THE LUCKY JIM

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None of us ever knew much about him.

Douglas Gillespie arrived as a tarpaulin passenger on the regular contract boat that every quarter brought in the food supplies and our mail.

A tarpaulin passenger on one of those tiny forty feet boats that ply as far as is humanly possible on many of the rivers and creeks strung like silver ribbons through the gigantic forests of central South America corresponds more or less to a first class passenger on an A-1 ~~a1~~-Atlantic liner. The only other class permissible on those small open row boats is third class in which the passengers have to work the whole way--pulling paddle--heading cargo over the falls and rapids--cooking their own food--manhandling the heavy boats over the rocks and other obstructions en route for their destination. The tarpaulin passenger does no work; he is given a seat amidships on the tarpaulin covering the cargo--generally a half bag of flour or rice or a bale of soft goods is so placed that he may have a somewhat more comfortable seat than on an angular box of sundries that compose the general cargo; he is allotted an apprentice boy from amongst the crew who cooks his food, hangs his hammock at night; doing all the duties of a steward-valet in the hope that careful services may result in a gratuity of a few dollars, one third of which must, of course, go to the steersman or captain.

It was Saturday afternoon--half day holiday for all hands--when the buzzar went at noon, we downed tools cheerfully and promptly. We were all laughing and talking as we climbed from the workings to the camp situated on the crest of a small hill a short distance away. Before scattering to our respective houses we stood a few moments discussing how we could

best spend the intervening forty hours of freedom before the buzzar went again. It had been a sizzling hot morning and was now the hottest part of the day, yet the hour of greatest quiet in all the twenty-four throughout the forest when all Nature sinks to sommolent silence in the vertical rays of the tropical sun.

The silence was suddenly broken by the faint, almost imaginary sound of a bugle being played some long distance away. Speech and laughter were instantly arrested; we even breathed through open mouths, intently listening to catch its second notes and locate the direction. Well, we knew what it meant. For hundreds of miles in every direction lay the trackless jungle but the sound must be made by human agency. Experience showed that the sound could mean only one thing--a boat was approaching up river from the coast. This was the usual river signal of a series of notes given on a conch shell, or a cowhorn invariably sent out when the captain thinks he is within such distance that the sound will reach the camp ahead. Silently each wondered what it could mean. Our regular boat was not due with supplies and mail for nearly a week, yet the river had been in half flood only for some weeks now and it might mean a favorable passage and a saving of some days. In any case, it meant people were approaching and even if they were not consigned to us it meant momentary releif from each other and the monotony of camp life for there would surely be fresh faces aboard and at the worst verbal news of some kind of the doings in the outside world.

The negro workmen had been clumping noisily behind us but came to sudden motionless silence at an uplifted hand and our tense attitude. Then came the clearer notes of the horn. The boat had passed from behind a bend of the river and now, free from the towering banks of the trees,

the sound, less muffled, came to our ears with certainty. Pandemonium at once broke out amongst the workers. Hats, and everything they carried were flung high in the air; they broke into yells, jumping and leaping in the air like playful antelope; as they scampered for their quarters informing as they ran "Boat-a-ramble. Iss we own Capt. Rhodius' signal. Huzzah! Huzzah!"

It was three o'clock in the afternoon before the boat became visable slowly stemming the current of the twisting, twining river. Everyone had bathed, dressed and lunched in the interval and when the boat crept round the last bend every soul in camp--6 white men, in their capacity as managers, overseers and clerks, and some hundred and fifty negro workers - men, women and children- were down at the landing in anticipation and welcome. The boat was that of our company and after the long silence of three months, every person in that motley crowd expected letters - news of those we loved or who loved us-- news of joys or sorrows of relatives--news of the welfare and doings of friends and acquaintances and news of the outside world, political and economic by newspaper and magazine. Excitment was visable everywhere, in the rolling eyes of the workers; the hushed tense whispers, now that the boat was drawing close, in place of rowdy welcome to the earlier distant signal. There was an electric current of expectancy, hope and fear in the air as they packed in serried rows behind us and even we, more disciplined by convention and experience, felt our thoughts running on similar lines even if we camouflaged them with jokes about unpaid bills and such like badinage.

Slowly the boat nosed round out of the current into the backwater in front of us; greetings, again hilarious and noisy, broke out between

the crew and the laborers behind us, until, with a gentle bump the bow of the boat grounded on the bank below our feet. The bowman sprang ashore, mooring rope in hand and made all fast to a nearby root of a tree; paddles were flung on one side and the crew in the near side lent over to give "gangway" for their passenger.

A trim thin Khaki clad white man rose from his seat on the tarpaulin, pausing for a second to ensure balance on the swaying boat, then with a jaunty air that bespoke considerable experience, walked unaided along the three inch wide gunwale and stepped ashore. As he did so He drew a letter from his pocket and read "John S. Winstanley Esq.". The 'Ole Man", our manager was seated well to the front of everybody on the stump of a felled tree. He rose, took the missive, broke it open and read for a moment.. He reached out to shake hands with the stranger, bade him welcome and put a few questions as to health, weather and the journey up country.

Turning to the crowd behind he said, "Boys, meet Mr. Gillespie, who has been sent up by the office as an assistant." His eyes roved over us all until his selection was made. "Shorty", he said "the new hand will mess with you in your house. See to his comfort. Introduce him round and don't forget to find out between now and Monday morning, Shorty, just how much he doesn't know about mining."

Shorty was American, California born, but how he came by his name none of us ever knew. His baptismal certificate gave his full name as James Alfred Frederick Eustavus Stackpole; he stood six feet three in his bare feet and was built on proportional lines. As he often told us "he filled the eye and was easy to look at." His temper was most serene and he was the least easily ruffled amongst us yet the man was "Shorty" to all and sundry over a territory with a radius of several hundred miles and very few ever knew his full or correct name.

The mail bags were now passing from hand to hand along the boat for the bank and already one black boy was racing up the hill with the first one ashore. Gillespie was of very second rate importance at the moment and after the customary handshake and courtesies we were all heading for the office for the distribution of letters and mails.

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With the exception of a few expert cartographers there are not many people who know the real size of the immense forest that clothes central South America. It begins at the most easterly point of land where the Guianas and Brazil about to deflect the Gulf Stream away to the North and taking the Equatorial line as roughly the center, continues Westward without interruptions till it dwindles away to nothing before meeting the snows and intense cold of the high Andean Mountains. Away in the North it begins at the edge of the Caribbean Sea and ramifications stretch away to the South to distant Uruguay, Paraguay and even Argentina. This huge forest is a colossal sea of turbulent vegetation varying from some thirty feet in depth to as much as three hundred feet according to the degree of soil fertility and other favorable enviornment; a compact mass against which civilization and man have been unable to make little if any headway. Much of this forest is dense jungle and even at its best, overland journeys on any scale can only be made at a vast cost in money, labor and health.

Here and there, are large tracks of open grass lands - the campos or savannahs which attract the settler from outside and may provide him with the necessaries of life and if lucky just a trifle over at a minimum expenditure of ready cash or hard work but as a rule the climate is

enervating, the settler slowly deteriorates until "Amanha" becomes his motto and he is glad to sell his holdings to some newcomer or a company who invariably see the pot at the end of the rainbow, only, in their case, also to pray for a further sale in a few years time.

While it is the ease of camp life that kills ambition and progress exactly the opposite may be said of the forest country. The forest shrinks a little as the puny human ~~nut~~ ant attacks some point with axe, saw, cutlass and fire, the customary methods of starting a clearing for home fields and gardens; for sometime, the forest appears to sit quiescent during which time the settler has got a variety of economics plants beginning to grow in the clearing. Some of his crops he will soon begin to gather; he has just picked his first rose and his fruit trees are coming in to blossom when some variation of climatic conditions occurs and the forest wakes up and begins to move.

It is strange that as far as records go the forest makes no attempt to encroach on the open campos or savannahs but after a short rest for mobilization, the forest definitely resents any attempt to steal a few acres of her territory. She stages no spectacular assault but slowly, inexorably, almost invisably as the glacier, she pushes forward a few inches here, a foot or so there. The vegetation growing outward at all points causes a slow daily unperceived advance over the stolen ground,- no more than that. To the forest a thousand years are as a day. But the forest marshalls her allies also. The weather may stage a drought when the domesticated plants of man die for lack of moisture increased by a blazing sun licking up from the bare open clearing what the forest conserves under der dense canopy of leaf and greenery. A record rainy season may occur when the same plants rot and die. Then come the insects of all kinds; tiny insignificant bodies of such gossomer

appearance as to appear beneath contempt. These forests carry more insects to the square yard than any other part of the world and it is well to remember that almost without exception they either sting, bite or annoy in some other way. Mosquitoes leave malaria where they bite another causes the even more deadly jungle or yellow fever; ticks burrow beneath the skin; jiggers make colonies in the toes; midges irritate beyond conception; and the piums or cobowra flies, an insignificant pinhead affair, leaves a blob of blood beneath the outer cuticle where their pneumatic pump has drawn a meal of blood in place of a bite thereby leaving an intolerable itch which if scratched will lead to open sores and blemishes for life.

Nor do the insects forget the imprted new plants. To them such plants are "milk and honey". Every plant that is useful to man is "easy money" to some insect or other. Of these probably the worst is the Parasol Ant-possibly the inspiration of Solomon's wise crack and certainly the darling of all popular observation with their remarkable national developement and organization. A man may go to sleep well content with the state of his cultivation to wake up in the morning to find every leaf had disappeared in the night from his cassava patch or from his rose bushes. In the growing light of sunrise, a few belated Parasol Ants may be found with a half inch diameter circular segment of these plant's leaves held high in the air leading along a beautifully made trunk road which soon dips under an archway to become an underground tube leading away to the big city, maybe a half mile distant, where their queen resides and the site of their scientific laboratories, their chemical industries and their social and general life.

Nature stages no ill without an antidote and science says if you do this, spray with that or something else, you will win out in the fight, but communication so far has been very slow in these colossal forests. Transport of the necessary chemicals and materials is also very costly,

so much so that the settler wonders if the game is worth the candle and he must pit his strength and exertions against his multitudinous foes, but he hasn't the ghost of a chance. Sooner or later, disease will sap his energies; his arm grows weaker with the passing years and less able to cut up and slash and dig and murder the enemy until, weary of the fray, he cashes in either by way of death or removal to pastures new and the forest has won. Within the year, the place is covered with a tangle of indigenous greenery and can only be know by its lower grade of growth in comparison with the background of stately trees.

Yes, so far the forest has won, except where much money has been expended and a continuous supply of labor has been imported. Some day maybe, during a record drought, fire may devastate much of the forest, but if the fire wins, seven worse devils may appear in place of the one at present.

The most practical way of seeing and entering the forest is that of the many rivers that penetrate everywhere. The Amazon bisects the forests from the Atlantic to the Andean Crests. An illustrated book can be picked up full of glowing descriptions of a thousand mile trip up that river. Many more miles than that can be covered in the fussy little launches that ply on the various creeks and tributaries that drain the forest where it spreads beyond the Amazon watershed. By far the most practical way of making a real acquaintance with the forests is by means of the open row boats manned by 12 to 29 laborers under a certified pilot and bowman. These boats ply far beyond the falls and difficulties that block mechanical propulsion until the creek becomes either so shallow or so narrow that further progress is only possible at high flood tide after heavy rains.

These boats penetrate in search of raw materials-minerals, precious stones, nuts, barks, rubber or any other natural product for which there is an economical demand in the markets of civilization. Many fortunes have been made by a lucky strike. Eldorado maybe just round the next bend and tales are told every night over the campfire of this nugget or that diamond that brought quick wealth to its finder. Tucked away, doubtless undercover of the forest, lies hidden enough wealth to make the money kings of civilization look like very small potatoes indeed.

Most creeks have been followed to the limits of navigation and a small amount of knowledge gained of the possibilities, but even on the best known rivers new finds of mineral wealth are constantly coming to light. Then there is the unknown area between each river and especially the large tracks on the higher grounds beyond navigation, much of which has never been pressed by the foot of civilized man. This unknown region forms a great lure to curious humanity. They give rise to wonderful theories of the great potentialities of each district and when backed by statistics of what has been garnered, lead men, hope beating high in their breasts, to go forth and undergo incredible privations and danger in search of what, to many, proves to be mere will of the Wisps, if not worse.

Following the fantastic finds of gold of the late middle century, a hardy type of pioneer spread to every country which held wide unknown, untouched spaces. These were the prospectors, each searching for diamonds, gold, silver or rubber as he fancied; often men of little education but with a certain rule of thumb knowledge of elementary methods of finding and wringing a living from the more obvious deposits of these various sources of wealth.

Of such a class was James Bradden. For years he had been working in the depths of the forests, drifting back periodically to civilization

with enough dust, nuggets or other valuables to give him a few months high pressure holiday and still leave enough cash to finance a new expedition back to the "bush" as the forests are generally called. Bradden was a good mixer, open-handed and hospitable. I don't suppose he ever made enough to start him in any other walk of life. He often used to say he could not retire under three thousand pounds a year and would not do so with less than a thousand a year. His generosity together with so msny successive trips which gave him the wherewithal to be generous, earned him the soubriquet of Lucky Jim. Everything he touched prospered and he even sold his locations of new mines to advantage to the speculators.

It is a long lane that has no turning, however, and at last Jim returned to the coast with no tangible results. He was ill also and spent some weeks in the hospital and several more recuperating at the houses of friends of whom he had many. When health returned, he found difficulty in raising funds for a new expedition. Banks were adamant and merchants refused to advance food and tools without substantial cash payments. A few friends got together and gave him enough supplies to grub-stake him for three or four months on the understanding that whatever information or gold he collected was at the sole disposal of the little party.

Almost four months to a day, Jim stepped off one of the small coastal steamers with enough gold to repay his backers and private information as to where a good alluvial proposition was located. The friends promptly drew up the articles of a small syndicate. He had done the necessary location formulas when up country & all that was necessary now was to register the claims & the company with government and so came into being the Lucky Jim Syndicate and the Lucky Jim Gold Mine.

Jim lacked experience in organizing a gold mine which was as yet completely covered with forest, nor was he too well again. So a capable manager was secured and sent off to the scene of action, while Jim took on the job of town agent, buying the necessary materials, tools and food supplies and attending to the transport. The Lucky Jim had been going some time when I joined the staff as an overseer. The pioneering had been done, land had been cleared, houses for the staff and loggies for the laborers had been built and resevoirs, conduits and sluices completed. Production work had just begun along a hundred feet front with some 3 to 10 feet over burden on a level stretch of proven ground that would give us 2 full years working at full capacity. There were 6 white men superintending about one hundred negro laborers, who with a few of their women folks and children composed the population of our camp.

The constructional work being completed, the camp was put on a permanent basis with a minimum of laborers. Normal supplies would be calculated and a quarterly dispatch of boats from the coast arranged in place of the almost continuous stream of boats required so long as construction called for all sorts of supplies from a needle to an anchor. In all cases it is necessary to run boats in duplicate or more to assist each other over the nasty falls and dangerous rapids that abounded on the Igarapédo Matto on the two hundred mile stretch between its mouth and the Lucky Jim, as also to ensure some probable help and a chance for life in case of a bad accident or a boat smashed against the rocks in a creek as yet unpopulated except for a few gold claims at work some fifty miles from each other.

A little Boviander-Cap't Rhodius- a man in whose veins ran the mingled blood of Dutch, English, Aboriginal Indian and Negro had the contract for these boats and on him fell the responsibility of safe delivery

of all gold and supplies. He could neither read nor write but was absolutely trustworthy, had a wonderful personality and was well able to handle his rowdy boathands. He never forgot anything, could dictate accounts in the office to a cent against the boatmen for tobacco and sundries on the trip up or down. He was absolutely fearless in the water whether it was in still water infested with maneating piranha fish or the equally dangerous swirling cross current of the rapids and falls where a minute miscalculation could mean grave danger ~~or~~ to life and limb. He had an eagle eye for a submerged rock when shooting the falls, to even touch which meant at least a punctured board and possibly a completely wrecked boat. He had an uncanny knowledge of currents and their force and it was often hair-raising to see him skirting death by inches, dodging in and out amongst the hungry rocks on either side of some twisty narrow, madly racing channel. Taking full advantage of those currents and forces, aided by the huge steering paddle in his own capable hands, he would run through most falls to meet slack water and safety below, to the instant shout by all the paddlers of their well known shanty "Danger over. Rocks and Falls".

Shorty, as second in command, sauntered into the office on Monday morning at 5:30 as the whimper of the buzzar was still echoing in the adjacent forests. The Ole Man was already seated there, a look of rather gloomy expectancy on his face. Shorty, biting hard on a plug of his favorite chewing tobacco, glanced round the room, noted the new paysheets, two new almanacs on the wall and other improvements off the recent boat, then he expectorated accurately at a cockroach trying to burrow under a stray piece of paper in a corner and gave his considered opinion. "I reckon, Boss, that Gillespie knows most all about placer mining that is worth knowing."

In the months that lay ahead, Shorty's verdict on the new man proved absolutely correct. We were all at home in the forests and naturally were up to most of the local tricks of the trade in mining under such circumstances, but Gillespie had been in other countries and while we could beat him on small local methods which were peculiarly adapted to his new environment, he knew more ways and labor saving gadgets than we had ever dreamed about. He hitched up a method of putting clayed pay dirt of which we had much, that he called the Narrow method. He had seen it in Australia and its introduction on the Lucky Jim released the labor of some ten or twelve men, something badly wanted at the moment as head office had recently written us asking us that some attention be paid to various dykes and rocks around camp in the hope of locating the mother load of the grains and small nuggets of gold found in the flats we were now working, but in such a way as not to unduly increase the costs of production, at least until the mine was on a proper paying basis after the recent high cost of construction.

Then we discovered Gillespie had a portable assay outfit amongst his baggage and that he was perfectly capable of analysing and testing all the rocks we found and so saved considerable fees to a high collar expert with a brass plate and a dinky office in town. Gillespie in these ways saved the mine considerably more money than his feed and salary through sheer efficiency and gave a slight increase in output to boot.

The man was, however, far from well. He was terribly emaciated and thin. "A Skeleton Kept in Place by Skin" was Shorty's laconic description. He had a short dry hacking cough which must have irritated him as much as it did us. There were times when it left him speechless and often

we could hear him cough, coughing at all hours of the night which meant little of no sleep and little rest or recuperation from the fatiguing work we were all engaged in.

It is rather shocking when cooped up in a comparatively small area with a limited number of people for months, how any little peculiarity or habit in the others can become so irritating and many a day and night we wished Gillespie ten thousand miles away. It was just the same with the others; each would have some peculiar manerism, perfectly harmless ordinarily, but it would set nerves jangling and would probably end in a royal row. Nobody ever let fly, however, at Gillespie. If looks could have killed there were times when he hadn't much of a chance, it is true, but the man was a gentleman with a winning personality that disarmed abuse or ribald criticism. Winstanley had gone out on the next mail after Gillespie's arrival and Shorty was now in command. Shorty had taken him under his wing so to speak and that was enough to make the rudest or least thoughtful think twice. We had seen Shorty handling heavy rocks and timbers in a tight corner and we all remembered how he had quietened half a dozen hefty laborers who had run amok with cutlass and razor last Xmas through a case of rum smuggled up in the boats by some relation amongst the crew. It had been a brilliant exhibition of agility, strength and the art of self defence accompanied by an enviable lecture of classic impurity.

Gillespie was a most likable fellow, had a quarrel-proof-temper and when decently well was a brilliant coversationalist on most any subject on earth. He had been nearly everywhere within the tropical and subtropical regions and seemed equally at home in London and Lima and most of the big mining camps between, whether you cared to go via Suez or Panama in getting to the last. What he had been doing in these various places we failed to understand. We were as curious as children but he never gave us even a hint of what his life had been nor the faintest clue to

the story behind that cheery manner, that helpful personality or that disturbing cough. Our united arithmetic placed his age around forty-five on the supposition that he had left home at 18 years of age, and allowing him a stay of only 6 months in each of the big cities and mines of which he spoke with first hand information. We deduced his nationality as a Scot, partly because of his name, partly because his favorite tipple, working day or festival, was a single sundowner of whiskey, generously diluted with water, but principally due to two tunes he invariably whistled during his leisure hours. Sandy Campbell, a redheaded firebrand of Celtic origin and with a barely legible accent, assured us loudly that these tunes were "Will ye no come back again" and "The Road to the Isles" but he may have been wrong or we may have just as easily mistaken Sandy's English.

I spent the day one Sunday out in the forests with my gun in search of game and on my return was just turning the crest of the hill before our camp when I noticed Gillespie emptying a lot of torn-up letters from his waste paper basket over a fire in the clearing. A sudden gust of wind blew dozens of the fragments all over me as with a "Cheerio" I passed. Half an hour later, undressing for a bath, a fragment of paper dropped to the ground. Unthinkingly I picked it up and read "Horace, darling," in strong, unmistakably feminine handwriting; then it suddenly dawned on me that the wind had blown the paper inside my open shirt as I had passed Gillespie at his work of destruction and that I was probably reading one of his secrets--his real name. I tore the damn thing to tiny pieces and stamped it beyond all possible recognition in the mud floor of the bathroom and never by word or look have I ever given that secret away to anyone. It showed me, however, that none of us knew the real man, not even his name.

¶ Gillespie kept his end up in work for nearly a year but the steamy heat and his trouble were slowly sapping his strength. Shorty, now manager, put him to light work, clerical work in our office, merely analysing the samples of rock the prospecting gangs brought in from time to time, but it was no use. After some 18 months he would have to spend 3 to 4 days each week, either in bed in the house, or more often, swinging in a hammock in the much cooler shade of the adjacent forest and eventually Shorty, much as he hated it, had to accept Gillespie's resignation and make arrangements for his going back to the coast on the next outgoing mail boat.

Few men stay long on these jobs on a lonely mine. Even when well paid, as we were, the urge for new contacts with people, the temporary lure of the city and civilization comes over them or they have enough money put away to put up an expedition for prospecting on their own, as no man in the trade but has visions and hopes for a lucky strike and quick wealth. Winstanley had gone over a year ago; three others had followed and now Shorty and I were the only two who had been on the Lucky Jim when Gillespie arrived. Other men from the coast had, of course, been sent up to replace the out-goers and we were still seven. ¶ All whites sent up to the Lucky Jim were under contract to put in — four accidents — one complete year of work as from the date he had left town. I had completed this contract, but kept on working solely because of financial reasons and the "Girl-I-Had-Left-Behind-me." For some time I had been having fidgets, an uneasy sense of unrest and impatience that made me quick tempered and ready to kick at my own shadow. It is cold comfort, coming in, tired and weary, to a sparsely furnished room, to look at a charming photo standing on a rough and ready dressing table and to know I could not have news of her for another nine--five--three weeks more. Heavens, how the weeks dragged by! My salary was being banked religiously every month in the hope of a nice cottage materializing when in my optimistic moods

I heard her whisper "Yes". Optimism lasted generally about a month after the mail had come, to be succeeded by a longer spell of increasing pessimism until in every sound of the forest, even the fitful whisper of the breeze amongst the leaves, I seemed to catch a very definite "No", whereupon I'd allocate part of my bank balance towards a hectic old time in town for a few weeks. I'd run over in my mind the eats and drinks I'd have, the different dances and shows and above all, the freedom from an impolite buzzar until at least noon. The balance of my cash I'd put into a prospecting expedition to try out a certain creek, the location of which was so secret I scarcely dared think of it even in bed.

I had first heard of this creek from a black boy who had been up "topside", collecting rubber and he had a noce half ounce nugget as evidence of what was there. I had had to post it on to his sister after his death, poor boy. I had also 2 boys working for me who, quite independently, had occasion to breakfast at the mouth of this creek in passing and they had panned out a few gleaming grains from the loose creek-borne sands in the enamel plates when they were washing up after their meal. They had no money to locate a mine themselves and they'd only be too willing to guide me to the creek if I would guarantee them steady work and good wages.

The creek was nameless yet but I had a name ready--nay, the choice of two names-one-"Heart's Delight" in my optimistic moods; the other "Buster Creek" when pessimistic, and when that girl heard that I had become a millionaire wouldn't she just ----------?

Every night I'd lie in my bunk dreaming these dreams before dropping off to sleep. That darned Girl (it is 8 weeks since I had a letter) wrote every mail cheery non-committal letters in the main, but with hints of a dance today and a picnic tomorrow and what perchance had I? Surely

the dice were loaded against me so far away and even if I wrote everyday, I could post only once every three months.

Imagination can play Old Harry with the mind and I'd been getting pepperier steadily and worrying no end for some time when one day Shorty stopped me as I was on my way down from attending to some repairs to the reseyoir higher up the creek. "You ain't been hitting the ball with much of a swing for a couple of months. Pip, What's biting you?" He inquired. "American bugs", I retorted offensively, "and what's more, I'm getting on the next down river boat." "O.K. for me" he replied, and thus I became slated as a fellow passenger on the same boat to town with Gillespie.

The down river boats, now free from cargo, had a large empty space amidship. Over this we spread an awning of tarpaulin, slung a hammock between two poles in which Gillespie would recline at ease, while on the floor of the boat was a canvas deck chair as a comfortable alternative when he cared to use it. We were very quick on the way down the river. Gillespie had been pretty bad during his last week on the Lucky Jim and the journey itself was not conducive to speech. The river abounded in the nasty falls and rapids which took its annual toll of life and smashed boats and we were too intent on watching the clever handling of the boat on which everything depended to speak very much.

The trip actually seemed to do Gillespie good. He coughed less and I noticed fewer surreptitious applications to his lips of a silken handerchief which curiously were all a bright red in color. Probably the knowledge that he had not to give a quid pro quo for his salary now, there was no buzzar to remind him that there was work he was supposed to do, and which may have given him some mental relief and allowed recuperation.

We cleared the last fall in safety just before dusk, cooked our dinner and went out in the moonlight to complete the ten miles of clear navigable river to reach a small upriver village in time to hand over the boats and tackling before the bi-weekly little steamer left at 8 a.m. to go down to the sea and along the coast to the nearest town of any importance. It was nine that night when the lights began to come close and we ran alongside the wharves of Sandeville.

After two long years in the bush naturally neither of us knew anyone in the hotel we mutually agreed to stay at. Promotion, sickness and unrest move people around much faster in these little backwaters of civilization than is ever dreamed in the home countries. There is not the keen competition of outsiders ready and probably equally as capable of doing any particular work and young men with few responsibilities move from place to place with astonishing rapidity and often ease and most of the men I had met previously had gone elsewhere, I rang up one house where I hoped to hear a voice quiver with welcome at my unannounced return, but could get no answer. They might be at the cinema, or a dance or they might have gone to visit friends or they might be out at bridge. I telephoned every half hour till midnight with no success and went to bed. Next day I learned that the lady I sought had left early the day I arrived to go round to another river to spend a week with friends on a timber grant. These friends were roughly two hundred miles away with no other communication with the rest of the world than the bi-weekly steamer which would return on Tuesday, so I was rather indefinitely hung up.

Gillespie at once sought out a doctor and decided to visit one that had only recently arrived. The doctor was young and had just left the University and the big hospitals of a prominent home town, after a brilliant career. He was a specialist on pulmonary troubles and had the latest ideas and treatments at his fingers' ends. At his request Gillespie removed his khaki tunic and vest, but it only took the doctor a minute to diagnose the trouble and its extent as he quietly said "That will do" to Gillespie.

The doctor sat down at his table slowly tapping its top with a nervous finger while he watched Gillespie don his garments until he too came to rest in a chair at the opposite side of the table, then he passed a box of cigarettes with a curt "Smoke". Gillespie took one and quietly lit up, then with an elbow on the table he faced the doctor.

"I was fourteen years of age when I was ordered to the tropics as my only chance of escaping an early death from this-" tapping his chest, "so you can speak freely".

The doctor relit his cigarette which had obviously gone out but did not speak."What I particularly want to know" continued Gillespie, "is how long have I left?" "I know there is little or nothing you can do, but with care will I last a year or a month?" "Not even the last, I'm afraid," murmured the doctor. "Thanks, Doctor" came Gillespie's level answer, "and what is your fee?" "Nothing, man, nothing," said the doctor, jumping to his feet.

Gillespie's hand went to a pocket. He brought out a roll of notes from which he rapidly flicked ten pounds. Laying this on the table he weighted it in place with the box of cigarettes still standing and holding out his hand said, "Godbye, Doctor", and walked out.

It was on the Monday night - as we sat over our after dinner coffee in the hotel lounge that Gillespie told me part of the interview with the doctor - the rest of it I heard later in bits from the doctor himself. I sat silent as there seemed nothing I could say. I was relieved as he glanced at the clock and jumped up. "I am going out tonight and I won't be back soon, so I won't see you in the morning as you leave by steamer at daybreak. Goodbye, Pip, and Good luck to you!" I wrung his hand as I murmured "Goodbye" and watched him walk away.

That was the last any of us ever saw of Gillespie. He just walked out of the brilliantly lit room into the dark passage beyond and disappeared.

It may have been coincidence but the next morning a fisherman about a quarter of a mile beyond the town reported the loss of his tiny craft to the police. The tide might have torn it from its mooring; it might have been stolen. Would they keep an outlook for it as its loss meant something to him?

No, we never knew much about him, whatever his real name may have been; whatever his story was, or the romance behind "Horace, Darling." He kept it successfully to himself.

###

Typed in Manuscript

The Lucky Jim

1.

None of us ever knew very much about him.

Douglas Gillespie arrived as a tarpaulin passenger on the regular contract boat that every quarter brought in the food supplies & our mail.

A tarpaulin passenger on one of these tiny forty feet boats that ply as far as is humanly possible on many of the rivers & creeks strung like silver ribbons through the gigantic forests of central South America corresponds more or less to a first class passenger on an Atlantic liner. The only other class permissible on these small open row-boats is third class in which the passengers have to work the whole way — pulling paddle — heaving cargo over the falls & rapids — cooking their own food — manhandling the heavy boats over rocks & other obstructions en route for their destination. The tarpaulin passenger does no work; he is given a seat amidships on the tarpaulin covering the cargo — generally a half bag of flour or rice or a bale of soft goods is so placed that he may have a somewhat more comfortable seat than on an angular box of sundries that comprise the general cargo; he is allotted an apprentice boy from amongst the crew who cooks his food, hangs his hammock at night; doing all the duties of a steward-valet in the hope that careful services may result in a gratuity of a few dollars, one third of which must, of course, go to the steersman or captain.

It was ~~half day holiday~~ Saturday afternoon — half day holiday for all hands — and when the buzzer went at noon, we downed tools cheerfully & promptly. We were all laughing & talking as we climbed from the workings to the camp situated on the crest of a small hill

a short distance away. Before scattering to our respective houses we stood a few moments discussing how we could best spend the intervening forty hours of freedom before the buzzer went again. It had been a sizzling hot morning & was now the hottest part of the day, yet the hour of greatest quiet in all the twenty four throughout the forest when all Nature sinks to somnolent silence in the vertical rays of a tropical sun.

The silence was suddenly broken by the faint, almost imaginary sound of a bugle being played some long distance away. Speech & laughter were instantly arrested; we even breathed through open mouths intently, listening to catch its second notes & locate the direction. Well we knew what it meant. For hundreds of miles in every direction lay the track-less jungle; but the sound must be made by human agency. Experience showed that the sound could mean only one thing – a boat was approaching up river from the coast. This was the usual river signal of a series of notes given on a conch shell or a cow horn invariably sent out when the captain thinks he is within such distance that the sound will reach the camp ahead. Silently each wondered what it could mean. Our regular boat was not due with supplies & mail for nearly a week, yet the river had been in half flood only for some weeks now & it might mean a favourable passage & a saving of some days. In any case, it meant people were approaching & even if they were not consigned to us it meant momentary relief from each other & the monotony of camp life, for there would surely be fresh faces aboard and at the worst verbal news of some kind of the doings in the outside world.

The negro workmen had been clumping noisily behind us, but

came to sudden motionless silence at an uplifted hand & our tense attitude. Then came the clearer notes of the horn. The boat had passed from behind a bend of the river, and now, free from the lowering banks of trees, the sound, less muffled, came to our ears with certainty. Pandemonium at once broke out amongst the workers. Hats & everything they carried were flung high in the air; they broke into yells, jumping & leaping in the air like playful antelope; & as they stampered for their quarters as they ran informing us.

"Boat-a-ramble. Iss me own Capt. Rhodes signal. Hurrah. Hurrah".

It was three o'clock in the afternoon before the boat became visible slowly stemming the current of the twisting, twining river. Every one had bathed, dressed & lunched in the interval & when the boat crept round the last bend every soul in camp — six white men in their capacity as manager, overseers & clerks, and some hundred & fifty negro workers — men women & children — were down at the landing in anticipation & welcome. The boat was that of our company & after the long silence of three months, every person in that motley crowd expected letters — news of those we loved or who loved us — news of the joys or sorrows of relatives — news of the welfare & doings of friends & acquaintances & news of the outside world, political & economic by newspaper & magazine. Excitement was visible everywhere, in the rolling eyes of the workers; the hushed tense whispers, now that the boat was drawing close, in place of the rowdy welcome to the earlier distant signal. There was an electric current of expectancy, hope & fear in the air as they packed in serried rows behind us & even we, more disciplined by convention and experience felt our thoughts running on similar lines even if we camouflaged them with jokes about unpaid bills & such like badinage.

Slowly the boat nosed round out of the current into the backwater in front of us; greetings - again hilarious & noisy - broke out between the crews of the boat & the labourers behind us, until, with a gentle bump the bow grounded on the bank below our feet. The bowman sprang ashore, mooring rope in hand, & made all fast to a nearby root of a tree: paddles were flung on one side & the crew on the near side bent over to give "gangway" for their passenger.

A trim, khaki clad white man rose from his seat on the tarpaulin, pausing for a second to ensure balance on the swaying boat, then with a jaunty, debonair air that bespoke considerable experience, walked unaided along the three inch wide gunwale & stepped ashore. As he did so, he drew a letter from his pocket & read "John S. Winstanley Esq". The "ble man", our manager was seated well to the front of everybody on the stump of a felled tree. He rose, took the missive, broke it open & read for a moment. He reached out to shake hands with the stranger, bade him welcome & put a few questions as to health, weather & the journey up country.

Turning to the crowd behind he said, "Boys, meet Mr Gillespie, who has been sent up by the Office as an assistant." His eyes roved over us all till his selection was made. "Shorty", he said, "the new hand will mess with you in your house. See to his comfort. Introduce him all round & don't forget to find out between now & Monday morning, Shorty, just how much he does'nt know about mining".

Shorty was American, Californaian born, but how he came by his name none of us ever knew. His baptismal certificate gave his full name

as James Alfred Frederick Gustavus Stackpole: he stood six feet three in his bare feet & was built on proportionate lines. As he often told us "he filled the eye & was easy to look at." His temper was most serene & he was the least easily ruffled amongst us, yet the man was "Ebony" to all & sundry over a territory with a radius of several hundred miles, & very few ever knew his full or correct name.

The mail bags were now passing from hand to hand along the boat for the bank and already one black boy was racing up the hill with the first one ashore. Gillespie was of very second rate importance at the moment & after the customary handshake & courtesies we were all heading for the office for the distribution of letters & mails.

2.

With the exception of a few expert cartographers there are not many people who know the real size of the immense forests that clothes central South America. It begins at the most Easterly point of land where the Guianes & Brazil about to deflect the Gulf Stream away to the North & taking the Equatorial line as roughly the centre, continues Westward without interruption till it dwindles away to nothing before meeting the snows & intense cold of the high Andean mountains. Away in the North it begins at the edge of the Caribbean sea & ramifications stretch away to the South to distant Uruguay, Paraguay & even Argentina. This huge forest is a colossal sea of turbulent vegetation varying

from some thirty feet ~~deep~~ in depth to as much as three hundred feet according to the ~~varying~~ degree of soil fertility & other favourable environment; a compact mass, against which ~~the~~ civilization & man have been unable to make ~~much~~ little if any headway ~~against~~. Much of this forest is dense jungle & even at its best, overland journeys on any scale can only be made at a vast cost in money, labour, & health.

Here & there, are large tracks of open grass lands, — the campos or savannahs — which attract the settler from outside & may provide him with the necessaries of life, and, if lucky, just a trifle over, at a minimum expenditure of ready cash or hard work, but as a rule the climate is enervating, the settler slowly deteriorates until "Amanha" becomes his motto & he is glad to sell his holdings to some newcomer or a company who invariably see the pot at the end of the rainbow, only, in their case, also, to pray for a further sale in a few years' time.

While it is the ease of campo life that kills ambition & progress exactly the opposite may be said of the forest country. The forest shrinks a little as the puny human ant attacks some point with axe, saw, cutlass & fire, the customary method of starting a clearing for home, fields & gardens. For some time, the forest appears to sit quiescent during which time the settler has got a variety of economic plants beginning to grow ~~in~~ the clearing. Some of his crops he will soon begin to gather; he has just picked his first rose & his fruit trees are coming into blossom, when some variation of climatic conditions occur, the forest wakes up & begins to move.

It is strange that as far as records go, the forest makes no attempt to encroach on the open campos or savannahs, but after a short rest for mobilisation, the forest definitely resents any attempt to steal a few acres of her territory. She stages no spectacular assault, but, slowly, inexorably, almost invisibly as the glacier, she pushes forward, a few inches here, a foot or so there. The vegetation growing outward at all points causes a slow daily unperceived advance over the stolen ground — no more than that. To the forest, a thousand years are as a day.

But the forest marshalls her allies also. The weather may stage a drought when the domesticated plants of man die for lack of moisture increased by a blazing sun licking up from the bare open clearing what the forest conserves under her dense canopy of leaf & greenery. A record rainy season may occur when the same plants rot and die. Then come the insects of all kinds; tiny insignificant bodies of such gossamer appearance as to appear beneath contempt. These forests carry more insects to the square yard than any other part of the world & it is well to remember that, almost without exception, they either sting, bite or annoy in some way or other. Mosquitoes leave malaria where they bite; another causes the even more deadly jungle or yellow fever; ticks burrow beneath the skin; jiggers make colonies in the toes; midges irritate beyond conception, and the piums or cobow'a flies — an insignificant pinhead affair — leaves a bleb of blood beneath the outer cuticle where their pneumatic pump has drawn a meal of blood in place of a bite thereby leaving an intolerable itch which if scratched will lead to open sores & blemishes for life.

Nor do the insects forget the imported new ~~farms of~~ plants ~~now~~ introduced planted. To them such plants are "milk & honey". Every plant that is useful to man is "easy money" to some insect or other. Of these, probably the worst is the Parasol Ant – possibly the inspiration of Solomons wise crack & certainly the darling of of popular observation with their remarkable national development & organisation. A man may go to sleep well content with the state of his cultivation to wake in the morning to find every leaf has disappeared in the night from his cassava patch or from his rose bushes. In the growing light of sunrise, a few belated Parasol Ants may be found, each with a half inch diameter circular segment of these plants leaves held high in the air, leading along a beautifully made trunk road which soon dips under an archway to become an underground tube leading away to the big city, maybe half a mile distant, where their queen resides & the site of their scientific laboratories, their chemical industries & their social & general life.

Nature stages no ill without an antidote & Science says if you dotes, spray with that or something else you will win out in the fight. But communication so far has been very slow in these colossal forests. Transport of the necessary chemicals & materials is also very costly, so much so that the settler wonders if the game is worth the candle & he must put his strength & exertions against his multitudinous foes, but he has it the ghost of a chance. Sooner or later, disease will sap his energies; his arm grows weaker with the passing years & less able to cut & slash, & dig & murder the enemy until, weary of the fray, he cashes in either by way of death, or removal to

pastures runs and the forest has won. Within the year, the place is covered with a tangle of indigenous greenery & can only be known by its lower grade of growth in comparison with the background of stately trees.

Yes, so far the forest has won, except where much money has been expended and a continuous supply of labour has been imported. Some day maybe, during a record drought, fire may devastate much of the forest; but if fire wins, seven worse devils may appear in place of the one at present.

The most practical way of seeing & entering the forest is that of the many rivers that penetrate everywhere. The Amazon bisects the forests from the Atlantic to the Andean creek. An illustrated book can be picked up full of glowing descriptions of a thousand mile trip up that river. Many more miles than that can be covered in the fussy little launches that ply on the various creeks & tributaries that elsewhere would be respectable rivers, or along those other rivers that drain the forests where it spreads beyond the Amazon watershed. By far the most practical way of making a real acquaintance with the forests is by means of the open row boats manned by twelve to twenty labourers under a certified pilot & bowman. These boats ply far beyond the falls & difficulties that block mechanical propulsion until the creek becomes either so shallow or so narrow that further progress is only possible at high flood tide after heavy rains.

These boats penetrate in search of raw materials – minerals, precious stones, nuts, barks, rubber or any other natural product for which there is an economical demand in the markets of civilization. Many fortunes have been made by a lucky strike; Eldorado may lie just-

round the next bend & tales are all told every night over the campfire of this nugget or that diamond that brought quick wealth to its finder. Tucked away, doubtless under cover of the forest, lies hid enough wealth to make the money Kings of civilization look very small potatoes indeed.

Most creeks have been followed to the limits of navigation & a small amount of knowledge gained of the possibilities, but even on the best known rivers new finds of mineral wealth are constantly coming to light. Then there is the unknown area between each river & especially the large tracks on the higher grounds beyond navigation, much of which has never been pressed by the foot of civilized man. This unknown region forms a great lure to curious humanity. They give rise to wonderful theories of the great potentialities of each district & when backed by statistics of what has been garnered, lead men, hope beating high in their breasts, to go forth & undergo incredible privations & danger in search of what, to many, proves to be mere Will of the Wisps, if not worse.

Following the fantastic finds of gold of the late middle century, a hardy type of pioneer spread to every country which held wide unknown untouched spaces. These were the prospectors, each searching for diamonds, gold, silver or rubber as he fancied; often men of little education but with a certain rule of thumb knowledge of elementary methods of finding & winning a living from the more obvious deposits of these various sources of wealth.

Of such a class was James Braddell. For years he had been working in the depths of the forest, drifting back periodically to civilization with enough dust & nuggets or other valuables to give him a few months

high pressure holiday & still leave enough cash to finance a new expedition back to the "bush" as the forests are generally called. Braddon was a good mixer, openhanded & hospitable. I dout suppose he ever made enough to start him in any other walk of life. He often used to say he could not retire under three thousand pounds a year & would not do so with less than a thousand a year. His generosity together with so many successive trips which gave him the wherewithal to be generous, earned him the sobriquet of Lucky Jim. Every thing he touched prospered & he even sold his locations of new mines to advantage to the speculators.

It is a long lane that has no turning however & at last Jim returned to the coast with no tangible results. He was ill also & spent some weeks in hospital & several more recuperating at the houses of friends of whom he had many. When health returned, he found difficulty in raising funds for a new expedition. Banks were adamant & the merchants refused to advance food & tools without substantial cash payments. A few friends got together & gave him enough supplies to grub-stake him for three or four months on the understanding that whatever information or gold he collected was at the sole disposal of the little party.

Almost four months to a day Jim stepped off one of the small coastal steamers with enough gold to repay his backers & private information as to where a good alluvial proposition was located. The friends promptly drew up the articles of a small syndicate. He had done the necessary location formulas when up country & all that was necessary now was to register the claims & the company with Government.

and so came into being the Lucky Jim Syndicate & the Lucky Jim Gold Mine.

Jim lacked experience in organising a gold mine, which was as yet completely covered with forest. nor was he too well again, so a capable manager was secured & sent off to the scene of action, while Jim took on the job of town agent, buying the necessary materials, tools & food supplies & attending to the transport. The Lucky Jim had been going some time when I joined the staff as an overseer. The pioneering had been done, land had been cleared, houses for the staff & loggies for the labourers ~~completed~~ had been built & reservoirs, conduits & sluices completed. Production work had just begun along a hundred feet front with some three to ten feet overburden on a level stretch of proven ground that would give us two full years working at full capacity. There were six white men superintending ~~around~~ about one hundred negro labourers, who with a few of their women folks & children composed the population of our camp.

The constructional work being completed, the camp was put on a permanent basis with a minimum of labourers. Normal supplies could be calculated & a quarterly despatch of boats from the coast arranged in place of the almost continuous stream of boats required so long as construction called for all sort of supplies from ~~the~~ a needle to an anchor. In all cases it is necessary to run boats in duplicate or more to assist each other over the nasty falls & dangerous rapids that abounded on the Igarapé do Matto on the two hundred mile stretch between its mouth & the Lucky Jim. as also to ensure some probable help & a chance for life in case of a bad accident or a boat smashed against the rocks in a creek as yet

unpopulated except for a few gold claims at work some fifty miles from each other.

A little Bovcander — Capt Rhodeis — a man in whose veins ran the mingled blood of Dutch, English, Aboriginal Indian & Negro had the contract for these boats & on him fell the responsibility of safe delivery of all gold & supplies. He could neither read nor write, but was absolutely trustworthy, had a wonderful personality & was well able to handle his rowdy boathands. He never forgot anything, could dictate accounts in the office to a cent against the boatman for tobacco & sundries on the trip up or down. He was absolutely fearless in the water whether it was in still water infested with man eating peranha fish, or the equally dangerous swirling cross currents of the rapids & falls where a minute miscalculation could mean grave danger to life & limb. He had an eagle eye for a submerged rock even when shooting the falls, to touch which meant at least a punctured boat & possibly a completely wrecked boat. He had an uncanny knowledge of currents & their force and it was often hair raising to see him skirting death by inches, dodging in & out amongst the hungry rocks on either side of some twisty narrow madly-racing channel. Taking full advantage of these currents & forces, aided by the huge steering paddle in his own capable hands, he would run through most falls to meet slack water & safety below, to the instant shout by all the paddlers of their well known Shanty "Danger over. Rocks & falls"

Shorty, as second in command, sauntered into the office on Monday morning at 5.30 as the last whimper of the buzzer was still echoing in the adjacent forests. The Old Man was already seated there, a rather look of rather gloomy expectancy on his face. Shorty, biting hard on a plug of his favourite chewing tobacco, glanced round the room, noted the new pay sheets, two new almanacks on the wall & other improvements of the recent boat, then he expectorated accurately at a cockroach trying to burrow under a stray piece of paper in a corner & gave his considered opinion.

"I reckon, Boss, that Gillespie knows most all about placer mining that is worth knowing".

In the months that lay ahead, Shorty's verdict on the new man proved absolutely correct. We were all at home in the forests and naturally were up to most of the local tricks of the trade in mining under such circumstances, but Gillespie had been in other countries & while we could beat him on small local methods which were peculiarly adapted to his new environment, he knew more ways & labour saving gadgets than we had ever dreamed about. He hitched up a method of puddling clayey pay dirt of which we had much, that he called the harrow method. He had seen it in Australia & its introduction on the Lucky Jim released the labours of some ten or twelve men, something badly wanted at the moment as head office had recently written us asking that some attention be paid to the various dykes & docks around camp in the hope of locating the

mother lode of the grains & small nuggets of gold found in the flats we were now working. but in such a way as not to unduly increase the costs of production, at least until the mine was on a proper paying basis. after the recent high cost of construction (& which we had not even been attempted. since we could not spare the necessary men)

When we discovered Gillespie had a portable assay outfit amongst his baggage & that he was perfectly capable of analysing & testing all the rocks we found & so saved considerable fees to a high collar expert with a brass plate & a dusty office in town Gillespie in these ways saved the mine considerably more money than his feed & salary through sheer efficiency & gave a slight increase in output to boot

The man was, however, far from well. He was terribly emaciated & thin. "A skeleton Kept in position by skin" was Shorty's laconic description. He had also a short dry Lacking cough which must have irritated him as much as it did us. There were times when it left him speechless & often we could hear him cough. coughing at all hours of the night which meant little or no sleep & little rest or recuperation from the fatiguing work we were all engaged in.

It is rather shocking when cooped up in a comparatively small area with a limited number of people for months, how any little peculiarity or habit in the others can become so irritating, & many a day & night we wished Gillespie ten thousand miles away. It was just the same with the others: each would have some peculiar mannerism, perfectly harmless ordinarily, but it would set nerves jangling & would probably end

in a royal row. Nobody ever let fly however at Gillespie. If looks could have killed there were times when he had'nt much of a chance it is true, but the man was a gentleman with a winning personality that disarmed abuse or ribald criticism. Whistanley had gone out on the next mail after Gillespies arrival & Shorty was now in command. Shorty had taken him under his wing so to speak & that was enough to make the rudest or least thoughtful think twice. We had seen Shorty handling heavy rocks & timbers in a tight corner & we all remembered how he had quelched half a dozen hefty labourers who had run amok with cutlass & razor last Xmas through a case of rum smuggled up in the boat by some relation amongst the crew. It had been a brilliant exhibition of agility, strength & the art of self defence accompanied by an enviable lecture of classic superiority.

Gillespie was a most likeable fellow, had a quarrel proof temper & when decently well was a brilliant conversationalist on most any subject on earth. He had been nearly everywhere within the tropical & subtropical regions and seemed equally at home in London, & Lima & most of the big mining camps between, whether you cared to go via Suez or Panama in getting through to the last. What he had been doing in these various places we failed to understand. We were as curious as children but he never gave us even a hint of what his life had been nor the faintest clue to the story behind that cheery manner, that helpful personality, or that disturbing cough. Our united arithmetic placed his age around forty five, on the supposition that he had left-

home at eighteen years of age & allowing him a stay of only six months in each of the big cities & mines of which he spoke with first-hand information. We deduced his nationality as a Scot: partly because of his name, partly because his favourite tipple, working day or festival, was a single sundowner of whisky generously diluted with water, but principally due to two tunes he invariably whistled during his leisure hours. Sandy Campbell, a redheaded firebrand of Celtic origin & with a barely legible accent assured us loudly that these tunes were "Will ye no come back Again" and "The Road to the Isles" but he may have been wrong or we may have mistaken Sandy's English.

I had spent the day, one Sunday, out in the forests with my gun in search of game & on my return was just turning the crest of the hill before our camp when I noted Gillespie emptying a lot of torn-up letters from his waste paper basket over a fire in the clearing. A sudden gust of wind blew dozens of the fragments all over me as with a "Cheerio" I passed. Half an hour later, undressing for a bath, a fragment of paper dropped to the ground. Unthinkingly I picked it up & read "Horace, darling," in a strong unmistakably feminine hand & sprawling; then it suddenly dawned on me that the wind had blown the paper inside my open shirt as I had passed Gillespie at his work of destruction & that I was probably reading one of his secrets — his real name. I tore the damning thing to tiny pieces & stamped it beyond all possible recognition in the mud of the bathroom floor, but never by word or look have I ever given that secret away to any one. It showed me, however, that none of us knows the real man, not even his name.

Gillespie kept his end up in work for nearly a year but the steamy heat & his trouble were slowly sapping his strength. Shorty, now manager, put him to light work, clerical work in our office, ~~or~~ merely analysing the ~~rocks~~ samples of rock the prospecting gangs brought in from time to time, but it was no use. After some eighteen months he would have to spend three to four days each week, either in bed in the house or more often, swinging in a hammock in the much cooler shade of the adjacent forest, & eventually Shorty, much as he hated it, had to accept Gillespie's resignation, & make arrangements for his going ~~—~~ to the coast on the next outgoing mail boat.

Few men stay long on these jobs on a lonely mine. Even when well paid, as we were, the urge for new contacts with people, the temporary lure of the city & civilization comes over them, or they have enough money put away to put up an expedition for prospecting on their own, as no man in the trade but has visions & hopes for a lucky strike & quick wealth. Wm Stanley had gone over a year ago; three others had followed & now Shorty & I were the only two who had been on the Lucky Jim when Gillespie arrived. Other men from the coast had, of course, been sent up to replace the out goers, & we were still seven.

All whites sent up to the Lucky Jim were under contract to put in - bar accident - one complete year of work as from the date he had left town. I had completed this contract, but kept on working solely because of financial reasons & the "Girl I had left behind me." For some time I had been having fidgets, an uneasy sense of unrest & impatience that made me quick tempered & ready to kick at my own shadow. It is cold comfort coming in, tired & weary, to a sparsely furnished room

to look on a charming photo standing on ~~my~~ a rough & ready dressing table & to know I could not have news of her for another nine — five — three weeks more. Heavens, how the weeks dragged by! My salary ~~was~~ had being banked religiously every month in the hope of a nice cottage materialising when in my optimistic moods I heard her whisper "Yes". Optimism lasted generally about a month after the mail had come, up to be succeeded by a longer spell of increasing pessimism until in every sound of the forest, even the fateful whisper of the breeze amongst the leaves I seemed to catch a very definite "No" whereupon I'd allocate part of my bank balance towards a hectic old time in town for a few weeks. I'd run over in my mind the eats & drinks I'd have, the different dances & shows, and above all the freedom from an impolite buzzer until, at least, noon. The balance of my cash I'd put in to a prospecting expedition to try out a certain creek, the location of which was so secret that I scarcely dared think of it even in bed.

I had first heard of this creek from a black boy who had been up "topside" collecting rubber, & he had a nice half ounce nugget as ~~the~~ evidence of what was there. I had had to post it on to his sister after his death, poor boy. I had also two boys now working for me who, quite independently, had occasion to breakfast at the mouth of this creek in passing & they had panned out a few gleaming grains from the loose creek borne sands in the enamel plates when they were washing up after their meal. They had no money to locate a mine themselves, and they'd only be too willing to guide me to this creek if I would guarantee them steady work & good wages

The creek was nameless as yet, but I had a name ready – nay, the choice of two names; – one, "Heart's Delight" in my optimistic moods, the other "Buster Creek" when pessimistic & when that girl heard that I had become a millionaire wouldn't she just – — — ?.

Every night I'd lie in my bunk dreaming these dreams before (it is eight weeks since I had a letter)
dropping asleep. That darned Girl wrote every mail – cheery now-&-commit-tal letters in the main, but with hints of a dance today & a picnic tomorrows & what chance had I?. Surely the dice were loaded against me so far away & even if I wrote every day, I could post only once every three months

Imagination can play Old Harry with the mind & I'd been getting pepperier steadily & worrying no end for some time, when one day Shorty stopped me as I was on my way down from attending to some repairs to the reservoir higher up the creek.

"You ain't been hitting the ball with much of a swing for a couple of months, Pip. What's biting you?" he enquired.

"American bugs" I retorted offensively, "and what's more, I'm quitting on the next down river boat".

"O.K. for me" he replied, & thus I became slated as a fellow passenger on the same boat to town with Gillespie

The down-river boats, now free from cargo, had a large empty space amidships. Over this we spread an awning of tarpaulins, slung a hammock between two poles in which Gillespie could recline at ease, while on the floor of the boat was a canvas deck chair as a comfortable alternative when he cared to use it. We were very quiet on the way down the river. Gillespie had been pretty

bad during his last week on the river by Jim. & the journey itself was not conducive to speech. The river abounded in nasty falls & rapids which took its annual toll of life & smashed boats. & we were too intent watching the clever handling of the boat on which ~~everything~~ everything depended to speak very much.

The trip actually seemed to do Billespie good. He coughed less & I noticed fewer surreptitious applications to his lips of a silken handkerchief, which curiously were all a bright red in colour. Probably the knowledge that he had ~~to~~ not to give a quid pro quo for his salary now; there was no buzzer to remind him that there was work he was supposed to do; and, which may have given some mental relief & allowed recuperation.

We cleared the last fall in safety just before dusk. cooked our dinner & went on in moonlight to complete the ten miles of clean navigable river to reach a small upriver village in time to hand over the boats & tackling before the bi-weekly little steamer left at 8 A.M to go ~~along~~ down to the sea & along the coast to the nearest town of any importance. It was nine that night when the lights began to come close & we ran alongside the wharves of Sandeville.

After two long years in the bush naturally neither of us knew any one in the hotel we mutually agreed to stay at. Promotion, sickness & unrest move people around much faster in these little backwaters of civilization than is even dreamed of in the home countries. There is not the keen competition of outsiders ready & probably equally as capable of doing any particular work, & young men with few responsibilities move from place to place with astonishing rapidity, & often ease & most of the men I had met previously had gone elsewhere. I rang up one house where I hoped to hear a voice quiver with welcome at my unannounced arrival, but

could get no answer. They might be at the cinema, or a dance; or they might have gone to visit friends & they might be out at bridge. I telephoned every half hour till mid-night with no success & went to bed. Next day I learned that the lady I sought had left early the day I had arrived to go round to another river to spend a week with friends on a timber grant. These friends were roughly two hundred miles away with no other communication with the rest of the world than the weekly steamer which would return on Tuesday. So I was rather indefinitely hung up.

Gillespie at once sought out a doctor, & decided to visit one that had only recently arrived. The doctor was young & had just left the University & the big hospitals of a prominent home town, after a brilliant career. He was a specialist on pulmonary troubles & had the latest ideas & treatment at his finger's ends. At his request, Gillespie removed his khaki tunic & vest, but it only took the doctor a minute to diagnose the trouble & its extent as he quietly said "That will do" to Gillespie.

The doctor sat down at his table slowly tapping its top with a nervous finger while he watched Gillespie don his garments until he, too, came to rest in a chair at the opposite side of the table, then he passed a box of cigarettes with a curt "Smoke." Gillespie took one & quietly lit up, then with an elbow on the table he faced the doctor.

"I was fourteen years of age when I was ordered to the tropics as my only chance of escaping an early death from this" - tapping his chest - "so you can speak freely."

The doctor relit his cigarette which had obviously gone out but did not speak.

"What I particularly want to know" continued Gillespie. "is how long have I left? I know there is little or nothing you can do. but even with care will I last a year or a month?".

"Not even the last, I'm afraid" murmured the doctor.

"Thanks, doctor" came Gillespie's level answer. "and what is your fee?"

"Nothing, man, nothing" said the doctor jumping to his feet.

Gillespie's hand went to a pocket. He brought out a roll of notes from which he rapidly flicked ten pounds. Laying this on the table, he weighted it in place with the box of cigarettes still standing & holding out his hand said "Goodbye, doctor". and walked out.

It was on the Monday night as we sat over our after dinner coffee in the hotel lounge that Gillespie told me part of his interviews with the doctor – the rest of it I heard later in bits from the doctor himself. I sat silent as there seemed nothing I could say. I was relieved as he glanced at the clock & jumped up. "I am going out tonight – I won't be back soon. so I won't see you in the morning as you leave by steamer at daybreak. Goodbye, Pip, and Good Luck to you" I wrung his hand as I murmured "Goodbye" & watched him walk away.

That was the last any of us ever saw of Gillespie. He just walked out of the brilliantly lit room into the dark passage beyond & disappeared.

It may have been co-incidence, but next morning a fisherman about a quarter of a mile beyond the town reported the loss of his tiny craft to the police. The tide might have torn it from its moorings; it might have been stolen. Would they keep an outlook for it as its loss meant something to him.

No, we never knew much of him, whatever his real name may have been; what ever his story was, or the romance behind "Horace, darling". He kept it successfully to himself