

Chapter 7

To run up the inclined surface of the palisade and drop to the ground outside was the work of but a moment, or would have been but for Nobs. I had to put my rope about him after we reached the top, lift him over the sharpened stakes and lower him upon the outside. To find Ajor in the unknown country to the north seemed rather hopeless; yet I could do no less than try, praying in the meanwhile that she would come through unscathed and in safety to her father.

As Nobs and I swung along in the growing light of the coming day, I was impressed by the lessening numbers of savage beasts the farther north I traveled. With the decrease among the carnivora, the herbivora increased in quantity, though anywhere in Caspak they are sufficiently plentiful to furnish ample food for the meateaters of each locality. The wild cattle, antelope, deer, and horses I passed showed changes in evolution from their cousins farther south. The kine were smaller and less shaggy, the horses larger. North of the Kro-lu village I saw a small band of the latter of about the size of those of our old Western plains--such as the Indians bred in former days and to a lesser extent even now. They were fat and sleek, and I looked upon them with covetous eyes and with thoughts that any old cow-puncher may well imagine I might entertain after having hoofed it for weeks; but they were wary, scarce permitting me to approach within bow-and-arrow range, much less within roping-distance; yet I still had hopes which I never discarded.

Twice before noon we were stalked and charged by man-eaters; but even though I was without firearms, I still had ample protection in Nobs, who evidently had learned something of Caspakian hunt rules under the tutelage of Du-seen or some other Galu, and of course a great deal more by experience. He always was on the alert for dangerous foes, invariably warning me by low growls of the approach of a large carnivorous animal long before I could either see or hear it, and then when the thing appeared, he would run snapping at its heels, drawing the charge away from me until I found safety in some tree; yet never did the wily Nobs take an unnecessary chance of a mauling. He would dart in and away so quickly that not even the lightning-like movements of the great cats could reach him. I have seen him tantalize them thus until they fairly screamed in rage.

The greatest inconvenience the hunters caused me was the delay, for they have a nasty habit of keeping one treed for an hour or more if balked in their designs; but at last we came in sight of a line of cliffs running east and west across our path as far as the eye could see in either direction, and I knew that we reached the natural boundary which marks the line between the Kro-lu and Galu

countries. The southern face of these cliffs loomed high and forbidding, rising to an altitude of some two hundred feet, sheer and precipitous, without a break that the eye could perceive. How I was to find a crossing I could not guess. Whether to search to the east toward the still loftier barrier-cliffs fronting upon the ocean, or westward in the direction of the inland sea was a question which baffled me. Were there many passes or only one? I had no way of knowing. I could but trust to chance. It never occurred to me that Nobs had made the crossing at least once, possibly a greater number of times, and that he might lead me to the pass; and so it was with no idea of assistance that I appealed to him as a man alone with a dumb brute so often does.

"Nobs," I said, "how the devil are we going to cross those cliffs?"

I do not say that he understood me, even though I realize that an Airedale is a mighty intelligent dog; but I do swear that he seemed to understand me, for he wheeled about, barking joyously and trotted off toward the west; and when I didn't follow him, he ran back to me barking furiously, and at last taking hold of the calf of my leg in an effort to pull me along in the direction he wished me to go. Now, as my legs were naked and Nobs' jaws are much more powerful than he realizes, I gave in and followed him, for I knew that I might as well go west as east, as far as any knowledge I had of the correct direction went.

We followed the base of the cliffs for a considerable distance. The ground was rolling and tree-dotted and covered with grazing animals, alone, in pairs and in herds--a motley aggregation of the modern and extinct herbivore of the world. A huge woolly mastodon stood swaying to and fro in the shade of a giant fern--a mighty bull with enormous upcurving tusks. Near him grazed an aurochs bull with a cow and a calf, close beside a lone rhinoceros asleep in a dust-hole. Deer, antelope, bison, horses, sheep, and goats were all in sight at the same time, and at a little distance a great megatherium reared up on its huge tail and massive hind feet to tear the leaves from a tall tree. The forgotten past rubbed flanks with the present--while Tom Billings, modern of the moderns, passed in the garb of pre-Glacial man, and before him trotted a creature of a breed scarce sixty years old. Nobs was a parvenu; but it failed to worry him.

As we neared the inland sea we saw more flying reptiles and several great amphibians, but none of them attacked us. As we were topping a rise in the middle of the afternoon, I saw something that brought me to a sudden stop. Calling Nobs in a whisper, I cautioned him to silence and kept him at heel while I threw myself flat and watched, from behind a sheltering shrub, a body of warriors approaching the cliff from the south. I could see that they were Galus, and I guessed that Du-seen led them. They had taken a shorter route to the pass and

so had overhauled me. I could see them plainly, for they were no great distance away, and saw with relief that Ajor was not with them.

The cliffs before them were broken and ragged, those coming from the east overlapping the cliffs from the west. Into the defile formed by this overlapping the party filed. I could see them climbing upward for a few minutes, and then they disappeared from view. When the last of them had passed from sight, I rose and bent my steps in the direction of the pass--the same pass toward which Nobs had evidently been leading me. I went warily as I approached it, for fear the party might have halted to rest. If they hadn't halted, I had no fear of being discovered, for I had seen that the Galus marched without point, flankers or rear guard; and when I reached the pass and saw a narrow, one-man trail leading upward at a stiff angle, I wished that I were chief of the Galus for a few weeks. A dozen men could hold off forever in that narrow pass all the hordes which might be brought up from the south; yet there it lay entirely unguarded.

The Galus might be a great people in Caspak; but they were pitifully inefficient in even the simpler forms of military tactics. I was surprised that even a man of the Stone Age should be so lacking in military perspicacity. Du-seen dropped far below par in my estimation as I saw the slovenly formation of his troop as it passed through an enemy country and entered the domain of the chief against whom he had risen in revolt; but Du-seen must have known Jor the chief and known that Jor would not be waiting for him at the pass. Nevertheless he took unwarranted chances. With one squad of a home-guard company I could have conquered Caspak.

Nobs and I followed to the summit of the pass, and there we saw the party defiling into the Galu country, the level of which was not, on an average, over fifty feet below the summit of the cliffs and about a hundred and fifty feet above the adjacent Kro-lu domain. Immediately the landscape changed. The trees, the flowers and the shrubs were of a hardier type, and I realized that at night the Galu blanket might be almost a necessity. Acacia and eucalyptus predominated among the trees; yet there were ash and oak and even pine and fir and hemlock. The tree-life was riotous. The forests were dense and peopled by enormous trees. From the summit of the cliff I could see forests rising hundreds of feet above the level upon which I stood, and even at the distance they were from me I realized that the boles were of gigantic size.

At last I had come to the Galu country. Though not conceived in Caspak, I had indeed come up cor-sva jo--from the beginning I had come up through the hideous horrors of the lower Caspakian spheres of evolution, and I could not but feel something of the elation and pride which had filled To-mar and So-al when

they realized that the call had come to them and they were about to rise from the estate of Band-lus to that of Kro-lus. I was glad that I was not batu.

But where was Ajor? Though my eyes searched the wide landscape before me, I saw nothing other than the warriors of Du-seen and the beasts of the fields and the forests. Surrounded by forests, I could see wide plains dotting the country as far as the eye could reach; but nowhere was a sign of a small Galu she--the beloved she whom I would have given my right hand to see.

Nobs and I were hungry; we had not eaten since the preceding night, and below us was game-deer, sheep, anything that a hungry hunter might crave; so down the steep trail we made our way, and then upon my belly with Nobs crouching low behind me, I crawled toward a small herd of red deer feeding at the edge of a plain close beside a forest. There was ample cover, what with solitary trees and dotting bushes so that I found no difficulty in stalking up wind to within fifty feet of my quarry--a large, sleek doe unaccompanied by a fawn. Greatly then did I regret my rifle. Never in my life had I shot an arrow, but I knew how it was done, and fitting the shaft to my string, I aimed carefully and let drive. At the same instant I called to Nobs and leaped to me feet.

The arrow caught the doe full in the side, and in the same moment Nobs was after her. She turned to flee with the two of us pursuing her, Nobs with his great fangs bared and I with my short spear poised for a cast. The balance of the herd sprang quickly away; but the hurt doe lagged, and in a moment Nobs was beside her and had leaped at her throat. He had her down when I came up, and I finished her with my spear. It didn't take me long to have a fire going and a steak broiling, and while I was preparing for my own feast, Nobs was filling himself with raw venison. Never have I enjoyed a meal so heartily.

For two days I searched fruitlessly back and forth from the inland sea almost to the barrier cliffs for some trace of Ajor, and always I trended northward; but I saw no sign of any human being, not even the band of Galu warriors under Du-seen; and then I commenced to have misgivings. Had Chal-az spoken the truth to me when he said that Ajor had quit the village of the Kro-lu? Might he not have been acting upon the orders of Al-tan, in whose savage bosom might have lurked some small spark of shame that he had attempted to do to death one who had befriended a Kro-lu warrior--a guest who had brought no harm upon the Kro-lu race--and thus have sent me out upon a fruitless mission in the hope that the wild beasts would do what Al-tan hesitated to do? I did not know; but the more I thought upon it, the more convinced I became that Ajor had not quitted the Kro-lu village; but if not, what had brought Du-seen forth without her? There was a puzzler, and once again I was all at sea.

On the second day of my experience of the Galu country I came upon a bunch of as magnificent horses as it has ever been my lot to see. They were dark bays with blazed faces and perfect surcingles of white about their barrels. Their forelegs were white to the knees. In height they stood almost sixteen hands, the mares being a trifle smaller than the stallions, of which there were three or four in this band of a hundred, which comprised many colts and half-grown horses. Their markings were almost identical, indicating a purity of strain that might have persisted since long ages ago. If I had coveted one of the little ponies of the Kro-lu country, imagine my state of mind when I came upon these magnificent creatures! No sooner had I espied them than I determined to possess one of them; nor did it take me long to select a beautiful young stallion--a four-year-old, I guessed him.

The horses were grazing close to the edge of the forest in which Nobs and I were concealed, while the ground between us and them was dotted with clumps of flowering brush which offered perfect concealment. The stallion of my choice grazed with a filly and two yearlings a little apart from the balance of the herd and nearest to the forest and to me. At my whispered "Charge!" Nobs flattened himself to the ground, and I knew that he would not again move until I called him, unless danger threatened me from the rear. Carefully I crept forward toward my unsuspecting quarry, coming undetected to the concealment of a bush not more than twenty feet from him. Here I quietly arranged my noose, spreading it flat and open upon the ground.

To step to one side of the bush and throw directly from the ground, which is the style I am best in, would take but an instant, and in that instant the stallion would doubtless be under way at top speed in the opposite direction. Then he would have to wheel about when I surprised him, and in doing so, he would most certainly rise slightly upon his hind feet and throw up his head, presenting a perfect target for my noose as he pivoted.

Yes, I had it beautifully worked out, and I waited until he should turn in my direction. At last it became evident that he was doing so, when apparently without cause, the filly raised her head, neighed and started off at a trot in the opposite direction, immediately followed, of course, by the colts and my stallion. It looked for a moment as though my last hope was blasted; but presently their fright, if fright it was, passed, and they resumed grazing again a hundred yards farther on. This time there was no bush within fifty feet of them, and I was at a loss as to how to get within safe roping-distance. Anywhere under forty feet I am an excellent roper, at fifty feet I am fair; but over that I knew it would be a matter of luck if I succeeded in getting my noose about that beautiful arched neck.

As I stood debating the question in my mind, I was almost upon the point of making the attempt at the long throw. I had plenty of rope, this Galu weapon being fully sixty feet long. How I wished for the collies from the ranch! At a word they would have circled this little bunch and driven it straight down to me; and then it flashed into my mind that Nobs had run with those collies all one summer, that he had gone down to the pasture with them after the cows every evening and done his part in driving them back to the milking-barn, and had done it intelligently; but Nobs had never done the thing alone, and it had been a year since he had done it at all. However, the chances were more in favor of my fozzling the long throw than that Nobs would fall down in his part if I gave him the chance.

Having come to a decision, I had to creep back to Nobs and get him, and then with him at my heels return to a large bush near the four horses. Here we could see directly through the bush, and pointing the animals out to Nobs I whispered: "Fetch 'em, boy!"

In an instant he was gone, circling wide toward the rear of the quarry. They caught sight of him almost immediately and broke into a trot away from him; but when they saw that he was apparently giving them a wide berth they stopped again, though they stood watching him, with high-held heads and quivering nostrils. It was a beautiful sight. And then Nobs turned in behind them and trotted slowly back toward me. He did not bark, nor come rushing down upon them, and when he had come closer to them, he proceeded at a walk. The splendid creatures seemed more curious than fearful, making no effort to escape until Nobs was quite close to them; then they trotted slowly away, but at right angles.

And now the fun and trouble commenced. Nobs, of course, attempted to turn them, and he seemed to have selected the stallion to work upon, for he paid no attention to the others, having intelligence enough to know that a lone dog could run his legs off before he could round up four horses that didn't wish to be rounded up. The stallion, however, had notions of his own about being headed, and the result was as pretty a race as one would care to see. Gad, how that horse could run! He seemed to flatten out and shoot through the air with the very minimum of exertion, and at his forefoot ran Nobs, doing his best to turn him. He was barking now, and twice he leaped high against the stallion's flank; but this cost too much effort and always lost him ground, as each time he was hurled heels over head by the impact; yet before they disappeared over a rise in the ground I was sure that Nobs' persistence was bearing fruit; it seemed to me that the horse was giving way a trifle to the right. Nobs was between him and the main herd, to which the yearling and filly had already fled.

As I stood waiting for Nobs' return, I could not but speculate upon my chances should I be attacked by some formidable beast. I was some distance from the forest and armed with weapons in the use of which I was quite untrained, though I had practiced some with the spear since leaving the Kro-lu country. I must admit that my thoughts were not pleasant ones, verging almost upon cowardice, until I chanced to think of little Ajor alone in this same land and armed only with a knife! I was immediately filled with shame; but in thinking the matter over since, I have come to the conclusion that my state of mind was influenced largely by my approximate nakedness. If you have never wandered about in broad daylight garbed in a bit of red-deer skin in inadequate length, you can have no conception of the sensation of futility that overwhelms one. Clothes, to a man accustomed to wearing clothes, impart a certain self-confidence; lack of them induces panic.

But no beast attacked me, though I saw several menacing forms passing through the dark aisles of the forest. At last I commenced to worry over Nobs' protracted absence and to fear that something had befallen him. I was coiling my rope to start out in search of him, when I saw the stallion leap into view at almost the same spot behind which he had disappeared, and at his heels ran Nobs. Neither was running so fast or furiously as when last I had seen them.

The horse, as he approached me, I could see was laboring hard; yet he kept gamely to his task, and Nobs, too. The splendid fellow was driving the quarry straight toward me. I crouched behind my bush and laid my noose in readiness to throw. As the two approached my hiding-place, Nobs reduced his speed, and the stallion, evidently only too glad of the respite, dropped into a trot. It was at this gait that he passed me; my rope-hand flew forward; the honda, well down, held the noose open, and the beautiful bay fairly ran his head into it.

Instantly he wheeled to dash off at right angles. I braced myself with the rope around my hip and brought him to a sudden stand. Rearing and struggling, he fought for his liberty while Nobs, panting and with lolling tongue, came and threw himself down near me. He seemed to know that his work was done and that he had earned his rest. The stallion was pretty well spent, and after a few minutes of struggling he stood with feet far spread, nostrils dilated and eyes wide, watching me as I edged toward him, taking in the slack of the rope as I advanced. A dozen times he reared and tried to break away; but always I spoke soothingly to him and after an hour of effort I succeeded in reaching his head and stroking his muzzle. Then I gathered a handful of grass and offered it to him, and always I talked to him in a quiet and reassuring voice.

I had expected a battle royal; but on the contrary I found his taming a matter of comparative ease. Though wild, he was gentle to a degree, and of such

remarkable intelligence that he soon discovered that I had no intention of harming him. After that, all was easy. Before that day was done, I had taught him to lead and to stand while I stroked his head and flanks, and to eat from my hand, and had the satisfaction of seeing the light of fear die in his large, intelligent eyes.

The following day I fashioned a hackamore from a piece which I cut from the end of my long Galu rope, and then I mounted him fully prepared for a struggle of titanic proportions in which I was none too sure that he would not come off victor; but he never made the slightest effort to unseat me, and from then on his education was rapid. No horse ever learned more quickly the meaning of the rein and the pressure of the knees. I think he soon learned to love me, and I know that I loved him; while he and Nobs were the best of pals. I called him Ace. I had a friend who was once in the French flying-corps, and when Ace let himself out, he certainly flew.

I cannot explain to you, nor can you understand, unless you too are a horseman, the exhilarating feeling of well-being which pervaded me from the moment that I commenced riding Ace. I was a new man, imbued with a sense of superiority that led me to feel that I could go forth and conquer all Caspak single-handed. Now, when I needed meat, I ran it down on Ace and roped it, and when some great beast with which we could not cope threatened us, we galloped away to safety; but for the most part the creatures we met looked upon us in terror, for Ace and I in combination presented a new and unusual beast beyond their experience and ken.

For five days I rode back and forth across the southern end of the Galu country without seeing a human being; yet all the time I was working slowly toward the north, for I had determined to comb the territory thoroughly in search of Ajor; but on the fifth day as I emerged from a forest, I saw some distance ahead of me a single small figure pursued by many others. Instantly I recognized the quarry as Ajor. The entire party was fully a mile away from me, and they were crossing my path at right angles. Ajor a few hundred yards in advance of those who followed her. One of her pursuers was far in advance of the others, and was gaining upon her rapidly. With a word and a pressure of the knees I sent Ace leaping out into the open, and with Nobs running close alongside, we raced toward her.

At first none of them saw us; but as we neared Ajor, the pack behind the foremost pursuer discovered us and set up such a howl as I never before have heard. They were all Galus, and I soon recognized the foremost as Du-seen. He was almost upon Ajor now, and with a sense of terror such as I had never before experienced, I saw that he ran with his knife in his hand, and that his intention was to slay rather than capture. I could not understand it, but I could only urge Ace to

greater speed, and most nobly did the wondrous creature respond to my demands. If ever a four-footed creature approximated flying, it was Ace that day.

Du-seen, intent upon his brutal design, had as yet not noticed us. He was within a pace of Ajor when Ace and I dashed between them, and I, leaning down to the left, swept my little barbarian into the hollow of an arm and up on the withers of my glorious Ace. We had snatched her from the very clutches of Du-seen, who halted, mystified and raging. Ajor, too, was mystified, as we had come up from diagonally behind her so that she had no idea that we were near until she was swung to Ace's back. The little savage turned with drawn knife to stab me, thinking that I was some new enemy, when her eyes found my face and she recognized me. With a little sob she threw her arms about my neck, gasping: "My Tom! My Tom!"

And then Ace sank suddenly into thick mud to his belly, and Ajor and I were thrown far over his head. He had run into one of those numerous springs which cover Caspak. Sometimes they are little lakes, again but tiny pools, and often mere quagmires of mud, as was this one overgrown with lush grasses which effectually hid its treacherous identity. It is a wonder that Ace did not break a leg, so fast he was going when he fell; but he didn't, though with four good legs he was unable to wallow from the mire. Ajor and I had sprawled face down in the covering grasses and so had not sunk deeply; but when we tried to rise, we found that there was not footing, and presently we saw that Du-seen and his followers were coming down upon us. There was no escape. It was evident that we were doomed.

"Slay me!" begged Ajor. "Let me die at thy loved hands rather than beneath the knife of this hateful thing, for he will kill me. He has sworn to kill me. Last night he captured me, and when later he would have his way with me, I struck him with my fists and with my knife I stabbed him, and then I escaped, leaving him raging in pain and thwarted desire. Today they searched for me and found me; and as I fled, Du-seen ran after me crying that he would slay me. Kill me, my Tom, and then fall upon thine own spear, for they will kill you horribly if they take you alive."

I couldn't kill her--not at least until the last moment; and I told her so, and that I loved her, and that until death came, I would live and fight for her.

Nobs had followed us into the bog and had done fairly well at first, but when he neared us he too sank to his belly and could only flounder about. We were in this predicament when Du-seen and his followers approached the edge of the horrible swamp. I saw that Al-tan was with him and many other Kro-lu warriors. The alliance against Jor the chief had, therefore, been consummated, and this horde

was already marching upon the Galu city. I sighed as I thought how close I had been to saving not only Ajor but her father and his people from defeat and death.

Beyond the swamp was a dense wood. Could we have reached this, we would have been safe; but it might as well have been a hundred miles away as a hundred yards across that hidden lake of sticky mud. Upon the edge of the swamp Du-seen and his horde halted to revile us. They could not reach us with their hands; but at a command from Du-seen they fitted arrows to their bows, and I saw that the end had come. Ajor huddled close to me, and I took her in my arms. "I love you, Tom," she said, "only you." Tears came to my eyes then, not tears of self-pity for my predicament, but tears from a heart filled with a great love--a heart that sees the sun of its life and its love setting even as it rises.

The renegade Galus and their Kro-lu allies stood waiting for the word from Du-seen that would launch that barbed avalanche of death upon us, when there broke from the wood beyond the swamp the sweetest music that ever fell upon the ears of man--the sharp staccato of at least two score rifles fired rapidly at will. Down went the Galu and Kro-lu warriors like tenpins before that deadly fusillade.

What could it mean? To me it meant but one thing, and that was that Hollis and Short and the others had scaled the cliffs and made their way north to the Galu country upon the opposite side of the island in time to save Ajor and me from almost certain death. I didn't have to have an introduction to them to know that the men who held those rifles were the men of my own party; and when, a few minutes later, they came forth from their concealment, my eyes verified my hopes. There they were, every man-jack of them; and with them were a thousand straight, sleek warriors of the Galu race; and ahead of the others came two men in the garb of Galus. Each was tall and straight and wonderfully muscled; yet they differed as Ace might differ from a perfect specimen of another species. As they approached the mire, Ajor held forth her arms and cried, "Jor, my chief! My father!" and the elder of the two rushed in knee-deep to rescue her, and then the other came close and looked into my face, and his eyes went wide, and mine too, and I cried: "Bowen! For heaven's sake, Bowen Tyler!"

It was he. My search was ended. Around me were all my company and the man we had searched a new world to find. They cut saplings from the forest and laid a road into the swamp before they could get us all out, and then we marched back to the city of Jor the Galu chief, and there was great rejoicing when Ajor came home again mounted upon the glossy back of the stallion Ace.

Tyler and Hollis and Short and all the rest of us Americans nearly worked our jaws loose on the march back to the village, and for days afterward we kept it up. They told me how they had crossed the barrier cliffs in five days, working twenty-

four hours a day in three eight-hour shifts with two reliefs to each shift alternating half-hourly. Two men with electric drills driven from the dynamos aboard the Toredor drilled two holes four feet apart in the face of the cliff and in the same horizontal planes. The holes slanted slightly downward. Into these holes the iron rods brought as a part of our equipment and for just this purpose were inserted, extending about a foot beyond the face of the rock, across these two rods a plank was laid, and then the next shift, mounting to the new level, bored two more holes five feet above the new platform, and so on.

During the nights the searchlights from the Toredor were kept playing upon the cliff at the point where the drills were working, and at the rate of ten feet an hour the summit was reached upon the fifth day. Ropes were lowered, blocks lashed to trees at the top, and crude elevators rigged, so that by the night of the fifth day the entire party, with the exception of the few men needed to man the Toredor, were within Caspak with an abundance of arms, ammunition and equipment.

From then on, they fought their way north in search of me, after a vain and perilous effort to enter the hideous reptile-infested country to the south. Owing to the number of guns among them, they had not lost a man; but their path was strewn with the dead creatures they had been forced to slay to win their way to the north end of the island, where they had found Bowen and his bride among the Galus of Jor.

The reunion between Bowen and Nobs was marked by a frantic display upon Nobs' part, which almost stripped Bowen of the scanty attire that the Galu custom had vouchsafed him. When we arrived at the Galu city, Lys La Rue was waiting to welcome us. She was Mrs. Tyler now, as the master of the Toredor had married them the very day that the search-party had found them, though neither Lys nor Bowen would admit that any civil or religious ceremony could have rendered more sacred the bonds with which God had united them.

Neither Bowen nor the party from the Toredor had seen any sign of Bradley and his party. They had been so long lost now that any hopes for them must be definitely abandoned. The Galus had heard rumors of them, as had the Western Kro-lu and Band-lu; but none had seen aught of them since they had left Fort Dinosaur months since.

We rested in Jor's village for a fortnight while we prepared for the southward journey to the point where the Toredor was to lie off shore in wait for us. During these two weeks Chal-az came up from the Kro-lu country, now a full-fledged Galu. He told us that the remnants of Al-tan's party had been slain when they attempted to re-enter Kro-lu. Chal-az had been made chief, and when he rose, had left the tribe under a new leader whom all respected.

Nobs stuck close to Bowen; but Ace and Ajor and I went out upon many long rides through the beautiful north Galu country. Chal-az had brought my arms and ammunition up from Kro-lu with him; but my clothes were gone; nor did I miss them once I became accustomed to the free attire of the Galu.

At last came the time for our departure; upon the following morning we were to set out toward the south and the Toreador and dear old California. I had asked Ajor to go with us; but Jor her father had refused to listen to the suggestion. No pleas could swerve him from his decision: Ajor, the cos-ata-lo, from whom might spring a new and greater Caspakian race, could not be spared. I might have any other she among the Galus; but Ajor--no!

The poor child was heartbroken; and as for me, I was slowly realizing the hold that Ajor had upon my heart and wondered how I should get along without her. As I held her in my arms that last night, I tried to imagine what life would be like without her, for at last there had come to me the realization that I loved her--loved my little barbarian; and as I finally tore myself away and went to my own hut to snatch a few hours' sleep before we set off upon our long journey on the morrow, I consoled myself with the thought that time would heal the wound and that back in my native land I should find a mate who would be all and more to me than little Ajor could ever be--a woman of my own race and my own culture.

Morning came more quickly than I could have wished. I rose and breakfasted, but saw nothing of Ajor. It was best, I thought, that I go thus without the harrowing pangs of a last farewell. The party formed for the march, an escort of Galu warriors ready to accompany us. I could not even bear to go to Ace's corral and bid him farewell. The night before, I had given him to Ajor, and now in my mind the two seemed inseparable.

And so we marched away, down the street flanked with its stone houses and out through the wide gateway in the stone wall which surrounds the city and on across the clearing toward the forest through which we must pass to reach the northern boundary of Galu, beyond which we would turn south. At the edge of the forest I cast a backward glance at the city which held my heart, and beside the massive gateway I saw that which brought me to a sudden halt. It was a little figure leaning against one of the great upright posts upon which the gates swing--a crumpled little figure; and even at this distance I could see its shoulders heave to the sobs that racked it. It was the last straw.

Bowen was near me. "Good-bye old man," I said. "I'm going back."

He looked at me in surprise. "Good-bye, old man," he said, and grasped my hand. "I thought you'd do it in the end."

And then I went back and took Ajour in my arms and kissed the tears from her eyes and a smile to her lips while together we watched the last of the Americans disappear into the forest.