

SAN CARLOS BLASTED INTO DUST

**The Historic Apache Indian Agency at San Carlos, Arizona,
Leveled by Dynamite.**

(By JOHN P. CLUM.)

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Another spectacular stride in the westward course of empire was measured when the echoing detonations of heavy charges of dynamite shattered to dust the last of the structures at the old San Carlos Apache Indian agency on February 16, 1930.

The sturdy and hopeful pioneers who laid the firm foundations of the main agency building and with unfeigned pride and satisfaction watched those substantial walls slowly but persistently rising along lines that were straight and plumb, did not dream that in a little more than half a century this most desirable scenic building site on the border of an arid mesa would be included within the basin of a spacious artificial reservoir, and that those same stout walls would be deliberately shattered into fragments in order that they might not intrude as dangerous obstacles to navigation when their stone foundations are submerged many feet below the rippling surface of a vast man-made lake.

That world-old natural law involving the principle of the survival of the fittest has been again exemplified in the recent blotting out of this old Apache Indian agency. The waters impounded behind the noble Coolidge Reclamation Dam will submerge this ancient agency site and several hundred acres of farming lands formerly cultivated by the Apaches, but in generous compensation for the flooding of this comparatively limited area, these impounded waters will make possible the reclamation of more than 100,000 acres of fertile valley and mesa lands to the westward.

This abstract statement of the potential results of the Coolidge reclamation project is highly gratifying, as well as a splendid tribute to the superior intelligence and dauntless courage so persistently displayed by the pale-faced race in the winning of the West, but when it is understood that none of the water impounded by the massive Coolidge Dam is available for irrigation purposes within the limits of the San Carlos reservation, this splendid reclamation enterprise presents an exceedingly pathetic aspect as far as the future welfare of the Apache Indians is concerned.

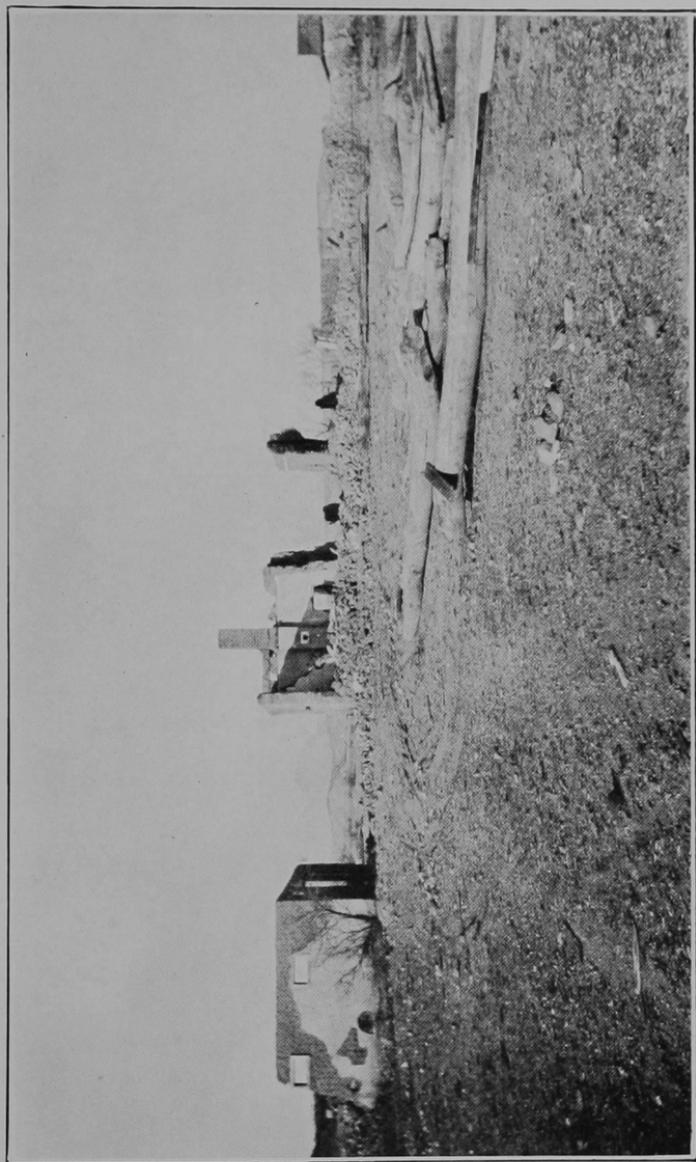
Although the old Apache agency has been thus ruthlessly blotted out, there remain many thrilling pages of its spectacular history that will continue to hold a resistless romantic appeal to generations yet unborn. For the purposes of this article it will suffice if we recall a few facts in connection with the establishment of the agency, supplemented by some of the details of the thrilling episode which resulted in the killing of Chief Disalin at the agency on December 22, 1875.

In the spring of 1871 several bands of Pinal and Arivaipa Apaches under Chief Es-kim-in-zin were permitted by the military authorities to assemble at Old Camp Grant, on the Rio San Pedro, near the mouth of the Arivaipa Canyon. What is known as "The Camp Grant Massacre" occurred there at dawn on April 30, 1871, when about 125 of those Apaches were killed by a party of Mexicans and Papago Indians led by several citizens from Tucson.

In 1872 General O. O. Howard, one of President Grant's Indian Peace Commissioners, visited Old Camp Grant, and at that time he promised Es-kim-in-zin and his followers that an agency would be established for them at the confluence of the Rio San Carlos with the Rio Gila. General Howard's promise was fulfilled by the government, and the name of the San Carlos River was adopted as the name of the new agency, as well as for the southern part of the Apache reservation. Chief Es-kim-in-zin and his followers (about 800) were removed from Old Camp Grant and located at San Carlos in February, 1873.

For a little more than a year thereafter these Indians were quite continually under the control of the military, and the affairs of the agency during that period were subjected to the vicissitudes of five separate administrations. As might be expected, these five temporary administrators contented themselves with the crudest sort of temporary quarters for the accommodation of the agent and employes and the storage of supplies. The walls of these primitive specimens of the builder's art were constructed of stout poles set upright in the ground and chinked in with adobe plaster, while the roofs consisted of more stout poles which served as rafters, over which was spread a covering of brush and mud. Such were the rustic and picturesque residential edifices that greeted my youthful vision when I arrived at San Carlos and assumed charge as agent for the Apaches on that reservation on August 8, 1874.

Inasmuch as I contemplated an indefinite residence among the Apaches I felt that suitable agency buildings should be constructed with the least delay possible, not only to provide proper



The room at northwest corner of the main agency building at San Carlos is shown in this photo, and was the last of that old building to be dynamited on February 16, 1930.

housing facilities for myself, my employes and the agency supplies, but as an example of the better mode of living which we hoped the Indians might eventually be induced to adopt in lieu of their wickiup shelters and nomadic habits.

The temporary agency and the temporary military camp were located on the eastern border of the mesa lying immediately north of the Gila and west of the San Carlos and overlooking the valley lands adjacent to the point where the San Carlos flows into the Gila. A little prospecting revealed an ideal site for the permanent buildings on the western border of the same mesa and within a mile of the temporary quarters. This site overlooked a broad section of the Gila Valley that stretched away westward several miles to the opening of the grand canyon where the gigantic Coolidge Dam now stands. To the south loomed the pyramidal form of Mt. Turnbull, while the western skyline was elevated along the towering and undulating crest of the majestic Pinal Mountain range. Having been reared in the charming valley of the Hudson, with those lovely Berkshire Hills to the east and the renowned Catskill range to the west, I early developed a great love for the beautiful in Nature. A residence of three years in the quaint and historic pueblo of Santa Fe, New Mexico, stimulated my admiration for the grandeur of the mountains. It is admitted, therefore, that the inspiring scenic view commanded from the western border of the mesa was potent among the conditions that determined me to select that location as the site for the permanent agency.

Within a week after my arrival at San Carlos I had selected the site, made the necessary preliminary surveys and employed a mason, who, with the aid of several Apache helpers, forthwith began laying the stone foundations of the main agency building and making adobes for its sturdy walls. This building was constructed in the form of a hollow square with a frontage of 135 feet and a depth of 200 feet. In the rear was added a corral 135 feet by 175 feet, surrounded on three sides by a stone wall seven feet high and two feet thick. A dozen or more years later when the agency was under military control, this corral wall was taken down and the stone utilized in the foundations of other buildings.

When I visited San Carlos in November, 1929, the work of demolishing the numerous structures at the old agency was already in progress. The roof, doors, flooring, etc., had been removed from the main agency building, but about three-fourths of the staunch old adobe walls were still standing quite as firm and solid as they were when constructed in the fall of 1874—FIFTY-

SIX years ago. And these were some of the walls that were shattered into fragments on February 16, 1930.

The Apache guardhouse that so recently succumbed to the devastating force of the detonating dynamite was not the famous old hoosegow in which the notorious renegade Geronimo was confined when I brought him—a prisoner in chains—from Ojo Caliente, New Mexico, to San Carlos in May, 1877. That ancient calaboose was a rude adobe structure that was long ago replaced by a modern prison with stone walls and steel bars, but which today is a shattered mass of debris.

As a thrilling chapter in the unwritten history of the old San Carlos Apache Indian agency I am persuaded to enter here some of the details of that tragic episode which ended with the killing of Chief Disalin on the afternoon of December 22, 1875. A special official report of the fatal affair was promptly submitted to Washington. But in my next annual report, written the following October, the matter was covered in a few lines, and that exceedingly brief statement was all that was included in the published report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs relative to the death of Disalin.

This very serious incident, however, is worthy of presentation in more complete detail for several reasons. It was an acid test of the loyalty and efficiency of the San Carlos Apache Police Force at that early period of its organization. It wrought just and swift retribution to the only would-be deliberate assassin encountered among the Apaches during my entire administration, and, furthermore, it is most desirable that these vital details should be given a permanent place in the spectacular story of the famous old agency that has so recently been reduced to mounds of desolate ruins.

Disalin, with his band of about 150 Apaches, had formerly lived in the Tonto Basin country, but had been located at San Carlos about two years prior to his death. Polygamy was a common practice among the Apaches, and Disalin had two wives. In the domestic affairs of these Indians the head of the family exercised supreme authority. If the wife offended she might be punished in any manner that the indignation and wrath of the husband might dictate—no one interfered.

It so happened that Disalin was extremely jealous of one of his wives. This woman finally came to me and complained that her husband had a playful habit of beating her, and that sometimes he would tie her to a tree and then amuse himself by throwing a wicked hunting knife at the tree in a cheerful en-

deavor to determine how closely to some part of her anatomy he could imbed the knife into the tree. The beatings, the woman said, were often very painful, while the knife-throwing exercises caused her acute mental anguish. She appealed to me for protection.

The offending husband was summoned to the agency and I had a heart-to-heart talk with him relative to the matters complained of by his wife. Disalin was naturally austere and reticent, but I had regarded him as in every way friendly to me and to my administration. I explained to him that all Indians on the reservation were entitled to protection from bodily harm, or cruelty of any sort—the women as well as the men; that in my official position I could make no exceptions; that I hoped he would thereafter be able to administer his household affairs without employing either a club or a knife, and that if he could not get along with this particular wife without maltreating her he had better allow her to return to her own people.

During this interview Disalin did not exhibit any signs of serious displeasure, and as several weeks passed without further complaint from the wife I supposed peace had been declared. In fact, I had quite forgotten the episode until it was recalled by another—and final—visit from Disalin.

Some details as to the plan of the new agency building are essential to a proper understanding of the movements of Disalin on the occasion of his final visit. The plan was a hollow square, thus providing an inner court, or **patio**. All rooms opened on the patio with two exceptions, one on the northeast corner and one on the northwest corner. I occupied the latter. The room adjoining mine to the east was the office, and the room next to that was used as a courtroom and for general conferences with the Indians. My room was entered either from the office or from the room next south of mine. My north window overlooked the **parade ground** and showed the quarters of the Indian police and the guardhouse about 200 yards distant. Chief of Police Beauford had fitted up a room for himself adjoining the police quarters. My west window commanded that inspiring scenic view terminating with the glorious Pinal range.

From a climatic standpoint the afternoon was ideal and every aspect indicated peace and contentment. Beauford was lounging in his quarters. Mr. Sweeney, the chief clerk, was in the office absorbed in his quarterly accounts. His table extended along the north wall of the office and as he sat with his face to the wall he did not observe the stealthy entrance of Disalin. I

was seated near the west window in my room reading, with no thought of an impending tragedy.

Suddenly, and almost noiselessly, Disalin opened the door from the office, walked into my room, closed the door behind him and halted about two paces in front of me. He wore a white cotton shirt, trousers and moccasins. A small blanket was draped over his shoulders and reached to his hips. I did not know that the chief purpose of the blanket was to conceal a six-shooter which he had shoved under the waistband of his trousers well to the rear. He was too cunning to wear a tell-tale pistol-belt and scabbard. His dark, clean-cut features wore a serious mien—but such was the habit of Disalin. There was no display of emotion, nor the slightest indication of excitement. I am compelled to admire his nerve from the time he entered my room until he fell dead a few moments later.

While I was most democratic in my intercourse with the Indians, I reserved my own room as the one spot on the reservation where the Indians might not intrude—uninvited. Whether or not Disalin was aware of the exclusiveness of my personal quarters I never knew. Fortunately for me, as well as for the continued peace and good order of the reservation, he had come at that moment to reconnoiter and not to kill, for, as I was lounging in a rocking chair with no suspicion of danger, he had me at a great disadvantage. He stood silent for an instant and then made some reference to his domestic troubles. Although I was a bit nettled at his intrusion I spoke quietly, telling him to find the interpreter and come to the courtroom where I would have a talk with him. He hesitated for a moment and then turned quite deliberately and went out. But instead of going through the office whence he came, he went through the room to the south, again closing the door behind him—thus shrewdly assuring himself that there was no one in that room. His reconnaissance was now complete. There was no one in that section of the building but Sweeney and myself, and we were oblivious to the danger that threatened us. Without further delay he would kill both of us and then take his chances on picking off Beauford. We were the three persons active in the administration of the affairs of the reservation—and all three of us were on Disalin's death list.

Disalin had not been gone more than two minutes when he re-entered my room from the office, again closed the door behind him, and then assumed a defiant attitude in front of me. Without concealing my annoyance I spoke sharply to him, demanding to know why he had not brought the interpreter, etc. At that

instant the agency physician happened to come in from the office and stopped at Disalin's right. A few seconds later the door of the south room opened and the janitor, a husky young negro, entered with an armful of wood which he deposited quickly at the fireplace and then stood at Disalin's left. I have no doubt that the timely entrance of these two men utterly ruined the first scene in Disalin's deadly plot. His presence in my room and the harsh manner in which I was telling him to find the interpreter, startled both the doctor and the janitor. Instantly they sensed danger and both stood, fully alert, intently watching Disalin. But even then I did not suspect Disalin's treacherous purpose. He did not utter a word during his second visit. He had not returned to talk—but to act. And then, in a twinkle, the Fates that had favored his plot thus far turned against him. Even though he might be quick enough to shoot me, his immediate capture would follow and his plot would fail. Briefly he meditated—then backing to the door, he opened it, passed into the office and closed the door behind him.

Disalin having withdrawn his austere presence from my room, the janitor left also. The negro had just disappeared by way of the south room when a shot sounded in the office. Instantly I sprang to the mantel and seized my six-shooter. The doctor grabbed a convenient Indian club. Then another shot sounded in the office as Sweeney burst into my room shouting the name of Disalin. We had scarcely assured ourselves that Sweeney was uninjured when a third shot echoed from the entrance to the inner court. Two or three seconds later the sharp reports of rifle shots resounded from the vicinity of the police quarters and the silence of that beautiful afternoon was further disturbed by a chorus of fierce Apache yells—the battle was on. As I glanced out of my north window across the parade ground a thrilling and more or less disquieting scene met my vision. Pandemonium had broken loose. A score or more of apparently frantic Apaches were running and jumping and yelling and shooting as if all had suddenly gone mad. We wondered how many of those fighting Indians were supporting Disalin—for we did not know that he was playing his desperate game single-handed. About that time the negro returned to my room armed with an ax. It seemed to us a matter of defense. However, we were not left long to ponder over the situation, for the yelling and the shooting ceased quite as suddenly as it had begun, and an Indian policeman came running to tell me that Disalin was dead.

I went at once to learn the details of all that had happened

outside of my room during those three or four exceedingly hectic moments. When Disalin re-entered the office from my room Sweeney was writing with his face to the wall. Disalin stepped behind a convenient bale of blankets and, taking deliberate aim, fired at Sweeney's head. But the bullet missed its intended victim and merely spattered some plaster from the wall into Sweeney's face—much to his surprise and annoyance. As Sweeney jerked open the drawer containing his six-shooter he turned his head just in time to discover Disalin aiming a second shot at him. It was then that Sweeney sprang from his chair and burst into my room as Disalin's second bullet sped too high, bored through the upper panel of the door and lodged somewhere in the mud roof over my room.

An Indian policeman standing in the court entrance saw Disalin fire his first shot, but, being unarmed, he ran for his rifle and to notify the other policemen. After his second shot Disalin ran to the court entrance where he met an Indian laborer who attempted to impede his progress and at whom he fired the third shot—which also missed its mark. This ill-luck should have discouraged Disalin. But not so. He still had Beauford on his death list, so he ran swiftly toward the guardhouse. It was then that the police joined in the fray. Beauford rushed out to learn the cause of the shooting just as Disalin dropped behind a convenient wood-pile. A second later Disalin sent a bullet whizzing close to the head of the chief of police. Then Beauford understood.

Disalin had been struck by two bullets but was not seriously wounded. When his shot missed Beauford he sprang from the wood-pile and leaped into the shelter of the thick adobe wall at a side door of the trader's store. A few seconds later he was running along the outside of the west wall of the corral in the rear of the store. An Apache policeman had rushed around on the east side of the store and halted at the northeast corner of the corral. Another policeman, Tau-el-cly-ee (also spelled Tal-kalai), had taken a position about fifty paces from the fatal corner and quite directly ahead of Disalin as he raced recklessly to his death. The instant Disalin passed the corner of the corral both of these policemen fired at him. The bullet fired by the policeman at the opposite corner pierced Disalin's skull through and through just back of the eyes, while the leaden missile from Tau-el-cyl-ee's gun ploughed a diagonal course through his chest from left to right. Disalin's wild dream of revolution and reform was thus rudely and forever ended.

We soon learned more of Disalin's desperate plot and the

motives that had inspired it. He had again administered severe punishment to the troublesome wife for some real or imagined offense, and it appeared that, acting upon my suggestion, she had deserted Disalin and fled to her own people. It was quite evident that Disalin felt that I had exceeded all reasonable bounds of my official authority by interfering with his domestic affairs, and that if he submitted a direful precedent would thus be established. In fact, he felt that the offense against his personal dignity, both as a husband and as a chief, was of such a grave character as to fully justify him in breaking off all diplomatic relations and declaring war—and in doing his killing first and stating his reasons later,—even as some alleged civilized nations have done in more recent years.

Disalin had also decided not to take anyone into his confidence until he had given his solo-revolution a thrilling and bloody start. Happily for his plans, all troops had been removed from the reservation about two months previous. Now if he could kill the three men active in the administration of the affairs of the agency he might compromise all of the Apaches on the reservation (about 4200), and demonstrate his prowess as a bold, resourceful and daring warrior. In short, he reasoned that within the few moments occupied with the killings he would flash before the astonished Indians as a hero—and ideal war-chief—ready and capable to lead them in successful combat with whomsoever might oppose.

Disalin had many good qualities and I had always found him friendly and tractable. About a year previous to his tragic death he had rendered a splendid service to the territory by leading a scouting party of his own men many weary miles over the mountain trails on a determined hunt after the desperate Apache renegade Del-shay, and Disalin did not falter in his pursuit until he had captured the renegade and carried his head into Camp McDowell.

Doubtless prolonged brooding over his domestic troubles had brought him to a state of temporary insanity, but even then he displayed his daring spirit—without which he would not have undertaken, single-handed, the desperate and bloody work he had set himself to accomplish.

While the purposes of Disalin were altogether evil, he unwittingly rendered a splendid service by offering an opportunity for the Indian police to demonstrate their loyalty and efficiency in a very sudden and very grave emergency. Those policemen were not only all Apaches, but two of them were members of Disalin's band—one of whom, Tau-el-cly-ee, was a half-brother of the

mad chief who was running amuck. And yet the police not only met the exigencies of the occasion with promptness and efficiency, but they acted entirely upon their own initiative and responsibility.

We must visualize the absolute peacefulness of that lovely afternoon. All were relaxed until Disalin fired his first shot. The policeman who witnessed that shot and noted the look of savage desperation on Disalin's face, ran at top speed for his gun, meantime shouting to his comrades that Disalin was killing the white men in the office. No one hesitated. In an instant all were armed, alert and active, and within a minute they were shooting as Disalin ran toward the guardhouse. They did not need to be told what to do. When Beauford rushed from his quarters and demanded to know why they were shooting at Disalin—intimating that he felt there must be some mistake—the policeman nearest him dropped on one knee for a steadier aim and fired at Disalin just as he ducked behind the wood-pile. The policeman knew why he was shooting at the mad chief, and Beauford grasped the seriousness of the situation, when, an instant later, Disalin raised his head above the wood-pile and sent a bullet close to the head of the chief of police. "Kill him," was Beauford's order. The police had merely anticipated that order. It is true that, at that moment, the police did not know whether they were defending Sweeney and myself, or avenging our deaths. They only knew that they were performing their highest duty, and that nothing should stop them until Disalin was either captured or killed.

Doubtless it will be asked how Disalin was able to avoid the many shots fired while he was running from the main agency building to the north corner of the corral at the trader's store. It must be remembered that the police were compelled to exercise the utmost caution in order to avoid maiming or killing some of their own comrades. This would account for some of the shots that missed their mark. Another thing, Disalin was nimble and did not offer himself as an easy target by running in a straight line—no true Apache warrior would do that. He leaped and zig-zagged and dodged as he advanced. It is also probable that, at first, some of the police who were friendly to Disalin fired over his head in the hope that he would surrender rather than be killed.

Just after I had viewed the body of the dead chief I met Tau-el-cly-ee. At first he simply shook my hand and said: "Inju"—meaning "it is good," or "it is well." And then, alternately stroking his gun and his chest, he said in a most seri-

ous manner, "I have killed my own chief and my own brother. But he was trying to kill you—and I am a policeman. It was my duty." With equal earnestness I told him that he had proved himself a brave officer and a good friend, and that I would be his chief and his brother and his good friend, always. We then sealed that pledge of mutual friendship with another clasping of the hands—and that pledge was kept inviolate to the day of his death.

The following June Tau-el-cly-ee served as sergeant of the company of Apache police that accompanied me to Apache Pass. With 20 of his men he arrested the murderer Pi-on-se-nay on June 9. At Ewell Springs on June 12, we spread a blanket over Pi-on-se-nay and then Tau-el-cly-ee and myself weighted down the overlapping ends of this blanket with our own precious bodies as we stretched out for the night on opposite sides of our dangerous prisoner. The next day we delivered this murderer into the custody of two deputies sheriff of Pima County.

Tau-el-cly-ee passed on to the Happy Hunting Grounds while the more or less spectacular ceremonies in connection with the dedication of the Coolidge dam were in progress on March 4, 1930. He was a little older than myself, and I would fix his age at the time of his death at about 90. Neither the state nor the nation ever rewarded Tau-el-cly-ee for his very efficient services as a peace officer—rendered at a time when those services were sorely needed. The last decade or more of his life was passed in ill-health, poverty and blindness. During this period he lived most of the time in the mining camp of Miami, where some good friends had a cabin built for him and who sometimes contributed small amounts for food and clothing. Occasionally I was permitted to add my mite to this fund. Even then he was often in want. My last meeting with him was in November, 1929. His condition at that time was most pitiful. Age and infirmities, including near total blindness, had rendered the former robust and efficient policeman almost helpless, and his environment bespoke abject poverty. At that time I urged a plan to provide for his care and comfort, and while the response was favorable, the action was too slow to afford any relief to the aged sufferer. Let us hope he has entered upon the just recompense that was denied him here.

I can never efface the mental picture of Disalin's prostrate form stretched upon the ground near the corner of the corral where he fell. The dead chief was of medium stature, straight and lithe, and his general demeanor was always dignified. The last two bullets, either one of which would have proved fatal, must have struck him simultaneously and snuffed out his life in

an instant. Ordinarily the body would have crumpled into an ungainly heap. But not so with Disalin. He had fallen with his face downward. His body was stretched to its full length and straight as an arrow. His long black hair trailed to his hips. None of his ghastly wounds was exposed to view. His left arm was lying straight beside the body, while the right arm was bent under his head so that the forehead rested upon the forearm. Every line was graceful and the body perfectly composed—as if Disalin had deliberately arranged every detail of his position for a long and restful sleep. Often I think of Disalin as he stood before me in my room the last time—but far more frequently I see him stretched there so gracefully upon the ground—ASLEEP.