinnacle before us, a swarthy face, the face of Gomez, the half breed, was slowly protruded. Yes, It was Gomez, but no longer the Gomez of the demure smile torted features, a face convulsed with hatred and with the mad joy of gratified revenge.

"Lord Roxton!" he shouted. "Lord John Roxton!"

"Well," said our companion, "here I

am.

A shrick of laughter came across the abyss.

"Yes, there you are, you English dog, and there you will remain! I have waited and waited, and now has come my chance. You found it hard to get up; you will find it harder to get down. You cursed fools, you are trapped. every one of you!"

We were too astounded to speak. We could only stand there staring in amazement. A great broken bough upon the grass showed whence he had gained his leverage to tilt over our bridge. The face had vanished, but presently it was up again, more frantic than before.

"We nearly killed you with a stone at the cave?" he cried. But this is would easily cross the chasm. Chal- better. It is slower and more terricome to cover them. As you lie dying "Our young friend has the thews and | think of Lopez, whom you shut five sinews," said he . "I think he will be years ago on the Putomayo river. I am his brother, and, come what will, I beg, however, that you will kindly re- will die happy now, for his memory frain from thinking for yourself and has been avenged!" A furious hand that you will do exactly what you are was shaken at us, and then all was

> Lord John had run along the edge of else. the plateau and gained a point from | Finally he descended and carried which he could see his man. There up two other packets of mixed goodswas a single crack of his rifle, and, a box of ammunition and a number of though we saw nothing, we heard the other things, all of which we got across scream and then the distant thud of by throwing our rope to bim and haulthe falling body. Roxion came back ing it back. It was evening when be to us with a face of granite.

he bitterly. "It's my folly that has till next morning. brought you all into this trouble. 1 should have remembered that these . (Continued next Saturday)

people have long memories for blood fends and have been more upon my guard."

"What about the other one? It took two of them to lever that tree over the edge."

"I could have shot him, but I let him go. He may have had no part in it. Perhaps it would have been better if I had killed him, for he must, as you

say, have lent a hand." Now that we had the clew to his action each of us could cast back and remember some sinister act upon the part of the half breed-bis constant desire to know our plans, his arrest outside our tent when he was overbearing them, the furtive tooks of bamiet save that a strange, many colored tred which from time to time one or oird flew up from under his feet and other of us had surprised. We were still discussing it, endeavoring to adjust our minds to these new conditions, when a singular scene in the

A man in white clothes, who could professors were armed when he had only be the surviving half breed, was

> | the our dea voony lights - voted negro. Even as we looked be sprang upon the back of the fugitive and flung his arms round his neck. They rolled on the ground together. An instant afterward Zambo rose, looked at the prostrate man and then, waving his hand joyously to us, came running in our direction. The white figure lay motionless in the middle of the great plain.

Our two traitors had been destroyed, but the mischief that they had done lived after them. By no possible means could we get back to the planacle. We had been natives of the world; now we were natives of the plateau. The two things were separate and apart. There was the plain which led to the canoes. Yonder, beyoud the violet, hazy horizon, was the stream which led back to civilization, But the link between was missing. No human ingenuity could suggest a means of bridging the chasm which yawned between ourselves and our past lives. One instant had altered all the conditions of our existence.

It was at such a moment that I learned the stuff of which my three comrades were composed. They were grave, it is true, and thoughtful, but of an invincible serenity. For the moment we could only sit among the bushes in patience and wait the coming of Zambo. Presently his honest black face topped the rocks and his berculean figure emerged upon the top of the pinnacle.

"What I do now?" he cried. "You tell me and I do it!"

It was a question which it was easier to ask than to answer. One thing only was clear. He was our one trusty link with the outside world. On no account must be leave us.

"No, no!" he cried. "I not leave you. Whatever come, you always find me here. But no able to keep Indians. Already they say too much Curupuri live on this place and they go home. Now you leave them me no able to

keep them." It was a fact that our Indians had shown in many ways of late that they were weary of their lourney and anxlous to return. We realized that Zambo spoke the truth and that it would be impossible for him to keep them with us.

"Make them wait till tomorrow, Zambo," I shouted; "then I can send letter back by them."

"Very good, sarr! I promise they and the maskilke expression. Here was a face with flashing eyes and dis. wait till tomerrow," said the negro. "But what I do for you now!

There was plenty for him to do, and admirably the faithful fellow did it. First of all, under our directions, he



Had the half breed simply wrought undid the rope from the tree stump and his vengeance and then escaped all threw one end of it across to us. It might have been well with him. It was not thicker than a clothesiine, but was that foolish, irresistible Latin im- it was of great strength, and, though pulse to be dramatic which brought his | we could not make a bridge of it, we own downfall. Roxton, the man who might well find it invaluable if we had had earned himself the name of the any climbing to do. He then fastened "Flall of the Lord" through three com- his end of the rope to the package of tries, was not one who could be safely supplies which had been carried up, taunted. The half breed was descend- and we were able to drag it across. ing on the farther side of the plunacle. This gave us the means of life for at but before he could reach the ground least a week, even if we found nothing

at last climbed down, with a final as-"I have been a blind simpleton," said surance that he would keep the Indians