

to our camp at the base of the cliff, and decided to continue searching for a way up in the morning.

CHAPTER 5

IT TOOK US SIX DAYS TO WALK AROUND THE CLIFFS. FINALLY, WE had to admit that there was no way to climb to the top. That night, we gathered around the campfire gloomily and ate our dinner in silence. Challenger spent most of the evening with his head in his hands; he seemed to be in deep thought.

The following morning, the professor was in much better spirits.

'Gentlemen! he cried, once we'd all woken up, 'I have found a way up!'

'You have?' said Lord John.

'I think so,' said the professor.

He pointed to a large column of rock to the right of where we stood – the rock was separated from the cliffs by a huge chasm. 'All we have to do is climb to the top of this rock, then we'll cross the chasm and get to the plateau.'

'How will we cross the chasm?' I asked.

'I'll tell you how when we've reached the top,' said Challenger.

With our ropes, clamps and other devices, we began the difficult climb to the top of the rock. An hour later, we'd reached the summit. The view from the top was spectacular; we could see the entire plain as well as a line of green forest stretching into the distance.

I was still admiring the view when Professor Challenger's heavy hand fell upon my shoulder.

'This way,' he said.

I followed him to an enormous beech tree.

'By George!' cried Lord John. 'We're going to make a bridge!'

'Exactly,' said Challenger. 'The tree is at least sixty feet high; if it falls the right way, we can easily cross the chasm.'

Challenger handed me an axe. 'Now my young friend, please cut down the tree,' he said.

After an hour of chopping, we heard a loud crack – the tree swayed to one side, then crashed to the ground. The trunk rolled to the edge of the platform, and there was our bridge to the unknown.

'Now I will cross the bridge first,' said Challenger.

Lord John looked alarmed. 'Wait,' he said, 'I can't allow that; there could be cannibals waiting for us on the other side. Malone and I will go down, collect the rifles and some provisions and bring

