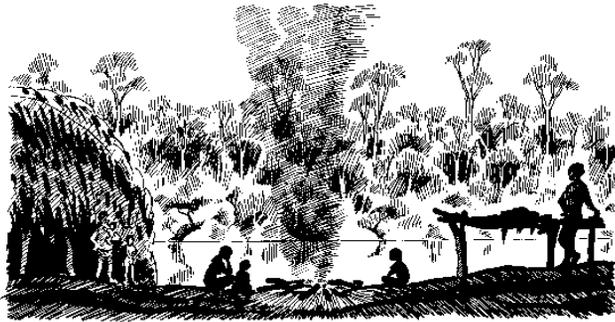
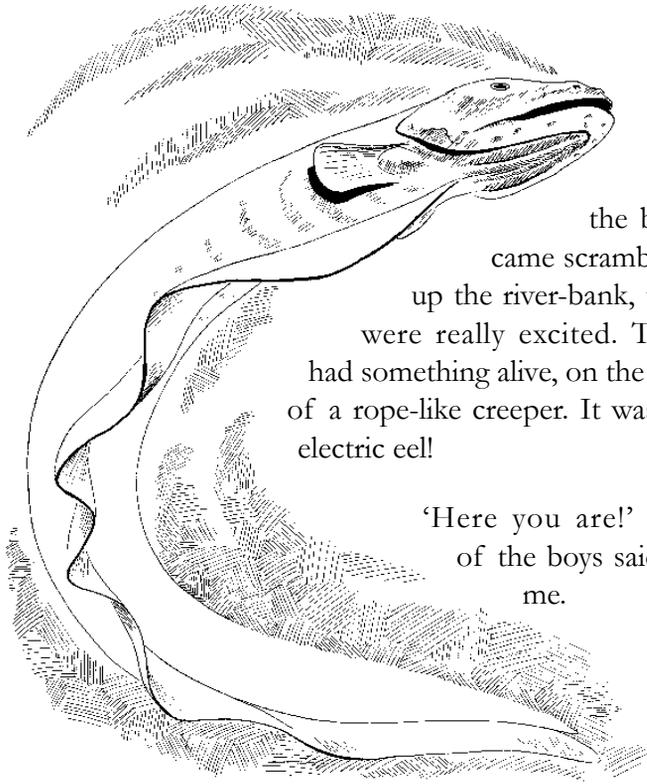


# The Electric Eel

**I**t was Sunday morning in the Kayapo village, but instead of Sunday School being as usual, the boys were absent. Waking up very hungry, they decided to go fishing.



They were not far away, but school was over when their canoes arrived. And long before they came in sight, everybody knew that they were not coming empty-handed. When there is no kill, or the catch is a small one, the Kayapo are ashamed and try to sneak into the village without being seen. When the haul is big, they make a lot of noise. That Sunday morning the shouting was so loud the kill might well have been a jaguar!



As the boys came scrambling up the river-bank, they were really excited. They had something alive, on the end of a rope-like creeper. It was an electric eel!

‘Here you are!’ one of the boys said to me.

‘You often asked us to get one alive. Now you can take its picture.’

I had often seen electric eels, but either dead or gliding about in the water. ‘Hang it up on that beam!’

It was a tricky operation, but the boys were most careful to keep out of the wriggling creature’s way. I noticed that the drag rope was quite dry. Experience has taught the Kayapo the ABC of insulation. After all, their ancestors knew about electric shocks before ours did!



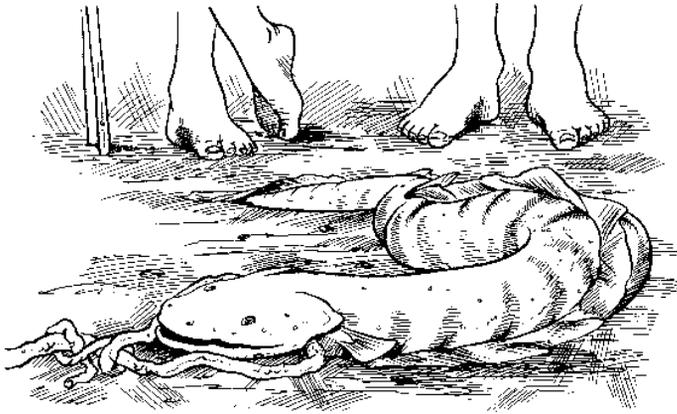
The eel was not a big one, being just four feet in length and the thickness of a man's arm. It could never be taken for a snake, the dark green body had no scales and there was a soft rippling fin stretching along the underside from head to tail. The head was flat, with the tiniest of eyes and a gaping mouth. The drag rope had been poked through the eel's gills.

The boys were quick to notice my interest in their victim. Asked one; 'Are you white-eyed with us for having fished on the God's day?' (White-eyed is one of their ways of saying angry.)

I might have been sad about the neglected Sunday School, but there was no hiding my interest in that electric-eel. 'So this is the electric eel which is dynamo, battery and discharge coil all combined, going about giving powerful shocks to all and sundry!' I mused.

Having read somewhere that the current produced is as much as 500 volts, I went into the house for my volt-meter. Perhaps by earthing the negative contact and touching that rippling fin or tail with the positive one, there might be some kind of response on the dial.

‘Don’t touch it, it will knock you down!’ yelled the boys. ‘Let it die first. Then it won’t shock anybody any more.’



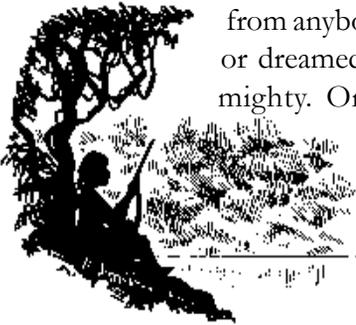
I was easily convinced. There was nothing else to do but wait for the electric-eel to die. But I was feeling sad and wondering why all that electricity should have to be wasted. I dreamt of what might have been done with those 500 volts if they could have been harnessed and made useful. To think that all the amazing eel had ever produced had just gone in giving shocks, in electrocuting small crabs and minnows and warning bigger fry to keep off! So much potential light, heat and power just squandered!

The dead eel was cut down and handed back to the boys, who, hungrier than ever, prepared themselves and their victim for the feast. I watched very carefully as they did the cutting and slicing, but saw no clue as to the creature's power plant. However the heart was very close to its mouth and I was surprised to see the heart so small for such a long, powerful body.



The Kayapo believe that they become like the things they eat. They eat the howling monkey to be tough and noisy, the jaguar to be fierce, the electric-eel to be vicious. The stronger and wilder they can become, the better their chances of one day becoming a chief. My Kayapo friends would think that you can learn much from the electric eel... how to be wild and fierce. They would say that God made the electric eel to show us how to be wild and fierce. I would say that God has made the electric eel to show us how not to behave!

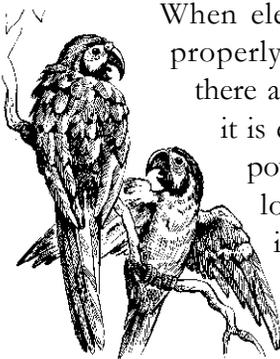
The tribal people of the jungle have their own ideals. The heroes of their legends were all fierce warriors with super-strength, magic weapons and a skill for killing. How they marvel at the stories the missionaries tell them of the



Lord Jesus, in everything so different from anybody the Kayapo ever heard or dreamed of. No one was ever so mighty. Only Jesus could say: 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth'. Yet for all that power, Jesus was so lovely to know.

Jesus healed many people. Many diseases were cured by his power. His power also calmed waves, cast out demons and even raised the dead. In him all-power was mingled with all-love.

Jesus wants us to be his disciples, to learn of him. We can never be like him by ourselves. Our human nature is so proud, so selfish and unkind. The looks we give, the words we say and the things we do, when thoughtless and unkind, can hurt so much.



When electrical equipment is working properly, there are no shocks, nor is there any wastage. If light is required, it is enough to switch-on, if heat or power, to plug-in. If our actions, looks and words give 'shocks', it is because there is something wrong, something within us, which needs putting right.

The Lord Jesus wants to do just that, and then to make us something which by nature we could never be. He wants to make us like himself. For him to begin working, there is a step which we must take. It is to accept him as our Saviour and Master. As we do this, the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and with him, something of God's own Life and Light, Love and Power.

What a wonderful thing it is to know the Lord Jesus, to believe in him and to know that he is working in us and through us. Whatever he gives to us and does for us, is for us to pass on, not to keep for ourselves. The world is full of needy people, the sad, the lonely, the disappointed, the sinful. Jesus wants to meet their need, through us.





The Brazilian jungle boasts  
some 30,000  
different kinds of butterflies.