

natural animosities.

In those days my fear of the Beast People went the way of my personal fear for Moreau. I fell indeed into a morbid state, deep and enduring, and alien to fear, which has left permanent scars upon my mind.

I must confess that I lost faith in the sanity of the world when I saw it suffering the painful disorder of this island.

A blind Fate, a vast pitiless Mechanism, seemed to cut and shape the fabric of existence and I, Moreau (by his passion for research), Montgomery (by his passion for drink), the Beast People with their instincts and mental restrictions, were torn and crushed, ruthlessly, inevitably, amid the infinite complexity of its incessant wheels. But this condition did not come all at once: I think indeed that I anticipate a little in speaking of it now.

XVII. A CATASTROPHE.

SCARCELY six weeks passed before I had lost every feeling but dislike and abhorrence for this infamous experiment of Moreau's. My one idea was to get away from these horrible caricatures of my Maker's image, back to the sweet and wholesome intercourse of men.

My fellow-creatures, from whom I was thus separated, began to assume idyllic virtue and beauty in my memory. My first friendship with Montgomery did not increase. His long separation from humanity, his secret vice of drunkenness, his evident sympathy with the Beast People, tainted him to me. Several times I let him go alone among them.

I avoided intercourse with them in every possible way.

I spent an increasing proportion of my time upon the beach, looking for some liberating sail that never appeared,--until one day there fell upon us an appalling disaster, which put an altogether different aspect upon my strange surroundings.

It was about seven or eight weeks after my landing,--rather more, I think, though I had not troubled to keep account of the time,--when this catastrophe occurred. It happened in the early morning--I should think about six. I had risen and breakfasted early, having been aroused by the noise of three Beast Men carrying wood into the enclosure.

After breakfast I went to the open gateway of the enclosure, and stood there smoking a cigarette and enjoying the freshness of the early morning. Moreau presently came round the corner of the enclosure and greeted me. He passed by me, and I heard him behind me unlock and enter his laboratory. So indurated was I at that time to the abomination of the place, that I heard without a touch of emotion the puma victim begin another day of torture. It met its persecutor with a shriek, almost exactly like that of an

angry virago.

Then suddenly something happened,--I do not know what, to this day. I heard a short, sharp cry behind me, a fall, and turning saw an awful face rushing upon me,--not human, not animal, but hellish, brown, seamed with red branching scars, red drops starting out upon it, and the lidless eyes ablaze.

I threw up my arm to defend myself from the blow that flung me headlong with a broken forearm; and the great monster, swathed in lint and with red-stained bandages fluttering about it, leapt over me and passed. I rolled over and over down the beach, tried to sit up, and collapsed upon my broken arm. Then Moreau appeared, his massive white face all the more terrible for the blood that trickled from his forehead. He carried a revolver in one hand. He scarcely glanced at me, but rushed off at once in pursuit of the puma.

I tried the other arm and sat up. The muffled figure in front ran in great striding leaps along the beach, and Moreau followed her. She turned her head and saw him, then doubling abruptly made for the bushes. She gained upon him at every stride. I saw her plunge into them, and Moreau, running slantingly to intercept her, fired and missed as she disappeared. Then he too vanished in the green confusion. I stared after them, and then the pain in my arm flamed up, and with a groan I staggered to my feet. Montgomery appeared in the doorway, dressed, and with his revolver in

his hand.

"Great God, Prendick!" he said, not noticing that I was hurt,
"that brute's loose! Tore the fetter out of the wall!
Have you seen them?" Then sharply, seeing I gripped my arm,
"What's the matter?"

"I was standing in the doorway," said I.

He came forward and took my arm. "Blood on the sleeve,"
said he, and rolled back the flannel. He pocketed his weapon,
felt my arm about painfully, and led me inside. "Your arm
is broken," he said, and then, "Tell me exactly how it
happened--what happened?"

I told him what I had seen; told him in broken sentences,
with gasps of pain between them, and very dexterously and swiftly
he bound my arm meanwhile. He slung it from my shoulder,
stood back and looked at me.

"You'll do," he said. "And now?"

He thought. Then he went out and locked the gates of the enclosure.
He was absent some time.

I was chiefly concerned about my arm. The incident seemed merely

one more of many horrible things. I sat down in the deck chair, and I must admit swore heartily at the island. The first dull feeling of injury in my arm had already given way to a burning pain when Montgomery reappeared. His face was rather pale, and he showed more of his lower gums than ever.

"I can neither see nor hear anything of him," he said.

"I've been thinking he may want my help." He stared at me with his expressionless eyes. "That was a strong brute," he said.

"It simply wrenched its fetter out of the wall." He went to the window, then to the door, and there turned to me. "I shall go after him,"

he said. "There's another revolver I can leave with you.

To tell you the truth, I feel anxious somehow."

He obtained the weapon, and put it ready to my hand on the table; then went out, leaving a restless contagion in the air.

I did not sit long after he left, but took the revolver in hand and went to the doorway.

The morning was as still as death. Not a whisper of wind was stirring; the sea was like polished glass, the sky empty, the beach desolate.

In my half-excited, half-feverish state, this stillness of things oppressed me. I tried to whistle, and the tune died away.

I swore again,--the second time that morning. Then I went to the corner of the enclosure and stared inland at the green bush that had swallowed up Moreau and Montgomery. When would they return, and how?

Then far away up the beach a little grey Beast Man appeared,
ran down to the water's edge and began splashing about.
I strolled back to the doorway, then to the corner again,
and so began pacing to and fro like a sentinel upon duty.
Once I was arrested by the distant voice of Montgomery bawling,
"Coo-ee--Moreau!" My arm became less painful, but very hot.
I got feverish and thirsty. My shadow grew shorter.
I watched the distant figure until it went away again. Would Moreau
and Montgomery never return? Three sea-birds began fighting for some
stranded treasure.

Then from far away behind the enclosure I heard a pistol-shot. A
long silence, and then came another. Then a yelling cry nearer,
and another dismal gap of silence. My unfortunate imagination
set to work to torment me. Then suddenly a shot close by.

I went to the corner, startled, and saw Montgomery,--his face scarlet,
his hair disordered, and the knee of his trousers torn.
His face expressed profound consternation. Behind him slouched
the Beast Man, M'ling, and round M'ling's jaws were some queer
dark stains.

"Has he come?" said Montgomery.

"Moreau?" said I. "No."

"My God!" The man was panting, almost sobbing. "Go back in," he said,

taking my arm. "They're mad. They're all rushing about mad. What can have happened? I don't know. I'll tell you, when my breath comes. Where's some brandy?"

Montgomery limped before me into the room and sat down in the deck chair. M'ling flung himself down just outside the doorway and began panting like a dog. I got Montgomery some brandy-and-water. He sat staring in front of him at nothing, recovering his breath. After some minutes he began to tell me what had happened.

He had followed their track for some way. It was plain enough at first on account of the crushed and broken bushes, white rags torn from the puma's bandages, and occasional smears of blood on the leaves of the shrubs and undergrowth. He lost the track, however, on the stony ground beyond the stream where I had seen the Beast Man drinking, and went wandering aimlessly westward shouting Moreau's name. Then M'ling had come to him carrying a light hatchet. M'ling had seen nothing of the puma affair; had been felling wood, and heard him calling. They went on shouting together. Two Beast Men came crouching and peering at them through the undergrowth, with gestures and a furtive carriage that alarmed Montgomery by their strangeness. He hailed them, and they fled guiltily. He stopped shouting after that, and after wandering some time farther in an undecided way, determined to visit the huts.

He found the ravine deserted.

Growing more alarmed every minute, he began to retrace his steps. Then it was he encountered the two Swine-men I had seen dancing on the night of my arrival; blood-stained they were about the mouth, and intensely excited. They came crashing through the ferns, and stopped with fierce faces when they saw him. He cracked his whip in some trepidation, and forthwith they rushed at him. Never before had a Beast Man dared to do that. One he shot through the head; M'ling flung himself upon the other, and the two rolled grappling. M'ling got his brute under and with his teeth in its throat, and Montgomery shot that too as it struggled in M'ling's grip. He had some difficulty in inducing M'ling to come on with him. Thence they had hurried back to me. On the way, M'ling had suddenly rushed into a thicket and driven out an under-sized Ocelot-man, also blood-stained, and lame through a wound in the foot. This brute had run a little way and then turned savagely at bay, and Montgomery--with a certain wantonness, I thought--had shot him.

"What does it all mean?" said I.

He shook his head, and turned once more to the brandy.