

I ACQUIRE A HOODOO STICK

LOOKING back on my life, it seems that I was followed by a lucky star during my wanderings in the wilds of Australasia. Soon after we left Alice Springs on a gold prospecting trip to the Petermann Ranges, it seemed certain that my cobbler Snowey and I would perish for lack of water. My lucky star was there . . .

Things looked even worse later, however. Snowey and our black boys, as I described last week, were out of camp when a wild tribe of pre-Stone Age tribesmen called in on me. I knew they were sizing me up preparatory to an attack. Snowey wasn't due back for hours. All I could do was to fight it out.

Just as I was looking round furtively for my rifle, my star came to the rescue again—in walked Snowey.

I could have danced for joy, although I tried not to show it, for primitive man is quick to detect fear in an enemy, and no doubt they regarded me as a potential foe.

"Thank heavens you're back," I whispered to Snowey. "If they start anything now, we may be able to hold our own. The report of our rifles should scare them badly."

Better show signs of friendship, I thought. I handed each of the tribesmen a slice of bread and meat, but Snowey and I had to take a bite out of each sandwich before they would eat. How they enjoyed it!

They talked volubly with their mouths full; their eyes rolled and they grinned like gargoyles. It seemed that the immediate threat had been removed.

A morning or two later these tribesmen began to act in a peculiar manner. They were sullen, would answer no questions, and spoke among themselves in whispers. They kept

GOLD prospector, explorer, alligator hunter, pearl diver, soldier of fortune, seaman, cattleman, fighter in four wars, fishing "pirate"—such is the career of Mr.

William L. Dawe, now living quietly with his wife and three children in Cannon Hill-road, Birmingham, and working at a Corporation Permanent Way depot. His adventures range from the wastes of Australasia and the South American pampas, to the African desert.



An aboriginal youth of Central Australia, a band of whom formed Mr. Dawe's "expedition."

staring out to the east, and when I moved over to them they would have nothing to do with me. I realised the gravity of the situation.

"Not a man must leave the camp," I told Snowey. "We must arm ourselves and our boys and be ready for action."

Just then Micky, who had been for water, raced into camp with his eyes nearly popping out of his head. His veneer of civilisation had vanished.

POWER OF SADKA

"Sadka!" he gasped. "Man in sadka shoes walk about—we get away quick fella."

"Oh, well," I said, "if it's sadka then its nothing to do with us."

"What does this scared scallywag mean by sadka shoes?" asked "Snowey."

"Sadka means an evil spirit," I reminded him. "Sadka shoes are made of emu feathers clotted together with blood. The imprint gives no indication whether the wearer is coming or going. Some stars are believed to be the ancestors of natives and only men favoured by these stars can wear sadka shoes."

"What utter rot!" snorted "Snowey."

"Nevertheless, the natives believe that the person who wears the sadka shoes has superhuman powers."

"Well, what does it mean?" asked "Snowey."

"It looks as if an enemy of this tribe has walked round the camp at night in the shoes. Now these tribesmen think there's a band of evil round the place, I'll bet they vacate the water hole, and that is what the sadka man wants, I guess."

"Snowey grunted non-committally. I'm sure he thought I was talking baloney. He was to think differently a few days later when he'd seen the effect of sadka on primitive minds."

All day the nomads clung together. Throughout the afternoon they went on whispering. At sundown they began to chant—low, weird and deathlike. At dusk they junk up to our camp fire. Far out in the inky darkness a haunting croon came from the lubras (childless

women) and the piccaninnies. One huge naked savage bent over me, making imploring gestures.

"Snowey" jumped up. "What the hell do they want now?" he demanded testily.

"He wants me to go with him," I said.

"He says he has something sacred his tribe wish to present to us through me."

We held a quick consultation.

"Take your rifle and revolvers, and I'll cover you with mine," said "Snowey." "If

they start any trouble, shoot—and drop the chief and the witch doctor first. By then I'll be accounting for a few."

He turned to Micky. "Micky, you shootem bang, bang, if him blackfella hurt em boss. Tellum other boys to fight with spear and boomerang when I say so."

I went off with the big nomad, to the evident relief of the rest of his tribe.

In the inky darkness, as I followed the big blackfella, I was beset with all kinds of doubts and fears. Had "Snowey" and I played into their hands by splitting our forces?

Back at the camp Micky and our other boys were in a blue funk, I learned later. An hour passed. Micky predicted that I had received a spear in the back. "Snowey," too, feared the worst.

THEY BOWED

When I returned with the blackfella, "Snowey" leapt to his feet and Micky almost danced with joy.

"What the hell have you got here?" "Snowey" pointed to the 12ft. long hardwood stick carried by my companion.

"As the firelight gleamed on it, the tribesmen bowed their heads to the ground. For the first time I noticed its tapering edges (like a two-edged sword) and the odd carvings from end to end."

"Behold the hoodoo stick," I said to Snowey.

[To be Continued]

SOLUTIONS

Crossword Puzzle—Page Seven
Across.—1. Cathedral; 6. Aim; 8. Silver Jubilee; 9. Odious; 11. Puppet; 13. Lehar; 14. Obol; 15. Erne; 16. Ecilat; 18. Indigo; 19. Nevada; 21. Apple Dumpling; 23. Sip; 24. Scavenger.
Down.—1. Cosmopolitans; 2. Talmi-gold; 3. Eyeful; 4. Raja; 5. Labour; 6. All; 7. Meet the Danger; 10. Secco; 11. Pagan; 12. Pervading; 16. Egress; 17. Temple; 20. Duma; 22. Pip.

Do You Know—Page Four

1. Engraved never inkstands. 2. By tradition every peer passing through the town has to present it with a horseshoe. 3. Male falcon, musical or poetical triplet, pertaining to the back. 4. (a) Biting stonework; (b) heartsease; (c) cowslip; (d) daffodil; (e) meadow-sweet. 5. 50. 6. President of the Executive Committee of the Communist International at Moscow. Eventually executed. 7. St. Michael's, Coventry. 8. (a) Immersed in water seated in ducking stools; (b) the loss of a hand; (c) ears cut off.